

HERTFORDSHIRE MUSEUMS

Hertfordshire Association of Museums



ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past year, it has been rewarding to see visitors returning to Hertfordshire's museums and observe a strong demand for events and activities, especially during the school holidays.

Our museums are doing more with less; although visitor figures continue to rise and are close to pre-pandemic levels, staffing numbers and, most markedly, volunteer hours remain reduced, as does commercial income. The most recent Annual Museum Survey (2022) shows this is reflected regionally and nationally with a 38 per cent decline in volunteer numbers and a 25 per cent decrease in income across the sector in the period of reporting.

Engagement with schools also continues to be a challenge for many museums. Following the successful re-establishment of many learning programmes schools have been keen to re-engage with museums but, amongst other things, the increased cost of coach hire continues to be a barrier to access.

This year we have been working closely with our volunteer-run museums providing training and support for new trustees or volunteers who have taken on new responsibilities since the pandemic. Trustees and volunteers from Herts museums have attended a variety of training courses that included an 'Introduction for New Trustees', an 'Introduction to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Museums' and 'Succession Planning for Museum Trustees'. We have also funded Management of Volunteers Level 3 training and a place on the National Museums Development Volunteer Strategy Programme for staff from Herts Museums, as well as providing HAM Museum Back to Basics training which was open to all volunteer-run museums in Hertfordshire.

We have seen diverse and engaging events and exhibitions during the year. Many museums marked the death of the Queen and the coronation of the King with commemorative displays. Other notable displays include an exhibition of Quentin Blake's illustrations for Roald Dahl's *The BFG* at North Herts Museum; *Drawing in the Dark*, an exhibition of Henry Moore's coal mining drawings at St Albans Museum and Gallery; and a truly extraordinary retrospective of the knitted creations made by a secret society of yarn bombers that was hosted by Ware Museum.



WHO WE ARE

Hertfordshire Association of Museums is a dynamic and active network that supports all people who work for or volunteer in our museums with the aim of increasing awareness and raising professional standards.

The Museums Development Team is part of Hertfordshire County Council Heritage Services and the programme is delivered in conjunction with a service level agreement with SHARE Museums East, a sector support organisation supported by Arts Council England.

Each year we deliver a programme of training, network events and meetings plus an annual awards event. We also provide individual support to museums seeking advice on a range of subjects including collections care, governance and audience development.

CONSERVATION SUPPORT SCHEME

Our newest resource for Hertfordshire Association of Museum members is a conservation support scheme that launched in September 2022. The scheme enables our museums to contact the Hertfordshire Archives conservator for free support or advice when caring for, or conserving documents or paper-based objects or collections. The conservator can provide general consultation for museum preventive needs, benchwork or reports for grants. This year the conservator helped five museums with work that included map repair, paper conservation for display, packaging plans and a grant consultation.

Conservation undertaken:

- Elstree and Borehamwood Museum - 11 maps flattened and repaired
- Lowewood Museum - paper conservation
- Welwyn Hatfield Museums - packaging plan
- Dacorum Heritage Trust - grant consultation
- Three Rivers Museum - general conservation advice





*We re-attached the
label to his jacket. It
looks fantastic! Thank
you so much!*

Lowewood Museum



HERTFORDSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF MUSEUMS AWARDS 2022/23



Hertfordshire Association of Museums held their fifth Annual Awards Ceremony on Friday February 24th at North Hertfordshire Museum. Guests were welcomed with a cream tea and were captivated by a fascinating talk on 'How the Stars have shaped the History of Humankind', given by astronomer and journalist, Dr Stuart Clark.

The awards were judged by an independent panel who praised the high quality of the entries, commenting that it demonstrated the excellent work achieved by museums within the county.

The winners were:-

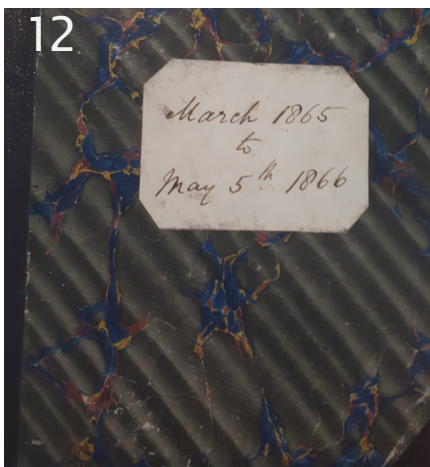
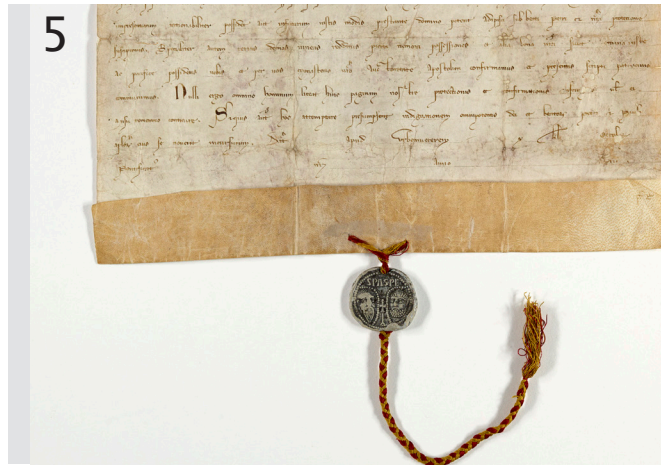
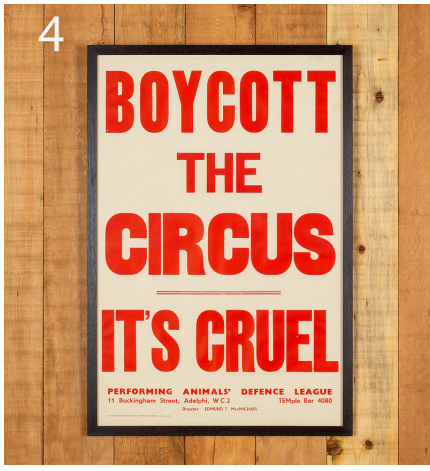
- Wellbeing Award – Bishops Stortford Museum
- Inclusion – Dacorum Heritage
- Transformation Award – The Bunker at Hatfield Police
- Project of the Year – Garden City Collection

Simon Aries, Director, Libraries and Heritage for Hertfordshire County Council, presented Heritage Hero Awards to individuals from eight museums across the county to recognise the wonderful work they have done supporting museums and communities.



The Object of the Year is decided by public vote and, this year, was won by Lowewood Museum with their set of **Four Swans**

14 museums entered an object from their collection
Over 1100 people voted for their Object of the Year



OBJECT OF THE YEAR ENTRIES

1. Ashwell Museum - Dolls house chamber pot
2. The Bunker Museum - Diorama of missile silo
3. Dacorum Heritage - Click the Kodak Kolorkin
4. Garden City Collection - Fly poster
5. HALS - (19686) Papal bull with bulla
6. Lowewood Museum - The Four Swans
7. Mill Green Museum - Deer Leg knife and fork
8. Natural History Museum at Tring - Glis glis
9. North Hertfordshire Museum - Giant Toe
10. Royston Museum - Chain of Office, AOFB
11. Stevenage Museum - Gordon the Gopher
12. Three Rivers Museum - Diaries of John White
13. Tring Local History Museum - Railway sleeper
14. Watford Museum - Watford FC mobile phone

Small Grants

In 2022 we awarded ten Hertfordshire Association of Museums Small Grants and Training Grants to support museums recovering from the pandemic or to fund development or project work. The total sum awarded was £6,761



Natural History Museum at Tring self-led materials

Grants were awarded to:

Ashwell Museum – for a collections review by consultant archaeological conservator to provide a priorities list of conservation work that could be undertaken for the future.

British Schools Museum – towards a consultant-led Trustee Development Day following significant changes in their Board. This was used as match funding in conjunction with a SHARE Museums East Trust Development scheme.

Dacorum Heritage – for a user-friendly, modern and inspiring website, to include stories from the collections. The website will open up opportunities for people to volunteer their time remotely.

de Havilland Aircraft Museum – to purchase an off the shelf software solution to support proper management of volunteer data and volunteer workflow for their very large volunteer base.

Garden City Collection – for a curriculum consultant to help put together a Year 6 STEM activity to be delivered as part of ongoing programme for local school.

The Natural History Museum (Tring) – towards improving the museum programme for visually impaired visitors including purchase of pen friend recorders, self-led materials, and translation of resources into braille.

North Herts Museum – to purchase one spotlight and various attachments to improve lighting in the exhibition gallery.

Royston Museum – to enable the museum to overhaul and re-establish a loan box scheme. The grant enabled the museum to purchase boxes, packing and contents, as well as develop promotional materials.

Stevenage Museum – in light of their forthcoming relocation to a new, purpose-built building within the next 5 years, a grant to cover the cost of a Continuous Professional Development visit for members of museum staff and volunteers to another cultural organisation which has recently undergone a similar large-scale redevelopment.

Watford Museum – to purchase of new mannequins for use in exhibition displays.

THE BUNKER AT HATFIELD POLICE STATION: A NEW MUSEUM

Hatfield Police Station occupies a 1930s Art Deco building that was originally built as the headquarters of the de Havilland Aircraft Company in 1933. The building saw many transitions and takeovers, ultimately becoming part of British Aerospace until the site finally closed in 1994. Ten years later when the building reopened as Hatfield Police Station, little thought was paid to the small complex of four basement rooms below the main foyer that had served as an Air Raid shelter for senior managers in the WW2, and were being used for document and evidence storage.



Nearly 15 years later, two officers at the Station decided that this space could be used for a better purpose. The history of the building was well known and a small exhibition about the de Havilland Aircraft Company had been developed for display in the foyer of the police station. An idea of converting the basement into a small museum began to take shape, and after four years of planning and development the new micro museum opened. It packs a lot into a small space, telling two different stories: the first is the history of aircraft manufacture in Hatfield and the people who worked locally for De Havilland; the second is the story of Welwyn Hatfield Police Force and the people who work in the building today.

Curator Alistair Hodgson was asked to create a museum environment with contemporary décor and lighting to enhance and support a collection of small artefacts, dioramas, models and interpretation. The space would be used for school children to engage with local heritage and gain a better understanding of the work of the police. The small premises meant there was no room for items that did not contribute directly to the story being told.

Visitors to the museum, which is open by appointment only and mainly used by schools and youth groups, can discover the story of the de Havilland Aircraft Company and the Aerospace industry in a learning programme that supports STEM subjects. The museum has been fortunate to receive help from BAE Systems, Hertfordshire University, the Royal Aeronautical Society and the de Havilland Apprentices' Association.

Hertfordshire Constabulary has a "Prevention First" policy that involves meeting with children at an early age and forming good relationships between officers and school classes from around Year 3 onwards. The Bunker Museum has provided an ideal venue for these interactions: not only can the children meet and talk to police officers, but they can do so while visiting a interactive exhibition that covers the 'Local History' element of their curriculum as well as their 'Citizenship' studies.

The main aim of the museum will always be to work with school pupils to inspire their interest in history, science and technology as well as delivering important messages about citizenship and the work of the police. However, in keeping with Hertfordshire Constabulary's policy of community engagement, The Bunker Museum is also designed to appeal to the interests of the whole community and will host special exhibitions from time to time.

MUSEUM TRAINING: BACK TO BASICS



After the Covid pandemic, it became apparent that many of our smaller museums were being managed by volunteers who were new to the sector or who had become distanced from their museum during lockdown. Our Museum Training – Back to Basics course was designed as an overview of museums for those who were new, or had no museum-specific training, or for anyone who wanted a refresher.

The sessions were fast paced and delivered with a light touch, making use of existing resources, and designed to give an overview of many aspects of museum activity and signpost useful resources for attendees who wished to learn more.

Attendees were invited to share experiences from their own museums, and the group worked on practical solutions to the common challenges they faced. Feedback was that the day was well structured and valuable to all that attended.



OTHER MUSEUM HIGHLIGHTS

University of Herts Arts were awarded full Arts Council Accreditation. Congratulations to all the staff.

Ware Museum appointed a part-time Museum Manager, their first paid post at the museum.

St Albans Museum and Gallery made a successful application to the Arts Councils National Portfolio Scheme gaining significant investment which will fund five new paid jobs.

North Herts Museum ran a series of coffee mornings for Ukrainian Refugees.

The Hertfordshire Heritage Fund awarded three grants to North Herts Museum for the purchase of various works including 'Ivy' 1931 by Margaret Brynhild Parker.

The Hertfordshire Association of Museums would like to say **THANK YOU** to the following people and organisations for their support during the last year.

Alistair Hodgson – The Bunker at Hatfield Police Station

Claire Walsh – Natural History Museum at Tring

Elie Hughes – Ely Museum

Emma Calver - Bedfordshire Museums Development

Heather Lomas – Heather Lomas Consulting

Jasmine Allen – Stained Glass Museum

Lucy Maxwell – Suffolk Museums Development

Nicola Sherhod – John Bunyan Museum and Church

Pam Halls – Duxford Aviation Society

Pam Murray – Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies Library

Ruth Stratton - Heritage and Museums Officer, Hertsmere

Simon Aries - Hertfordshire County Council

Simon Roberts – Natural History Museum

Arts Council England and the SHARE Museums East Team

Members of the HAM Committee

All the wonderful staff and volunteers at Hertfordshire's museums



Hertfordshire Association of Museums

