

**SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM**

**CURATOR'S QUARTERLY REPORT  
July - September 2013**

**1 Museum Management and Staff**

**1.1 Management**

**Forward Plan 2013-2018 and Museum Development**

The 'Design & Build' contract for the new store at Shire Hill has gone out to tender. It is expected that the appointment of a contractor and legal arrangements between the Council and Museum Society will be confirmed shortly. Further fund-raising will be necessary to provide mobile racking for the store.

On plans for the Castle, the Curator and Natural Sciences Officer continue to work with the Planning Department and their contractors Purcell, as reported in 2.5 below. The Heritage Lottery Fund have indicated to Planning that they expect to see a single application for any future project to improve the Museum and the Castle site.

**Accreditation**

The Arts Council have postponed the next tranche of Accreditation due to their workload, consequently the Museum will not now receive its invitation to re-apply until mid-November, with a submission deadline of June 2014.

**1.2 Staff**

While the Documentation & Exhibition Officer post remains vacant, staff are being diverted from other work to deal with enquiries, offers for the collections and research access which would normally be dealt with by this post. There is a backlog of documentation work on recent acquisitions and loan records and special exhibition plans are being scaled down accordingly, although current plans for 2014 will include two special exhibitions (*Secrets from the Store* and a commemorative exhibition reflecting on local civilian life in the two world wars).

On 28 September four new Museum Assistants (casual contracts) were inducted: Gemma Copping, Suzanne Hawkins, Amy Thompson and Hayley Wilson. Congratulations to Museum Assistant Lisa Rivett on the birth of her son in July.

The Conservation Officer post is being deleted due to budget cuts, and after service of 26½ years, Lynn Morrison will be leaving in January 2014 on a redundancy package. This will impact not only on future care of collections but also on other aspects of the service including maintaining staff levels for security / Health & Safety and for Saturday opening, and the move to the new store (anticipated early 2014). A restructure of the service is being implemented to reduce the impact as far as possible.

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

Barry Kaufmann-Wright, Tony Morton, Ken Rivett, Saffron Walden Wildflower Group members, Heather and Paul Salvidge, Dominique Wallace completed their ecological surveys of Uttlesford special roadside verge sites. Ian Sharpe continued on the photographs index and Hamish McIlwrick on the glass images. Maddy Marshall was offered a place at Camberwell College of Art to study book and paper conservation and completed her last projects before leaving at the end of September. Her experience here and references from the Conservator must have helped! Roger Barrett of the Essex Numismatics Society has begun a long-term project on the coin collections, which may draw on the expertise of other ENS members as work progresses, and form a closer working link between the Museum and ENS.

Museum Society volunteers have continued to help with geophysical surveys on the Common and castle site, and with the *All Our Stories* project (the 'Dig on the Common' and Heritage Open Day event); special thanks are due to Jane Laing for assisting with supervising students, Open Day arrangements and the Open Day picnic for helpers.

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

No training events this quarter.

### **1.5 Health & Safety**

Peter Caulfield, security advisor for Essex Police, visited the Museum on 20 August for a routine inspection (Accreditation requirement) and to advise on plans for the new store; there were no urgent recommendations to be implemented, but useful guidance for future developments. The Conservation Officer attended a Fire Team meeting.

## **2 Buildings and Site**

### **2.1 Museum Building**

Natural History Store: 2 pieces of environmental control equipment broke down. The air conditioning unit was repaired and the dehumidifier has been sent to Munters for repair. Saffron Security repaired a dysfunctional CCTV camera in the Ceramics gallery.

### **2.2 Laboratory/Schoolroom**

The gas-fired boiler in the Lab was inspected and the gas meter changed to a Smart meter.

### **2.3 Newport Store**

No specific items to report this quarter.

### **2.4 40 Castle Street**

The Curator has been given notice by the Council to vacate the Curator's house by mid March 2014 so that it can be rented out commercially at a higher rate. This additional income will be used to offset some of the reduction in the Council's budget for the Museum 2014-15.

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

Contractors working for the Planning Department have completed the immediate programme of

conservation work to support vulnerable parts of the ruined keep, and Museum staff continue to work with consultants Purcell who have been appointed by Planning to produce a Site Management Plan. A bat survey was carried out as part of the ecological survey work. Dr Tim Dennis completed a final piece of geophysical survey of a strip of grass between the tennis courts and Church Street properties, thanks to the cooperation of Castle Hill Tennis Club and with the assistance of volunteers Sarah and Henrietta Kirkpatrick and Paul Salvidge. UDC grounds maintenance cut vegetation growing behind the iron fence on the boundary wall with Castle Street.

### **3 Collections and Research**

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

**2 acquisitions** this quarter, both numbers allocated for Archaeological Evaluation archives. Several items of costume including children's dresses were offered but are still under consideration and have not been accessioned yet.

#### **Treasure Appeal**

In early September the Museum and Museum Society launched a local public appeal for donations towards the purchase of 5 items of archaeological treasure, including an early Anglo-Saxon gold signet ring of exceptional interest. This received good coverage in the local press, radio and television. Meanwhile purchase grant applications have been made to five potential funding organisations in respect of the ring, and a further application to the New Treasure Plus Fund (managed by the Art Fund) has been awarded a £5,100 grant for purchase of a new secure showcase.

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

**Horse-drawn vehicles** – surface cleaning of 3 carts and one funeral bier was completed and we are awaiting removal of the Brougham and the Jobmaster's cart from Newport to the Whitensmere Farm barn in early October for similar cleaning and examination.

**The 17th Essex Rifle Volunteers "colour"** – This has been conserved by giving it a new silk backing and flattening and cleaning the central painted circle. It will be collected and displayed next month. The total cost of £3,429 will be largely offset by a grant of £3,000 from the Essex Heritage Trust, as previously reported.

Objects conserved by Lincoln conservation students were processed and returned to store and toys and dolls were selected from the store for any treatment that might be needed prior re-display of the Toys and Dolls case.

### 3.3 Documentation

0 new acquisitions catalogued this quarter (no Documentation & Exhibitions Officer in post) and backlog / updates for

	<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	0	0	0
Natural history colln.s	0	0	1584
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1584</b>

### Effective Collections (World Cultures project)

Len Pole has completed editing the entries for four museums and has kindly entered the corrections for Saffron Walden on EHive.

### Essex Numismatics Society

Roger Barrett, a longstanding member of the Essex Numismatics Society, has begun a long-term volunteer project on the Museum's coin collections. In time, this may be able to draw on the expertise of other ENS members as well. The first task has been to identify, sort and list a large number of 'miscellaneous' coins mostly Roman bronze) and assist the Curator on deciding which to accession, which to keep for handling and educational use, and which to dispose of.

### 3.4 Loans In

A 1950s dancing dress, a children's Annual, toys and domestic items were loaned this quarter for display in the 1950s exhibition.

### 3.5 Loans Out

The watercolour of *The Almshouses* by Edward Bawden has been safely returned from exhibition at the First Site gallery in Colchester and re-hung in the Local History gallery. Costume has been returned from loan to the *China in the East* touring exhibition. Objects have also gone for conservation by students at Lincoln University Conservation Unit.

### 3.6 Object Identification and Enquiries

**Object identifications this quarter: 12**

**Collection Enquiries this quarter: 50** by phone, fax, email, letter or casual enquiries in person

### 3.7 Research

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

- Group of eight members from Mersea Museum, investigating finds and records from the Roman burial mounds of Bartlow Hills (for project on a similar roman burial mound on Mersea island).
- Hettie Dix from Purcell came to research the Museum's history for Purcell (the castle contractors) 20 September.
- Hanna Waugh came to research John Player autobiography on 18 September.
- Christopher Hartop came to view some 1741 auction catalogues on 21 August.
- *Christ in Majesty* alabaster examined by a researcher from the School of Art History, University of East Anglia on 15 August with her WEA group
- Civil War coins were studied by a researcher on 12 August.
- 2 local residents to look at 17 century tradesmen's tokens from Thaxted

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## 4 Displays and Visitor Services

### 4.1 Permanent Galleries

It has not been possible to complete the redisplay of the Studio Pottery (loan from The Keatley Trust) due to lack of staff but this is scheduled for October.

### 4.2 Temporary Exhibitions

The popular *Butterflies* exhibition finished on Sunday 1 September. This travelling exhibition was produced by Southend-on-Sea Museums Service. It celebrated the beauty of British butterflies; detailed their fascinating habits, life histories and strategies for survival; and considered the threats that butterflies face in a changing world. British and foreign butterfly and moth specimens from the insect collection at Saffron Walden Museum were displayed with the exhibition. Several photographs of butterflies taken by local author and photographer Barry Kaufmann-Wright were also on show. Young visitors to the exhibition could design their own butterfly on a computer interactive, try on butterfly and bug masks, and colour in some beautiful butterflies and colourful caterpillars to display on the art wall – the wall was very impressive by the time the exhibition ended.

**1950s – *Having it So Good*** – This travelling exhibition was collected on 5 September and installed within a week. The exhibition takes a nostalgic look at life in the 1950s and explores everyday life and national events. 11 bright and colourful graphics panels and framed ads of the time look at changing design as seen during the Festival of Britain, in fashion, the home and new developments that would influence music and leisure. Through a range of original objects, some loaned from staff members, the exhibition reveals changes which took place in home life as well as national events such as the advent of immigration, the Suez crisis, the Festival of Britain, as well as the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth. Members of the public can post notes on what they remember and there are games and activity sheets of the time for the younger visitors, although the older ones who remember Muffin the Mule might also like to see him again!

For the last week of June and first week of July, Year 1 **children from R.A. Butler School** put on a temporary exhibition of their family histories in the Great Hall. This was the result of a number of workshops over the Summer term with the Learning and Visitor Services Officer. More than 50 children were involved in the project and the school hopes to set this up as an annual collaboration between the Museum and the School.

A small temporary display of **dig finds** from the Common continues through October with a selection of display boards produced by students for the *All Our Stories* Open Day on 14 September.

### 4.3 Visitor Services

	Public		Schools incl. adults		Total	
	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012
July	1084	1038	156	189	1240	1227
August	2121	1798	0	0	2121	1798
September	992	1239	431	0	1348	1239
<b>Total</b>	<b>3874</b>	<b>4075</b>	<b>587</b>	<b>189</b>	<b>4709</b>	<b>4264</b>

## Shop

	2013	2012
July	<b>339.59</b>	303.62
August	<b>842.69</b>	587.86
September	<b>423.52</b>	246.99
TIC Crocus	<b>See note*</b>	216.00
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1605.80</b>	1354.47

\*Saffron Walden TIC has not yet been invoiced for the crocus but £280.80 is to be invoiced this October for 130 packs of bulbs

## Tickets

	2013	2012
July	<b>779.00</b>	668.25
August	<b>1391.75</b>	1167.00
September	<b>578.75</b>	596.25
<b>Totals £</b>	<b>2749.50</b>	2456.25

## Donations

	2013	2012
July	<b>67.30</b>	81.04
August	<b>106.19</b>	121.16
September	<b>108.87</b>	119.70
<b>Total £</b>	<b>282.36</b>	321.90

## Publicity, Marketing and Website

Press releases, newspaper adverts, posters, website information and the Museum email newsletter went out for all of the events, activities and exhibitions for this quarter including: Summer holiday activities, the Dig on the Common and Heritage Open Day, 1950s exhibition, and the 1950s afternoon. The Treasure appeal has also been publicised in local papers and through museum email newsletters. We now have Facebook 'likes' 213 and 503 'Followers' on Twitter. The Council website including the Museum pages is being rebuilt and Museum pages have received 1,054 pageviews this quarter.

## 5 Education, Events and Outreach

### 5.1 Education

**No. of sessions taken by Learning Officer: 11** paying sessions and 8 FREE Egyptian workshop sessions for Re-Imagining Egypt exhibition with 8 different schools/groups (grant-aided)

No. of school loan boxes sent out: 2 (Local History and Victorians)

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

No. of pupils in sessions taught by Learning Officer in Museum *	<b>299</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>71</b>
No. of pupils benefiting from schools loan boxes in classroom	<b>63</b>
<b>Total no. of pupils benefiting educationally from Museum Service</b>	<b>433</b>

\* These figures, plus 63 teachers/adults accompanying school groups plus 158 children taught in

FREE Egyptian workshops in the Museum with 31 accompanying adults. Plus 28 children taught in school as part of FREE Egyptian workshops (Total 186 kids and 31 adults) 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>
2 August	SWMS AGM – SWMS, CW, LM, GT	50
7, 14, 21 August	Family holiday activities – GT, AG, DD, SK 133 + 149 + 156	438
16 August	Magnetic Bug mazes as part of the maze festival - GT, AG	199
14 September	Heritage Open Weekend – CW, AG	210
21 September	Book signing and 1950s afternoon – GT, AG	57
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>954</b>

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

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event and Staff</b>	<b>No. Attending</b>
22-26 July	<i>All Our Stories</i> project (HLF) dig on the Common 38 participants in total (3 Access Cambridge archaeology staff + 2 volunteers; 15 SWCH students; 14 NFGS students + 1 staff; 2 volunteers; 1 geophysicist) and Curator Estimated 300 public looking at site or attending summing up.	338
	<b>Total</b>	<b>338</b>

***All Our Stories* project: Saffron Walden Castle Bailey ('The Dig on the Common' + Open Day)**  
Carolyn to write up Dig and Open Day

**Other Museums and Local Groups supported (Uttlesford)** 7 groups, 7 meetings  
Museum staff have attended meetings, site visits, undertaken work or given advice to:

*Edit this list from last quarter*

- Essex Field Club (1 meeting, treasurer work, Natural Sciences Officer)
- Essex Ecology Services Ltd (maps for wildlife sites review, Natural Sciences Officer)
- Saffron Walden Wildflower Group (advice, Natural Sciences Officer)
- Special Roadside Verges project (2 meetings, 1 planning application, 3 surveys, annual reports, Natural Sciences Officer)
- Searchers Metal Detecting Club (3 meetings, Curator)
- Fry Art Gallery (Accreditation and Forward Plan advice, Curator)
- Saffron Walden Initiative (August Bug Mazes, Visitor Services and Learning Officer)

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

- MEAN (Museums East Archaeology Network), Curator, 20 September

## Local Performance Indicators

Definition	This Quarter actual Q2	This Quarter target Q2	Annual Total 2013-14	Annual Target 2013-14
<b>Visitors</b> SI 12c	<b>4,709</b>	4,300		<b>15,000</b>
<b>Users</b> CI 39	<b>6,230</b>	6,000		<b>22,000</b>

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 1,054 Pageviews this quarter.

### Comment on this quarter's results

**Visitor figures** are 9.5% above target, mainly due to high number of school bookings in September, and additional activity in August for Maze Festival.

**User figures** are about 4% over target, reflecting the strong performance of on-site visits and also the public interest in the off-site activity the Dig on the Common (*All Our Stories* project) however there has been a significant drop on website pageviews compared to previous quarters.

## Grants Awarded this quarter

Grant from	For	Amount £	Financial Yr
NADFAS	Re-Imagining Egypt Project	500.00	2013-14



# **Future Programme, October - December 2013**

## **1 Museum Management and Staff**

Four new Museum Assistants (casual contracts) to be inducted in October.

Documentation & Exhibitions Officer post remains vacant, additional Casual assistance needed to complete Saturday rota and continuing to provide support during the week when staff cover is unavoidably thin.

## **2 Buildings and Site**

Repaired dehumidifier to be reinstalled in Natural History Store to bring the relative humidity down.

## **3 Collections and Research**

Work continues on 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).

## **4 Displays and Visitor Services**

Re-Imagining Egypt exhibition 16 November 2013 – 26 January 2014.

Studio pottery case (Keatley trust loan) to be completed.

Ordering of new showcase for treasure finds to replace Roman potter.

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

From 9 September	Egyptian school workshops for Re-Imagining Egypt project. 8 sessions taught over the quarter, more to follow.
5 October	The Big Draw
30, 31 October	Family holiday activities - Space Race
7 December	Decorate the Museum Christmas Tree