

### AGENDA ITEM NO. 3

<b>Committee:</b>	WESTBURY MANOR MUSEUM, FAREHAM JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	14 <sup>th</sup> September 2015
<b>Title of Report:</b>	CURATOR'S REPORT
<b>Author:</b>	Erica Munro

#### **Purpose:**

Report on activities at or relating to Westbury Manor Museum  
Covering period June to August 2015

## **1 Providing a Welcoming and Well Maintained Museum**

### **1.1 Museum Service Delivery**



The new Shop space at Westbury Manor

Much of the team's effort over the summer has focussed on the front-of-house areas of preparing and opening the Shop and improving the Tearoom. The Shop has been painted and decorated by our staff and volunteers with a huge amount of effort put into preparing the space and the stock in time to open this summer.

The Tearoom and shop have a new focus on local produce, a result of Hampshire Cultural Trust's partnership with Hampshire Fare. The Tearoom serves Mozzo Coffee (from Southampton) and a new line of luxury teas, and the shop sells Hill Farm apple juice, Cyril's Soap Shed soaps, Dangly Hearts crafts and Hampshire Jams & Chutneys. During the 'Stitchsmiths' exhibition, we are selling crafts made by the exhibitors as part of Hampshire Open Studios. This is the beginning of a growing strategic emphasis on supporting Hampshire makers and producers, particularly those from Fareham (where possible).



The Shop displays, featuring Hampshire produce

The entrance into the museum has been re-routed via the new Shop space. Public response to this has generally been positive, with the added bonus that staff and volunteers are able to greet (and count) every visitor that now enters the museum. Daily queries about the Tourist Information Centre continue, and visitors are directed to Fareham Library and the Ashcroft Arts Centre with whom we are developing good relations in terms of marketing and planning events within the Borough. The pop-up Library held on the Museum forecourt on 17 August is an example of this, and has inspired future ideas of events and activities organised by both partners.



In June, the museum celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> birthday at a Strawberry Fair event which included craft activities, special displays of handling items and a themed Pride of Place case (organised by museum volunteers), strawberry teas, music and a display by the Friends of Fareham Museum. Coverage in the Portsmouth News helped spread the word, and 42 people attended on the day.



Article about the Strawberry Fair in the Portsmouth News

A successful funding bid for consultancy work led to a training day on 10 June, held at Westbury Manor, which was attended by staff from the museum and from Winchester City Museum. The day, led by Lean Systems consultant Debbie Brown, was an opportunity for staff to assess existing procedures in terms of retail and operations, and plan more efficient practices in future. It also gave a chance for the staff of both museums to compare experiences and share knowledge and skills. Staff members have also attended training in fire safety, food hygiene and facilities management.



Lean Systems training day, Westbury Manor Museum, 10 June

## 1.2 Visitor Figures

Visitor figures reflect a general downward trend that is compounded by the closure of the TIC which traditionally drew many visitors during summer. Our Family Friendly Fridays events have been less well attended than anticipated, echoing similar outcomes across the region and beyond.

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	1183	1710	1312	18,721
2015-2016	1161	1157	1254	1886									

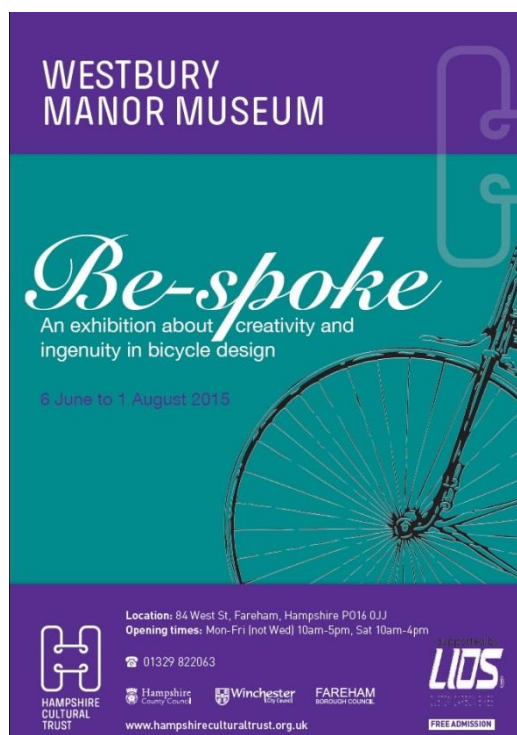


## 2 Hosting Special Temporary Exhibitions and Related Events

### 2.1 Be-spoke exhibition (6 June to 1 August)

The Be-spoke exhibition was a display of archive photographs and historic bicycles from both the Hampshire Cultural Trust stored collections at Chilcomb and from a local collector. These bicycles, some very rare, were researched and interpreted by the Curator and displayed with assistance from the Collections Team. Bicycle stands were generously provided by Lee-on-the-Solent bicycle designers LIOS Bikes.

This exhibition coincided with the Tour de France, and as such proved popular over the summer. The opportunity for bicycle-related events with local businesses were sought for the Museum's forecourt, but unfortunately none could be confirmed due to limited staff availability at those companies we approached.



### 2.2 Stitchsmiths exhibition (8 August to 12 September)

Local textile art group Faze 4 developed 'Stitchsmiths', an art exhibition with fun and thought-provoking textile works inspired by the permanent displays at Westbury Manor Museum. The members of Faze 4 have been visiting the museum for research over the last year, and their works are a vibrant and creative interpretation of the themes on display. They have been present during much of the exhibition's run, making more textile art on site and speaking to visitors. The Faze 4 artists also delivered a family workshop as part of our Family Friendly Fridays programme.

The exhibition formed part of the Fareham Art Festival and Hampshire Open Studios, which brought in visitors through the publications produced by those events.



Paper book made by Stitchsmiths artist for their Family Workshop

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

#### **3.1 Caring for collections**

Collections colleagues liaised with Portsmouth Museums and Records Service recently regarding the loan renewal of items on display at Westbury Manor Museum, which include the scold's bridal, Iron Age material from Wallington, Military Road excavation and an Anglo-Saxon cremation urn. Further work on these loans has been arranged with Portsmouth for September.

Readings from the environmental monitoring system, or 'tinytags', were downloaded in August. 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.

#### **3.2 Promoting access to collections**

Four bicycles from the Hampshire County Council collection that were selected for the *Be-spoke* temporary exhibition on bicycle design were prepared and installed by the conservators based at Chilcomb House in Winchester. The remainder of the collection can be seen either on display at Milestones in Basingstoke or in store at Chilcomb. Visitors are welcome to visit the reserve collection by appointment. The four bicycles prepared for display were of particular interest and considerable rarity. They were:

- 1888 Safety bicycle
- 1910 Dursley-Pederson bicycle
- 1980 Itera plastic bicycle
- 1985 recumbent racing bicycle, made by an Emsworth resident



Reserve bicycle collection at Chilcomb

### 3.3 Providing specialist knowledge and advice

The Drawn to Dinosaurs exhibition opening in November has been prepared by the Collections and Programme Delivery Team. The team developed the concept with the artist, undertook the research for the interpretation and framed many of the paintings. The show features the art of John Sibbick, whose life-long interest in dinosaurs was sparked by early schoolboy visits to the Natural History Museum. Since then he has illustrated numerous dinosaur books, travelling exhibitions for national and international museums as well as for a variety of television channels. The exhibition features a specially commissioned piece – Deinonychus – a dinosaur now known to have feathers.



Cretaceous Australia



Deinonychus

## **4 Inspiring Learning and Community Engagement**

### **4.1 Formal Education Provision**

Over the 2 summer term months of June and July there were no school workshops in the museum. This is understandable because for the new Primary National Curriculum the museum can only really support local history topics through the permanent displays and most schools undertake these in the winter months, covering environmental topics in the summer term.

The CELO has produced and distributed a new flyer for schools detailing the local history offer, including a newly-devised Key Stage One version of Our Town in the Past. She has also promoted the Dino Artist exhibition to schools.

The history project with St Jude's Primary School continued into June with the school displaying their work in the Pride of Place Case.

The 'NO Facebook OMG!' Project continued, with the young people from local colleges undertaking the research, oral history interviews, collecting of artefacts and planning for the exhibition at the museum in September.

### **4.2 Community Engagement and Learning**

In line with the Venue Plan aim of widening participation, a programme of activities for a range of audiences was offered over the 3 month period June to August. **357** people took part in the activities listed in the table below and many more have enjoyed the self-led games and trails. The trail of textile mice around the museum linked to the Stitchsmiths exhibition has proved especially popular.

<b>Activity/Event</b>	<b>Target Audience</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>No. of participants</b>
"Role Up" half term family drop-in activity	Families	23-30 May	107
Reminiscence Workshop (A Day by the Sea) at Willow Tree Lodge Care Home	Older people in care settings	15 June	15
Strawberry Fair activities	Families	20 June	42
Sound recording for Workhouse redisplay, at Ashcroft Arts Centre with Ashcroft Youth Theatre Group	Young People	23 June	9
Stall and activities at NGS open day, Wicor School Grounds	Local Community	5 July	83
Reminiscence Workshop (A Day by the Sea) at Lockwood Day Care Centre	Older people in care settings	6 July	19



Museum Late: Vintage Evening	Adults	10 July	6
Museum Make & Take – activity packs to do in the resources room	Families	7 August	24
Make a Single-Sheet Book activity in the Stitchsmiths exhibition	Families	14 August	10
“Museum Medley” workshop on the museum’s collecting themes	Families	21 August	17
Museum Make & Take – activity packs to do in the resources room	Families	28 August	25



Sound recording for the Workhouse redisplay project

The May Half Term holiday workshop (“Role Up”) took a different format from the usual led activities. The CELO took over the empty exhibition space and set out a timeline of Fareham’s history on the walls and a timeline of costumes in boxes on the floor below it. All half term families came in and the children dressed up as a character from Fareham’s history. Then they had to go and find the objects in the museum displays which related to their character, answer a question, and draw themselves in their costume to add to the wall display. Feedback from participating families was that the children (and adults) had learned a lot about local history in a really fun way. The VSA’s added mask making to continue the dressing up theme and to ensure children had something to take away from

the activity. Some children came in day after day, becoming someone new each on each visit.

The reminiscence work in the *Museums for Seniors* programme offered by the CELO to local day care centres and care homes using Hampshire Futures funding continued, with Willow Tree Lodge and Lockwood Day Care Centre enjoying workshops on the theme of a Day by the Sea. The CELO took along boxes of artefacts and a range of open questions and linked activities. On both occasions, the CELO went in to lounges full of people sitting quietly, and left them full of animated, chatting, smiling people who had enjoyed 2 hours of recollecting the old days, finding out more about each other, singing, laughing, dressing up and studying some fabulous social history items which they would not normally have access to. Not all the participants were able to complete an evaluation form because they were dementia sufferers, but the feedback received was really positive. Of the 44 forms returned from the 4 Fareham reminiscence sessions, 38 had ticked 'very' for how much they had enjoyed course, and 6 had ticked 'mostly', with no one ticking 'a little' or 'not at all'. 33 of the forms had an added superlative like "brilliant" or a positive comment such as how good it was to swap experiences or how lovely it was to laugh. One participant wrote "Lots of memories looking at the different items. Good, interesting and fun presentation with time to look, feel and discuss." The CELO also received an email from the manager of the Meon Valley Day Care Centre, saying "A really big thank you for such a lovely session. We would love to be involved in any other sessions that you have to offer in the future."

The CELO made Fareham strawberries the stars at the Strawberry Fair (25<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration) and for the outreach stall at the NGS open garden day in Portchester. As well as a lovely make-and-take 'chip' strawberry basket, there were hands-on activities using real artefacts and specimens (mystery strawberry-related artefacts and strawberry friends and foes), and lots of historic photos and fact cards.



Families enjoy the Strawberry Fair celebrating the museum's 25<sup>th</sup> birthday





Families enjoy the Strawberry Fair celebrating the museum's 25<sup>th</sup> birthday

For the summer holiday we ran 'Family Friendly Fridays', with something for families to do in the museum on every Friday in August. Although the numbers were quite low on the sunny days, the families who came stayed for several hours and really enjoyed the activities. A family from Spain, on holiday here, thought the Museum Medley was marvellous.

The CELO has just finished working with the Curator on the programme and 'What's On' copy for October to December 2015.

## **5 Marketing and Management**

### **5.1 Printed material**

In May 2015 a South East Area What's On leaflet covering the period from June to September was produced. It was professionally distributed throughout the region to TICs, libraries, museums, accommodation providers, educational establishments, attractions, arts centres, theatres etc. The new edition, covering the period October to December 2015, is currently at the printers for delivery in early September.

### **5.2 Online marketing**

The e-newsletter Museums Monthly, recently rebranded as HCT, is sent to sign ups on a new database created for use by Hampshire Cultural Trust.

### **5.3 Research**

The museum's front-of-house staff have been collecting visitors postcodes from June to August as part of the Trust's routine twice-yearly collection of this data. These postcodes 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. The profile

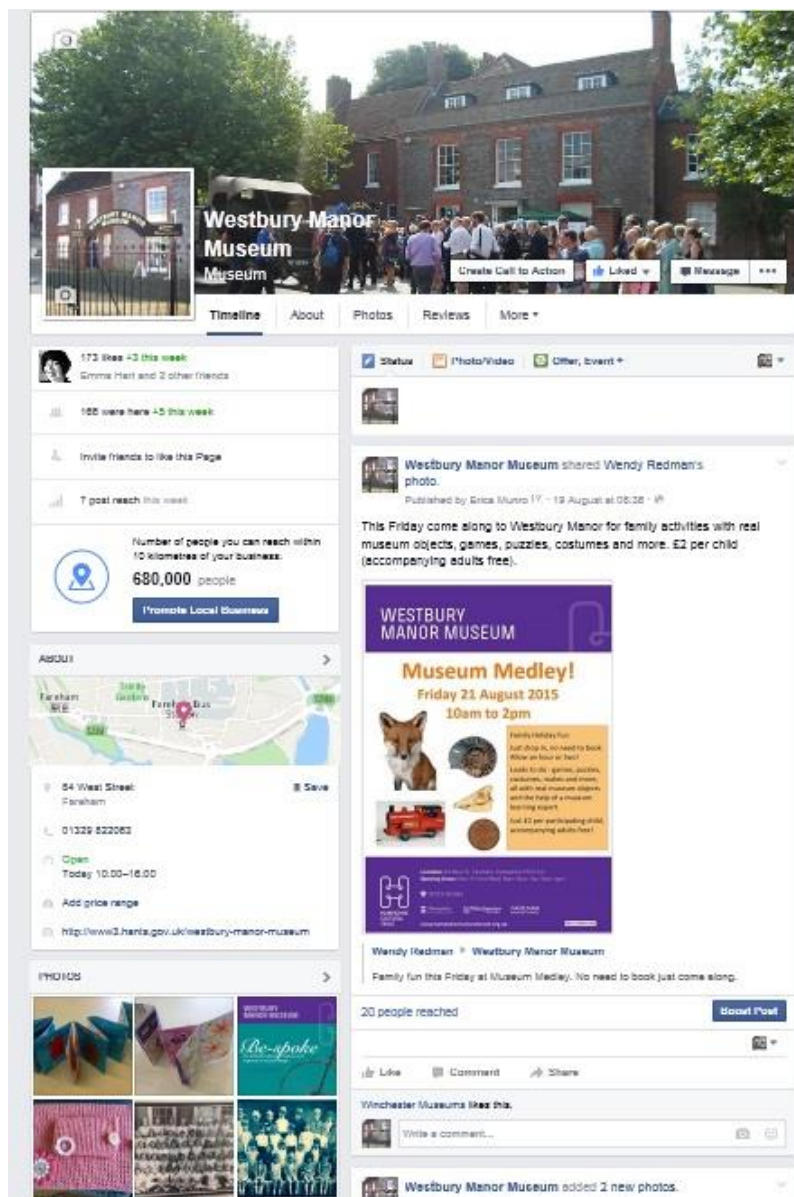
produced for January to March 2015 reinforces the diverse audience of the museum which appeals to traditional museum goers as well as some of the harder to reach groups found in the museum's catchment area.

## 5.4 Local marketing in Fareham

Meetings are ongoing with representatives of FBC and HCT, in order to cross-promote, organise and market events and activities in a more joined-up way. Members of the Innovations Lab have met with Borough teams, and the Curator and Asst Head of Venues and Learning have met with the Leisure Projects Officer to discuss forward planning and closer partnership working.

## 5.5 Social Media

HCT Facebook now has over 2,000 "likes" and twitter over 3,000 followers. Events at Westbury Manor are promoted on both social media sites on an ongoing basis. The museum has its own Facebook page which is updated regularly with events and comments, and provides a means for our visitors to engage with and contact the museum outside of their physical visit.



Westbury Manor Museum's Facebook page, maintained by site staff



## **5.6 The Culture Card**

This annual pass scheme for all the Trust's sites includes free admission to all the Trust's admission-charging museums. There is a family pass for families with two adults and two children (or one adult and three children) for £69 per year as well as an extra child card for £10. The cards are now on sale online and at Trust museums.

Erica Munro, August 2015