

**CURATOR'S QUARTERLY REPORT**  
**April – June 2007**

**1 Museum Management and Staff**

**1.1 Management**

**Heritage Quest Centre**

After an encouraging meeting with HLF officers on 26 April, it was confirmed that the application would be for a one-stage bid, requesting just under £1m from the HLF, but would include a full business plan which would strengthen the bid (though not strictly necessary for one-stage applications). The deadline for submissions is 14 September and the decision will be made at the HLF regional board meeting on 13 March 2008. The fund-raising strategy group has met twice: thanks to Jan Bullen, Pamela Kennedy and Jane Elsom (UDC) and Finella Boyle (local resident and Esmée Fairburn Foundation) for contributing ideas and experience. A guided Woodland Walk in West Wood on 21 April, organised by Heather and Paul Salvidge and Michael Rowley raised £127 towards the appeal. The Resource Centre Project Team will reconvene shortly after an inevitable break caused by local elections. A preliminary application to Viridor (by the Heritage Quest Trust Ltd) has been prepared by the Natural Sciences Officer, while negotiations between the HQ Trust Ltd and the Charity Commission continue.

**Audit Commission – Access to Services**

The Audit Commission made an on-site inspection on 24 May of various Council services, including the Museum, on the theme of access to services. Although a formal report has not yet been received, informal feedback on the Museum Service's approach to access and forward planning has apparently been very favourable.

**1.2 Staff**

Sue Miller kindly returned as a volunteer for a few days to help dismantle the *Blades* exhibition and put exhibits back in store. Interviews for a new Documentation & Exhibitions Officer were held on 25 May and we look forward to Susan Collier taking up the post on 2 July.

**1.3 Volunteers and Work Experience**

Pat Williams assisted with education activities. Greg Pugh continued to assist in stores work. Stephanie Thompson has cleared some of the backlog documentation work and Anne Wade continues to process the incoming textiles. The map survey is proceeding with Ann Holloway typing up Hamish McIlwray's surveys of the contents of map drawers.

**1.4 Training and Seminars Attended**

31 May MLA East of England seminar *Trusts and Sustainability* at Ickworth (Curator)  
21 June Introduction to Microsoft Project software (Frog, Shelford) for HQC project (Curator)  
25 April *Responding to Climate Change*, a Care of Collections group meeting (Conservation Officer)

**1.5 Health & Safety**

Meetings of the Coordination Group were attended by the Conservation Officer.  
Smoking is Illegal signs were placed on entrance doors to comply with legislation.

Workplace Assessment forms were produced to check conditions in stores, offices and galleries. Some of these have been filled in by pairs of staff and work is ongoing. Air-conditioning unit in natural history store was serviced.

### **1.6 Museum Sector**

No significant news to report. Preliminary discussion have taken place with Museum in Essex officers about a future touring exhibition on a Chinese theme to coincide with the Beijing Olympics. It is likely that the Museum will be asked to loan some Chinese costume for this.

## **2 Buildings and Site**

### **2.1 Museum Building**

Holes left in the east-end gable by work for the Natural History store air-conditioning unit, have now been plugged. Scaffolding has been erected at the rear of the Museum (from garden of 40 Castle Street) to allow inspection and maintenance of difficult-to-reach roof and gutters. Annual spraying of insecticide to deter pests took place, done by UDC pest control officer. A dead mouse was found in a pest trap in the kitchen in April. UDC pest control officer advised that it was a lone visitor. Kitchen thoroughly cleaned, disinfected and sprayed with insecticide. Museum electricity meter was replaced. Heavy rain caused a leak in the ceiling of Ceramics gallery. The excess volume forced water under the lead flashing; no repair to roof is required.

### **2.2 Laboratory/Schoolroom**

No significant items to report

### **2.3 Newport Store**

Heavy rain during the Bank Holiday weekend in May almost filled the culvert around the site. Water rose to within 1 ft of the top of the bank, but thankfully the rain abated and no flooding occurred.

### **2.4 40 Castle Street**

A large conifer in the back garden was felled, to prevent damage to the Museum from its roots and branches, and improve access to the back of the Museum building for scaffolding.

### **2.5 Grounds and Castle Site**

Mend-a-Main replaced the corroded water pipe supplying the Museum building. This involved digging up part of the driveway. New tarmac repaired the drive and pavement. Frost cover was removed from erratic boulder with assistance of UDC contact services staff.

## **3 Collections and Research**

### **3.1 Acquisitions**

**76 acquisitions** this quarter, including:

- A donation of 48 items of costume
- 8 small archaeological treasure finds, purchased by the Society (details below)
- Television purchased by an Elsenham resident in 1948
- Samples of stitching and inspection and teaching certificates, issued in 19<sup>th</sup> century to a Saffron Walden woman (transfer from Colchester Museums)
- Group of documents and items associated with Eric Mizen, former local resident and headboy of Boys' British School, East Street, Saffron Walden (donated by his daughter)

Treasure finds purchased by the Society:

2005 T355	Small silver medieval buckle, Felsted
2005 T492	Silver-gilt late medieval finger-ring, Clavering, inscribed "gode be trewe"
2005 T495	Bronze Age gold ring of rolled-up gold sheet, Takeley <i>Grant-aided by MLA / V&amp;A Purchase Grant Fund and the Headley Trust</i>
2005 T496	Roman silver mount in form of small bust of god Mars, nose and crest damaged, from 'North Essex' [Radwinter]
2005 T562	Medieval silver mount engraved with winged lion, High Roding <i>Grant-aided by MLA / V&amp;A Purchase Grant Fund and the Headley Trust</i>
2005 T564	Post-medieval Silver Coin Pendant, High Roding
2006 T27	Silver-gilt medieval ring, inscribed "Ave Maria", High Easter
2006 T227	Silver Roman spoon handle, from 'Saffron Walden area' [Manuden]

### **3.2 Collections Care and Conservation**

**Care of collections has included:**

- Pest trapping in galleries and storage areas.
- Liaising on costume items to be conserved by specialists documenting; packing, and labelling incoming textile items including 1950s – 1960s costume and accessories
- Processing incoming museum objects conserved by students at the University of Lincoln under supervision, and associated paperwork

**Remedial conservation work has included:**

Woodworm treatment of a c.1948 Invicta television

### **3.3 Documentation**

**No new accessions catalogued this quarter, because there has been no Documentation & Exhibitions Officer in post.**

Backlog documentation: natural sciences 8 new records, 12 records updated.

Basic accession records have been completed for recent acquisitions.

### **3.4 Loans In**

**Loans In: 0**

A billhook on loan from Nick Gordon was returned to the New Walk Museum in Leicester.

### **3.5 Loans Out**

**Loans Out: 2**

Anglo-Saxon bowl, brooch, beads and 2 textile fragments items for an exhibition *Hidden Treasures of Kent* at Maidstone Museum, as previously agreed.

A panel of Delft tiles and two decorative carved wood panels were retrieved from the Leaders' Office, Council Offices, following local elections. The environment and especially lighting in the Council Offices make it inappropriate to loan works on paper, original photographs or any light-sensitive material.

### **3.6 Object Identification and Enquiries**

**Object identifications this quarter: 5**

**Collection Enquiries this quarter: 75** by phone, fax, email, letter or casual enquiries in person (without an appointment)

### **3.7 Researchers**

**7 research visits in person**, including:

- Ethnography: Oceania & North American objects
- Sion House maps and sale catalogue
- Military documents
- Fan
- Art motifs: pargetting and Celtic motifs

## **4 Displays and Visitor Services**

### **4.1 Permanent Galleries**

Ongoing repairs to lighting in gallery areas by Chelmsford Electrical.

Chelmsford Electrical also investigated ongoing problems with electrical circuits in Discovery Centre and Natural History Gallery causing the circuit breakers to trip out intermittently. New switches, wiring and circuit breakers were fitted and the problem seems to have been solved.

### **4.2 Temporary Exhibitions**

*Blades – A Cutting Edge Exhibition* closed on Sunday 3 June. A new loaned-in exhibition, *Making the Past Present*, about the National Monument Record and featuring images from all over Essex, opened on 16 June, and will run until 18 September.

### **4.3 Visitor Services**

#### **Visitors**

	<b>Public</b>		<b>Schools</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	<b>2007</b>	2006	<b>2007</b>	2006	<b>2007</b>	2006
April	<b>1308</b>	2068	<b>188</b>	296	<b>1496</b>	2364
May	<b>2794*</b>	1570	<b>389</b>	429	<b>3183</b>	1999
June	<b>921</b>	890	<b>542</b>	775	<b>1463</b>	1665
<b>Total</b>	<b>5023</b>	4528	<b>1119</b>	1500	<b>6142</b>	6028

\* Walden 1647 events with Sealed Knot camped in grounds 18/19/20 May

#### **Shop**

	<b>2007</b>	2006
April	<b>406.37</b>	1045.15
May	<b>708.36</b>	828.17
June	<b>818.65</b>	1205.15
<b>Total £</b>	<b>1933.38</b>	3078.47 + £85 TIC

#### **Tickets**

	<b>2007</b>	2006
April	<b>621.50</b>	902.50
May	<b>696.50</b>	678.00

June	<b>424.50</b>	414.00
<b>Total £</b>	<b>1742.50</b>	1994.50
	+	+
	<b>£355.50</b>	£492
	<b>Mus soc</b>	Mus Soc

### **Donations**

	<b>2007</b>	2006
April	<b>57.37</b>	82.63
May	<b>80.89</b>	74.50
June	<b>67.32</b>	58.50
<b>Total £</b>	<b>205.58</b>	215.43

### **Publicity and Marketing**

Three new leaflets have been designed and printed, in fulfilment of the Museum's Marketing Plan: a general publicity leaflet for the Museum, a new Exhibitions & Events leaflet and a leaflet featuring all four public museums and art gallery collections in north-west Essex (Ashdon, Dunmow, Fry Art Gallery and Saffron Walden Museum) to encourage people to explore Uttlesford's 'hidden treasures'.

## **5 Education, Events and Outreach**

### **5.1 Education**

**No. of booked school sessions** taken by Education Officer: 27

**No. of school loan boxes sent out:** 7 natural history 1 Roman  
Reminiscence loans 0

### **Analysis of School Visits and Pupil Numbers**

No. of pupils in taught sessions with Education Officer (BVPI)*	709
No. of pupils taught in school visits by Education Officer (BVPI)	72
No. of pupils in independent visits to Museum* (BVPI)	206
No. of pupils benefiting from schools loan boxes in classroom	120
<b>Total no. of pupils benefiting educationally from Museum Service</b>	<b>1107</b>

These two figures + 188 teachers / adults provide total no. school visitors in Visitor figures table under 4.3

BVPI 170a Total Users of Museum Service this quarter 8,863

BVPI 170b Total Visitors to Museum this quarter 6,142

BVPI 170c Total School pupils in organised visits / off-site tuition 987

### **5.2 Events at Museum**

The new laptop and portable digital projector, funded by the Museum Society, have been acquired via the Council's IT department and have already been used by the Curator and is available for speakers in the Society's lecture programme.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event and Staff</b>	<b>No. Attending</b>
3, 4 April	Family Activity I-Spy Spring using Museum and Bridge End Garden (Education Officer, Natural Sciences Officer)	338
12 May	Green Mist Rising – Essex storytellers, Schoolroom	40
12 May	Museum's 172 <sup>nd</sup> Birthday Cocktail Party to thank volunteers and supporters	44
19-20 May	Walden 1647 Sealed Knot living history camp in Museum grounds	550
19 May	Visit by Fan Circle International (Education Officer)	62
20 June	Evening induction and tours for new Uttlesford Councillors	10
28 June	Museum Society AGM	41
29,30 May	Family Activities + Swordplay workshop (Ed. Officer)	296
3. May, 7 June	Museum Minis (Education Officer)	82
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,463</b>

### **5.3 Outreach**

#### **Museum activities, talks and lectures at other venues:**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event and Staff</b>	<b>No. Attending</b>
16 April	Museum Society lecture, Littlebury parish history project, St Mary's Parish Rooms	30
19 April	Presentation at South Midlands Museums Federation seminar, Peterborough, on archaeological archives and museums (Curator)	25
21 April	Eco Footprint event in Town Hall was organised by Local Agenda 21 Forum for the Mayor's Sustainability Year. Museum loaned display boards, displays about ancient woodland and special verges, and specimens of birds and mammals to support the event.	100
14 May	Museum Society lecture on 17 <sup>th</sup> century witchcraft trials, St Mary's Parish Rooms	65
	<b>Total</b>	<b>220</b>

#### **Other Museums and Local Groups supported Please edit for Apr-Jun**

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

- Saffron Walden Initiative (liaison over Walden 1647, use of grounds and display of documents various staff; use of forecourt for litter pick-up evening)
- Ashdon Village Museum (images for publicity leaflet, Curator)
- Great Dunmow Museum Society (images for publicity leaflet, Curator)
- Fry Art Gallery Society – (committee meeting and AGM, Curator) Advice on Emergency Plan and calibration of environmental monitoring equipment (Conservation Officer)
- Searchers metal-detecting club (2 meetings, Curator)
- BRIE Biological Records in Essex (3 meetings, Natural Sciences Officer)
- Essex Field Club (2 meetings, Natural Sciences Officer)
- Essex Wildlife Trust (Uttlesford) Committee (Natural Sciences Officer)
- Special Roadside Verges project (Natural Sciences Officer)
- Uttlesford Nature Conservation Working (Natural Sciences Officer).
- Bridge End Garden - Family Holiday Activities (Education Officer)

## **Advice, support and involvement in organisations outside Uttlesford**

The Museum hosted a regional meeting of Museum Development Officers on 16 April

The Curator has attended the Museums in Essex Committee AGM and a Hub Partners meeting (East of England Museum Hub).

The Education Officer collaborated with Chesterton Community College and Trainee teachers in a project to encourage the use of museums by secondary schools.

Conservation Officer attended EMWG at Epping Forest District Museum

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## **Future Programme and Projects**

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

## **Heritage Quest Centre and HLF Application**

With a short and concentrated timetable to prepare and submit the bid to HLF for mid-June, and to continue to fund-raise as a matter of urgency, staff's work will be strictly prioritise as far as possible. It is inevitable that some areas of the service will be comparatively neglected, especially with no Documentation & Exhibitions officer in post until mid-summer.

### **1 Museum Management and Staff**

Susan Collier takes up the post of Documentation & Exhibitions Officer from 2 July

### **2 Buildings and Site**

### **3 Collections and Research**

Cuming Museum staff to visit in August to begin process of returning long-term ethnographic loans to the Cuming Museum (loaned items on display will not be affected).

### **4 Displays and Visitor Services**

### **5 Education, Events and Outreach**

Ecological surveys of special roadside verge sites over the summer (Natural Sciences Officer and team of volunteers)

5 Aug Egyptology Workshop for all adults (partnership with the Fitzwilliam Museum)

9 Aug *Spiders and Snakes* for all

15, 16 Aug *Africa* Family Holiday Activity

22, 23 Aug *Arctic* Family Holiday Activity

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