

**CURATOR'S QUARTERLY REPORT  
July – September 2007**

**1 Museum Management and Staff**

**1.1 Management**

**Heritage Quest Centre**

Preparation of the application documents for the Heritage Lottery Fund has dominated work this quarter. Copies of the Application Form, 100-page Business Plan and Supporting Documents were delivered to the HLF regional office in Cambridge on 12 September. The outcome will be known after 13 March, meanwhile we can expect the HLF case officer assigned to our application, Sandra Hirons, to contact us with questions and requests for further information as she works through the application over the next few months. This report notes with gratitude the work, advice and encouragement contributed by Council staff and members, volunteers and members of the Museum Society, especially David Laing and Tony Watson, and (on the fund-raising front) Janet Bullen. Both the Resource Centre Project Team and the Fund Raising Strategy Group have met twice this quarter, in July and September. Due to continuing difficulties with the Charities Commission in registering the Heritage Quest Trust, much effort has also been expended in finding a solution to this, to enable the HQ Centre to benefit from landfill tax and other capital grants.

A significant amount of fund-raising remains to be done over the winter, with targets for sources to approach, grants to apply for and businesses to approach. Uttlesford Life and local support helps to keep the project in the public eye. A Pudding Evening on 17 August by Little Walden WI raised £210 for HQC funds.

**UDC Finances**

Museum Society members will be aware from articles in the local press that a £1.1m deficit has made it necessary for the Council to take urgent measures to reduce spending. This has effectively frozen any further spending from revenue budgets for the Museum (as for all Council services) for the remainder of this financial year, except for necessary items which must be approved at director level. Services are expected to raise income from discretionary fees and charges by a minimum of 2.5% from no later than 1 April 2008. Proposals for this need to be submitted imminently and a draft for new Museum charges is attached.

**Horse-drawn vehicles: Priors Hall Barn / English Heritage**

After numerous approaches to English Heritage over the past two years, we have now been told that the final decision by EH was to refuse permission to display any vehicles in Priors Hall Barn, Widdington, although so far they have ignored requests for a written reply and a reason for their decision. This has been very frustrating for Museum staff and for the landowner at Priors Hall, who has consequently requested that we remove the hayrick stand, which was being conserved outside at Priors Hall with the intention of reconstructing it as an outdoors exhibit and as a complement to the Essex Hay Wagon (one of the vehicles we had hoped to display inside the Barn). The hayrick base will need to be dismantled and stored either in Newport if possible, or outside in the oil-tank compound adjacent to the Museum if it cannot fit into the

Newport store. Meanwhile we are making a final proposal to EH with the landowner to see if they will permit a smaller display of agricultural tools, or at very least a one-day road-show next April.

### **1.2 Staff**

Susan Collier was welcomed on 2nd July as the new Documentation and Display Officer. Our cleaner, James Bolder, left in mid August, since when cleaning services have been provided by agency staff engaged by UDC.

### **1.3 Volunteers and Work Experience**

Sarah Callow from SWCHS had a 2 week placement where she completed various useful projects, gain museum experience, and helped out in the Lab. The Guy Maynard papers were sorted, some re-packed, and some rolled items flattened, by Stephanie Thompson. Anne Wade continued cataloguing packing and marking incoming 20<sup>th</sup> century textile and costume collections. Four volunteers continue indexing and cataloguing document archives and maps.

### **1.4 Training and Seminars Attended**

Museum staff received training on the Modes XML database system. This was provided at the Museum by Richard Langley of the Modes Users Association. An additional afternoon of 'trouble shooting' helped to resolve some of the problems with the museum's Modes database. Nine staff including casual assistants attended a Welcome All course subsidised by the East of England Tourist Board on 13 September. This will help us to improve our service to people with disabilities. The Conservation Officer attended a training course on Equalities at UDC. A training session covering security, visitor services and child protection was held for casual staff.

### **1.5 Health & Safety**

Workplace Assessments were completed and an action plan has been produced. Chemical data sheets were reviewed (COSHH) and an updated list with quantities produced.

### **1.6 Museum Sector**

Museums in Essex are planning a touring exhibition on a Chinese theme for 2008 as part of the celebrations surrounding the Beijing Olympics. Exhibits from Saffron Walden Museum's collection of Chinese costume are expected to be included.

## **2 Buildings and Site**

### **2.1 Museum Building**

Pest trapping in Museum stores and galleries took place in July. Scaffolding was erected at the rear of the Museum in July to allow maintenance work and checking of rear roofs, gutters and down pipes. There have been problems with the gas boilers, now hopefully resolved. The theft of an Egyptian offering platter in August led to the discovery of a fault in the CCTV processor, which Saffron Security and the manufacturer are dealing with (see separate report).

### **2.2 Laboratory/Schoolroom**

Gutters around the building have been cleared. The Tennis Club agreed to cut back some vegetation overhanging into the School yard.

### **2.3 Newport Store**

The alarms were serviced by Secom in September.

## **2.4 40 Castle Street**

UDC has agreed to engage Roalco to work on the rear of 40, Castle Street, where there are a few areas of peeling paint and water penetration through the walls. This has affected electric wiring in two rooms, to the extent that two double sockets had to be disconnected by an electrician because they were potentially dangerous and were causing circuit breakers to trip.

## **2.5 Grounds and Castle Site**

Ivy has been removed from the workshop and compound fence by the Security Officer. Roalco repaired a damaged manhole cover by the Museum drive, repaired the cracked wall of the entrance ramp and laid a concrete base and ramp in the bin compound. Water pipe holes were asphalted over.

# **3 Collections and Research**

## **3.1 Acquisitions**

**80 acquisitions** this quarter, including:

- A selection of magazines from The Saffron Walden Technical and Modern School
- Possessions of a Tibetan Monk
- Postcards of Saffron Walden General Hospital in 1917
- Costumes and textiles from the 1950s to the 1970s

## **3.2 Collections Care and Conservation**

**Care of collections has included:** The Military case was cleaned and objects examined. Shields stored on the floor in the ethnography store were wall hung for their safety. Costumes were mounted for the Making of Modern Essex display.

### **Remedial conservation work has included:**

About 40 objects despatched to University of Lincoln at the end of September for remedial conservation by conservation students. Incoming treated objects include an 18th century fan, natural history specimens, large gilt frames, archaeological pots, 18th century shoes and some social history objects. The hay rick base at present outside Priors Hall Barn was treated to stabilise iron and some pieces straightened by a blacksmith were returned. A 1948 television set was examined and treated. A Victorian brown silk gown was treated by a textile conservator pending display.

## **3.3 Documentation**

**75 new accessions catalogued this quarter**

Backlog documentation: human history 62 new records, natural history 3 new records, updated records 37.

## **3.4 Loans In**

**Loans In: 1**

Romano-British Casket Burial from Great Canfield including lion bronze mounts, tinned bronze box catch, 2 bronze handles, iron nails, Samian pottery, and vessels of green and blue glass, have been loaned by the finder and landowner for display in the special exhibition opening in January 2008 and thereafter in the Archaeology Gallery.

## **3.5 Loans Out**

**Loans Out: 0**

Epping Museum has used pictures of the ~~Page 3~~ fan in their Slavery exhibition text panels.

A further selection of objects has been taken to Lincoln for conservation by students. Anglo-Saxon objects loaned to Maidstone Museum have been returned.

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

**Object identifications this quarter: 20**

**Collection Enquiries this quarter: 53**

### **3.7 Researchers**

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

- Essex Wildlife Trust investigating biological records held at the Museum as part of a review of Uttlesford district wildlife sites.
- North Essex Vineyards
- Bell family history
- Bronze Age Spearheads; also Bronze Age archer's brace
- English 17<sup>th</sup> century tin-glazed charger
- Bassingbourne Hall finds ( from a Stansted Airport site)
- Collection of glass slides for a magic lantern show

#### **Other research:**

The annual programme of ecological surveys of Special Roadside Verge sites has been completed and the annual reports produced (Natural Sciences Officer). Visitors include the new Finds Liaison Officer for Essex, Laura Mclean. Continuing contact with the Cuming Museum to identify objects from their original collection pending possible return of same.

### **3.8 MA Monument Fellowship awarded to Len Pole for ethnography project**

Former Curator Len Pole has been awarded one of the new Museums Association Monument Fellowships which enable retiring professionals to undertake a project in their area of expertise and pass on their knowledge to the next generation. Len will be returning to the Museum from August 2008 to work on the ethnography collection, and benefits will include enhancing staff's ability to interpret and use ethnographic collections in displays and educational work, and exploring ways of making ethnographic collections relevant to modern society.

## **4 Displays and Visitor Services**

### **4.1 Permanent Galleries**

There remains a backlog of work for the Curator to complete in the Archaeology Gallery, HQC project and fund-raising permitting. The main priority is to redisplay the island case in Ethnography with a selection of East Asian costumes, textiles and objects.

### **4.2 Temporary Exhibitions**

*Making the Past Present: Images of Essex from the National Monument Record* finished 18<sup>th</sup> September 2007. *The Making of Modern Essex 1946-2006* opened on 29<sup>th</sup> September and runs until 6<sup>th</sup> January 2008. Both these travelling exhibitions are supported by objects from the collections.

### **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
July	<b>1247</b>	1442	<b>352</b>	770	<b>1599</b>	2212
August	<b>2038</b>	2728	<b>98</b>	240	<b>2136</b>	2968
September	<b>913</b>	1188	<b>317</b>	431	<b>1230</b>	1619
<b>Total</b>	<b>4198</b>	5358	<b>767</b>	1441	<b>4965</b>	6799

Down-turn in numbers reflects both poor summer weather and greater numbers of evening and special events in 2006. Pupils from Bell College and Pearce House (staying at YHA in Saffron Walden) contributed significantly to summer figures in previous years, but closure of Bell College and Pearce House has affected school summer visits. Education Officer took annual leave at end of school term in July (16-24), having to run summer activities throughout August.

#### **Shop**

	<b>2007</b>	2006
July	<b>376.02</b>	711.04
August	<b>816.54</b>	870.11
Sept	<b>334.95</b>	584.23
TIC	<b>455.00</b>	575.00
Book launch (net)	<b>183.00</b>	
<b>Total £</b>	<b>2164.95</b>	2740.38

#### **Tickets**

	<b>2007</b>	2006
July	<b>517.50</b>	460.50
August	<b>946.00</b>	1113.00
Sept	<b>377.00</b>	429.50
<b>Total £</b>	<b>1840.50</b>	2003.00

#### **Donations**

	<b>2007</b>	2006
July	<b>96.46</b>	46.90
August	<b>99.69</b>	158.00
Sept	<b>58.08</b>	70.93
<b>Total £</b>	<b>254.23</b>	275.83

#### **Publicity and Marketing**

Good coverage as usual for Museum activities in the local press, including the signing of Lottery application by the Chief Executive. *Uttlesford Life* front cover and centre spread also featured the Heritage Quest Centre project and produced a number of donations sent by readers. For a programme about saffron, the arrival of the crocus at the Museum was filmed by Kingfisher TV for *Tales from the Country* to be shown on Channel 4 next year.

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

The Museum is taking part in the *Partners in Time* project with additional financial input to encourage schools which do not usually visit museums.

## **5.1 Education**

**No. of booked school sessions** taken by Education Officer: 12

**No. of school loan boxes sent out:** 7 natural history

**Reminiscence loan boxes:** 1

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

No. of pupils in taught sessions with Education Officer (BVPI)*	392
No. of pupils taught in visits to schools by Education Officer (BVPI)	0
No. of pupils in independent visits to Museum* (BVPI)	238
No. of pupils benefiting from schools loan boxes in classroom	60
<b>Total no. of pupils benefiting educationally from Museum Service</b>	<b>690</b>

\*These two figures for pupils + 81 teachers / adults provide total no. school visitors ;  
Add Arkesden Playgroup (56) in 5.2 below to equal Visitor figures table under 4.3

BVPI 170a Total Users of Museum Service this quarter 7643

BVPI 170b Total Visitors to Museum this quarter 4965

BVPI 170c Total School pupils in organised visits / off-site tuition 630

## **5.2 Events at Museum**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event and Staff</b>	<b>No. Attending</b>
4 July	Induction for Saffron Walden Town councillors CW, SK, JG, ME	6
14 Sept	Visit of Chairs of district councils - tea and talk CW, ME, JG, SK, SC, LM	45
5 May	Museum Minis JG	24
11 July *	Clavering and Arkesden Playgroup JG	56
18 July	UDC staff and councillors evening party	150
8,9,15,16, 22,23 Aug	Family Holiday Activities JG	707
	<b>Total</b>	<b>988</b>

## **5.3 Outreach**

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

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event and Staff</b>	<b>No. Attending</b>
9 July	Talk to Brain Valley Archaeological Society (Curator)	27
14 July	Joint Holiday Activity Saffron Walden Library JG	50
1 Aug	Radwinter Over 60's Group JG	32
30 Aug	S.W. Day Centre Jubilee Group	36
15 Sept	Saffron Walden Museum Society stall at Saffron Walden Initiative Communities Day SWMS, SC, ME, SK	110
19 Sept	Norfolk Art Fund visit (talk from Curator)	10
	<b>Total</b>	<b>238</b>

### **Other Museums and Local Groups supported : 10 organisations**

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

- Fry Art Gallery Society – (committee meeting, Curator) Advice on Emergency Plan, lighting and calibration of environmental monitoring equipment (Conservation Officer)

- Searchers metal-detecting club (1 meeting, Curator)
- Essex Field Club (Natural Sciences Officer)
- Saffron Walden Botany Group (Natural Sciences Officer)
- Special Roadside Verges project (Natural Sciences Officer)
- Sustainable Uttlesford LA21 Farming, Wildlife and Countryside Group (2 meetings, Natural Sciences Officer)
- Uttlesford Nature Conservation Working (Natural Sciences Officer).
- Collections meeting of EMWG at Braintree Museum (Documentation Officer, Conservation Officer)
- Great Days Out consortium ( Visitor Services Officer)
- Saffron Walden Scout movement - The Education Officer prepared special Museum activities for visiting scouts from the international jamboree at Gilwell Park.

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

The Curator has attended meetings of the Regional Museums Group (MLA East of England) and the Archaeological Advisory Committee for Essex

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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**

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

Intensive local fundraising and trust applications to raise matching funding in advance of Heritage Lottery Fund result in March 2008.

### **2 Buildings and Site**

Improvements to insulation of the roof space may be taking place this winter.

### **3 Collections and Research**

Work on sorting the ethnography collection and identifying historic Cuming Loan items for return to the Cuming Museum will be a priority this quarter.

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

Preparation of the next temporary exhibition, which features objects recently acquired by the Museum entitled *Every Object Tells a Story*

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

6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> October *The Big Draw* art activity in conjunction with Essex County Council, Bridge End Garden and the Fry Art Gallery.

23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> October Family Half Term Holiday Activities – *Tutankhamen's Treasures*

2<sup>nd</sup> December *Christmas Tree Decoration Day*

First Thursday of Oct., Nov., Dec. – *Museum Minis – Activities for the Under 5's and their Carers.*