

Committee: Museum Management Task Group
Date: 2 February 2005
Agenda Item No: 6
Title: Report of the Saffron Walden Museum Society
Author:

Saffron Walden Museum Society Management Committee met on Thursday, 21st October and 9th December 2004, and 27th January 2005.

Officers

Tony Watson elected Chairman of the Management Committee in place of Brian Newman. Mr Edwin Planterose elected Vice-Chairman.

Development of Museum Society

An Executive Sub-committee consisting of the Officers and the leaders of the other groups has been established. A Fundraising Group has also been established under the leadership of Robert Bartlett, OBE.

The Museum Society's Constitution in course of amendment, with Rules/Regulations being developed separately. The latter would require only Management Committee agreement for alteration rather than AGM approval, thus increasing flexibility.

Active consideration being given to the application of the Society's resources.

Financial Regulations

A paper prepared by the Hon. Treasurer laying down procedures to be followed, including those for acquisitions, has been approved.

Risk Assessment

The Hon. Treasurer is developing the Society's policy on Risk Assessment.

Membership

Incentives put in place for Christmas season recruitment. Preparations made for Member get Member campaign to start in the new year. Four organisations in the town have agreed to display poster with accompanying membership application leaflets; further approaches to be made over a wider area. Prizes (hopefully sponsored) to be offered, to be presented at the AGM, for the largest number of people recruited by both individuals and organisations. Further boost to this campaign in Spring newsletter.

Would the Council agree to posters and leaflets being placed in UDC Reception areas, and possibly also in staff recreation areas?

Possibility of special rates for young people: contacts to be made with local schools.

MMTG

Any four members of Museum Society Management Committee to attend MMTG meetings, which in future will be chaired by UDC.

Closer co-operation with UDC considered beneficial for future development. It is hoped that the proposal put to the MMTG meeting in August, 2004 for a small group to be established to consider admission policy and charges will be progressed shortly, and that this may form a useful conduit.

With the more effective relationship between MMTG and the Museum Society, should the number of UDC representatives on the Management Committee be reduced to ease the burden on Councillors of attendance on numerous different bodies? (Essex County Council representation reduced to 1).

170th Anniversary: 12th May, 2005

The Society is looking at ways of marking this anniversary in co-operation with the Curator.

Museum

The Management Committee has been concerned at the possible risks to the collections following reports of anti-social behaviour in the museum. It has therefore agreed the sum of £6,000 to be made available for security equipment; this amount to include a small number of acquisitions and for the conservation of a picture.

At the Project Group meeting in December 2004, it was reported that consideration would be given by the Museum Society to capital investment in the museum building.

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Agenda Item No: 7
Title: Curator's Quarterly Report October – December 2004
Author: Carolyn Wingfield (01799) 510334

1 Museum Management and Staff

1.1 Management

Resource Centre and Future Development of Museum Service

A visit from the staff of the regional HLF office on 21 October viewed the tapestries conserved with a HLF grant in store and on display, and heard short presentations from the Conservation Officer and Curator on previous and current projects with HLF. The Resource Centre Project Team met on 1 October and 11 November. Following the rejection by Resources Committee to agree any matching funding for the Resource Centre project at this stage, it was decided to enlarge the Resource Centre Project Team in both membership and scope, so that it could develop a long-term strategic plan for the Museum Service, of which the Resource Centre would form the first and fundamental element.

A report was submitted to Community & Leisure Services Committee on 2nd November on the potential of the Gold Enterprise Zone, Elsenham, where small industrial units had been suggested as alternative storage venue pending Resource Centre developments. This site was ruled out on the grounds of cost and other considerations. Another site at Thaxted Road, Saffron Walden, was also investigated and proved unsuitable.

Audience Development consultants ABL Cultural Consulting were appointed with HLF project planning funding and have met with staff and the Resource Centre Project team. They are already well into their brief to investigate the potential of the Service to develop its local audiences, and will make their final presentation at the Council Offices on Monday 28th February at 7pm, to which members of the Museum Society Committee are invited.

Budget 2005-06

The Council has asked a wide range of services to find savings on next year's budgets, without affecting service delivery or cutting staff. The Museum has been asked to find savings equivalent to 5% of its net budget, excluding the Council's internal charges. This amounts to £11,000. However the vast majority of the Museum Service's other costs are fixed (buildings, staff) and the budget for actually

operating the service is a little under £26,000 – of which around £5,000 are ‘below-the-line’ grants and the remainder essential core budgets, which have been gradually reduced in real terms over many years of financial stringency. Clearly the proposal is untenable if the service is to continue to be provided. The Museum has been very successful in obtaining sponsorship and grants to supplement its budget during the past year, however these cannot replace core budgets: sponsorship in particular is unreliable and is not necessarily cost-effective to pursue for small amounts. A meeting to discuss Museum finances is to be held on 3rd February attended by Cllrs Morson and Murphy, UDC Leader Cllr Alan Dean, the Museum Society Treasurer, Curator and Executive Managers for Environmental & Cultural Services and Finance.

Insurance

The Curator has discussed with UDC’s Principal Accountant and an independent insurance adviser the need to revise the Museum’s insurance for both premises and collections. This is likely to be costly in both time and specialist advice required; further information on budget and timescale is awaited.

Other UDC issues

Curator has attended 2 JMT (Joint Management Team) meetings. In a Council-wide prioritisation exercise covering all services, the Museum Service was assessed as medium priority, assessment being based on statutory status, role in the Quality of Life Corporate Plan and other factors.

1.2 Staff

It is a special pleasure to record that on 23rd December the outstanding work of Education Officer Jenny Gibsone earned her the award of Uttlesford Staff Member of the Year at the first annual staff awards ceremony. Jenny was presented with her award by Council Chairman, Cllr Godwin. A member of UDC staff, returning to work after a long illness, spent several days at the Museum giving most welcome assistance with admin tasks. With assistance from casual staff and volunteers, the Museum remained open throughout the Christmas and New Year period (excluding 24th & 25th December) , and welcomed a good number of grateful visitors.

We welcomed a new member of staff, Sarah Wilson, to job-share the post of Documentation & Exhibitions Officer with Julia Bazley from 6 December.

The Education Officer is to join and chair a UDC team of colleagues looking into requirements of the Children Act. She is also liaising with District and County Councils on preparations for Cultural Diversity events.

1.3 Volunteers and Work Experience

Cllr Vanessa Pedder has been assisting with computerised documentation of the mineral collection and conservation of a bone from the jaw of a bowhead whale. Deborah Chancellor has assisted with the hayrick base and Chinese costumes.

1.4 Training and Meetings Attended

Archaeological Resource Centres, one-day seminar, London (Curator)

Medieval Finds seminar, Finds Research Group, London (Curator)

The Curator has also attended two regional archaeological Saturday conferences (Council for British Archaeology Mid Anglia region and Sutton Hoo Society) at her own expense, to keep updated on relevant archaeological issues.

First Aid one-day Appointed Persons course with St John's Ambulance organised for all staff by Conservation Officer, previous First Aider certificates having lapsed.

Training on E-procurement (electronic system for placing, approving and receipting orders) has been provided for all curatorial staff, in line with government policy for local authorities.

The Education Officer attended **Inspiring Learning for All** training day run by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council

Drawing in the Museum workshop at the Fitzwilliam Museum attended by the Education officer

1.5 Health & Safety

The Conservation Officer is now H&S representative and has attended meetings at Council Offices and passes on information to Museum colleagues at staff meetings.

Problems with the lift, caused by troublesome youngsters one Sunday afternoon, required Fire Brigade and Police to attend to release trapped young offenders. The Museum is supporting a Police prosecution of the young culprits. The incident resulted in a repair bill of £350 and the lift being out of order for a couple of days.

1.6 Museum Sector

Regional re-organisation of the museum sector continues in line with *Renaissance in the Regions*, pending further decisions on government funding for East of England museum hub in late January. The new Chief Executive of EEMLAC (East of England Museums, Libraries and Archives Council), Terry Turner, visited the Museum on 9th November with the Essex Museums Officer and Museums Development Officer for Essex.

2 Buildings and Site

2.1 Museum Building

Conversion of one of the boilers to gas has been dogged with problems. Both are still working on diesel fuel. Aqua and British Gas have both been involved, and gas piping has now been connected and a meter installed. Aqua have experienced problems installing a flue in the Museum's chimney, and it is hoped that additional work to resolve this (which will entail cutting a small hole through the chimney breast in the temporary exhibitions gallery wall) will be undertaken before the end of January.

Much-needed refurbishment of Toilets has been postponed due to budget being required for new heating system for Laboratory/Schoolroom. In addition, a recent inspection has indicated that the Accessible Toilet requires more extensive modifications in the light of the latest standards. The Curator is investigating the

possibility of the whole toilet refurbishment being treated as a capital programme item, rather than revenue expenditure.

2.2 Laboratory/Schoolroom

New gas central heating installed, and after some teething problems, is now working well.

2.3 Newport Store

Some drawers from the mineral cabinets have been moved to tables in order to place them above flood level over the winter. The height of the cabinets cannot be raised any further due to the ceiling height of the ground floor store (Natural Sciences Officer).

One dehumidifier has gone for repair, and only 2 machines are now working in the store.

2.4 40 Castle Street

Replacement of the rotting attic window frame is still awaited.

2.5 Grounds and Castle Site

Hedge around the Castle has been cut. Work requested to trim shrubs around the Museum building and coppice hazel growing by Church Street entrance (Natural Sciences Officer).

3 Collections and Research

3.1 Acquisitions

83 acquisitions this quarter, including

- Collection of programmes for Saffron Walden Town Football Club
- Bronze Age bronze arrowhead, first example from Essex

3.2 Collections Care and Conservation

Care of collections has included:

- Pest check of natural history areas in October 2004 (Natural Sciences Officer).
- Freezing against pest of incoming Chinese textiles and costumes, and airing same to allow off-gassing of camphor, condition photography and scanning of old photographs
- Meeting with John Bosworth and David Demery as well as external conservators involved with Bridge End Gardens and advising on Summer House paintings
- Investigating data loggers, visits from system representatives

Remedial conservation work has included:

- Conservation of a bone from the jaw of a bowhead whale that was on display in the museum grounds (Vanessa Pedder and Conservation Officer)
- A sampler for Cater Museum
- Wire brushing the hayrick base

3.3 Documentation

No of new accessions catalogued: 83

Backlog documentation: 12 new Modes records (Natural Sciences), and a total of 5608 records updated (4715 human history and 893 natural sciences)

3.4 Loans In

Loans In: none this quarter

3.5 Loans Out

Loans Out: no requests received this quarter

3.6 Object Identification and Enquiries

Object identifications this quarter: 12

Collection Enquiries this quarter: 89 by phone, fax, email, letter or casual enquiries in person (without an appointment)

3.7 Researchers

14 research visits in person, including Littlebury Millennium Project and Southey papers.

Other collections research

Great Chesterford research project ongoing. Publication of *Excavations at Stansted Airport, 1986-91* by Essex County Council has already resulted in one request to examine Iron Age pottery from the extensive archive, while Oxford – Wessex Archaeology are currently digitising numerous plans from ECC's excavations pending further fieldwork.

4 Displays and Visitor Services

4.1 Permanent Galleries

New fruit beetles are in the bug cage in the Discovery Centre.

Ceramics Gallery

Jonathan Dutton, ceramics expert, has met again with the Documentation & Exhibitions Officer (JB) and Curator, otherwise little progress has been possible this quarter while waiting to recruit the other half of Julia's jobshare. An outline timetable for the project and plans for obtaining a more accurate costing have since been drawn up.

4.2 Temporary Exhibitions

The *Archaeology in the Pipeline* exhibition ran until 7th November. The related display panels from the exhibition are being loaned for short periods to Uttesford parishes: so far it has been seen at Hempstead, and will be touring over the next few months to Henham, Rickling, Broxted, Great Easton and Widdington, while enquiries

for further bookings are still being received.

All Creatures Small, a creative look at insects and other small creatures, opened on 20 November 2004 and continues until 27 February 2005. It features art from the Off-Centre Gallery in Bristol and specimens of invertebrates from the museum collections, and has been enjoyed by visitors of all ages.

4.3 Visitor Services

Visitors

	Public		Schools		Total	
	2004	2003	2004	2003	2004	2003
October	1474	1457	666	977	2140	2434
November	665	680	748	578	1413	1258
December *	792	536	111	296	903	832
Total	2931	2673	1525	1851	4456	4524

* Includes private hire of the Museum for a Sunday morning Christening party

Shop

	2004	2003
October	1191.94	1121.25
November	850.62	826.32
December	397.02	560.39
Total £	2439.58	2507.76
ADD TIC sales`	10.00	35.00
Total £	2449.58	2542.96

Tickets

	2004	2003
October	647.00	681.00
November	298.50	327.00
December	313.50	219.00
Total £	1259.00	1164.00

Donations

	2004	2003
October	76.75	66.85
November	21.65	21.80
December	49.65	41.21
Total £	148.50	129.86

Publicity and Marketing

Work continues to update the Museum's website within the UDC framework. There have been numerous articles in the local press based on exhibitions and events. The Celtic shears from the TRANSCO exhibition were featured in *British Archaeology* and the national press. Discussions with local press and police on the advisability of printing children's names in press photo captions has resulted in a guidance statement which will be attached to all Museum press releases in the future, requesting press to obtain parents' or teachers' consent and to avoid printing children's surnames if possible. The Museum featured in a TV programme about the Gibson family shown on the History Channel. As part of the audience development package, new visitor and non-visitor questionnaires have been designed in conjunction with the appointed consultants, ABL.

5 Education, Events and Outreach

5.1 Education

No. of booked school sessions taken by Education Officer: 35

No. of school loans 3

The staff from St Mary's C of E Primary School came for a 'twilight' training session the Education Officer, and will provide ongoing advice to the Museum on education issues.

5.2 Events at Museum

26/27 October **Museum Magic, Two days of Childrens Holiday Activities** attended by 300 people.

5 December **Christmas Tree Decoration Workshop** Afternoon session attended by 42 people.

5.3 Outreach

Museum activities at other venues:

Saffron Walden County High School Farm Club with mole touch specimen (Visitor Services Officer)

Other Museums and Local Groups supported

Museum staff have attended meetings, undertaken work or given advice to:

- Littlebury Millennium community project (assisting researchers and weekend archaeology meeting in village hall, Curator)
- Heritage Sampford community project (anniversary weekend exhibition and evening project meeting, Curator)
- Fry Art Gallery Society (2 committee meetings, Curator) – advising on new light system and options (Conservation Officer)
- Saffron Walden Searchers Metal Detecting Club (2 meetings, Curator)
- Biological Records Initiative Essex (BRIE) (Natural Sciences Officer)
- Essex Biodiversity Project (Natural Sciences Officer)
- Essex Wildlife Trust (Uttlesford) Committee (Natural Sciences Officer)
- Local Agenda 21 Farming, Wildlife & Countryside Group (Natural Sciences Officer)
- Special Roadside Verges Committee (Natural Sciences Officer)

- Uttlesford Countryside Forum (Natural Sciences Officer)
- Uttlesford Nature Conservation Working (Natural Sciences Officer)
- Museum of London Archive centre visited (Conservation Officer)
- Museums & Galleries Disability Association AGM & seminar (Visitor Services Officer)
- Uttlesford Tourism Forum working party (Visitor Services Officer)
- Uttlesford Volunteers Forum (Visitor Services Officer)
- St. Marys School Staff Training Session (Education Officer)
- Uttlesford Cultural Diversity Festival working party (Education Officer)
- Douglas House(Children with special needs school) (Education Officer)
- Widdington Local History Society loan of Education collection artefacts and display boards (Education Officer)

Advice, support and involvement in organisations outside Uttlesford

Advisory Committee for Archaeology in Essex (Curator)

Essex Museum Workers Group (Curator, currently Chair)

Museums in Essex Committee (Curator)

Regional Museums Group, EEMLAC and Regional Museums Strategy Steering Group (Curator)

Talks and Lectures given by Museum staff:

Bishops Stortford Rotary Society : History of Saffron Walden Museum (Education Officer)

Future Programme and Projects

1 Museum Management and Staff

Continuing work with the councillors and Museum Society on Museum's finances, future development and fund-raising for projects such as the Resource Centre and Ceramics Gallery.

2 Buildings and Site

Resolution of gas central heating. A plan for maintenance and repairs for the coming year, including redecoration of the ceramics gallery, is being drawn up by the Curator and Property Services.

CCTV improvements to be ordered from Saffron Security, thanks to the Museum Society's offer to finance these.

3 Collections and Research

A damaged and discoloured 1810 aquatint of Saffron Walden is being investigated prior to conservation. It appears we have two of the same view, so the better will be sent for treatment and framing, and the one in poorer condition, being unaccessioned, will be assessed for disposal.

4 Displays and Visitor Services

ABL to report back on 28th February

Curator on annual leave 4th - 21st March inclusive

5 Events, Education and Outreach

2005 programme is being finalised – a draft programme for the whole year is enclosed but may be subject to development and changes. We aim to finalise it by the end of January.

Some immediate events:

Meet spiders, scorpions and snakes with *Snakes Alive!* on Saturday 15 January 2005 from 11-1 pm and 2-4 pm.

Creepy Crawly playshop for under 5's on Thursday 13 January

Reminiscence Therapy Training Day for Uttlesford Care workers Thursday 10 February

Children's Holiday Activities for families on Wednesday 16 February and Wednesday 23 February – Minibeast Monoprints

Long Before the Dinosaurs - National science week activities for all ages, Sat 12 March