

**Curator's Report Westbury Manor Museum
Joint Management Committee Meeting 04 February 2013
Covering The Period October – December 2012**

1. Providing a welcoming and well maintained Museum

An important development at Westbury Manor Museum during the months leading up to Christmas has been the way the new volunteer team has begun to become better established. As individuals within the new team are becoming much more confident with the everyday activities needed to keep the service operating on a daily basis, they are also developing their understanding of the Fareham community and the way the Museum delivers the service to local people.

This means volunteers are now better placed to take on their own projects which will push the service forward and make a difference to what we can deliver. This promises to be the start of a new period as the new team starts to make their own mark and influence the things that the museum does.

Some current volunteer projects include cataloguing the reference map collection and creating an index, with the aim of identifying gaps which will be filled. Another project will create an index of publications in the local history study resource that can be accessed online – alongside this a programme of displays entirely created by the volunteer team is being developed for the Resource Room cases to showcase the books and archive resources available within the Resource Room and encourage local people to make best use of this resource.

A volunteer project team has also been established to work on research and content development for a forthcoming local exhibition scheduled for September and October, “Speed”, which will explore the stories of some of the people and the local companies who have been involved in the quest to be the fastest in the air and on the water. Not only will this be the first time that this inspiring story has been told in an exhibition, it will also be the first time that the new team will see the results of their own efforts forming part of such a local display.



Visitor Figures Table:

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
January	1729	Closed	2858	2374	2964	1762	1946	1870
February	2936	1990	2557	3499	3182	2367	2402	1799
March	2342	1850	2511	1943	3368	3347	2659	1872
April	2423	2396	2173	3222	3118	3367	2605	1816
May	2153	2690	2546	2782	2138	2687	1971	449 (Closed except 7days)
June	2448	2470	2887	2671	2615	2696	1797	1,852
July	3126	2576	2574	2654	3065	2935	2175	4,992
August	3090	3632	3171	3437	3781	3333	2266	2,449
Sept.	1601	3174	2553	2813	2206	2124	1648	1,414
October	949	3219	3019	2921	3514	2471	1950	2,416
November	CLOSE D	2459	2546	2491	2496	2530	1951	1,566
December	CLOSE D	2079	2134	2162	1808	1563	1813	1,070
Total Calendar Year	22,797	28,535	29,269	32969	34,255	31,221	25,183	23,565

Visitor figures

Visitor figures for 2012 have been a little lower than in 2011 but we have also seen some periods of high attendance during the year to date linked to specific exhibitions and community engagement projects.

Through these, the service is connecting strongly with the local community and in particular is able to enhance the community's ability to come together in ways that will build a sense of identity and pride.

2012 has been a year of challenges as the way the service is delivered has changed. In this section, we have described the development of the volunteer team which will enhance service delivery during the coming year as the breadth of skills that volunteers have to offer expands further. In the light of this, the strong participation with certain activities may be seen as a positive platform that can be built upon.

2. Hosting special temporary exhibitions and related events

LAND SEA SKY 15th Nov 2012 to 19 Jan 2013

The exhibition focused on artists fascinated by re-interpreting and Re-presenting the landscape. Highlights included artists Nick Schlee and David Atkins and Hampshire landscapes by Annabel Gault.

ITEM 3

The exhibitions team liaised with the Arts Service to select artworks from the Contemporary Art Collection. These are artworks of both regional and national significance assembled over the last 20 years by Hampshire County Council. We collected and returned the 28 artworks from County Council offices and other locations around Winchester and Eastleigh. We installed them (again in liaison with the Arts Service) at Westbury Manor Museum. We provided marketing materials to promote the exhibition and it formed part of our ongoing social media marketing campaign.

The exhibitions team are currently working on 'Then and Now' a photography exhibition combining period and modern pictures of the area to open in April and 'Meet the Victorians' an exhibition aimed at Schools and Families to open in 2013.

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

3.1 Caring for collections

The Collections Team undertook its major series of biennial collections reviews in Autumn 2012 reaching Westbury Manor Museum in November. The condition of the objects and the displays were checked, as well as environmental controls, security measures and the disaster plans, leading to a new plan for improvement and general maintenance. Some of the work was carried out on the spot, such as repairs to graphics panels and displays. The Team also provided further advice and packaging for when objects are transferred to Chilcomb House for identification or donation.

A major review of the Chilcomb stores containing objects from Fareham Borough was also completed during this period, in addition to the regular six monthly review of environmental data relating to the collections on display at Westbury Manor.

The plans that result from these reviews demonstrate to the Museums Accreditation Scheme that the Arts and Museums Service is achieving the national standard for museums, which strengthens applications for public and private funding, gives investors confidence in the organisation, as well as ensuring continuous improvement in the way that collections are preserved for future generations.

3.2 Promoting access to collections, specialist knowledge and advice

The Collections Team continued to introduce some intriguing and topical objects through the Hampshire Hidden Treasure's case which is situated on the 1st Floor. In October 'Austerity Britain' was installed, which was a tribute to the many women who turned to home knitting and dressmaking to make clothes and household linens for their families during the Second World War. Magazines gave away free patterns for embroidery for example, that could be used to decorate a cloth cover for a ration book. Other small items, like purses and slippers, were made in an effort to make life more comfortable or to cheer up the family home. These objects themselves were produced in accordance with government regulations and are therefore exhibited only very rarely as the materials are rather fragile.

The Keeper of Art and two collections volunteers, working with the Exhibitions Team, installed a temporary high quality showcase in the Ashcroft Arts Centre in which to display objects relating to the Dazzle exhibition at Gosport Gallery from November 2012 to January 2013.

ITEM 3

The exhibition, of 1920s beaded dresses, requires very specific security and environmental conditions for display and can therefore go only into the Government Indemnity Scheme galleries at Gosport, Winchester and the Sainsbury Gallery in Basingstoke. In order to make the exhibition accessible to as many Hampshire residents as possible, and to demonstrate the quality of the objects on display, satellite cases were installed in Gosport Discovery Centre and at the Ashcroft Arts Centre..

The case in Fareham had two dresses and an evening coat, all of the most sumptuous quality and fine condition, together with a contemporary fashion magazine and appropriate accessories. The comments book at the Gosport Gallery revealed that individuals who saw the case in Fareham were moved to travel Gosport just to see the exhibition. Informal feedback from the Arts Centre suggests that the showcase was generally well received by visitors even though not all of them would have been able to go to Gosport.

The team also continued to provide an enquiry service which allows members of the public to leave objects with us for identification, processing four identifications and five gifts during the October to December period. In addition further requests from members of the public for various photographic images have been met.

Volunteers from the Fareham area attended one of the Behind-the-Scenes Days at Chilcomb House, Winchester this Autumn to see the full extent of the collections cared for by Hampshire County Council and witness the great range of activities that are carried out to make the collections accessible to all.

4. Inspiring Learning and Community Engagement

4.1 Formal Education Provision:

Over the 3 month period October to December 2012, the Learning and Community Engagement Team have worked with **9** school groups in the museum and as outreach. That is a total of **204 pupils** in school groups. All sessions involve planning, preparation and liaising with teachers prior to the visit.

No. of sessions in the museum	No. of children in school groups	No. of outreach sessions/ events	No. of children as outreach
6 3 X Our Town in the Past local history sessions for Harrison Primary Year 4. 3 X Mini Museum sessions for Northern Infants Yr 1&2	156	3 2 X Mini Museum sessions for Wicor Primary Yr 5&6. 1 Our Town in the Past session for Harrison Primary Yr 4	48

Impact evidence and general feedback is collected from all school sessions, to aid evaluation and service planning, and summaries are available on request. All feedback was very positive with mainly 4 out of 4 scores for the different elements of their experience.

ITEM 3

The Year 4 Head from Harrison Primary School said, “The visit changed a lot of perceptions about what a museum is about. Some that have been before said they had learnt new things. So thank you!” A further comment was that the sessions “inspired the class to further learning as they went straight back and wrote blogs of their visit as well as a self made story.”

As part of their school blog, pupils from Harrison Primary Year 4 were asked to use their school website to comment on their visit and what they learnt at Westbury Manor Museum. The comments below show enjoyment of their visit and evidence of their learning through object handling, census records, maps and photographs.

“Today I learnt that Fareham was famous for making red bricks and clay chimney pots. I now also know that a lady called Ann White (a servant) used to live at Westbury Manor. Another something I learnt today is that our school was once only fields” – Year 4 pupil.

“I had a great time, I learnt things that I would never have known without Westbury Manor Museum’s help! The three things I have learnt are: Anne White lived in Westbury Manor, in the olden days you had a tin bowl under your bed for the toilet, and last but not least, I learnt that there are lots and lots of buildings that were not there years ago” – Year 4 pupil.

A Year 1&2 teacher from Northern Infant School said the learning impact of their session was demonstrated by “the children’s questioning, vocabulary and reasoning, and by the children showing respect of and care for historical and special artefacts.”

The Assistant Community Engagement and Learning Officer has been working with the head teacher of Red Barn Primary School on an ‘All Our Stories’ bid to HLF to fund a local heritage project for the school community working with Westbury Manor Museum. We have just heard that the bid has succeeded and this project will begin early in 2013 with some local history and research skills workshops for the children. It will culminate with an exhibition at the museum later in the year.

Other projects with local schools have been planned this quarter for delivery after Christmas, including one to involve Harrison Primary School in putting together elements of the Victorians exhibition coming next Autumn, and one to work with Ranvilles Junior School on interpreting local history through animation. Cams Hill School will be working with us on another exhibition this Spring, building on the successful Cams Creatives exhibition last year. All these projects will be detailed in the next report.

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 quarter. 127 people took part in community activities. Many more benefitted from the self-led Christmas Trail provided by the CEL Team.

Activity/Event	Target Audience	Date	No. of participants
2 woodcarving workshops linked to exhibition	Children & families	27 Oct	22
Spooky Spells workshop	Children &	31 Oct	49

ITEM 3

linked to Roman Curse artefact in main displays	families		
Visit by Fareham Day Services	Adults with Learning Disabilities	6 Nov	5
Visit by Havant Day Services	Adults with Learning Disabilities	20 Nov	8
Tailored Tour for Ashcroft Book Group	Adult Community Group	4 Dec	8
Christmas Trail for 1 st Fareham Brownies & 2 nd Fareham Rainbows	Children Community Group	5 Dec	35

The CEL Team are now working on a new set of family friendly games and activities linked to the permanent collections, to launch at the start of the Easter Holiday, and are starting to work with the volunteers and school and community groups on the local elements of the Victorians exhibition planned for the autumn.

5. Marketing and Management

Renaissance Bid

November saw the submission of a major application to the Arts Council Strategic Fund as part of the Hampshire Solent partnership. The application is for £630,000 over 2 years in support of a 2014 exhibition programme and to develop digital marketing projects. Westbury Manor will be a beneficiary of this programme if the bid is successful.

Accreditation

In the run up to an application to the Arts Council for re-accreditation of Westbury Manor Museum in April 2013, a team of Arts & Museums Service staff has been working hard to gather the evidence for this important process. Further details are given in Jo Bailey's accompanying report to the JMC.

Marketing

15,000 copies of 'What's On in Hampshire Museums and Archives', covering the period October to December, were distributed in September, which included events at museums across Hampshire. Distribution covered TICs, local museums, libraries and visitor attractions throughout the county.

Posters were circulated locally for each new exhibition and press releases are produced and circulated to the local media for each show.

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 all the time, Showcase

ITEM 3

is now reaching over 27,000 subscribers. It regularly features both an exhibition and an object of the month as well as signposting recipients to events in the their local area.

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 is becoming well established. Facebook now has over 570 “likes” and twitter over 700 followers.

Research

Postcodes were being collected from visitors to Westbury Manor Museum were collected between June to August 2012 and again are being collected during January. These are being profiled in mosaic giving us an up-to-date picture of the types of people using the museum and where they come from. This information will feed into our latest service and marketing plans.

SE Hampshire Delivery Team

Arts & Museums Service

Westbury Manor Museum

Fareham

January 2012