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

13 December 2021 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 October to
November 2021**

1. COVID-19 Service update

1.1 Following periods of closure caused by the Coronavirus pandemic, Lynn Museum reopened to the public on 17 May 2021. Full safety measures have been put in place including hand sanitising facilities, additional ventilation and clearly signed routes. Staff have been trained in safe systems of working to operate the museum safely, including implementation of additional cleaning measures. Staff are provided with any identified PPE and a protective screen has been installed at the museum reception. Visits can be pre-booked using timed tickets available from the Art Tickets website. To accommodate social distancing, site visitor capacity has been reduced.

1.2 All Norfolk Museums Service (NMS) museums closed to visitors on 19 March 2020 as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic. The majority of NMS non frontline staff have been working remotely from home since this time. Following a phased COVID-secure reopening of four NMS museum sites including Norwich Castle during July and August 2020, all NMS closed again from 5 November 2020 as part of the second national lockdown. Following the announcement that Norfolk would be in Tier 2, three NMS sites reopened to the public on Thursday 3 December 2020. These sites were Norwich Castle, Time & Tide Museum and Lynn Museum, with the seasonal site at Gressenhall remaining closed until the start of the 2021 season. Following the announcement that Norfolk would be in Tier 4 from Boxing Day, all NMS sites closed again with effect from 24 December 2020. Following the government announcement that indoor museums could reopen from 17 May 2021 as part of Roadmap Step 3, seven NMS sites reopened to visitors in the week beginning 17 May. These sites were Norwich Castle, the Museum of Norwich, Lynn Museum, Time & Tide

Museum, the Elizabethan House Museum, Cromer Museum and Gressenhall Farm & Workhouse (outdoor areas at Gressenhall had reopened on 12 April under Step 2). Subsequently, museum reopenings have taken place at Ancient House Museum and Strangers' Hall. All legal restrictions specific to museums were removed by the Government with effect from 19 July 2021 (Step 4).

- 1.3** Legal restrictions relating to the wearing of face coverings in specific settings were reintroduced by the Government on 30 November 2021. These legal restrictions apply to retail areas within museums. From 30 November 2021 Norfolk County Council made the wearing of face coverings a requirement for all visitors to NCC premises, including museums.
- 1.4** Many COVID-secure systems and procedures remain in place across NMS sites, with a focus on keeping staff and visitors safe through minimising the risk of transmission. Visitors are being requested (rather than legally required) to follow these procedures. The key changes to NMS procedures include:
- The wearing of face coverings by visitors and staff is now required, unless visitors are exempt
 - 2m social distancing is no longer a legal requirement. Visitors are instead being requested to abide by “respectful distancing” from other visitors and staff
 - Test & Trace venue check-in is now advisory rather than a legal requirement
 - The pre-booking of tickets is no longer a requirement, but is now recommended. Walk-in visits are permitted where there is sufficient site capacity
 - Site capacity limits have been increased (previously averaging 30% of normal capacity) and pre-booked ticket slots adjusted to accommodate an overall increase in visitor numbers.
 - Priority on-site activities have resumed including delivery to schools and young people. Some on-site public events have also resumed. All such activities are still the subject of strict COVID-19 procedures, with Safe Systems of Work being created to protect staff and visitors.
- 1.5** In terms of the COVID-19 procedures and systems that remain in place across NMS sites, the priorities remain:
- Ventilation – maintaining existing ventilation arrangements to maximise fresh air flow including supplementary air purifiers at relevant sites
 - Cleaning regimes – maintaining enhanced cleaning arrangements including toilets and regular touch points
 - Hand sanitisation – maintaining existing sanitiser stations and encourage regular hand sanitisation/hand washing. Additional hand sanitiser stations are being introduced where required (e.g. near reactivated interactives)
- 1.6** Many museum activities and services, including general visits and school visits, have been severely impacted due to COVID-19. NMS staff have

been involved in supporting key work relating to the Norfolk County Council's (NCC) COVID-19 response, including helping to coordinate volunteer activities, managing the distribution of food and medicine to residents who needed this support, and making telephone calls to identified vulnerable residents. NMS staff have also been helping with other COVID response work including supporting the work of the NHS and the NCC Trading Standards and Registrars' teams.

- 1.7 Throughout the pandemic, NMS staff have developed a broad range of digital resources to support audiences, including resources for children and families. Digital engagement included a significant expansion of social media activity. Resources continue to be made available for those in digital poverty or without ready access to digital content.
- 1.8 The enormous range of NMS activity during the period of COVID-19 disruption continues to be captured in the weekly *Museums Mardle* staff e-newsletter. A reminder that members of the committee can be added to this distribution list on request.
- 1.9 The reopening of museum sites during 2020 and 2021 followed the implementation of strict COVID-19 safety procedures that were reviewed and signed-off by the NCC Health & Safety and Wellbeing team. Reopening also took place in accordance with sector-specific guidance issued by the National Museums Directors Council and in liaison with the English Civic Museums Network.
- 1.10 Staff training has taken place at all NMS sites in advance of reopening. Staff are provided with any identified PPE and protective screens remain in place at key points. Enhanced staffing levels ensure that visitors can be provided with the necessary level of support and advice. Refresher training for staff took place in advance of the reopening of museum sites.
- 1.11 During periods of site closure, all NMS sites were the subject of regular premises, security and collections condition checks. Statutory maintenance continued, as did essential construction and maintenance works, with strict COVID-19 management procedures in place.
- 1.12 Since 4 October 2021 and in line with NCC practice at office hubs, an increased number of non-frontline NMS staff have returned to the workplace, with strict COVID-19 protocols in place. NMS has also implemented NCC Smarter Working principles across teams, which identify patterns of home and office-based working on a team and individual staff member level.

2 Exhibitions and events at Lynn Museum

2.1 Thomas Baines: Art Exploration and Empire

Lynn Museum has marked the bicentenary of King's Lynn artist Thomas Baines with a special exhibition about his life and work. Born on 27

November 1820, Baines was a prolific artist, writer, traveller and collector. He spent much of his adult 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, alongside views of 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 exhibition's run was extended for an additional three months because of the periods of closure caused by the pandemic. It closed on 2 October 2021.

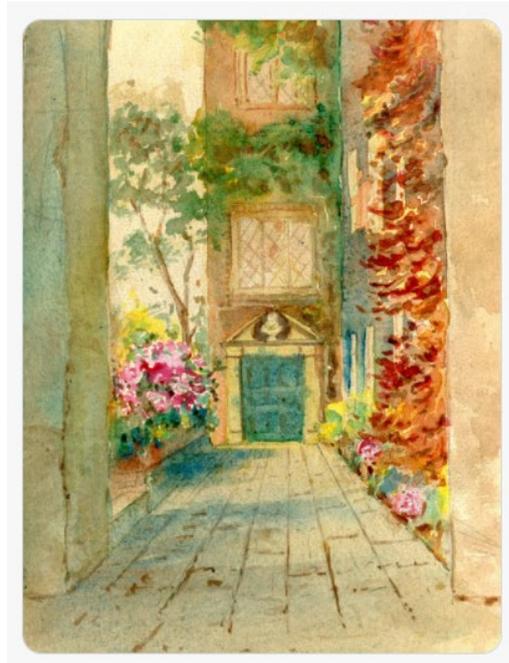


Elephant Hunt painting by Thomas Baines forming part of the recent exhibition at Lynn Museum which closed on 2 October.

2.2 Gardens, Sowing Seeds, Growing Stories exhibition

This new exhibition opened on 16 October 2021 and will run until 12 June 2022. The displays tell the story of gardens and gardening in the King's Lynn area, including the display of collections from the Taylor's seed merchants business in the town and material relating to the Walks and other public gardens.

In the main gallery at Lynn Museum, the shop display has been changed into a new display about the Taylors seed shop. The museum team has made a new film of recollections by Jim and Bob Taylor which forms part of the display. Exhibition themes include garden wildlife (including some of the museum's taxidermy collection), *Dig for Victory*, allotments, things found in the garden, and things inspired by gardens.



Tawny owl, and watercolour of the garden at Clifton House by Christopher Thomas Page, two of the exhibits in the latest Gardens exhibition at Lynn Museum

456 people took the opportunity to visit Lynn Museum over the half-term holiday to visit the new exhibition. Many of these visitors attended as family groups, with 109 children enjoying a special Garden Family Trail.



Above: Tweet from the Lynn Museum feed promoting the new *Gardens: Sowing Seeds, Growing Stories* exhibition, which opened in October



Insect specimens from the museum collections on display in the Gardens exhibition at Lynn Museum

2.3 *Lull* – a new audio walk for winter

Linked to the launch of the *Gardens* exhibition, Lynn Museum is also partnering with the Norfolk & Norwich Festival to provide an innovative new way to explore nature in King's Lynn. *Lull* is an audio walk for winter, exploring how plants, animals and fungi survive the darkest months.

To take part people use a smartphone and a special *Lull* pack. The packs are available to purchase from Lynn Museum, and feature a downloadable immersive audio track by artists French and Mottershead, plus maps, charts and anecdotes to help users uncover the hidden secrets of nature in King's Lynn. The *Wonder Walk*, which is now on sale, is one of three that the Festival is presenting across the county, part of a Norfolk County Council autumn and winter tourism initiative. Guided walks by the artists for young people and also for a more general audience are planned for 4 December.



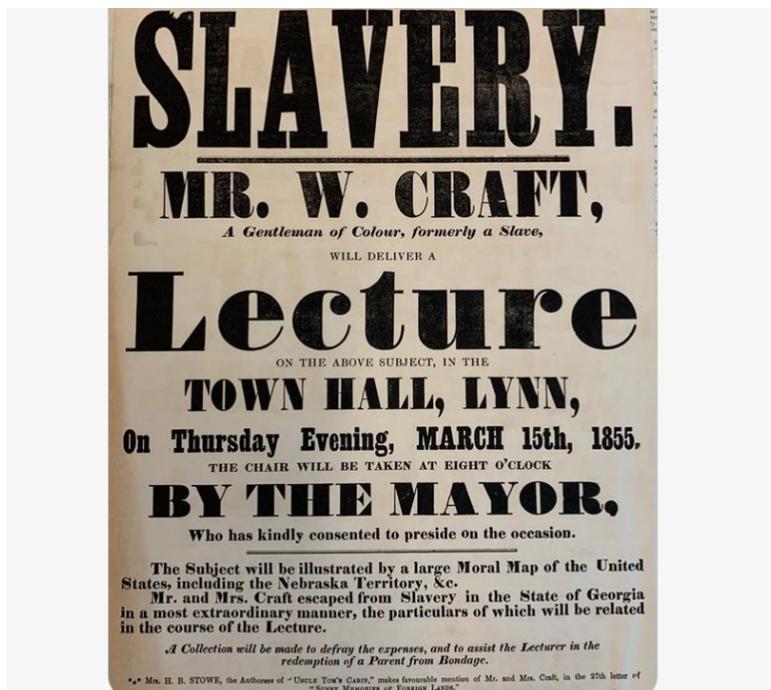
Lull – artists packs available at Lynn Museum

2.4 Black Abolitionists pop-up display and talks programme



Black Abolitionist Lecturers temporary display at Lynn Museum

A temporary display at Lynn Museum explored the story of Black Abolitionist Lecturers in Norfolk. The display was on show from 6-16 October 2021. In addition to the exhibition at the museum, a series of on-line talks were given on 12 October about Black Abolitionist William Wells Brown and on 14 October about Benjamin Benson. The panel display went on the Millennium Library in Norwich after its time at Lynn Museum.



Poster (left) in the museum's collection advertising a lecture in King's Lynn given by William Craft one of the Black Abolitionists who visited Norfolk to share their experience as enslaved people in 19th century America

3 Other Museum developments

3.1 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 3,268 followers while the Facebook account has 1.1k followers. Examples of social media campaigns have included *#DisabilityHistoryMonth* *#OnThisDay* and *#OnlineArtExchange*.



Shown above is an example of a Lynn Museum tweet linked to a theme – this example features a painting in the museum collection by Edward Gosling of the Ruskin School in Heacham. This was shared as part of Disability History Month. Gosling was born with no arms and painted the picture with his feet.

- 3.2 On-site volunteering has been paused since March 2020 due to limitations in room capacity arising from the need to maintain strict ventilation controls to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.
- 3.3 As well as digital delivery, the museum has maintained strong links with local media outlets including the *Lynn News*. Staff continue to contribute to a fortnightly *Picture This* column, with a focus on local drawings, engravings and paintings.
- 3.4 NMS Learning Officer Melissa Hawker has continued her regular slot for Radio Norfolk to discuss local history and promote forthcoming events.
- 3.5 Engagement work through the *Kick the Dust: Norfolk* project has continued with the young people via Zoom since the spring. Assistant Curator, Dayna Woolbright has worked with Stories of Lynn Learning & Engagement Officer Rachael Williams and the young people on several projects including creating a game about the Civil War and poster design.

4 Loan to the British Museum

- 4.1 Norfolk Museums Service is lending material to the British Museum for a Seahenge exhibit for their forthcoming major exhibition *World of*

Stonehenge which will run from 17 Feb to 17 July 2022. The exhibition will cover highlights from the Neolithic and Bronze Age of Britain, Ireland and north-west Europe. There are confirmed loans including the Nebra Sky Disc from Germany and several star loans from regional and national museums across Europe. Seahenge chimes with many of the themes to be explored in the exhibition: relationships with the natural world; cosmology; and community involvement in the past and the present.

- 4.2**A number of palisade timbers from the outer circle have now been safely packed and transported to London, with all relevant decant and additional conservation costs being paid for by the British Museum. NMS Conservator, Debbie Harris has overseen the care of the timbers and advised the British Museum team on their safe display.
- 4.3**This partnership with the BM is a significant opportunity for NMS and Lynn Museum to give prominence to Seahenge for an international audience.

5 Friends of King's Lynn Museums

- 5.1**The Museum Friends continue to offer valuable support to assist the Museum. The Friends committee is currently looking for new members to take the place of long serving committee members needing to step down. An appeal has been made for publicity in local media.

6 Partnerships

- 6.1**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.
- 6.2**NMS staff continue to support Borough Council colleagues with the development and delivery of relevant cultural and heritage project across the borough, including ongoing support for Towns Fund projects including the Guildhall.
- 6.3**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.
- 6.4**NMS continues to support the Borough Council with the delivery of the NLHF-funded *Stories of Lynn* project focussed on King's Lynn Town Hall. NMS manages the Stories of Lynn Learning & Engagement Officer post, which is co-funded by the Borough Council and the NLHF Kick the Dust: Norfolk project. The postholder Rachael Williams works closely with colleagues from the Borough Council and the Norfolk Record Office.

6.5 NMS Assistant Curator, Dayna Woolbright leads on supporting the Borough Council and Festival Office on collections management advice and support. Recent contributions have included advice on museum display maintenance at Stories, and assistance with the regular revaluation of the King's Lynn collections for insurance.

6.6 Studio Ceramics exhibition at Stories of Lynn

The Studio Ceramics exhibition at Stories of Lynn continues. The exhibits come from the NMS decorative art collections and the display has been curated by Dr Francesca Vanke, Senior Curator, NMS.

7 Learning & Outreach

7.1 During 2021 the Lynn Museum continued to host an 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. In October 2021 trainee Will Mars started a Kick The Dust Traineeship based at Lynn Museum. This traineeship is aimed at young people and helping them enter the museum profession.

7.2 Lynn Museum has seen much interest from local schools in visiting. In October and November 2021 over 650 school pupils visited the museum. Many of the sessions are bespoke and are linked to changes in the history curriculum. These sessions have included *Lighting through the Ages* and *How We Know About the Past*. A number of the sessions have linked up with Stories of Lynn at the Town Hall and also with the Learning team at King's Lynn Minster. Interest from schools in the months ahead remains strong.

8 Kick the Dust: Norfolk – project activity update

The Kick the Dust: Norfolk project, funded through the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) and delivered in partnership with a range of organisations including YMCA Norfolk, has continued to engage with young people aged 11-25 throughout the COVID-19 lockdown period. The project team have adapted their activities to support existing groups across Norfolk, in particular YMCA groups, using digital means.

From the start of the first national lockdown to 22 November 2021 there were a total of 4,516 interventions, involving 1,759 individual young people taking part in 2,035 hours of quality digital activity. Following the partial reopening and access to groups on site and in outdoor settings, the team has delivered 232 face to face sessions (36% of all delivery) with young people across the county, out of a total of 635 sessions delivered between May and November 2021.

Total engagement numbers for the project from October 2018 to 22 November 2021 are 10,588 interventions, involving 3,474 individual young people taking part in 5,167 hours of quality activity. Of these interventions, 252 volunteering opportunities have been provided to 104 individual young people.

Of this activity 5% has been at Pre-Player (introductory) level specifically designed for YMCA clients; 27% has been at Player (initial activity) level; 43% at Shaper (project development & delivery) level; and 25% at Leader (leadership) level. Of these activities, 70% involve young people in leading and designing projects as well as acting as mentors to staff and other young people through the Digital Buddies and Peer Mentoring programmes.

Since October 2018, the breakdown of project activity taking place in each NMS area: 47% in the West (covering Kings Lynn, Thetford and Gressenhall), 30% in the East (covering Great Yarmouth, Cromer and Sheringham) and 23% in Norwich.

Throughout lockdown, project staff have continued to develop and deliver an online training offer for all staff and volunteers who support youth engagement in NMS. In total 220 staff have taken part in training since October 2018, with 129 of these opportunities having taken part during lockdown.

Training allows our young volunteers and staff to work together and share best practice, something that will continue post lockdown. Key areas which staff and volunteers had identified for future training have been incorporated into this year's training plan and included a joint venture between the YMCA and Kick the Dust on a new interview preparation programme entitled You're Hired! for young people who may wish to progress onto the next cohort of the Bursary traineeship programme or into other employment. All places were filled on each of the sessions for young people and volunteers. Delivery of a new training offer was rolled out from October 2021. As the team have opened up opportunities to volunteers, a further 18 young volunteers have taken part in training including freelancer training workshops. These workshops enable young people to set up as freelancers in the future.

The Digital Buddy programme continues to expand with 6 young people supporting 5 Norwich based curators and the Events and Visitor Programme Manager for Norwich Castle with social media.

NMS and NCC continue to work together through the 'Making Creative Futures' group; its sub-groups the 'Norfolk Creative Collective'. The group has developed a new offer to support parents in developing their own creativity and communication skills to engage with their children in a more meaningful way and continues to play a key part in the delivery of activity as part of the DfE funded Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) project. The

'Adult Creativity' offer will follow the model that has been successfully used in the West with parents of children on the YOT programme.

Kick the Dust was set up as a three-stage journey (Player-Shaper-Leader), with young people developing transferable work-related skills and gaining experiences that they would struggle to find elsewhere, supporting them in securing employment. Staff have seen young people move through the programme, gaining the confidence to take on volunteering roles within NMS, with others securing their first job through the Government's Kick Start 6 month placement programme; three young people progressing onto the Kick the Dust Bursary traineeship programme who are set to complete their Level 3 Diploma in Cultural Heritage and two others who have taken up positions within NMS Front of House teams. Three young people currently sit on the Project Steering Group.

Take up continues to expand through the establishment of new partnerships with schools, colleges, NCC Children's Services and other cultural organisations. The launch of the new Kick the Dust web pages on the NMS site will support this growth and solidify the way NMS approaches youth engagement going forward – see:

<https://www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk/join-and-support/kick-the-dust>

Evaluation evidence shows that the programme has made a significant impact on young people and staff engaging in activity. As the project team moves to more face to face delivery, this impact will be greater as more staff engage in the co-delivery of activity and see the benefits to their own development.

Breakdown of Kick the Dust project participants

This has changed considerably since lockdown due to the high number of YMCA clients project staff have been engaging with through the enhanced digital offer.

- 7% aged 11-13 years
- 11% aged 14-16 years
- 30% aged 17-19 years
- 26% aged 20-22 years
- 26% aged 23-25 years

Data is collected around ethnicity through the Young People's Feedback form (should they choose to answer this question) and is based on the descriptions used by NLHF:

Breakdown of ethnicity:

- Asian – 3%
- Black - 0.5%
- Irish Traveller – 0.5%
- Mixed ethnic – 4%
- White – 92%

Those identifying as having a disability which can be a barrier to engagement:

- Disabled – 20%
- Non-disabled – 26%
- Prefer not to say – 54%

Target audiences (some young people fall into more than one category)

- YMCA clients – 35%
- Secondary schools – 35%
- FE/HE – 35%
- Young people with mental health issues – 17%
- Outside of mainstream education – 6%
- Young Offenders at those at risk of offending – 3%
- Looked after children and adopted living at home - 5%
- SEND – 8%
- NEET – 5%
- Care Leavers – 1%
- New arrivals and refugees – 2%
- Pregnant young mums and teenage parents – 1%
- Young Carers – 2%

Evaluation

As part of the feedback, young people are asked how aware they are of the range of job roles available within NMS and the heritage sector and how they perceived museums in terms of being spaces for young people. 77% of young people stated they had little or no knowledge of job roles in NMS or the heritage sector before taking part. After their engagement, 81% of young people stated they now had a good understanding of the different job roles available in the sector. 91% stated that the skills they had learnt would be useful to them in the future. This shows that Kick the Dust enables young people to gain a greater understanding of the opportunities within NMS and the sector in general. Following their engagement, 90% of young people participating felt that museums were a space they could use and would use in the future.

Evaluation responses from this Kick the Dust project can be compared with those from the other eleven Kick the Dust projects currently running across the UK. This programme- wide evaluation has been commissioned by the National Lottery Heritage Fund from the evaluation specialists Renaisi.

Following their engagement with the NMS Kick the Dust project:

- 98% of young people said they had learnt new and interesting things about heritage (Renaisi survey 90%);
- 97% of young people felt that heritage reflected them (Renaisi 70%)
- 98% felt heritage would engage other young people (Renaisi 89%).
- 91% of young people said they were more likely to become a volunteer as a result of their involvement in KTD and this option was the most popular with work experience for all those who took part. (Renaisi 61%)
- 99% of young people stated they felt welcomed and respected by staff and 94% felt a sense of achievement.

- 80% of young people stated they now had a better understanding of heritage having taken part in the programme with 20% stating they weren't sure and needed more engagement. (Renaissi 78%)
- 94% of young people felt they had the opportunity to influence decisions. (Renaissi 66%)
- 81% of young people felt that there were jobs for young people like themselves to work in heritage. (Renaissi 72%).
- 61% of young people felt that heritage had helped them understand more about their own lives – it had given them context
- 78% said they had found heritage more relevant than they had before embarking on their Kick the Dust journey (Renaissi 77%).
- 96% of young people felt that the programme was easy and affordable to get involved in but had concerns that they may not be able to do this in the future if there was a significant cost to them. (Renaissi 92%).

9. Recommendations:

That the Area Museums Committee notes the report

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