

# SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM

## CURATOR'S QUARTERLY REPORT

April – June 2015

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

#### **1.1 Management**

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

The installation of mobile and static racking by Link51 has been completed except for a few minor 'snagging' items and collection of surplus shelving. Cocksedge are pursuing these and also repairing some minor damage caused by Link51. A number of other items now need to be completed in July, chiefly the installation of a dehumidifier in the natural history store, a deep clean and advisory visit of the Council's Health & Safety Officer, before the moving-in of collections can commence.

Meanwhile packing and sorting of collections continues with curatorial staff and the team of store volunteers, ably supported by Hayley Wilson (Casual Administrative Assistant, funded by the Museum Society). Most of this work has been completed, although the last phase of assessment and packing will be possible only when other collections have been moved out, liberating space and access in congested storage areas.

##### **Internships**

In April, a new internship programme, managed by Leah Mellors (Collections Officer, Human History) commenced. Nicola Lawson (social history) and Dorian Knight (archaeology) started on 13 April and have completed 30 days each. Nicola carried out an audit of part of the social history collection, documenting the collection on our database and re-packing the collections with appropriate materials. Dorian helped to assess some of the archaeology collections for rationalisation, researching their provenance and repacking them. Both of these projects will contribute to the store move by helping us to assess and potentially rationalise the collections, which will help with storage issues.

#### **1.2 Staff**

Hayley Wilson's contract as casual Admin Assistant (12 hrs per week) has been extended until 30 September, thanks to support from the Museum Society. U-Perform appraisal interviews took place with Museum staff.

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

Special roadside verge surveyors reported back to Natural Sciences Officer on the April cut and are carrying out the 2015 programme of ecological surveys.

Store Team volunteers packed collections for approximately 600 hours.

The team of Human History Collections Volunteers have continued their work on the documentation of the collections. Together, they contribute 160 hours of their time over the quarter. They are mostly working on the 2D collection of documents and photographs.

Joseph Cladingboel took part in a one week placement with the Visitor Services and Learning Officer as part of training in learning outside the classroom, a module of his PGCE (teaching qualification), London Southbank University, approximately 25 hours.

## **1.4 Training and Seminars Attended**

15 April	SHARE Fund-raising cohort, meeting at Chelmsford (CW, Richard Priestley)
27 April	Study visit to ‘Magnificent Obsessions’ exhibition at the Barbican, London (GT, LM)
On-going	Behind the Scenes of a 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Museum, online course (LM)
8 May	AMA Support Group, Norwich (LM)
26 May	Dementia Friends (Uttlesford District Council) (HW)
27 May	SHARE Natural History Curators’ Network meeting, Southend on Sea (SK)
28 May	Developing Skills for Collections Management, NHM, London (LM)
1 June	Casuals training (In-house, Museum) (all Museum Casual staff)
8 June	Digital museums training – Essex County Council, Colchester (GT)
18 June	SHARE Fund-raising cohort, meeting in Museum with adviser (CW, Richard Priestley)
18 June	Fire and Security Systems training (all Museum staff by SS)
29 June	SHARE Collaboration Cohort (at Museum in school room) (LM, HW)

## **1.5 Health & Safety**

No specific items to report this quarter.

## **2 Buildings and Site**

### **2.1 Museum Building**

Saffron Security serviced alarms. Pest monitoring took place in stores and galleries. Emergency repairs were undertaken by UDC Housing Repairs of the Accessible WC. Servicing and inspections took place for: hand driers; lift and stair lifts. IT Security Officer Wayne Caton and an external contractor have been working on installation of the new broadband (completed on 10 July).

### **2.2 Laboratory/Schoolroom**

Saffron Security serviced alarms. Pest monitoring took place in the store.

### **2.3 Newport Store**

Due to a false alarm call-out last November, Essex Police will no longer automatically attend out-of-hours call-outs at this store, unless the intruder alarm system is upgraded. Due to the cost and imminent evacuation of the Newport store, the current basic system has not been retained, and Police and UDC Contract Services (who will be taking over the store) have been notified. (Two staff always attend all call-outs, and if they found anything suspicious, staff would call the Police).

### **2.4 Grounds and Castle Site**

A gate pillar at entrance on Museum Street was demolished by a delivery lorry, and the insurance claim is in progress. Rebuilding will need approval from the Planning Conservation Office and Historic England (Conservation Area and Scheduled Ancient Monument conditions).

Frost cover was removed from the cracked glacial erratic boulder in the grounds.

Work by contractors for UDC Planning continues on the castle walls and walls around the grounds.

### 3 Collections and Research

#### 3.1 Acquisitions and Disposals

12 acquisitions entered in the register this quarter, including:

- Commemorative bronze coin, designed for Edward VII's coronation
- Archaeological evaluations from Elsenham, Great Easton, Little Canfield and Little Bardfield (finds and records to be deposited by archaeological contractors at a later date)
- A hoard of four gold Gallo-Belgic coins, purchased through the Treasure Act 1996
- Early medieval (Viking) silver ingot, purchased through the Treasure Act 1996
- The lower part of a Roman skeleton found in Saffron Walden on the former Tudor Works site, Debden Road, from Essex Police

#### 3.2 Collections Care and Conservation

New moth traps were placed in the ethnography and costume galleries, following concerns about pest management in these galleries.

#### 3.3 Documentation

1 new acquisition 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	1	1386	3408
Natural history colln.s	0	1	1098
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1387</b>	<b>4506</b>

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

Quotations and advice are being sought to see how much of the website design brief can be achieved within the project budget.

#### 3.4 Loans In

A collection of model aeroplanes, featuring most types of plane to fly from Debden airfield, has been loaned to us by Ruth Braybrooke for the upcoming *Uttlesford: A Community of Collectors* exhibition (Aug 2015 – Feb 2016)

The Green Howards Museum in North Yorkshire has requested the return of several Zulu items loaned to the Museum in the 1980s. The Collections Officer (Human History) is arranging their return.

#### 3.5 Loans Out

There have been no loans out during this period.

#### 3.6 Object Identification and Enquiries

Object identifications this quarter: **0 (service suspended)**

Collection Enquiries this quarter: **38** (visitors' 'on-the-spot' ad urgent / essential enquiries only)

Collections and research enquiries, and identification services are temporarily suspended until further notice while staff time has to be prioritised for packing and moving collections.

#### 3.7 Research

2 people from Haverhill Historical Society researching William Wakeling Boreham, whose widow

donated Anglo-Saxon artefacts from a seventh-century burial at Coombe in Kent.

## 4 Displays and Visitor Services

### 4.1 Permanent Galleries

A new 'Object of the Month' programme has been started by Leah Mellors, Collections Officer (Human History) as a way of sharing objects that are rarely seen on display. A case of relics, including a lock of Napoleon's hair, was displayed in May and a braille slate was displayed in June. Each month, a new object will be chosen by a member of staff, intern or volunteer and displayed in one of the permanent galleries, as well as being shared on our blog and on social media.

### 4.2 Temporary Exhibitions

Work is progressing on our next exhibition, *Uttlesford: A Community of Collectors*, which will explore the collections of ordinary people in our local community. Gemma Tully (Visitor Services & Learning Officer) and Leah Mellors (Collections Officer, Human History) have held three workshops with participants to teach them how to care for, display and interpret their collections. Most of the participants will be heavily involved in writing their own exhibition text and creating their own displays. Leah will prepare a display in the exhibition relating to one of the early collectors of the museum. The exhibition will open on 29 August 2015.

### 4.3 Visitor Services

	Public		Schools incl. adults		Total	
	2015	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014
<b>April</b>	<b>1203</b>	1490	<b>186</b>	73	<b>1389</b>	1563
<b>May</b>	<b>1607</b>	1244	<b>104</b>	252	<b>1711</b>	1496
<b>June</b>	<b>1394</b>	524	<b>431</b>	299	<b>1825</b>	841
<b>Total</b>	<b>4204</b>	3258	<b>721</b>	624	<b>4925</b>	3900

Easter weekend 3-6 April 2015 (18-21 April 2014)

#### Tickets

	2015	2014
<b>April</b>	<b>£ 803.25</b>	952.60
<b>May</b>	<b>£ 881.50</b>	884.50
<b>June</b>	<b>£458.25</b>	394.50
<b>Total £</b>	<b>2143.00</b>	2231.60

#### Donations

	2015	2014
<b>April</b>	<b>£ 83.84</b>	106.79
<b>May</b>	<b>£ 96.70</b>	133.00
<b>June</b>	<b>£ 46.68</b>	99.87
<b>Total £</b>	<b>227.22</b>	339.66

#### Shop

	2015	2014
<b>April</b>	<b>£ 450.64</b>	756.30
<b>May</b>	<b>£ 568.10</b>	825.72
<b>June</b>	<b>£ 770.08</b>	701.99
<b>Total £</b>	<b>1788.82</b>	2284.01

#### Comments

Generally, visitors numbers are up due to a series of large free outdoor events (Waterloo, Fete de la

Musique, Nursery School Fete), but ticket sales are down as many people did not come inside and therefore did not give donations or spend in the shop.

### **Museum Shop**

Sales are down on last year, mainly as a result of the fact that fewer school groups have been allowed to use the shop by teachers (an increasingly common phenomenon!).

### **Publicity, Marketing, Social Media and New Website**

The Museum currently has **556 ‘Likers’** on **Facebook** and **1,194 Followers** on **Twitter**.

This is the first full quarter where the Museum’s **new website** has been on-line. There are still some visitors to the old Museum pages on the Council website, but these are obviously much lower than in previous quarters and web users are now being directed to the new website. The May peak may be partly due to the activities and events that month, but the ‘top page’ in June is for ‘Community of Collectors’. Thanks are due to Tony Morton for providing a comprehensive breakdown of the new website figures, and to Bruce Tice (UDC) for assistance with the transition from old to new website.

	<b>Old Website (Council website)</b>	<b>New Website</b>		
	<b>Pageviews</b>	<b>Pages</b>	<b>Visits</b>	<b>Unique Visitors</b>
<b>April</b>	<i>Figure provided for whole quarter only</i>	3,169	599	258
<b>May</b>		5,651	1,360	861
<b>June</b>		4,664	998	627
<b>TOTAL for Q1</b>	<b>668</b>	<b>13,484</b>	<b>2,957</b>	<b>1,746</b>

**Pages:** the number of "pages" viewed by visitors.

**Visits:** the number of visits made by all visitors. (This could be described as the number of "sessions", implying the possibility of multiple pages per visit and multiple visits per unique visitor).

**Unique Visitor:** the number of persons or computers (hosts) that have made at least 1 hit on 1 page of the website during the current period. If a user makes several visits during this period, it is counted only once. Visitors are tracked by IP address, so if multiple users are accessing the website from the same IP (such as a home or office network), they will be counted as a single unique visitor.

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

### **5.1 Education**

**17 sessions** were taken by the Learning Officer

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

No. of pupils in sessions taught by Learning Officer in Museum *	<b>517</b>
No. of pupils taught in visits out to schools by Learning Officer	<b>26</b>
No. of pupils in independent visits to Museum *	<b>61</b>
No. of pupils benefiting from schools loan boxes in classroom	<b>98</b>
<b>Total no. of pupils benefiting educationally from Museum Service</b>	<b>702</b>

\* These figures plus 143 teachers/adults accompanying paying school and independent groups provide total school visits in Visitor table in 4.3

### Loan and reminiscence boxes:

The Prehistory Loan box was used by two different schools this term. The Fossil loan box was used by the Bell Day Nursery in Saffron Walden. The World War II loan box is currently being used by Henham and Ugley Primary School.

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

Date	Event	No. Attending
8 and 9 April	Magnificent Mosaics Easter family events 190 + 140	330
9 May	Freshwell Youth Art Group drawing fossil specimens	10
15 May	Museums at Night – explore the museum by torchlight 6-8pm	139
28 May	Museum birthday parties x 2	74
30 May	Outdoor events Waterloo 200 anniversary Museum Grounds	350
13 June	Nursery School Fete in Museum Grounds	265
21 June	Fete de la Musique in Museum Grounds	450
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1618</b>

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

Date	Event	No. Attending
18 May	Talk to Braintree & Bocking Historical Society (Curator)	40
10 June	Dunmow Reminiscence Group (GT and HW)	21
21 April	Saffron Walden Town Hall Dementia Café (HW)	16
	<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>

### **Other Museums and Local Groups supported (Uttlesford) 10 groups, 9 meetings)**

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

- Dig It Community Allotment – investigating Museum and Castle grounds as a possible site for planting free seeds (Natural Sciences Officer)
- Essex Field Club - 2 meetings, treasurer work, 2014 accounts (Natural Sciences Officer).
- Saffron Walden Wild Flower Group - liaison re verge on Debden Road (Natural Sciences Officer)
- Special Roadside Verges project – 1 meeting, 2015 surveys, April cut, comments on 4 planning applications (Natural Sciences Officer)
- Sustainable Uttlesford – 1 meeting (Natural Sciences Officer)
- Saffron Walden Searchers Metal-Detecting Club - 1 meeting (Curator)
- Dunmow Museum Committee – AGM (Curator)
- Fry Art Gallery - 1 committee meeting and AGM (Curator)
- Hadstock Millennium Committee (Battle of Assandun event 2016) – 2 meetings, one hosted by Museum (Curator)
- Wendens Ambo Society – advice on organising archaeological project and preliminary discussions on further Museum support 2016

Staff also attended the first public display of the Stansted ‘Magna Carta’ Embroidery at Forrest Hall School on 23 June, with a view to displaying the embroidery in the Museum sometime in 2016.

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

- Learning Officer has attended three meeting with Cambridge University (Departments of Education and Archaeology) to look into developing public engagement partnerships/projects.

### Schoolroom Hire

Kids party – 18 April (£70 hire and Toys session with Casual and Visitor & Learning Services Officer)  
Didi Dance – 20 May (£20 1 hour hire)

### Grants and Support

Grants towards the cost of events in May have been reported in previous quarters.

Applications have been made for grants to the Essex Heritage Trust (for analysis of geophysical survey of Museum and Castle site) and to the V&A Purchase Grant Fund (to assist the Museum Society in purchasing an archaeological find offered through the Treasure Act 1996). Results expected in July.

### Local Performance Indicators

Definition	This Quarter Actual Q1	This Quarter target Q1	Cumulative 2015-16	Annual Target 2015-16
Visitors PI 22 SI 12c	4,925	3,400	4,925	14,000
Users PC 01 CI 39	8,095	5,100	8,095	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 engaging with the Museum Service in person or through other media, and include:

- those visiting the site (visitors, as above)
- those attending off-site events (e.g. talk or other off-site activity by Museum staff)
- those using the Museum ‘remotely’ (enquiries, research and services by phone, email, fax and letter and website visits which were 2,957 on the new website this quarter)

Comment: an exceptional combination of on-site special events in May, with fine weather and grant-aid for the Waterloo event, have boosted visitor figures beyond the norm.

The good performance of the new website has further enhanced User figures. Note that the Visits have been used rather than Pages or Unique Visitors, as Visits (“sessions”) is directly comparable to the way Museum visitors are counted.

Previously, ‘Pageviews’ per quarter were provided from the Council website, this being derived from Audit Commission definitions of national performance indicators for museums some years ago. Pageviews on the Council website for the Museum averaged at 2,142.5 per quarter over the last two financial years (from April 2013 to March 2015).

# **Future Programme, July-September 2015**

Main activities and items to note for the next quarter:

## **1 Museum Management and Staff**

Sarah Kenyon's Support Worker who is funded by Access to Work is on leave for 6 weeks from 6 July and an agency replacement has been found only after some difficulty.

## **2 Buildings and Site**

Dependent on completion of contractors' work at Shirehill before a timetable for moving collections in can be established.

Two issues requiring urgent attention in the Museum:

- Fire alarm system upgrade (under discussion with Sunfish and the Council)
- Fibre-optics display lighting in Ancient Egypt gallery (persistent failure, needs replacing, staff investigating (a) short-term mitigation measures and (b) options for replacement and cost)

## **3 Collections and Research**

Members of the public continue to bring in objects for identification and make enquiries or other requests despite suspension of these services. Staff can sometimes deal with 'on the spot' identifications and urgent items otherwise these services have to remain suspended until collections have been moved into the new store.

## **4 Displays and Visitor Services**

*Uttlesford a Community of Collectors* will open on 29<sup>th</sup> August, with a private view for Museum Society members and guests on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> August to which all MMWG members and Uttlesford councillors will be invited.

Update of the treasure case in the archaeology gallery is anticipated in early August to put recent acquisitions in display (subject to impact of Shirehill store project and other urgent issues on the Curator's time)

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

All school visits are complete until September. The Visitor Services & Learning Officer will be focusing on the summer holiday activities, which take place on the 5<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> August.

We also have the Heritage Open Weekend forthcoming 12-13 September.