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

December 4th 2017

KING'S LYNN MUSEUMS REPORT

Report by the Head of Operations and Learning

**This report provides information on King's Lynn
Museum activities for the period from October 2017
– November 2017**

1. Temporary exhibitions and events at Lynn Museum

- 1.1 The current major exhibition at Lynn Museum is *Shoes!* exploring the changes in footwear from the 13th century to the present day. The exhibition draws upon the museum's collection of historic footwear with additional items from the Norfolk Museums Service costume and textile collection. The examples on show include both everyday shoes from the past and more elaborate shoes made for special occasions. There are medieval shoes from archaeological excavations in King's Lynn, shoes discovered by builders deliberately concealed in old houses and heirloom shoes passed down through the generations. Also on show are a selection of shoes from recent decades. The Shoes exhibition was opened to the public on 23rd June by the Mayor of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk, Cllr Carol Bower, with words of welcome and thanks by Chair of the Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Area Museums Committee, Cllr Elizabeth Nockolds. The exhibition runs until 9th June 2018.
- 1.2 The next major exhibition at Lynn Museum to open in summer 2018 will be *Animal ABC*. This exhibition is aimed at families and draws upon collections from, or inspired by, the natural world. *Animal ABC* will be curated in partnership with Dr David Waterhouse, Curator of Natural History for Norfolk Museums Service. Work is underway on selecting objects, assessing items for conservation requirements and work with designers. Items under consideration include a cape made from ostrich feathers, a 17th century stumpwork textile featuring animals, a stuffed pair of frogs playing cards, and a walrus skull. Textile items were taken to the NMS conservation team for assessment in October. The object records are being improved with the addition of photographs and extra information.

- 1.3 In the summer of 2020 the Lynn Museum is planning to mark the bicentenary of Thomas Baines birth with an exhibition about the King's Lynn born artist brothers Thomas and Henry Baines, drawing upon the rich range of their paintings which are held in the Museum collections. Henry Baines painted a number of local scenes in the second half of the 19th century including buildings that have since been demolished. These paintings form an interesting record of King's Lynn and area as well as having considerable aesthetic value. The following web link takes you to a list of works by Henry Baines in public ownership, mainly at King's Lynn: <https://artuk.org/discover/artists/baines-henry-18231894>
- 1.4 Earlier in the year, the Lynn Museum held a special exhibition of two of the Anglo-Saxon Pentney brooches in the display case in the reception area of the Museum on loan from the Trustees of the British Museum. This proved very popular. Museum staff are in discussion with the British Museum to follow on from this loan, including exploring the possibility of a display of items from the famous Iron Age Snettisham hoard. A detailed risk assessment will be required regarding the fragility of potential loaned material.
- 1.5 NMS Teaching Museum trainee Sam Bellotti has developed a mini exhibition programme for the Lynn Museum reception area display case. Currently the display features colourful advertising boards from the 1950s. Future plans include a display of recent acquisitions and the Baines painting of the cemetery chapels (see below).
- 1.6 A programme of monthly illustrated talks continues to be offered at Lynn Museum on Wednesday afternoons. Attendances at these talks average 15-25 and most talks are delivered by NMS staff. Recent talks have included *Boys and Girls come out to Play* about nursery rhymes and playground songs by Learning Officer Melissa Hawker and *Nelson: A Life in Objects which followed on from the successful Nelson & Norfolk* exhibition at Norwich Castle, by NMS Teaching Museum trainee Andy Bowen who discussed the life, death and legacy of Norfolk's famous naval hero.
- 1.7 An enhanced programme of informal family learning events continues to be offered at the Lynn Museum for the school holiday periods. A prehistoric-themed event during October half term received a total of 191 visitors, learning about life in the Stone Age and Bronze Age. A new activity involved making a model of Seahenge in cake using chocolate for the timber circle, nicknamed 'Cakehenge'.
- 1.8 During October half term the Museum also hosted a pop-up science event run by Cosmos from the Cambridge Science Centre with 37 participants.
- 1.9 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. The trails use different themes each time and children completing the trails receive a small prize. During the October half term the Museum offered a Halloween themed trail.

- 1.10 To publicise the museum's events programme and enhance visitor numbers the Museum uses a variety of media including the *History in Your Hands* event flier distributed through local schools and through a number of local attractions and businesses. Facebook and Twitter are also utilised to publicise events as well as press releases to local media. During the school summer holidays and October half term there has been an enhanced publicity campaign supported by the NMS marketing team. This has included petrol forecourt signage and poster sites on buses and has helped to deliver a boost in attendances.
- 1.11 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. Recent themes include 1950s and an event as part of the nationwide fund-raising MacMillan Charity coffee mornings in September.
- 1.12 Assistant Curator Dayna Woolbright led a tour of Lynn Museum for the 41 Club on 14th November and for the Lord Lieutenant's group at Stories of Lynn on the 16th November, the latter including a close examination of the King John cup.

2. Other Museum Developments

- 2.1 The Lynn Museum's partnership online exhibition with the Google Cultural Institute is '*Blubber, Bone and Baleen*' exploring the history of the whaling industry using collections from Lynn Museum. Staff plan to follow this up with a new online exhibition on pilgrimage and pilgrim badges. The Museum has an important collection of medieval pilgrim souvenirs and these were the subject of a recent study day at Lynn Museum.
- 2.2 The Lynn Museum continues to develop its social media presence, with Twitter and Facebook accounts being maintained by staff. The Lynn Museum accounts continue to grow, with the Twitter account having 2106 followers while the Facebook account has 509 follows. The Museum plans to participate once more in the #MuseumWeek and the new #ScienceWeek events next year.
- 2.3 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. Work continues on topographical prints of the King's Lynn area. The team's work enhances and illustrates the museum catalogue available online through the NMS

collections website <http://norfolkmuseumscollections.org> . Another volunteer has been using information from Museum committee reports to compile a 20th century history of the museum and useful information about collections for our catalogue. The volunteers have also been scanning posters and other documents relating to the Armistice in November 1918 to support a major exhibition planned at Norwich Castle from October 2018.

- 2.4 Recent staff appointments at Lynn Museum include full-time Front of House Supervisor, Sophie Broomfield, and part-time Museum Learning Assistant, Sade Ojelade.
- 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 stuffed sturgeon and an Iron Age fish-faced bronze wine spout.
- 2.6 With support from the Art Fund, the V&A Purchase Grant Fund, the Friends of the Museum and the Friends of Hardwick Road Cemetery, the Museum has purchased a painting by Henry Baines of the Cemetery Chapels at the Hardwick Road cemetery of about 1870. This interesting view shows the cemetery buildings which no longer exist and is a significant addition to the collection of Baines works. Museum Trainee Sam Bellotti was a courier for the painting and safely brought the picture back to King's Lynn. It is planned to hold an event in association with the museum Friends on Monday 18th December 4pm for an official unveiling.
- 2.7 A useful partnership is developing with the photography course at the College of West Anglia where the Museum is able to offer work experience to photography students and the museum benefits from new photography of collections and events.
- 2.8 The Museum has successfully raised the £1,100 needed to purchase a group of 8 silver coins known as sceattas. These coins represent the earliest form of penny and they circulated in England from circa 675 to the middle of the 8th century. The group of coins includes a rare runic *Aethiliraed* type. Grant aid comes from the V&A Purchase Grant Fund and the Friends of Kings Lynn Museum.

3. Friends of King's Lynn Museums

- 3.1 The Friends are continuing to offer a varied programme for members including a newsletter, trips and an annual lecture. Other Friends benefits include free admission to the Museum and to the afternoon talks programme.

- 3.2 The Friends of the Museum hold regular committee meetings at the Museum and receive reports on the museum activities, upcoming events and requests for supporting museum purchases or conservation.
- 3.3 The Friends AGM took place on the morning of the 9th October to elect officers and hear reports on the museum, finances and a change in the constitution to allow for a smaller quorum for AGMs.
- 3.4 A Junior Friends of Kings Lynn Museum scheme continues to be offered to encourage more young people to be involved.
- 3.5 In October the Friends of the Museum marked their 60th anniversary and the British Association of Friends of the Museum commented on Twitter: “60 years ... what a milestone. Here’s to the next 60 years!”

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, NMS continues to lead on the delivery of the project Activity Plan.
- 4.3 NMS is continuing to host the Stories of Lynn Learning & Engagement Officer, who works closely with colleagues from the Borough Council and the Norfolk Record Office. Recruitment for a new Learning and Engagement Officer has recently taken place following Ruth Farnan’s move to a museum post in London. Rachael Williams is now in post and is already working well with the wider Town Hall team..
- 4.4 Dayna Woolbright, Assistant Curator for Lynn Museum continues to support curatorial aspects of Stories of Lynn, such as display snagging, the production of the town App to guide people around the history of King’s Lynn, assistance with exhibitions and work on the Town Hall’s collections storage facility. The current exhibition at Stories of Lynn is a touring exhibition about Olive Edis, photographer. Dayna has most recently supported a Borough Council asset inventory audit of historic collections at the Town Hall, for which the auditor gave a 100% score.
- 4.5 Partnership working with the Borough Council on events continues and NMS organised the Second World War themed event *Forties Lynn: Life on the Home Front* in July and Lynn Museum once more participated in the *Heritage Open Day* in September. The Museum Service is keen to continue this fruitful partnership in 2018.

- 4.6 The delivery of NMS services in King's Lynn & West Norfolk continues to operate under the terms of the 2017-18 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 On behalf of the Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council, museum staff have worked on a successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for improving the interpretation and display of the town's South Gate, a grade one listed building and scheduled ancient monument. A project team comprising borough council and museums staff has been meeting monthly to plan and to review progress. A building conservation plan brings together information about the architectural, historical and archaeological significance of the site. The project team is working on detailed display briefs with colleagues in NMS display department. Initial design visuals were used for consultation with visitors to South Gate on the *Heritage Open Day* in September when about 600 people came to the site. Costumed interpreters were on hand to engage visitors about the Siege of Lynn during the English Civil War and this proved popular. Further consultation was carried out with the volunteer team. Lighting and display improvements are planned for the winter and spring with an activities programme to stimulate interest in the 2018 season. The scheme includes a budget for volunteer development and there are plans to support the volunteer team who open up the site and receive visitors on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays through the summer season.
- 4.8 The Lynn Museum has been open once more on Sundays from 12pm until 4pm for the 2017 season running from April until September, made possible by financial support from the Borough Council. A Sunday joint ticket was available for visitors to Stories of Lynn to also explore both the Custom House exhibition and the Lynn Museum, with positive uptake.
- 4.9 The Museum will be working with the King's Lynn Festival again in 2018 to follow up three years of successful partnership working. The Lynn Museum works well as a 'pop-up venue' for recitals during the July Festival period.
- 4.10 The Museum has been working in partnership with Norfolk County Council's Children and Adults Social Services by providing free admission cards to the Lynn Museum for care leavers. One hundred cards were delivered to our colleagues at Priory House, King's Lynn for distribution to the young people.
- 4.11 The Museum team is currently working with the 'Digital Pilgrim' project, supported by the Paul Mellon Foundation and in conjunction with the University of Cambridge and the British Museum. The Museum was successful in raising a grant of £1,000 from MUPI (Museums and Universities Partnership Initiative) to cover the costs of a study day in September. The Museum team plans to improve interpretation of the Lynn

Museum's important collection of lead pilgrim badges for the public benefit and develop an informal network in this specialist area and will be reporting back on the project at a conference in Birmingham in February.

5 Learning & Outreach

- 5.1 During 2017-2018, the Lynn Museum is once more 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 business plan. Sam Bellotti is our trainee this year, one of seven hosted by the NMS as a whole. Amongst a range of other activities, Sam helps coordinate the trails programme, assists with the coffee cake and collections mornings, supervises collections volunteers, contributes to social media work and schedules displays in the museum reception area.
- 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 prehistoric box used by our Learning Officer, Melissa Hawker, Museum Learning Assistants and freelance educators to help children investigate local history and archaeology.
- 5.3 The schools bookings for Lynn Museum show the continued popularity of the toys programme, an upsurge in interest from schools in sessions on Stone Age and Bronze Age. We continue to offer a flexible programme responding to teachers' needs – this has included developing one-off sessions on American Pioneers and Out of the Attic. We have also run combined events covering two topics for different years within the same school allowing them to make one visit and thus save on the coach costs.
- 5.4 School bookings for this term at Lynn Museum are positive, with confirmed bookings of 480 pupils for the autumn term. We already have bookings for a further 150 in January alone.
- 5.5 Lynn Museum is supporting local uniformed groups, such as Scouts and Brownies, to visit the museum outside normal opening hours as part of their badges. We are exploring creating a badge specific to Lynn Museum to encourage more of these visits. . For example, we welcomed 2nd Dersingham Brownie Pack in October. The group leader said: "The brownies enjoyed it very much."
- 5.6 Lynn Museum has also been working the College of West Anglia to welcoming groups learning in the museum space. The English as a Second Language tutor said: We had a really successful trip to the KL museum with my students. One of my students said: I have been in some

Museums before but Kings Lynn Museum is the one that I like the most.”
We are hoping to continue this relationship.

5.7 Recent partnership work with the Stories of Lynn project at the Town Hall has included a joint session for schools exploring the town’s Victorian fairground heritage. At the end of the summer term this event was run at maximum capacity with 153 pupils visiting in one day. This term we are piloting a joint 1950s event and working on a joint Medieval event.

5.8 The Learning Officer has been training and mentoring the Museum Learning Assistant team at Lynn Museum in delivering sessions for schools.

6 Visitor numbers

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

7. Resource implications

(a) Finance

Lynn Museum receives funding to support core operations and activities from Norfolk County Council and through a Service Level Agreement with the Borough Council of King’s Lynn and West Norfolk. A number of activities are financed as part of funding to Norfolk Museums Service from Arts Council England as a Major Partner Museum under the terms of the current 2015-18 Business Plan. Project activities are funded from a range of external sources including the Heritage Lottery Fund. The source of these funds are detailed within the report. The above report includes no additional or unfunded financial implications.

(b) Property

Unless specified, the above activities relate to the Lynn Museum, the Town Hall NMS offices and Aickman’s Yard museum stores. The above report includes no additional implications relating to property.

(c) Staff

The team at Lynn Museum are supported by a wider team of colleagues within Norfolk Museums Service, in addition to partnership working with the Borough Council to deliver additional projects and activities. Some current posts are funded by external project funding. The above report includes no additional implications relating to staffing and personnel resources.

(d) Information Technology

Digital operations at Lynn Museum are supported by Norfolk County Council’s IMT department. Social media is delivered by the Lynn Museum team. The above report includes no additional implications relating to Information Technology.

8. Recommendations:

1. That the Area Museums Committee notes the report

Originator of report:

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