

Committee:	WESTBURY MANOR MUSEUM, FAREHAM JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	9 th JUNE 2014
Title of Report:	CURATOR'S REPORT
Author:	Annabel Cook

Purpose:

Report on activities at or relating to Westbury Manor Museum Covering period January to May 2014

1 Providing a Welcoming and Well Maintained Museum

1.1 Museum Service Delivery

During the past five months, Westbury Manor has played host to stuffed birds, farm animals, school children, and Hell's Angels!

Following discussions at previous JMC meetings and feedback from the public, the museum re-opened its doors on Monday 24th February with a Market Day activity morning. The museum is working with Patricia Gray, Town Centre Manager to further develop the offer on a Monday and to tie into more of the Town Centre events like Music Month which saw a Punk Opera performed complete with an invasion of Hell's Angels on bikes. The Spring Fair event on Monday 7th April proved to be particularly popular with over 200 people attended the event despite unseasonably bad weather.

The change of day is being monitored to evaluate the impact on the museum in terms of visitor numbers. Since 1st March, visitor figures are slightly lower with 200 less visitors on a Monday compared the equivalent Wednesday in 2013 taken as a total for two months. However, these figures are being slightly inflated because of the popularity of Lego Mania which fell in April last year. The impact of Monday opening will be continued to be monitored over the coming months.

The Museum also ran a farm animals event in February which saw 907 people come into the museum within the day. The "farm" consisted of dogs, donkeys, ducks, chickens, rabbits and a goat and enabled visitors to stroke and learn more about a variety of different animals and the role they play in farm life.

The Area Team has also been working on a major HLF Young Roots project with two groups in the Fareham area, one from Crofton School and one based at the Ashcroft Arts Centre. The project which gained £49,500 funding has seen the young people learning skills around curating an exhibition, researching and oral history. They have then used these skills to investigate life during WW1 as they work towards creating the local content for the 1914 Hampshire Big Theme exhibition A Soldiers Journey, which is due to open at Westbury Manor Museum on 11th October 2014. They are currently involved in developing films to represent some of the stories they have uncovered and the whole project will be

celebrated at the Ashcroft Arts Centre in December 2014. Soldiers Journey is part of the 1914 Hampshire Big Theme programme.



1.2 Visitor Figures

The visitor figures show an increase in 13/14 over 12/13 of 16%

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												

2 Hosting Special Temporary Exhibitions and Related Events

2.1 Stuffed and Mounted



Stuffed and MOUNTed looked at the history of The Mount and the people who have lived here since 1844. These include Lt. Col. Edward Walter (who served with the East India Company), Richard Gilman (one of the founders of the Hong Kong Stock Exchange and HSBC Bank whose tea-cargoes were raced in the Great Tea Clipper race of 1866) and Captain Thomas Hargreaves (local benefactor who paid for many community endowments including The Bishopstoke Reading Rooms – the first school in Bishopstoke).

Perhaps the best known locally is Thomas Atkinson Cotton, who with his wife Charlotte undertook important work in the fields of zoology and botany, who set up a natural history museum at the Mount. This collection later passed to The Natural History Museum in London, and returned to Hampshire for this exhibition for the first time in almost 100 years.

This collection was also the basis for the 1895 book “Birds, Beasts and Fishes of the Norfolk Broadland” by P.H. Emmerson, an important work classifying local variations between species. The exhibition was supported financially by Anchor Homes

Excerpt from The News, 22 March:

PUPILS from a Portchester primary school came up close to nature of a historic kind.

Children from Red Barn Primary School were at the official opening of the Stuffed and Mounted exhibition at Westbury Manor Museum, in Fareham.

The taxidermy collection has come from Bishopstoke Park, Eastleigh, which has been turned into a retirement village.

Scores of dusty taxidermy pieces, from crows to widgeons, were saved during the restoration. The collection was owned by Thomas Atkinson Cotton and wife Charlotte and passed through the people who lived there since 1844, including Richard Gilman, a founder of the Hong Kong Stock Exchange and HSBC Bank.

Curator Tom de Wit said: 'It's wonderful this great building has been saved. I've been astonished at the influence of the people who lived in this house. The work of Thomas and Charlotte Cotton laid the foundations for future discoveries, from DNA to modern genetics. The fact they had a passion to spread this knowledge is truly inspiring.'

2.2 The Games We Played

The Games We Played exhibition which is in the gallery until Saturday 21st June is a nostalgic exhibition exploring some of the most popular, as well as a number of lesser known, board and card games from the 1920s through to the 1970s. Visitors can investigate the different games on display, then grab one from the shelf to play with their family. This has been especially popular at Westbury Manor with our older visitors as well as with grandparents, as it has given them the chance to pass on their knowledge and share the games they played when they were children with their own grandchildren. The exhibition is in the gallery until Sat 21st June.

Visitor Comments

"Delightful. What a fantastic Idea"

"Very good. Saw some of my games as a child"

"The games remind me of my childhood"

"Excellent"

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

3.1 Caring for collections

We were delighted to have the opportunity to show the Mayor of Fareham and the Mayor's Consort around the collections centre at Chilcomb House in Winchester in April as part of the Civic Day hosted by Councillor Thornber as Chairman of Hampshire County Council. They were able to see 'behind-the-scenes' in both stores and conservation workshops where objects from Fareham are cared for and kept so that they can be enjoyed by future

generations. A child's dish from Fareham was being conserved in one of the studios and a 1930s dressing case featured amongst a selection of objects on display from the arts collection.

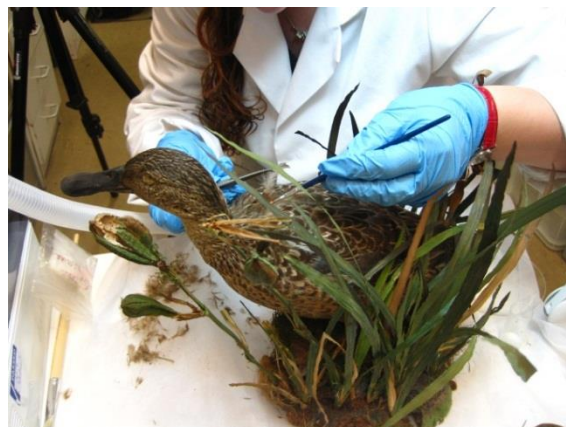
The environmental conditions in which objects relating to the Borough of Fareham are kept in both the Winchester stores and those at the museum have been monitored regularly throughout this period. Records were checked thoroughly and found to be satisfactory in February.

3.2 Promoting access to collections

The research, text writing and extensive conservation work for the 'Stuffed and MOUNTed' exhibition was completed by the Collections Team in October in time for the 14 cases of taxidermy from the Thomas Atkinson Cotton Collection to be put on display at the Museum in January following exhibition at Eastleigh Museum. This is the first time they have been on display to the public for 60 years, having been tracked down in Norfolk and brought back to Hampshire by the Arts and Museums Service.



Each case was cleaned inside and out



Each bird benefited from remedial conservation

As well as featuring this collection of British birds created by the Cotton family, the exhibition also drew on the County's ceramics collection. Commemorative mugs were displayed that Thomas Cotton presented to local school children during his time as mayor.

The exhibition led to some interesting activities and events, including an illustrated talk by Christine Taylor, the Arts and Museums Service's Keeper of Natural Sciences, that explored the Victorians' fascination for stuffed animals that led to taxidermists setting up in most towns in Hampshire.

The museum's half-term holiday activities were enhanced by a session called 'Rock around Fareham' in February that made great use of resources developed by the HLF funded 'Rockband' project, which brought together five museums in south east England with geology collections that they wanted to make more accessible and interactive. In May, a session on Owls in conjunction with Fareham Borough Council will be using more specimens from the collections, as well as specialist equipment.

The Collections Team has also continued to find interesting objects from the collections stored at Chilcomb House to feature in the Hampshire Hidden Treasure's case. The first one to feature during this period was the very popular 'grotesque' scene 'Baby rabbits playing cards' that was created by Winchester taxidermist William Chalkley. This type of

display was used by taxidermists to demonstrate their skill in the preparation of small and delicate animals. Chalkley was a self taught taxidermist, who opened his first premises at 11 Sussex Street, Winchester from c1875. In 1880 he moved to The Square and the firm remained there until long after his death in 1922.



The 'Baby Rabbits playing cards' are actually Brown Rats!



Hampshire 'grave goods'

This was replaced by an archaeology-based display featuring two distinctive types of Roman pottery, glossy red samian from Gaul and grey-black wares made near Farnham, which ended up in a series of cremation burials found at Neatham, near Alton. A comparatively local tradition saw many vessels placed in single grave (63 in one instance!). Some were family heirlooms, mended with lead rivets, others were low-grade 'kitchen rejects' probably made for the funeral market. The burials date from around AD 150. Hampshire's Hidden Treasures are designed to illustrate the diversity of the collections cared for by Hampshire County Council and that are available for exhibition at Westbury Manor Museum.

3.3 Providing specialist knowledge and advice

Other work undertaken by the collections team has been driven by the '1914' Big Theme project. A great deal of effort has gone in to researching and supplying text and images for the website and for the exhibition which will feature online and in all the community museums, including Westbury Manor, in October. Objects are being selected from all of our historic collections and conservation work has started, which will continue throughout the summer. The objects include historic costume and textiles from the decorative art collection because all the venues for 'Soldiers' Journey' will feature a case of costume.

One of the most significant tasks undertaken so far has been the restoration to running order of the Thornycroft 'J' type military general service lorry, which recently featured on BBC South Today and on Radio Berkshire. The lorry was one of 5,000 built in Basingstoke for the War Office. It was delivered in March 1916 and is one of very few survivors still in military livery. It will be touring the county throughout the summer and will be in Fareham on the 4 August to mark the centenary of the outbreak of war. The lorry will be outside the Museum whilst the commemorative events take place until 2pm when it departs for Winchester to perform a similar function at the Great Hall.



At Chilcomb before being put through its paces for the BBC South team



Collections Officer and engineer, Nigel Spender, rebuilt the engine

Not all the objects that will go on display are drawn from our collections. Local people have been most generous in their support for the commemorative events and have loaned items that tell a strong local story. This engagement with the museum has been particularly successful in Fareham, where Westbury Manor will have a distinctive 'offer' for the commemoration.

4 Inspiring Learning and Community Engagement

4.1 Formal Education Provision

Over the 3 month quarter January to March 2014, the CEL Team worked with **12** school groups in the museum and **3** as outreach, a total of **237 pupils** in school groups. This brought the annual financial year 2013-14 total of school pupil visits to 1104, exceeding the target of 900. Three further school sessions have been run so far in April/May, to be reported on when the April to June quarter is complete.

Date	School	Key Stage & Year Group	No. of children	Type of workshop
9 Jan	Orchard Lea Junior	KS2, Yr 6	28	Into the Workhouse
10 Jan	Orchard Lea Junior	KS2, Yr 6	27	Into the Workhouse
16 Jan	Wicor Primary	KS2, Yr 4&6	10	Mini Museum Curators
17 Jan	Crofton Secondary	KS3, Yr 9	6	Entrenched Project
28 Jan	Wickham House	EY, Yr R	9	Self-led general visit
31 Jan	Crofton Secondary	KS3, Yr 9	5	Outreach, Entrenched Project
14 Feb	Red Barn Primary	KS2, Yr 6	19	Exhibition Opening
24 Feb	Red Barn Primary	KS2, Yr 5	30	Outreach, Questioning Skills
3 Mar	Meon Cross School	KS2, Yr 3	16	Our Town in the Past
7 Mar	Crofton Secondary	KS3, Yr 9	7	Outreach, entrenched Project
10 Mar	Uplands Primary	EY, Yr R	33	Self-led general visit
10 Mar	Harrison Primary	KS1, Yr 1	5	Self-led general visit
11 Mar	Harrison Primary	KS1, Yr 1	5	Self-led general visit
11 Mar	Red Barn Primary	KS2, Yr 5	30	Mini Museum Curators
28 Mar	Crofton School	KS3, Yr 9	7	Entrenched Project

It is worth noting that self-led sessions are still booked in with and prepared by the Assistant Community & Engagement Officer, who welcomes the groups and sets them off working with the resources she has produced.

Impact evidence and general feedback is collected from all school sessions, to aid evaluation and service planning. All feedback was very positive. Examples received January to March (some relating to earlier workshops):

“The session inspired children to record and share what they had learnt on return to school”

KS2 Teacher, Into the Workhouse (Meet the Victorians linked session).

“Thank you for another fantastic visit. The children spoke excitedly about all the things they did on their trip, especially about the old-fashioned objects.” KS2 teacher, Our Town in the Past.

“Excellent selection of activities. The children loved the old photographs and maps.” KS2 teacher, Our Town in the Past.

“Examples of where learning impact has been shown by the children - in our recount writing the children confidently discussed local industries (strawberry picking and bricks) and the artefacts they held in the museum”. KS2 teacher, Our Town in the Past.

One highlight of the schools programme has been the on-going work with history pupils from Crofton School on the “Entrenched” (HLF Young Roots funded) WW1 project. In the Spring Term the CEL Team worked with this group on interpreting a newly donated artefact which is going to form part of the Soldiers’ Journey exhibition at Westbury Manor. It is the autograph book of a WW1 nurse who was based at Fareham House Hospital (now Wickham House School), and it records the recuperating soldiers’ thoughts on the hospital and on “pretty Fareham”. The young people have some great ideas about how to display and interpret this wonderful item in the exhibition, and these are being worked on currently.

Crofton students at work with WW1 collections



Another very successful school activity was the Mini Museum project with Red Barn Primary School. The ACELO helped Year 5 pupils to set up a museum at school and a mini exhibition in the Resource Room at Westbury Manor. The project involved the children evaluating the displays at Westbury, becoming curators, and gaining the skills to create their own display and associated activities for visitors. They chose World War II as their subject, undertook research and borrowed objects from the school community to display. They produced information panels, object labels, games and activities. They even had their own private view event for their families! Over 400 visitors saw their exhibition in the museum in April.

Red Barn also helped to open the Stuffed & Mounted exhibition in February, bringing the children who had worked with us on Operation Portchester last year back as VIP's at a private view event.

The CEL Team have reviewed the school sessions to align them to the new National Curriculum and have written and produced a new primary schools' brochure to promote the service, which has been sent to every primary phase school in the borough.



Red Barn Primary School
Year 6 children
at the opening of
Stuffed and MOUNTed

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 3 month Jan-March quarter and the start of the new quarter. **447** people took part in the **led activities** Jan-April. The CEL Team also provided **self-led drop-in activities** for children for the school holidays. The figures below are for led activities and do not include participants in the self-led offer. Further activity has taken place in May, to be included in the next report.

Activity/Event	Target Audience	Date	No. of participants
Stuck on Victorians decoupage workshop	Families	3 Jan	20
Rock Around Fareham geology workshop	Families	19 Feb	79
'Preserved in Time' expert talk	Adults	27 Feb	6
Jewellery making workshop	Museum Volunteers	14 Jan	7
Birds @ Westbury workshop for NSEW	Families	15 Mar	65
Exhibition Private View for families of Red Barn School	Families	4 April	15
Market Day Spring Fair	Community	7 April	235
Race Around Fareham game making workshop	Families	14 April	3

*Easter Egg Decorating workshop	Families	17 April	17
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*This activity was prepared and run by the front of house team rather than the CEL team.

The highlight of the programme was the family offer for the school holidays and the Saturday of National Science & Engineering Week. Having these led activities increases visitor numbers on those days. The CELO talked to several visitors on 15 March who had come to the museum specifically for the Birds activity and had then discovered that it was a family friendly place that they could come back to. The ACELO helped the front of house team deliver the Spring Fair and provided hands-on activities for the event. Activities for May half term will be reported on next time.

5 Marketing and Management

5.1 Publicity and Promotion

In May 2014 a south-east area What's On leaflet, with an increased print run of 12,500 was produced. This covers the period from June to September and features Westbury Manor Museum, Eastleigh Museum, Bursledon Windmill, Gosport Discovery Centre and Gosport Gallery. It is being professionally distributed throughout the region.

The Games We Played exhibition:

The Games We Played exhibition is currently on display at Westbury Manor Museum from 5 April and runs until 21 June. It is being supported by printed marketing materials in the form of full colour A4 posters and larger A2 ones for the A boards. The touring exhibition is being promoted as a featured exhibition on the Museums Service popular What's On page <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/museum/whatson-museum.htm> . Social media support was provided on both Facebook and Twitter by the Exhibitions Team.

5.2 Online Marketing

Events at Westbury Manor were promoted on a monthly basis via the Hampshire County Council cultural e-newsletter, Showcase. With new people signing up regularly, 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. 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. Profiles are currently being created for the most recent postcodes, collected between January and March 2014.

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 1300 “likes” and Twitter over 2100 followers. Recent posts by the Exhibitions team have promoted Rock around Fareham in February as well as The Games We Played.

Annabel Cook, May 2014