

**SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM**  
**CURATOR'S QUARTERLY REPORT**  
**April - June 2014**

## **1 Museum Management and Staff**

### **1.1 Management**

#### **Forward Plan 2013-2018 and Shirehill Store**

The new store at Shirehill was completed on schedule at the end of June and marks the opening of a new chapter for the museum service. Special thanks must go to Nicola Wittman and Martin Stocks who oversaw the construction project, with the main contractor Cocksedge.

#### **Accreditation**

The preparation of policies, plans and the on-line return for Accreditation have taken a significant amount of staff time this quarter, with input from Council colleagues, the Museum Society Chairman and Cllr Eden on behalf of MMWG. The Museum's submission was completed two days ahead of the 13 June deadline and we await further questions and possibly an inspection from the Arts Council (who are responsible for administering the scheme) before our application goes to the Accreditation panel in September. Some of the policies required are new, and play an essential role on setting up the new collections management regime following the staff restructure and completion of the new store.

Forward Plan 2013-18

Environmental Sustainability Policy

Collections Development Policy (formerly known as Acquisition & Disposal policy)

Collections Care & Conservation Policy and Plan

Documentation Policy and Plan

Access Policy

Learning Policy

Customer Care Policy

### **1.2 Staff**

Leah Mellors started work in April as the new Collections Officer (Human History) on 1 April.

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

Collections volunteers Roger Barratt, Judy Brook, Hamish McIlwrick, Ian Sharpe and Hilary Walker have been working on collections and administrative tasks. Hayley Wilson has conducted research for the North-West Essex at War exhibition. Verge surveyors Tony Morton, Heather and Paul Salvidge conducted ecological surveys of Special Roadside Verge sites.

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

4 April	Safeguarding training (UDC) Natural Sciences Officer
28 April	Accreditation seminar (ERO, Chelmsford) Collections Officer (Human History) & Natural Sciences Officer

12 May	SHARE retail forum, Gemma Tully, V&LS Officer
23 May	SHARE Moving natural sciences collections, Cambridge, Natural Sciences Officer
5 June	Safeguarding training (UDC) Curator
6 June	Safeguarding training (UDC) Collections Officer (Human History)
25 June	ASPIRE free seminar provided by SHARE on fund-raising from trusts and foundations (Fitzwilliam Museum) Curator

## **1.5 Health & Safety**

UDC Fire Safety meeting took place in Museum Schoolroom.

Sunfish conducted an inspection of fire systems and equipment at all Museum Service buildings.

Saffron Security carried out service of alarm systems in the Museum and Schoolroom buildings.

The Museum lift was inspected.

## **2 Buildings and Site**

### **2.1 Museum Building**

Essex Police made a routine inspection of firearms storage on 14 April, and also gave advice on future potential changes to stores (pending progress with the Forward Plan) if the firearms collections moves to a more spacious storage area within the building. All Museum computers were replaced by UDC IT due to Microsoft no longer supporting older Windows software. Building windows were cleaned.

### **2.2 Laboratory/Schoolroom**

Building windows were cleaned.

### **2.3 Newport Store**

Environmental monitoring continues but relative humidity remains variable, and dehumidifiers require emptying more frequently than staff are sometimes able to achieve.

### **2.4 40 Castle Street**

While the sale is finalised, work is in hand with Wayne Caton (UDC) and BT to re-route the Museum's telephony and data cables, which currently run through the house. An application for Scheduled Monument Consent has been submitted to English Heritage for the small trench which will be needed to bring the cables through the Museum Street gateway to connect with existing ducting.

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

Contractors Noble & Taylor completed the works to the Church Street gateway for UDC Planning Department, providing a much improved and more welcoming pedestrian entrance with bicycle racks.

Unauthorised use of the Museum's private parking area on the forecourt has been a cause for concern, both during and outside public opening hours. Measures are being planned to tighten access arrangements and deter unauthorised vehicles.

Removal of the frost cover from the glacial erratic boulder was delayed until May due to late frosts.

### **3 Collections and Research**

#### **3.1 Acquisitions and Disposals**

**61 acquisitions** entered in the register this quarter, including:

- Ethnography - Bronze Akan weights and woven cloth from Ghana and Nigeria
- Social History – cricket club plaques, Second World War photographs and certificates, jewellery
- Continuing work on miscellaneous coins, found in the stores and previously unaccessioned

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

##### **Disposal of the Horse-drawn Vehicles**

The disposal of the tip-cart from Foxton, Cambs. by gift to English Heritage has been agreed. It will be used at Audley End Stables where the Stables' own draft horse Bob will use it for light work around the gardens and grounds, demonstrating the role of the horse=power on a 19<sup>th</sup> century estate. No other museums or heritage organisations have expressed an interest in the other tip-cart by Diver of Isleham or the brougham, therefore arrangements have been made to sell these at public auction through Cheffins on 19 July, all proceeds to be applied to the Society's purchase funds for future acquisitions.

#### **3.3 Documentation**

? new acquisitions catalogued this quarter. Backlog / updates are as follows:

	<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	102	31	181
Natural history colln.s	0	4	305
<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>486</b>

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

##### **HLF All Our Stories project (the Dig on the Common 2013)**

These remain awaiting completion; Newport Free Grammar School has been making steady progress with their archaeological work with primary schools and this should allow the HLF project to be finalised soon.

#### **3.4 Loans In**

None

#### **3.5 Loans Out**

None

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

Object identifications this quarter: **7**

Collection Enquiries this quarter: **44**

### **3.7 Research**

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

- 14 members of the family of Teddy Worley visited the museum to view a selection of the Worley saddlery tool collection, which was donated in 1980 and has not been displayed or accessed since 1981.
- Viking necklace (researcher studying Viking Age beads)
- Martyn Everett photographed the Tudor charter. The images were used in a publication created for the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration.

## **4 Displays and Visitor Services**

### **4.1 Permanent Galleries**

Discovery Centre: broken monitor screen for the microscope interactive replaced by Saffron Security.

### **4.2 Temporary Exhibitions**

*Secrets from the Stores* opened on 8 March and showcases rarely or never seen objects from the stores, including archaeology, ceramics and glass, costume, ethnography, social history – clock, decoupage doors, musical serpent, tools, traps, weapons; biology and geology specimens. Exhibits in one of the cases were changed in June, to include some of the Worley saddlery tool collection.

A temporary display of cycling-related ephemera and objects was created in the Great Hall to coincide with the Tour de France in Essex.

### **4.3 Visitor Services**

*Easter weekend 18 – 21 April*

	<b>Public</b>		<b>Schools incl. adults</b>		<b>Total</b>	
	<b>2014</b>	2013	<b>2014</b>	2013	<b>2014</b>	2013
<b>April</b>	<b>1490</b>	1765	<b>73</b>	200	<b>1563</b>	1965
<b>May</b>	<b>1244</b>	1333	<b>252</b>	138	<b>1496</b>	1471
<b>June</b>	<b>524</b>	1067	<b>299</b>	514	<b>841</b>	1581
<b>Total</b>	<b>3258</b>	4165	<b>624</b>	852	<b>3900</b>	5017

#### **Shop**

	<b>2014</b>	2013
<b>April</b>	<b>756.30</b>	510.27
<b>May</b>	<b>825.72</b>	520.33
<b>June</b>	<b>701.99</b>	600.94
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2284.01</b>	1631.54

#### **Tickets**

	<b>2014</b>	2013
<b>April</b>	<b>952.60</b>	1036.75
<b>May</b>	<b>884.50</b>	768.50
<b>June</b>	<b>394.50</b>	739.00
<b>Totals £</b>	<b>2231.60</b>	2544.25

## Donations

	2014	2013
<b>April</b>	<b>106.79</b>	57.00
<b>May</b>	<b>133.00</b>	131.49
<b>June</b>	<b>79.87</b>	87.76
<b>Total £</b>	<b>319.66</b>	276.25

## Publicity, Marketing and Website

In April there was good local coverage and some regional / national coverage of the archaeological treasure acquired, principally the North-West Essex ring: interviews on BBC Radio Essex and BBC Radio Cambridgeshire (Curator); local papers; other publications and websites including Culture 24, Museums Association and British Archaeology magazine. We also had good coverage of our Easter and half-term events in the local press.

There were **2,328 Pageviews** this quarter on the Museum's website pages, we now have **306 'Likers' on Facebook and 831 Followers on Twitter** so continue to build a good profile on social media, The unexpected award of a TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence (based on feedback from visitors) and comments in the visitor book indicate that the quality of the 'visit experience' is highly rated.

The Museum benefited from the efforts of Jacqui Portway and her fund-raising campaign to commemorate Flossie Gedney, who was Saffron Walden's oldest resident when she died in 2013 aged 109. The funds purchased eight smart and comfortable matching arm chairs from Harts for visitors to use in the Museum galleries, with commemorative plaques in memory of Flossie, and a small freestanding cycle rack which can be used on the forecourt.

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

### **5.1 Education**

**15 sessions** were taken by the Learning Officer with 11 different schools over 12 days of bookings. 464 children were taught in total in paying sessions in the Museum. 49 children were taught in paying sessions in their own schools and 80 children visited in independent visits. 8 different topics were covered across the sessions: Victorians, Romans, Egyptians, Greeks, Rock Cycle, Tudors, How Museums work and Local History.

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

No. of pupils in sessions taught by Learning Officer in Museum *	<b>464</b>
No. of pupils taught in visits out to schools by Learning Officer	<b>49</b>
No. of pupils in independent visits to Museum *	<b>80</b>
No. of pupils benefiting from schools loan boxes in classroom	<b>308</b>
<b>Total no. of pupils benefiting educationally from Museum Service</b>	<b>901</b>

\* These figures plus 80 teachers/adults accompanying paying school groups provide total school visits in Visitor table in 4.3.

**Loan and reminiscence boxes:** 6 loans were made in total, of which five were made to schools (Rocks, World War II, Victorians x 3) and were used by a total of 308 children. A Birds & Mammals loan was used by 4 adults, giving a total users figure of 312.

**Student sessions:** the Curator provided a study session on the archaeology of medieval Saffron Walden for 10 post-graduate history students from Cambridge University with Dr Carena Lewis (as part of their visit to Saffron Walden to study the town's development and topography).

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

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>No. Attending</b>
4 April	'Finders & Funders' reception to launch new treasure display	70
11 April	Museum Society members' evening, <i>Secrets from the Stores</i> and treasure display	40
16 & 17 April	Easter Holiday – Back to the Stone Age activities	(134+175) 309
10 May	Saffron Walden Drawing Group drew 4 birds and 1 mammal from the school loan collections	4
16 May	Museum by Torchlight with snowy owl	85
14 June	Tour de France making masks and flags	98
28 & 29 May	Half term events <i>Cracking Codes</i> with Morse code machines	(191+140) 331
31 May	Tudor Charter day at Museum with activity making own charter	81
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1018</b>

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

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>No. Attending</b>
10 May	Tudor Charter Day in Saffron Walden – Museum Society stall and display in Town Hall	115
7 June	Societies' Day at Town Hall – Museum Society stall	98
	<b>Total</b>	<b>213</b>

**Other Museums and Local Groups supported (Uttlesford)** 6 groups, 9 meetings  
Museum staff have attended meetings, site visits, undertaken work or given advice to:

- Essex Field Club (2 meetings, treasurer work, Natural Sciences Officer)
- Special Roadside Verges project (1 meeting, 2 planning applications, distributing & processing 2014 ecological survey forms, Natural Sciences Officer)
- Sustainable Uttlesford (1 meeting, Natural Sciences Officer)
- Fry Art Gallery (1 committee meeting, AGM, Curator, loan of book cushion for artists' scrapbooks and use of Schoolroom for meeting)
- Searchers Metal Detecting Club (2 meetings, Curator)
- Dunmow Museum (AGM, Curator)

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

- Museum Essex archaeology curators meeting (Curator)
- Essex Heritage Trust (Curator) – meeting to plan autumn AGM in Saffron Walden
- SHARE retail forum (Visitor Services and Learning Officer)

## Grants and Support

The Museum received grants and support from the following organisations:

- Saffron Walden Town Council - £250 to support Music and Memories event in August 2014

## Local Performance Indicators

Definition	This Quarter Actual Q1	This Quarter target Q1	Cumulative 2014-15	Annual Target 2014-15
Visitors SI 12c	3,900	3,200	3,900	14,000
Users CI 39	6,820	4,900	6,820	21,000

### 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').

### Comment on this quarter's results

**Visitor figures** are 22% above target, attributable mainly to activities programme which included Easter holidays and late May half-term, plus extra activities for Museum by Torchlight, Tour de France and Tudor Charter. School numbers were lower than last year as more schools are due to visit in July so term figures will even out. Visitor figures have dropped mainly due to Monday closing.

While visitor numbers were down in terms of people through the door, shop income increased and so did the average spend per head is up, which shows improvement in the quality and display of the shop. Donations were also very good compared to the same period last year, echoing visitors' appreciation.

**User figures** are 39% over target due mainly to good performance of visitor figures for activities and pageview figures for website, although most website visits appear to be short visits.

# **Future Programme, July – Sept 2014**

## **1 Museum Management and Staff**

Results of Accreditation are awaited and especially their views on the Documentation Plan and backlog which will be the focus of attention in 2015 once the move to Shirehill store has been completed.

## **2 Buildings and Site**

Shirehill store: the racking fit-out and preparations for the move will take up most of staff time once the exhibition opens in August. A shortlist of potential volunteers has already been prepared and recruitment and training is expected to begin in September. The final version of the Natural History Store racking plan is awaited. The Natural Sciences Officer has already had 5 meetings with a racking contactor and UDC project managers, Nicola Wittman and Martin Stocks, in the last quarter to get to this stage. Work to quantify the space needed for the human history collections by the Curator and Collections Officer (Human History) continues so that racking specifications to be developed to house the human history collections in the new store. Staff are also listing the (non-storage) equipment and furniture needed for fitting out the new store, and working with Council colleagues and the Museum Society to procure free second hand or grant-aided items to furnish the Workroom, Kitchen and Cleaning Room.

## **3 Collections and Research**

Ecological surveys of Special Roadside Verge sites continue over the summer (Natural Sciences Officer, Support Work and volunteer Verge Survey team).

Work continues on a project to document the presence of protected species of animals and plants in the Natural History collections (Natural Sciences Officer and Support Worker Madeleine Fanthorpe).

## **4 Displays and Visitor Services**

The next temporary exhibition *North West Essex at War* opens on Saturday 2 August to mark the centenary of World War 1. This exhibition will show how both the First and Second World Wars affected the people of North West Essex. There is a Private View for Museum Society members on Friday 1 August 6 – 7.30 pm.

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

Family summer holiday craft activities based on social history, natural history and archaeology themes are being held on Wednesdays between 11am – 1pm and 2pm – 4pm on:

30 July – historic hats.

6 August – rockets.

13 August – coil pots.

*Music and Memories* event on Friday 8 August, 2 - 4.30 pm with songs, dance, a pop-up tea room and recording family memories of life in the district during war time.

Heritage Open Weekend with FREE museum entry on Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 September.