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

19 March 2018

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 December
2017 – February 2018**

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 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 9 June 2018.
- 1.2 The next major exhibition at Lynn Museum will be *Animal ABC* aimed at families and drawing upon collections from, or inspired by, the natural world. *Animal ABC* will be curated in partnership with Dr David Waterhouse, NMS Curator of Natural History. 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. During this process, the object records are being improved with the addition of photographs and extra information. *Animal ABC* will open to the public on the 30 June 2018.

- 1.3 In the summer of 2020 the Lynn Museum will 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 paintings 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 form an interesting record of King's Lynn and the local 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 2017, 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 continue with discussions with the British Museum exploring the possibility of a display of items from the famous Iron Age Snettisham hoard. A detailed risk assessment is required regarding the fragility and security of potential loan material.
- 1.5 Teaching Museum Trainee, Sam Bellotti has developed a mini exhibition programme for the reception area display case. Currently this case features a display about gardening and Grow Your Own using items from the collections produced by Sam and his fellow trainees as part of a 'Display in a Day' training session.
- 1.6 A programme of monthly illustrated talks continues to be offered at Lynn Museum on Wednesday afternoons. In 2018 staff plan to change the format for the talks programme by holding short seasons of four talks on a particular theme on successive Wednesday afternoons in March and October. Talk attendances average 15-25 and most talks are delivered by NMS staff. The talks planned for March 2018 include Doorways of Kings Lynn by Adrian Parker, South Gate by Oliver Bone, Gressenhall Workhouse by Megan Dennis and Kings Lynn Town Hall by Rachael Williams.
- 1.7 An enhanced programme of informal family learning events continue to be offered at the Lynn Museum for the school holiday periods. The Egyptian themed event in the February Half term received a total of 478 visitors, learning about the Egyptian way of life and death based upon the Museum's Egyptology collections. A programme of events throughout 2018 has been planned.
- 1.8 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 follow a range of different themes, with those children completing the trails receiving a small prize. During the Christmas holidays two trails were offered (Christmas (70 participants) and Paintings (61 participants))

and in the February Half Term an Egyptians trail (Spot the Scarab, 456 participants) was offered.

- 1.9 On 16 December the Lynn Museum supported a national scheme to offer enhanced access to those museums and other heritage sites which have received funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund as a thank you to lottery players. The Heritage Lottery Fund is keen to explore opportunities with benefactors to publicise the connections between playing the lottery and supporting good causes such as museums.
- 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. The 2018 edition of this piece of print is currently being designed. Facebook and Twitter are also used to publicise events as well as press releases to local media.
- 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 Pancakes and Romans. 30 people attended the January event (Romans) and the February event was officially cancelled due to snow and ice, although two people braved the elements and attended. The Lynn News published a complimentary letter following the January coffee morning.
- 1.12 Over this period the Museum team offered a tour to the King's Lynn U3A (20 visitors). And the Museum hosted the NNAB (for blind and partially sighted people) for their first meeting of the Heritage group. 14 people attended the talk, tour and handling session led by Melissa Hawker, Learning Officer.

2. Other Museum Developments

- 2.1 Seahenge, the Holme Bronze Age timber circle conserved and displayed at Lynn Museum is to feature in a regional BBCTV programme as part of the Civilizations series. Presenter Ray Mears was filmed in conversation with archaeological timber expert Maisie Taylor at Lynn Museum in February. The programme about the Bronze Age is due to be broadcast in the spring.
- 2.2 The Lynn Museum, partnership with the Google Cultural Institute, currently shows '*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 a strong collection of medieval pilgrim souvenirs and this was the subject of a study day at Lynn Museum in 2017.

- 2.3 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 2,223 followers while the Facebook account has 534 follows. The Museum contributed to social media campaigns by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the National Gallery and others including #ArtGold, #HeritageTreasures and #LoveWestNorfolk. There are plans to participate once more in the #MuseumWeek and the new #ScienceWeek events this year.
- 2.4 A team of collections volunteers continues to meet on a weekly basis in the NMS offices at Queen Street. Volunteers are engaged with a programme of work involving the scanning and cataloguing of the drawing collections by local artists and 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. Volunteers have also been assisting with the accessioning of new gifts to the Museum, compiling a 20th century history of the museum and collating useful information about collections for our catalogue.
- 2.5 The Museum's fortnightly *History of King's Lynn in 100 Objects* series with the Lynn News has generated significant interest. Recent artefacts featured include an Iron Age harness fitting, the King John cup, a medieval shoe, the painting of the King John cup and the map of King's Lynn by Wenceslaus Hollar.
- 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 museum's collection of Baines' works. Teaching Museum Trainee Sam Bellotti was a courier for the painting and safely brought the picture back to King's Lynn. An event in association with the museum Friends was held on Monday 18 December for its unveiling and about 30 people attended including representatives from the Friends of the Cemetery and Friends of King's Lynn Museum. Speakers at the event included Cllr Elizabeth Nockolds, the Mayor of King's Lynn and West Norfolk Cllr Carol Bower, the Chair of Friends Susan Thompson, Dr Paul Richards and Julia Brettell from the ACE / Victoria and Albert Museum Purchase Fund. Lynn Museum has received grants from the V&A towards purchases since 1961 when the Fund supported the acquisition of Fanny Burney's watch on display in the Main Gallery.
- 2.7 The partnership with the photography course at the College of West Anglia continues to develop with students assisting with new photography of collections and events.

- 2.8 Recent acquisitions at the Museum have included: trophies from the King's Lynn Art Club (founded in the 19th century), a 1960s desk calendar from Savages Engineers, a money box in the form of a King's Lynn cottage from the Custom House area, a small box of costume accessories from King's Lynn shop Catleughs, King's Lynn circus posters from 1848 and 1991, 4 postcards, a silver posy ring, brooch and a pierced coin of Queen Elizabeth, and a wood engraving of Trafalgar Square 1934 by King's Lynn artist Graham Dudley Page.

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 9 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 The unveiling event for the newly acquired painting by Henry Baines on 18 December was hosted by the Friends and staff are planning a Christmas social event as annual occasion for members.
- 3.5 A Junior Friends of Kings Lynn Museum scheme continues to be offered to encourage more young people to be involved.

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. Rachael Williams, Learning and Engagement Officer works with Melissa Hawker, Learning Officer and Dayna Woolbright, Assistant Curator on such aspects as school visits and temporary exhibitions.

- 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 is an exhibition about the King's Lynn Mart. Dayna has been supporting photography of the civic regalia and liaison with conservation staff. A training session on handling historic objects for the team at the Town Hall was recently offered.
- 4.5 Partnership working with the Borough Council on town centre events continues and NMS will once more be involved in the planning and delivery of the popular Second World War themed event *Forties Lynn: Life on the Home Front* on Sunday 22 July. The Lynn Museum will also be participating in the Heritage Open Day in September.
- 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 Borough Council, NMS staff have been working on the project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Borough Council and the Friends of the Walks 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 museum 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 the NMS Design & Technical team. Lighting and display improvements are planned for the next few months with an activities programme to stimulate interest during 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 As a 'spin off' from the South Gate project, a group has been set up led by civil war expert David Flintham to undertake a community archaeological investigation into the civil war defences between South Gate and the River. An initial meeting was held in January and it is hoped that work could start in the summer of 2019 if permissions and support can be obtained.
- 4.9 The Lynn Museum will open once more on Sundays from 12pm until 4pm for the 2018 season running from April until September. This additional opening is made possible by financial support from the Borough Council. Staff hope to repeat the offer of a Sunday joint ticket, available to visitors

of Stories of Lynn to also explore both the Custom House exhibition and the Lynn Museum. Previously, this has seen positive uptake.

- 4.10 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 as a 'pop-up venue' for recitals during the July Festival period.
- 4.11 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 colleagues at Priory House, King's Lynn for distribution to the young people.
- 4.12 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. In the summer of 2018 staff are hoping to work with a visiting Canadian academic and her students to improve documentation of the town's significant collection.

5 Learning & Outreach

- 5.1 During 2017-2018, the Lynn Museum has been 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. Sam Bellotti is the Lynn-based trainee this year, one of seven hosted by the Norfolk Museums Service as a whole. Amongst a range of other activities, he 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 Following a recruitment process with assessment days held at Norwich Castle a Teaching Museum Trainee has been appointed to join the Lynn Museum team for 2018-2019. Samantha Parker will be starting in April and she will be working at both the Lynn Museum and the Ancient House Museum of Thetford Life.
- 5.3 Joining Samantha will be two other trainees funded through the Norfolk *Coastal Treasures* project. In July 2017, Norfolk County Council was awarded funding from the Government's Coastal Communities Fund for this project to promote sustainable tourism and new ways of accessing the wealth of heritage interest in the coastal area between King's Lynn and Holme. The project will develop walking and cycling trails, aligned to the delivery of Stretch 4 of the long distance England Coast Path, and use new technologies to bring the heritage assets of this area to life. The Project team will be working with a range of partners and stakeholders to develop itineraries, deliver business workshops and create a wide range of promotional activities. The Trainees, based in the museum offices at the

Town Hall, will focus on key heritage assets of this area including the Holme timber circle known as Seahenge and the internationally important Iron Age finds from Snettisham.

5.4 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 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 NMS Learning Officer, Melissa Hawker, Museum Learning Assistants and freelance educators to help children investigate local history and archaeology.

5.5 The schools bookings for Lynn Museum also show the continued popularity of the toys programme. The museum continues to offer a flexible programme responding to teachers' needs – this has recently included developing one-off sessions on American Pioneers and Out of the Attic. The museum has 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.

5.6 School bookings for Lynn Museum are positive, with recent visits from Focus School (43), St Edmunds Academy (30), Gaywood Primary (58), St Martha's (30), Churchill Park (30), Howard Junior (52), Sandringham and West Newton (45), Unity Federation Academy (45), Great Massingham (53), Mart School (13), Nelson Academy (60). In addition there was a self guided visit from the College of West Anglia (11).

5.7 Recent partnership work with the Stories of Lynn project at the Town Hall has included a number of joint sessions for schools exploring the town's heritage.

5.8 During the autumn, Melissa Hawker, Learning Officer offered training for the Museum Learning Assistant team at Lynn Museum in delivering sessions for schools and for informal learning events. She has continued to mentor and support staff as the Learning Assistants take on more of the direct delivery of sessions.

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

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