

SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM

**CURATOR'S QUARTERLY REPORT
July – September 2005**

1 Museum Management and Staff

1.1 Management

Heritage Quest Centre

The Appeal launch was held on 2nd August at the College of St Mark, Audley End, attended by over 100 guests. The name for the resource Centre was chosen by Uttlesford resident Gloria Hills in a competition run by the Saffron Walden Reporter, who provided the £50 prize, presented by Carezza Lewis. The Appeal Brochure has since been designed and printed, and clerical help from Susie Corke (UDC) is available to assist with mailings. Fund-raiser Martin Shaw has been preparing applications to grant-giving trusts with the Curator. Following the Council's approval to allocate a site off Thaxted Road, Saffron Walden, for the Heritage Quest Centre, a new design has been produced by Council Architect David Demery and the internal layout revised accordingly. An application for planning permission is being prepared and a decision is expected by the end of the year.

Forward Plan and Policy Documents

There are a number of important policy documents in preparation as a result of Museum Service development plans, impending HLF and other applications and Accreditation in 2006. A new Marketing Strategy has been formally adopted, and a new Education Policy has been prepared. A revised Access Policy Statement is being prepared. In addition to all these, a ten-year rolling Forward Plan is being formed, showing the Heritage Quest Centre project in the context of the Museum Service's longer-term aims and developments. Earlier work by staff, the Museum Society Executive Committee and MMTG has resulted in a draft document which has been circulated to the Council's Community & Leisure Committee (25th October) to elicit councillors' input.

1.2 Staff

Education Officer on extended sick leave mid May until the end of August with impact on schools visits and knock on effect on colleagues. Julia Bazley (job-sharing Documentation & Exhibitions Officer post) left on maternity leave mid-July having made a major contribution to the Museum over the past 8 years. Sarah Wilson has taken over the Documentation & Exhibitions Officer post full-time.

1.3 Volunteers and Work Experience

Trident student: Helen Midgeley on work experience for 2 weeks in July. Stephanie Thompson assisted with family holiday activity sessions during August. Fanny Sallin

from Switzerland came for an eight-week placement in the Conservation Laboratory prior to commencing her conservation studies. She was joined by Graham Millard from Cardiff University, on a four-week placement. They worked on maps, costume mounts, ethnography and metal small finds among other things. Visits were arranged to meet the English Heritage conservator at Audley End House, and to the Fitzwilliam Museum, to discuss issues and tour the galleries and stores. Jessica Scott, a history undergraduate who will train as an Education Officer, attended two teaching sessions as work experience.

1.4 Training and Meetings Attended

Seminar on Income Generation, Campaign for Museums, London (Curator)
Seminar on Samurai armour, with Shogun exhibition, Leeds (Conservation Officer)
Seminar on Care of Photographs at Norwich Castle Museum (Conservation Officer)
Meeting on saving energy at Council Offices (Conservation Officer)
Seminar on construction and decoration of Egyptian Third Intermediate Period coffin held at the Fitzwilliam Museum (Education Officer)
Great Days Out consortium meeting hosted by Visitor Services Officer, Tourism Officer
Seminars on web accessibility and 'e-information' at the Genome Centre and at Manchester City Gallery as part of the Museums & Galleries Disability Association AGM (Visitor Services Officer)
UDC in-house training on computer programmes: Basic Computing (Security Officer); Excel (Documentation & Exhibitions Officer)
UDC Fire Marshall training (Education Officer and Security Officer)
UDC Freedom of Information briefing (Visitor Services Officer)

1.5 Health & Safety

Assessments of computer workstations and VDUs have been undertaken, and necessary changes to office furniture and layout is being made as necessary. Some issues have arisen following recent advice on fire marshal training and evacuating the building in an emergency. A staff practice with revised procedures is planned for November, before contractors start work on the WCs.

1.6 Museum Sector

The Curator has continued to be involved in regional initiatives: the steering group for EEMLAC's *Regional Museum Strategy* (now nearing completion) and as FMEE (*Forum for Museums in the East of England*) representative at the East of England Hub Partners Meetings, advising on 2006-08 proposals for the *Renaissance* programme. Meanwhile, the *Renaissance* MDF (Museum Development Fund) is creating new projects in Essex. The Documentation & Exhibitions Officer and Conservation Officer are involved with *Living Costume*, for which Saffron Walden Museum will be one of four leading partners.

2 Buildings and Site

2.1 Museum Building

The front door and hand-rails have been painted. The Security Officer has undertaken some interior and exterior building refurbishment. A long-term maintenance plan is to be reviewed and prepared with Property Services. The Museum's WC's are to be upgraded

and remodelled in December-January, partly to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act. A pre-contract meeting with the contractor has already been held on site and the refurbishment has been phased so that there will be minimum inconvenience caused to the public, schools and staff. The contractors will be fencing off a small area at the far end of the forecourt for use as a compound from mid-December to late January.

2.2 Laboratory/Schoolroom

2.3 Newport Store

2.4 40 Castle Street

2.5 Grounds and Castle Site

No specific matters to report this quarter.

3 Collections and Research

3.1 Acquisitions

29 acquisitions this quarter, including

- An intact World War Two medical box
- Stansted Home Guard uniform and demob suit
- A crucifix with mother of pearl inlay quoted in an accompanying letter as found in the 'Church of the Monastery of St Francis at Audley End' (St Marks College)
- Two samples of tatting kindly donated by a member of the public after they saw the display of tatted items in the costume gallery. These samples will be added to the display allowing the public to better appreciate the effect of tatting, a skill that is now rarely practised.
- Copy of manuscript of local researcher's history of Debden Airfield
- Donation of a small map of the London-Cambridge canal, from a member of the public attending the Museum Society lecture on the canal (12th September)

Items purchased by the Society for the collections:

- Tools formerly belonging to William Dix of Quendon, carpenter, and other members of his family, some with name stamps, to add to the chest and other tools already in the collections
- Silver-gilt pilgrim badge of St George found in Takeley parish (treasure item), purchased at half the valuation after the landowner kindly waived his share of the *ex gratia* payment. This and two post-medieval treasure items – a silver-gilt pin and a silver button-cufflink – have now been collected and will be displayed in the New Year. The button-cufflink was donated, thanks to finder and landowner both waiving their *ex gratia* payments.

3.2 Collections Care and Conservation

Care of collections has included: The Hanwell telemetric monitoring system has been logging environmental data at the Newport Store since installation, but so far there are problems routing this information to the Lab. Another dehumidifier stopped working and the humidity in the Organics store is being temporarily controlled by low level heating. Pest trapping was carried out in Natural History areas in July and September (Natural

Sciences Officer). More carpet beetle was found in the Woodland display and this has been treated by freezing the object affected and using contact pesticide in the case.

Remedial conservation work has included:

- 2 folding maps c 1770, 2 samples of tatting, a sampler, some of the Maldon Museum ethnographic material, and a bone weaving comb
- A framed display of early 19th century gloves belonging to Cater Museum
- 51 items were returned from the University of Lincoln where conservation has been carried out over the last year by supervised students; 33 more objects were sent.

3.3 Documentation

No of new accessions catalogued: 23

- Modes backlog documentation: 4 new records, 1413 updates (Natural Sciences Officer)
- Modes backlog documentation: 7 new records, oil painting records updated (Exhibitions and Documentation Officer)

3.4 Loans In

Loans In: 3

Loans in during this period included Imperial Chinese letters lent to the Museum to display in the Chinese costume exhibition along with a collection of twentieth-century Chinese books, scholars brushes and seals. A small Hellenistic sculpture of a Negroid boy and an Anglo-Saxon bracteate die, both made of bronze, were lent to the Museum for display by a local metal detectorist.

3.5 Loans Out

Loans Out: 0

Panels from the *Archaeology in the Pipeline* exhibition were loaned to Hatfield Heath. This exhibition has now travelled to a total of 8 parishes throughout Uttlesford.

Horse-drawn vehicles

Despite repeated requests from the Curator, a reply from English Heritage is still awaited for permission to display these at Prior's Hall Barn. A brief report on options is attached.

3.6 Object Identification and Enquiries

Object identifications this quarter: 11

Collection Enquiries this quarter: 131 by phone, fax, email, letter or casual enquiries in person (without an appointment)

3.7 Researchers

10 research visits in person, subjects including:

- G.S. Gibson Flora of Essex and plant specimens collected by Gibson
- Information regarding the old Railway station in Saffron Walden and the businesses that were located around it
- Antler pick from Grimes Graves and compare it with North American examples
- Visitors from Old Salem, Carolina photographing Staffordshire figures

- Littlebury documents for the Littlebury Millennium Project
- Thomas Frye – church organist
- Documents relating to the proposed canal through Saffron Walden prior to a well attended talk to the Museum Society
- A Level student studying Iron Age site at Stansted Airport (ACS) for project

Other collections research

- Ecological surveys of Special Roadside Verge sites in Uttlesford and checking for presence of marker posts and plaques. Preparation of annual Verge Report for 2005 to inform verge management plans (Natural Sciences Officer).
- Documentation and storage of the Osteology collection and updating object location records for minerals, fossils, and invertebrates/molluscs (NSO/Support Worker).
- Oil paintings collection was surveyed and photographed in August for the Public Catalogue Foundation.
- Thaxted leather was returned after study by a specialist. One of the fragmentary items was found to be a purse or bag.
- Computerised documentation of the card index to the Bird Collection compiled by George Nathan Maynard in the 19th Century (NSO/Support Worker).

4 Displays and Visitor Services

4.1 Permanent Galleries

The stick insects in the Bug Cage have four babies which are growing fast. The Delft tile pictures were replaced on the wall of the Local History Gallery, following repainting of the wall by Security Officer.

4.2 Temporary Exhibitions

Fighting Napoleon continues until 30th October. *Silk, Cotton, Fur; The Fabric of Chinese Family Life* is in preparation with invaluable assistance of Europa Chang.

It will run from 11th November until 28th February.

4.3 Visitor Services

* August Free Admissions trial month. There were fewer school visits during Education Officer's absence, with a higher proportion of independent visits (306 in taught sessions). Free entry as usual for Heritage Open Days Sat 10th (106 visitors) & Sun 11th Sept (58)

Visitors	Public		Schools		Total	
	2005	2004	2005	2004	2005	2004
July	1080	1411	442	339	1522	1750
August*	2401	2310	65	44	2466	2354
September	865	818	439	888	1304	1706
Total	4346	4539	946	1271	5292	5810

Shop	2005	2004
July	465.66	690.22
August	896.18	887.87
September	654.69	764.61
Total £	2016.53	2342.70

Tickets	2005	2004
July	526.00	631.50
August*	- ----	891.00
September	304.50	358.50
Total £	830.50	1881.00

Donations	2005	2004
July	91.04	65.44
August*	655.19	96.47
September	80.85	51.72
Total £	827.08	213.63

* may include sales for crocus bulbs from TIC (excluded from figures 2002 onwards)
 Visitor figures exclude occasional independent school visits and those attending drama events in grounds or booked workshops in Schoolroom, none of whom made donations.

Analysis of effect of free admissions on donations box during August

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Visitors	1901	1764	2384	2310	2401
Tickets	£ 881	£ 795	£935	£ 891	-
Shop	*£ 1,008.86	£ 732.76	£753.84	£ 888.87	£ 896.18
Donations	£ 70.50	£ 55.82	£87.36	£ 96.47	£ 655.19
Average Donation per visitor	4p	3p	4p	4p	28p

From beginning of August 2005, the Donations Box has been fitted with appropriate 'sound effect', which is triggered by a coin dropping into the box; this has been popular though the novelty may wear off a little in time. Donations increased by nearly x7 from 2004 figures for August, equivalent to around 70% of estimated income from admissions.

Publicity and Marketing

Useful press cover by local papers as usual. The Curator and Councillor Morson were interviewed by BBC East for a feature on Uttlesford. The Museum was the backdrop for a professional educational video made with pupils from Debden. An artist made a DVD of the Museum as a follow up to *Three Heads in the Well* performed in the grounds.

5 Education, Events and Outreach

5.1 Education

12 booked school sessions taken by Education Officer (306 children and 58 adults)

No. of school loan boxes sent out: 2

5.2 Events at Museum

Date	Event and Staff	No. Attending
26 July	Evening Board meeting of the Saffron Walden Initiative, with a follow-up mailing and crocus for sale.	10
9, 10 Aug	<i>Hats for Heroes</i> family activity sessions	164
16, 17 Aug	<i>Fan-tastic</i> family activity sessions	310
11 Aug	Drama workshop on Stage Fighting for teenagers	10
19 Aug	Free Family drama workshop run in conjunction with Mercury Theatre (re. <i>Three Heads in a Well</i> 27 Aug)	25
23, 24 Aug	<i>Food Webs and Wildlife</i> family activity sessions	230
27 Aug	<i>Three Heads in a Well</i> An open air family play touring Essex by Mercury Theatre, supported by Insite and organised by UDC Leisure Services. Museum staff involved in H&S preparation and security on the evening	50
8 Sept	<i>Museum Minis</i> - session for under 5s & parents/carers with Education Officer	23
24 Sept	Private Hire for 40 th Birthday party – Sat evening 7pm-midnight	70
27 Sept	Great Bardfield History Society, evening opening and talk by Education Officer	10
July - Sept	3 x Museum Society lectures 20+15 +50	85
	Total	987

5.3 Outreach

Museum activities, talks and lectures at other venues:

Date	Event and Staff	No. Attending
16 July	Stall at Clavering Village Festival for National Archaeology Days – Curator, Doc & Exhibitions Officer	100 (stall, Church)
2 Aug	Naming and launch of the Heritage Quest Centre Appeal, St Mark's College Audley End, all staff	120
18 Sept	Cultural Diversity Festival, Education Officer attended	(3,000)
	Total	220

Other Museums and Local Groups supported (total 13)

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

- Clavering Project Castle (Curator and Documentation & Exhibitions Officer)
- Great Dunmow Museum Society, advice on MDA (Curator)

- Great Dunmow Town Council (Natural Sciences Officer)
- Fry Art Gallery Society – advice on new lighting resulted in purchase of a new system to be installed in November (Conservation Officer), 2 Committee meetings, AGM and advice on MiEC and Accreditation (Curator)
- Local History Societies, meeting in Town Hall (Conservation Officer)
- Bridge End Garden opening attended by Conservation Officer
- Saffron Walden Initiative (Curator & Natural Sciences Officer)
- Saffron Walden Searchers Metal Detecting Club, 1 meeting (Curator)
- BRIE (Biological Records Information Essex) (Natural Sciences Officer)
- Essex Biodiversity Project (Natural Sciences Officer)
- Essex Field Club (Natural Sciences Officer)
- Essex Wildlife Trust (Uttlesford) Committee (Natural Sciences Officer)
- Local Agenda 21 Farming, Wildlife & Countryside Group (Natural Sciences Officer)
- Saffron Walden Botany Group (Natural Sciences Officer)
- Special Roadside Verges Committee (Natural Sciences Officer)

Advice, support and involvement in organisations outside Uttlesford

- The Conservation Officer was invited to attend an international conference on the Greek-Albanian border to discuss the future of a small Greek village museum as a focus for the regeneration of the area. The project involves European economists, cultural anthropologists and staff at the University of West England, Bristol.
- Newmarket Horse Racing Museum - advice on running an education service on a low budget. (Education Officer)
- EEMLAC - information and advice on the implications of the Children's Act 2004 for local authority and other museum services (Education Officer)
- EEMLAC Regional Museum Strategy and Regional Steering Group
- Hub Partners Meetings (Curator)
- Essex Museum Workers Group (Curator)
- Forum for Museums in the East of England EGM (Curator)

Future Programme and Projects

Forthcoming major events and developments for information, and urgent matters arising since the end of the quarter.

1 Museum Management and Staff

Heritage Quest Centre – a significant amount of staff time will be spent on fund-raising and grant applications, followed by more detailed planning of the three-year project from late November onwards

Forward Plan – draft to Community & Leisure Services 25th October, opportunity for further development with councillors and Museum Society, need to appoint financial and business adviser. Education Policy to same Committee for approval

Policies to be revised/written this quarter: Access Policy, Acquisition & Disposal Policy

2 Buildings and Site

WCs refurbishment, Museum starting 12th December

3 Collections and Research

Centred on costume and textiles, for the Chinese costume exhibition, and preparation for the *Living Costume* Essex MDF project.

Return of Toi moko to New Zealand scheduled for mid-November.

4 Displays and Visitor Services

Please note Saturday afternoon occasional gallery talks by staff on our advertised programme.

5 Events, Education and Outreach

MUSEUM AUTUMN PROGRAMME

During the Autumn months the Museum will be holding a series of events suitable for all ages, free of charge. Normal entrance charges apply: adults £1; discounts 50pence, children (18 and under) free; annual season tickets £3 and £1.50

EXHIBITIONS

Fighting Napoleon- Walden at War 1789 –1815

The exhibition marks the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar and continues until 30th October.

Silk, Cotton, Fur – The Fabric of Chinese Family Life.

Saturday November 12th until 28th February 2006

An insight into traditional Chinese life shown through a selection of costumes worn by four generations of a single family from the late 19th century to the mid 20th century

Continued over....

SATURDAY SHORT TALKS FOR ADULTS

Saturday, October 1st at 2pm **A Rich Man's Burial**

A short talk by Carolyn Wingfield on a Roman burial from Stansted, with a close view of the luxurious grave goods.

Saturday 22nd October at 2pm | **Rare Birds**

A short talk by Sarah Kenyon on the first recorded American Bittern in Essex, and the re-introduced Great Bustard.

Saturday 12th November 2pm. A short talk by Lynn Morrison

on **Chinese Costume** in the exhibition 'Silk, Cotton Fur', from scholarly robes to seductive evening wear, with a chance to view some garments more closely.

Saturday 3rd December 2pm A short talk by Sarah Wilson, with an opportunity to get a close look at a variety of objects from the **Museum's mysterious reserve collections.**

FAMILY ACTIVITIES – CHILDREN MUST BRING AN ADULT

Monday 10th October 3.30 – 5.00pm Drop-in session

FAMILY LEARNING WEEK After-school activities for children aged 5 – 9 years and their parents / carers, in partnership with the North and West Essex Adult Community College. The Museum challenge is to make a model together based on museum objects. Materials, drinks and snacks provided

CHILDREN'S HALF TERM HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES

Tuesday 25th and Wednesday, 26th October 11.00 – 1.00 and 2.00 – 4.00 p.m. Drop-in sessions : **More Magic –Tricks to make and take home** Master the art of mind reading and find out about magic in Ancient Egypt. Suitable for children aged 6 – 10 years who **MUST** bring an adult to astonish.

MUSEUM MINIS - Themed activities for children aged 2 – 5 years with parents / carers

In the Autumn Thursday 6th October 1.00 – 2.30pm. Drop in session

Night Time Thursday 3rd November 1.00 – 2.30 Drop-in session

Let's Fly Thursday 1st December 1.00 – 2.30 Drop-in session

Sunday December 4th 2.00 –4.00p.m. Drop in session

CHRISTMAS TREE DECORATION DAY

Make decorations on a Chinese theme, to take home and to decorate the museum tree. Suitable for ages 2 – 12 years with adult help.

Monday 26th December 2.00 – 4.30p.m.

BOXING DAY OPENING. Want to get out of the house and clear your mind by contemplating wonders of the natural and man made world ? Then head for the museum, open as usual on Boxing Day.

Tuesday 27th December 2.30 – 4.00

STORIES FOR ALL AGES. Old French fairytales, first recorded in the 18th century, retold for a modern audience. Drop in session.