

**SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM**  
**CURATOR'S QUARTERLY REPORT**  
**October – December 2012**

## **1 Museum Management and Staff**

### **1.1 Management**

#### **Museum Development Plan**

Dr Tim Dennis and his team of helpers completed the ground-penetrating radar survey and a meeting was held on 19 October to present the results to colleagues from English Heritage, Essex County Council Place Services and Archive Access Point, Uttlesford District Council and the Museum Society. Because of the extent of the archaeological features revealed, and the wider implications for planning, ECC Place Services are now commissioning a report to analyse and interpret the data, and Dr Tim Dennis presented a poster at a conference in December to share interim results with the geophysics community. Assistance is being sought from local history contacts to extract clues about the 15<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> century manorial buildings from the manorial court rolls in the Essex Record Office.

Following a reorganisation of the Shirehill Depot in Saffron Walden, Council officers have identified a potential site for a new-build Museum off-site store which would be approximately 17 x 17 metres, and two storeys high. The Museum Society and Council are working through preliminary legal and planning issues and it is hoped that the store can go ahead in 2013.

#### **Forward Plan 2013-2018**

A timetable for review and renewal of all major Museum plan and policy documents has been agreed with the Museum Management Working Group, in line with Accreditation requirements. The Curator and one Museum Society director, Richard Priestley, are participating on a SHARE Forward Planning cohort with support to develop a new Forward Plan, and the Natural Sciences Officer and other staff are assisting with production of a draft, to be circulated to the Museum Society Board and MMWG for consideration in late January / early February.

#### **UDC Internal Audit**

The audit review was concluded in October and provided a constructive check on various aspects of the service, including financial procedures. The Museum received an 'Adequate' rating, and has acted on recommendations where small-scale improvements to stock and cash procedures were identified.

### **1.2 Staff**

No staff changes this quarter.

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

Five new 'Welcome Volunteers' have been through the selection and training process: David Thear, Harriet Anthony, Tracey Sibbald, Ursula Lyons, and Susan Dwiar. Harriet and Tracey have taken up permanent slots (Tracey on Monday mornings and Harriet on Friday mornings). David will be taking up the Sunday slot on a permanent basis after the New Year and Ursula will take up the Friday lunchtime slot on alternate Fridays with Jeannette. Susan will act as a 'back-up' volunteer to cover absences and holidays. I have a reserve list of a number of other interested and suitable candidates for

the ‘Welcome Desk’ position who are happy to be kept on file and called on in the future when more slots become available.

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

<b>Date</b>	<b>Training / Seminar</b>	<b>Staff</b>
10 Oct	IFA Workshop on Archaeological Archives, Hertford Museum	Curator
16 Oct	Council training on U-Access new Flexitime system	All staff
17 Oct, 8 Nov, 11 Dec	SHARE volunteer training	Visitor Services a& Learning Officer plus one Volunteer (Angela Jones)
6 Dec	East Anglian Conservators Forum seminar and tour of Blickling Hall	Conservation Officer
7 Dec	SHARE Forward Planning cohort	Curator & Richard Priestley (Museum Society Board of Directors)
Nov - Dec	Equalities training for all Council staff UDC Offices (1 day manager’s course and half-day staff courses)	Curator, Conservation Officer, Natural Sciences Officer, Documentation & Exhibitions Officer, Security Officer, Visitor & Learning Services Officer

#### **1.5 Health & Safety**

New H&S Officer David Cottrell met museum staff and the Museum H&S rep (Conservation Officer) attended a meeting on 21 November where issues such as working at heights, the ladder register, fire extinguisher training and access to the roof were discussed.

An inspection by Fire Officer Rob Sunshine took place on 4 October and the Museum passed its fire inspection. He familiarised himself with the building and our Emergency Plan, Fire Drills, and Fire Risk Assessment.

Tightening of regulations around ‘working at heights’ and difficulties on obtaining a new set of lanyards to reach hoppers prevented Museum and Council staff from making a planned check and clearance of drainage hoppers round the south and west sides of the roof in November. Training has now been organised with the Council and Total Access to coincide with the annual inspection of the Museum’s fall arrest system in late January. This will ensure that the Museum’s Security Officer, one Casual Assistant (former Security Officer) and two Council staff from Housing services will be able to access the roof for routine and emergency maintenance and snow clearance.

## **2 Buildings and Site**

### **2.1 Museum Building**

Staff continue to keep an eye on a few areas prone to damp on account of the wet weather this year. New LED porch lights were installed which provide better lighting at the Museums entrance area and car park, as well as costing about a fifth in terms of electricity consumed.

### **2.2 Laboratory/Schoolroom**

No issues to report this quarter.

### **2.3 Newport Store**

No issues to report this quarter.

### **2.4 40 Castle Street**

Small leak in kitchen roof awaiting attention from Council's roof contractors.

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

Contractors undertook some work for Grounds Maintenance on trees (sycamores) along the north side of the site near the workshop. Grounds Maintenance have also cleared and sprayed weed overgrowth along the top of the (new) retaining wall above the yards of 30-34 Castle Street, to tidy that boundary for local residents, and have removed all dead leaf litter from the Museum site.

## **3 Collections and Research**

### **3.1 Acquisitions and Disposals**

**29 acquisitions** this quarter including

- Two small but decorative items of archaeological treasure purchased by the Museum Society for the collections: a 16<sup>th</sup> century (Tudor) dress hook from Great Canfield and a late 17<sup>th</sup> century silver engraved stud from Ugley.
- Commemorative glass originally presented to each school child in Saffron Walden on the occasion of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in June 1953.

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

The survey of Town Hall portrait and town photographs, paintings, sketches and other artworks was finally completed and the database and images stored on a CD. The project has three outcomes:

1. The objects are protected by being de-framed and placed flat in archival quality storage.
2. The Town Council has a complete record of what they have and all data on each item is amalgamated.
3. The objects are ready to be transferred to Essex Record Office for digitization and better access (like the written archive and records were more than ten years ago) and/or Museum archives.

This will also result in a re-hang of pictures in the Council Chamber, reflecting some of the prominent citizens of the town over the centuries and including labels about their achievements.

Two items of costume were treated in the Lab, a blazer and a Victorian mourning dress, as well as small items of precious metals acquired as Treasure, and a coin hoard. Advice was given to Hadstock Parish Council on the mounting of a late Victorian embroidered altar frontal and materials to do this were supplied at cost.

Backlogs of items waiting to be put away or have a new location were tackled in the Organics Store, the Ceramics Store, and the Costume & Textile store. The seals, medals, coins and tokens are being sorted out and repackaged with better labelling in the Archaeological Metals store.

A report was made to the Museum Society Board on the urgent need to re-house the horse-drawn vehicles, following a visit by the Conservation Officer, at least until a long-term storage and/or display solution can be found. One possible line of enquiry is being followed up, but it is proving difficult to find suitable premises.

Arrangements are being made for a facsimile to be made of the Bridge End Gardens Summer House paintings, owned by the Town Council, which have been stored by the Museum at Newport since they were conserved as part of the Bridge End garden project.

Thanks to Town Councillor and architect Mike Hibbs, some historic paving slabs of an unusual lozenge shape were acquired from the basement of a refurbished building in the centre of town. They are being stored at the Newport depot and it is hoped that they will be used in some later development on the Museum site.

### **3.3 Documentation**

**29 new acquisitions catalogued this quarter.**

	<b>New Acquisitions</b>	<b>Backlog (existing collections not previously catalogued on Modes)</b>	<b>Edits and Updates to existing records</b>
Human history colln.s	29	74	388
Natural history colln.s	0	3	2304
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>2692</b>

### **Effective Collections (World Cultures project)**

A brief for the proposed website is ready for circulation to web designers for quotations.

### **3.4 Loans In**

- An early Anglo-Saxon gold coin and a silver penny of Harold II (1066), both from parishes in the west of Uttlesford district

### **3.5 Loans Out**

No loans out this quarter

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

**Object identifications this quarter: 1**

**Collection Enquiries this quarter: 77** by phone, fax, email, letter or casual enquiries in person

### **3.7 Research**

**3 research visits in person**, in addition to regular collections volunteers:

- Iron age pottery from Stansted Airport (Airport Catering Site) – scoping survey for project on food residues and grant application (Val Steele, British Museum)
- Roman intaglio from Stansted Airport (Airport Catering Site) – post-graduate research, Ian Marshman
- Early medieval bone flutes, Wicken Bonhunt (D Constantine, by email)
- Essex trade tokens, post 1820 – Stuart Adams
- Historic loans from the museum collection for a 1951 exhibition of British popular art at the Whitechapel gallery

## **4 Displays and Visitor Services**

### **4.1 Permanent Galleries**

A new touch screen computer interactive called *Woods and Walks, Nature in North West Essex* has been installed in the Discovery Centre. It was funded by Saffron Walden Museum Society Ltd and developed by Heritage Interactive Ltd, with input from the Natural Sciences Officer. The interactive features pictures, sounds and information about wildlife found in the Museum grounds and at four nature reserves in north-west Essex. Digital photographs taken by visitors to the sites can be submitted by email to [museum@uttlesford.gov.uk](mailto:museum@uttlesford.gov.uk) for inclusion in the photo galleries on the computer.

Work is in progress on the redisplay of the bay window cases in the Ceramics gallery, to incorporate new loans of studio pottery from The Keatley trust and recent acquisitions from East Anglian potters.

### **4.2 Temporary Exhibitions**

*Castle & Community* continues in the special exhibitions gallery until the end of January.

*The Moat Farm Mystery Talk and Book Signing*, on Saturday 20 October, saw around 40 additional visitors join local author and true crime researcher M W Oldridge to learn more about the murder of Camille Holland on a farm in Clavering in 1903. A temporary display was put together in the Great Hall to accompany the event and included an account of the events drawn from contemporary newspapers and original documents which formed part of the Essex Police investigation by Superintendent Daniels of Saffron Walden. The temporary display was left in place and will be replaced in early 2013 by a small display of recent archaeological acquisitions. *The Museum Murder Mystery* event, arranged in collaboration with Heather Nesbitt Ltd, Private Investigator, has been postponed until the spring due to poor take-up in the run-up to Christmas.

### 4.3 Visitor Services

	<b>Public</b>		<b>Schools incl. adults</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	<b>2012</b>	2011	<b>2012</b>	2011	<b>2012</b>	2011
October	<b>1119</b>	1320	<b>331</b>	519	<b>1450</b>	1839
November	<b>735</b>	764	<b>286</b>	252	<b>1021</b>	1016
December	<b>677</b>	786	<b>225</b>	23	<b>902</b>	809
<b>Total</b>	<b>2531</b>	2870	<b>842</b>	794	<b>3373</b>	3664

#### **Shop**

	<b>2012</b>	2011
October	<b>451.22</b>	583.83
November	<b>877.35</b>	406.75
December	<b>211.70</b>	205.63
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1540.27</b>	1196.21

#### **Tickets**

	<b>2012</b>	2011
October	<b>746.00</b>	931.50
November	<b>499.75</b>	564.00
December	<b>415.25</b>	406.50
<b>Totals £</b>	<b>1661.00</b>	1902.00

#### **Donations**

	<b>2012</b>	2011
October	<b>£ 119.70</b>	111.00
November	<b>£ 98.70</b>	65.30
December	<b>£ 68.88</b>	40.90
<b>Total £</b>	<b>287.28</b>	217.20

#### **Publicity, Marketing and Website**

Amy Glover (our recent work experience student) has helped set up a Facebook and Twitter account for the Museum in order to further promote activities, exhibitions, acquisitions and events and to reach wider audiences.

Advertising has also been sourced beyond the usual local media outlets in the hope of expanding audiences. Adverts and editorial has been placed in The Pass (circulated throughout Essex), Group Coach Travel (circulated to all coach and group travel planners plus organisations such as the WI throughout the UK) and Visit Britain (150,000 readerships in circulation in over 50 countries).

The Museum has also just initiated an entrance deal for members of the Young Archaeologists Club (YAC), which allows members free entry into the Museum for one accompanying adult. YAC has over 70 branches across the country (including Cambridge, Chelmsford and Norwich) and will hopefully attract more young visitors and their families to the Museum.

The Museum also assisted producers and researchers from Tern Television in preparing and filming a programme on Saffron Walden to be broadcast in the BBC *Towns* series, presented by Nicholas Crane. This involved supplying information on the castle's and town's origins, arranging access to the castle ruins for filming and providing parking for the TV crews.

There has been local publicity to celebrate the award of a £10,000 grant from the HLF (Heritage Lottery Fund) *All Our Stories* programme. This will be used in 2013 to give students from Saffron Walden County high and Newport Free Grammar School the opportunity to excavate a trench across the buried outer bailey Ditch of Walden Castle on the Common, under the direction of Dr Carezza Lewis, University of Cambridge.

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

### **5.1 Education**

**No. of sessions taken by Learning Officer: 31 sessions with 18 schools** (this is a record in terms of sessions taught over the course of one quarter by the Visitor & Learning Services Officer)

For the autumn term (falling in this quarter October – December) there have been:

- 31 taught sessions for 659 pupils, generating income of £1,823.90 (£1,519.50 net of VAT)
- Shop income from 12 schools who used the shop = £898.14, and £20 (incl. VAT ) from loan boxes
- Total income from schools this term = £2,742.08 (incl. VAT) from sessions, shop and loan boxes.
- Evaluation of visits and sessions by teachers scored highly, most aspects being rated 'excellent'.
- 10 different topics were taught: Ancient Egyptians remains the most popular topic (13 sessions), followed by Communication through the ages (5 sessions), Celts/Romans (3 sessions), Stone Age/Bronze Age/Iron Age (2 sessions), Local History (2 sessions), Victorians (2 sessions), Toys & Childhood (1 session), Tudors (1 session), Journey through time (1 session), the Senses (1 session).

**No. of school loan boxes sent out: 2** (Egyptians and Toys)

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

No. of pupils in sessions taught by Learning Officer in Museum *	<b>659</b>
No. of pupils taught in visits out to schools by Learning Officer	<b>0</b>
No. of pupils in independent visits to Museum *	<b>27</b>
No. of pupils benefiting from schools loan boxes in classroom	<b>126</b>
<b>Total no. of pupils benefiting educationally from Museum Service</b>	<b>812</b>

\* These figures, plus 133 teachers/adults accompanying school groups plus 23 UAE members attending a taught session, provide total school visits in Visitor table in 4.3

## **5.2 Events on-site (in Museum and grounds)**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event and Staff</b>	<b>No. Attending</b>
6 Oct	Big Draw	112
30 Oct	Grand Union Youth Orchestra workshops	121
31 Oct, 1 Nov	Half-term activities: Home Sweet Home	243
3 Nov	GYO Open Workshop and Concert	36
1 Dec	Christmas Tree decorating	140
10 Dec	Museum Society Christmas Social	80
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>732</b>

## **5.3 Outreach** (Museum activities, talks and lectures at other venues)

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event and Staff</b>	<b>No. Attending</b>
8 Nov	Manuden Local History Group workshop on archaeological finds identification (Curator)	12
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>

**Other Museums and Local Groups supported (Uttlesford) 8** groups, 13 meetings  
Museum staff have attended meetings, site visits, undertaken work or given advice to:

- BRIE Biological Records in Essex (Natural Sciences Officer)
- Essex Field Club (2 meetings, Natural Sciences Officer)
- Special Roadside Verges project (4 meetings, Natural Sciences Officer)
- Searchers Metal Detecting Club (3 meetings, Curator)
- Fry Art Gallery (2 committee meetings, Curator)
- Dunmow Museum (1 committee meeting, Curator)
- Maze Festival 2013 (1 meeting with organisers, Visitor & Learning Services Officer, Curator)
- Town Hall survey of collection of photographs and artworks (Conservation Officer)

Advice, support and involvement in organisations outside Uttlesford

- SHARE conference, Ipswich (Curator)

## **Local Performance Indicators**

<b>Definition</b>	<b>This Quarter actual</b>	<b>This Quarter target</b>	<b>Annual Target 2012-2013</b>
<b>Visitors</b> SI 12c	<b>3,373</b>	3,700	13,700
<b>Users</b> CI 39	<b>6,197</b>	5,200	18,580

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 those on-site (visitors, as above); those off-site (attending talk, display or other off-site activity by Museum staff) and those using the Museum 'remotely' (information, research enquiries and services by phone, fax, email, letter and website visits or 'Pageviews'). There were Pageviews this quarter.



### **Comment on this quarter's results**

**Visitor figures** slightly under target but feedback and evaluation from exhibitions, activities and school groups indicates that quality and interest of services is highly valued.

**User figures** continue above target, due mainly to use and promotion of service through the website.

## **Future Programme, January - March 2013**

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

#### **2 Buildings and Site**

24 January training day for working at heights

A programme of deep cleaning the museum stores continues, in order to minimise possible pest infestation.

#### **3 Collections and Research**

Work to improve Herbarium (dried plant) records in the Modes Complete database continues.

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

The next temporary exhibition *Witch Hunt* opens on 9 February 2013.

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

20-21 February Half-Term Activities: **Spell Quest**. Family holiday activities. Follow clues on the trail of magical museum items to inspire your own magic spell scrolls. Drop in sessions 11am-1pm and 2pm-4pm. No need to book. Children **MUST** bring an adult.