

1 Museum Management and Staff

1.1 Management

Museum Service: re-opening

This is the first full quarter for which the Museum has been open since the Covid pandemic, with public opening hours Thursday – Saturday 10 – 5, Sundays and August Bank Holiday Monday 2 – 5. Induction of new volunteers and casual staff on the cashless payment system (till and card reader), and training of other Welcome Desk volunteers, has continued on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. The number of pre-booked admissions on Art Tickets declined as the number of walk-in visitors rose, and since the end of August all visits have been walk-ins (i.e. pay on the door) although we are retaining our on-line booking facility with Art Tickets for click-and-collect activity packs and future activities and events. Covid restrictions have eased but the use of sanitiser, face coverings and social distancing in the Museum continues to be encouraged, considering the confined spaces and relative lack of ventilation. Visitor response has been positive and sufficient volunteers have now been trained to plan extending the days open for October half-term week.

Training and achieving consistency in the use of the cashless payments system across a large team of volunteers, plus weekend and casual staff, continues to absorb a great deal of time and energy. The Front-of-House & Admin Officer continues to work well over her 16 hrs a week, ably assisted by senior Welcome Desk volunteer June Baker. In addition, reconciliation of figures and discussions with Finance and EPOS have taken much time this quarter, so that the till can now generate reports to assist Finance will allocation of card payments to the correct income heading. It is hoped that this situation will ease gradually over the rest of the year, as it is not sustainable in the long term for so much staff time to be expended in this way.

Museum Development

The Museum Development Committee has considered the consultants' reports from the Resilient Heritage project and priorities for the Museum's development. Fourth Street's option 3a has been adapted to provide essential improvements to the Museum, bearing in mind the need to maximise cost-benefit, minimise financial risk and keep the total project budget under £5m (a requirement for support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, NLHF). To start the process of negotiation with the NLHF, an Expression of Interest form was submitted in mid-September and feedback is awaited. The total project visage is expected to be around £4,357,000 including some allowance for inflation and a further 10% contingency. We hope to obtain support from the NLHF for up to about £3m and Saffron Walden Museum Society Ltd already has £500,000, which more than meets the minimum 10% matching funding requirement. The balance of around £807,000 would be raised by the Museum Society through applications to trusts and foundations; fund-raising events and public appeals. However it will be a little while before we know whether the NLHF will allow us to proceed to make the first major grant application in 2022, and discussions may result in changes to the project and budget, and our Forward Plan.

1.2 Staff, Volunteers and Work Experience

Staff

Jill Willets and Tom Holloway have joined our roster of casual museum staff.

Volunteers

The volunteers' Tea Party event is usually held during National Volunteers Week in June but was delayed this year due to Coronavirus restrictions. We were pleased to celebrate with over 30 of our dedicated volunteers, in a Covid-safe manner, at our deferred Tea Party on 20 September. Museum staff were on hand to answer any questions in the museum galleries and Sarah Kirkpatrick, Uttlesford Blue Badge Guide, gave tours of the castle.

| Volunteers – remote / outdoors support | Est Hours |
|--|------------------|
| Natural Sciences Volunteers | |
| Special roadside verge volunteers made 31 ecological surveys of verges to assess their botanical condition: Peter Hanson, Tony Morton, Ken Rivett, Michael Rowley, Heather and Paul Salvidge. Photographic archive of projector slides is being documented on Excel spreadsheet. | 50 |
| Geology – assisting with identifications for the public and for museum objects | 54 |
| Documentation, digitizing handwritten notes | 1.5 |
| Welcome Desk volunteers (<i>Welcome Desk, Till Training and Tea Party helpers</i>) | 54 |
| Human History Volunteers Collections work including archaeology | 256 |
| TOTAL volunteer hours | 34 |
| | 449.5 |

There are more potential volunteer projects using computers and we are waiting for new volunteer profiles to be created by IT before these can start.

1.3 Training and Seminars Attended (all online)

| Date | Course and Staff |
|-------------|---|
| Ongoing | EPOS Now till 'back office report' training (Front-of-House & Admin Officer) |
| 10.9.2021 | Decolonisation seminar (SHCG) – (Collections Officer, Human History) |
| 17.9.2021 | MACE community engagement forum, CIMS (Collections Officer, Human History) |
| 22.9/2021 | Briefing/Training for new SHARE VIE project (Collections Officer, Human History) |
| 23.9.2021 | Colchester & Ipswich Museums – Decolonisation seminars/ conference (Collections Officer, Human History) |
| 27.9.2021 | |
| 29.9.2021 | |
| | Inclusive Practice and Decolonisation, Powell-Cotton Museum/EssexMDO (JL, Natural Sciences Officer) |
| 24.9.2021 | SHARE Rising Leader's Programme (Collections Officer, Human History) |

1.4 Health & Safety

Covid safety measures remain the dominant issue, especially maintaining the hand sanitisers which tend to clog when not in constant use.

Fire exit door

As part of our Fire Safety routine, fire exit doors are regularly tested. Due to the wet weather this year, the fire door to the external fire escape stairs had swollen to a point where it was difficult to open. A small amount of wood has been trimmed off, so the door now functions correctly.

2 Buildings and Site

2.1 Museum Building

Pests

An infestation of a small species of wasps was discovered in a vent on the north wall of the Natural History Gallery. Pest control contractors sprayed the area from the outside, killing large numbers, but many survived possibly by hatching from eggs after the treatment. These had to be captured and dispatched from the inside by the Security & Premises Officer.

Damp penetration

It had been noticed that damp patches were forming on one side of the bay window area of the Local History Gallery, resulting in the need to take some exhibits off display. Blocked roof hoppers were suspected and Council operators came to investigate. It was found that the hopper was not blocked but was not properly aligning with the downpipe. The situation is in hand for rectification.

Boilers

It was intended that the Museum's ageing gas boilers would be replaced during this year, with modern gas-powered equivalents. The Council has been considering a more 'sustainable' method of heating using bio-fuel pellets, however this will create challenges, since the bio-fuel boilers and pellet store cannot be housed in the cellar. It was hoped that a plantroom with fuel store could be erected to the west of the Museum, in the area between the glacial boulder platform and the Museum, where it could be partly shrouded by bushes. However, Historic England are not keen on this, so a new plant and fuel store will have to wait until it can be incorporated in the new Museum east extension. The Council's Property Surveyor is therefore working with contractors to extend the life of the current gas boilers for a few more years.

2.2 Museum Site and Castle Grounds

Walden Castle was opened to the public by the Chairman of the Council on 18 June with a short ceremony for invited stakeholders, organised by Lewis Merle, Property Surveyor, with other Council and Museum staff. Around the same time, the Heritage Development Group also launched their Medieval Walden leaflet and associated film (by Paul Bellany of Creative Walden) which featured the Castle and Museum.

2.3 Shirehill Store

Heavy rain in July caused an ingress of water under the loading bay shutter and the entrance door into the foyer, due to the draining channels and grilles along the store frontage becoming blocked and over-run. No damage was caused to collections.

3 Collections and Research

3.1 Acquisitions and Disposals

12 new acquisitions received this quarter (Human History 6; Archaeology 6 ; Natural Sciences: 0)

These included:

- Archaeological human remains from Roman burials found at Great Chesterford, through Essex Police
- Archaeological human remains from Saxon burials found in Gibson Close, Saffron Walden in 1982
- Framed picture of Audley End House
- Commemorative Moorcroft Saffron pattern vase (Museum Society purchase)
- Archive of the SW United Nations Association
- Toy Pram from Clavering
- Two archaeological contractors, Archaeology South-East and Albion Archaeology, have deposited some backlog archives from various small sites and evaluations in Uttlesford district.

3.2 Collections Care & Conservation

- Lost Language of Nature project. The conservation side of project took a hiatus this quarter due to exhibition preparations and demands on summer activities and preparations for October half term; James Lumbard's timetable has been adjusted to make up the hours during the autumn. Progress has been made on growing relationships with external partners Cultural Engine and Essex Cultural Diversity Project to provide funding for an art commission to run alongside the Lost Language of Nature exhibition in summer 2021. A welcome grant from the Gibson Walden Fund to the Museum Society is enabling the Museum to purchase the portable display cases needed for the outreach programme next summer.
- Snapping the Stiletto – the LGBTQ+ archive continues. Heidi Sharp was recruited as Artist in Residence for the school summer holidays and demonstrated her artwork practice based on the human history collections in the ceramics gallery to visitors, as she explored women's histories and untold stories inspired by the Museum's collections. She also held two hands-on practical art workshops in the Great Hall with local residents. Their work is due to go on display in the Your Stories community showcase shortly. During October history walks will be run from the Museum in partnership with local poet/artist Hannah Jane Walker (Collections Officer, Human History & Learning & Outreach Officer).

- The map collection stored at the Museum in the Workroom map cabinets are being catalogued and condition checked and then moved to more appropriate storage at the Shirehill store.
- CV Walden Archive Project - contemporary collecting about the Covid epidemic collected since March 2020. A selection of diaries, poems, artwork and more which has been collected is now online on the Museum's website.
- In partnership with Epping Forest District Museum a grant application has been submitted for an Anglo-Ethiopian co-curated collections project (Collections Officer, Human History and Learning & Outreach Officer).
- Insect pest traps were monitored in August 2021 at the Museum and Shirehill store. As a result, insecticide was sprayed at the entrance to the Victorian Museum Workroom and inside the case displaying the nature of North-West Essex.
- Cleaning and repackaging of archaeological human remains recently deposited with the Museum (as listed above) has run in tandem with research identifying potential candidates for DNA analysis, in response to a research request from the Crick Institute. This will be fully reported in Q3.
- A programme of work has commenced on the archaeology gallery (Great Hall) displays, checking and updating Modes database entries, undertaking condition checking and light cleaning of case where necessary, and ensuring all exhibits have at least a basic digital image to identify them. This is partly to improve collections management, and partly to prepare for the eventual dismantling and redisplay of the galleries when the Museum's development plans progress.

3.3 Documentation

| Backlog / updates | New Acquisitions | Backlog (existing collections not previously catalogued on Modes) | Edits and Updates to existing records |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|--|--|
| Human history collections | | 500 (maps) | 500 (maps) |
| Archaeology | | 10 | 50 |
| Natural Sciences | | | 14 SK |
| Total | | 510 | 564 |

| Other collection records | Excel records |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Document Archive/New acquisitions (Laings) | 500 |
| Birds' Eggs (Natural Sciences Support Worker) | 92 |
| Projector Slides (Natural Sciences Volunteer) | tbc |
| Total | 592 + projector slides (tbc) |

3.4 Loans In

There have been no Loans In this quarter.

3.5 Loans Out

Saffron Walden Town Council: – the ceremonial mace (which is usually on loan to the Museum for display) was used by SWTC for the Mayor-making ceremony on Friday 9th July and then returned.

Wampum beads and belts in the Museum's world cultures collection returned from loan at The Box in Plymouth, part of a touring exhibition for the Mayflower anniversary. Between July and September they received 25,000 visitors.

3.6 Object Identification and Enquiries

Object identifications this quarter: 3 (Human History 0 ; Archaeology 2; Natural Sciences 1)

- Flints & field working finds (local detectorist)
- Enquirer found unidentified piece of metal sought more information
- Flint nodules from Windmill Hill

Collections Enquiries this quarter: 41 (Human History: 34; Archaeology : 2 ; Natural Sciences : 5)

Topics included:

- Karl Weschke sculpture
- 18th century fans
- Trade tokens
- Aboriginal collections
- WW1 rolls of honour
- Dick Turpin
- The Close, Saffron Walden
- Portrait paintings
- Post – Cretaceous geology collections to assist Ipswich Museum Designation bid
- Castle turret
- Argus pheasant and taxidermy pest management
- Saffron crocus
- Special roadside verges biological records
- Archaeological human remains (2 separate enquiries)
- Butterfly enquiry, forwarded to Uttlesford Wildlife group
- Insect ID, resolved as hoverfly *Volucella zonaria*

3.6 Researchers

7 research visitors: (Human History: 4 ; Archaeology: 1 Natural Sciences: 2)

- 14 July – anatomical measurements of bird specimens to make models in wood
- 13 August - Autumn/Winter moths listed and displayed for Emma Bridgewater design researcher
- 17 August – local resident researching Wicken Bonhunt excavations (Shirehill store)
- 30 August - Ashdon Museum x 2 people – re. museum documentation & collections care

- 31 August - Ghanaian Queen Mother Yaa Asantewaa Ababio II and her attendant came to perform prayers and ceremonies for special objects from Ghana in the World Cultures Gallery (with Curator & ex-Curator, Len Pole), in particular the xylophone which is on loan to the Museum from the Royal Collections Trust.

4 Displays and Visitor Services

4.1 Permanent Galleries

Discovery Centre: the Woods and Walks touch screen computer interactive is operational again. Visitors are asked to sanitise their hands before using it.

4.2 Temporary Exhibitions

Fossilisation: a slice of the Anthropocene opened on 18 September, an artistic collaboration featuring original bronze sculptures from artist Kabir Hussain inspired by the concepts of fossilisation and preservation, with objects from across the Museum’s collections. *Fossilisation* considers what traces of modern society might remain in the geological record. Kabir’s original sculpture is for sale throughout the exhibition, with the Museum entitled to a 25% commission from the total sale price.

Object of the Month has continued online and in the Saffron Walden Flyer:

| | | |
|-----------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| July 2021 | Gold Bronze Age bracelets | Curator |
| Aug 2021 | Wampum Beads and Sashes | Collections Officer, Human History |
| Sept 2021 | Edible crab, Britain | Natural Sciences Officer |

Curiosity Corner : (Learning & Outreach Officer)

July -October, Castles to celebrate the reopening of Walden castle

Your Stories: (Collections Officer, Human History) the Sawdust Hearts textile display has now been removed and will be replaced shortly by a display about the work of the Artist in Residence, part of the Snapping the Stiletto Project (as reported in 3.2 above).

4.3 Visitor Services

The Museum has been open to the public Thursdays – Saturdays and Sunday and Bank Holiday afternoons this quarter, which has been a ‘transitional’ quarter in the aftermath of the Covid, as the Museum and visitors re-adjust and we monitor public reaction. On-line admission bookings via Art Tickets were discontinued after August Bank Holiday, by which time they accounted for only a very small proportion of total admissions.

4.3.1 Visitors

Visitor Figures

| Category | Walk-up Visitors | Art Tickets | TOTAL |
|---|------------------|-------------|--------------|
| Adult (<i>including concessions</i>) Admission | 1,111 | 65 | 1,176 |
| Child Admission | 336 | 43 | 379 |
| Free Admission (<i>e.g. Season Ticket / SWMS / Pass holders</i>) | 73 | 10 | 83 |
| Special Event: Rachel Morris' Author talk | 25 | - | 25 |
| Total: | 1,545 | 118 | 1,663 |

4.3.2 Income

Gross Income

| Income Category | July | Aug | Sept | Total £ |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|------------------|
| Admission – walk-ins | 626.75 | 1075 | 592.5 | 2,294.25 |
| Admission – Art Tickets | 97.50 | 40.00 | - | 137.50 |
| Educational Sessions | 55 | 200 | | 255 |
| Shop – Sale of Books | 35.32 | 61.91 | 86.45 | 183.68 |
| Shop – Sale of Souvenirs | 301.14 | 588.46 | 214.4 | 1104 |
| Donations | | | 75.54 | 75.54 |
| Loan Box | | | 18 | 18 |
| Total £: | 1,115.71 | 1,965.37 | 986.89 | £4,067.97 |

The education-related figures in red account for payments made through the till, rather than online or by BACS or cheque to the Council. They are included in the total figures for Learning & Outreach income in 5.1 below.

4.3.3 Shop highlights

- July– Castle Booklet – ‘topical’ to align with the re-opening of the Castle and Children’s activity on 29 July
- August – Insect Explorer Kits – ‘topical’ to align with the Children’s activities (Brilliant Beasts and Wildlife)
- September – Saffron Walled-In Poster – ‘recommended by’ Welcome Volunteer, Melanie

The Shop display was updated to feature the *Museum Makers* ‘signed by the author’ book. To align with Rachel Morris author talk held at the Museum this quarter.

A great deal of time was devoted to preparing the till and establishing the associated processes for sales of the Kabir Hussain exhibits.

Cashless payments

As noted at the opening of this report, training and achieving consistency in the use of the cashless payments system across a large team of volunteers, plus weekend and casual staff, continues.

4.4 Publicity, Marketing

Published Articles (in print and online)

| Date | Publication | Subject | Photo |
|-------------|--------------------|--|--------------|
| 1.7.2021 | SW Flyer | Object of the Month (BA bracelets), Man & Beast Exhibition & Museum News | y |
| 1.7.2021 | SW Reporter | Events Listing & Castle Re-opening | Y |
| 21.7.2021 | Walden Local | Medieval Walden Walks (Heritage Development Group) | Y |
| 1.8.2021 | SW Flyer | Object of the Month (Wampum) & Museum News: Summer kids events, seeking new volunteers and the castle re-opening | y |
| 1.9.2021 | SW Flyer | Object of the Month & Museum News: Moorcroft vase | y |
| 2.9.2021 | Walden Local | Creative Community Project (with Saffron Hall) | Y |
| 2.9.2021 | Walden Local | New Exhibition : Fossilisation | Y |
| 22.9.2021 | Walden Local | Pipe discovered at Fry Art Gallery, donated to Museum | Y |

4.5 Online, Website and Social Media

Social Media and Email Newsletter

| | |
|------------------|------------------|
| Twitter | Followers: 2247 |
| Facebook | Followers: 1529 |
| Instagram | Followers : 1061 |
| Email Newsletter | Followers: 1419 |

Saffron Walden Museum Website

| | Visits | Unique Visitors |
|-----------------------|---------------|------------------------|
| July 2021 | 5,645 | 4,047 |
| August 2021 | 5,888 | 5,583 |
| September 2021 | 6,341 | 4,930 |
| TOTAL for Q2 | 17,874 | 14,560 |

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.

Trip Advisor

The Museum ranks number 3 out of 18 things to do in Saffron Walden; of the 142 reviews, 98 rate the Museum as 'Excellent' and 39 rate the Museum as 'Very Good'. One recent reviewer, from August 2021, found the Museum to be "very interesting" and they "would have liked to spend longer"

5 Education, Events and Outreach

5.1 Learning

Education and outreach figures for this quarter

| Activity or Service | Details | Users | Income £ |
|---|---|---|-----------------|
| Loan boxes | Ancient Egypt Toys & Games (Bradfield Primary) Ancient Greece (Downfield Primary) Ancient Egypt (Rickling Primary) Seaside loan box – used by <i>Snapping the Stiletto</i> project (free) Loaned out in Q1: Seaside, Ancient Greece and Victorian loan boxes, returned in Q2 | To report in Q3 To report in Q3 To report in Q3 To report in Q3 30 children 10 adults 154 children 14 adults | Total £ 72 |
| Taught Session - outreach | Ancient Egypt (RA Butler School) | 96 children 4 staff | £ 120 |
| Taught sessions onsite | None – summer holidays | | |
| Self guided | None – summer holidays | | |
| Summer holiday activities – Crafts at the Castle* | 5 Activity packs from 29 July to 26 Aug for outdoors on site or click 'n' collect to take home | 204 children 137 adults | £ 680 |
| Total | | 484 children 165 adults | £ 872 |
| Learning website | 158 site sessions | unique visitors | 129 |

***Crafts at the Castle summer activity topics were:**

- Castle
- Under the Sea
- Brilliant Beasts
- Toys and Games
- Wonderful Wildlife

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

| Date | Event | No. Attending |
|-------------|---|----------------------|
| Aug 2021 | Artist in Resident – general demonstrating in gallery | 69 |
| 18.8.2021 | Artist in Residence workshop 1 | 7 |
| 27.8.2021 | Artist in Residence workshop 2 | 9 |
| 17.9.2021 | Exhibition Launch (private preview by invitation, restricted numbers) | 11 |
| 20.9.2021 | Volunteer Tea Party | 30 |
| 21.9.2021 | Rachel Morris Talk | 25 |
| 30/09/21 | Evening event for together in sound | 20 |
| | Total | 171 |

5.3 Outreach (Museum activities, talks and lectures at other venues or remotely via Zoom)

Figures for Click 'n' Collect Summer Holiday Activity Packs (used outside on site or at home) are reported in 5.1 above.

| Date | Event | No. Attending |
|-------------|---|----------------------|
| 25.7.2021 | Gardens of Easton Lodge Open Day | 250 |
| 7.8.2021 | Historical Pageants Day (contributed material for open day with Gibson Library on the SW 1910 Pageant) hosted by the <i>English Folk, Dance and Song Society</i> (EFDSS) and King's College, London, which was held at Cecil Sharpe House on Regents Park Road, London. | 100 |
| | Total | 350 |

Museums and Local Groups: support and liaison (Uttlesford) 9 local groups supported, 2 meetings

- Fry Art Gallery - 1 committee meeting, statement in support of grant application (Curator)
- Gibson Library - statement in support of grant application for digital microform scanner (Curator)
- Gibson Library – Research enquiries (Collections Officer, Human History)
- Archive Access Point, Essex Record Office/SW Library (Collections Officer, Human History)
- SW Tourist Information office – research enquiries/CV Walden project (Collections Officer, Human History)
- Heritage Development Group, Saffron Story project - provision of information (Curator, Natural Sciences Officer SK)
- Special Roadside Verges 3 ecological surveys, score and copy 36 survey forms, Audley End House new speed limit signage and cut of nettles/thorns, Onslow Green broadband cable work, 1 planning application comment (Natural Sciences Officer SK).
- Saffron Hall, Together in Sound – evening social event for participants in Museum
- Ashdon Museum – help with collections documentation, conservation and storage advice (Collections Officer, Human History)

- Gardens of Easton Lodge – Support/Organising open day (Collections Officer, Human History)

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

- Museums Essex – Snapping the Stiletto Project (Collections Officer, Human History)
- Research for a Blogger (Collections Officer, Human History)
- Museums Essex - trustees' meeting (Curator)
- Epping Forest Museum – Anglo-Ethiopian co-curated collections project (Collections Officer, Human History)
- Colchester & Ipswich Museums, Museum Community Project Forum (Collections Officer, Human History)
- SHARE Rising Leader's Programme Group (Collections Officer, Human History)
- SHARE & Marketing Consultant Christina Lister – VIE Project
- SHCG – social history curator's group (Collections Officer, Human History)
- Mentoring, Ian Flint, Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome (Collections Officer, Human History)
- Sarah Sinka, Horniman Museum re. Objects in Focus project (Collections Officer, Human History)

Local Performance Indicator

| Performance Indicator | Q2 Actual | Q2 Target | Annual (Cumulative) | Annual Target 2021-22 |
|------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| PI 49 | | | | |
| Users of the Museum Service | 2,610 | 1,500 | 3,369 | 6,000 |

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; children and adults using loan boxes or activity packs; 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, 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:

Visitor figures are steadily increasing, though not yet at pre-Covid levels. User figures have been boosted by remote outreach (loan boxes, activity packs and participation in off-site events) and use of the Castle site for activities during the summer holidays.