

York Museums Trust Performance Report

2012/13 Bi-annual Report to 31 March 2013

Executive Summary

Our biggest current project is the York Art Gallery Development Project. Since the gallery closed on 31 December 2012 we have emptied the building of collections and fitments and the building is now being checked for asbestos and potential structural issues before the main building contract begins in October. We are planning to reopen for Easter 2015 with 60% more exhibition space, improved visitor facilities and the new Centre for British Studio Ceramics. We have raised £7,170,000 of the £8,000,000 needed but so still have a way to go. We have applied to various trust and foundations and are awaiting the outcome of these.

Whilst the gallery is closed we have sent key works from our collection on tour. In May, the exhibition of some of our most famous paintings, **Masterstrokes** opened at The Collection at Lincoln, which is the first venue of a tour of six of northern public art galleries. We also have four paintings on display at the National Gallery and Tate Britain. The Hepworth in Wakefield is currently displaying paintings presented to York by Dean Milner-White and from October they will also display a large percentage of the W A Ismay ceramic collection. Eighteenth century paintings have also been lent to Fairfax House in York.

Work also continues on our other major development at York Castle Museum. This will see a refurbished Debtors Prison creating new exhibition spaces, better learning spaces and for the first time a visitor lift. The first exhibition to be held in these new spaces will be **1914: When the World Changed Forever**, a major changing exhibition on the social impact of World War One. This will be Heritage Lottery Funded and the final submission for the round two funding has recently been sent to HLF. We will hear by the end of June if it has been successful. We have devised a plan B should the HLF bid not be successful where we will use the secured funds to deliver a more modest World War One exhibition. This work has required us to find more storage for the displaced collections which is still under negotiation.

Due to the closure of York Art Gallery and the future part closure of York Castle Museum some staff have relocated to office space on the Shambles and on Marygate.

We are delighted to report that our joint venture from 2012, the York Mystery Plays, won Visitor Experience of the Year at this year's Visit York Awards ceremony. The production was also nominated for the Marketing Award and York Castle Museum was also nominated for Visitor Attraction of the Year.

We have worked with the council on a new Partnership Delivery Plan which will describe how we will work together up to 2018. YMT is incredibly proud of our achievements over the last 11 years and hope to continue to improve the services we offer York Residents and visitors to the city.

We have also begun to plan for displaying the reconstructed head of King Richard III, which will be on display at the Yorkshire Museum for 5 months as part of a national tour. We will also display items from the period along with the head, including items associated with Richard III including the Middleham Jewel and a recently acquired boar badge that would have been worn by a supporter of the king.

Plans are also progressing with signage in the Museum Gardens. We have agreed an overall plan of a unified suite of signs ranging from very clear, simple signs on the entrances, through to maps and behavioural signs which will help the Garden Guides in their duties.

Our regional role is developing with the Museums Development Team working well with the smaller and medium sized accredited museums across Yorkshire and Humberside. We also launched the third Art in Yorkshire project which is led by YMT and has over 20 partners.

Staff Numbers at 30 April 2013 were: 106 Permanent, 54 Casual, 9 Temporary, totalling 169.

Analysis of Performance

a) Stabilising visitor figures

Summer 2012 was very challenging, as it was for many attractions throughout the country, attributed to the effect of the Olympic Games and the bad weather experienced through the holiday period. Since the start of 2013 though figures have improved and we had a very good February half term and Easter.

Total Visitors: 4 months from January to April
2013
(excluding conference visitors)

	Actual	Last year	% Change
Castle Museum	63,542	53,266	+19%
York St Mary's	4,286	0	-
Yorkshire Museum	25,134	22,535	+12%
Grand Total	92,962	75,801	+23%

(York St Mary's was not

open during this period last year)

Final figures for the year (discounting the closed York Art Gallery) are very similar to the previous year, a remarkable turnaround considering the summer dip. We partly attribute this to our 'two museums for £10' offer which has proved to be very popular.

One area that we do not count visitors on a regular basis is the number of people enjoying the Museum Gardens which at the last count we believe are somewhere in the region of over 1.3million per annum.

b) Delivering new income streams

Councillors should be aware that due to government funding cuts our Arts Council Major Partner Museum award of £3.5m for 2012-15 has been cut by 2%. We expect further cuts to be announced due to budget cuts by the Coalition Government.

YMT's Trading Subsidiary Company continues to show a strong performance and this year retail, catering and venue hire delivered a profit of £206,000 largely because of our very successful wedding venue, the Hospitium. This income feeds back in to support the Charity under a tax-free Gift Aid arrangement.

We have also begun to think about a YMT Membership scheme and have had a meeting with a consultant which has helped our approach.

Over the reporting period we have also been successful in securing funds for the following:

Family Saturday's:

- Friends of York Art Gallery, £1,800

Purchase of watercolour of St Mary's precinct by Patrick Hall

- Friends of York Art Gallery, £400

Learning events for upcoming Bruce Nauman exhibition

- The Art Fund, £8,800

c) New exhibitions and interpretative service

It has been a busy start to the year with lots of new exhibitions. **Toys** has always been one of the Castle Museums most popular displays, so with the upcoming refurbishment it was decided to create a brand new exhibition space in a larger area. A new play area for children has been created, which is a brand new aspect to the museum. The exhibition opened on 15 February and was attended by children from St Paul's Primary School.

York: Capital of the North was opened on 28 February at the Yorkshire Museum by the Dean of York, Vivienne Faull. The exhibition is in the medieval galleries and includes the newly acquired boar badge that relates to Richard III.

Due to the closure of York Art Gallery, York St Mary's has become York Art Gallery's new contemporary art space. We partnered with Aesthetica, the York based publishers to launch the first ever **Aesthetica Art Prize Exhibition**. It took place from March to April, and was a great success, particularly as it attracted lots of young people. Following this we have opened **The Matter of Life and Death**, an exhibition curated by Julian Stair, a very established potter and writer who worked with all the YMT historic ceramic collections on the theme of death. This is a departure from our installation approach and has worked beautifully. The range of objects is very broad including Neolithic and Egyptian works and contemporary pieces by Stair himself, all on open display. After this we are pleased to host an exhibition of work by the international artist Bruce Nauman, as part of the Tate's Artist Rooms.

Earlier in the year we also displayed an exhibition of York based artist Mark Heard's work from his book '*A First Book of Nature*' at the Yorkshire Museum. This has been followed by the exhibition **After the Ice** on Yorkshire's prehistory that includes famous items found at Star Carr. This is part of our Prehistory in Yorkshire project, which has also seen Bronze Age objects from the Lamplough-Lidster archaeological collection on display at Dalby Forest Visitors Centre. This is the first time the collection has ever been on public display. The installation, in close proximity to where the objects were originally recovered, will make YMT's archaeology collections accessible to a new audience.

We held another successful Contemporary Art Walk on 10 April with a visit to York St Mary's, Kentmere House Gallery and the National Railway Museum.

We have also begun thinking about new gardens to the rear of the gallery that we will connect to the current footprint of Museum Gardens. We are busy consulting on these plans at the moment and they include a Yorkshire edible garden, a space dedicated to the botanical history of the site, and a possible artist's garden.

d) Create an education strategy

Headline educational figures for the period are as follows:

	YCM		YM		Total	
	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013
Children from York schools	1,125	919	585	888	1,710	1,807
Children from non-York schools	5,407	5,079	2,889	2,313	8,296	7,392
HE and FE student visits	300	216	321	54	621	270

Formal Learning

We are evaluating our Formal Learning provision and finding out why there has been a drop in the attendance of York primary schools to York Castle Museum. There has been a good increase in York secondary schools attending both museums though.

We have developed 3 new art workshops for primary schools, *Portraits in Your Pocket* and *Sensing the Gardens* for delivery at the Yorkshire Museum and *York Prison: Can this Building Speak?* delivered at the Castle Museum.

Portraits in Your Pocket uses miniature portraits from the Gallery collection and coins from the Yorkshire Museum to illustrate why people carry portraits and what they can tell us about the people they portray. *Sensing the Gardens* includes a tour of the Museum Gardens during which the children make a sensory map. Photographs, prints and drawings show the gardens during different seasons and at different periods of its history and stimulate discussion. *York Prison: Can this Building Speak?* uses drawing activities to encourage the children to explore the history of York Castle and the prison buildings.

Family Learning

Family Saturdays will run at York St Mary's whilst there are exhibitions on show, during the rest of the year they will be held at the Yorkshire Museum.

A special leaflet detailing the new programme of offers for Under 5's at the museum has been produced with brand new events including Kitchen Club and Storytelling and Singing.

A week long Art School for teenagers was held at York St Mary's. Participants created sculptures using old dining chairs under the expert guidance of Aesthetica Art Prize winning artist Poppy Whatmore.

Adult Learning

York Open Studios artists led eight workshop sessions for adults (four each at the Yorkshire and Castle Museums) in January. These workshops have been run annually at York Art Gallery and we were keen to continue this successful partnership. 94 people attended in total, over two weekends.

Artist Jake Attree delivered drawing workshops at the Yorkshire Museum in early February, as part of the annual Residents Festival; 13 people attended.

Book Club at the Yorkshire Museum has continued with 'Theft: a Love Story' by Peter Carey, and 'Toast' by Nigel Slater.

Territories

A classroom has been hired at Burnholme Community College so that the Territories programme for hard to reach groups can continue while York Art Gallery is closed.

Five sessions have also been held at Auden House, a care home for the elderly. These *Music and Memory* sessions are led by musician Thea Jacob and will ultimately generate stories, songs and reminiscences which can be used as part of the interpretation of the new toy exhibition at the Castle Museum.

Gypsy traveller pupils at Lakeside Primary have been inspired by Royal Crown Derby ware. They have produced collages, small clay sculptures of birds and decorated plates. They will each gain an Arts Award at Discover level for this project. This is particularly significant as the school do not expect these children to achieve satisfactory grades in their end of year SATs.

With support from an Occupational Therapy Nurse we are running a further five sessions for people with dementia and their partner-carers. Artist Kirstie Briggs Bateman will create sensory memory boxes with the group.

e) Increase use and involvement by residents

With the gallery emptied, we opened the doors to the public for one last time on Saturday 2 February. The empty building was used to celebrate the creativity of the local community with a display of the 'York Bayers Tapestry' (a 120 panel painting measuring over 200 feet in length, which was produced in sessions across the city organised by City of York Council during *York 800*) and a small exhibition of contemporary quilts produced by the Quilter's Guild and performances by York Youth Theatre.

Visitors were encouraged to draw on the walls of the downstairs galleries, we ran open public sessions with a digital drawing tool, members of the Northern Potters ran drop-in clay workshops in the main gallery and demonstrated throwing on a wheel. We also ran activities for the under 5s in the Studio and a café with craft materials on hand in the entrance hall. Curators and guides also gave tours of the back-of-house areas and explained the development plans to visitors.

The Friends of York Art Gallery encouraged people to make donations and talked to people about the development and the role of the Friends. This was a hugely successful event which received press both locally, nationally and in Ireland. The Mayor and Sheriff of York attended as did Councillor Sonja Crisp. Total visitor numbers were: 756 children and 3,011 adults, which is the greatest number of visitors YMT has had in a single day to the gallery.

We currently have 310 active volunteers on our books as at the end of April, totalling 3,608 contributed hours across all of the sites over the reporting period.

York Observatory opened as part of the BBC Stargazing Live event again this year. We offered 84 free timed tickets, which sold out within 2 hours of bookings opening on the internet, and, even though the night itself was cloudy, almost everyone turned up for their session.

We now have Historic Library Steward volunteers in the Yorkshire Museum library 4 days a week, including weekends which are our busiest days. We took our team on a fact-finding trip to the Minster Library where staff there showed us around and talked us through their operating procedures. The library continues to attract much admiration from visitors and we are looking forward to growing this project steadily over the coming months.

We had good cover for Studios activities at the Castle over Easter and visitors enjoyed our child-themed activities in the Studio spaces. Our new history team volunteers are up and running at the Castle Museum, helping the history team

with a number of audit projects in both the internal stores in the museum and at our stores.

f) *Achieve high visitor satisfaction*

Visitor surveys carried out in summer 2012 by Spirul Research showed that at:
York Castle Museum:

- 99% of visitors were either satisfied or very satisfied with their visit
- 97% would recommend the museum to others
- 96% would visit again

At Yorkshire Museum:

- 97% of visitors were either satisfied or very satisfied with their visit
- 97% would recommend the museum to others
- 89% would visit again

At York Art Gallery:

- 97% of visitors were either satisfied or very satisfied with their visit
- 99% would recommend the gallery to others
- 95% would visit again

Incidentally, York Castle Museum is now the best rated charging York attraction on Tripadvisor and third only to the NRM and the City Walls out of all 125 attractions listed in York.

g) *Ensure the cataloguing of the collection*

We have begun drafting up a new Collections Development Policy that is needed for national Accreditation of our collections. This has been taken to, and discussed by, the Learning and Culture Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and will be finalised in the summer.

Collections stewardship is very much to the fore with plans for new storage, collection development plans, archaeology collection rationalisation and in the autumn our submission for Accreditation.

The collections technician has completed work improving archaeological records in the Adlib database by using the MDA archaeological object thesaurus. The collections team continue to update the Adlib records for fine art, adding new locations and insurance valuations. The registrar provided Adlib training for the digital team leader and the collections facilitators of natural science and history, and the science team have been working on getting up to speed with the documentation of the collection.

Collection Facilitators are reviewing departmental information systems. Approximately 35 - 40 separate indexes have been found. Information from these will be added to Adlib as the collections are checked and documented. A basic filing system is being created for the department and two further volunteer projects will be created from this to organise existing held research and to link objects with donation letters.

Acquisitions over the period have included a group of seven works of art by war artist Jules George that document his trip to Afghanistan with the 2nd Battalion Yorkshire regiment (Green Howards); a watercolour by Patrick Hall, c. 1950, which shows a design for a sculpture garden at the rear of York Art Gallery; ice skates used in Rowntree park; equipment from the Museum Garden Bowling Club; a 1853 pattern Enfield musket rifle; a WW1 Rum Jar; a 1980's mobile phone and camera; and WW1 handkerchiefs.

**Janet Barnes, Chief Executive
York Museums Trust, May 2013**