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**KING'S LYNN & WEST NORFOLK
AREA MUSEUMS COMMITTEE**

June 2016

Item No.

KING'S LYNN MUSEUMS REPORT

Report by the Head of Operations and Learning

**This report provides information on King's Lynn
Museum activities in the period from March 2016 –
May 2016**

1. Temporary exhibitions and events at Lynn Museum

- 1.1 The current major exhibition at Lynn Museum explores the life and work of Frederick Savage and is entitled *Art of the Mart: Savage's - the famous fairground makers of Lynn*. It tells the story of King's Lynn's iconic creator of merry-go-rounds – including a close look at the art, craft and design of the fairground. The exhibition includes a number of products from the St Nicholas Ironworks that have not been on public display before including watercolour designs, accessories from the costume collections, taxidermy, a finely carved canopy, wooden patterns and a large chalk drawing of a racing cockerel, conserved and framed with support from the Friends of King's Lynn Museums. The exhibition includes the modern 'Mart' horse, and the bell used in the Opening Ceremony in February, on loan from the Town Hall collections. A painted decorative frieze in the display was a gift from Harry Overton, local sign-writer and member of the Showmen's Guild. The popular exhibition has been extended over the summer holidays and will now run until 11 September 2016.
- 1.2 A programme of illustrated talks continues to be offered at Lynn Museum on Wednesday afternoons. Recent topics have included Battle of Jutland by Nigel Amies, Victorian Menageries by Michael Medlar and a talk on whaling given by Learning Officer Melissa Hawker and Curatorial Trainee Morgan Bell. Attendances average 15-25 and most talks are delivered by NMS staff.
- 1.3 An enhanced programme of informal family learning events continues to be offered at the Lynn Museum for the school holiday periods. 'Drop-in' format events this year have included: a *Dinosaurs (640)* and

Romans (67) events during the Easter holiday and *Fancy Dress (51)* an event during the May half term to make costume for the June 12 *Roaring Twenties* town-wide event. .

- 1.4 During the school holidays the Lynn Museum continues to offer a popular programme of themed gallery discovery trails, with a new trail available for each week of the school holidays. Recent trails have included an *Easter egg hunt* and *All the Fun of the Fair*.
- 1.5 The Lynn Museum continues to host monthly *Coffee, Cake and Collections* “coffee morning” style events for adults, with each session exploring a different aspect of the collections. Topics have included a sessions on medieval King’s Lynn and RAF Marham centenary themes.
- 1.6 The Museum participated in the national initiative known as Museums at Night with a screening of the film *Cathead* by the King’s Lynn Youth Forum on Friday 13th May. The young people involved in making the film participated in a discussion after the film was shown about how the film was made.
- 1.7 The reception case at Lynn Museum is re-displayed regularly by Museum Trainee, Morgan Bell. Recent exhibits have included a pilot whale skull, hearing aids from the museum collections and conserved Roman glass from Hockwold. A request has been made to the British Museum to display in this case two of the Anglo-Saxon Pentney brooches in January and February 2017.

2. Other Museum Developments

- 2.1 The Lynn Museum continues to develop its social media presence, with Twitter and Facebook accounts being maintained by staff. The Lynn Museum Twitter account has 2388 tweets and 1582 followers while the Facebook account has 358 likes. The Museum participated in the international Twitter event Museum Week and gained interest and new followers.
- 2.2 A team of collections volunteers continues to meet on a weekly basis in the NMS offices at Queen Street. Volunteers have continued with a programme of work involving the scanning and cataloguing of the drawing collections by local artists Henry Baines and Walter Dexter. The team’s work enhances and illustrates the museum catalogue available online through the museum service’s collections website. .
- 2.3 In addition to the scanning project, a small team of volunteers is working with Assistant Curator Dayna Woolbright on a weekly basis, undertaking an audit of collections at the museum stores at Aickmans Yard. They have been joined by a local artist who has been creating

drawings of different objects which are regularly shown to audiences on social media and formed a display in the reception case last winter.

- 2.4 The Museum has been successful in obtaining grant funding of £1,160 from the Woodmansterne Conservation Awards, supporting the conservation of two newly acquired portraits in poor condition. The portraits are of John Langley and his wife Elizabeth. John Langley travelled around the world with Captain Vancouver and later in life managed a public house in King's Lynn. The Friends of Kings Lynn Museums and two private donors are also contributing to the costs. The portrait of Elizabeth Langley has been conserved and returned to the Museum and the cleaned painting is much improved. Once both portraits are completed an unveiling of the finished works is planned with the museum Friends group.
- 2.5 The Museum's fortnightly *History of Kings Lynn in 100 Objects* series with the Lynn News has generated significant interest. Recent artefacts featured include a silver badge of 1744 worn by beadles for the Guardians of the Poor, a portion of Roman mosaic pavement and a railway poster promoting King's Lynn.
- 2.6 Recruitment of staff for the Museum's Front of House team is currently in progress with the appointment of Carl Hutchings as Front of House Supervisor and interviews taking place on June 6th for two part time Museum Learning Assistant positions.
- 2.7 Following the closure of the Kings Lynn Arts Centre, a 19th century British School oil painting 'The Regatta' of 1860 featuring a maritime event at the town has been deposited with the Museum to be added to the town collections.
- 2.8 Recent notable acquisitions to the museum's collections also include a print of 'Trafalgar Square' by Lynn artist Dudley Page, a watercolour miniature of Robert Partridge, born in King's Lynn and later Mayor of Norwich and a Medieval silver annular brooch

3. Friends of King's Lynn Museums

- 3.1 The Friends are continuing to offer a varied programme for members including lunchtime talks, newsletter, trips and an annual lecture. The Friends have continued to support the afternoon talks programme being offered at the Lynn Museum during 2016.
- 3.2 The Friends are continuing to fund a programme of fine art conservation, most recently the cockerel drawing for the Art of the Mart exhibition and support for the conservation of the portraits of John and Elizabeth Langley.

- 3.3 A Junior Friends of Kings Lynn Museum scheme has been launched and members of the Friends Committee attended last summer's family events to invite children and young people to join.

4 Partnerships

- 4.1 The Lynn Museum free admission period runs from October to the end of March. This free admission period is provided under the terms of the Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the Borough Council and NMS.
- 4.2 NMS continues to support the Borough Council with the delivery of the HLF-funded *Stories of Lynn* project focussed on King's Lynn Town Hall. As well as being part of the project steering group and Project Board, NMS continues to lead on the development and delivery of the project Activity Plan and has led on the development of exhibition designs and site interpretation.
- 4.3 NMS is hosting the Learning & Engagement Officer and has hosted the Project Curator post until the end of March. Both have worked closely with colleagues from the Borough Council and the Norfolk Record Office, alongside the external designers responsible for developing the new exhibitions at the Town Hall. Dayna Woolbright, Assistant Curator for Lynn Museum was seconded to the Stories of Lynn project from January to March 2016 to complete the curatorial aspects of the work including installation of objects in displays, completing graphic panels and labels and arranging for the packing and safe return of collections. The new displays at the Town Hall opened on 25th March. The Assistant Curator has continued to support the Stories of Lynn project through April and May including display snagging, supporting the production of the town App to guide people around the history of King's Lynn, and setting up the Town Hall's collections storage facility.
- 4.4 Assistant Curator, Dayna Woolbright has led on an exhibition in the Stories of Lynn changing displays area to commemorate the 100th anniversary of RAF Marham. Timed to coincide with the annual Freedom Parade and the launch of the summer Tornado Trail, the exhibition opened on 27th May. Linked to the exhibition is a plane spotting trail for families in the Stories of Lynn exhibition area.
- 4.5 Partnership working with the Borough Council continues with the delivery of two major town events in 2016: the *Roaring Twenties* event on the 12th June to commemorate the Queen's 90th birthday, and a second event on the 17th July with *Forties Lynn: Life on the Home Front* Second World War theme.
- 4.6 The delivery of NMS services in King's Lynn & West Norfolk continues to operate under the terms of the 2015-16 Service Level Agreement with the Borough Council. Under an extension to this agreement, NMS

continues to provide curatorial advice, support and an enquiry service for those Borough collections currently held in the Town Hall including fine art and Civic Regalia.

- 4.7 The Lynn Museum has started opening on Sundays from 12 until 4 for the 2016 season running from April until September, made possible by financial support from the Borough Council. A Sunday joint ticket is available for visitors to Stories of Lynn to also explore both the Custom House exhibition and the Lynn Museum.
- 4.8 The Museum will be working with the Kings Lynn Festival again in 2016 by providing the Lynn Museum as a venue. There are plans for a 30 minute performance by flautist Anna Rosa Mari on Thursday 28 July and an event aimed at pre-school children and their families by the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment on Saturday 16th July.

5 Learning & Outreach

- 5.1 During 2015 - 2016 and again in 2016 -2017, the Lynn Museum is hosting a 12 month Teaching Museum traineeship provided through the NMS *Teaching Museum* programme, funded by ACE as part of the 2015-18 Major Partner Museum ACE business plan. Morgan Bell worked as Curatorial Trainee for King's Lynn and Thetford in 2015-16. Amongst a range of other activities, she helped coordinate the trails programme, supervise collections volunteers and schedule displays in the museum reception area. Morgan's traineeship ended in April when we welcomed new trainee, Imogen Clarke, one of 6 hosted by the museums service as a whole. Imogen has settled in very well and will be undertaking a similar range of curatorial work to gain experience for her future career.
- 5.2 Lynn Museum has continued to work with local schools to deliver a broad range of formal learning sessions. Learning programmes have been adapted following recent changes to the history National Curriculum. The Seahenge and early history displays and themes are proving popular with schools and school numbers are up on last year's total. New boxes of handling artefacts are being created for use with schools including a new Romans box and an 'Archaebin' with layers of archaeological finds for children to investigate local history and archaeology.
- 5.3 On 17th May. Museum staff welcomed pupils for the first joint schools event in partnership with Stories of Lynn. Children found out about Frederick Savage's life and role as Mayor at Stories of Lynn and discovered more about his work at Lynn Museum.

6 Visitor numbers

- 6.1 Visitor figures for the period will be circulated at the meeting.

7. Resource implications

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| (a) | <u>Finance</u> | None |
| (b) | <u>Property</u> | None |
| (c) | <u>Staff</u> | None |
| (d) | <u>Information Technology</u> | None |

8. Recommendations:

1. That the Area Museums Committee notes the report

Originator of report:

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