

**SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM
CURATOR'S QUARTERLY REPORT
July - September 2009**

1 Museum Management and Staff

1.1 Management

Heritage Quest Centre

Since the announcement by Sainsbury's of their intention to build a store on the adjacent development site, subject to planning permission, the tender for construction has been put on hold pending negotiations between the Council, Museum Society, Sainsbury's and the Heritage Lottery Fund. Meanwhile other major funding partners have been briefed on the situation, and a watch is being kept on matching funding which may be put at risk by prolonged delays.

Accreditation Biennial Return

Museums accredited by the MLA must complete a biennial return with reports on progress against 'areas for improvement'. The Museum's return, submitted in September, contained a brief report on the HQC project which will deliver improvements required in collections care and documentation. The Forward Plan will also need reviewing once present issues with the HQC project have been resolved. Also in compliance with accreditation, microfilm security copies of the three latest completed Accession Registers, covering acquisitions up to 2008, have been made by Essex Record Office.

1.2 Staff

Learning Officer Aleksandra Jones left in August to relocate to Devon, after an extremely successful year in which she had contributed much to education, activities and the Museum in general. Appointment of a successor is currently suspended, consequently school bookings for taught sessions are being lost. Volunteer Chris Phillips and other Museum staff are maintaining the Museum Minis programme and family holiday activities this term, and school loan boxes continue to be available.

1.3 Volunteers and Work Experience

Tony Morton is working with Natural Sciences Officer to input data from ecological surveys of verges into the Special Roadside Verges database. Caroline Clements SWCHS had some work experience in July, Rosie Brown assisted the Conservation Officer on various projects, Ian Sharpe and Hamish McIlwrick sorted out lantern slides and other photographic glass plates (the CJE collection and Samuel Wenman's), and Anne Wade worked on the textile collection. The Museum also hosted several short-term student volunteers over the summer. Christine Housden has joined the desk volunteers.

1.4 Training and Meetings Attended

Date	Training / Seminar	Staff
9 July	Costume & Textile identification seminar, Colchester	Conservator
27 Aug	Fire Awareness training, Mike Thomason, UDC	All staff
15-16 Sept	Modes Users Association – Modes database Client and Administrator training course	Documentation & Exhibitions Officer

1.5 Health & Safety

Fire extinguishers were serviced. Two new water fire extinguishers were placed in the natural history store and inside the entrance to the roof space; if used they will cause less damage to specimens than foam. A Fire Officer visited the Museum to discuss matters with the JOSHRAC coordinator from UDC, and carry out an inspection under the new fire safety legislation. The only new requirement is that Emergency Lighting needs to be tested regularly by the Security Officer (in addition to tests by Chubb) and this is now in hand.

2 Buildings and Site

2.1 Museum Building

A new iron grille lockable gate has been fitted at the end of the Museum to close off the passage to the fire escapes and rear of the building when the Museum is unoccupied. Pest trapping in natural history stores and galleries took place in August. Halogen bulbs throughout the Museum started a programme of replacement by extremely low energy LED bulbs, in conjunction with Jake Roos from UDC.

2.2 Laboratory/Schoolroom

A new gutter was installed outside the Lab office as the old one has been filling with leaves and rainwater, and damaging the walls by soaking through to the Conservation Officer's office.

2.3 Newport Store

Nothing to report this quarter

2.4 40 Castle Street

Nothing to report this quarter

2.5 Grounds and Castle Site

Contractors' work on the wall behind 30-34 Castle Street has been progressing steadily and is expected to finish soon. Arrangements are in hand with Environmental Services and other Castle Street residents for the removal of the overgrown sycamore behind the Museum on 12-13 October. The Conservation freezer in the Workshop was defrosted and cleaned. Vandals damaged new signage in the Museum grounds and overturned the contractors' portaloos on several occasions. All instances have been reported to the Police, and signs have been replaced with more secure fixings.

3 Collections and Research

3.1 Acquisitions and Disposals

36 acquisitions this quarter including

- Silver bowls trophy from the Gate Bowling Club
- Weighing hooks from Clavering
- Booklet, 'History of Christianity in the Essex Region'
- First edition of 'The Exchange and Mart', 1868
- 1950s ladies woollen coat
- Collection of children's toy trains, 'Thunderbird' craft and 'Dinky' cars

- 1920 British passport belonging to Walter Dix, brother of Violet Dix
- Japanese fan
- Collection of commercial material (can opener, gas mantle) from the former pottery shop in Quendon
- Collection of surveying equipment, books and name plaques belonging to Ernest Jennings; surveyor, auctioneer and land agent in Saffron Walden
- 8 natural history specimens – mammals, birds, reptile and rocks
- Papers and correspondence of Superintendent Daniels relating to the Moat Farm Murder investigations, of which he was in charge

The set of eight damaged oil paintings previously approved for deaccession and disposal, were finally transferred to the Hamilton Kerr Institute in Cambridge for use by students studying painting conservation. The transfer completed 2 July 2009 (Exit Form: 42), no museums or galleries having responded to the notice placed in the *Museums Journal*.

Collections Care and Conservation

Care of collections has included:

- Surface cleaning and packing away Chinese garments from Silks of Life touring exhibition

Remedial conservation work has included:

- Mounting prints and photographs on ‘sheep’ theme to supplement the Henry Moore exhibition
- Cleaning and rolling up of bark cloths that were on display in Worlds of Man since 1984 and will now go to store, to be replaced by others
- The Oceania case was cleaned and all objects dusted by students Victoria Nash and Nicola Whalley
- Treatment of a child’s bonnet and dress, a man’s shirt and a pair of combinations

3.3 Documentation

32 new accessions catalogued this quarter.

	New Acquisitions	Backlog (existing collections not previously catalogued on Modes)	Edits and Updates to existing records
Human History collections	24	9	257
Natural History collections	8	30	690
Total (all collections)	32	39	947

3.4 Loans In

3 loans in, borrowed for display in the *Henry Moore: Sheep* exhibition

- 4 Bishop Blaise trade tokens loaned by Judy Brooke
- Oil painting ‘Driving Sheep on Windmill Hill’ by Bernard Sickert, from private local owners
- 11 cloth seals loaned by Tony Carter

1 renewal of long term loan (LN405) to 4 October 2014

- Embroidered stump work casket on loan from Mrs Lindy Date, currently on display in costume gallery

3.5 Loans Out

1 loan out

- Set of historic kitchen implements loaned to Helen Tedman of UDC, to illustrate talk at Saffron Walden Day Centre regarding food health and hygiene.

3.6 Object Identification and Enquiries

Object identifications this quarter: 15

Collection Enquiries this quarter: 71 by phone, fax, email, letter or casual enquiries in person (without appointment)

3.7 Researchers and Len Pole's MA Monument fellowship project

11 research visits in person, in addition to regular collections volunteers, including:

- Clippings of Saffron Walden Gazette newspaper articles
- Helder-Wedge collection documentation for ABC Radio National interview (Fiona Gruber)
- Clavering sales catalogues
- Wendens Ambo newspaper cuttings
- Audley End House archives
- James Duberry collection
- Stansted Airport ECC Archive and animal bone records
- Wallace the Lion, George Wombwell and Dunn brothers records
- Camera collection
- Christina Riggs studied wrappings of the mummified child, which may be a girl not a boy, and is later in date by some 200-300 years than previously thought (Roman 2nd century not Ptolemaic)
- Mesolithic flint from excavations in Uttlesford

Len Pole's ethnography project

Len Pole's Fellowship project concluded on 18 September with a verbal report to Essex Museum Workers Group and submission of reports to the Museums Association, who commented on its success of Len's project and asked Len to give a presentation at MA Conference in London on 5 October. To continue and extend this work with world cultures collections in museums in the region, a new bid to the *Effective Collections* programme has been submitted and we have just heard that our application has been successful. Discussion with the MA will take place over the next few months to plan the scope of the project with partner museums, and it is expected to start in April 2010.

3.8 Insurance

Jonathan Dutton has completed most of his survey of the ceramics and glass collections, and we are awaiting his return to finish the work during the autumn.

4 Displays and Visitor Services

4.1 Permanent Galleries

The duck-billed platypus in the *Origins* exhibition proved to be very popular with visitors and it has been put on display in the Victorian Museum Workroom on the natural history gallery.

Refurbishment of the Ceramics gallery, starting with the Chinese export porcelain and English soft

paste porcelain case has begun and involves painting the case interiors matte light blue. Exhibits meanwhile are being cleaned and packed in storage, and a review of label texts and production of new labels is due to start.

4.2 Temporary Exhibitions

Origins of the Museum Collections, Creatures and Cultures from around the World ended on 31 August 2009.

Henry Moore: Sheep (etchings, sculpture and found works) opened on 12 September 2009, with a private view for members and guests on Friday 11 September. It was co-curated by staff from the Henry Moore Foundation and Carla Purdue, Documentation & Exhibitions Officer.

4.3 Visitor Services

	Public		Schools incl adults		Total	
	2009	2008	2009	2008	2009	2008
July	1267	1153	199	275	1466	1428
August	1745	1917	-	-	1745	1917
Sept	*1101	852	50	131	1101	983
Total	4113	3922	249	406	4362	4328

Shop

	2009	2008
July	494.78	527.78
August	494.13	794.28
Sept	588.00	661.60
TIC crocus	461.50	661.60
Totals	2038.41	2172.17

Tickets

	2009	2008
July	598.25	559.00
August	1102.75	881.00
Sept	*664.00	340.50
Totals	2365.00	1780.50

*Henry Moore Sheep exhibition generated large number of visitors from 11 Sept, many over Heritage Open Weekend 12-13 Sept when admission was free for all.

Donations

	2009	2008
July	65.53	82.37
August	101.56	109.39
Sept	100.12	76.90
Total £	267.21	268.66

Publicity, Marketing and Website

National, regional and local publicity and lists Page 65 the Henry Moore exhibition have brought in

considerable numbers of visitors. Len Pole and the Curator have recorded interviews on the Museum and John Helder Wedge collection for broadcast on Radio National in Australia in November. A new edition of the Saffron Crocus publication has been produced in conjunction with the Tourist Information Centre, which will bear the cost of printing and sell copies to the museum.

5 Education, Events and Outreach

5.1 Education

No. of booked school sessions taken by Learning Officer: **3**

No. of school loan boxes sent out: **1** : Fossils

Reminiscence loan boxes: **0**

Analysis of School Visits and Pupil Numbers

No. of pupils in sessions taught by Learning Officer	*	73
No. of pupils taught in visits to schools by Learning Officer (Burnham)		10
No. of pupils in independent visits to Museum	*	136
No. of pupils benefiting from schools loan boxes in classroom		150
Total no. of pupils benefiting educationally from Museum Service (Local Indicator 12b; all Performance Indicators listed at the end of report)		369

* These figures (209), plus 40 teachers/adults, provide total school visits in Visitor table in 4.3

5.2 Events at Museum

Date	Event and Staff	No. Attending
1 July – 30 Sept	Rock Hunter activity trail (Natural Sciences Officer)	70
2 July	Museum Minis	21
18 July – 4 Sept	Natural History Museum Explorer Suitcases (Learning Officer, Natural Sciences Officer)	48
22 July	World Cultures print workshop for children (Learning Officer, Len Pole, Jenny Gibsone)	20
25 July	World Cultures print workshops for adults (Learning Officer, Len Pole, Jenny Gibsone)	7
5 August	Creatures & Cultures activity day (Learning Officer)	100
16 August	Private hire : Sunday morning Christening Party	33
12 August	Bird & Butterfly Mobiles activity day (Learning Officer, Natural Sciences Officer)	135
16 August	Private Hire – Christening Party	33
11 Sept	Private View, <i>Henry Moore: Sheep</i>	105
	Total	572

5.3 Outreach

Museum activities, talks and lectures at other venues:

Date	Event and Staff	No. Attending
5 Sept	Local Society showcase SW Town Hall – objects for handling on display (Museum Society stall)	100
	Total	100

Other Museums and Local Groups supported (Uttlesford) 9 groups, 12 meetings

Museum staff have attended meetings, undertaken work or given advice

- Essex Biodiversity Project (1 meeting, Natural Sciences Officer)
- Essex Field Club (1 meeting, Natural Sciences Officer)
- Essex Wildlife Trust Uttlesford (1 meeting, Natural Sciences Officer)
- Saffron Walden Botany Group (1 meeting, Natural Sciences Officer)
- Special Roadside Verges project (2 meetings, 5 surveys, 2 annual reports Natural Sciences Officer)
- Uttlesford Futures LSP Environment Group (1 meeting, Natural Sciences Officer)
- Uttlesford Nature Conservation Working Group (1 meeting, Natural Sciences Officer)
- Searchers Metal Detecting Club (2 meetings, Curator)
- Fry Art Gallery (2 committee meetings, Curator)

Advice, support and involvement in organisations outside Uttlesford

- Heritage Education Group meeting, Harlow Museum (Learning Officer)
- Essex Museum Workers Group (Len Pole and Curator)
- MLA Partnership Day (Len Pole and Curator)
- Advisory Committee on Archaeology in Essex (Curator)
- Epping Forest District Museum – redisplay and new mount for a medieval plough (Conservation Officer)

Grants Summary for this quarter

Grants received for Heritage Quest Centre project are reported to Resource Centre Project Team

Source	Grant for	Amount £
Volunteer Ann Holloway	Purchased 2 sets of children's suitcases to expand use of explorer suitcases in the Museum for gallery activities	Equivalent of 52-95
	Total	£52-95

Local Performance Indicators

12a will provide a baseline from which to measure the eventual impact of the Heritage Quest Centre and its outreach programme.

	Definition	This Quarter actual	This Quarter original target	Annual Target 2009-2010
12a	No. of users attending events and activities on/off site (outreach work)	672	260	1,000
12b	No. of school pupils in organised groups (incl. nursery and loan box users)	369	200	3,000
12c	Total Visitors to Museum building and on-site events	4,362	4,300	16,450
12d	Total Users of Museum Service including 1,212 website visitors	5,906	7,100	26,800

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

1 Museum Management and Staff

The Service will be running with one post (Learning Officer) unfilled for the immediate future, see 5 below.

Museums in Essex Committee AGM at Barleylands on 21 October (Curator to attend)

2 Buildings and Site

Work on the wall next to the Museum is expected to be completed in October, plans of the new wall and security fence have been provided for the Museum Society by Andrew Hurrell, UDC.

3 Collections and Research

A number of archaeological finds from Uttlesford district have recently been declared treasure at a Coroner's inquest. Once valuations have been established, the Museum Society and Curator will need to look at an acquisition and purchase grant plan,

4 Displays and Visitor Services

Work will continue to refurbish the Ceramics Gallery displays, once the porcelain cases have been completed as a pilot. The early Anglo-Saxon case in the Great Hall will be overdue for a re-display when the Coombe sword is returned from loan to Sutton Hoo in mid-November, requiring sufficient release of the Curator's time from other work to complete this.

Museum Minis 1 Oct, 5 Nov and 3 Dec

October half-term activities:

27 October Big Draw with Jenny Gibsone

28-29 October Fluffy Sheep craft activities with Chris Phillips and Museum staff

5 Education, Events and Outreach

Museum Minis, half-term activities and independent (self-guided) school visits will continue, but the absence of a Learning officer means that booked school visits cannot be taken, and visitor numbers and income will be markedly down until this post can be filled; it may also cause difficulties in setting the 2010 activities programme, which relies heavily on the Learning Officer's input.