

Committee:	WESTBURY MANOR MUSEUM, FAREHAM JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	23 February 2015
Title of Report:	CURATOR'S REPORT
Author:	Erica Munro

Purpose:

Report on activities at or relating to Westbury Manor Museum covering period October 2014 to January 2015

1 Providing a Welcoming and Well Maintained Museum

1.1 Museum Service Delivery

In October to December 2014, the emphasis was on delivering the 1914 Big Theme and planning and programming for the forthcoming year.

December at the museum saw the Edwardian Christmas Festival, which complemented the *Soldiers' Journey* exhibition and the Borough's Christmas Carol Spectacular. Visitors were welcomed by costumed staff and volunteers and treated to craft activities, music and festive treats such as stollen and mulled cider in the Tearoom. There was dressing up in the Exhibition Gallery and volunteers ran an object handling table which was popular with all ages.



The Tearoom decorated for the Edwardian Christmas Festival

In addition to the public events and exhibitions, the museum has held a number of private events. Coghlan's held their annual Remembrance Ceremony in front of the building in December. In October the Mayor, Councillors and members of the twinning associations attended a tree planting ceremony for the 30th Pulheim twinning anniversary in the museum garden in with a reception in the Tearoom. In January 2015, the WI held their Centenary baton celebration in the forecourt with a classic Morris Minor Convertible

delivering the baton itself in the presence of the Mayor and dozens of WI members from across the region.



The WI baton visits Westbury Manor Museum (photo courtesy of the Daily Echo)
http://www.dailyecho.co.uk/news/11731009.Women_s_Institute_baton_passes_through_Hampshire/?ref=arc

A Friends of Fareham Museum evening function in November was a chance for them to meet the new Area Curator. A lecture on the *Soldiers' Journey* exhibition and informal chat were well received, with the majority of the Friends Committee braving the cold to come. Ongoing discussions about the celebrations for the 25th anniversary of the museum have led to plans for a Birthday Strawberry Fair in June 2015 at which the Friends will have a display on the history and development of the museum.

The Area Curator has been busy establishing plans and systems to help drive the work of the museum forward in a more streamlined and efficient way, such as defined exhibition policies for the temporary exhibition gallery programme and formal venue hire documentation. She has been liaising with the Collections team about display and storage conditions for some of the museum's artworks and objects. A day's Collections Team visit has been arranged for February in order to document the backlog of donations and rearrange the artefact storage areas.

Recruitment of new volunteers has been steady with a number of new starts in this period. The team are keen to explore new opportunities for our volunteers to contribute to the work of the museum. We are currently 'auditing' our volunteers in order to establish their existing skills, gauge interest in additional opportunities and identify training needs. Responses will be co-ordinated and analysed in February in time for March's all-volunteer training day.

1.2 Visitor Figures

Visitor figures show a drop on the previous year. The gallery was closed for part of October while the *Soldiers' Journey* exhibition was installed which led to a drop in visits. *Soldiers' Journey* did not attract as many visitors as the main exhibition from the previous year, *Meet the Victorians*, which ran from Oct-Jan and was very popular.

Year	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Totals
2009 – 2010	3118	2138	2615	3065	3781	2206	3514	2496	1808	1762	2367	3347	32,217
2010 – 2011	3367	2687	2696	2935	3333	2124	2471	2530	1563	1870	1799	1872	29,247
2011 – 2012	2605	1971	1797	2175	2266	1648	1950	1951	1813	1870	1799	1872	23,717
2012 – 2013	1816	449	1852	4992	2449	1414	2416	1566	1070	1300	2046	1555	22,925
2013 – 2014	4463	3235	2281	1545	1823	1472	2600	1569	1547	1463	2775	1743	26,516
2014 – 2015	1904	1391	1105	1554	2605	1588	1757	1342	1270				

2 Hosting Special Temporary Exhibitions and Related Events

The *Soldier's Journey* exhibition was part of Hampshire's County-wide commemoration of the First World War. We opened exhibitions on the 11 of October in 9 venues across the county. Each exhibition explored Hampshire's role in the First World War – most of the troops from Britain and her allies came through Hampshire on their way to the front as well as training here. Hampshire was a huge supplier of both horses and equipment and of course was home to many of the hospitals that helped to deal with huge quantities of wounded. The Fareham exhibition included sections on the POW ships in Fareham creek that held German prisoners during the war and also on local women knitting to provide equipment to the armed forces. As well as researching information, writing text panels, arranging loans, designing, transporting and installing the exhibition, the team also commissioned a special film to be shown in the gallery exploring the themes with archive footage and oral history interviews.

3 Caring for Collections, Promoting Access, and Providing Specialist Knowledge and Advice

3.1 Caring for collections

Preparatory work for improving the storage and documentation of objects not on display at Westbury started in December with a visit from the Principal Conservator, who also made an assessment of the film applied to the museum's windows to protect objects from light damage. The opportunity was also taken to reposition objects that had bounced off their plinths, tidy displays and check security. Members of the Collections Team are returning in February to carry out further work on the stores and the displays.

Readings from the environmental monitoring system, or 'tinytags', were downloaded in December. They are examined to spot significant fluctuations in temperature or humidity that might eventually lead to deterioration in the condition of the museum's objects. These checks are done in all the museums and stores managed by the Trust every six months, including the stores at Chilcomb House in Winchester where objects relating to the Borough of Fareham are kept when they are not on display or attending events, such as the Keeble K3 Coupe, the only supercar ever to have been built in the Borough.



A 'tinytag' monitoring the environment in the archaeological display

3.2 Promoting access to collections

The objects installed in the Hampshire's Hidden Treasure case for this period also marked the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War. They were Toby jugs featuring leaders from the First World War that were drawn from the County Council's Decorative Arts Collection. They were replaced by a selection of Roman ceramics from the Archaeology Collection - samian pottery with makers' stamps and repairs using lead rivets discovered in Neatham, near Alton. This type of display serves to illustrate the diversity of the collections cared for by Hampshire Cultural Trust and that are available for exhibition at Westbury Manor Museum.



The 'Hampshire Hidden Treasures' case with its display of Roman ceramics

3.3 Providing specialist knowledge and advice

Having completed an extensive amount of work preparing the Soldiers Journey exhibition in September, the Collections Team moved on to the next Hampshire Big Theme project - Dino Fest 2015. The exhibition that is being developed for Westbury Manor Museum is called *Drawn to Dinosaurs* because it features the work of artist John Sibbick, well known for his reconstructions of prehistoric life. Our Keeper of Natural Sciences has been working with the Head of Public Programmes visiting the artist and making selections of his artwork, which will also include preparatory sketches and possibly models of dinosaurs.

4 Inspiring Learning and Community Engagement

4.1 Formal Education Provision

Over the 4 months from October 2014 to January 2015, the CEL Team worked with **9** school groups in the museum, a total of **256 pupils** in school groups. The Hampshire's War workshop devised for the *Soldier's Journey* exhibition made up for the loss of bookings on a Victorian theme resulting from the changes to the National Curriculum history syllabus. Although history programmes now end at 1066 for junior schools, the local study aspect of the Hampshire's War session sold it to the schools.

Date	School	Key Stage & Year Group	No. of children	Type of workshop
6 Oct	Harrison Primary	KS2 Yr4	30	Our Town in the Past
9 Oct	Harrison Primary	KS2 Yr4	29	Our Town in the Past
9 Oct	Harrison Primary	KS2 Yr4	30	Our Town in the Past
7 Nov	Red Barn Primary	KS2 Yr5	30	Hampshire's War
5 Dec	St Jude's Primary	KS2 Yr6	21	Workhouse at Westbury
9 Dec	Wicor Primary	KS2 Yr4	31	Hampshire's War
9 Jan	St Jude's Primary	KS2 Yr6	21	Hampshire's War
26 Jan	Orchard Lea Junior	KS2 Yr6	32	Our Town in the Past
26 Jan	Orchard Lea Junior	KS2 Yr6	32	Our Town in the Past

Impact evidence and general feedback is collected from all school sessions, to aid evaluation and service planning. All feedback was very positive. In addition to the nice comments solicited on the teacher evaluation forms, the teacher from Wicor primary School sent the following comment by email a few weeks after the visit:

I just wanted to thank you for the fabulous trip my class enjoyed in December. The children loved the morning and enjoyed the activities enormously. We talked about the activities again this week in school and will be using the experience for our current enquiry. The talk and different tasks were perfectly pitched for their leaning and they, and I, gained lots of valuable information from our visit. The adults also really enjoyed the experience too. Thank you again for a brilliant visit. I hope to see you again soon on another occasion!



Wicor Primary School enjoying a 'Hampshire's War' workshop



The two workshops for St Jude's Primary were a lead-in to their special anniversary year where they are focusing on local history. In March the CELO is spending the day in the school working with all year groups on a circus of local history activities; then the school are putting up a display in the Pride of Place Case in the museum in June.

The CELO finished off the ENTrenchedED project with Crofton School by enlisting the youngsters to help at a 1914 Open Day in Gosport and at the opening of *Soldier's Journey* at Westbury Manor where one of the students – in costume – assisted the photographer with the 1914 Photo Studio.

4.2 Community Engagement and Learning

In line with the Service Plan aim of widening participation, a programme of activities for a range of audiences was offered over the 4 month period October to January. **282** people took part in the **led activities**. The CEL Team also provide **self-led drop-in activities** for families in special exhibitions and for the permanent displays. The figures below are for led activities and do not include participants in the self-led offer.

Activity/Event	Target Audience	Date	No. of participants
1914 Photo Studio (opening event for Soldier's Journey exhibition)	Families	11 Oct	45
Half Term Havoc – making 1914 toys	Families	28 Oct	84
Outreach Reminiscence Workshop – Christmas Past at Meon Valley Day Centre	Older people in care settings	29 Nov	8
Edwardian Christmas Fair – to support town centre Christmas Carols event	Families	18 Dec	125
Old & New – Market Day Drop-in reminiscence workshop	Older Adults	5 Jan	20

The CEL Programme was supplemented by an evening talk on the Battle of the Somme for Armistice Day and the Area Curator led expert tours around the exhibition when it first opened. Those events listed in the table above were planned and run by the CELO, usually working with the Front of House Team (e.g. for the Edwardian Festival).

The highlight of the programme was the Half Term Havoc event because it was led on the day by the young ENTrenchedED participants from the Ashcroft Advocates group. The CELO attended one of their Wednesday evening meetings to train them in the facilitation skills and the craft skills needed to deliver a family workshop at the museum. They then helped family visitors to make 1914-style toys and models from cardboard. The templates were designed by the artist who produced the mural in the exhibition. They also helped visiting children explore and play with replica Edwardian toys and make medals for their own heroes.



Ashcroft Advocates group getting their training to run 'Half Term Havoc'

The Edwardian Fair also had a craft element with family visitors making Art Nouveau badges and replica Princess Mary tins as Christmas presents.

The 2 reminiscence activities – both using a wealth of museum artefacts – demonstrate how the CELO is building up this service. She has produced promotional materials to send out to older people's organisations and has secured some Hampshire Futures funding to deliver some reminiscence workshops free of charge for older people who cannot easily access museum learning opportunities. The evaluation comments from participants from the Meon Valley Day Centre show how much this service is valued:

"Lots of memories looking at the different items. Good, interesting and fun presentation with time to look, feel and discuss."

"A fascinating insight into Christmas past. Thoroughly enjoyable session which sparked off lots of conversation and reminiscence."

"You see what you done when you was a nipper."

"Smashing."



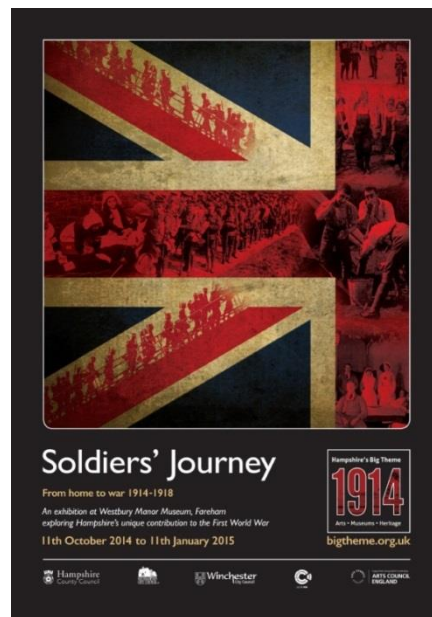
'Old & New' – the January Market day drop-in activity

5 **Marketing and Management**

5.1 Printed material

In December 2014 a Hampshire Cultural Trust branded south east area What's On leaflet with a print run of 12,500 was produced. This covered the period from October to January and featured Westbury Manor, Eastleigh, Bursledon Windmill and Gosport Discovery Centre. It was professionally distributed throughout the region to TICs, libraries, museums, accommodation providers, educational establishments, attractions, arts centres, theatres etc. A new edition covering the period February to May has just been delivered and distribution has begun.

Posters for the *Soldiers' Journey* exhibition were produced for each venue and distributed by them. A competition, promoted through social media and extremely well promoted within the museum by our volunteers, was run in the museum to encourage visitors into the venue in order to take part.



The *Soldiers' Journey* exhibition poster, designed by marketing agency RLA

5.2 Hampshire Cultural Trust branding and Signage

HCT branding guidelines were developed in the run up to the launch of the Trust. Westbury Manor Museum took delivery of new HCT branded signage in readiness for Trust launch on 1 November. Trust T-shirts and lanyards have also been provided for the team. New templates have been produced to allow the team to produce a range of simple posters and flyers on site.



Poster for a forthcoming exhibition using the new marketing templates

5.3 Online marketing

Events at Westbury Manor Museum feature on a monthly basis via the Hampshire County Council cultural e-newsletter, Showcase. Showcase is now reaching over 30,000 subscribers and regularly features both an exhibition and an object of the month as well as signposting recipients to events in their local area. In addition, the monthly e-newsletter Museums Monthly, recently rebranded as HCT, is sent to over 12,000 subscribers who

have asked to receive museums-specific information. A new database is also being created for use by Hampshire Cultural Trust.

5.4 Research

Postcodes are now routinely collected from visitors at key sites over two three-monthly periods - January to March and June to August. These are profiled using Mosaic software and provide ongoing information on which groups of people are using and not using our services and how individual visitor profiles compare to the local area. This feeds into the service and marketing planning processes. Postcodes are currently being collected for the January to March period.

5.5 Social Media

The Facebook page and Twitter feed set up to promote exhibitions and events at HCC Museums Service have now been rebranded as Hampshire Cultural Trust. Facebook now has nearly 1500 “likes” and twitter over 2,700 followers. Westbury Manor Museum is also running its own Facebook page with 153 “likes” and a visitor review rating of 4.3 stars, and a Twitter page with 176 followers..

Erica Munro, January 2015