

SAFFRON WALDEN MUSEUM

CURATOR'S QUARTERLY REPORT

July - September 2017

1 Museum Management and Staff

1.1 Management

Museum Service

The arrival of our new Learning & Outreach Officer, Charlotte Pratt, in mid-September brought the welcome return of learning services and school bookings, which we anticipate will build through the autumn term. It also helps resolve some staff cover issues and pressure on curatorial staff who have been organising the holiday activity programme in the interim in addition to their existing workloads. Without the Schoolroom building, only single classes (30 pupils) can be accommodated in the Museum, so the Learning & Outreach Officer will also offer sessions in schools. Charges for this new service (£210 for a day, £120 for a half-day inc. VAT) have been referred to MMWG for recommendation to Cabinet.

Forward Plan 2013-2018

'Project Enquiry Forms' outlining our two proposed schemes (access to collections – 'Stories of North-West Essex' and the main project to redevelop the Museum, 'Heritage Hub for north-west Essex') were submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund in August to open a dialog with HLF officers and seek an advisory meeting to test our proposals. An on-site meeting with an HLF officer has been arranged for 4 October.

1.2 Staff, Volunteers and Work Experience

Staff

Museum Admin Officer Wendy-Jo Atter passed her Institute of Leadership and Management Level 3 (*equivalent of an A Level*) Award in Management of Volunteers with distinction.

Charlotte Pratt took up her post of Learning & Outreach Officer on 11 September, and in the first two weeks has already brought much energy and new ideas to the service, plus the welcome return of schools.

Some members of the Museum Assistants (casuals contracts) team received refresher training (in general procedures and fire evacuation) from the Collections Officer (Human History) at the end of September. The rest of the team will receive training on 2 or 7 October. The Museum Assistants have begun taking a more active front-of-house role, delivering object handling sessions in the galleries, which have been well-received by visitors.

Volunteers

Michael Swindlehurst was a valued volunteer at the Museum for many years and it is with great sadness that we report news of his passing, on Monday 7th August. Due to staff unavailability, Christine Sharpe kindly represented the Museum at his Funeral.

A Volunteers Tea Party took place at the end of June, as well as updates from the Curatorial staff; volunteers contributed to focus group exercises and enjoyed behind the scenes tours of the Museum.

Reece Thear, a music graduate and grandson of our Sunday Volunteer, David, volunteered on the Welcome Desk over the summer prior to taking up his new role as a teacher at Felsted School.

The team of human history collections volunteers continue their work in cataloguing the local history archive, repacking the collections, and transcribing the Museum's early documentation, under the

supervision of the Collections Officer (Human History). In total, this quarter, the team contributed approximately 450 hours of their time to the Museum. The archaeology collections volunteers (Joanne Pegrum, Peter Stribling, Peter Morrissey and Peter Rooley) have assisted the Curator at the Shirehill store and Museum with collections work and activities, contributing 36 hours.

Natural science collection volunteers helped to pack and move 55 drawers of birds' eggs and mollusc shells from the museum to Shirehill and a giant antler from the store to the Museum exhibition. 36 hours of time. Other volunteers helped to prepare the exhibition area and paint a life sized woolly mammoth on a wall. Donating 4.5 days of time and painting materials. The verge survey team carried out ecological surveys at 22 special roadside verges in Uttlesford. Approximately 50 hours of time.

Work Experience

Vicky Geddes completed her 30-day internship in Digital Engagement. She contributed to the Museum's social media presence, website, and collections database, as well as carrying out research on potential future digital projects, and gave an excellent presentation on her work to the Museum Society's AGM.

1.3 Training and Seminars Attended

Date	Course and Staff
8 Sep 2017	<i>Changemakers</i> , leadership development course (Collections Officer, Human History)
30 Sep 2017	Refresher training – general and fire procedures (Casual Museum Assistants)
Sept 2017	Refresher training – Front of House desk duties (Welcome Desk Volunteers)

1.5 Health & Safety

The Security & Premises Officer attended the SAT meeting at the Council Offices on 12 September.

Asbestos in Collections

The Museum has now been given permission to proceed with the quotation received from Kadec and arrangements are being made for them to undertake the necessary work to manage this risk.

2 Buildings and Site

2.1 Museum Building

Security Shutter in Great Hall

The old and broken shutter has been replaced with a similar metal shutter thanks to Eric Payne.

Fire Alarm

A Fire Risk Assessment has been undertaken with the Emergency Planning Officer. Some additions to signage have been made as a result, and the other recommendation (establishing regular annual service for the air-conditioning unit in the natural history store) is in hand.

On September 1st at around 10pm, we received a call from the monitoring station, informing us that the Museum Fire alarm had been activated and that they had called the Fire Service but they refused to attend unless a fire was confirmed by key holders. Two members of staff attended, but the alarm had just reset itself. The building was thoroughly checked and there was no fire, but it did coincide with a heavy electrical storm and a power cut, which no doubt caused the activation.

It caused consternation that the Fire Service refused to attend and the Security & Premises Officer has since been told that they are obliged to respond when a building is an important heritage asset, irrespective of whether lives are at risk. Museum staff are looking into this situation further and will be liaising with the

Council Fire Team. The Curator has also raised concerns with the Emergency Planning Officer about the access for fire engines since parking has been imposed along Museum Street and the need for a ‘familiarisation’ training visit by the Fire Service to the Museum (the last one was over 5 years ago).

Museum boilers

The Council is intending to change the Museum boilers before the winter sets in. There are practical problems with the installation as most new boilers are supplied fully assembled and access to the boiler room cellar is very restricted. However, several contractors have visited the premises and hopefully a solution has been found.

Ivy on the north-west corner of the Museum

This is in the hands of Grounds Maintenance and is likely to be dealt with at the end of the season, when they have less work to do cutting grass and trimming vegetation.

External repairs

The Security & Premises Officer compiled a list of repairs and maintenance issues which was sent to Bill Golbourn. Hopefully, a surveyor will visit the Museum to assess the situation this year, although it may not be possible to undertake much before next financial year.

2.3 Shirehill Store

Storage heater – Natural Sciences Store

The faulty night storage heater in this store was replaced, though the process generated dust necessitating a thorough clean of the storeroom.

Flood Rainwater from thunderstorms in July overwhelmed the drainage system and caused flooding in the entrance lobby and loading bay.

2.4 Grounds and Castle Site

The Museum is exploring with Saffron Screen the possibility of an outdoor film screening early next summer. There are however some health & safety issues which need addressing in respect of the site’s capacity and potential hazards affecting emergency evacuation. A site meeting is planned for October with the Corporate Health & Safety Officer, Curator and Saffron Screen staff to examine the options.

3 Collections and Research

3.1 Acquisitions and Disposals

28 new acquisitions have been recorded in the accessions register this quarter, including:

4 archaeological finds purchased by the Museum Society through the Treasure Act (1996):

- medieval silver matrix, Great Hallingbury (purchased with a grant from the Saffron Walden Arts Society formerly NADFAS)
- gold ‘memento mori’ ring dated AD 1680, Stansted (the landowner kindly waived his share of the award, reducing the purchase price by 50%)
- silver-gilt medieval ring-brooch of two inter-twined animals, High Roothing (the finder kindly waived his share of the award, reducing the purchase price by 50%)
- hoard of 3 gold coins, quarter-nobles of Edward II, Great Dunmow

24 other acquisitions, including:

- Hat, gloves and jewellery, previously loaned to the museum for the *Completing the Look* fashion

accessories exhibition and now acquired as gifts.

- Large, framed photograph of pupils of the Boys' British School, Saffron Walden
- Metronome, napkin ring and photographs belonging to Ruby Hurn, renowned violinist from Audley End. These are welcome additions to the Museum's existing collection of Ruby Hurn items.

Disposals:

- Archaeological finds of pottery, tile, worked flint from Cambridgeshire are awaiting collection by Cambridgeshire County Council Heritage Service and Ely Museum, following recent decision to dispose by the Board of Saffron Walden Museum Society Ltd and MMWG's recommendation to Cabinet (Disposal D11)

3.2 Collections Care and Conservation

Insurance Valuations

James Glennie, Arts & Antiques Appraisals Ltd, has made numerous visits to the Museum checking and finalising valuations on specific exhibits. A summary of new valuations was supplied in September so that the insurance policy for the Museum's collections could be renewed, while we await the full final report.

Firearms Licence

The new Home Office Museum Firearms Licence has been received and will be due for renewal in 2022. At present this licence is free of charge. It replaces the previous practice of the Curator holding personal Firearms and Shotgun Licences, and is more appropriate and administratively simpler for the Museum.

Social History Conservation

Having secured funding through grants and private donations, the Collections Officer (Human History) couriered a silk reticule (made in 1825 to support the abolition of slavery campaign) to Poppy Singer, textiles conservator, for vital conservation work. It is hoped this work will be complete by spring 2018.

The Collections Officer (Human History) is supervising volunteers in the repacking of the world cultures collection. Storage is being improved and rationalised and a full audit of locations is being carried out.

Natural Sciences Collections Care

Pest trapping took place in the Museum and at Shirehill store.

Move of drawers of birds' eggs and mollusc shells from the Museum to their cabinets at Shirehill Store was completed with Collections Volunteers and Support Worker assisting the Natural Sciences Officer.

3.3 Documentation

Backlog / updates are as follows:

	New Acquisitions	Backlog (existing collections not previously catalogued on Modes)	Edits and Updates to existing records
Human history collections	24	698	2019
Natural sciences collections	0	0	218
Total	24	698	2237

Effective Collections (World Cultures project)

Still on hold awaiting for the Curator to have time to dedicate to moving this project on.

3.4 Loans In

All objects loaned to the Museum for *Completing the Look: 300 Years of Fashion Accessories* have either

been returned to the lenders or acquired by the Museum as gifts. The Travelling Natural History Museum loaned specimens, models and sundry items for *Life in the Ice Age* exhibition.

3.5 Loans Out

Staff from Stevenage Museum have come to view *Life in the Ice Age* exhibition and may request a loan of some prehistoric flint tools and specimens from the Museum for an exhibition in 2018 (to be confirmed).

3.6 Object Identification and Enquiries

Object identifications this quarter: **4** identifications (**121** objects)

Collections Enquiries this quarter: **35** in total (16 human history, 10 natural sciences, 9 archaeology)

3.7 Research

5 researchers this quarter, including

- Three friends of the Dix family, to see Violet Dix's trunk and its contents.
- Archaeologists from Cambridgeshire CC Heritage Services to check finds on offer via disposal

4 Displays and Visitor Services

4.1 Permanent Galleries

Object of the Month continues to be a popular addition to the permanent galleries. In July, the Curator chose a 500,000-year-old flint handaxe from Warren Hill, Suffolk; in August, the Collections Officer, Human History chose a Punch puppet, made by Joyce Sturge of Saffron Walden; and in September, she chose a photograph of pupils from the Boys British School, Saffron Walden.

Two Natural Sciences interactives were repaired. Materials in the Discovery Centre and Sedimentation in Geology. However little fingers have damaged the Materials interactive again.

4.2 Temporary Exhibitions

Completing the Look: 300 Years of Fashion Accessories closed on 30 July 2017. In total, around 6,150 visitors viewed the exhibition, including a number of special-interest groups.

Life in the Ice Age, a collaboration between the Travelling Natural History Museum and Saffron Walden Museum, opened on 12 August 2017. It features specimens and models from the TNHM and specimens and artefacts from the Museum's collections, mostly items which are otherwise in store. It runs until 14 January 2018.

4.3 Visitor Services

	Public		Schools incl. adults		Total	
	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016
July	1281	783	49	225	1330	1008
August	1770	1365	0	17	1770	1382
September	823	589	189	0	1012	589
Total	3874	2737	238	242	4112	2979

Shop

	2017	2016
July	546.02	699.40
August	783.01	417.07
September	331.46	248.48
Total £	1660.49	1364.95

Tickets

	2017	2016
July	1460.50	768.00
August	1994.50	624.50
September	864.25	694.75
	4319.25	2087.25

Donations

	2017	2016
July	<i>See comments below</i>	82.60
August		20.00
September		165.31
Total	197.27	267.91

Comments

Donations - due to holiday commitments and availability of access to donations boxes, one sum for the 3 month period has been calculated.

Museum Shop

The museum Admin Officer has completed a re-branding exercise, making the labels consistent and simpler for both visitors and Welcome Desk volunteers. She continues to introduce new lines, which link shop stock to the current exhibitions and children's activities; with the Polished Tumble Stones, crystal growing kits and small boxed minerals and fossils proving particularly popular. Product range and Sales continue to be restricted by the lack of credit card payment facilities and we have received a few comments from visitors about lack of a card payment facility.

4.4 Publicity, Marketing, Social Media and New Website

Publicity and Marketing

Adverts

- Walden Local – advert for Ice Age exhibition and Holiday Activities - 19 July (schools out edition)
- East Life Magazine – generic museum advert - July and August issues
- Essex Mums – generic museum advert - July, August, September
- Essex Wildlife Trust – advert for Ice Age exhibition and activities in Summer 2017 issue

Radio Broadcast

- BBC Essex - Tony Fisher's show Saffron Walden Museum for visiting over summer holidays.

Press / Magazine articles:

- Saffron Walden Reporter – “Museum Award” re Trip Advisor Certificate – 6 July
- Walden Local – Ice Age exhibition, Stone Age day, SWMS talk - 19 July, 2 Aug, 23 Aug, 31 Aug, 6 Sept, 13 Sept
- Walden Local – Summer Holiday Activities – 19 July, 2 Aug, 6 Sept
- Uttlesford Resident' magazine - article about Ice Age Exhibition – August
- Saffron Walden Reporter – Ice Age exhibition, activities and Stone Age day – 27 July, 24 August
- Saffron Walden Flyer – Museum article in each monthly edition (July, August and September)
- Uttlesford Life – article about Ice Age Exhibition and activities in Autumn 2017 magazine
- Collections Officer (Human History) gave a tour of the museum and history of the collections to Land Love Magazine, for a special feature on Saffron Walden

Collections

- A selection of images from the museum's local history photograph archive appear in a new book by Malcolm White, entitled *Saffron Walden, 1945-2000*
- An image of the painting *View of the Thames, Pool of London, from Billingsgate to London Bridge* by

Henry Pether appears in a new book published by Tate, entitled *Impressionists in London: French Artists in Exile*

Exhibition and Events listings

Exhibition and Events advertised on the following 'What's On' listings (in print and on-line):

- The AA (events pages)
- Saffron Walden Reporter
- Visit Cambridge Website
- Tourist Information Centres: Saffron Walden, Bishop's Stortford, Great Dunmow
- Salad Days
- Primary Times
- East Life
- Essex Mums
- Net Mums
- EastLife also published two links to the Museum website: <https://www.eastlife.co.uk/article/top-historical-attractions-for-the-summer-holidays-2017/>

Awards:

- Shortlisted in the Essex Mum's Loves 'Museum Category'

Trip Advisor:

In this quarter we made it to triple figure reviews, currently the number stands at 101 reviews and we are rated 4.5 / 5 stars.

Social Media and Email Newsletter

The Museum currently has 1,775 followers on Twitter and 854 likes on Facebook. There are currently 612 subscribers to the email newsletter.

Treasure 20

Saffron Walden Museum has participated in Treasure 20, a project of the British Museum's Portable Antiquities Scheme, to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Treasure Act and the range of archaeological finds which have been acquired for public benefit by museums as a result, Saffron Walden Museum has acquired over 50 items of treasure since 1997, and has been tweeting one treasure find per week for 20 weeks over the summer and into the autumn, with further information on our website. Vicky Geddes' social media internship has been invaluable in this project.

Saffron Walden Museum Website – Statistics for this quarter

	Visits	Unique Visitors
July	4,282	3,708
August	4,934	4,297
September	2,621	2,173
TOTAL for Q2	11,837	10,178

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

Figures this quarter reflect the fact that most of the quarter falls in the school holidays, and the new Learning & Outreach Officer only started in mid-September.

Analysis of School Visits and Pupil Numbers (No Learning Officer in post)

No. of pupils in sessions taught by Learning Officer in Museum *	0
No. of pupils taught in visits out to schools by Learning Officer	0
No. of pupils in independent visits to Museum *	210
No. of pupils benefiting from schools loan boxes in classroom	298
Total no. of pupils benefiting educationally from Museum Service	508

* These figures plus 28 teachers/adults accompanying paying school and independent groups provide total 238 school visits in Visitor table in 4.3

Loan and reminiscence boxes: 4 boxes used by a total of 298 pupils / adults

Fox loan box to The Icknield Primary School, Sawston

Toys and Games loan box to Thaxted Primary School

Ancient Egypt and Fossils loan boxes to RA Butler Primary School, Saffron Walden

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

Date	Event	No. Attending
8 July	Eastern Regional Textile Forum workshop	16
12 July	Moat Park Care Home visit to exhibition	12
13 July	Ashdon Women's Institute evening event	23
25 July	Stanley Wilson Lodge visit to exhibition	15
26 July	Summer Holiday activity: Seaside Holidays	254
27 July	Treasure Roadshow with Sophie Flynn, Finds Liaison Officer for Essex and celebrating Treasure 20 (20 years of the Treasure Act)	101
11 August	Private View for <i>Life in the Ice Age</i> exhibition	64
16 August	Stone Age Day with 'Stone Age Man' (James Dilley, Ancient Crafts)	210
23 August	Summer Holiday activity: Super Shell Creatures	105
8 Sept	Museum Society AGM	24
	Total	824

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

No talks or activities by staff at other venues in this quarter.

Other Museums and Local Groups supported (Uttlesford) 4 groups supported, 3 meetings

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

- Essex Field Club - forwarding invoices to new Treasurer (Natural Sciences Officer)
- Special Roadside Verges project – 1 meeting, list of missing posts, 1 planning application response, 2 ecological surveys, October cut (Natural Sciences Officer)
- Searchers metal-detecting club – 1 meeting (Curator)
- Saffron Walden Heritage Development Forum – 1 meeting (Curator)

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

- MEE (Museums East of England) regional meeting at Gressenhall, Norfolk (Curator)
- Social History Curators' Group Trustee Meeting at M Shed, Bristol (Collections Officer)
- Presentation to the SHARE Volunteer Coordinators event at Gressenhall (Museum Admin Officer)

Local Performance Indicators

Definition	Q2 Actual	Q2 Target	Cumulative 2017-18	Annual Target 2017-18
Visitors PI 22 SI 12c	4,112	4,000	7,015	14,000
Users PC 01 CI 39	16,286	10,500	33,115	40,000

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 using 'Visits')

Comments on this quarter's figures:

Visitors: have exceeded target by nearly 3%, contributing factors are a combination of new exhibition in August; summer activity and events programme and website and social media generating interest.

Users: are 55% above target. The Museum's website continues to maintain high visit figures aided by social media internship, and people searching on-line for places to visit in the summer holidays, plus the range of local and regional publicity opportunities which the museum has taken up.

Main Museum activities and items to note for the next quarter (Oct-Dec 2017)

1 Museum Management and Staff

Induction of new volunteer to help Natural Sciences Officer update storage locations for objects now at Shirehill Store on the Modes database.

Curator's time prioritised to pursuing HLF development projects and also tranche of SMT work from the Council and its implications (data protection, risk management, communications).

2 Buildings and Site

Work on replacing boilers anticipated.

3 Collections and Research

Continuing work to improve Herbarium records in Modes (Natural Sciences Officer, Support Worker).
Continuing work on recent archaeological deposition at Shirehill (Curator and volunteers, most Mondays)

4 Displays and Visitor Services

Treasure case due for re-display to incorporate latest acquisition and special preview from the committee of The Arts Society of Saffron Walden (formerly NADFAS) which has generously sponsored the purchase of a silver seal die, with have a special preview event on 1 November

5 Education, Events and Outreach

Wed 25 and Thurs 26 October Woolly Mammoth Fun Days

Learn about these enormous creatures and take part in craft activities. Sessions 11am – 1pm & 2pm – 4 pm with time-tickets for places at activity tables. Children must bring an adult, usual entry fees apply

Friday 27 October Museums at Night

Explore the museum by torchlight and follow a trail.

Drop in 6-8pm. Children must bring an adult, usual entry fees apply

Sunday 26 November Special screening of the family film *Ice Age* at Saffron Screen, with link to the *Life in the Ice Age* exhibition at Saffron Walden Museum and a special Ice Age trail for families to enjoy. Free admission offered to adults with a cinema ticket.

Saturday 9 December Decorate our Christmas Tree

Make festive decorations – one for our tree and one to take home.

Drop in sessions 11am – 1pm & 2pm – 4 pm. Children must bring an adult, usual entry fees apply