

-SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM
CURATOR'S QUARTERLY REPORT
April – June 2006

1 Museum Management and Staff

1.1 Management

Heritage Quest Centre

Fundraising continued to dominate the agenda and especially the establishment of the Heritage Quest Trust to receive funds raised and enable the Museum Society to register for a Landfill Tax Grant. A 171st Birthday coffee morning in May, and a Car Boot sale on 2nd July raised £120 and £450 respectively, and continue to keep the project in the public eye. A Wine Evening is planned for September 9th with local wine-master David Wrigley. The Curator made a short presentation on the HQC to Little Hallingbury Parish Council in April and gave a presentation to a seminar on archaeological archives and resource centres at the Museum of London on 7 June, outlining the difficulties of local museum services in securing funding for housing collections and dealing with archaeology from major developments. An article on similar lines was published in the newsletter of *Rescue*, a national archaeological organisation, using Saffron Walden Museum and Uttlesford district as a case study.

Forward Plan and Income Generation Feasibility Study

The Feasibility Study for Income Generation by PHT Consultants was discussed by the Resource Centre Project Team and Option 4 chosen as the most productive option for future development of the Museum site. This favoured extension of the Museum building with incorporation of the TIC in the Museum if possible, and a refreshment facility for visitors space and resources permitting.

Accreditation and Policy Documents

The Museum has to complete and submit a lengthy on-line questionnaire with constitutional policy and other documents by the end of October and preferably earlier. The Forward Plan and Access Policy Statement were approved by Community Committee on 8 June and arrangements are in hand for the completion of other documents and information required.

1.2 Staff, Volunteers and Work Experience

Stephanie Thompson, Mary Knight and Pat Williams assisted with family holiday activities. Ines Frontzek of Germany worked in the lab on a student placement for 6 weeks prior to starting a Conservation degree in Stuttgart. We welcome Freda Clarke to the volunteer team. A UDC volunteer policy has been framed with Jim Shaw of UDC personnel, and Ann Holloway, a volunteer experienced in the charity sector.

1.3 Training and Meetings Attended

3.5 days of JMT training programme (Strategic Thinking, Leading Change, Project Management) and Fire Awareness session at Council Offices (Curator)
All staff attending training on the new appraisal system (Competency Framework)
Equal Opportunities training sessions at UDC were attended by most museum staff

Fire Awareness training for Museum staff was provided by Jason Dear, Emergency Planning Officer
Emergency Training (Disaster response) attended by Conservation Officer at UDC Museums Association Conference on Project Management (Documentation & Exhibitions Officer)
MLA East of England Collections Day and Partnership Day (Curator and Documentation & Exhibitions Officer)
Education Officers meeting at Epping (Education Officer)
Tourism Forum and Great Days Out meetings (Visitor Services Officer)
Opening of new Ancient Egypt Galleries at the Fitzwilliam Museum (Curator & Education Officer) and opportunity to discuss forthcoming Egyptology project

1.5 Health & Safety

Museum Risk Assessments were reviewed by the Curator, Security Officer and Conservation Officer. New Fire Procedures were written

1.6 Museum Sector

The Essex County Museums Officer has left for another post, and it is hoped that the post will be filled in the autumn, especially at this critical time for the county's museums with Accreditation and Hub programme impacting on many museums, Plans are in hand for the Museum's participation in an Ancient Egypt project with the Hub and the Museum has participated in the Essex Living Costume project funded by the Museums Development Fund.

2 Buildings and Site

2.1 Museum Building

A programme of building repairs and repainting has been planned within budget constraints; exterior paintwork of the Museum and Schoolroom / Lab annex will be redecorated this summer. Electrical repairs to case lighting in the Ceramics Gallery underlined the need for a full scale electrical circuits test, which is to be arranged by the Council's Architect. The redundant oil tank was removed and the compound is being cleared, to be used for storage of spare bricks, tiles etc.

2.2 Laboratory/Schoolroom

New equipment was installed to operate the airbrasive machine used for cleaning corroded archaeological iron. Dry rot in the Schoolroom floor investigated and repaired. The cupboards are to be replaced with ventilated storage.

2.3 Newport Store

The geology specimens removed from cabinets to protect them against winter flooding were returned to their correct storage locations. The Hanwell monitoring system installed in 2005 is working intermittently but provides data remotely on temperature and humidity in the store.

2.4 Grounds and Castle Site

Frost cover was removed from the glacial erratic boulder in the grounds during May. Environmental Services contractors have strimmed vegetation round the foot of the Castle walls and inside the keep, and have begun to cut the ivy at the base.

3 Collections and Research

3.1 Acquisitions

9 acquisitions this quarter, including

- A 'Tilley' Paraffin Pressure Domestic Iron
- A pair of men's or women's working boots said to have come from Saffron Walden Workhouse
- Top of a stoneware spirit flagon, Westerwald type dating to the late 17th century to late 18th century

3.2 Collections Care and Conservation

Care of collections has included.

- Repackaging and mounting of costume and textiles, a number of which were accessed to be shown at the Living Costume Workshop days.
- Plains Indian scalp-lock shirt was repacked flat in the ethnography store.
- Ethnographic items ex Maldon Museum checked and treated prior to accessioning
- Jewellery case was cleaned and dusted
- Advisory visit to Epping Forest District Museum on 15 June to help staff with examination and treatment procedures for an outbreak of woodworm infestation in the display and stored collections.
- A check of pest traps in natural history areas was carried out in April, and Ethnography and Organics stores in June.
- The Museum building was sprayed with contact pesticide by an Environmental Health Officer to protect against insect pests in the galleries and stores.

Remedial conservation work has included:

- Dry cleaning of a Greatcoat and Demob suit
- Work on a stone head of Serapis
- Finished surface cleaning a collection of OS maps
- Refurbishment of a Hippopotamus teeth display case, a number of copper alloy social history items, some coins and medals, tools and textiles.

3.3 Documentation

No of new accessions catalogued: 150 human history, 5 natural sciences

3.4 Loans In

Geology specimens from local author and expert Gerald Lucy to supplement the *Beneath Essex* exhibition, one of these filmed by BBC TV for *Coast*. The Weeley core, the oldest rock in Essex, is also on loan from Chelmsford Museums Service for the exhibition.

3.5 Loans Out

The stilt step, mat and cloak were safely transported for the *Pacific Encounters* exhibition at the University of East Anglia gallery, which runs until 13th August.

Loan Requests for approval:

Several enquiries for loans have been received this quarter, and there are two formal requests requiring Committee's approval:

Egyptology loan to Hertford Museum

Hertford Museum (registered museum) has requested to borrow the following Egyptian antiquities for an exhibition 12 September 2006 to 20 October 2007:

12,044 bronze figurine	12, 010 girdle of Isis amulet
1965.210 wooden comb	1963.105 Old Kingdom jar
1917.14 figurine of hawk	1917.2 Osiris figurine

The loan of these objects would not interfere with Saffron Walden Museum's teaching and activities programme on Ancient Egypt, and may make more people in Hertfordshire aware of our collections.

Committee is asked to approve the loan of Egyptian antiquities to Hertford Museum.

Jamaican lacebark dress, cap and brush to the Commonwealth Institute, Bristol

The British Empire & Commonwealth Museum, Bristol, has requested the loan of a Jamaican child's lace-bark dress and cap with a brush, nos. 1833.59, 60 and 61 from the ethnography collections, for an exhibition. The exhibition *Slavery, Abolition and the Making of Modern Britain* is for one year initially from February 2007 but they also asked if the loan might be extended for a second year as well. The dress was lent to the Royal Albert Museum, Exeter, for a short exhibition a few years ago, but the cap is considered too fragile to travel. The Museum in Bristol is registered, has supplied details of environmental monitoring and the Conservation Officer will stipulate how the loaned items should be displayed to minimise risk. We may wish to display cap, dress and brush in Saffron Walden Museum during 2008, to supplement a travelling exhibition on slavery which is being planned by museums in Essex, so do not think it advisable to lend the dress and brush beyond 2007.

Committee is asked to approve the loan of the lace-bark dress and the brush to Bristol for one year only, and the provision of a digital image of the cap in lieu of loan.

3.6 Object Identification and Enquiries

Object identifications this quarter: 12 groups of objects for identification

Collection Enquiries this quarter: 101 by phone, fax, email, letter or casual enquiries in person (without an appointment)

3.7 Researchers

10 Research visits in person, including:

- Visit by Robert Freeman researching three generations of Goodwow's, Victorian/Edwardian musical instrument makers, to photograph the Orphcleide in the Museum collection made by James Goodwow.
- Local family connections to North American Indian objects
- Dr Zorina, a native of Belarus, who is currently staying with Professor Norris in Newport requested access to our 2D items. Dr Zorina is currently undertaking research on caring for Tartar manuscripts. She had previously visited the British Museum's archive stores but was keen to see how a smaller institution similar to her own cared for similar material.
- Visit by Ann Wise, curator at the Warner Archive, prior to her talk on the history of 19th century fashion as part of one of the Living Costume workshop days
- Archaeology research visits to study late Iron Age pottery, draw Roman finds

- from Great Chesterford for publication.
- Saffron Walden Almshouse trustees to view Edward VI portrait.

Other collections research

Stephanie Thompson is currently researching and cataloguing accessioned books on the Modes database. These were stored underneath the ceramics gallery cases and will now be more accessible to museum staff and the public. Ian Eaves was engaged to advise on swords and edged weapons prior to the forthcoming *Blades* exhibition.

4 Displays and Visitor Services

4.1 Permanent Galleries

Planned updating for archaeology displays, to take place in August and find a permanent display space in the galleries for recent acquisitions and loans.

4.2 Temporary Exhibitions

A small photographic display was mounted to mark the reunion of the HMS Lapwing crew and families. *A Return to Brambly Hedge* closed on 14 May and was returned to Epping Forest District Museum. During the period of the exhibition 3,116 people visited the museum – 1,210 children and 1,906 adults, plus 660 school pupils and teachers. *Beneath Essex – A Journey Through Time* opened on 27 May with a private view for Saffron Walden Museum Society and a week of family holiday activities with geological themes. This touring exhibition was prepared by Southend Museums Service and is supplemented by geology specimens from the collections and loaned items.

4.3 Visitor Services

Visitors

	Public		Schools		Total	
	2006	2005	2006	2005	2006	2005
April	2068	1403	296	431	2364	1834
May	1570	892	427	376	1997	1268
June	890	**1386	775	328	1665	1714
Total	4528	3681	1498	1135	6026	4816

**Napoleonic weekend events in grounds

Shop

	2006	2005
April	1045.15	845.78
May	913.17	691.09
June	1205.15	356.69
Total £	3163.47	1803.56

Tickets

	2006	2005
April	902.50*	672.00*
May	678.00	400.00
June	414.00	518.00
Total £	1994.50	1590.00

+ Mus Soc 492.00 439.50 (Annual Season tickets)
TOTAL £2486.50 £2029.50

Donations

	2006	2005
April	82.63	57.26
May	74.50	44.09
June	58.50	55.35
Total £	215.43	156.70

Publicity and Marketing

Museum events and activities continue to receive good local press coverage. Staff were interviewed by Dilly Barlow of BBC Radio4 for a programme in the series *Making History* transmitted on 6th June. The Curator contributed an article to *Rescue News*, the newsletter of Rescue, the British Archaeological Trust, about the acute problems of storing archaeological archives. Museum staff have contributed to the various marketing schemes for new tourism signage, finger posts and heritage trail.

5 Education, Events and Outreach

5.1 Education

No. of booked school sessions taken by Education Officer = 36

No. of school loan boxes sent out: =0 Reminiscence Boxes = 3

Analysis of School Visits and Pupil Numbers April- June 2006

No. of pupils in taught sessions with Education Officer (BVPI)*	991
No. of pupils taught in school visits by Education Officer (BVPI) (Thaxted School and St Mary's School, Saffron Walden)	199
No. of pupils in independent visits to Museum* (BVPI)	293
No. of pupils benefiting from schools loan boxes in classroom	0
Total no. of pupils benefiting educationally from Museum Service	1483
No. of adults with school parties visiting Museum*	214
Total pupils + adults (total school visitors in Visitor figures table under 4.3)	1498

* These three figures provide the total no. school visitors in Visitor figures table under 4.3
(BVPI) figures are those which constitute Audit Commission Best Value Performance Indicator 170b

Saffron Walden Nursery came for a highly successful visit with craft activities. The Curator gave one of a series of short Saturday afternoon talks for adults on the early Anglo-Saxon spearhead from Great Chesterford, Temple Precinct excavations. Students came via the Fairycroft Youth Centre to make a video interview with the Documentation & Exhibitions Officer.

5.2 Events at Museum

Date	Event and Staff	No. Attending
4/5/6 April	<i>Search for Signs of Spring</i> activities, Museum and Bridge End Garden (Education and Natural Sciences Officers)	653
10 April	Museum Society talk on Antarctic (Hilary Shibata)	36
3 May	Uttlesford Local History Recorders AGM	20
4 May	Museum Minis <i>Be a Knight or a Princess</i> (Education Officer)	26
8 May	Museum Society talk <i>Herbs and folklore</i>	15
12 May	Museum's 171 st Birthday coffee morning	40
12 May	<i>Evening Adventure</i> family event (Education and Visitor Services Officers)	25
19 May	Talk to Essex Museum Workers Group on conservation and care of collections (Conservation Officer)	14
26 May	Private view for <i>Beneath Essex</i> exhibition	40
27 May	Geology fun day (Education and Natural Sciences Officers)	141
30/31 May & 1 June	<i>Chill Out in the Ice Age</i> activities (Education and Natural Sciences Officers)	464
4 June	Private hire for a Christening party luncheon	30
8 June	Museum Society AGM	30
17 June	<i>Living Costume</i> Workshop (Conservation, Documentation & Exhibitions and Education Officers)	21
27 June	<i>Living Costume</i> Workshop (Conservation, Documentation & Exhibitions and Education Officers)	21
	Total	1,576

5.3 Outreach

Museum activities, talks and lectures at other venues:

Date	Event and Staff	No. Attending
26 April	Special Roadside Verges Project at Town Hall for EWT (Natural Sciences Officer)	25
10 May	Archaeology Henham 'roadshow' (Curator)	180
14 May	Archaeology Little Hallingbury 'roadshow' (Curator and Museum Society volunteers)	200
7 June	Presentation on archaeological archives and resource center project, Museum of London (Curator)	120
	Total	525

Other Museums and Local Groups supported (15)

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

- Great Dunmow Museum Society (Committee meeting, funding; Curator)
- Fry Art Gallery Society – new lighting scheme completed in both galleries, AGM (Conservation Officer and Curator)
- BRIE Biological Records Initiative Essex (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)
- Special Roadside Verges project (Natural Sciences Officer)
- Uttlesford Nature Conservation Working (Natural Sciences Officer).
- St, Mary's School, St. Thomas More School Education in Museums project (Education Officer)
- Bridge End Garden HLF bid – Future Education Programme (Education Officer)
- Saffron Walden Schools Cluster Group – Literacy Project (Education Officer)
- S.W. County High School – ‘AS’ Level Leisure Studies Course (Education Officer)
- Searchers Metal Detector Club (two meetings, Curator)
- Saffron Walden Initiative (heritage trail meeting, litter pick and plans for *Walden 1647* events next year)
- Elmdon Parish Church – loan of two table-top display cases for crafts display

Advice, support and involvement in organisations outside Uttlesford

Advice to Epping Forest District Museum on pest infestations and checking (Conservation officer)

Involvement with Professional and Specialist Organisations

Essex Museum Workers Group 19 May)

Museums in Essex Committee and Management Committee 5 and 28 June)

MLA East of England (formerly EEMLAC) – Regional Museums Group (31 May)

Hub Partners Meeting (26 May) (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

The Curator will be needing to set time aside to complete Accreditation forms and submissions, as well as ongoing work on the Heritage Quest Centre project and Forward Plan, not to mention the Marketing Strategy's action plan.

A study trip for Resource Centre Project Team and Museum Management Working Party members and staff is planned for 31 July to Fishbourne, Chichester to see the Collections Discovery Centre (very similar to the HQC in concept).

2 Buildings and Site

Replacement of air conditioning unit in natural history store.

Clearance of oil tank compound. Contractors will be spraying the ivy on the Castle at some stage, weather permitting.

3 Collections and Research

Ecological surveys of Special Roadside Verge sites in Uttlesford.

Archaeology undergraduate Frank Barlett will be undertaking work experience in August and will be assisting the Curator with work on updating displays amongst other tasks.

4 Displays and Visitor Services

Replacement of the video microscope system in the Discovery Centre.

5 Events, Education and Outreach

2 August Egyptology Workshop for Young Adults 14- 17 (partnership with the Fitzwilliam Museum)

5 August Egyptology Workshop for all adults (partnership with the Fitzwilliam museum)

9 September 'Spiders and Snakes' for all

15-16 September 'Africa' Family Holiday Activity

22-23 September 'Arctic' Family Holiday Activity

29 July – 2 September Writing Competition for children (in partnership with Harts bookshop)

Children's activities including 'minis' and half term planned until Christmas.

Next special exhibition: Living Costume Roadshow : Nov 6th – Jan 4th 2007