

King's Lynn and West Norfolk Area Museums Committee

The Committee has met several times, including at the Lynn Museum, where members were able to inspect exhibits including new acquisitions.

In terms of collections the museums service has made several acquisitions, chief amongst which is a painting by Baines of Lynn's Hardwick Cemetery when it had first opened, showing the now demolished chapels. This had to be purchased from the USA, which thanks to grants and the Friends of the Museum was managed. The new apprentice Sam was sent to collect it, owing to its age the painting had to be conserved before it could travel across the Atlantic. The apprentices have become a regular part of the museum's life, organising exhibits in particular in the changing display case in the entrance, and past apprentices have gone on to good careers in the sector.

Free opening at Lynn Museum, funded by the Borough, continues until the end of March. Members are strongly encouraged to visit and view the museum, the latest exhibition is on shoes which includes medieval shoes and detail on why people placed them in walls being built and go up to such items as platform shoes which have provoked a good number of reminiscences!

The Committee has been shown various aspects of the museum staff's work, perhaps the most enthusiastically received was "cake henge" which has been used to illustrate to younger visitors how henges were constructed, and as ever food-based learning proved rather popular with both young and old.

Friends of the museum have done well, and a group of willing volunteers continue to help with digitising the collection's drawings etc, undertaken at Aikman's yard. The members of the committee were given a tour of the storage facilities there, being able to inspect the various items stored, these include a considerable taxidermy and painting collection, farming tools, domestic equipment, parts from locally made bombs (non-dangerous) and historic weaponry. The main complaint was that we couldn't spend longer there. The use of digital technology is excellent at making these otherwise inaccessible exhibits visible to both local people whose taxes support them, and people worldwide.

Visitor numbers began to decline over the past year, rather than bemoan this the staff set about organising an ad campaign and promoting the museum, which has had success in improving visitor numbers and has shown a good attitude.

Stories of Lynn remains open and a joint ticket is available for it and Lynn Museum, which has proven popular. The newly refurbished museum has rather improved the presentation of the collections and visitor comments have been enthusiastic.

True's Yard has continued well, the museum's exhibitions have been excellent, and the silver jubilee appeal has been used both to help secure its' future and to ensure that the fishing smack Activity of 1904 is conserved.

Councillor Thomas Smith

March 2018