

Great Yarmouth Area Museums Committee  
Town Hall, Great Yarmouth

7<sup>th</sup> March 2014



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

Report on Great Yarmouth Museums for the period:  
October 2013 – February 2014



*Circa 1900*

GRYEH : 2013 · 4 · 170

Tolhouse Street, Great Yarmouth, c.1900 (Percy Trett collection, NMS)

## **1.0 Visitor figures**

- Visits to the Time and Tide Museum, during the period October 2013 – January 2014 totalled 8,807 thereby showing a 30% increase on the same period in 2012-13. The most significant factor to this uplift in visitors during the period has been the Frayed exhibition.
- Visits to the Elizabethan House Museum, during the same period, totalled 1,896 thereby showing a 0.5% decrease on the same period in 2012-13
- Visits to the Tolhouse museum, during the period totalled 713 thereby showing a 4% decrease on the same period in 2012-13. It should be noted that the opening times for the Tolhouse museum have been reduced this year by 15%.

## **2.0 Staff**

Following interview on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2013 Andrew Smith has been appointed as the Operations Manager for Eastern Area museums. Andrew joined the Service in January 2014 following twenty years experience working in the commercial and retail sectors. He is responsible for managing the visitor service teams and for site maintenance and security, in addition to delivering a vital role supporting our commercial ambitions, notably in driving retail income and developing other means of income generation including venue hire.

Two new museum trainees have commenced employment with Great Yarmouth museum in January 2014. Orla Kennelly (Curatorial) and Sam Jinks (Learning) were recruited through the NMS Teaching Museum scheme. In 2012 Norfolk Museums Service established the first teaching museum in the country. This operates along the lines of the existing model of teaching hospitals and schools. The aim of the teaching museum is to support the development of a highly skilled and flexible workforce that can meet the future needs of museums and is aimed at those seeking to start a career in museums. The programme draws on the breadth of expertise, collections, museum sites and audiences across NMS and is a key development as part of our Major Partner Museum funding from Arts Council England.

### **3.0 Youth engagement programme – *Presentation by Tricia Hall, Youth Engagement officer, Norfolk Museums Service (Eastern area)***

The Youth engagement programme has been running since Autumn 2012. 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.

### **4.0 Schools**

The total number of pre-organised school visits to Great Yarmouth Museums during the period was 3,176. This shows a 24% increase on the same period in 2012-13. The significant increase in schools figures is particularly noteworthy and is testament to the hard work of all those involved in schools development work at Great Yarmouth. To date (this year) we have engaged with 64% of Great Yarmouth Borough schools with several schools making multiple visits during the year through the Stories from the Sea programme. ***Heritage Schools*** – Museums staff continue to work closely with English Heritage and local schools to develop and run a number of events. For example, staff are working in partnership with Great Yarmouth High school on a study day for 160 year eight students. The school will collapse the timetable for a day and will participate in a carousel of activities around the enquiry question – *What made Great Yarmouth Great?* The learning aim of the day is to develop student's historical enquiry skills.

With the proposed revisions to the national curriculum museum staff are evaluating the current school offer and recognise the need to continue to be flexible in meeting the needs of teachers as there is likely to be less emphasis on big number events around popular themes and more bespoke events for smaller numbers of students. Schools will try to maintain some historical topics such as WWII home front by giving them a local study or literacy focus. Time and Tide is hosting the next local teachers CPD workshop in March so will use this opportunity to continue planning with teachers to match our services to the new curriculum.

## 5.0 Exhibitions

*Frayed: Textiles on the Edge* opened at the Time and Tide Museum on World Mental Health Day, 10<sup>th</sup> October 2013 (exhibition ends 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2014). This ambitious exhibition has attracted many visitors from across the country as well as being a focus of national media attention. Norfolk Museums Service worked closely with Great Yarmouth & Waveney Mind to develop the exhibition that features the poignant and personal stories of Norfolk people living with mental health problems more than a century ago. It illustrates how they used and created textiles as a way of managing depression, grief and post traumatic stress and also explores their influence on contemporary artists, with contributions from internationally renowned artists, including Tracey Emin and Sara Impey. The central display in the exhibition is the fascinating story of Beccles-born Lorina Bulwer who lived in the lunatic wing of the Great Yarmouth Workhouse from 1901 until her death in 1912. She pours out her frustrations in two embroidered 'letters' more than three metres long and entirely covered in text. Visitors to the exhibition are able to see both of Lorina's embroidered letters together for the first time following the loan of her second piece of work, normally housed at the Thackray Museum in Leeds.

The extraordinary counterpane and bed hangings created by Anna Margareta Brereton while mourning the death of her 14 year old son in 1800 are also on display. Anna Margareta gave birth to 10 children between 1781 and 1796 but only six survived infancy. The death of her eldest son, John, aged 14, caused Anna to have a breakdown. The exhibition also tells the story of the artist and former Sheringham fisherman John Craske who "painted in wools" after being confined to bed following an abscess on the brain.

Alongside objects from the archives of the Norfolk Museums Service, this major new exhibition features a number of significant loans, including Elizabeth Parker's sampler from the Victoria & Albert Museum as well as Tracey Emin's embroidered monoprint that explores her feelings of melancholia and loneliness. Contemporary artists, including renowned quilting artist Sara Impey, Georgie Meadows, Jacqui Parkinson, Jane Whiteley and Rosalind Wyatt, have also contributed to the exhibition.

Visitors are also able to see work from Fine Cell Works - a charity that sells work created by prisoners in their cells. Participants, who are trained by volunteers in

sewing and embroidery and work as many or few hours as they like, are paid for their work.

In addition, a patchwork quilt bedcover made by women prisoners in Newgate Prison in 1817 under the direction of Elizabeth Fry, also forms part of the exhibition.

As a result of national publicity for the exhibition a further embroidered letter by Lorina Bulwer turned up in the attic of a house in County Durham and which was subsequently purchased by Norfolk Museums Service through a generous grant from the Costume and Textile Association. The sampler has gone on display for the final few weeks of the exhibition.

In a separate development, and as a direct result of the exposure on BBC *Antiques Roadshow*, a number of ledgers from the Great Yarmouth workhouse have also come to light and been donated to the Great Yarmouth collections. It was previously thought that no documentation from the workhouse survived from this period due to a fire, so this proved a very exciting discovery. The ledgers are from a slightly earlier period than Lorina and so don't 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 workhouse, such as details of diagnoses of patients in the lunatic ward and what inmates were allowed to wear.

The next temporary exhibition at Time and Tide, *Super Models: Some Assembly required*, opens 29<sup>th</sup> March 2014 (ends 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 Blaschkha 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*).

## **6.0 Events programme**

The annual talks programme re-commenced on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2013 and has resumed with ever popular weekly attendances on Friday mornings. To date the diverse range of speakers have included musician and actor, Nigel Amies in his talk about 'Music in historical education'. Jeremy Moore has told visitors everything they needed to know about Moregrove Manor in Martham 'A Manor of Life And Death' and many Norfolk museums Service staff have contributed their enthusiasm and knowledge, including Dr. David Waterhouse with a time travelling tour of the Castle Museum's Natural History archives Paris Agar's talk, 'Curious about Curiosity' and Dr. Rosy Gray's talk about Dutch and Flemish paintings. Attendances at the talks have been to capacity and we have now introduced a booking system to prevent disappointment. The talks programme is set to continue until 28<sup>th</sup> March 2014.

Other events during the period include The Big Draw (October 2013) that was themed around Historical Heroes and Horrors where visitors drew inspiration from Great Yarmouth characters such as Captain Manby and Sarah Martin. On 1<sup>st</sup> November 2013 we held the annual Great Yarmouth Herring Day event which included a popular herring cooking master class. The Hoards of History event series has continued with a number of behind the scenes activities for visitors including conservation in action workshop that demonstrated methods of conserving historical objects.

## **7.0 First World War commemoration 2014-18**

Coordinated by the Learning Manager, Great Yarmouth Museums will be leading on, and participating in, a number of projects linked to the forthcoming national WWI commemoration. These include:

- Research work linked to a Heritage Schools (English Heritage) funded project, carried out by school children and their families and using archive materials provided by museums, libraries and archives. This work will lead to the creation of a touring exhibition created in conjunction with the Great Yarmouth Archaeological and Local History Society. The exhibition will tour community venues and schools and be available as an ongoing resource for future learning projects with schools and community groups.

- Schools events focusing on dilemmas faced by conscientious objectors.
- *War of Words* - students from two High Schools in Great Yarmouth will work with a poet to create and perform their own poems inspired by the work of wartime poets and by the stories of local people during the conflict.
- Creation of new audio commentary for the Time and Tide WW1 gallery at Time and Tide in addition to the development of a new digital display of records of local service personnel and civilians killed during the conflict.
- Youth Engagement work linked to a performance piece - subject to a Seachange Arts led HLF bid supported by the Great Yarmouth cultural education partnership.

## **8.0 *The Shoals of herring***

A folk song (*The Shoals of herring*) featured in Time & Tide's fishing gallery, and which honours the life of singing Winterton fisherman Sam Larner, is featured in a new critically-acclaimed Coen Brothers' film, *Inside Llewyn Davis* resulting in unforeseen media interest linking Great Yarmouth to Hollywood. The film won the Grand Prix at the 2013 Cannes Film Festival and tells the story of a week in the life of a fictional folk singer in New York, 1961. The song features in a scene in which Llewyn tries to communicate with his father, who is suffering from Alzheimer's disease, by singing one of his favourite tunes. Written by Ewan MacColl, Charles Parker and Peggy Seeger and first broadcast in 1960, the song is about Sam Larner, who used to entertain fishermen and other pub-goers in Winterton's Fisherman's Return pub with his repertoire of folk songs. Born in Winterton in 1878, one of nine children, he once recalled that the choice for village boys was going to sea or going to prison. He was 'discovered' in 1956 by a BBC radio producer and four years later featured in a programme called *Singing the Fish*. He died in 1965, aged 87.

## 9.0 Collections Management

*Summary by the Great Yarmouth Museums' Curator for the period October- December 2013.*

<b>Acquisitions during the period include:</b>	<p>We have accepted the donation of a 19<sup>th</sup> c. marine watercolour for the works on paper collections. This will be assessed by NMS Conservation prior to being de framed or considered for display.</p> <p>Working with Cromer curator and a group of local volunteers the first stage of cataloguing the recently donated Percy Trett photographic collection has begun in the maritime archive on a weekly basis. This collection contains several thousand photographs and provides a significant addition to the collection both for research and display purposes.</p>
<b>Documentation</b>	<p>Working with Norfolk library service and the community Librarian we have been sharing knowledge of the collections, archives and volunteers expertise in several visits between sites. This sharing of skills and promoting access to the collections has resulted in both the discovery of new research as well as assistance in local studies enquiries. Working with the National Maritime Museum we have compiled a list of collections relating to Nelson that identifies museums that hold relevant material on a national search and website celebrating Nelson.</p>
<b>Social Media</b>	<p>As part of the Facebook residencies undertaken by curatorial staff we have taken over the Norfolk Museums Facebook page for a day and promoted the collections, museums and exhibitions at Great Yarmouth. We used this opportunity to promote the behind the scenes of the exhibition changeover and the acceptance of loans into the museums as well as the partnership working with the display and conservation teams. The structured programme of the day highlighted a few different types of the collections both on display and in store with in depth research.</p>
<b>Conservation:</b> object specific issues	<p>We have had a meeting with conservation and operations staff from the National Trust to agree the next steps for addressing the Elizabethan House heating and Hanwell systems issue. There has been significant building and maintenance works on site over the winter period and we will take that opportunity to address heating issues with the panelling in the kitchen. The review of monitoring will happen in Spring.</p>
<b>Collection Management:</b> activities include	<p>The majority of the permanent displays at the Elizabethan House museum have been dismantled for building work and changes to the fabric of the building. All collections have been moved and stored or covered where appropriate.</p>
<b>Loans etc</b>	<p>Meetings to discuss the learning, adult and family events that will run alongside the Super Models exhibition in preparation for marketing</p>



	<p>for next year. As part of the Adult events workshops, The adult Learning officer and I have run the sampler and textile collections workshop which helped us look at how we use collections in store and relate them to temporary exhibitions.</p> <p>Research and loan trips have happened to secure loans for the Supermodels exhibition including Bressingham Steam Museum and Flixton museum. Lenders for the exhibition have all now been contacted and applications for loans submitted. Agreement of internal loans is being assessed by Conservation.</p>
<b>Display work</b>	<p>Working with the Youth Engagement Officer on sessions with photography classes looking at objects and surrealist photographers. The students were asked, with the help of the curator, to choose an object to be photographed using professional equipment and cameras. We have taken the 1960's collections out of store to engage a diverse group of students for the creative collisions project to look at their value to history change over time.</p>
<b>Archive and store users (include)</b>	<p>We have been working with local historians on material on local businesses such as Palmers and the Great Yarmouth illuminator JJ. Hall for forthcoming publications. These enquires have included visits to the maritime archive, general stores and looking at the works on paper art collections.</p>

## 10. Recommendation

That members note this report.

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper please contact

James Steward, Eastern Area Manager (NMAS) Tel No: 01493 743933 /  
07768 156205

email address: [james.steward@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:james.steward@norfolk.gov.uk)



If you need this Agenda in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact James Steward 0344 800 8020 or 0344 800 8011 (textphone) and we will do our best to help.