

CURATOR'S QUARTERLY REPORT
April – June 2012

1 Museum Management and Staff

1.1 Management

Museum Development Plan

No further progress with a new store has been possible, due to the difficulty of finding an appropriate and affordable building. On the Museum and Castle site, the archaeological geophysical survey conducted by Dr Tim Dennis has revealed some interesting features using GPR (ground-penetrating radar) supplemented by resistivity in some areas. A number of Museum Society members and a student from Saffron Walden County High, Nicholas Tedder, kindly helped out with the archaeological survey. The results will be considered at a meeting on site later this summer, to include officers from English Heritage and Essex County Council's Place Services and Field Archaeology Unit. This will help to devise an archaeological strategy for future development, research and interpretation of the site and early Castle / town history.

1.2 Staff

On 16 April we welcomed David Whorlow as Documentation & Exhibitions Officer, straight in at the deep end for exhibition change fortnight. Maureen Evans, Visitor Services Officer, retires in mid July after over 30 years of dedicated service to the Museum, although effectively her last working day was 30 June (allowing her to use up remaining leave). Due to reductions in the Museum Service budget, it is intended to combine the post of Visitor Services with that of Learning Officer.

1.3 Volunteers and Work Experience

During difficult times with staff changes, we are especially grateful to volunteers who help keep the service going both at the desk, the Museum's public face, and by helping behind the scenes: Chris Baker, Ian Sharpe, and Hamish McIlwrick; Catie Moon and Danny Pedler. Special roadside verge surveyors Tony Morton, Ken Rivett, Margaret Rufus, Heather & Paul Salvidge, Dominique Wallace. It has been necessary to turn down a growing number of requests from students enquiring after work experience because of the lack of suitable project work for them, and the lack of staff to supervise young persons and restrictions on work space.

1.4 Training and Seminars Attended

Date	Training / Seminar	Staff
April	In-house training on Modes documentation system provided by Natural Sciences Officer	Gemma Tully & David Whorlow
April	UDC Appraisal system training	All staff
18 June	Text Writing Training, Museums Association	Gemma Tully & David Whorlow

18 June	East Anglian Conservators Forum	Lynn Morrison
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1.5 Health & Safety

No specific matters to report.

2 Buildings and Site

2.1 Museum Building

Failure of the Museum heating system was traced to the extractor fan in the chimney, and further complications ensued when a new fan and controls were fitted to the old control panel. The result was that the Museum was without heating and distinctly cool for several weeks in a wet and cool spring, but the heating was eventually restored. New LED lighting was installed in the Temporary Exhibition area, improving its appearance and saving energy.

2.2 Laboratory/Schoolroom

Heating in the Lab and Schoolroom also developed a fault in April but was more quickly repaired.

2.3 Newport Store

No items to report this quarter.

2.4 40 Castle Street

During the very wet weather, a minor leak has occurred through the kitchen / rear shed ceiling in the vicinity of the valley gutter, but no obvious cause is discernible.

2.5 Grounds and Castle Site

After English Heritage's consent to retaining the wider gateway without replacing the demolished pillar, to allow access for modern fire engines, the new gates were finally installed in May and have received many compliments. Thanks to Miller Brothers who did the groundwork and Borley Brothers for casting the new gates, and to Andrew Hurrell and Martin Stocks (UDC) for overseeing the works in time for the *Sparks Will Fly* event on 19 May.

3 Collections and Research

3.1 Acquisitions and Disposals

30 acquisitions this quarter including

- Large swan mussel shell dredged from Debden Park Lake
- Last instalment of late Roman hoard of gold and silver coins from Ashdon parish (treasure)

3.2 Collections Care and Conservation

Treatment of c 1870s Ordnance Survey maps continued. Treasure hoards were conserved in the lab, about 50 pieces of bronze, many silver Roman coins and a few gold coins. A wooden panel that had fallen off its hooks in store was repaired. Items from *Embroideries in the East* were put away and a pair of curtains had old discoloured linings removed. The frost cover was removed from glacial erratic

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boulder on display in the Museum grounds.

3.3 Documentation

31 new acquisitions catalogued this quarter.

	New Acquisitions	Backlog (existing collections not previously catalogued on Modes)	Edits and Updates to existing records
Human history colln.s	30	4	50
Natural history colln.s	1	5	3350
Total	31	9	3400

Effective Collections (World Cultures project)

This project has had to put on hold, with the departure of Carla Purdue in March and the Curator's time prioritised to staffing issues, *Sparks Will Fly* and other pressing matters. It will need to be re-established shortly, as soon as the exhibition programme allows.

3.4 Loans In

25 items were loaned into the Museum for the *Sporting Heroes* exhibition to supplement the travelling exhibition panels and interactives. 12 items were borrowed for a small exhibition in the Great Hall to celebrate Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee.

3.5 Loans Out

8 Chinese items of costume were lent to the *China in the East* exhibition starting its tour at Epping Forest District Museum. The Curator attended the opening of the Great Bed of Ware exhibition at Ware Museum on 14 April, to which the Museum had lent some Tudor items for the excellent supporting exhibition. Saffron Walden Museum received some extra publicity in the exhibition gallery at Ware because of this loan.

3.6 Object Identification and Enquiries

Object identifications this quarter: 7

Collection Enquiries this quarter: 57 by phone, fax, email, letter or casual enquiries in person

3.7 Research

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

- A conservator from Ipswich visited to study and measure a Chinese "dragon robe"
- A researcher studying the history of the Day family

4 Displays and Visitor Services

4.1 Permanent Galleries

Some changes were made in order to display the Tudor wall painting fragment from Sibleys Barn.

4.2 Temporary Exhibitions

Sporting Heroes opened on Saturday 28 April with an informal 'cake and coffee' morning to which nominators and nominees of our own local 'Uttlesford Sporting Heroes' were invited. The core touring exhibition, from Epping Forest District Museum, was supplemented by objects, photographs and

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ephemera illustrating the history of local sporting activities and some of our local Olympians, past and present. Exhibits included hockey kit lent by international hockey player and Olympian Chloe Rogers, member of the GB Women's Hockey Squad; the history of Saffron Walden Football Club; the harvesting of cricket willow for bat blades made by J Wright & Sons of Great Leighs, and a 1960s score book and photo form Thaxted Cricket Club recording matches against West Ham United cricket team. Thanks to Dunmow Museum, Uttlesford's Local History Recorders and all those who provided information and images, and loaned exhibits, photos and documents, and to volunteers Hilary Walker and Judy Brooks for sifting through the Museum's documentary collections to extract relevant sporting programmes, and ephemera.

To celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee a small exhibition was set up in the Great Hall. Loan objects supplemented our own collection. Pride of place went to the embroidered dress sample from Queen Elizabeth's coronation dress by Norman Hartnell.

4.3 Visitor Services

	Public		Schools incl. adults		Total	
	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011
April	1398	1209	232	15	1630	1224
May	1528	826	308	57	1808	883
June	1036	868	399	321	1435	1189
Total	3962	2903	911	393	4873	3296

Shop

	2012	2011
April	300.97	269.99
May	373.90	282.38
June	823.57	539.77
Totals	1498.44	1092.14

Tickets

	2012	2011
April	929.25	696.75
May	541.75	555.75
June	683.75	585.50
Museum Society Season Tickets	642.50	582.50
Totals £	2797.25	2420.50

Donations

	2012	2011
April	97.50	66.88
May	72.21	45.15
June	53.60	110.05

Total £	223.31	222.08
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Publicity, Marketing and Website

Publicity centred on the *Sparks Will Fly* event on Saturday 19 May, which attracted about 1,000 people to the Museum and castle site and enjoyed some brief live coverage on BBC Radio Essex.

5 Education, Events and Outreach

5.1 Education

No. of sessions taken by Learning Officer: 17 sessions with 11 schools

No. of school loan boxes sent out: 1

Analysis of School Visits and Pupil Numbers

No. of pupils in sessions taught by Learning Officer in Museum *	427
No. of pupils taught in visits out to schools by Learning Officer	0
No. of pupils in independent visits to Museum *	322
No. of pupils benefiting from schools loan boxes in classroom	32
Total no. of pupils benefiting educationally from Museum Service	781

* These figures, **plus 162 teachers/adults** accompanying school groups, **minus the loan box figures (32)**, provide total school visits in Visitor table in 4.3 (911)

5.2 Events at Museum

Date	Event and Staff	No. Attending
3 April	Family activities: <i>We Are the Champions</i> , making Olympic torches, medals and victors' wreaths	120
13 April	Family activities: <i>Make a Shaker</i> workshop with Kiran Chahal	101
23 April	St George's Day event in the grounds	55
28 April	Coffee Morning for opening of <i>Sporting Heroes</i>	45
19 May	<i>Sparks Will Fly</i> and <i>Museum by Moonlight</i>	1000
1 June	Volunteers' coffee morning	20
6, 7 June	Half-term family activities: <i>Crowns and Emblems</i>	201
23 June-1 July	National Insect Week displays/activities with live bees event on 23/6 by Saffron Walden division of Essex Beekeepers	390
	TOTAL	1932

Sparks Will Fly

On Saturday 19th May the Museum hosted Uttlesford's Sparks Will Fly at Walden Castle event to welcome 'champion Marina Mightier' to Uttlesford. This was the first of a series of events, one on each Essex district, to celebrate the cultural Olympiad. The event was planned and staged by Essex County Council Arts Development, and their appointed event organisers Walk the Plank, and Uttlesford District Council's Community team led by Gaynor Bradley, working with artistic coordinator Catherine Mummery, Museum staff and a wide range of local community groups. Marina's entourage accompanied by music, dance and costumed attendants, paraded from the Council

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Offices round the town centre to the Castle grounds, where further performances took place and a giant glass 'bead' containing photos of Uttlesford's treasured places, submitted by the public, was presented to Marina. Hundreds of visitors enjoyed the craft activities, performances and workshops held in the arena and a series of marquees throughout the afternoon, including an exhibition of the nominations for Uttlesford's sporting heroes (also shown in a folder in the exhibition in the Museum). Radio Essex did some short live broadcasts from the event, including an interview with the Curator.

In the evening, the Museum remained open until 10.00pm for *Museum by Moonlight* and welcomed dozens of families with their torches to explore the galleries in the dark.

5.3 Outreach

There have been no talks, events and activities off-site this quarter.

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

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

- Essex Field Club (2 meetings, 3 gift aid claims, Natural Sciences Officer)
- Special Roadside Verges project (1 meeting, 2 site visits, 2012 survey prog., Natural Sciences Off.)
- Sustainable Uttlesford Environment Group (2 meetings, Natural Sciences Officer)
- Searchers Metal Detecting Club (1 meeting, Curator)
- Great Dunmow Museum (AGM and summer opening, Curator)
- Fry Art Gallery (1 committee meeting, Curator, advisory visits on environmental control LM)
- Local History Recorders of Uttlesford (AGM, Curator)
- Hundred Parishes conference (Curator)
- Clavering 'Dig & Sow' community archaeology project (Curator attended)

Advice, support and involvement in organisations outside Uttlesford

- Museums in Essex Committee AGM (Curator)
- Advisory Committee for Archaeology in Essex (ECC) (Curator)

Local Performance Indicators

Definition	This Quarter actual	This Quarter target	Annual Target 2012-2013
Visitors SI 12c	4873		
Users CI 39	7687		

Targets are based on average of previous three years' figures, including regular activities and events but excluding special and extra events which may be incorporated according to external circumstances.

Notes on Performance Indicators

Visitors are all those visiting the Museum in person, including activities and events in the grounds

Users are all those using the Museum Service, including:

on-site (visitors, as above),

off-site (attending talk, display or other off-site activity by Museum staff)

and 'remotely' (information, research enquiries and services by phone, fax, email, letter and website visits or 'Pageviews'. There were 2,723 Pageviews this quarter.

Comment on this quarter's results

Visitor figures are well up, largely due to the *Sparks Will Fly* and *Museum by Moonlight* event on 19th

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May, when the Museum was open for 12 hours 10am – 10pm. Holiday activities and National Insect Week activities also contributed to this exceptional figure. The wet weather may have encouraged more people to look for an indoor venue.

User figures have benefitted from the same factors and from the continuing rise in Pageviews on the Museum's web pages.

Future Programme, July - September 2012

1 Museum Management and Staff

Maureen Evans, Visitor Services Officer, retires in mid-July after over 30 years' service

2 Buildings and Site

Air conditioning unit in Natural History store is still to be serviced. It has not been warm enough to need the air conditioning on this year.

3 Collections and Research

Ecological surveys of special roadside verge sites continue over the summer (Natural Sciences Officer, Support Worker and team of Essex Wildlife Trust verge surveyors).

A major review of collections insurance will take place during August, to determine which objects and specimens should continue to be insured for 'all risks' and which should in future be insured for 'restoration only'. This is the first step to establishing a more rigorous basis for insuring the collections, ahead of the annual policy renewal in September, and in line with local government audit practice to assess 'heritage assets'.

It is hoped that it will stop raining for long enough to allow the archaeological geophysical survey to be completed, so that the discussion meeting on the results and future archaeological strategy for the site can be held.

4 Displays and Visitor Services

14 July-2 September Eastern Region Textile Forum exhibition of art textile works inspired by Owen Jones, author of 'The Grammar of Ornament', 1856.

15 September-27 January 2013 Castle and Community, an exhibition on the origins and historic homes of Saffron Walden and Castle Street from the Normans until now.

5 Education, Events and Outreach

Summer holiday family activities: Textile craft activities on 8 & 15 August, 22 August make an Anglo-Saxon warrior's shield.

August Bank Holiday Monday: the Roman coin hoard from Ashdon parish goes on display for the first time at Ashdon Village Museum as part of their special fund-raising weekend. It will be accompanied by Museum staff, and will afterwards be on display with other recently-acquired treasure in the archaeology gallery.

Heritage Open Days 8 & 9 September. Anglo-Saxon living history with Ealdafaeder. Warriors, slaves and craftsmen bring the Dark Ages to life.