

1 Museum Management and Staff

1.1 Management

Museum Service; Covid 19 pandemic and closure to public

The Museum building has been closed to the public for the whole of this quarter, due to Covid 19 restrictions. However, the service has remained active on-line and behind-the-scenes, with some staff working in the Museum or Shirehill store, and others working at home as circumstances dictated. Our weekend and casual staff and volunteers have been unable to work during closure but have been kept in touch with the Museum and plans for re-opening in the autumn (Covid regulations permitting). By the end of the quarter, permanent staff had mostly resumed normal working patterns in the Museum as work has focused on the galleries, collections and new equipment and procedures to comply with Covid 19 safety measures. The support and assistance of other Council colleagues and departments has been an important part of this effort, in procurement, installation and general preparations.

Public services have continued on-line through our usual enquiry services and through the Museum's E-Newsletter, website and social media. The new 'click and collect' Activity Packs have been highly successful and have been promoted as an example of good practice by the Essex Museums Development Officer to other Museums in the region. Details of on-line and outreach activity are in section 5 of this report.

In late June the government announced that museums would be allowed to re-open from 4 July onwards provided that they could meet the new Covid 19 safety requirements. There is great variance across the sector, dependent on the specific circumstances of each museum, with some re-opening in the late summer and autumn, and others remaining closed over the winter. Section 4 of this report itemises the work which has been undertaken to make the Museum 'Covid safe' for visitors and workforce. This includes the introduction of a cashless payment system, comprising an Electronic Point-of-Sale (EPOS) till with barcode scanner and card reader, to be followed by training of all staff and then Welcome Desk volunteers. At the close of the quarter, the Museum is poised to set a re-opening date once the card reader (which has to be leased) has been supplied, installed and training has been rolled out.

Accreditation Review

Updating of the Joint Management Agreement and Museum Management Group Terms of reference is in progress, ahead of Accreditation next year.

Forward Plan: NHLF Resilient Heritage project

The consultation phase of the Audience Development Study (Julia Holberry Associates) concluded this quarter with remote surveys, a public consultation in Saffron Walden Market on Saturday 22 August and small focus groups at the Museum on Saturday 26 September. A Zoom workshop to present the findings to the Museum Development Group is planned for 6 October, after which the final report will be drafted.

1.2 Staff, Volunteers and Work Experience

Staff

The core staff team is now mostly working in the Museum as described, and we anticipate bringing our

weekend and casual staff team back shortly, in Q3.

Volunteers

Volunteers – remote / outdoors support in Q2	Est Hours
Natural Sciences Volunteers	
TM liaised over the highway works at UTT46 Audley End House Wall special verge.	3
Welcome Desk volunteers	
JB advising on use of till and operation of Welcome Desk with new procedures; undertaking EPOS till training	8
Learning volunteers to prep activity packs: 30hrs	30
Total hours remote support from volunteers during Covid 19 closure in Q2	41

1.3 Training and Seminars Attended (all on-line)

Date	Course and Staff
Daily	On-line and Telephone based daily training throughout the quarter re: EPOS till, how to set up and manage products, reports etc. Front of House Officer
1 July	Webinar: Re-opening Museums (Museums Association) Curator
27 July	ePOS till – basic online introductory session: JL, Natural Sciences Officer.
August	Barkcloth Basics (World Cultures Collections, Collections Officer (Human History))
14 Aug	Webinar: Culture Recovery Funding (AIM) Curator
9, 14 Sept	Series of archaeology webinars – Rendlesham (research and community archaeology project) - Suffolk County Council Archaeology (Curator, CPD in own time)
14 Sept	How to reset alarm at Shirehill store, S Kenyon (Natural Sciences Officer) by Security Officer
17 Sept	Webinar: Digital Skills for Heritage (NLHF) Curator
25 Sept	Webinar: Re-Opening Retail (Association for Cultural Enterprises) Front of House Officer
25 Sept	EPOS till, basic on-line introductory session: Learning & Outreach Officer, Collections Officer (Human History), Curator
8 Sept	Prevent – Anti-Terrorism training: JL, Natural Sciences Officer

1.4 Health & Safety

Much work and staff time this quarter has centred on work-place risk assessments, safety measures and procedures for Covid 19.

Asbestos Minerals: Kadec and Kova contractors visited the Shirehill Store and Saffron Walden Museum on 23 and 24 September to work on the historic asbestos minerals in the museum collection. Those minerals are in quarantine at Shirehill store and in the mineral display case on the geology gallery at the Museum. Kadec measured the minerals for new Perspex boxes, cleaned the work and display areas and disposed of unwanted textile pads, insulation board, Victorian soap and contaminated packaging. Kova conducted air tests to certify that asbestos fibres resulting from the work have been removed. This work is funded partly from the Museum's budget and partly by the Museum Society. Cost has been reduced because it took less time than anticipated. A further visit will take place to store and consolidate the minerals once the boxes are manufactured.

2 Buildings and Site

2.1 Museum Building

External works

In July, a resident in Castle Street, who has a clear view of the back of the Museum, informed us that a grey squirrel was entering the building via a below floorboards ventilation shaft. These shafts are covered by cast iron grills, but this one was badly corroded allowing access. This grill and another in similar condition have now been replaced with new ones of a similar design to the originals.

Internal work

Screens have been erected in museum reception, offices and other work areas where social distancing for Covid 19 is not possible.

Museum Natural Sciences store: hole in wall at end of wooden beam repaired by Security Officer.

Minor redecorating and repairs have been carried out as part of our reopening preparations. Particular attention has been given to the bay window shutter area, the Great Hall and the main staircase.

2.2 Museum Site and Castle Grounds

Grounds maintenance have continued to maintain the lawns throughout the Covid restrictions and several large branches that have fallen from trees at the back of the Castle during high winds, have been cut up and removed. It has been agreed in principle to cut down several large sycamores the other side of the wrought iron security fence that overhang Castle Street gardens. As a designated area of historic interest, further permissions are required before work can commence.

2.3 Shirehill Store

Natural Sciences Store: work on the asbestos minerals (see 1.4 Health and Safety) and the humidifier, which involved cleaning, de-scaling of limescale and changing the filter. Future investment in a water filter may be required if supplied of distilled water run out.

3 Collections and Research

3.1 Acquisitions and Disposals

66 new acquisitions received this quarter (Human History: 54; Archaeology: 12), plus an additional 139 Natural History/Geology specimens which were accessioned retrospectively.

The Museum Society completed the purchase of two items of archaeological treasure – two Bronze Age gold bracelets and a Roman ring set with an amethyst – but we are waiting for the British Museum to permit collection appointments to resume before acquisition is completed. Grants towards the cost of the bracelets have been received by the Museum Society from the ACE/V&A Purchase Grant Funds, the Art Fund and the Beecroft Bequest (Museums Association).

3.2 Collections Care & Conservation

Digital environmental monitoring trial (Museum Society funded).

The data logger is currently in its third trial location (downstairs at Shirehill), having already been tested in the Museum Natural Sciences Store and the Shirehill Nat Sciences Store. It will shortly be tested in: Metals store at

Shirehill, SWM Metals store, Ethnography store and the Special Exhibitions gallery. The trial will end in mid-February. The higher sensitivity and faster sampling rate of the datalogger is posing challenges for interpretation. Experiments are continuing to find the best settings to use on the software so that we don't get sent frequent, unnecessary alerts if the conditions briefly deviate from our preferred range. A fuller report is available, and has been circulated to the Museum Society Board, as the Society is funding this initiative.

Geology Gallery cataloguing project (Museum Society funded)

All objects in the geology gallery now have at least an Inventory-level Modes record. Most have more data than the minimum required. All queries have been investigated as far as is reasonable, but still leaves the precise identification of certain items unsure. These records have been annotated that they require updating as and when new information becomes available. All items that did not have a permanent accession number at the start of the project have been newly entered in to the current Accession Register and given a 2020 accession number. Queries described above have also been noted as such in the Accession Register. 50% of the Modes records have had images attached. The other half are awaiting image attachment, and several records need restructuring to denote individual items within group accessions. JL still owes 6h45min of dedicated project time, which should be sufficient to complete the work.

Natural History store and work on historic taxidermy

The Natural Sciences and Learning & Outreach Officers have been working since August to return and condition check the taxidermy that had been relocated to the Inorganics store while sealing work was completed in the Natural Sciences Store. They were joined occasionally by a volunteer. The items have mostly been birds, but also included rodents, shrews, bats, and some larger mammals and invertebrates. 194 items have been checked, leaving about 10% still to do. 83 items have been noted as requiring further work. About a quarter of these need urgent attention to stop pest damage or because they are in a very fragile physical state. They have been set aside and are being treated to prevent further pest damage. Staff are also investigating funding opportunities for a larger project to conserve the remaining items requiring attention and to work with the foreign birds (a strength of the collection) on basic conservation and improving storage conditions. Pest monitoring took place at Museum and Shirehill store. The inorganics store was fumigated as a result.

3.3 Documentation

Backlog / updates	New Acquisitions	Backlog (existing collections not previously catalogued on Modes)	Edits and Updates to existing records
Human history collections	50	500	200
Archaeology	0	0	0
Natural Sciences	0	0	185
Total	50	500	385

3.4 Loans In

In August staff from the Horniman Museum in London visited and met with Jenny Oxley, Collections Officer (Human History) to view, photograph and condition checking their ongoing historic loan of world cultures material, to enable the loan to be more accurately recorded and on a firmer footing.

3.5 Loans Out

Wampum – Mayflower 400

Saffron Walden Museum has lent out two strings of Wampum beads and a beautifully intricate Wampum belt

for a new touring exhibition "Wampum: Stories from the Shells of North America," which opened in August at Seacity, Southampton and runs until October. There is a possibility of further extensions to the loan as the exhibition tours to future venues. Wampum is a traditional shell bead made and used by the Eastern Woodlands indigenous American tribes. It includes white shell beads hand fashioned from the North Atlantic channeled whelk shell, and white and purple beads made from the quahog or Western North Atlantic hard-shelled clam.

3.6 Object Identification and Enquiries

Object identifications this quarter: 2 (Archaeology)

Collections Enquiries this quarter: 39 (Archaeology 1, Human History: 33; Natural Sciences 5)

Topics included:

- Beekeeper contacts
- Bee orchids and wild flower groups
- Shield bugs
- Special roadside verges biological records
- Concealed garment research
- Saffron Walden Town Football Club
- Indigenous American collections
- Mutual Improvement Societies
- Piano coin hoard
- Ashdon historical floods
- Karl Weschke sculpture 'Deutschland 1945'
- 1970s Fashion
- Saffron Walden Convent
- Circulating libraries

In addition to these the Museum continues to receive written and audiovisual submissions by email from the public regarding their experiences of the Covid-19 situation for the CV Walden project.

3.7 Research

No research visits this quarter due to Covid 19 closure. Researcher enquiries on-line are included above in the Collections enquiry section.

4 Displays and Visitor Services

4.1 Permanent Galleries

For Covid safety reasons, information sheets and large text portable labels have had to be removed and labels texts for the exhibits affected have been posted by the Collections Officer (Human History) on the Museum's website so that visitors can read them on their own mobile devices using QR codes, or can download them from our website to print them off at home beforehand if they would prefer.

Most interactives have been removed to storage because they cannot be made Covid-safe. Sanitiser and other modifications have been provided in the galleries for touchable items to make them safe, e.g. the large, fixed ammonite and crystal specimens in the geology gallery. In the Natural History Discovery Centre, a small selection of wipe-able plastic trays of specimens will be provided for viewing under the microscope camera, as these can be wiped down easily and the selection rotated on a regular basis.

4.2 Temporary Exhibitions

Special Exhibition: Man and Beast: A cultural History of animals

The exhibition explores the impact of animals on human culture, from early dog burials in Stanstead 2000 years ago to classics of modern literature. The exhibition uses the Museum's broad collections to study six groups of animals: raptors, snakes, insects, ungulates, canines and bees. It is ready for the first visitors, as soon as the Museum is able to re-open.

Object of the Month has continued on-line and in the Saffron Walden Flyer:

- July - Hipposandal (Roman horse shoe) from Wixoe
- August - Chinese Foot binding – shoes
- September - Septarian nodule section

Curiosity Corner: The display is currently on hold due to the Museum being closed. Focus for learning has been switched to our blog.

Your Stories: Sawdust Hearts exhibition remains on display for re-opening.

4.3 Visitor Services

While closure due to Covid 19 continues, income lost from sale of admission tickets and souvenirs has been partially offset by income from the Click & Collect Activity Packs. The following income statistics are based on average figures for the last three years 2016/17 – 2018/19, as an indication of losses caused by Covid closure:

Visitors:	3,445	average of last 3 years for Q2
Tickets income:	£ 3,720	"
Shop (sale of souvenirs):	£ 1,546	"
Donations income:	£ 146	"

On this basis, total income lost this quarter could have been up to about £ 5,412 but if the income from Activity Packs and Loans Boxes) is taken into account then the net loss would be around £ 4,375 .

Income from Click & Collect Activity Packs and Schools Loans Boxes

(For comparison, in Q1 June, 64 activity packs were sold with a total income of £320)

July-September, 193 activity packs were sold with a total income of £965

Since schools have returned in September 4 loan boxes have gone out bringing in £72 of income (user figures for these loan boxes will be reported in Q3 at the end of the loan period, when schools return the data)

EPOS till and preparation for cashless payments

An Electronic Point-of-Sale (EPOS) till and barcode scanner have been installed on the Welcome Desk and the majority of staff have completed basic online introductory training sessions. Work is in progress to produce a 'User Guide' which will support the Welcome Desk volunteers training in due course.

The Card Reader is yet to be installed and integrated with the EPoS system; further training in the use of this (and issue resolution) will be required by all staff and Welcome Desk volunteers prior to re-opening.

Online booking through Art Tickets and Test & Trace

The Collections Officer (Human History) has set up on-line bookings on Art Tickets ready for public re-opening. The Museum now has systems compliant with Test & Trace:

- Modified signing-in procedures for all staff, volunteers, Council and Museum Society officers, contractors and other visitors-by-appointment
- On-the-door recording for members of the public when the museum re-opens
- QR codes displayed at the Museum and Shirehill store for scanning with the NHS app

Welcome Desk and Front-of-House

A screen has been erected at the Welcome Desk and hand sanitisers installed both on the Welcome Desk and in the reception areas. Plastic seat covers and cleaning equipment provide the necessary Covid requirements. A leading volunteer has been invited to advise on use of till and operation of Welcome Desk with the new procedures. There will be a new role on the door for casuals staff to assist visitors with Covid Safety measures

Gallery Preparations

Covid safety signs, hand sanitiser stations, floor markers, and routes are now in place. Interactives have either been removed or covered, or adapted for safe use.

4.4 Publicity, Marketing

The Museum has a publicity strategy, which includes planned paid for and free advertising. Publicity and marketing activities have been reduced due to Covid 19 and 'essential spending' restrictions.

In September the Discovery Channel filmed Jenny Oxley, Collections Officer (Human History) in the Museum's local history gallery for a series about historical mysteries. The interview to camera was based around the history of the Bishop's Castle College Coin Hoard, a hoard of 913 gold sovereigns which were mysteriously found hidden in a piano. We await news of the broadcast date.

Trip Advisor

We are delighted to have been recognised as a **Travellers' Choice Winner** on this Travel and Tourism review website. The Museum now ranks Number 2 out of 18 things to do in Saffron Walden and, of the 140 reviews, 97 rate us as 'Excellent'. You can read them here: https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attraction_Review-g315967-d1548064-Reviews-Saffron_Walden_Museum-Saffron_Walden_Essex_England.html

Publicity and Marketing:

Publication	Advert	Date
SW Town Council Official Guide and Map	Generic Museum double page spread, full colour advert https://www.localauthoritypublishing.co.uk/flip_guides/saffro_nwaldenguide/index.html pages 20 and 21	2020

SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM
CURATOR'S QUARTERLY REPORT Q2 2020/21

July - Sept 2020

www.visitsaffronwalden.gov.uk	Enhanced entry advert https://www.visitsaffronwalden.gov.uk/2020/03/saffron-walden-museum/	2020
East of England Visitor guide	Generic Museum Half page advert on page 46 + MPU https://www.yumpu.com/en/embed/view/gcP0DjISRQizrWpU	Spring - Summer 2020
East of England GROUP visitor guide	Generic Museum Half page advert	2020
Eastlife Magazine	Generic Museum Advert on page 48 + App https://www.yumpu.com/en/embed/view/syFrzgxopNeR13nq	Summer 2020

Published Articles (in print and on-line)

Date	Publication	Subject	Additional Information	Photo
July Issue	Saffron Walden Flyer	Museum News	Object of the month / General news update	Y
02/07	Saffron Walden Reporter	CV Walden Project (Covid-19)	Letter's page re CV Walden Project	Y
July issue	Uttlesford Resident	Learning	"Get Crafty" Click & collect activity packs	Y
August Issue	Saffron Walden Flyer	Museum News	Object of the month / General news update	Y
September Issue	Saffron Walden Flyer	Museum News	Object of the month / General news update	Y
24/09	Saffron Walden Reporter	Letter	Letters Page – Thank you for Click & Collect Activity Packs	Y
30/09	Walden Local	CV Walden Project (Covid-19)	CV Walden Project	Y

Exhibition and Events listings

Exhibition and Events are advertised on many 'What's On' listings (in print and online) these include:

- Saffron Walden TIC
- Bishops Stortford TIC
- Saffron Walden Flyer Online
- Net Mums
- Salad Days
- EastLife

4.5 On-Line, Website and Social Media

These figures all show a marked increase compared to the same quarter in 2019, no doubt largely due to the impact of the Covid pandemic and renewed focus on on-line materials and digital communication.

Social Media and Email Newsletter

Twitter	Followers: 2176
Facebook	Followers: 1426
Instagram	Followers : 912
Email Newsletter	Followers: 1314

Saffron Walden Museum Website – Statistics for this quarter include the Focus Group visits 26/9 (15 people)

	Visits	Unique Visitors
July	3,628	2,512
August	3,962	2,928
September	3,666	2,909
TOTAL for Q2	11,256	8,349

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 Learning

Since closure of the museum in March, normal learning services have been suspended until September 2020. However, Schools Loans Boxes have been available (with new Covid safety measures and quarantining in place) and four have been loaned out this quarter, bringing in income of £72.

During the summer period 'Click and Collect' Activity Packs continued to engage the public with the Museum learning services and stories from our collections. A new pack was released every other week covering a new topic. Each pack contained an A4 activity booklet, materials needed for the crafts and stories from the collections in the form of collections postcards.

- Week One: Brilliant botanists
- Week Two: Fantastic Fossils
- Week Three: All about Birds
- Week Four : Incredible Insects
- Week Five: Romans going potty
- Week Six: Ancient Egypt
- Week Seven: Perfect Puppets

SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM

CURATOR'S QUARTERLY REPORT Q2 2020/21

July - Sept 2020

In total 251 packs were sold, estimating that 2.5 people used each pack (1 or 2 children, 1 or 2 adults) this totals 627 users. Further packs are planned for October half term and Christmas holidays.

Schools returned in September 2020 and 3 loan boxes are currently out on loan, Vikings, Toys and Games and Ancient Egypt. There is also an outreach visit booked for November and further enquires from teachers ongoing at present.

Learning services have been adapted to meet the government's Covid guidance and we are currently offering the following services.

Outreach Visits

The Learning & Outreach Officer has reorganised our learning and outreach services in line with Covid safety:

Visits to the Museum. The Museum will be closed to the public during visits to limit the number of people in the Museum at any one time. Bookings for such visits will need to be made at least 6 weeks in advance.

Loan Boxes. Our loan boxes are available for hire at a cost of £18 for 6 weeks. Packs will be quarantined in between hires to ensure they are Covid 19 secure.

Click and Collect Activity Packs (instead of our usual half-term craft activities in the Museum). Past packs can be made to order and bespoke packs can be made for schools or groups. Once the museum is open the learning officer will work on developing a "catalogue" of packs that can be made up to order. It is hoped that these will be utilized by people who are homeschooling.

5.2 Events on-site (in Museum and grounds and at Shire Hill Store)

None this quarter due to Covid 19 closure except the Audience Development tours of the museum and focus group meetings on the 26 September (Julia Holberry Associates / NLHF project)

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

Museum stall with Audience Development consultants at Saffron Walden Market on the 22 August.

Other activities, events and outreach programmes have had to be cancelled or postponed due to Covid 19 closure. This has also affected work with local (Uttlesford) and other organisations.

Museums and Local Groups: support and liaison (Uttlesford)

- Fry Art Gallery – continuing liaison and 1 Committee meeting (Curator)
- Heritage Development Group – work on Medieval Walden leaflet, 2 meetings (Curator)
- Essex Wildlife Trust (Uttlesford) – reporting sightings of red kites for Uttlesford Wildlife website, liaison over display of newsletters on museum noticeboard. (Natural Sciences Officer)
- Special Roadside Verges: 1 site meeting at Audley End and numerous emails about damage from roadworks, 2020 annual reports being produced, comments on 2 planning applications (Sarah Kenyon, Natural Sciences Officer).
- Gibson Library – opportunities for more partnership working, public engagement and historical research (Jenny Oxley, Collections Officer, Human History)

Meetings, Support and Involvement in professional and other organisations outside Uttlesford

- Museums Essex general meeting via Zoom, 4 Sept (Curator)
- SHARE Natural History Network: details of Covid 19 signage

Local Performance Indicator

**SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM
CURATOR'S QUARTERLY REPORT**

Q2 2020/21

July - Sept 2020

Performance Indicator PI 49	Q2 Actual	Q2 Target	Annual (Cumulative)	Annual Target 2020-21
Users of the Museum Service	666 (remote users only)	3,500	901	13,200

Notes on Performance Indicators

Users are all those engaging with the Museum Service in person or through other media, and include:

- those visiting the Museum site and Museum outdoor events on site (visitors, table 4.3)
- those attending off-site events or benefitting from outreach services (e.g. learning and reminiscence work in schools and care homes; pupils using school loan boxes in the classroom; audience for a talk, store tour or other off-site activity by Museum staff)
- those using the Museum service 'remotely' (enquiries, research and services by phone, email and post)

This definition of Users excludes website visits and social media followers, but these figures are reported separately in 4.4 above as a measure of the Museum's on-line profile

Comments on this quarter's figures:

Exceptional circumstances due to Covid 19 closure mean that there are no visitors while the Museum remains closed, but there have been 39 remote enquiries and an estimated 627 users of Click & Collect Activity Packs who count as users this quarter. The Museum has continued to engage widely through its website, blog and social media.

Main Museum activities and items to note for Q3 2020-21 Oct - Dec 2020

Re-opening

This Quarter will be dominated by re-opening, Training returning staff (weekend and casuals) and volunteers and monitoring new procedures and visitors' behaviour and feedback. There will also be additional cleaning and gallery monitoring duties for all staff during the day. Initially, staff will need to operate the Welcome Desk and support Welcome Desk volunteers. There will also be a new Front-of-House role for casual staff to welcome visitors and ensure compliance with Covid safety measures.

These new Covid safety routines will impact on all staff and other aspects of Museum work

Resilient Heritage project (Museum development)

The Audience Development study draws to a close this quarter with the final report due from Julia Holberry Associates at the end of November. We then enter the final phase of seeking fund-raising advice for the Museum Society and developing a fund-raising strategy for the proposed development option. The Audience Development report will also identify measures we can take in the immediate future within existing resources or with small grants, and these will inform our service planning for 2020-21.

Front of House

Install and integrate Card Reader with the EPoS system; roll out training in the use of this (and issue resolution) to staff, Welcome Desk volunteers and casuals.

Collections

The programme of work on natural sciences collections continues, updating storage locations for collections recently moved due to store sealing, and conservation needs identified by the recent survey.

Asbestos: minerals to be stabilised and sealed in new Perspex boxes by Kadec.

Trials of the new digital datalogger continue

Learning & Outreach

As our revised service offer is rolled out to schools, we will be monitoring its uptake and looking at other developments such as on-line learning materials

Since our usual half-term activities and events in the museum will no longer be possible due to Covid, Click & Collect Activity Packs will be provided instead.