

Curator's report to Museum Committee Tuesday 24th March 2020

As a result of Covid 19 and the government's advice, the meeting of the Museum committee will not take place, instead this report is being circulated and members of the committee should respond to the Town Clerk by midnight on 24th March with any comments. Following this, the Town Clerk will make any decisions necessary resulting from this report, that would otherwise have gone to the committee.

As part of the Onwards and Upwards expansion project the Museum will be working through a detailed Activity Plan, approved by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF). A key aspect of the plan involves our target audiences: people with disabilities, low income families, low income older people, 13- 24 year olds and primary schools. Throughout this and subsequent reports points outlined below that are pertinent to these groups or to another key area of the Activity Plan will be highlighted in purple.

Clare Lyall - Curator and Head of Cultural and Neighbourhood Services

Hannah Lyddy - Museum Manager

David Birks - Learning and Outreach Officer

Nikki Ritson - Assistant Learning and Outreach Officer

Hanne Dahl - Exhibitions and Collections Officer

Tessa Kerslake - Marketing and Events Officer

Andrea Bartlett - Retail and Income Generation Officer

Richard Alley - Museum Assistant

1. STAFFING/ TRAINING

1.1 New Museum Officers – Our two new NLHF funded staff posts have now been occupied since 1st January. Tessa Kerslake (Marketing and Events Officer) and Andrea Bartlett (Retail and Income Generation Officer) have seamlessly become valued members of our team, hitting the ground running with project objectives and helping prepare the way for our opening in August.

1.2 Staff development – Hannah and Andrea attended free SWFED training on the 9th January. Using Your Museum to Generate Income was held at the Rural Life Museum. We discussed ways in which Museums can diversify to increase income. One of the key areas was in room/ facility rental which was extremely pertinent for us as we plan to hire out the new Learning Hub.

1.2.2 Collections Consultant – Tim Burge, who has been helping us throughout the project, spent a day assisting Hanne to split our Collection database into several smaller ones (such as Library, handling, main collection) which now make up the whole database. It is now much more user friendly and accreditation ready.

1.2.3 Hanne Dahl attended an 'Exhibitions from concept to display' workshop also run by the SWFED.

1.3 Mill Street Day Care Centre – we continue to have a close working relationship with Mill Street, cooking for their clients once a month and providing reminiscence sessions.

1.4 Volunteers – We are no longer using Volunteer Makers as an external digital volunteer management system. The pilot trial period had finished meaning there would have been a substantial cost if we wished to continue with it. After consideration we decided the benefits were not worth the cost.

1.4.2 New Volunteers – We have inducted three new volunteers to our team this quarter.

1.4.3 Safeguarding: HL, DB and NR met with Hayley Bell, the Council's Safeguarding Lead to discuss simplifying the safeguarding training volunteers are required to undertake. Hayley has agreed to run introductory Safeguarding sessions for learning and Outreach volunteers periodically.

1.5 Value Exchange - This quarter the Town Council has received volunteer support for the Museum and its activities equating to £3850 (General: 30 hrs - £750, Learning & Outreach: 10 hrs - £250, Collections: 114 hrs - £2850).

2. OPERATIONAL

2.1 Procedures handover – On 25th February the Museum staff attended a whole day hand over with Beard (site build) and Wheelers (electrical installation) to receive induction on all of the building management systems, such as the fire and intruder alarms and the heating system.

2.2 Fire Management Plan and Emergency Plan – In readiness for the opening of the new Museum we have produced or reviewed a number of documents including these two plans. Both will need finalizing once the team is on site, at which time a Security Review will also be conducted.

3. COLLECTIONS

3.1 Accessioning- The latest exciting addition to our collection is a wedding dress of Miss Mary Stancomb Fowler from 1870. The dress ended up in Canada with family who have now brought it back for the museum's collection.

3.2 Pat Whitehead has joined the Collections volunteer team. Pat worked as a pattern designer at Samuel Salter & Co in the 1960s and will be helping us with research into the cloth collection.

3.3 Our collection is due to arrive back on site W/C 20th April. At this point we will begin the task of populating the exhibits and restoring everything to our climate and humidity controlled store. Our MODES (collection) database will need to be updated with the location of every one of our 22,000 objects.



4. EXHIBITIONS

4.1 Staff are finalising the texts and objects selected for the permanent displays but a temporary exhibition is also being planned. We are hoping to work with 3 local artists including Jen Hamblin who runs Court Street Gallery. The exhibition will be titled 'Illuminating the overlooked' and the displays will focus on places and people in Trowbridge who are often not seen or heard.

5. ARTS

5.1 Celebrating Trowbridge – The Museum attended the 'Celebrating Trowbridge' community Fair on Saturday 8th February. This was a partnership event run by Trowbridge Town Hall and the Civic Centre aimed at showcasing what Trowbridge has to offer its community and to recruit volunteers who may be interested in assisting. It was a great event for us; we engaged with 150 people and took the details of 6 people interested in volunteering with us.

6. LEARNING & OUTREACH

During Dec – Feb we have facilitated 44 workshops for 1047 participants and have taken £657. This included 7 school workshops, 11 Monday Craft sessions, 7 reminiscence workshops, a Brownies Christmas workshop and the Not In A Pub Quiz. We continue to provide a free service within the Trowbridge town boundary, and charge for groups and schools outside the boundary.

6.1 School Workshops: We are still writing, resourcing and trialing new sessions, but have now started to take bookings from paying schools.

- **Woollen Industry:** We are developing a woollen industry-themed workshop for a year 2 class at North Bradley. This will look at fleece to fabric, weaving, local inventors such as John Dyer and George Haden, working in the mills and technology. The first sessions looked at weaving, turning fleece into yarn and identifying woollen tools.
- **Victorian Life:** We have put on several of workshops this quarter that have included new activities such as Victorian holidays. These have been run for North Bradley and Paxcroft.
- **Local Study:** We were asked to repeat our local study workshop for a second Holbrook class. This involves a guided history walk around the town and a classroom-based activity looking at various aspects of the town's history including post war immigration, geography and working in the mills. Unfortunately, the guided walk was postponed due to the recent wet weather and has been rescheduled.
- **Trowbridge Buildings:** We put together a completely new workshop for three year 3/4 classes at Paxcroft Primary School. They are looking at Victorian Trowbridge and the built environment and want to put together a guided walk around the town centre. The workshop looked at how to identify an old (Victorian) building, which were the town's important buildings and plotting them on a map. The workshops were very successful.
- **Toys and Games:** Paxcroft again invited in to their school so we could run our Toys and Games workshops for their year 1/2 classes. We trialed a handling activity that looked at comparing old and new toys as well as their materials and properties.
- We also ran a 1960s Life workshop for Bowerhill Primary School.

6.2 February Half Term Holidays: We only ran two holiday activities (normally we'd run one per day) in February but both were very well attended with 202 people taking part. We are continuing our productive working relationship with the Shires Shopping Centre Management by leading a bird-themed drop-in craft session in the Atrium on the Tuesday (80 children). Friday's Mardi Gras Mask sessions in the Guide Hut was slow for the first 30 minutes then steady for the remainder of the day – 76 people attended. We are keen to continue working with the Shires and have programmed in an additional Mother's Day craft session on Saturday 14th March.

6.3 Monday craft group: Nikki's Monday craft sessions for adults with learning difficulties continues to thrive. The group have tried their hands at a range of arts and crafts including landscape pictures, Valentine's day decoupage and Calendar designs. We have run 11 sessions this quarter. These will transfer back to the Museum in April.

6.4 Lifelong Learning: We continue running memory sessions for various care and residential homes as well as for the Mill Street day centre by Alzheimer's Support. We ran a number of Christmas-themed workshops in December. These include a retelling of the nativity and rousing renditions of favourite Christmas Carols. We were invited to run our Christmas workshop for a memory café in Salisbury – this was very successful and we hope to visit them again throughout the year with more of our handling boxes. All of the museum staff attend Mill street once a month to cook and eat lunch with the members there, support the community values and building a good relationship with the centre. They promote our services and support via their social media to nearly 5000 followers.

6.4.1 History Talks: We give a series of illustrated talks to residents at Shockerwick (BUPA) House – this time we treated them to a Medieval show and tell which involved them trying on chainmail coif (headpieces) and writing with goose quills and ink.

6.5 Quizzes: Not In A Pub Quiz: The final Not In A Pub Quiz for 2019 took place at Leykers in December. A new team were crowned champions and took home the winner's trophy. Leykers were happy to host 2020's series of quizzes so they restarted in February. February's was very well attended and everyone had an enjoyable, if challenging time. It's a general knowledge quiz that cost just £2.50 per person and the winning team takes home a cash prize. It's a thoroughly enjoyable evening (at least for me, the quizmaster) and supports a longstanding local business. It would be lovely to see a team of town councilors take part.

6.5.1 Friends of the Museum quiz: David compiled a Christmas quiz for the Friends' Christmas do.

6.6 Brownies: We put on a Christmas workshop for a local troupe of Brownies. They were treated to a craft activity, games and a visit from our Father Christmas who handed out gifts to each child.

6.7 Walks and Talks: David was asked if he could lead a workshop for IC staff so they could gain an understanding of the town's history. The result was a guided walk around the town centre looking at sites connected to the town history followed by a talk on how the town has developed since Saxon times. The 2020 programme includes a series of guided walks starting in April with a Woollen walk.



6.7.1 Trowbridge History Talk: The Bathford Society have booked a Trowbridge History talk for 2021. David met with their Chairman, Peter Martin, to discuss the talk.

6.8 Handling Collection: We have purchased some more resources to add to our handling collections. These include Victorian items for our Florence Nightingale workshop, an old fashioned seaside outfit, photographic packs, domestic items and Victorian dressing-up sets. These last items have been bought so that when a class visits the new Museum they can dress in period costume which helps to set the scene.

6.8.1 School Loans' Box: A school in Radstock have loaned a box of WW2 resources for term 4.

6.9 History Hub: Nikki attended the January History Hub meeting of history co-ordinators of Trowbridge area schools. She updated them on the Museum project, our schools offering and future plans for INSET sessions.

6.10 Fairy Tale Book: David and Nikki (and local artists) are working on a set of illustrations for our Fairy Tale interactive which will feature in a breakout area in the new Museum. David is illustrating Rumpelstiltskin – a spinning-themed story – for which he has made several Plasticine figures (King, Miller, Miller's daughter and Rumpelstiltskin) on which to base the illustrations. Whilst Nikki has created a series of illustrations for the story of Arachne (weaving tale).

6.11 Alzheimers Support: Nikki has led further information sessions to new support staff for a local care branch. She is looking into how to make the new museum 'dementia friendly'.

6.12 Onwards and Upwards: All staff have continued writing outlines for the design and interpretation of the new Museum.

7. MARKETING/PROMOTION AND WEBSITE

7.1 Website – We have been reviewing the website to streamline the content and make it more user friendly, ready for the reopening of the museum. Hannah and Tessa will be meeting with Brightside in April to request any updates.

7.2 Clare did a piece with Ian Longdon for BBC Wiltshire on the 10th January to discuss project progress on site at the museum, recording as they toured the site.

7.3 Bath and Wiltshire Parent Magazine – Our Easter Holiday events will be listed in the March/April issue of the Bath and Wiltshire Parent magazine. This will be followed by events listings in the following 2 editions and a news feature running on their website offering an overview of the museum's events and activities, supported by posts on their Facebook, Instagram and Twitter pages. BWP will feature a Days Out piece based around a family visit to the new museum in the September/October issue of the magazine. We will review the success of these features once the museum has opened and decide if it is financially worthwhile to continue advertising in the magazine.

7.4 Events Leaflet – 1000 copies of the Events and Activities for 2020 booklet designed by Brightside have been printed and distributed around Frome, Bath and Trowbridge.

7.5 New plans for marketing – The museum's social media will be timetabled at least one week ahead and fed in to by members of the team. A formal newsletter will run alongside the more informal 'Trowbridge Museings' and will be emailed directly to those signed up to our mailing list. Tessa will also now be designing promotional materials in house rather than using Brightside for all of these.

8. TOURISM/VISITS

Engagement figures this quarter (Aug, Sep, Oct): Schools: 432, Other Groups: 755,

8.1 Trowbridge Heritage Festival 2020 – The timetable has been established with just a few details still tbc, including a key note speaker. As well as a range of free and charged craft events, the festival will include film showings of Peterloo and Suffragette at £5pp, as well as talks from Helen Montague-Smith and staff members Nikki and David, at £10pp. There are plans work collaboratively with the Town Hall, including opening the Town Hall cells during the Crime and Punishment family interactive day at the museum, and hosting a Victorian banquet in the Supper Room of the Town Hall.

9. PARTNERSHIP WORKING

9.1 Order of St John's Care Trust – This oral history project continues. We have a number of dates now booked in to actually record the histories and then we will begin planning the accompanying touring exhibition.

9.2 Making Place Trowbridge – After another delay partly caused by the Christmas break and difficulty finding mutually available dates to meet with our Bath Spa University colleagues we are now in a position to submit the funding bid to the Arts Council. If successful, we will begin conducting community workshops in the summer that will in turn produce a brief for local makers to create contemporary objects that represent Trowbridge's environment today. These will then be exhibited and sold.

9.3 Investors in Trowbridge group - Tessa will be attending the next meeting on the 10th March.

9.4 Town Hall – Clare and Andrea will be attending the Town Hall's 'Funding, how to get it from the people who give it' event on the evening of the 10th March. They will be there both as advisors and attendees!

10. RETAIL AND INCOME GENERATION

10.1 Research - AB contacted the team at Chippenham Museum and together with Tessa met up with them to hear about their experience and knowledge, and what they have found to be successful particularly regarding retail, marketing, exhibitions and room hire.

10.2 Figures - To prepare for the new museum shop Andrea had gathered information about visitor numbers and previous sales history & compiled initial retail scenarios and projections, for anticipated income, and targets for cost of sales, average transaction values, and spend per head.

10.4 Till system - After investigating several companies an order has been placed for an epos till system that will meet the needs of the new museum shop and be compatible with TTC systems and procedures. This will be set up and installed towards the end of May.

10.5 Retail Plan - AB has prepared a shop activity timeline planner from Jan – August to get ready for opening, and identified seven main merchandise themes linked to the museum collection, to focus the selection of products and suppliers.

10.6 Stock - One of our aims is to support local suppliers, champion small businesses, and be as environmentally sustainable as possible. Through research we've identified 56 suitable potential suppliers, 24 of which are local Wiltshire companies, and are in the process of contacting them to set up trade accounts.

10.7 In February Andrea attended the International Spring Trade Fair at the NEC in Birmingham with Hannah, where we made some good contacts and four relevant and exciting product lines to stock in the shop.

10.8 Handmade - AB spent some time with our Collection and Exhibition Officer Hanne Dahl looking at the museum's



collection of pattern books for inspiration and has begun investigating the viability of setting up a weaving project with our volunteers to produce handmade book marks to sell. We selected a sample piece of cloth woven by George Chambrey at Clarks Mill in 1960's as source material and designed



a simple modern representation that can be made on our portable hand looms. With guidance and help from Hanne a sample strip was woven (see pics).

10.9 Alcohol Licence – Andrea is working on an application for an alcohol license for the museum to enable us to sell alcoholic beverages in the shop, refreshment area and at events, and taking a training course and exam for a personal license on 25th March.

10.10 - AB is in the process of pulling together a fund raising strategy for the museum and has prepared two funding applications, that will be submitted in the next couple of weeks, both to help improve the facilities of the Library and Research Facility.

Hub Hire - When we are back at the refurbished museum Tessa and I will begin preparing room hire information to create a brochure, and set up a booking system.

11. EVALUATION

11.1 Many of the recent school workshops have been evaluated either through teacher completing forms, classroom observation and pupil-led evaluations (Generic Learning Outcomes).

11.2. Under 5s: NR researched the possibility of running mother and toddler groups in the museum. This is something that the museum has tried to do before, but after spending a day at a nursery and speaking to the professional staff, it was clear lots of new resources would have to be purchased, as well as training. Nikki is going to look into having an established toddler group leader (or start up) using the space in the museum to run a group, independently.

12. MUSEUM EXPANSION PROJECT (CL)

12.1 Project History

Our successful round one pass with the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) secured £100,000 towards the development stage, which allowed us to complete the work required to complete our successful round two application to the NLHF for £1,172,500 million, which was submitted in May 2017. The Museum sought funding from others of around £200,000 and the town council will be making a contribution of around £1million, funded by reserves and borrowing (costing just under £50,000 per annum) over the 25 years of a new lease for two floors of Home Mill.

Improvements to signage outlined in the *Town Centre* section will include the museum and other historic locations, cross-referenced in the new museum displays and visible from the new top floor windows. In addition, we will improve the signs on the approaches to the town. The new museum is due to open in late Summer 2020.

Trowbridge Museum must undergo Accreditation every four years. This is an external independent assessment and covers every aspect of the Museum operation, from being appropriately resourced to employing suitably qualified staff. Without Accreditation, the Museum would not be able to obtain major funding from external bodies including the NLHF. Trowbridge Museum underwent a semi-assessment during 2017/18 and therefore much of the focus of work prior to commencing the Development Phase of the project was on Accreditation.

During the closure period (from June 2019) the Museum implemented the project **Activity Plan**, which was developed during the Development Phase, and enabled our Learning and Outreach service to continue to offer a series of workshops in other locations and outreach services. The Museum also continues to work with our partners to enhance Trowbridge as a tourism destination, supported by the Information Services department.

12.2 Design & Interpretation - The staff have been providing text to Steve Slack who was recommended by the National Lottery Heritage Fund Monitor, Ellen Dempster. He is excellent at editing text and creating a Museum 'voice' for our interpretation. He completed his contract the week beginning the 9th March.

12.3 Capital Works

12.3.1 Roof – This has now been completed. Snagging has taken place and continued until the 13th March. The existing roof slab is still drying out in places and will be monitored by the contractors whilst they remain on site. Redecoration will be carried out when areas have dried out.

12.3.2 Second and Thirds Floor – Partial handover took place on the 24th February for both floors. The bi-fold doors were delivered on the 9th March and were fitted from the 11th March. There was an issue with the roof lights failing to close properly but this was resolved on the 11th March. The Storage facility wall at the far end of the Learning and Outreach Room was left as unpainted plywood, however, it was felt that this did not fit in with the rest of the room and would look odd when a television screen was installed on it. The architect is to investigate sources of grey fire retardant paint.

12.3.3 Ground floor-Lift works - Work on the lift shaft area and bridge works continue and these areas will be inserted into the O&M manuals prior to handover of the whole site on the 3rd April.

12.3.4 Shires – The Museum entrance works have been completed and all scaffolding and hoarding was removed prior to handover. All the plaster work has been successfully removed from either end of the mall as has the scaffolding. The Museum entrance plaster work has been completed, as have the repairs to the tiled floor.



12.4 National Lottery Funding monitoring – We held a meeting on the 15th January 2020 with the NLHF's Project Monitor Ellen Dempster. Ellen was pleased with the way that the project was progressing.

12.5 Borrowing for the Project – The second tranche of borrowing was taken out on the 31st January 2020. This was £450,000 at an interest rate of 2.74%.

12.6 Collections – the collections are being returned from the storage facility at Upper Heyford the week beginning the 20th April.

12.7 Appointment of consultants & contractors – Main Contractor Beard of Swindon are due to complete on 3rd April and then our fit-out contractors should start work. No other appointments are pending.

13. MUSEUM - FINANCE SUMMARY (AGENDA ITEM 7)

13.1 Q3 accounts are attached.

Museum I01 (Oct - Dec 19)

SUMMARY FIGURES			
Museum Q3 (April '19 - December '19)	Actual	Budget	Variance
Gross Expenditure	£112,008	£102,536	-£9,472
Income	£4,603	£4,644	-£41
Net	£107,405	£97,892	-£9,513

Museum I02 (Oct - Dec 19)

SUMMARY FIGURES			
Museum Project Q3 (April '19 - December '19)	Actual	Budget	Variance
Gross Expenditure	£1,055,232	£1,052,170	-£3,062
Income	£1,055,232	£1,052,170	£3,062
Net	£0	£0	£0

Grants Cultural I04 (Oct - Dec 19)

SUMMARY FIGURES			
Grants Cultural Q3 (April '19 - December '19)	Actual	Budget	Variance
Gross Expenditure	£17,727	£17,250	-£477
Income	£0	£0	£0
Net	£17,727	£17,250	-£477

Total	£125,132	£115,142	-£9,990
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Financial summary - Please see summaries on detailed Actuals attached.

11.2 Funding – The total amount donated by parishes is as follows:

Hilperton £2500

North Bradley £100

Keevil £75

Bratton £600

Great Hinton Ladies Club £260