

<b>Committee:</b>	WESTBURY MANOR MUSEUM, FAREHAM JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	31 OCTOBER 2016
<b>Title of Report:</b>	CURATOR'S REPORT
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**Purpose:**

Report on activities at or relating to Westbury Manor Museum Covering period July – Sept 2016
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**1 Providing a Welcoming and Well Maintained Museum**

**1.1 Museum Service Delivery**

Over the last months of peak season the team's focus has been on service delivery Front of House, putting into practice skills developed in their Principles of Customer Service training in May. The VSA's have worked closely with the volunteers to continue to improve the welcome to the museum visitors received and have focused particularly on orientating the visitor on arrival and promoting the option of donating.

During the summer holidays we have run a number of offers in both the café and shop aimed at families and children, for example a kid's summer holiday drink and cookie deal and a Lego sale. In addition we have had a number of popular family events at the museum during July and Aug, in particular our Fun Day Fridays which attracted high numbers of participants. These sessions were supported by our ever enthusiastic volunteers who helped the various people who led these sessions to deliver a wide range of exciting craft activities.

There has been a review and refresh of the shop stock with new lines being brought in which are proving popular with visitors. This will continue in Sept with a range of baking goods aimed at the creative baker inspired by the start of Bake Off and a new jewellery range featuring beautiful pressed flowers.

The Tearoom continues to bring visitors in to Westbury Manor; many of which are repeat visitors. Our 'Cake of the Week', a luxury treat which includes a donation to HCT, has proved a naughty temptation many can't resist and has sold very well. To sit alongside our hot drinks offer we have refreshed the cold drinks with a range from Fentimans.

**1.2 Visitor Figures**

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	<b>32,217</b>
2010 – 2011	3367	2687	2696	2935	3333	2124	2471	2530	1563	1870	1799	1872	<b>29,247</b>
2011 – 2012	2605	1971	1797	2175	2266	1648	1950	1951	1813	1870	1799	1872	<b>23,717</b>

<b>2012 – 2013</b>	1816	449	1852	4992	2449	1414	2416	1566	1070	1300	2046	1555	<b>22,925</b>
<b>2013 – 2014</b>	4463	3235	2281	1545	1823	1472	2600	1569	1547	1463	2775	1743	<b>26,516</b>
<b>2014 – 2015</b>	1904	1391	1105	1554	2605	1588	1757	1342	1270	1183	1710	1312	<b>18,721</b>
<b>2015-2016</b>	1161	1157	1254	1784	1708	1076	1398	2265	1152	974	1268	1110	<b>16307</b>
<b>2016-2017</b>	1190	996	1401	1393	1763								

Total visitor figures for the 3 months are slightly down on the same three months from the previous year. This is due to lower than expected visitor numbers in July as both June and August figures are above the equivalent months from last year. Visitor numbers were lower than budget for both June and July but have beaten budget in August. The issue with anti-social behaviour seen in May continued into June and probably impacted numbers, but support from local Police has improved this and the garden is no longer such a regular gathering place, although the benches at the front of the museum do still attract groups. Poor weather at the start of July also affected numbers as these picked up as the weather improved later in the month. August's figures were helped by 4 very successful Fun Day Friday events and two popular Summer Shorts exhibitions.

## **2 Hosting Special Temporary Exhibitions and Related Events**

### **2.1 Royal Blood - Big Theme 2016 14 Mar – 18 Jul**

Part of the Hampshire Cultural Trust's Big Theme 2016 on Royal Blood, 'Heads and Tails' focussed on the past 2000 years of English Royalty through objects and interactives with a special Royal Blood horrible history trail for families. This exhibition proved popular with our visitors, particularly those with children who enjoyed the associated activities.

### **2.2 Summer Shorts Exhibitions – 5 local exhibitors 22 Jul – 25 Oct**

The Summer Shorts exhibition programme started with a preview evening on the 21<sup>st</sup> July attended by the exhibitors and their friends, volunteers and Friends of the Museum. The Solent Embroiders Guild were the first exhibitors with their theme of 'Stitching the Solent Shore from Sea to Sky'. This exhibition was very well received by visitors with some staying over an hour to enjoy the exhibition and DVD displays fully. The greetings cards associated with this exhibition also sold very well in the shop.



*Figure 1: Embroidered seahorse*

The second exhibition was by the Solent Art Society and was timed to coincide with Hampshire Open Studios exhibition. A wonderful range of works by local artists was put on display and prompted lots of comments in the visitor's book.

Cathy Lawrence will be in the gallery most of Sept and will be working and demonstrating daily in the exhibition space which will be a great opportunity to talk to the artist and watch her work.



*Figure 2: Painting by Cathy Lawrence*



*Figure 3: March hare by Fareham Woodcarvers*

We will then have Arran Mac and the Fareham Woodcarvers in late Sept and Oct.

### **2.3 All Manor of Arts 22 Jul**

The All Manor of Arts craft activity day was planned to coincide with the opening of the Summer Shorts Art exhibitions and themed to tie in with the Pride of Place display cases. Children enjoyed a strawberry bunting making craft activity which due to the sunny weather took place on the courtyard at the front of the museum. This event was designed and led by the Ashcroft Arts Centre and children had the opportunity to take bunting home or leave it to be displayed in the museum shop or at the Ashcroft.

## 2.4 Fun Day Fridays every Fri in Aug

The ever popular Fun Day Fridays ran again this August with themes linked to our various displays and visitor figures show they helped attract people to the museum on those days. Numbers of participants ranged from 20 – 44 per session and all sessions were supported by our volunteers. The first one had a seaside theme to fit in with our Pride of Place display looking at life on the seashore, children were able to make seashell wind chimes, seaside snow globes and sea themed cross-stitch (to match the embroidery exhibition). We also had a Messy Art day to coincide with the Hampshire Open Art events including lots of messy bubble wrap printing and bubble blowing art. The other two sessions were delivered by other colleagues in HCT, Christine Taylor, Curator of Natural Sciences, led a 'Big Bug' session where children had an introduction to some of the Big Bugs on display and could then make their own insects out of 4 different options. Finally SEARCH delivered a strawberry basket making workshop on the Friday before the bank holiday weekend.

## 2.5 Pride of Place

The Pride of Place display cases in the resources room have had some interesting and very different displays in over the last 3 months. At the beginning of July we had a beautiful display of hand-made hats by local milliner Susan Hughes, followed by a fun sea shore display created by one of our volunteers Viv Rance looking at what could be found down on Fareham seashore. In Sept we are hosting the Age Concern photographic display and book tour 'Getting On' which features contributions from a number of Fareham residents.



*Figure 4: Seaside display*

## 2.6 Indian Dance Group – Sangha

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sept Indian dance group Sangha performed in the gardens, sadly the planned dance workshop was rained off, but visitors came into the tearoom to enjoy a hot drink and cake instead. This was really popular and promotion on the day attracted a number of people who would not otherwise have visited the museum, there were over 50 people in the gardens enjoying the colourful performances for an hour.



*Figure 5 & 6: Sangha Indian dance group performing in the garden*

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

### **3.1 Caring for collections**

Current policy is for any objects not on display to be stored at Chilcomb House or, if they are on long-term loan, to be returned to their owners. This way we can ensure that the objects are kept in the best condition possible within our resources. Following on from the audit of both the collections on display and those held behind-the-scenes conducted by the Collections Manager during the last quarter plans have been put in place to review the collections currently stored at Westbury ahead of the refurbishment project.

The aim is to list and photograph all the items in store that have been deposited at the museum to enable the relevant Curator to be able to assess what the most appropriate location for each object is e.g. display, storage etc. A number of volunteers have offered to be involved with this already and the Collections Manager will provide full training and support for them throughout the project. Dates for an introductory session are being arranged now to enable this project to start as soon as possible.

The conservation staff continued to monitor the environment at Westbury Manor to make sure it remains stable enough for the great diversity of objects on display. The regular 6 monthly visit to download the temperature and humidity readings took place in early Sept.

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

In preparation for the 'Big Bugs' Fun Day Friday event at the museum, Christine Taylor, Curator of Natural Sciences prepared for display a number of bugs from the biology collections, these mostly consisted of foreign insects from a variety of locations around the world and included Elephant beetles, Goliath beetles and Atlas beetles. The children were able to learn about these bugs and then had the option of 4 large insects to make. This event was really well attend (44 participants) and a number of visitors chose to make all 4 bugs.



*Figure 7: Beetles prepared for Fun Day Friday*

The Hampshire's Hidden Treasures case was changed over in September, replacing the Iron Age tankard for minerals that can be found in the shopping trolley. 'Did you know that the weekly shopping trolley contains naturally occurring minerals which are used in a variety of ways? Examples include: Muscovite, which is used in cosmetics to give a sparkly effect when applied to the skin and limestone which when ground up is used in toothpaste to remove plaque.

### **3.3 Providing specialist knowledge and advice**

Our collections staff contributed to the development of outline proposals for the permanent exhibitions at Westbury Manor Museum. Ideas were discussed for ways in which they could be refurbished to tell its story in a modern, accessible, fun, and family-friendly way. Over the last two months several of the project team have been at the museum speaking to visitors and other key local stakeholders to gain their views on the proposals for the new galleries to support the HLF bid. To complement this the VSAs and volunteers have been carrying out a marketing survey with visitors to add to our visitor profile data.

## **Better Life Chances**

### **4.1 Formal Education Provision**

July through to September marks a quiet period at Westbury Manor Museum due to the schools breaking up for the summer holidays. However the Better Life Chances team will be linked into the development of the new museum with schools in mind and hope to contribute to the HLF funding bid which HCT is developing.

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

#### **Poetry Project in and around Fareham for People with Dementia and their Carers**

Healthwatch Hampshire is supporting the Better Life Chances team to help improve wellbeing and gather feedback of mental health users with the use of a Community Cash Fund (CCF) of up to £2,500. The feedback collected will be used to influence service providers and improve outcomes for local communities, particularly within mental health services. The project will focus on people with dementia and their carers, holding a series of sessions in Fareham care homes and day settings led by a poet who will use poetry to express personal experiences of mental health services. The words and responses will be

captured by the artist and brought together into poetry for Healthwatch Hampshire to share with service providers.

<b>Activity/Event</b>	<b>Target Audience</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>No. of participants</b>
All Manor of Arts	Families	22 Jul	20
Fun Day Friday - Seaside	Families	5 Aug	39
Fun Day Friday – Messy Art	Families	12 Aug	25
Fun Day Friday – Big Bugs	Families	19 Aug	44
Fun Day Friday – Strawberries	Families	26 Aug	20
Sangha Indian dance group	Families	3 Sept	55

## **5. Marketing and Management**

### **Marketing Communication:**

Throughout the period we have released the What's On leaflets featuring Westbury Manor Museum This was delivered at the beginning of April and also the later (redesigned) edition in August. 12,500 copies were printed and it is circulated via our distributors, Brochure Connect, to TICs, libraries, museums, accommodation providers, educational establishments, attractions, arts centres, theatres etc.

### **Online marketing:**

The e-newsletter Museums Monthly, featuring exhibitions and events from Westbury, has been sent to sign ups on a new database. Subscribers now number over 2,500 and we featured the Museum May-kers at Westbury in the May edition.

### **Research:**

Postcodes are now routinely collected from visitors at on an ongoing basis. These are profiled annually 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.

### **Social Media:**

HCT Facebook now has over 2,600 "likes" and twitter nearly 3,800 followers. Events at Westbury are promoted on both social media sites on an ongoing basis. We have promoted Fun Day Fridays and the Summer Shorts exhibitions on Social Media (Facebook and Twitter) and the website. This is not an exhaustive list and doesn't include generic HCT or over-arching theme supported posts, posts added which weren't on the plan, re-



Tweets or Tags and Shares. We have Tweeted and created a Facebook post for every event listed above.

### **Big Theme: Royal Blood 2016**

The Royal Blood website including sign up area and What's Ons for all upcoming events has been live throughout the big theme. (Westbury was featured when it had the Heads and Tales exhibition.) However, Royal Blood Facebook and Twitter accounts are posting and tweeting interesting facts in addition to promoting each individual event at each venue and we ensured that Heads and Tales was promoted both as a series of exhibitions and also the Westbury exhibition itself.

75,000 DL RB leaflets have been produced promoting all key exhibitions. 48,000 of these are being professionally distributed by Brochure Connect across Hampshire and the bordering counties (Berkshire, West Sussex, East Dorset, Wiltshire and Surrey) including date specific "blitzing" in key areas prior to regional events (including in [the Fareham area](#) for Heads and Tales during the May - July.) Westbury Manor received a pack of collateral before launch, including leaflets and posters. We then did a second run of 12,000 "family leaflets" which also incorporated Heads and Tales at Westbury.

A PR campaign was also embarked upon with our agency Carswell Gould to encompass all the Royal Blood/Heads and Tales events. This includes Releases at the launch of major exhibitions (and also a co-ordinated Press event alongside our partners Winchester Cathedral and The Great Hall.)

We took out Press adverts in the Basingstoke Gazette, including a feature wrap and strip, (we received some editorial support alongside this paid advertising space) in Schools Out (May half term), Primary Times (back page summer half term), Defence of the Realm magazine and The View. These all featured Heads and Tales at Westbury Manor.

For the first time this year our big theme has a media partnership with Wave FM. This includes On Air mentions of our events during round ups of what's on locally (at least 3 mentions per week for each of our 4 featured events), 2 features in e-shots to their customer database, a webpage on [wave105.com](#) (over 330,000 visitors per week), and specific targeted messaging via their Social Media channels throughout the partnership. We ensured that Westbury was mentioned on air during the period that Head and Tales was open.

Finally, Royal Blood signs have been created for use around several key sites as well as pull ups for permanent use in some sites and some for loans/to be moved around to different locations necessary.

Cerian Trevan, Sept 2016