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

**30 September 2019**

**Item No.**

**KING'S LYNN MUSEUMS REPORT**

**Report by the Assistant Head of Museums**

**This report provides information on King's Lynn  
Museum activities in the period from June 2019 to  
August 2019**

**1. Temporary exhibitions and events at Lynn Museum**

- 1.1 The current exhibition at Lynn Museum is *Journeys, People, Place and Pilgrimage*. The exhibition was opened by Mayor of King's Lynn and West Norfolk, Cllr Geoffrey Hipperson on Friday 21 June. The event received good publicity, with museum staff being interviewed by Jill Bennett for Radio Norfolk and pieces appearing in the local papers. It connects with - and is funded by - projects and partnerships led by the Norfolk County Council's Environment team exploring the themes of Green Pilgrimage and Coastal Treasures. Funding for the Green Pilgrimage project is derived from the ERDF Interreg programme and for the Coastal Treasures project from the Coastal Communities Fund. The exhibition draws upon the museum's rich collections relating to West Norfolk including the nationally significant historic collection of pilgrim badges found in King's Lynn's River Purfleet. These badges include a number of medieval lead souvenirs from the important shrine at Walsingham. Additional pilgrim badges have been loaned from the Peter Sibley Collection at Walsingham and also Oscott College, Birmingham, with grateful thanks to the trustees of these organisations. Other exhibits include a feature on the railway journey to Hunstanton for holidaymakers and the display of a knitted bathing costume from the Museum's costume and textile collections, alongside other elements relating to journeys to and from Norway and the Arctic. One of the Interreg project European partners from the Green Pilgrimage project is shown on one graphic panels holding items of medieval Grimston Ware from North West Norfolk that had been traded to Norway and Sweden and found in archaeological excavations. There will be a Green Pilgrimage Interreg project partner visit to Norfolk in September and the group plans to visit King's Lynn on the 11-12 September 2019.

- 1.2 The previous major exhibition at Lynn Museum was *Animal ABC: from Ammonite to Zebra*. The exhibition was primarily aimed at a family audience and drew upon collections from, or inspired by, the natural world. *Animal ABC* was co-curated with the Curator of Natural History for Norfolk Museums Service (NMS). Preparation of objects for display and installation of artefacts was undertaken by NMS conservators and 3D design of the show was by the NMS Design team, working closely with Lynn Museum staff. Items exhibited within this multi-disciplinary exhibition included natural history specimens, geology, toys, textile items and ephemera relating to household products. *Animal ABC* opened to the public in 2018 and ran until June 2019. In association with the exhibition, the museum team worked with the NMS Retail Manager to ensure a suitable range of animal related stock was available for sale in the museum shop.
- 1.3 In the summer of 2020 Lynn Museum will mark the bicentenary of the birth of Thomas Baines with an exhibition exploring the King's Lynn born artist brothers Thomas and Henry Baines, drawing upon the significant body of their work in the Museum collections. Henry Baines painted a number of local scenes in the second half of the 19th century, including a number of buildings that have since been demolished. These paintings form an interesting social history record of King's Lynn and the local area as well as having considerable aesthetic value. A list of works by Henry Baines in public ownership, mainly at King's Lynn can be found at: <https://artuk.org/discover/artists/baines-henry-18231894>
- 1.4 The Lynn Museum is currently showing a selection of items kindly loaned by the Trustees of the British Museum from the famous Iron Age Snettisham hoard, the largest collection of such Iron Age gold, silver and bronze objects in Europe. The display has generated additional visitors and has received interest from the local papers and radio. The Lynn Museum Curator gave a Radio Norfolk interview about the display. Also interviewed was a relative of the finder of the Great Torc. The display opened in March 2019 and runs through until 15 September 2019 (Heritage Open Day).
- 1.5 The Lynn Museum reception area display case remains a useful space in which to create changing displays and to showcase items from store that are not usually on display, thereby encouraging repeat visits. Following the Snettisham Treasure display, there are plans to continue exploring the themes of Journeys and Coastal Treasures.
- 1.6 The Lynn Museum continues to offer a programme of Wednesday afternoon talks using a format of short seasons of themed talks, with four in March and four in October. The October talks programme includes talks connected to the Journeys theme. Forthcoming talks include: 2 October – Susan Maddock '*On both sides of the sea, on water and on land*': the life and travels of Margery Kempe of Lynn; 9

October – Ken Hill *Journeys to the Antarctic 1956-1957*; 16th October – Alison Gifford *Meet the Vancouvers*; 23 October – Oliver Bone *Medieval Pilgrim Souvenirs*; 30th October – Paul Richards *The Port of Lynn: From Medieval to Modern*. Attendances for talks are normally in the range 25-30.

- 1.7 An enhanced programme of informal family learning events continues to be offered at the Lynn Museum during the school holiday periods. Over the summer holidays these have covered the themes of Romans and Celts (48), 1953 Floods (21), Anglo-Saxons and Vikings (79), Seahenge (39), Pilgrimage (40). For the October Half Term, the Discovery Day will be on an Edwardian Seaside theme to link to the *Journeys* exhibition.
- 1.8 Lynn Museum joined other museums and attractions around the county to mark *Norfolk Day* on 27 July. 107 people visited the museum that day including eight who came to hear Jack Davidson's talk on the Peddars Way and the Norfolk Coast path. Jack works with the NCC Trails team and the museum team worked with him as part of the Coastal Treasures project.
- 1.9 During the school holidays the Lynn Museum continues to offer a popular programme of themed gallery discovery trails, with a new trail developed by the museum team available for each week of the school holidays. The trails use different themes each time and children completing this activity receive a small prize. Over the summer holidays 2019, 255 children's trails were completed, an average of 51 per week.
- 1.10 The Lynn Museum continues to host monthly *Coffee, Cake and Collections* "coffee morning" style events for adults, including those who are isolated or those who would not normally be confident enough to visit the museum. Each session explores a different aspect of the collections.
- 1.11 The Lynn Museum's monthly *Mini Museum* club aimed at under 5s is proving popular. The group meets on the second Tuesday of the month and the club has run throughout 2019 with an average of 10-11 children at each session (plus accompanying adults). This activity forms part of a developing Early Years offer across NMS.
- 1.12 To publicise the museum's events programme and enhance visitor numbers, the Museum uses a variety of media. The 2019 version of the *History in Your Hands* event flier was distributed to local schools. It is also available through a number of local attractions and businesses. Facebook and Twitter are also used to publicise events as well as press releases to local media.

## 2. Other Museum Developments

- 2.1 The Lynn Museum's partnership with the Google Cultural Institute currently includes the online exhibition *Blubber, Bone and Baleen*, exploring the history of the whaling industry using collections from Lynn Museum. Staff are working on a new online exhibition on the theme of *Shoes* drawing upon content from a previous temporary exhibition.
- 2.2 The Lynn Museum continues to develop its social media presence, with Twitter and Facebook accounts being actively used and maintained by staff. The Lynn Museum accounts continue to grow with the Twitter account having 2,621 followers while the Facebook account has 736 follows. On Twitter, the Museum included a series of Tweets connected to LGBTQ+ history. On Facebook there have been a number of posts using the *History of Kings Lynn in 100 Objects* theme.
- 2.3 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 and collating useful information about these collections for the catalogue.
- 2.4 The Museum's fortnightly *Picture This* column focuses on local drawings, engravings and paintings. Examples of published works have included a portrait of Frederick Savage, Lynn from the South West by Walter Dexter and a lithograph of an address for Samuel Gurney Cresswell.
- 2.5 Both Lynn Museum and Stories of Lynn have started to play a significant part in the NMS-wide *Kick the Dust: Norfolk* project. This is an important 4 year project supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, with match-funding support from the borough council. The project is targeted at young people aged 11-25 years of age with specific focus on young people who face significant barriers to participation in heritage and arts activities. This includes harder to reach groups of young people: care leavers, children who are looked after, refugees and YMCA clients. The *Kick the Dust* project aims to work with 8,000 young people between July 2018 and June 2022 working in consortium with Creative Collisions and YMCA (Norfolk). Designed by young people for young people the project offers the chance to take part in a range of exciting activities and events inspired by the vast collections and objects held by NMS as well as structured work placements and work awareness opportunities which will support the development of work related skills as well as open young peoples' eyes to the range of job roles within the heritage sector. Each young

person will be supported in developing their own unique pathway which meets their needs and interests and which in turn will help shape the future of the Museums Service in attracting more young people in the future. As well as taking part in a range of activities the young people will have the opportunity to gain a 'behind the scenes' understanding of museums and how they operate. They could find themselves working in a team to host an event or put on an exhibition; learn how to display and mount work; produce a tour; developing the social media around such an event; be involved in 'Take Over days'. In addition, all young people will be able to gain accredited skills and training through the Arts Award programme. Young people will have the opportunity for progression through the project, engaging with different levels of activity characterised as "Player-Shaper-Leader".

- 2.6 Current *Kick the Dust* projects in King's Lynn include establishing a regular forum for young people running out of Lynn Museum and Stories of Lynn museums, with a group of young people now attending weekly. Working with the College of West Anglia the group have made a heritage film for the South Gate. For a Queer History project, young people from Thetford's Ancient House's Teenage History Club came to Lynn Museum to mark LGBT History Month, researching the collections and leading tours. The tours built on the Teenage History Club's *Rainbow Pride* project and *Pride of the People: Helping History Out of the Closet* exhibition which ran at the Ancient House Museum. A pop-up touring version of the exhibition was shown at Lynn Museum in the summer.
- 2.7 Up to the end of July 2019, 2,907 young people had participated in 1,515 hours of high quality *Kick the Dust: Norfolk* activities. There have been 484 interventions with YMCA clients.
- 2.8 Former Curator of the Lynn Museum, Sophia Hankinson (nee Mottram) died in August 2019 at the age of 89. Mrs Hankinson was curator from April 1957 until 1974. She made a considerable contribution to the preservation and interpretation of King's Lynn's heritage and also to the cultural life of the town including high profile exhibitions, support for the town centre archaeological excavations of the 1960s, new acquisitions and a complete refurbishment of the 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 Annual fundraising lecture on 18 September 2019 will be *Digging Sedgeford: A People's Archaeology* by Gary Rossin.

- 3.3 The Friends of King's Lynn 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.
- 3.4 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 delivery of NMS services in King's Lynn & West Norfolk continues to operate under the terms of the current Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the Borough Council. Under an extension to this agreement, NMS continues to provide curatorial and conservation advice, support and an enquiry service for those Borough collections currently held in the Town Hall including fine art and Civic Regalia.
- 4.2 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 SLA between the Borough Council and NMS.
- 4.3 NMS continues to support the Borough Council with the delivery of learning activities at Stories of Lynn in King's Lynn Town Hall, including management of the Stories of Lynn Learning & Engagement Officer. The postholder Rachael Williams works closely with colleagues from the Borough Council and the Norfolk Record Office. Funding from the Borough Council has enabled this post to continue for a further 12 months from the ending of National Lottery Heritage Fund funding in November 2018.
- 4.4 Partnership working with the Borough Council on events continues and the NMS is once more involved in the planning and delivery of the Second World War themed town-wide event *Forties Lynn: Life on the Home Front* on 21 July 2019. The Forties Lynn event was again well received, with 522 visitors to Lynn Museum. NMS will also participate in the town-wide Heritage Open Day in September 2019.
- 4.5 The Lynn Museum is once more opening on Sunday afternoons from 12pm until 4pm until the end of September 2019. This additional opening is made possible by financial support from the Borough Council. A Sunday joint ticket, available to visitors of Stories of Lynn to also explore both the Custom House exhibition and the Lynn Museum is also available.
- 4.6 NMS is continuing to work in partnership with the King's Lynn Festival in 2019 to follow up four years of successful partnership working. The Lynn Museum serves as a 'pop-up venue' for recitals during the July Festival period. 14 visitors attended this year's pop-up recital. Further collaborations are being delivered through a programme of exhibitions

in the Fermoy Gallery as part of the Festival extension weekends in April and October 2019, with NMS working in partnership with the King's Lynn Festival, Norfolk & Norwich Festival and the NCC Arts Service to curate a three show programme funded through the New Anglia LEP *Look Sideways East* project. The summer Festival exhibition was *Gustav Metzger: Destroy, and You Create* which ran from 29 June 2019 - 3 August 2019. The exhibition celebrated the town's connections with radical political artist Gustav Metzger (1926-2017), who lived and worked in King's Lynn between 1953-1960.

- 4.7 The Fermoy exhibitions are curated by the NMS Curator of Modern & Contemporary Art Dr Rosy Gray and draw on the rich NMS collections. The next show of modern and contemporary art from Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery will be entitled *Painting the Personal*. The exhibition – which will run from 2-24 November draws on the rich variety of figurative work in the collection, exploring how the human figure is integral to an understanding of place. There will be an informal tour of the exhibition with the curator Rosy Gray on 6 November. These exhibitions have all been supported by programmes of events for schools, children and adults developed and delivered by the Stories of Lynn Learning & Engagement Officer.

## 5 Learning & Outreach

- 5.1 During 2019-2020, the Lynn Museum is continuing to host a 12 month NMS Teaching Museum traineeship provided through the NMS *Teaching Museum* programme and funded through the Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation 2018-2022 NMS Business Plan. Current Trainee, Paula Murphy is based at both Lynn Museum and the Ancient House Museum in Thetford. Paula has been busy working on the *Journeys* exhibition, writing pieces for the Lynn News and social media. Paula will also be working on displays in the reception case. Her predecessor, Sam Parker finished her traineeship in April.
- 5.2 Lynn Museum has continued to work with local schools to deliver a broad range of formal learning sessions. The Seahenge and early history displays and themes remain popular with schools. School numbers for 2018-19 show an increase over the previous year. The NMS Learning Officer offers flexible bespoke workshops to suit teachers' needs. Recent examples have included sessions on Anglo-Saxons and Vikings, Flooding, Romans and Egyptians.
- 5.3 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, with a particular focus on flooding, Vancouver and Frederick Savage, with these sessions often using the archive as a 'jumping off' point for exploration. Successful co-working between NMS, Borough Archive staff, Lynn Museum and Stories of Lynn staff

has been supported by Work Experience students from the College of West Anglia.

## **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 National Portfolio Organisation under the terms of the current 2018-22 Business Plan. Project activities are funded from a range of external sources including the National Lottery Heritage 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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