

12 June 2014

Report by the Eastern Area Manager,
Norfolk Museums Service (NMS)

Report on Great Yarmouth Museums for the period:

March – May 2014



Mud, Music and Old Bill event at the Elizabethan House Museum, Great Yarmouth,
18th April 2014

1.0 Visitor figures

- Visits to the Time and Tide Museum, during the year 2013-14, totalled 30,595 thereby showing an 11% increase on last year and the best visitor figure for five years. The most significant factor to this uplift in visitors during the period has been the appeal of the Frayed exhibition in addition to the Stories from the Sea programme
- Visits to the Elizabethan House Museum, during the year 2013-14 totalled 11,300 thereby showing a 6% increase on the previous year and the best visitor figure for over ten years.
- Visits to the Tolhouse Gaol declined slightly during 2013 but the annual visitor figure (4,224) reflected a reduction in opening time during the year.

2.0 Youth engagement programme

The principal aim is to develop sustainable partnerships that enable museum services to deliver a programme of high quality youth engagement work. This project provides opportunities for young people (primarily aged 14-24 and outside of formal education) to engage with museums and collections in new and innovative ways. It also provides young people with opportunities to learn, develop their cultural interests, inform their aspirations and take an active part in the development of our community museums.

2.1 Maritime Effect

In March we began our second twelve week project, Maritime Effect, with young people from Ormiston Academy who have particular learning and social needs. The group have been researching the natural world through sculpture. This has included a visit the museum for a handling session of Natural History objects from Norwich Castle and our steering group had an archive session with curator Jo O'Donohue. One fourteen year old's war inspired animation & sound piece was installed in Time and Tide's herring steep for the Easter holidays when he'll also assist with the delivering of an activity for families

(2.2) Wide Angle

During April we were very pleased to welcome the renowned documentary photographer Justin Partyka to Time and Tide museum. Justin led a workshop with young people who are

part of the *Wide Angle* photography group. This group meets once a month to work with different professional photographers on projects which are documenting different aspects of life in Great Yarmouth. Justin gave a fascinating presentation on his work and his approach to photography before leading the group on an exploration of the riverside area of the town to capture images. Justin's past projects include the acclaimed Field Work series of photographs of East Anglian small holders. This was exhibited at the Sainsbury Centre and was recently featured in the Guardian weekend magazine. The Wide Angle photographers also took part in second master class with photographer Daniel Clegg. They photographed the Great Yarmouth seafront from an abstract view point. Final photos are displayed on the 'Our Great Yarmouth' website www.ourgreatyarmouth.org.uk. Wide Angle is a Creative Collisions Youth Arts Network project led by museum staff at Great Yarmouth.

(2.3) Young Volunteers

Museum staff have been actively creating opportunities for young people to develop skills and interests through volunteering roles in the museums. A Young Volunteers group has been established that help staff and other volunteers regularly with events, projects and back office tasks. A group of these young volunteers will soon be assisting curatorial staff with the packing, documentation and relocation of artefacts from the Library basement stores to the Time and Tide museum.

(2.4) Jack Cardiff Centenary Celebration—Heritage Lottery Award

Creative Collisions Youth Arts Network has been awarded an HLF 'Sharing Heritage' grant. Working in partnership with Great Yarmouth Arts Festival and St Georges theatre our project will commemorate the centenary of Oscar winning cinematographer Jack Cardiff, who was born in Great Yarmouth in 1914. Young People will engage in a range of activities to highlight his incredible career and contribution to the history of cinema. Young people will create 'The Cardiff Cut Outs', a trail of 'end of the pier' style painted cut out boards to be exhibited in prominent venues during the Great Yarmouth Arts Festival in June, including Time and Tide. A trail map will guide the public to the cut outs where they can be photographed posing as famous Hollywood actors. Free daily screenings of Cardiff's films will also help to establish a new film club in the town.

(2.5) Follow the Herring!

During the Easter holidays Young Volunteers helped families to make hundreds of 'Foily Fish' out of recycled crisp bags for the herring shard sculpture. Follow the Herring is a performance and visual arts production which will travel to fourteen east coast towns, including Great Yarmouth this summer. Time and Tide will host Coat for a Boat, a full size boat with a knitted coat!

3.0 Schools

Our schools programme continues to attract increasing numbers of children to our museums. In Great Yarmouth the total for the year 2013-14 was 8,200 compared to 6,400 last year. The majority of Great Yarmouth schools have visited during the last year with several visiting more than once. The prize goes to the Great Yarmouth Primary Academy with 30 visits or outreach sessions during this period.

In April Time and Tide received a visit by a judge from the Sandford Awards for Excellence in Heritage Education who came to observe a Seaside Special event and talk to staff about our learning programmes. We will not hear the outcome until July however the judge's were very positive and she was particularly impressed by the range of activities staff are engaged with and the quality of the resources available to local school children and young people.

(3.1) Stories from the Sea

It has been a very busy period for our *Stories from the Sea* programme. Museum staff have been developing our brand new *Explorers!* event which will make use of the museum's unique ethnographic collections. We have also recruited author Tim Clare who has been selected as our fourth writer in residence at Time and Tide. Tim will be working with the learning team and local teachers to create the new Explorers! event as well as delivering CPD for local teachers and writing several pieces for our Stories from the Sea anthology. Tim's first book, *We Can't All Be Astronauts*, won an Anglian Book Award in 2009. He has performed two five-star review live literature shows at the Edinburgh Fringe as well as around the rest of the UK. He has performed his work on BBC 1 and 2, Radio 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6, and has written for The Guardian, The Times, The Independent, The Big Issue and Writing magazine, amongst others. We are thrilled that Tim has joined the project and look forward to see what he produces to inspire the next generation of writers from Great Yarmouth. The incredible quality of all of our writers has really helped to make Stories from the Sea an inspiring and exciting programme for both children and teachers.

On 26th March museums' staff, assisted by Cllr. K. Robinson-Payne, accompanied over 100 students from Great Yarmouth primary schools to visit the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich for a celebration event. The students met children's authors Timothy Knapman, Pauline Stewart and Tom Banks, as well as poet Mark Grist. The students took part in creative writing workshops and also got the chance to look around the amazing galleries that tell the story of our national maritime heritage. For many of the children this was their first visit to London.

Museum staff have started analysing the pupil perception data that we have been collecting since September 2012 and the results are incredible. Children from one school were asked if they were proud of any stories that they had written. In September 2012 only 13% of them said yes. Since then they have come to Time & Tide three times, attending our *Pirates!* and *Shipwrecked!* events and last July we visited the school for a Pirates and Poets outreach day. Last month the children were asked the same question - are you proud of any stories you have written. 89% said yes!

4.0 Exhibitions

The Frayed: Textiles on the Edge exhibition at Time and Tide closed on 2nd March but not before inviting further revelations from the past. Another remarkable embroidered letter created by Great Yarmouth resident Lorina Bulwer over a hundred years ago turned up in the attic of a house in County Durham and has been purchased by Norfolk Museums Service through a generous grant from the Costume and Textile Association. The sampler went on public display straight away for the final few weeks of the exhibition. In a separate development, and as a direct result of the media exposure on BBC's Antiques Roadshow, a number of ledgers from the Great Yarmouth workhouse have also come to light and been subsequently donated to the Great Yarmouth museums' collection. It was previously thought that no documentation from the workhouse survived from this period due to a fire, so this was a very exciting discovery. The ledgers are from a slightly earlier period than Lorina Bulwer and therefore do not mention her by name, but they do mention some of the people who appear in her samplers, including a number of doctors. They also provide a fascinating insight into daily life at the Great Yarmouth workhouse, such as details of diagnoses of patients in the lunatic ward and what inmates were allowed to wear. The Bulwer samplers are fast becoming an iconic items in the Norfolk Museums collections, with this latest chapter of the story featured on Anglia TV.

The current temporary exhibition at Time and Tide, *Super Models: Some Assembly required*, opened on 29th March 2014 (ends 2nd November). This exhibition explores how models and model-making have contributed to our working and cultural to the lives of its inhabitants. From architectural models of the town's best known buildings, to ships models, via the model village and Meccano, the exhibition will reveal the business and pleasure of models and model-making. The exhibition features models from NMS collections, including the exquisite Blasckchka glass models as well as national loans including set models from both Aardman animations (BBC's Creature Comforts) and the Ray Harryhausen collection (Clash of the Titans).

5.0 Event programme

(5.1) Mud, Music and Old Bill & Pirate adventures

Good Friday was made even better at the start of the Easter holiday weekend when over one hundred visitors attended the 'Mud, Music and Old Bill' event at the Elizabethan House. The event was the first in a series of events planned to take place this year at Great Yarmouth commemorating the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War. Actor and musician, Nigel Amies played 'Old Bill', the cartoon character created by War Artist, Bruce Bairnsfather. The knitted balaclava-wearing, walrus moustached comical character became famous in his time for boosting the morale of everyone from the Home Front to the Front Line. In the Elizabethan House kitchen, Nigel Amies drew on the cartoons of Old Bill to bring the character sketch to life whilst he also invited visitors to wear a tin helmet, handle a rifle and learn more about life in the trenches. Fashions of the time and objects owned by servicemen were carefully handled by children and adults alike. As well as collecting WWI objects, reminiscence expert, Angela Bishop, had researched the life and work of Vesta Tilley, who was a male impersonator from the music halls and learned many of her songs. So after much talk of rations, the appalling conditions in the trenches and plum and apple jam, both Angela as Vesta and Nigel as 'Old Bill' provided visitors with a stunning performance accompanied by Angela's wind-up gramophone and Nigel's authentic WWI drum. Visitors of all ages joined in enthusiastically.

During the Easter half-term holiday Time and Tide was overrun by pirates, looking for new crewmates and treasure. As part of the family events programme museum staff delivered two popular Pirate Port days where children met salty seadogs, learn the ways of being a pirate and, if they proved to be piratical enough, received a share of the pirate's treasure (in the form of a chocolate coin). Learning Trainee, Sam Jinks, was in charge of the treasure running a handling session and treasure hunt around the museum, while John Simpson

Wedge was the pirate's chief gunner, responsible for training new crew in the use of weapons.

6.0 Site improvements

A number of site improvements have been made during the period. In addition to the redecoration of the entrance lobby at the Elizabethan House new display lighting has been installed throughout the museum. The most significant enhancement has been the landscaping of the site garden area which, in addition to generally improving the environment, has now been made more accessible to our visitors. New planting is due to be installed in June. Currently the external decoration of the complete site is being improved. The developments are part of a series of improvements that will enable the museum to be successfully promoted as an ideal venue for private functions including weddings. At the Time and Tide museum two new Velux windows have been installed in the Education room that have addressed the humidity and lighting issues previously experienced. The Education room is an area of the museum that is used on a regular basis and with the recent improvements we will now seek to develop a commercial offer for the excellent services it provides as both training and meeting facility.

7.0 Museums & Heritage Awards

Both the Frayed exhibition and Stories from the Sea were recently shortlisted, in separate categories, at the National Museums & Heritage Awards in London on 14th May 2014. Although we were not awarded either prize it was a fantastic achievement to be nominated alongside national institutions and reflected the level of excellence and professionalism of our staff and programmes.

8.0 Recommendation

That members note this report. If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper please contact

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