

Committee:	WESTBURY MANOR MUSEUM, FAREHAM JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	04 February 2014
Title of Report:	CURATOR'S REPORT
Author:	Tom de Wit

Purpose:

Report on activities at or relating to Westbury Manor Museum
Covering period 9th October 2013 to 4th February 2014

Recommendation:

It is recommended that this report is noted

1 Providing a welcoming and well maintained Museum

1.1 Museum Service Delivery

The last quarter of 2013 was marked by effective & close working between the central exhibitions team, the local volunteers at the museum and Janet Wildman and Emma Hart who deliver Community Engagement and Learning in SE Hants.

Right from the start of planning the “Meet the Victorians” exhibition and across the period, the CEL team led the volunteers on Fareham-based research contributing to the project and volunteers making interactive exhibits for the exhibition (such as the Victorian dolls house which is now a permanent family interactive). Research on the Kelsall family of Westbury Manor by volunteers led to the loan from Fareham Borough Council property team of original 19th century indentures relating to Westbury Manor for display during this time. Museum volunteer John Gregory has been invited to give a talk on the Kelsall family in the Civic centre later in 2014 as part of the mayor’s programme of events.

The highlight events of this period were a result of this work. The hugely successful opening event on 26 October involved the whole town centre including a market stall in The Podium staffed by WI volunteers in Victorian dress and a host of other activities (full details in CEL section 4.2). This event attracted significant media coverage :

<http://www.portsmouth.co.uk/news/museum-takes-a-step-back-to-victorian-times-as-new-exhibition-gets-under-way-1-5645384>

Staying with the Victorian theme, the Victorian Christmas Festival (December 14) had outdoor activities and refreshments accompanied by carol singers and

a traditional Punch and Judy show. This was well attended and contributed to the lively pre-Christmas buzz at an important time for the vibrant town centre (details and figures sec. 4.2) and again attracted media attention:

<http://www.portsmouth.co.uk/news/victorian-makeover-at-westbury-manor-museum-1-5781439>



Westbury Manor Victorian Christmas Festival 14 December 2013

1.2 New Gallery Lighting for Westbury Manor

Collections Interpreter Mark Fenton has led a project to design a replacement lighting programme for galleries within the museum and worked with senior management of the Arts & Museums Service to secure funding for this work. The lighting has been an issue for some time but replacement is not straightforward as the lighting system must comply to conservation requirements so as not to degrade items on display as well as being safe and robust for continuous use within a public building. The main exhibition gallery and the Strawberry Gallery are now completely re-lit and engineers were able to salvage good components from the old system to give a new lease of life to the lighting throughout the rest of the museum. The new equipment is fully guaranteed for 5 years and will reduce energy consumption. Below is a summary of what has been installed:

Westbury Manor Museum, Fareham: new LED Lighting

New lighting installed in the main exhibition gallery at Westbury Manor Museum. Using LED (Light Emitting Diode) technology, it is the first of our Community Museums to benefit from this exciting system. LED lighting consumes a fraction of the electricity of traditional filament light bulbs. It generates only minimum heat and emits no UV rays (which are particularly damaging to some museum objects like costume and textiles). Furthermore, the lifespan of the LED lights is measured in years rather than hours, so is much more cost effective to run. The new Concord system is designed for use in museum galleries and each unit can be used as either a flood or a spot light.

Whilst the contractors, EMCOR, installed the exhibition lighting they also put new LED track and lighting in to the Strawberry Gallery on the first floor and relight the Childhood display on the same floor.

The cost for the lights and installation is £6,584.

1.3 Visitor Figures

The programme of events and activities around the Meet the Victorians exhibition resulting from effective team work have contributed to good visitor numbers. December 2013 was 45% up on December 2012. This follows on from earlier notable months, all driven by programmes of additional activity with input from across the service, such as the Victorian opening events in October and the Lego Mania activities in April, May and June. The figures for the year are below. Overall, 2013 was the best year since 2010.

1.4 Visitor Figures Table

See table below

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
January	Closed	2858	2374	2964	1762	1946	1870	1,300
February	1990	2557	3499	3182	2367	2402	1799	2,046
March	1850	2511	1943	3368	3347	2659	1872	1,555
April	2396	2173	3222	3118	3367	2605	1816	4,463
May	2690	2546	2782	2138	2687	1971	449 (Closed except 7days)	3,235
June	2470	2887	2671	2615	2696	1797	1,852	2,281
July	2576	2574	2654	3065	2935	2175	4,992	1,545
August	3632	3171	3437	3781	3333	2266	2,449	1,823
Sept.	3174	2553	2813	2206	2124	1648	1,414	1,472
October	3219	3019	2921	3514	2471	1950	2,416	2,600
November	2459	2546	2491	2496	2530	1951	1,566	1,569
December	2079	2134	2162	1808	1563	1813	1,070	1,547
Total Year	28,535	29,269	32969	34,255	31,221	25,183	23,565	25,430

2 Hosting Special Temporary Exhibitions and related events

2.1

12 October to 16 November

LEGO Model Tour

Every spare space in Westbury was taken over by this tour of amazing specially commissioned LEGO models including, Danebury Hillfort complete with Minifigure population, , an amazing life size Roman feast made of LEGO including the table! The exhibition also gave visitors the chance to enjoy rare large scale sets of LEGO from Star Wars LEGO Technic and Medieval ranges. The exhibition was accompanied by a variety of workshops and building opportunities.

Meet the Victorians

26 Oct 2013 – 18 Jan 2014

This hands-on, multisensory exhibition about late-Victorian domestic life was targeted at families with young children and schools (especially KS2). The exhibitions team produced a core element, replicated across 6 venues while Community Engagement and Learning teams worked with local groups and individuals to add local elements (displays, panels, activities). We undertook formative evaluation using an online Hampshire-wide survey (with 434 respondents) which we used to steer our interpretation design and marketing strategy. Responses clearly showed a demand for interactive elements, play and handling with minimal text. The exhibition was designed to showcase the Museums Service's Victorian collections using experience and context, rather than academic labelling, as the main interpretive tools. The Exhibition Technicians created Victorian room sets furnished with replicas, artefacts from the collections and handling objects. Skilled museum

volunteers at 3 sites made detailed period dolls houses (to our brief) to be used in the exhibition. The exhibition narrative centred around a fictional family based on detailed research done by the team. We liaised with collections staff in the selection, conservation and display of the objects. We produced a 'Meet the Victorians' website, providing extra information for visitors and schools, and text and audio downloads for teachers. We designed and printed the local materials to fit with the core brand, devised by an external graphic design company. We worked with Arts Centres and other council organisations on Victorian-themed mini displays and events around the county. Audio material was written by a scriptwriter in association with Library Services, and performed by a youth theatre company, recorded at Forest Arts Centre. Being aware of potential waste after the exhibition's end, we incorporated sustainable and reusable materials and techniques – masking display cases, offering replicas to other sites, using reusable digital frames rather than copious printing, and using podcasts rather than on-site audio equipment.

3 Caring for collections, promoting access, and providing specialist knowledge and advice

3.1 Caring for collections

The Accreditation Assessor for the Arts Council took Westbury Manor Museum's Museum Accreditation submission to the September 2013 panel meeting and we are delighted to announce that the Museum was awarded Full Accreditation with only two areas for improvement. The Panel has requested confirmation of the renewal of the Westbury Manor Museum lease, which is due to expire on 31 March 2015, by April 2015 and that additional information about access arrangements for group visits out-of-hours is added to the museum's promotional material.

Accreditation has been a major piece of work for the Collections Team over the last twelve months and included the preparation of new collections management policies and plans. Having these in place will ensure that Westbury Manor Museum continues to be an 'Accredited Museum' benefiting from membership of the national scheme in many ways, including access to a greater range of funding opportunities.

Objects relating to the Borough of Fareham both on display in the museum and in store at Chilcomb House Winchester have been monitored regularly during this period. The environmental conditions at the museum, including temperature and humidity, have been recorded throughout and were checked and found to be satisfactory in October.

3.2 Promoting access and providing specialist knowledge and advice

The Collections Team continued to find intriguing objects and specimens from the collections stored at Chilcomb House to feature in the Hampshire Hidden Treasure's case. This serves to illustrate the diversity of the collections cared for by Hampshire County Council and that are available for exhibition at Westbury Manor Museum.

Having featured samples of patchwork in 'Patching History' from July to September, the Hampshire's Hidden Treasures case was devoted to a selection of hawkmoths from October until January.



There are about 17 species of hawkmoths that occur regularly in Britain and some of them were featured in the display. These strong, fast fliers cover great distances. They can often be found in the Hampshire countryside at dusk sipping nectar with their proboscis.

Members of the Collections Team also continue to support the exhibitions programme at the Museum. The 'Meet the Victorians' exhibition drew extensively on the expertise and the collections curated by the Photographic Collections Officer, the Keeper of Arts and the Keeper of Social and Industrial History. The Keeper of Arts also delivered a talk on 'Undressing Victorian England' in November. Meanwhile the Collections Officers undertook all the conservation, mounting and packaging of the objects that were included in the show, which ranged from Victorian dolls and jigsaw puzzles to pots and pans.

A similar range of specialist collections work by both staff and volunteers is well underway in preparation for this year's programme of activities to mark the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War.

Some fascinating material is coming to light in the Arts and Social History collections stored in Winchester. Members of the public are also responding to our appeals for further local objects and information. We were absolutely delighted, following an appeal by BBC's South Today, to have been offered the loan of a genuine Burberry officer's coat that belonged to one of the many individuals who gave his life in the trenches in 1917. Other garments will tell the story of the women who served as nurses, in the Land Army and a myriad of other roles and which led to the granting of the vote and the increasing opportunities for women to participate in life outside the home.

4. Inspiring Learning and Community Engagement

4.1 Formal Education Provision:

Over the 4 month period September to December 2013, the Learning and Community Engagement Team worked with **29** school groups in the museum and as outreach. That is a total of **473 pupils** and added to the April-July figures means we have attained 96% of the pupil visits target with a quarter of the year still to go. More sessions have been undertaken in January and will be included in the next report. School sessions each have a lot of work behind them in admin, liaison, planning and preparation, and the CE&L Team are constantly reviewing, evaluating and improving the offer to schools as well as communicating it – particularly now with imminent changes to the National Curriculum.

No. of sessions in the museum	No. of children in school groups	No. of outreach sessions/ events	No. of children as outreach
20 :	285	9	188
4 Workhouse sessions for Uplands Junior (KS2)		3 local history sessions at Harrison Primary (KS2)	
1 general visit for St Francis Special School (KS1)		3 Victorian sessions at Crofton Anne Dale Junior (KS2)	
1 general visit for Titchfield Primary (KS2)		3 special project sessions at Crofton Secondary (KS3)	
3 Our Town in the Past sessions for Harrison Primary (KS2)			
2 Victorian exhibition visits and 2 Museum Explorers self-led sessions for Woodcroft & Mill Hill Primary (KS1&2)			

3 Victorian exhibition visits for Heathfield Special School (KS 2)			
1 Mini Museum Curator Training session for Wicor Primary (KS2)			
1 special project visit for Wildern Secondary (KS3)			
1 special project visit for Bridgemary Secondary (KS3)			
1 special project visit for Crofton Secondary (KS3)			

Impact evidence and general feedback is collected from all school sessions, to aid evaluation and service planning. All feedback was very positive. Example:

“The Children...changed their views on the work from the beginning to the end of the session. They loved the debate on the workhouse.” Teacher, Uplands Primary (KS2 Into the Workhouse Session).

The in-depth project with Harrison Primary School was completed in October, with the Year 4 children producing a Happy Families Game for the museum’s Meet the Victorians exhibition, based on their research on real Victorian families from the 1891 census for West Street. The Victorian animation produced through the earlier project with Ranvilles Junior also featured in the exhibition. It was very positive to see local schools having such a high profile public outcome for their project work with the museum. The CEL Team are now concentrating on the Entrenched WW1 project, working with Crofton School, and have been training these young people in the skills of oral history collection and exhibition production. Westbury Manor was also used as a venue for exhibitions work with two other schools involved in the Entrenched Project.

4.2 Community Engagement and Learning

In line with the Service Plan aim of widening participation, a programme of activities aimed at different audiences was offered

over the last 3 months October to December 2013. **1099** people took part in **14 led activities**. Many more benefitted from the **self-led offer** provided by the CE&L Team which consisted of the Museum Explorers family games and self-led activities in the Meet the Victorians exhibition.

Activity/Event	Target Audience	Date	No. of participants
Memories at the Manor – drop-in Reminiscence workshop for Older persons’ Day	Older people	1 Oct	33
The Victorians are in Town – special family open day to launch Meet the Victorians exhibition	Families	26 Oct	217
Punch & Judy shows for half term linked to Victorian exhibition	Families	30 Oct	98
3 X planning sessions with Ashcroft Drama Group	Young people	12 Nov, 10 & 13 Dec	24
2X Undressing Victorian England talks	Adults	14 Nov	27
Meet the Victorians workshop	Children (Home Educator group)	15 Nov	25
Jewellery making workshop	Adults	29 Nov	6
Meet Our Victorians talk	Adults	3 Dec	12
Workhouse @ Westbury workshop	Children (Home Educator group)	11 Dec	27
Westbury Manor by Torchlight	Families	13 Dec	67
Victorian Christmas Festival	Families	14 Dec	563

Highlights of this programme were the two big Victorian family open days for the exhibition launch and for Christmas, both of which created a real buzz in the town centre on those days. The exhibition launch day was planned with involvement from the Fareham Town Centre Manager. The CEL Team kitted out all the stallholders on the Podium country market stall with Victorian costumes and included their stall in the quiz trail. Even greater

participation was achieved at the Christmas Festival, which included Punch and Judy shows, refreshments and a Christmas choir on the museum forecourt, as well as costumed characters and a wealth of hands-on activities planned and delivered by the CEL Team. The atmosphere inside and outside was wonderful.

Two new initiatives proved very successful in this quarter – our first activity for Older Persons’ Day (a drop-in reminiscence workshop with lots of themed 1950s collections from SEARCH available for handling and discussion in the museum’s resources room); and our first ‘Torchlight’ opening – offering a very different museum experience for visitors and an exciting in-depth project for the young people’s drama group who partnered with us. The Youth Theatre Group Coordinator said:

“What a great experience for everyone involved and I really hope there will be further opportunities to collaborate with the museum team again. All in all much fun was had, and I feel that we all learnt a lot from the event.”

A full evaluative report is available for this project.

The images below capture some of the positive engagement with the local community this quarter:





5 Marketing and Management

5.1 Publicity and promotion

In December 2013 a south-east area What's On leaflet, with a print run of 10,000 was produced. This covered the period from February to May and featured Westbury Manor Museum, Eastleigh Museum, Bursledon Windmill, Gosport Discovery Centre and Gosport Gallery. It was professionally distributed throughout the region. Due to the large number of events planned during the spring at Fareham, Westbury manor has two pages within this guide and is among the more prominent sites.

5.2 Online marketing

Events at Westbury Manor Museum were promoted on a monthly basis via the Hampshire County Council cultural e-newsletter, Showcase. With new people signing up all the time, Showcase is now reaching over 30,000 subscribers. It 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 is sent to nearly 12,000 subscribers who have asked to receive museums specific information.

5.3 Research

Postcodes are now routinely collected from visitors at key sites over two 3 monthly periods - January to March and June to August. These are profiled using Mosaic software and provide on-going 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.

5.4 Social Media

The Facebook page and twitter feed set up by the Exhibitions team at Chilcomb House to promote exhibitions and events at Museums Service sites are now well established. Facebook now has almost 950 "likes" and twitter over 1500 followers.

6 Risk Management

JMC Auditors, BDO stated that on the basis of their review of 12/13 that the information in the annual return is in accordance with their proper practices. They also state that no matters have come to their attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.

The auditors acknowledge that risks are assessed and considered by the JMC. To help the auditors in future, it is recommended that risk is specifically highlighted in minutes and documentation presented to the JMC.

A Risk Register accompanies this report at Appendix 1 for the JMC to be noted by members.

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