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

8 January 2020

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 September
2019 – November 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 some 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 journeys to and from Norway and the Arctic. One of the Interreg project European partners from the Green Pilgrimage project is shown on one of the graphic panels holding some medieval Grimston Ware from North West Norfolk that had been traded to Norway and Sweden and found in archaeological excavations there.

- 1.2 There was a Green Pilgrimage Interreg project partner visit to Norfolk in September and the group visited King's Lynn on the 11-12 September 2019. They were impressed with the town and enjoyed a civic reception at the Town Hall as well as a visit to Lynn Museum. At the Museum staff showed the group around and Dr Michael Lewis from the British Museum gave a talk about pilgrim badges in Norfolk.
- 1.3 In the summer of 2020 Lynn Museum will mark the bicentenary of the birth of Thomas Baines with an exhibition about his life and work. Baines was a prolific artist, writer, traveller and collector. He spent much of his life in southern Africa where he painted scenes of life at the time including a record of the colonisation of the area by the British, landscapes and wildlife. He was the first European to paint Victoria Falls, he accompanied Livingstone on the Zambesi river expedition and was a war artist in the Frontier War between the British and the Xhosa people. He also accompanied Gregory on an expedition in northern Australia as artist and storekeeper. The Museum has five oil paintings by Thomas Baines and a collection of drawings and watercolours including two sketchbooks of watercolours made when he was a teenager. In addition, there is a collection of world cultures artefacts and specimens from his travels in Africa and Australia. The curatorial team is seeking partners to work on this project and has made some initial contacts as part of Arts Council England's Creative Case for Diversity agenda.
- 1.4 The Lynn Museum showed a selection of items loaned by the Trustees of the British Museum from the Iron Age Snettisham hoard, the largest collection of such Iron Age gold, silver and bronze objects in Europe. The display generated additional visitors and received interest from the local papers and radio. The display opened in March 2019 and ran 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 was a display featuring Samuel Gurney Cresswell and a display created by the NMS Teaching Museum Trainees.
- 1.6 The Lynn Museum continues to offer a programme of Wednesday afternoon talks, following a format of short seasons of themed talks. The October talks programme included talks by Susan Maddock, Ken Hill, Alison Gifford, Oliver Bone and Paul Richards. 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 October Half Term, the Discovery Day was on an Edwardian Seaside theme to link to the Journeys exhibition.

- 1.8 Lynn Museum joined other museums and attractions around the country to say thank you to National Lottery ticket holders on 30 November as part of a promotion with National Lottery Heritage Fund. sites such as Lynn Museum that have benefit from Lottery funding offered free activities to ticket holders. Lynn Museum offered a Christmas event including a visit to Father Christmas in his grotto (located in the replica Seahenge circle).
- 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.
- 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 5’s is proving popular. The group meets on the second Tuesday of the month and the club has run throughout 2019 with an average of 10-15 children at each session (plus accompanying adults). This activity forms part of an increasing 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 2020 programme has been put together by staff and will be included in the 2020 version of the *History in Your Hands* event flier for distribution 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 included the online exhibition *Blubber, Bone and Baleen*, exploring the history of the whaling industry using collections from Lynn Museum.
- 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 2,682 followers while the Facebook account has 854 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 teams 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 in the Lynn News continues, with a focus on local drawings, engravings and paintings.
- 2.5 Lynn Museum and Stories of Lynn have started to play a significant part in the NMS-wide *Kick the Dust: Norfolk* project. This is a four 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.
- Kick the Dust* headline participation data to the end of October 2019:
- 3,580 young people have engaged in 2,063 hours of high quality activities across the county
 - 46.% aged 11-15; 45.8% aged 16-21; 7.7% aged 22-25
 - 43.3% female and 40% male, 10.7% non-binary (6% unknown)
 - 161 young people have carried out a volunteering role
 - 533 interventions have been with YMCA clients
 - 45% of project total target number
- 2.6 Current *Kick the Dust* projects in King's Lynn include the establishment of a regular forum for young people running out of Lynn Museum and Stories of Lynn museums, with young people now attending weekly. An update on progress with the *Kick the Dust* project will be given at this meeting.
- 2.7 The Lynn Museum and Learning Officer and Archivist at Stories of Lynn completed a first aid training course in November. This is part of a regular programme of staff training to help ensure staff and public safety. As a follow up, the responsible officer at the Borough Council

was able to show the team the defibrillator available in case of emergency in the bus station

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 was *Digging Sedgford: 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 is running 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 the HLF-funded Stories of Lynn project focussed on King's Lynn Town Hall. NMS manages the Stories of Lynn Learning & Engagement Officer post. The postholder Rachael Williams works closely with colleagues from the Borough Council and the Norfolk Record Office. Additional funding from the Borough Council has enabled this post to continue beyond the HLF funding period, currently until August 2020.
- 4.4 Partnership working with the Borough Council on events continues and the NMS once more participated in the town-wide Heritage Open Day on 15 September 2019. The Lynn Museum attracted 711 visitors on that Sunday.

- 4.5 The Lynn Museum once more opened on Sunday afternoons from 12pm until 4pm to the end of September 2019. This additional summer 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. Collaborations have been 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.
- 4.7 These Fermoy exhibitions are curated by the NMS Curator of Modern & Contemporary Art Dr Rosy Gray and draw on NMS collections. In November 2019 there was an exhibition of modern and contemporary art from Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery entitled *Painting the Personal*. The exhibition – which ran from 2-23 November 2019 drew on the rich variety of figurative work in the collection, exploring how the human figure is integral to an understanding of place. There was an informal tour of the exhibition with the curator 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.
- 4.8 The curatorial team at Lynn Museum is supporting the development of the 2020 Festival exhibition at the Fermoy including assessing objects from the museum collections for possible inclusion. The King's Lynn Festival will be celebrating its 70th anniversary in 2020 and there will be a retrospective element to the summer exhibition. Items assessed include King's Lynn glass and an abstract sculpture by Ernst Eisenmayer purchased for the museum by the Friends of Kings Lynn Museum from a Festival exhibition in the 1960s.
- 4.9 The curatorial team has also been supporting the Borough Council with the completion of the National Lottery Heritage Fund funded South Gate project, including the content and design of two external interpretive panels.
- 4.10 NMS Assistant Curator, Dayna Woolbright leads on supporting the Borough Council and Festival Office on collections management advice and support. Recent contributions have included arrangements for the conservation of the portrait of Lady Fermoy, the conservation of the Guildhall models, the conservation of the Festival portrait photograph collection and the cleaning of the historic chandeliers at the Town Hall.

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 forthcoming Baines exhibition, writing pieces for the Lynn News, social media, and she has been working on changing displays in the reception case.
- 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. The NMS Learning Officer offers flexible bespoke workshops to suit teachers' needs. Recent examples have included sessions on Anglo-Saxons and Vikings, Flooding, Romans, Toys and Games, Victorians 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. These sessions often use the archive collections as a 'jumping off' point for exploration. A recent school visit on a world war two theme involved children learning about the period at Lynn Museum, Stories of Lynn and the Air Raid shelter.

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

Originator of report:

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