

MUSEUMS COMMITTEE
16 JUNE 2014

Present: Councillors Charlesworth, Charman, Hodges, Howard, Lock, Poole (in the Chair), Street and Webb (duly appointed substitute for Councillor Sinden).

Museum Association Representatives: Mr Adams, Mrs Barrett, Mr Palfrey-Martin, Mr Peak and Mrs Purdey

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were noted for Councillors Edwards and Sinden and Mrs Hawkins.

The Chair welcomed the new members to the Committee.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors made no declarations of interest at this meeting.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2014 be approved and signed by the Chair as a true record.

4. CURATOR'S REPORT

Cathy Walling, Museum Curator, presented a report to provide an update on issues arising from previous meetings and confirmation of Curator's actions.

It was noted the Members and HBC staff visit to the Keep at Falmer on 11 April was successful. During the tour of the building and its facilities, Members and staff viewed a number of Hastings maps and documents. Another visit to the Keep will be arranged in due course.

The National Trust asked for permission to move a painting of William Lamb currently on loan to Lamb House in Rye to facilitate the BBC filming of 'Mapp and Lucia' currently taking place.

A team of volunteers have been appointed to work on the 'Hastings Remembers' WWI project. The volunteers will undergo a programme of training. Work on the exhibition, which opens on 26 July is currently underway. Invitations to an open evening on 25 July will be sent out in due course.

The Museums new Twitter & Facebook accounts are widely used. As of 4 June 2014, 189 there were Twitter followers. Facebook posts have reached

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3,795 people. The most popular item on Facebook has been an album of photographs of Hastings in the 1950s which has reached 4,168 people.

HMAG is one of five museums taking part in this project, led by Rachel Heminway-Hurst for Bexhill Museum and 100% funded by the Arts Council England Strategic Commissioning Fund. The project will pay for a three day review by freelance expert Len Pole of our less well-known ethnographic objects, in particular items from Eastern Europe, South America and Africa. Full details were contained within the report.

RESOLVED – that the Committee accepts the report and are satisfied with the comments in the report.

5. DRAFT FORWARD PLAN

Cathy Walling, Museum Curator, presented a report to inform members of the draft Museum Forward Plan. The draft Forward Plan 2014-2019 was appended to the report under Appendix A.

The Museums Forward Plan will replace the version dated 2010-13. The plan covers a three-year period as well as a proposed Action plan for the next five years. A regularly monitored Forward Plan was a requirement of the Accreditation scheme run by the Arts Council. Hastings Museum and Art Gallery and the Old Town Hall Museum have been accredited since 2007. This will enable the Museum to apply for key funding for the Council's strategic review and also from the Arts Council.

Councillor Street enquired if consideration had been given to selling items on the website. The Curator confirmed that it was discussed 5 years ago, when at the time their software was not advanced enough to provide a retail service.

Councillor Hodges, suggested the SWOT Analysis Weakness 'Out of town centre' was incorrect. Virginia Gilbert confirmed it was part of the Corporate Plan and needed to be retained.

Tania Charman, noted the bus times for Bohemia Road were no longer available. The Curator confirmed this would be addressed.

Councillor Howard asked if further consideration had been given to enhance the café facilities at the Museum. He believed it would be beneficial as no where else within the vicinity provided this service and it offered a good destination for visitors. The Curator explained that if the Arts Council were minded to fund the strategic review they may look further into it and fund a strategic study.

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Councillor Charlesworth asked if visitors could sit outside on land behind the museum which was cleared in 2013. Nick Sangster said the land was covered in the strategic study funded by the Arts Council to look at overall space inside and out. Councillor Charlesworth suggested renting the land out to other organisations/charities. Mrs Barrett said any expansion of the café would require additional staffing and cost to make an income.

Steve Peak asked if given the high costs of using the museum and costs of staff could this could be subsidised by the Council. Virginia said it was difficult to make an income and subsidise our services. They would try to keep prices reasonable.

RESOLVED – that the Committee accepts the report.

6. REQUEST FOR A LOAN

Cathy Walling, Museum Curator, presented a report to update members on a loan from the Museum collection.

The loan of the Hawaiian feather cloak had been requested by The Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco and the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, Honolulu. The exhibition of 'Royal Hawaiian Featherwork: Na Hulu Ali'i' is to be presented at the de Young from 29 August 2015 to 28 February 2016 and at the Bishop Museum from March 19 to 23 July 2016.

This will be the first exhibition of Hawaiian featherwork to be presented on the US mainland. The exhibition of 'Royal Hawaiian Featherwork' will mark the first time many of these items will have returned to Hawaii since the 18th century. The cloak is part of the Brassey gift to Hastings Museum.

Councillor Charlesworth considered that it was a good idea to loan the item to encourage publicity and for foreign visitors to visit the museum and see the large collection of Indian work held in Hastings.

Councillor Street asked if when loaning the item to a private institution, it would be possible to make an income from it. The Curator advised that it was not possible to make a profit on items loaned for the public to view. However, it might be possible to reduce insurance costs whilst the cloak was not in the museum, although this maybe an insignificant amount.

Councillor Hodges asked if the museum was in a position to afford such a range of artefacts and asked the committee to consider if it was time to focus more clearly on a range of local artefacts to release capital. Virginia Gilbert said they were under pressure to find ways to make more income without effecting the collections. She was minded to pursue other options before letting go of any of the museum pieces.

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Councillor Charlesworth recommended that an article in the Observer regarding the Hawaiian feather cloak would give local people a chance to see it before it goes on loan. The Curator said she would look into it.

RESOLVED – that the Committee accepts the report.

7. MUSEUM ATTENDANCE FIGURES

Cathy Walling, Museum Curator, presented a report to inform members of figures for attendances, educational activities and use of the Museum's website for the fourth quarter of 2014-15. Figures for January to March 2013 were submitted for comparison.

It was noted that the attendance figures for Hastings Museum and Art Gallery were consistent with the previous year. The number of pupils in organised groups had increased, this was reflected by the number of visits made by St. Paul's Group. The total number of visits combined had decreased by 979 compared to the previous year.

Attendances to the Old Town Hall Museum had dropped as well as school visits, this was primarily because of the reduction in opening hours from six days a week, to three. The total number of visits combined had decreased by 4,275.

Councillor Hodges suggested the window display at The Old Town Hall was contributing to the loss of visitors because it was dark and unwelcoming. He asked if officers could look at ways to lighten it up, to make it more attractive to visitors.

Councillor Lock asked the Curator if she knew where visitors to the museums were travelling from i.e. Sussex or further afield. The Curator confirmed she would undertake another visitor questionnaire during the course of the summer. This was carried out by way of a rolling programme every couple of years. In the interim period staff maintained data records on visitors.

Councillor Street explained that visits to the website were down from 37,023 for Quarter 4 to 20,793, because the website was being updated. It was expected that the new website would be up and running by the next committee meeting in September.

The Curator said that weddings and civil ceremonies had reduced from 35 to 22 compared to the previous year. Wedding bookings were lower than average everywhere, because of superstition associated with the year 2013. To date, a total of 18 bookings have been made for 2014/15. A Wedding Fair is to be held on 14 September. Entry will be free.

RESOLVED – that the Committee accepts the report.

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8. MUSEUM EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Cathy Walling, Museum Curator, presented a report to inform Members of forthcoming events and educational activities at the Hastings Museum and Art Gallery and the Old Town Hall Museum during July to September 2014, for Quarter 2, 2014.

These included:-

Exhibitions

Until 13 July: 'Rainforest of the Sea', a photographic exhibition of the coral reef environment off Borneo, on loan from the Horniman Museum.

Until 4 January 2015: 'The Four Seasons', paintings from the Museum collection.

5 July to 15 September: 'White Rock Baths', photographs by Brian Rybolt.

26 July to 13 November: 'Hastings Remembers, Local Stories of the First World War'.

29 July: 'Hastings Remembers' Pop-up exhibition at Old Town Hall Museum

22 September to 30 November: 'Misogyny is Suicide' by HKB Finn. Photographs and soundtrack, part of AfriKaba Festival.

Events

1 July to 22 July: Weekly Life Writing and Literature Workshops.

2 July and 16 July: 'Book Bugs', Children's Library sessions.

2 July: Oral History training

3 July: Crosspath Theatre presents 'Puff' an entertaining new verse play by poet John Agard, exploring the relationship between Queen Elizabeth I and Sir Walter Raleigh.

3 July to 25 July: Friday morning Local History talks with Edward Preston.

26 July to 31 August: Summer Holiday Fun for families.

12 August: Hastings and St Leonards Seniors Forum Event, re 'Hastings Remembers'.

23 August: Charity daytime concert.

7 September: an illustrated talk on 'Artists and Writers at Fairlight' by Haydon Luke for Museum Association.

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13 September: 'The last Edwardian Summer', a talk and memory-collecting session. Part of Hastings and St Leonards Heritage Open Days.

14 September: Wedding Fair

27 September: 'The Quick and the Dead', a talk by Richard van Emden, the story of those who are forgotten when the fallen of WWI are remembered.

Weekly Play and Learn sessions by In2Play are held in term-time.

The Local Studies Room opens every Wednesday from 10am to 4pm.

Steve Peak informed the committee of the 50th Anniversary of the Mods and Rockers Rights-1964. This is to be attended by the BBC on 3rd August. Councillor Street asked if there would be a reception with the Mods & Rockers attending. The Curator explained that this had been arranged by the museum in previous years, but this year staff had been absorbed in organizing WWI events and exhibitions. However, she went on to say they could produce a photo-gallery on Facebook, if approval was given for copyright. To conclude, Steve Peak said the scooter shop would be hosting a rally at the Stade Open Space.

RESOLVED - that the Committee accepts the report.

9. MUSEUM ACQUISITIONS

Cathy Walling, Museum Curator, presented a report informing members of six items acquired by the Museum in the last quarter and the names of donors. The items included: -

1. Hastings Grammar School cap, with yellow trim for 'Parker' house, 1960s. Donor: Mr J Hibberd
2. Album of photographs of donor's parents' honeymoon in Hastings December 1934. Donor: Mrs J Wickson
3. Hastings and St Leonards official guidebook and other leaflets 1927. Donor: Mr B Crisp
4. Copy of 'The Dekhnewala' or 'Fusiliers gazette, 1873. Donor: Mrs J Divall
5. Eight prescription journals and ledgers from local pharmacy, from 1928 onwards. Donor: Mrs S LeBreuilly
6. 3 glass negatives of Hastings Castle. Donor: Eastbourne Heritage Service
7. Spode Silver Jubilee Loving Cup. Donor: The estate of Mrs P Leach

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8. 1920s wedding dress and photographs. Donor: Mrs E Martin
9. LMSR brass railway sign. Donor: Mrs J Collett
10. Framed needlework of Royal Sussex Regiment crest, WWI. Donor: Mrs P Pont
11. Framed watercolour of Old St Helen's Church by J Oddie. Donor: St Helen's Church per Mr D Valentine
12. Framed watercolour of Harbour Arm, by E L Badham. Donor: Brassey Fund
13. 1953 Radio Times and televisor instructions. Donor: Mr R Mucci
14. Drawing on map by Len Shelley. Donor: Brassey Fund
15. Jigsaw of Battle of Hastings from Tapisserie de Bayeux. Jigsaw of White Rock Gardens in 1925, made by Ottakars. Donor: Mrs C Georgiou
16. Copy of report from St Leonards Coastal Space Community Planning weekend, April 2012. Copy of report from Town Centre Conference, Sept 2011. Donor; Mr A Palfrey-Martin

Councillor Lock sought clarification on whether items that were not suitable for the collections could be sold or whether they would go to other museums. The Curator confirmed that items could not be sold. Furthermore, Erica Barratt added that they could not be disposed of. She said items would have to be offered to other museums and carefully investigated for a connection with Hastings, however tenuous.

RESOLVED - that the Committee accepts the report and the Chair signs the certificates of thanks.

10. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED – that the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the items of business listed below because it is likely that, if members of the public were present, there would be disclosure to them of ‘exempt’ information as defined in the paragraphs of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

<u>Minute No.</u>	<u>Subject Matter</u>	<u>Paragraph No.</u>
11(E)	Offer to purchase	Paragraphs 8 & 9

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11E. OFFER TO PURCHASE

Cathy Walling, Museum Curator, presented a report for Members to consider an item offered to the Museum for purchase.

Councillor Street proposed a motion to refuse to purchase the item. This was seconded by Councillor Hodges.

RESOLVED – (unanimously) that the Committee accepts the report and notes the report and that the offer to purchase be declined.

(The Chair declared the meeting closed at 3.33pm)