

SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM
CURATOR'S QUARTERLY REPORT
January – March 2013

1 Museum Management and Staff

1.1 Management

Forward Plan 2013-2018

A draft Forward Plan was circulated to MMWG in February for comment, before a final version is submitted in May for approval. Richard Priestley has been kindly assisting the Curator with development of this document and both have been attending a series of Forward Planning workshops arranged by SHARE (an organisation providing training, advice and a skills network for the region's museums). Participation in the SHARE Forward planning cohort has led to a grant of £750 which has been used to purchase equipment and supplies ready for moving collections into the new store.

Museum Development Plan

Planning permission was approved on 13 March for the proposed new store at the Council's Shirehill Depot, and related works to enable the site for the store to be cleared. Martin Stocks, Surveyor, has worked with the Curator and staff on an outline specification. Attention now turns to getting a timetable and costs for the store, which it is hoped will be built later in 2013.

Meanwhile, thanks to a contact in the Saffron Walden & District Searchers Metal-Detecting Club, a spacious, vacant barn has become available in the Ashdon area for the horse-drawn vehicles which have been stored at Hempstead for many years by David Haylock. The Jobmaster's Cart and brougham from the off-site store at Newport may also be moved there. The Society has permission to use the barn for 6 months initially, with the option on a further 6 months extension (i.e. up to March 2014). This will enable vehicles to be conserved and assessed for display, storage or disposal to other suitable museums. The Museum has been fortunate in receiving an offer of voluntary help from Charlie Barker, who restores horse-drawn vehicles and will also assist in moving the vehicles to the barn.

Separate from, but very helpful to future developments at the Museum, the Council's Planning department is now undertaking a programme of conservation work on the ruins of the castle keep in collaboration with English Heritage, as reported in the local press. The Curator has met with Andrew Taylor, Assistant Director of Planning & Development, to exchange information and co-ordinate future plans for the castle and Museum. At the recommendation of English Heritage, costings for a full conservation management plan for the site have been obtained from ECC Place Services and Planning are now looking into this; it will include analysis of the geophysics data obtained last year, but encompass a much broader range of heritage and ecological issues. Both English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund will require the Council to submit a conservation management plan for the site with any future HLF applications for Museum developments.

1.2 Staff

No staff changes this quarter. Amy Glover, previously a volunteer, is now a Casual Assistant.

1.3 Volunteers and Work Experience

In the Lab and behind the scenes post-grad Maddy Marshall and student Phoebe Ramsay-Ruggles are assisting the Conservation Officer. Ian Sharpe is typing up the records of photographs taken by and for the Museum and the conservation records.

1.4 Training and Seminars Attended

| Date | Training / Seminar | Staff |
|-------------|---|--|
| 21 Jan | SHARE meeting of Eastern Region Natural History Curators, Peterborough | Natural Sciences Officer Sarah Kenyon |
| 24 Jan | UDC Fire Team meeting | Conservation Officer Lynn Morrison |
| 24 Jan | Working at Heights One-day course on site provided by Total Access, statutory training for staff working on Museum roof (clearing hoppers, snow etc) | Security Officer Stefan Shambrook, Casual assistant Tony Carter and 2 staff from UDC Newport Depot Frank Martin and John Easterbrook |
| 26 Feb | UDC health and safety meeting | Security Officer Stefan Shambrook |
| 26 Feb | SHARE Forward Planning cohort, Ely Museum | Curator and Richard Priestley, Museum Society director |
| 5 Mar | SHARE – Museums engaging children and young people | Visitor Services and Learning Officer, Gemma Tully |
| 13 Mar | SHARE – Volunteer development course – final session | Visitor Services and Learning Officer, Gemma Tully |
| 21 Mar | East Anglian Conservators Forum: sessions included hazards of geology collections, and packing, moving and storing collections, specifications of new premises. | Conservation Officer Lynn Morrison & Natural Sciences Officer Sarah Kenyon |

1.5 Health & Safety

Relevant staff from the Museum and Contract Services have received training for working on the roof, in accordance with new regulations. Council contractor ROALCO also has appropriately-qualified personnel for roof work (weekdays). Modified lanyards and a new fixing point are still required for the Museum's roof fall arrest system. Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) was carried out to check the safety of all portable electrical appliances in all the Museum buildings including the off-site store.

2 Buildings and Site

2.1 Museum Building

Bill Golbourn, Housing Services, is obtaining quotations for maintenance and repairs to the north and east elevations of the Museum, in order to plan a programme of work for 2013/14. Following a wet summer and winter, the brickwork has absorbed more moisture than usual and work on problem hoppers and drainpipes is needed, as well as repair and repainting of windows. The roof is leaking in the passage along back of museum building due to a blocked soakaway, degraded sealant and old asbestos roof panels. The soakaway has been disconnected but this has increased water flow over the panels.

The Museum's central heating broke down in late March. Both boilers needed repair by Imtech and one still needs a new actuator. A new humidifier was installed in the Ethnography store to replace a broken machine.

2.2 Laboratory/Schoolroom

Chubb replaced a break-glass point and recommended replacement of an emergency light.

2.3 Newport Store

The intruder alarm system was serviced by Secom. The extension cable for a free-standing radiator was lengthened and secured at high level to remove a cable trip hazard and prevent cable damage.

2.4 40 Castle Street

Replacement of faulty slates on the kitchen roof have stopped the leak previously reported.

2.5 Grounds and Castle Site

Assistance has been given to consultants and contractors visiting the castle ruins to assess and quote for work commissioned by the Council's Planning Department. It is expected that the first round of conservation work on the keep will commence in the spring.

3 Collections and Research

3.1 Acquisitions and Disposals

5 acquisitions this quarter including

- Inn sign from The Crocus Tavern, Mount Pleasant, Saffron Walden, donated by developer Lindum
- Hexagonal dressed limestone paving slab, example from about 100 retrieved from cellar of refurbished building in Cross Street, Saffron Walden, retained for historic building materials reference collection. The rest have been stored for re-use in later Museum developments. Donated by the developer through Cllr Mike Hibbs.
- A quantity of engravings, prints, watercolours, oils and photographs were received from the Town Council. These have been deframed and removed from poor storage and have been repacked in boxes awaiting accessioning. A number of photographs of previous mayors had facsimiles made for a smaller display in the Council Chamber. Research on a number of 20th century citizens of local significance resulted in display labels to give information on these and other oils in this room and make it more interesting and informative.

3.2 Collections Care and Conservation

Geology collections were moved from an upstairs room in Newport Store to the ground floor to provide space for the two Bridge End Garden summerhouse paintings to be photographed. The photographs enabled facsimiles to be produced for the summer house, which now looks exactly like it was before they were removed due to poor environmental conditions in the 1990s.

Pest checking took place in the Museum stores and galleries. Seals, tokens, medals and coins were sorted out in store, given basic listing and repacked to make them more accessible. An application was made to conserve the 17th Essex Rifle Volunteer military flag. Essex Heritage Trust approved this and will make a grant of £3,000. It is hoped to put this on display with uniform items already in the Military Case. Chinese 'lotus' shoes were repacked and organised. The humidifier in the ethnography store was replaced, as it can get very dry during winter with central heating.

3.3 Documentation

3 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 | 3 | 17 | 885 |
| Natural history colln.s | 0 | 2 | 6109 |
| Total | 3 | 19 | 6994 |

Effective Collections (World Cultures project)

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

3.4 Loans In

None this quarter

3.5 Loans Out

Costumes from the touring exhibition *China in the East* were returned to be replaced with different items for the rest of this touring display. This is to reduce their exposure to light and dust.

Loan Request

One loan request has been received from First Site gallery, Colchester, for the loan of Edward Bawden's watercolour of the Almshouses, Saffron Walden for an exhibition of Bawden's work in Essex, May – August 2013. A facilities report has been supplied by the gallery and it is recommended that the Museum Society agrees to the loan, subject to First Site confirming that light levels will be kept to a maximum of 100 lux on the Conservation Officer's recommendation.

3.6 Object Identification and Enquiries

Object identifications this quarter: 6

Collection Enquiries this quarter: 90 by phone, fax, email, letter or casual enquiries in person

3.7 Research

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

- Late Roman coin hoards from Lindsell and Ashdon have been studied by two separate researchers
- Natal / Zulu objects

4 Displays and Visitor Services

4.1 Permanent Galleries

The modern studio pottery case in the Ceramics gallery is being redeveloped to better accommodate the additional loans from the Keatley Trust and to make better use of available display space and reflect the nature of the decorative items on display.

The process of making small updates and adding recent acquisitions to the archaeology displays continues slowly, because of numerous demands on the Curator's time. The Iron Age bronze mirror, on loan from local residents, has been redisplayed and a lead 'papal bull' (medieval Papal seal) has been added to the medieval finds display.

4.2 Temporary Exhibitions

Castle & Community closed on 27 January after a successful run, during which it was seen by over 3,700 visitors. The listening post, kindly lent by Essex Record Office, with extracts from the Castle Street Residents' Association oral history project, was much enjoyed by many visitors.

Witch Hunt, a touring exhibition from Epping Forest District Museum, opened on 9th February and runs until 12th May. It focuses on the 17th century Essex witch trails and Matthew Hopkins, but local elements have been added by Museum staff including evidence for witch trials in north-west Essex; items related to witchcraft and superstitions found in local houses (including witch bottles and the scold's bridle from Ashdon); animals and birds often cited as witches' familiars, and – in more light-hearted vein – the image of witched and wizardry today in popular culture. A dressing up box, complete with broomstick, has been well-used by visiting families.

4.3 Visitor Services

| | Public | | Schools incl. adults | | Total | |
|--------------|---------------|------|-----------------------------|------|--------------|------|
| | 2013 | 2012 | 2013 | 2012 | 2013 | 2012 |
| January | 688 | 676 | 31 | 98 | 719 | 774 |
| February | 1594 | 1155 | 324 | 181 | 1918 | 1336 |
| March | 954 | 854 | 338 | 273 | 1292 | 1127 |
| Total | 3236 | 2685 | 693 | 552 | 3929 | 3237 |

Shop

| | 2013 | 2012 |
|---------------|----------------|---------------|
| January | 278.68 | 153.08 |
| February | 753.73 | 316.07 |
| March | 430.21 | 227.59 |
| Totals | 1462.62 | 696.74 |

Tickets

| | 2013 | 2012 |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| January | 316.00 | 458.50 |
| February | 1013.50 | 759.75 |
| March | 722.50 | 419.50 |
| Totals £ | 2052.00 | 1637.75 |

Donations

| | 2013 | 2012 |
|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| January | 44.72 | 61.00 |
| February | 53.79 | 80.65 |
| March | 70.18 | 85.80 |
| Total £ | 168.69 | 227.45 |

Publicity, Marketing and Website

We now have 166 **Facebook** friends, and 305 followers on **Twitter**. The February half-term event *Spell Quest* was our best attended indoor event since February 2011, which is likely to have been due in part to our greater online presence and promotion of the events through Facebook and Twitter. We are also promoting new acquisitions and interesting museum objects through the website when possible.

The Museum also received its annual **Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Service (VAQAS) for Museums** accreditation report and scored very highly on all areas of visitor service and standards of information. The Museum has been put forward as a model for other local museums to follow.

The Museum has also been asking for nominations for the **Family Friendly, Kids in Museums Award** and has received national media attention for its efforts in the Sunday Telegraph (31/3/2013).

5 Education, Events and Outreach

5.1 Education

No. of sessions taken by Learning Officer: 23 sessions with 14 different schools/groups (this is an increase of 8 taught sessions compared to the same period last year taught by the Visitor & Learning Services Officer)

No. of school loan boxes sent out: 0

Analysis of School Visits and Pupil Numbers

| | |
|---|------------|
| No. of pupils in sessions taught by Learning Officer in Museum * | 536 |
| No. of pupils taught in visits out to schools by Learning Officer | 58 |
| No. of pupils in independent visits to Museum * | 0 |
| No. of pupils benefiting from schools loan boxes in classroom | 0 |
| Total no. of pupils benefiting educationally from Museum Service | 594 |

* These figures, plus 99 teachers/adults accompanying school groups provide total school visits in Visitor table in 4.3

5.2 Events on-site (in Museum and grounds)

| Date | Event and Staff | No. Attending |
|-------------|---|----------------------|
| 20 + 21 Feb | Spell Quest half term activities (Visitor & Learning Services Officer and volunteers) 274 + 237 | 511 |
| 1 March | Volunteers event and Museum tours | 20 |
| 28 March | Museum Minis (VLSO, Amy Glover casual assistant and volunteers) | 68 |
| | TOTAL | 599 |

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

| Date | Event and Staff | No. Attending |
|-------------|---|----------------------|
| 4 February | School session at Takeley Primary (Visitor & Learning Services Officer) 58 children + 4 adults | 62 |
| 27 March | Talk for Saffron Walden UN association (VSLO) | 21 |
| | Total | 93 |

All Our Stories project; Saffron Walden Castle Bailey

Planning has commenced for this HLF-funded project with Dr Carezza Lewis, University of Cambridge; sixth-form students of Saffron Walden County High and Newport Free Grammar School., and Saffron Walden Town Council. The main events will be after-school workshops for the students in April, geophysical survey of the NW corner of The Common in April (hoping to locate the buried outer bailey ditch); the dig on the Common in 22-28 July and the public open day on Saturday 14 September in the Museum and castle grounds.

Other Museums and Local Groups supported (Uttlesford) 10 groups, 11 meetings

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

- Essex Field Club (2 meetings, 2012 accounts, deposit investment, Natural Sciences Officer)
- Essex Wildlife Trust Uttlesford (1 meeting, Natural Sciences Officer)

- Saffron Walden Wildflower Group (help to plan 2013 programme, Natural Sciences Officer)
- Special Roadside Verges project (2 site visits, April cut, 2013 surveys, Natural Sciences Officer)
- Sustainable Uttlesford (2 meetings, Natural Sciences Officer)
- Searchers Metal Detecting Club (3 meetings, Curator)
- Fry Art Gallery (2 committee meetings, advice on Accreditation and other matters, Curator)
- Dunmow Museum (1 committee meeting, advice on touchscreens, Curator)
- Saffron Walden Town Council through survey of collection of photographs and artworks (Conservation Officer)
- Sure Start Children’s Centre Saffron Walden (Visitor & Learning Services Officer)

Attendance of meetings, advice, support or involvement in organisations outside Uttlesford

- MEE (Museum East of England, regional forum), Curator
- Essex Museum Workers Group, Curator
- East Anglian Conservators Forum “Storage/packing/moving Collections” in our own Schoolroom (Conservation Officer)

Local Performance Indicators

| Definition | This Quarter actual Q4 | This Quarter target Q4 | Annual Total 2012-13 | Annual Target 2012-13 |
|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Visitors SI 12c | 3,929 | 4,300 | 16,439 | 16,000 |
| Users CI 39 | 7,686 | 5,800 | 28,472 | 22,000 |

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 3,571 Pageviews this quarter.

Comment on this quarter’s results

Visitor figures are a little under target, although well up on the same quarter last year. Half-term activities have been particularly successful and the VLSO has taken as many school sessions as available time permits; the cold and icy weather contributed to some quiet patches earlier in the year.

User figures continue above target, due mainly to use and promotion of service through the website, now enhanced by Facebook and Twitter.

Grants Awarded this quarter

| Grant from | For | Amount £ | Financial Yr |
|----------------------|---|-----------------|--------------|
| SHARE | Forward Plan expenditure towards objectives – used to stock up on storage equipment and materials, already spent | 750 | 2012/13 |
| SHARE | Supporting MODES software training course organised by Saffron Walden Museum for small museums in the region (spent on advance 50% fee to secure MODES training for 3 May 2013). Two of our staff will benefit from the course, at a subsidised rate of £50 per place (=50% discount) | 300 | 2012/13 |
| SHARE | Audience Development Grant towards costs of the <i>Re-imagining Egypt</i> project with artist Khaled Hafez in November 2013 | 2,000 | 2013/14 |
| SHARE | Small grant award to revive Museum Minis activities programme for pre-school children and their carers | 200 | 2013/14 |
| Essex Heritage Trust | Grant towards conservation and display of 17 th Essex Rifle Volunteers colour, a Saffron Walden military flag dating to c1870 | 3,000 | 2013/14 |
| Sub-total | | £ 6,250 | |
| Museum Society | Contribution towards Museum budget 2012-13 | £ 6,000 | 2012/13 |
| Total | | £ 12,250 | both years |
| | | £ 7,050 | 2012-13 |
| | | £5,200 | 2013-14 |

In addition to the above, the Visitor & Learning Services Officer is waiting for the result of an application to ECC Arts for a grant towards *Re-imagining Egypt*

Future Programme, April - June 2013

April, May and June will see a number of event taking place at the Museum including: Mouth-Watering Magic (biscuit making for Easter 10 and 11 April), Butterflies exhibition (opening 25th May), *Help our Mummy is Missing* (detective activities for families during May half term 29th and 30th May).

1 Museum Management and Staff

Horse-drawn vehicles to be moved in April from Hil Farm, Hempstead to new temporary accommodation near Ashdon.

Store plans to be progressed with the Council and contractors.

2 Buildings and Site

Archaeological and historic building contractors expected to start work on the castle ruins
Geophysical survey of The Common to be undertaken by Dr Tim Dennis for the All Our Stories project in April, hoping to locate the buried outer bailey ditch which is to be excavated in July.

3 Collections and Research

Work continues to improve the records in the Herbarium file on the Modes database, and a project to document the presence of protected species of animals and plants in the Natural History collections (Support Worker Madeleine Fanthorpe and Natural Sciences Officer Sarah Kenyon). Reorganisation in store of medals resulted in some interesting stories of past military personnel (Conservation Officer).

4 Displays and Visitor Services

Butterflies, an exhibition celebrating the brilliance of our British Butterflies. Learn about their habits and strategies for survival. 25 May to 1 September 2013. It opens with a Private View for Museum Society members on Friday 24 May.

Work in the Ceramics and Archaeology galleries to continue.

5 Education, Events and Outreach

10 & 11 April Mouth-watering Magic, booked family activities making terrifying treats with Rachel from The Biscuit Jar. 11am-12pm, 12pm-1pm, 2pm-3pm, 3pm-4pm. Booking Required: £2.50 per child, accompanying adult free.

25 April Museum Minis – Musical Minis. Pre-school children & accompanying adults Free. 1.30-3pm.

29 & 30 May Help! Our Mummy is Missing, booked evening activities with Private Investigator Heather Nesbitt. 6pm-8pm. Booking Required: £7.50 per child, one adult free per group, other accompanying adults £5.00.

30 May Museum Minis – Mini Beasts. Pre-school children & accompanying adults Free. 1.30-3pm