

Curator's report to Museum Committee, Tuesday 6th October 2020



**Trowbridge
MUSEUM**

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

Tessa Kerslake - Marketing and Events Officer

Andrea Bartlett - Retail and Income Generation Officer

Richard Alley - Museum Assistant

Vacant Position – Collections and Exhibitions Officer

1. **STAFFING/ TRAINING**

1.1 Museum Staff – Hanne Dahl, our Collections and Exhibitions Officer, left our team on the 15th June after deciding to return home to Denmark. Owing to the Covid-19 Pandemic there is currently a freeze on recruiting new officers. So until at least the start of the new financial year the post will remain vacant.

1.2 Staff development – HL attended the Wiltshire Museums Group Meeting via Microsoft Teams on 5th August. Much of the focus was on how Wiltshire Museums are coping with the impact of the pandemic and how this has affected working practises.

1.2.2 AB Successfully applied for a free place and attended the online Institute of Fundraising annual convention in July. She also attended four other fundraising and planning Art Fund and South West Museums Development webinar and training sessions during July.

1.2.3 TK has undertaken the following training: The Digital Culture Network: 'How to take your Twitter profile to the next level', 'SEO explained in one hour' and 'How to take your Instagram account to the next level'. Plus from the South West Museums Development Programme: 'Collections Online and Rights Management and 'Communicating Your Story in Fundraising'.

1.3 New volunteers – This quarter we have welcomed 4 new members to our volunteer team.

1.4 Value Exchange - This quarter we were extremely happy to be able to welcome volunteers back on site again, in teams of 2 at a time. The Town Council has received volunteer support for the Museum and its activities equating to £3850 (General: 6 hrs - £150, Learning & Outreach: 0 hrs - £0, Collections: 252 hrs - £6,300).

2. **OPERATIONAL**

2.1 New equipment – We have purchased a two-way tour guide radio system that will be used for guided walks and we are purchasing 6 – 8 digital tablets for use in schools and care homes. The funding for this has come from a successful grant application (see ***) and a £300 contribution from the Friends of Trowbridge Museum.

3. COLLECTIONS

3.1 Onwards and upwards: We continue to sort through the collection (with the help of our volunteers!), relocating objects and updating our database. Though initially this task seemed overwhelming we are now making real progress.

3.1.2 We have moved the archaeology collections into a temporary storeroom on site and compiled a summary contents list. These collections are intended to go to Wiltshire Museum in Devizes permanently (although we can loan items for display), when the details and agreement are finalized.

3.1.3 Nikki has been working on MODES, creating profiles so staff can update the database and created detailed instructions on how to update information, to save time.

3.2 Nikki has also started sharing more collection content, explaining the process of selecting objects for display and box checking. This is a lead in to the Museum collection being more accessible for the public once we reopen.

3.3 Conservation – conservation work on the Spinning Jenny and the Teasel Gig is due to be finished in September, with the slubbings added to the Jenny and the teasel hands re applied to the Gig. We would love to have conservation work carried out on a nineteenth century wedding dress we accessioned last year. Once the collection workload has eased a little AB is going to look in to where we might be able to apply for funds.



4. EXHIBITIONS

4.1 We are still hoping to curate the 'Illuminating the overlooked' exhibition in partnership with local artists including Jen Hamblin from Court Street Gallery, but in light of the pandemic we may need to scale down the scope a little.

4.2 On and Up: Now the collection has returned we will be working through the task of scanning all the images that are needed for the new graphic panels that will make up the Museum story. Once this has been done, we can finalise and 'sign off' the panels ready for their production and installation.

5. LEARNING & OUTREACH

Learning and Outreach has been on the back burner for much of this reporting period due to a combination of post-lockdown restrictions and the need to focus on getting the Museum ready for reopening.

5.1 School Workshops & Lifelong Learning: We have not run any school workshops this quarter. We had some enquiries from teachers for sessions in the autumn term. These include St Johns, who would like some guided walks around the town and a woollen history themed in-school session. Teachers from The Mead and Castle Mead primaries have asked if we can run some Zoom teaching sessions focussing on local people who had an impact on the town – they have settled on Thomas Helliker and Abraham Bowyer. Nikki took part in a virtual singing and music session with a local care home and has been in contact with Alzheimer's support planning session for when Covid restrictions are eased.



5.2 Holiday Workshops: We joined with the Town Hall on a short programme of family craft workshops in late August. We ran two activities – Making Your Mark (printing on t-shirts, etc.) and Wonderful Wool (needle felting, weaving, braiding, etc.). They were originally planned for the Sensory Garden but the weather meant that they were held in the Town Hall with appropriate social distancing and regular sanitising of equipment and resources. 80 children and adults took part. We planned to run some October activities and a version of our Christmas grotto with the Town Hall this year but due to the amount of work still required to get the Museum up and running decided that this was not possible.

5.3 Not In A Pub Quiz: The online version of our monthly quiz continues to attract a good following. Two quizzes (in June and July) took place and everyone enjoyed themselves, or so they tell me (DB, quiz master). It is a good way of keeping in touch with supporters and we are thinking of live-streaming them over Facebook when they return to Leykers at some point in the future.

5.4 Guided Walks: We are planning to programme in some social distanced guided walks in the autumn. These will follow government guidelines on “rule of 6” and will make use of our new tour guide system.

5.5 Online Content: Nikki continues to produce monthly newsletters following the projects development found at trowbridgemuseum.wordpress.com. She has also been creating weekly ‘stumpy says’ facts with Tessa to use online.

5.6 Trowbridge Future: David and Hannah met with Deborah McClean of Trowbridge Future to discuss their plans for creating and burying a time capsule. We have offered to lead some workshops for them.

6. MARKETING AND EVENTS

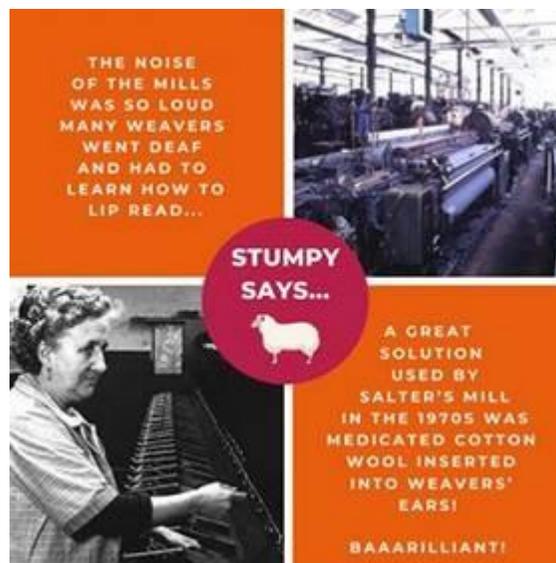
6.1 Vlog - Since returning on site, Nikki has started recording and producing our ‘vlog’ style updates again, showing the progress being made to the museum, these are not weekly anymore, as much of our week looks the same, but instead show viewers the more interesting and bigger parts of the expansion.

6.2 Website – Brightside have been contacted to arrange a meeting to update the website and to discuss an accessibility evaluation, ready for our reopening in February. The website will be more user-friendly, with a focus on bringing visitors into the museum and promoting our events and outreach opportunities.

6.3 Social Media Marketing – Our social media channels have been continued to be updated with our weekly schedule including Making Mondays craft sessions, monthly Not In A Pub quiz, Stumpy Says facts and collection highlights.

6.4 Publications - We have been visited by local online publication The Nub, who have written 2 features on the progress of the Museum. The Bath and Wiltshire Parent magazine have been running a series of adverts for the museum culminating on a feature on the reopening of the museum. As restrictions ease and the team are returning to site full time, we will be inviting more publications on site.

6.5 BBC Wiltshire radio – DB was interviewed in June to talk about our monthly Not In A Pub quiz; it was featured in their top 10 things to do in Wiltshire during lockdown!



7. TOURISM AND EVENTS

Engagement figures this quarter (May, June, July): Schools: 0, Other Groups: 80, Website: 1,227, Digital (FB and Insta post engagement): 8,416

7.1 Museum Re-Launch – Now that the Museum reopening has been confirmed for February next year, TK will begin to devise our marketing strategy and events for the lead up. We hope to hold a preview for supporters in January and a volunteer open day.

8. **PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

8.1 This quarter we worked with Town Hall Arts, leading 2 sessions for them as part of their 2 week summer activities festival. We also met with Trowbridge Future to discuss how we can help with their time capsule project idea.

9. **RETAIL AND INCOME GENERATION**

9.1 Fundraising – AB put together a grant funding application to the Art Fund Recovery Grants programme for equipment to support learning and outreach during Covid 19 restrictions and our new way of working. The bid was successful, and we were awarded £4,865.

9.2 Retail - AB has finalised the design and placed an order for a new range of competitively priced bespoke museum shop products, featuring our mascot 'Stumpy'.



10. **MUSEUM EXPANSION PROJECT (CL)**

There have been issues with the sensors within the Learning and Outreach roof light windows. They were not functioning and this was causing them to remain open which meant that the Museum alarm could not be reset. The fire alarm can now be set. However, there is still an issue with the actuators in the roof light windows continuing to fuse. There is to be an on-site meeting with the roof light installers and Mark Cunningham of Beard, who Project managed the build on the 29th September.

10.1 **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 £1 million, 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.

10.2 Design & Interpretation - The staff are in the process of completing the scanning of object images so that these can be passed on to the Project designer Chris Jones so that he can now prepare the interpretation panels for the displays.

The infrastructure for the displays themselves has been completed by Beaufort Bespoke Ltd. They will return to site when the museum staff are ready to install the objects within the displays.

10.3.1 **Roof –NTR**

10.3.2 Second and Thirds Floor – NTR

10.3.3 Ground floor-Lift works – NTR

10.3.4 Shires –Works completed. However, we are still trying to resolve the issue of the relationship with the Shires and the fire alarm within the stairwell. The Museum is willing to take it over but the Shires have to remove their equipment first and this appears to be the stumbling block. Verbal update.

10.4 National Lottery Funding monitoring – We held our remote meeting with Ellen Dempster and Tom Brewer on the 15th July. The National Lottery Heritage Fund are prepared to be flexible and can if required, increase the grant above the 90% limit. Again they can be more flexible in how the grant is allocated and can swap areas of expenditure around within existing budgets. If the cashflow needs to be increased from 90% to 95% this can be requested by an email to Tom Brewer. The Activity Plan will need to be re-scoped in light of COVID 19 restrictions and the Project timetable will have to be altered.

10.5 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% which gives an annual repayment of £24,981.74 for this half of the loan and £24,675.28 for the first half of the loan, giving a total of £49,657.02 per annum and £1,241,425.50 including interest over the whole life (25 years) of the loan. At the end of Q1 we had just over £70,000 of remaining unspent loan to cover additional project costs as well as the remaining HLF grant.

10.6 Collections – The collections were returned to site and a couple of objects were unfortunately damaged in one case destroyed. Jamie Briggs will be covering the costs of repair and replacement. The Museum staff and volunteers have been doing a fantastic job of working through the collections and placing them in storage.

10.7 Appointment of consultants & contractors –NTR

11. MUSEUM - FINANCE SUMMARY (AGENDA ITEM 7)

11.1 Q1 accounts detail is attached, summary figures are below.

Museum I01 (quarter 1 actuals 20/21)

Museum Qtr 1 (April '20 - June '20)	Actual	Budget	Variance
Gross Expenditure	£43,962	£43,167	-£795
Income	£0	£3,203	-£3,203
Net	£43,962	£39,964	-£3,998

Museum I02 (quarter 1 actuals 20/21)

Museum Project Qtr 1 (April '20 - June '20)	Actual	Budget	Variance
Gross Expenditure	£187,404	£0	-£187,404
Income	£187,404	£0	£187,404
Net	£0	£0	£0

Cultural Services I04 (quarter 1 actuals 20/21)

Grants Cultural Qtr 1 (April '20 - June '20)	Actual	Budget	Variance
Gross Expenditure	£16,622	£15,750	-£872
Income	£0	£0	£0
Net	£16,622	£15,750	-£872

Total	£60,584	£55,714	-£4,870
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