

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4

Committee:	WESTBURY MANOR MUSEUM, FAREHAM JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	1 st June 2015
Title of Report:	CURATOR'S REPORT
Author:	Erica Munro

Purpose:

Report on activities at or relating to Westbury Manor Museum
Covering period January 2015 to May 2015

1 Providing a Welcoming and Well Maintained Museum

1.1 Museum Service Delivery

The start of 2015 has seen a good deal of change both behind the scenes and front of house. The museum has taken part in the county-wide Culture Conversation and Hampshire Cultural Trust has been engaging in strategic planning work throughout the region. At Westbury Manor, a display in the Resources Room has informed visitors of the Trust and its ambitions, and a visitor survey and 'Culture Conversation' event has been gathering their feedback.



The Culture Conversation display in the Resources Room

The Tourist Information Centre closed at the end of March and work began immediately to prepare the space as a reception area for the museum. New carpet is being laid, and redecoration of the walls and shelving units is now taking place, following consultation with HCC's Listed Building specialists in the Architect's team. The work is being done by a team of volunteers and staff, and it is hoped to be completed in June. Relocating and increasing the retail space will allow for more tables in a dedicated Tearoom and a more welcoming and spacious reception area.

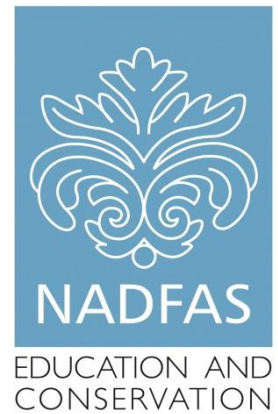
New outdoor furniture has been obtained for the Tearoom so that refreshments can be served on the patio on sunny days. If this proves popular, we hope to expand the number of outdoor covers, locating some tables on the forecourt, if possible, and getting picnic blankets for Tearoom customers.

Many of Westbury Manor's volunteers took part in a volunteer training day in March. The focus was on customer service, fire safety and food hygiene. They have also been involved in the production of the 'Memories of Fareham' exhibition and in the preparation of the new museum reception/retail area. In addition to their sterling work in the Tearoom and shop, they have assisted with preparing flyers and delivering posters and they have taken part in several of our events throughout this period. In recognition of this, they were nominated by the Curator for a Fareham Volunteer Award which will be presented at the start of June to some representatives of the volunteer team.



Jim, a volunteer, helping with the Lost World Explorers event in February

We are excited that our display in the permanent galleries about the Fareham Workhouse Scandal is being improved due to a generous grant from Sarisbury Green NADFAS. The Ashcroft Youth Theatre, working with the CEL team, have been learning about the story during workshops at the museum, and their resulting monologues will be recorded in June and incorporated into the display to bring to life those historic events. These workshops will also feed into the redesign of the text panel about this story, with the complete display finished by the summer. We hope this reinterpretation will appeal to a broader audience, adding a valuable audio element to our displays, and provide a more engaging way for our visitors to learn about this episode in Fareham's history.



The Ashcroft Youth Theatre group learning about the Fareham Workhouse Scandal

The museum team have also been working with an HLF-sponsored Young Roots project to prepare for an exhibition they will open at the museum later this year. Entitled '*No Facebook? OMG!*' the exhibition will explore technology and video games over the last five decades. Following initial workshops in exhibition skills and research that have already taken place (see Sections 3.3 and 4.2 for more information), the exhibition will run September – November 2015 in the museum gallery.

Museum staff have also been concentrating on management processes over the last few months, streamlining our facilities management processes, improving our water temperature documentation and initiating quarterly full building inspections. Staff have undergone training related to asbestos, legionella and fire safety. A successful funding bid for training by a consultant in Lean Systems Thinking has produced a staff training day which will take place in June, to support our efforts in expanding our retail space.

1.2 Visitor Figures

These figures show a decrease in visitors to Westbury Manor Museum over the last year. This is due to a combination of factors. These include:

- a lack of a ‘blockbuster’ exhibition to consistently draw in visitors (such as previous LEGO shows);
- less interest in adult and family events (including an unpopular Fareham Music Month);
- difficulty with continuity of programming as a result of the gap between the previous curator leaving and recruitment of the current one;
- the change in the National Curriculum which now favours pre-1066 history in the primary phase has had an impact on school visits;
- fewer town centre-wide events which specifically attracted visitors to the museum;
- the closure of the TIC has inevitably caused a further drop in April 2015, and it is likely this will be reflected for some months into 2015.

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												

The future looks more promising. We plan to, among other things, increase activity on the museum forecourt to counter the ‘closed’ look caused by the TIC closure; improve local marketing efforts by changing how we programme and advertise events; have regular meetings with the FBC Town Centre team to renew partnership working on events and ensure their promotion includes the museum; utilise our volunteers to spread the word about exhibitions and events; increase engagement through social media over 2015-16 and join existing campaigns (Hampshire Open Studios, Fareham Art Festival) to maximise awareness of the museum and its offer. Centrally, there are improvements planned to the visitor figures database which has suffered technical difficulties. On-site, volunteers based in the new reception space will be more able to accurately count visitors, whom they currently sometimes miss due to concentrating on their Tearoom duties.

2 Hosting Special Temporary Exhibitions and Related Events

2.1 Soldiers Journey (until 18 January)

The 'Big Theme' *Soldier's Journey* exhibition that was part of Hampshire's county-wide commemoration of the First World War ran until 18 January. The Fareham exhibition, included sections on the POW ships in Fareham Creek that held German prisoners during the war and on local women knitting to provide equipment to the armed forces. The exhibition appealed to all ages, with objects, illustrations, photographs, games and a specially commissioned film about the impact of the First World War in Hampshire.

2.2 The Lost World Zoo (7 February to 28 March)

The *Lost World Zoo* came to Fareham! The exhibition featured a menagerie of extinct animals made from LEGO bricks by the UK's only professional LEGO artists, mixed with natural science specimens from Hampshire County Council's collections. The successful Lost World Explorers event (see section 4.2 for more information) was linked to this family-friendly exhibition.



A life-sized LEGO Dodo in the *Lost World Zoo* exhibition

2.3 Memories of Fareham (4 April to 19 May)

This photographic exhibition included images from the museum's collection but also featured photos submitted by members of the public after an appeal in the Portsmouth News. Large format copies of the photographs were displayed with clipboards under each image to allow visitors to add their own memories. Oral history recordings with memories from Fareham residents were provided by Hampshire Record Office. Museum volunteers participated in several ways – they helped write the labels, they scanned the photographs, researched the audio material and contributed their own photographs and memories.



The temporary exhibition gallery during Memories of Fareham

An adult education course, Developing Room, also took place during the exhibition. 7 adults attended an evening workshop on digital photography techniques led by a professional photography tutor.

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

3.1 Caring for collections

The Accreditation Return for Hampshire Cultural Trust was submitted to Arts Council England on 30 April 2015 making them formally aware of the changes in governance and management resulting from the transition from local authority management to Trust status. The return included a suite of revised collections management policies and plans for the Trust that had been updated in the light of the new partnership with Winchester City Museums and approved by the Board of Trustees prior to their submission. Having these policies 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.

Following preparatory work for improving the storage and documentation of objects not on display at Westbury in December, the Collections Team returned in force in February to finish off the task. The backlog of donations made over recent years was sorted out and objects used for educational activities were separated from non-collections material to improve access.



Some of the stored objects at the museum after being sorted by the Collections Team

Frequent checks were undertaken in the stores at Chilcomb House in Winchester where objects relating to the Borough of Fareham are kept when they are not on display to ensure that the winter weather was not affecting the environmental conditions in which they are kept.

3.2 Promoting access to collections

Four bicycles were selected from our reserve transport collection for inclusion in the forthcoming *Bespoke* exhibition at Westbury Manor. In April they were given a thorough preparation before going to Fareham by one of our conservators, helped by our team of volunteers.



Our solid tyred safety bicycle c.1888 - the oldest bicycle going on display

The selection of Roman ceramics from the Archaeology Collection, samian pottery with makers' stamps and repairs using lead rivets discovered near Alton, remained on display until February. In its place was installed a large ceramic model of a bear advertising Atkinson's Bear Grease. This unusual object was used to promote the business of James Atkinson, an 18th century London merchant specialising in the product which was allegedly a cure for baldness. These types of display serve to illustrate the diversity of the collections cared for by Hampshire Cultural Trust and that are available for exhibition at Westbury Manor Museum.

3.3 Providing specialist knowledge and advice

The Collections Team have been devoted to preparing the 2015 Hampshire Big Theme project - *Dinofest 2015* – during this period. 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 Curator of Natural Sciences collected the paintings from the artist, who lives on the Isle of Wight, and completed the research needed to write the labels for his work, which will also include preparatory sketches and models of dinosaurs.

The team has also been supporting the students taking part in the *No Facebook? OMG!* project. The students spent an afternoon at Chilcomb House in April learning about museum collecting policies, documentation and conservation, as well as visiting behind-the-scenes. There are particularly interested in developing exhibitions that draw on our more contemporary home entertainment and digital technology collections, such as telephones, TVs, sound systems and games consoles. We are also hoping the students will be able to help us bring these collections up-to-date by making some new acquisitions.

4 Inspiring Learning and Community Engagement

4.1 Formal Education Provision

Over the 5 months January to April 2015, the CEL Team worked with **18** school groups in the museum or as outreach, a total of **470 pupils** in school groups. The figures for May are pleasing as traditionally this is a poor month for school sessions due to schools having SATs tests.

Date	School	Key Stage & Year Group	No. of children	Type of workshop
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
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23 Feb	St Jude's Primary staff meeting at museum	Teachers	School staff	Project planning
18 Mar	St Jude's Primary	Whole School	194	Assembly and 7 class workshops on local history
24 Mar	Fareham College	KS5 6 th form Yr 12 & 13	11	Outreach workshop on questioning skills for OMG project
6 May	Fareham College	KS5 6 th form Yr 12 & 13	10	Outreach workshop on exhibition skills for OMG project
7 May	Meoncross School	KS2 Yr 3	19	Our Town in the Past
15 May	Redlands Primary	KS2 Yr 3&4	87	3 X Local Study self-led class visits (CELO devised trail)
19 May	Wicor Primary	KS2 Yr 6	32	Outreach prehistory workshop
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Feedback is sought from all school groups in the form of a teacher's evaluation form. Unfortunately, no forms for the Spring Term were returned to us. However, we know from comments made verbally that schools do value the workshops and get a lot out of them.

The CELO worked with the head and staff of St Jude's Primary to help them with their local history project for their school's 50th anniversary. The whole school assembly and the hands-on history workshops for all classes led by the CELO were very well received and the school are delighted to have been able to book our Pride of Place Case for May and June to display work and artefacts resulting from the project.

The bookings from Wicor are another example of local schools wanting in-depth engagement with the Cultural Trust. They are looking at farming history and wanted an input from the museum on the start of farming in the Stone Age, so the CELO is taking artefacts from the collections to the school to start the project off. Further work is planned

for later in the term. After the first sessions the teacher emailed to say:

“Thanks again for today - the children got a lot from being able to handle the artefacts”.
Teacher, Wicor Primary School

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 5 month period January to May. **288** 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 which included two trails in the *Memories of Fareham* exhibition and an ambitious all-week family drop-in activity (*Role Up*) for May half term to be reported on next time.

Activity/Event	Target Audience	Date	No. of participants
Old & New – Market Day Drop-in reminiscence workshop	Older Adults	5 Jan	20
Lost World Explorers half term holiday workshop	Families	20 Feb	202
Outreach Reminiscence Workshop on Spring Cleaning in the Past for Kershaw day Care Centre	Older people	27 Feb	11
Gallery Explorers Workshop (Lost World Explorers)	Adults with Learning Difficulties	25 March	10
Photo Phun Easter holiday workshop	Families	10 April	12
Developing Room Adult leisure learning photography course	Adults	21 April	7
Project work with Ashcroft Youth Theatre group - Workhouse re-display	Young People	28 April	9
Project work with Ashcroft Youth Theatre group - Workhouse re-display	Young People	5 May	8
Gallery Explorers Workshop (Photo Explorers)	Adults with Learning Difficulties	13 May	9

The highlight of the programme was the Half Term holiday family workshop in the *Lost World Zoo* exhibition which attracted 202 visitors. The CELO planned a range of science and art activities linked to the subject of extinction and evolution. People were queuing down the road to get in and despite the crowds the evaluation forms showed that people had really enjoyed the activities:

“Absolutely great. Both children loved it. Thank you.”

“Fantastic place, great volunteers. Well done guys, great morning.”

“No improvement necessary. We learnt a lot and £2 is a very good price.”

“It was all fantastic. More please!”

Comments from the Lost World Explorers workshop



Visitors queue for the Lost World Explorers workshop on 20 February

The same promotional activity and the same format of workshop resulted in only 12 visitors at Easter so we need to review when to offer the led workshops – perhaps they are better suited to the winter months.

The reminiscence work in the *Museums for Seniors* programme offered by the CELO to local day care centres using Hampshire Futures funding continues to be popular, with Kershaw Day Centre benefitting in the spring term and Lockwood Day Centre already booked in for the summer term.

Another Hampshire Futures funded project has been *Get More Out of Galleries* for adults with learning difficulties. A group who attend a skills for life course at Southampton City College have been working with the CELO at Eastleigh Museum and Westbury Manor Museum to gain confidence in museum and gallery visits. At Westbury they had one session in the *Lost World Zoo* exhibition and one in the photographic exhibition, each session highlighting a different kind of exhibition and giving the participants different ideas for how to access an exhibition, critique it, respond to it and gain new skills or knowledge from it. Each time they also did a bit of linked art work as a response to the exhibition.



The *Get More Out of Galleries* project at Westbury Manor Museum

The workshops have been very successful in achieving their aims. Their group leader sent some excellent feedback:

“Thank you for the sessions you have organised and run for my group over the past few months. The students have learnt a lot from them and have all expressed how much they have enjoyed working with you and how much they have enjoyed the sessions. The exhibitions have been varied and interesting as have the art activities. You set out to teach new and different ways to look at and access museums and galleries and it has been a success. The sessions have had a good balance of looking at pictures/exhibits, learning new knowledge, discussing ideas, expressing opinions, hands on discovery and making responses in art form. The fossils at Westbury were particularly interesting and the similarities and differences matching activity was a great interactive way for the students to gain new knowledge.”

Group leader, Southampton City College

The CELO has also been involved in the Workhouse re-display project funded by a grant from NADFAS. She organised two out-of-hours workshops at the museum for the young people from the Ashcroft Youth Theatre group. In the first they had a hands-on history session using documents and artefacts to find out more about life in the workhouse. In the second they were introduced to the Fareham Workhouse Scandal story and worked with one of our casual tutors (who is also an actor) to develop their characters and practise performing their audio presentation monologues using the words from the original enquiry. They are currently rehearsing it at the regular meetings and the CELO will join their group next month with a sound recordist to record the audio content.



Members of the Ashcroft Youth Theatre group during a workshop

5 Marketing and Management

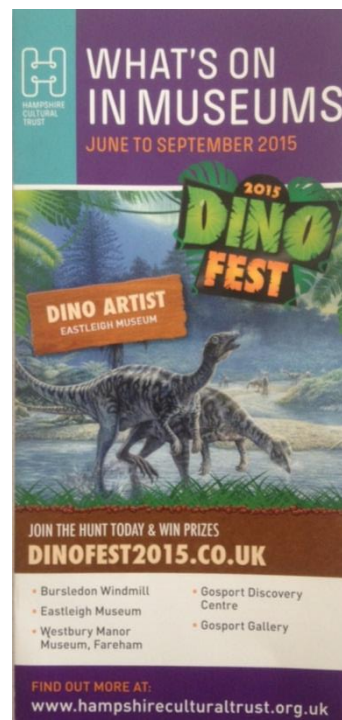
5.1 Printed material

In May 2015 a new South East area What's On leaflet with a print run of 12,500 was produced. This covers the period from June to September 2015 and is being professionally distributed throughout the region to TICs, libraries, museums, accommodation providers, educational establishments, attractions, arts centres, theatres etc. Posters for the temporary exhibitions and events were also produced and distributed.

5.2 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.

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. The first issue was sent out on 5 May to 2,500 people.



5.3 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 collected for the January to March period are in the process of being profiled.

5.4 Local marketing in Fareham

Site staff met with the Fareham Town Centre team in February to explore further ways of working together, to cross-promote cultural events and to integrate the Museum's programme with larger events organised in the Town Centre.

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 2,000 "likes" and twitter over 3,000 followers. Content has been scheduled in until June and and planning is taking place for the next few months. Westbury Manor also has its own Facebook page which staff use to speak directly with enquirers and to promote events and activities in the museum.

5.6 The Ambassador Scheme

Launched at the HCT launch event, this central project has created over 40 Founding Ambassadors who have pledged their support to the Trust and donated vital funds. Whilst we will offer these Ambassadors one or two special invitations in return for their generosity, this income will help support venues across the Trust.

5.7 The Culture Card

The card is now available and will shortly be on offer in all sites and online. This annual pass scheme for all the Trust's sites includes some partners (Itchen Valley/Portsmouth Historic Dockyards) and includes free entry for a family of four to all HCT venues.



HCT's CEO Janet Owen and Chair of Trustees Alan Lovell launching the Culture Card in April 2015

5.8 *DinoFest* round up from the Trust marketing team

Staff from the venue were trained and briefed on *Dinofest* – the 2015 Big Theme which has begun at some locations in the county and opens at Westbury Manor Museum in November 2015. Marketing instructions were delivered for all public-facing and front of house staff and all venues received relevant *Dinofest* print. The *Dinofest* website and social media sites are up and running with 500 followers on social media sites. King/following so far. Press ads have been booked in Daily Echo, Primary Times etc. General ads elsewhere (lifts in Basingstoke's Festival Place, bus sides, poster sites in Southampton etc). Leaflets are also being distributed (38,000 around the county).

Erica Munro, May 2015