

## AGENDA ITEM NO. 3

<b>Committee:</b>	WESTBURY MANOR MUSEUM, FAREHAM JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	1 February 2016
<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 September 2015 to January 2016

## 1 Providing a Welcoming and Well Maintained Museum

### 1.1 **Museum Service Delivery**

The highlights of September to January at Westbury Manor have been the success of the Dinosaurs exhibition and events programme, the ongoing development of our commercial offer and the very popular Window Illuminations.

Front-of-house quality remained a key focus for this period as we improved the look and feel of the downstairs public areas of the museum. We continued to develop the shop with additional product lines with a particular local and Hampshire emphasis, and these proved especially popular over Christmas. Fareham postcards and a calendar were commissioned from a local photographer and crafts by local people were sold throughout this period.

Brand new furniture in the Tearoom has created a bright and more spacious feel, with lots of compliments from visitors. Additional equipment such as new till and cordless card machine were purchased and will enable us to have a slicker operation, with a greater ability to monitor stock levels and purchasing trends. A growth in volunteer numbers, thanks to a concerted recruitment effort, means that we are more able to rotate stock, enhance displays and provide better service even during busy times. If this recruitment level continues, we aim to investigate how we can diversify the volunteer role, with more input in other areas of museum operation.



The Drawn to Dinosaurs exhibition (see section 2.3) was very successful at both attracting and involving our younger visitors. Large dinosaur models in the museum and garden were popular, and the Dinosaur-themed events programme saw visitors returning to a number of events. In particular the Santasaurus grotto, part of Fareham's Christmas Lights Switch On event, was a hit – **641** people came into the museum on a Sunday (when it is usually closed) to meet the Santasaurus, visit the exhibition and take part in the activities

on the Forecourt (face painting, art & craft, RSPB bird feeders, live reindeer) organised by Fareham Borough's Leisure Events team.



Santasaurus and a young visitor in the Santasaurus grotto

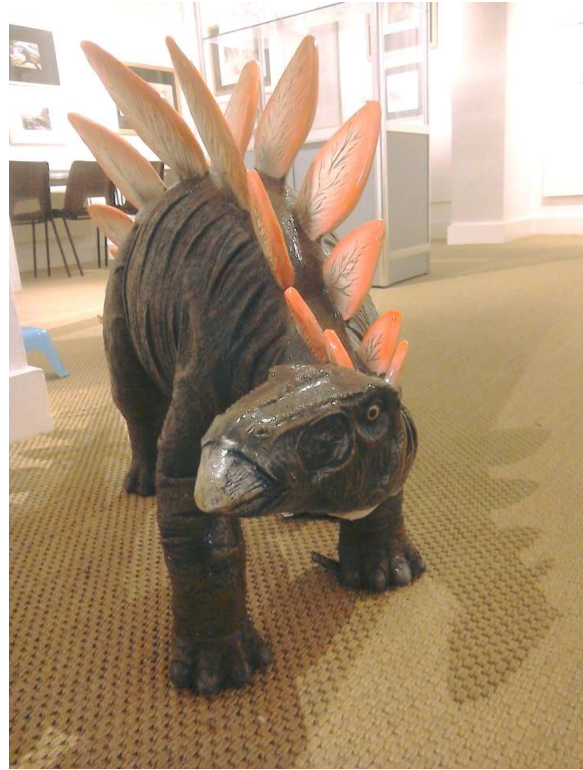




Santasaurus in his grotto







Dinosaur models in the garden and building extended *Drawn to Dinosaurs* to the whole museum

Between November and January Westbury Manor Museum also displayed its beautiful Window Illuminations. Managed by HCT's Innovations Lab, this project saw illustrations by Hampshire artist Emily Harper fill the museum's windows, backlit by custom-made lightboxes. The illustrations were inspired by the building's Victorian past and created a stunning festive glow, enhanced by the Christmas tree on the museum Forecourt. Staff have received numerous compliments. A typical response came from one woman who approached staff as they were locking up to say she thought the Illuminations were brilliant, that she's lived in Fareham for twenty years but the lights really made the museum stand out and really made her visit into town.



## 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 and over the Christmas period. November's enormous increase in numbers can be attributed to the very successful DinoFest events, particularly the Santasaurus grotto.

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	1784	1708	1076	1398	2265	1152				

## 2 Hosting Special Temporary Exhibitions and Related Events

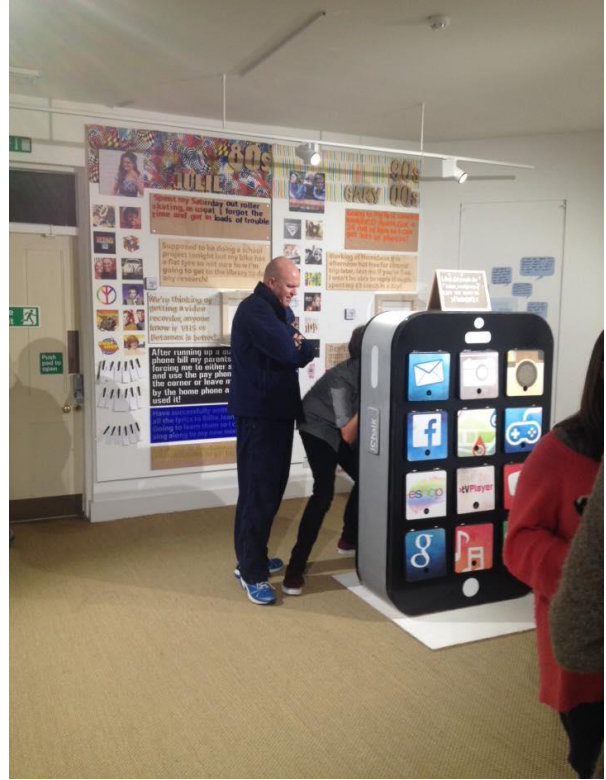
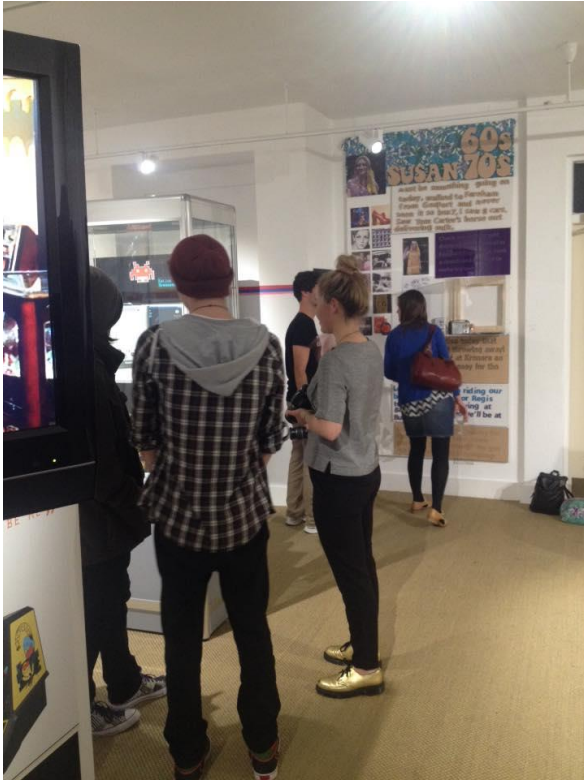
### 2.1 Stitchsmiths exhibition (8 August to 12 September)

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. Their works are a vibrant and creative interpretation of the themes on display. The artists were present during much of the exhibition's run, making more textile art on site and speaking to visitors. The exhibition formed part of the Fareham Art Festival and Hampshire Open Studios, and the artists' work was sold in the museum shop until after Christmas.

### 2.2 No Facebook? OMG! (19 September to 7 November)

The HLF Young Roots-funded project *No Facebook? OMG!* opened with a private view on 18<sup>th</sup> September which filled the museum's ground floor with visitors! The project, developed by the Ashcroft Arts Centre, looked at how technology has developed and changed the lives of teenagers since the 1960's. The interactive exhibition was the work of 25 young people including students from Fareham College and Barton Peveril, and reflected the research they had done in the preceding months.

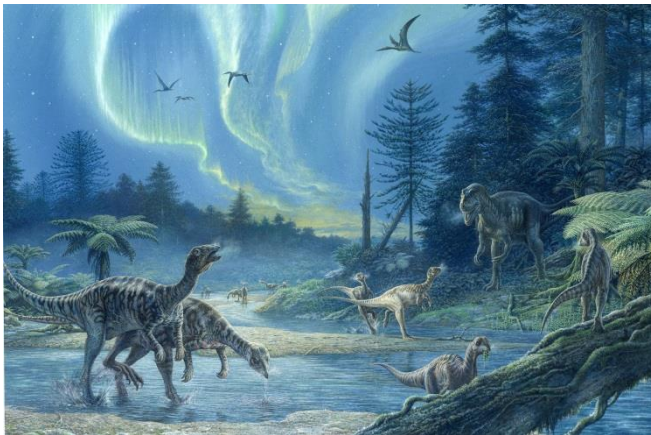




The opening event of *No Facebook? OMG!*

### 2.3 Drawn to Dinosaurs (14 November to 9 January)

Part of HCT's Big Theme 2015 – DinoFest – this exhibition displayed the work of John Sibbick, an Isle of Wight based artist who has been drawing and illustrating dinosaurs since he was a boy. His work has featured in many dinosaur books and on television as well as dinosaur galleries in national and regional museums. Alongside 27 pieces of his work was displayed a specially commissioned piece for DinoFest 2015.



John Sibbick's artwork in Drawn to Dinosaurs and the DinoFest 2015 logo

### 2.4 Found in the Fields (16 January to 12 March)

This exhibition of lithographs by Carry Akroyd incorporates text from poems by John Clare, bringing the 19<sup>th</sup> century poet's words into the contemporary landscape. An events programme has been developed for Westbury Manor to complement both the artistic and literacy elements of this exhibition and will be reported in the next period's report.

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

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

The Hampshire Cultural Trust Collections Development Policy 2015-2020, was launched in October and is now available on the Trust website. This policy guides decisions relating to the acquisition and disposal of objects relating to Fareham Borough, as well as other parts of the County. It was written soon after the Trust was formed and has now been formally approved by the Board of Trustees and both Hampshire County Council and Winchester City Council as owners or trustees of the collections. The policy is one of a suite of documents that all museums are required to have to retain their Museum Accreditation. Westbury Manor Museum was last awarded Full Accreditation in 2013.

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

The Drawn to Dinosaurs exhibition was 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 team installed the show in November and removed it in January returning the dinosaur models to 'Dinosaur Isle' and the paintings to the artist John Sibbick, both on the Isle of Wight.

Fossils from Whitby in Yorkshire replaced dinosaur bones in the Hampshire's Hidden Treasure case in November. Three ammonite fossils and an Edwardian tiara decorated with jet were displayed to demonstrate the range of animals and plants that were fossilised in the same area during the Jurassic period about 180 million years ago. The jet was formed from the remains of a variety of the monkey puzzle tree and used to make jewellery for hundreds of years. This type of display serves to illustrate the diversity of the collections cared for by Hampshire Cultural Trust that are available for exhibition at Westbury Manor Museum.

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

As the work undertaken by the specialist curators on Dino Fest 2015 was completed, work began on the next Big Theme for 2016 – Royal Blood. The exhibition being prepared for Westbury Manor will explore Hampshire's links to the birth of kingship and its connection with the history of monarchy ever since. It will highlight the struggles for power that took place locally on many occasions, but also that the county was a place for ceremony and recreation. A narrative has been written by the Curator of Hampshire Archaeology, objects are being selected from our extensive collections of archaeology, history and art and potential loans identified in other museum collections across the UK.



Memorial medal struck to mark the execution of Charles I

When Hampshire Cultural Trust was formed the Hampshire Finds Liaison Officer, funded by the national Portable Antiquities Scheme, joined the Collections Team and moved to Chilcomb House in Winchester. Quite regularly, the Finds Liaison Officer, Katie Hinds, identifies and records archaeological objects that have been found in Fareham Borough by metal detectorists and other members of the public. During the period covered by this report, Katie has processed five finds from the area, including a piece of Anglo-Saxon metalwork with three silver rivets, probably Carolingian in origin, a Late Iron Age or Early Roman bronze brooch and two Neolithic or Bronze Age (4000 - 800 BC) flint flakes. Our collections staff contributed to an internal workshop in November that discussed ways in which the permanent exhibitions at Westbury Manor Museum could be refurbished to tell its story in a modern, accessible, fun, and family-friendly way.

HCT's new Conservation Technician has visited Westbury Manor a number of times during this period, assisting with site maintenance and storage and replacing and renewing lighting in the permanent displays. He has adapted the plinth holding the archaeology display on the first floor to improve access for those in wheelchairs or with pushchairs, ensuring better protection for both collections and visitors.

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

### **4.1 Formal Education Provision**

The 'NO Facebook OMG!' Project with young people from local colleges culminated with the exhibition opening in September.

The CELO spent a morning training a teacher from Wicor Primary School in exhibition and display techniques and collections management so that the teacher could take on the job of running the school's own mini museum and looking after the school's growing collection of artefacts and specimens.

The CELO devised and promoted KS1 & 2 workshops to accompany the Dino Artist exhibition, but there was no uptake for this offer, nor for the regular offer of local history sessions last term. However, a campaign of re-contacting all local primary phase schools has paid off, with 6 class being made for January.

<b>Date</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Key Stage &amp; Year Group</b>	<b>No. of children</b>	<b>Type of workshop</b>
11 Jan	Wallisdean Junior	KS2 Yr 3&4	26	Introduction to Museums and Prehistory
14 Jan	Wallisdean Junior	KS2 Yr 3&4	26	Introduction to Museums and Prehistory
14 Jan	Wallisdean Junior	KS2 Yr 3&4	26	Introduction to Museums and Prehistory
14 Jan	Wallisdean Junior	KS2 Yr 3&4	26	Introduction to Museums and Prehistory
25 Jan	Orchard Lea Junior	KS2 Yr 6	26	Our Town in the Past
25 Jan	Orchard Lea Junior	KS2 Yr 6	28	Our Town in the Past



The CELO is helping the Wallisdean pupils to create their own prehistory museum at school, complete with hands-on activities, and is doing outreach at the school in February.

## 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 September to January. 670 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 model dinosaurs around the museum has proved especially popular. The activities run by the CEL Team also result in increased sales in the shop and coffee shop and attract new visitors who then sometimes become regular visitors.

Activity/Event	Target Audience	Date	No. of participants
Evening talk for Catisfield Village Association, about the work of HCT in the Fareham area	Adults/Community	11 Sept	32
Awesome Autumn Activity Packs for October Half Term	Families	24 to 31 Oct	62
Awesome Autumn drop-in craft workshop for October half Term	Families	30 Oct	16
Meet the Dinosaur opening event for the Dino Artist exhibition	Families	14 Nov	83
Dinosaurs for Beginners Workshop	Families with Under-5's	20 Nov	33
Santa-Saurus Grotto	Families	29 Nov	248
Mystery in the Museum event – One of Our Dinosaurs is Missing!	Families	5 Dec	54
Reptile Handling event	Families	19 Dec	53
Dinosaurs and Other Animals Holiday Workshop	Families	21 Dec	68
Memories in the Manor – drop-in reminiscence event	Older People	11 Jan	21

The lack of uptake for dinosaur workshops by schools was more than made up for by the popularity of the family programme linked to the exhibition. The CELO brought along a wealth of hands-on fossil and other activities for families to enjoy at the two workshops (one for under 5's and one for school aged children in the Christmas holiday); and the giant T-Rex costumed character made three appearances, launching the exhibition with a walkabout in West Street, donning a Santa costume and taking up residence in a Jurassic Grotto for the Christmas Lights Switch-on, and leaving a trail of clues around the museum at the Mystery in the Museum event – finally turning up in the strawberry gallery to the delight of the young Dino Detectives! All of these activities brought in large numbers of visitors who added to their stay by using the café and shop and looking around the rest of

the displays. Two of the events were outside normal opening hours, and all were excellently supported by the volunteer team.



Dinosaurs for Beginners under-5s workshop, 20 Nov



The Dinosaur and his handler on walkabout in West St, 14 Nov



The reminiscence event is to be followed up by some outreach workshops in local day care centres and residential homes as the CELO has secured Hampshire Futures funding to deliver reminiscence activities in Fareham in the spring and summer terms.



Dinosaurs and Other Animals workshop, 21 Dec



## 5 Marketing and Management

### Marketing Communication

The current edition of What's On covers the period January to April and features Westbury Manor and Gosport Discovery Centre. It is 6 DL pages and 12,500 copies were delivered before Christmas. They are professionally distributed to TICs, libraries, museums, accommodation providers, educational establishments, attractions, arts centres and theatres etc.

### Online marketing

The e-newsletter Museums Monthly, featuring exhibitions and events from Westbury Manor, is sent to sign ups on a new database. Subscribers now number over 2,000.

### 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.

### Social Media

HCT's central Facebook page now has over 2,200 "likes" and twitter over 3,400 followers. Events at Westbury Manor Museum are promoted on both social media sites on an ongoing basis. The events promoted recently include the following:

14-Nov	Dino Artist (14 Nov-9 Jan)
14-Nov	Meet the Dino
20-Nov	Dinosaurs for beginners
21-Dec	Dinosaurs and other animals
16-Jan	Found in the Fields exhibition

### Big Themes

#### Dinofest 2015

Dino Artist closed at Westbury Manor on 9 January completing a successful county-wide Big Theme which saw an uplift in both income and visitor figures across the organisation. This was supported by web promotion and Social Media, as well as appearing in the What's On guide and on flyers throughout the duration of the exhibitions.







The holding page for the Royal Blood website

### Royal Blood 2016 and Jane Austen 2017

Brand identities and headline creative has been developed for both Big Themes with initial web sites for both now live. The launch of the Jane Austen big theme took place at the Willis on the 15 January (ahead of Basingstoke's Jane Austen activity in 2016) and Royal Blood will be launched in February.

### **HCT Ambassadors**

We currently have 38 Founding Ambassadors and two Corporate Partners with donated revenue of £45,350.

Erica Munro, January 2016