

## York Museums Trust Performance Report: April – September 2013

### Executive Summary

Our biggest current project continues to be the York Art Gallery Development. The gallery closed to the public on 31 December 2012 for the enabling works and we have now agreed the main works contract. The work began on 11 November and the contractors are Simpsons of York. We are still planning to reopen spring 2015 with 60% more exhibition space, improved visitor facilities and the new Centre of Ceramic Arts (CoCA). We have now raised £7,260,000 of the £8,000,000 needed so still have a way to go. We have applied to various trust and foundations and are awaiting the outcome of these.

We have been closely involved in the proposed redevelopment of Exhibition Square as part of the Reinvigorate York scheme and we look forward to a fresh looking public space by the time of the gallery's reopening. The gallery development, the Exhibition Square refresh and the York Theatre Royal development will help create a new dynamic area of the city for residents and visitors.

Work also continues on our major development at York Castle Museum and we have heard that our second round application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for £1.1m was successful. 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 work will begin in November and will be open to the public in June 2014. The museum will remain open to visitors during the project.

The reconstructed head of Richard III went on display in the Yorkshire Museum's medieval gallery at the centre of a special exhibition **Richard III: King & County** on 19 July. This proved to be extremely popular and since the head moved to Northampton we have displayed the York House Book, on loan from York City Archives, that details the kings relationship with the city.

We were delighted in September when the Museum Gardens were awarded a gold medal by Yorkshire in Bloom, a deserved 'well done' to our dedicated gardens team. We are currently planning to expand the gardens to the rear of York Art Gallery where we hope to establish three new gardens. We have consulted widely on these plans, including with schoolchildren and we were delighted when Yorventure awarded us £100,000 towards one of these gardens, an Edible Woodland.

Whilst York Art Gallery is closed we have continued to display as much of the collection elsewhere as possible. Our regional touring exhibition ***Masterstrokes: Great Paintings from York Art Gallery*** has now been on display in Lincoln and Preston and will shortly open in Huddersfield before moving on to Scarborough, Barnsley and Harrogate. 700 pieces from the Ismay ceramic collection are currently on display at the Hepworth as part of an installation by artist Matthew Darbyshire. Eight ceramics by William Staite Murray are included in a new exhibition, ***Art and Life: Ben Nicholson, Winifred Nicholson, Christopher Wood, Alfred Wallis and William Staite Murray 1920-1931***. The exhibition at Leeds Art Gallery is open until 12 January and then tours to Kettle's Yard, Cambridge and Dulwich Picture Gallery. We also continue to have a select few work on display at Fairfax House and also the National Gallery and at Tate Britain.

We have moved some central services staff to office space on the Shambles and we have also moved staff from York Castle Museum to our stores on James Street in advance of the HLF project. Guides and other key staff will have use of portakabins on the site so they have easy access to the museum.

As part of our Forward Plan 2012-18 we decided to boost the digital side of our work. Much work has been done and we were delighted that our bid to the Wikimedia Foundation for funding of a Wikipedian in residence was approved. This will give us a part-time post for three months to help us to become a Wikipedia-friendly organisation, boost the profile of the Trust and its collections on Wikipedia and Wikimedia Commons.

Our regional role continues with the Museums Development Team working well with smaller and medium sized accredited museums across Yorkshire and Humberside. Since April 60 Museum organisations have received direct advice or support from the team, 75% of all eligible museums. This summer also saw the third ***Art in Yorkshire*** project led by YMT that involves over 20 partners across the region. This will continue for a fourth year and we are also leading on a similar partnership for a regional initiative on Yorkshire exhibitions to mark the centenary of WWI, ***1914 in Yorkshire***.

In January we will be concentrating on the second round of funding for both the Arts Council Major Partner Museum funding and ACE funding for our regional museum development work. Both of these sources of funding, currently £3.4m and £800,000 respectively, have represented a big step up for YMT that we have responded very well too. We recently received a very complimentary letter from ACE reviewing our progress so far.

Staff Numbers at the end of September were: 77 full time, 40 part time, 49 casual totalling 166.

## Analysis of Performance

### a) Stabilising visitor figures

We had a much better summer than last year, with the Yorkshire Museum doing very well, helped by the reconstructed head of Richard III and also because for the first time this museum was included in our television advertising. Our 'two museums for £10' offer continues to be very popular too.

Total Visitors: 6 months from April to September  
2013  
(excluding conference visitors)

	Actual	Last year	% Change
Castle Museum	163,933	167,643	-2%
York St Mary's	24,170	31,996	-24%
Yorkshire Museum	70,793	53,482	+32%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>258,896</b>	<b>253,121</b>	<b>+2%</b>

### b) Delivering new income streams

YMT's Trading Subsidiary Company continues to show a strong performance and so far this year retail, catering and venue hire delivered a profit of £172,000 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.

To coincide with the Richard III exhibition we also had made replicas of a medieval boar badge associated with the king that we recently acquired. We produced these in pewter, silver and a one off gold version. These have proved to be very popular and we may do similar unique retail offers in the future based on the collections.

We have also continued to think about a YMT Membership scheme and have had a meeting with a consultant which has helped our approach, as well as having a meeting with our Trustees so that the shape of the scheme can begin to be formulated. We will shortly appoint a membership manager who will lead on the instigation of this.

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

### York Art Gallery Development

- The Holbeck Charitable Trust, £100,000

### New edible woodland garden

- Yorventure, £100,000

### Wikipedian in residence

- Wikimedia UK, £5,522

## c) New exhibitions and interpretative service

Due to the closure of York Art Gallery, York St Mary's has become York Art Gallery's new contemporary art space. Following on from the ***Aesthetica Art Prize Exhibition*** and ***The Matter of Life and Death*** we have had a selection of work by the international artist Bruce Nauman on show, as part of the Tate's ARTIST ROOMS. This features iconic pieces in sculpture, neon and video.

At the Yorkshire Museum, following an exhibition of York based artist Mark Heard's work, historian Francis Pryor opened ***After the Ice*** that investigates Yorkshire's prehistory including famous items found at Star Carr. We also have on display ***Tempset Anderson: Volcano Chaser***, a centenary exhibition looking at the life and work of this York worthy.

In the Museum Gardens pruning was carried out on shrubs by the riverside to let in more light and various Roses and Clematis have been planted next to Yew and Holly trees with the intention of having them climb up those evergreens and provide a splash of colour. New plants in the Observatory and Riverside beds have established well and there have been many positive comments from local visitors and tourists. The first Spring Flower Count carried out on 1 March found 62 different species in flower. This will be repeated every year on the same date and will provide a useful record for the garden. The recent opening of the Starr Inn the City adds an extra attraction to the gardens and promises to bring more people to them.

## 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	1,230	<b>1,235</b>	709	<b>1,172</b>	2,288	<b>2,427</b>
Children from non-York schools	9,533	<b>10,180</b>	2,751	<b>3,128</b>	13,416	<b>13,355</b>
HE and FE student visits	567	<b>909</b>	234	<b>273</b>	<b>832</b>	<b>1,182</b>

(\*total include some figures from York St Mary's and York Art Gallery)

### Formal Learning

Numbers for school visits are mostly up in comparison with the same period last year. This is in part due to the extra attendance at the reworked and refreshed Yorkshire Museum workshops.

Highlights through the period have included 45 Year 9 pupils at Burnholme School taking part in a special arts day inspired by the gallery collections; University of York students working on an audience development plan regarding changing use of the Cradle to Grave gallery; working with York St John University undergraduate students on foreign language guides for visiting groups and tourists; and Cosmodome outreach sessions that attracted over 200 children and young people at NYBEP's Big Bang event in June.

### Informal Learning

'Catnapped!' was a huge success this summer at the Castle Museum. Approximately 25,000 people took part in the activity, which involved investigating suspects and looking for clues around the Female Prison and Kirkgate to discover who stole the Lord Mayor's Cat.

Working with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation six sessions were run with a group of dementia patients from York to make a film on living with dementia, inspired by the museum. The project will also inform us on how we can make the museum a more dementia friendly place.

Wild Wednesdays were back this year; they ran every Wednesday in August in the Museum Gardens, with activities relating to the collections and themed around the seasons. They were attended by around 6,000 children. This resulted in improved visitor numbers at the museum itself.

A special leaflet detailing the new programme of offers for Under 5's was produced with brand new events including Kitchen Club, Storytelling and Singing sessions being advertised.

### **Family Learning**

Family Saturdays were held at the Yorkshire Museum and at York St Mary's. These were a partnership project with University of York's Centre for Lifelong Learning, which aims to promote science learning and encourage parents to engage with their children.

Artist run drop-in workshops for families were held for three days at York St Mary's, inspired by the Julian Stair exhibition.

### **Adult Learning**

Highlights have included: in partnership with CYC York Learning, a weekend of life drawing, that took place at the Yorkshire Museum in May, attended by 11 people; The Ekphrasis partnership with the Centre for Lifelong Learning at the University of York continues with a session on Kirkgate looking at objects and using experience as inspiration to create a piece of writing; a special curator session on Keeping Healthy in Victorian England; YMT Book Club continues with 'And Our Faces, My Heart, Brief as Photos' by John Berger and 'Drawing Fire' by Private Len Smith being discussed.

### **Territories**

The Explore Award project with young gypsy travellers at Lakeside Primary School reached its conclusion in July. Four of the children involved completed all the components of the Award and received participatory certificates. Their portfolios have been sent for moderation.

Art workshops for couples where one has dementia, which we have been running at Burnholme School, have proven very successful. They fit well with the City of York Council's aspiration for York to become a dementia friendly city, and we hope to continue offering supportive, practical, creative workshops for this growing community in the future.

### ***e) Increase use and involvement by residents***

We currently have 335 active volunteers on our books as at the end of September, totalling 6,139 contributed hours across all of the sites over the reporting period.

We now have Historic Library Steward volunteers in the Yorkshire Museum library 4 days a week, including weekends which are our busiest days. The team is now 20 strong and they continue to attract much admiration from visitors.

Raindale Mill is still gathering a small team of committed volunteers who open the space on a regular basis to visitors and the mill is working at least twice a week. During May and June, the Mill opened to nearly 3,000 visitors.

A host of volunteers have had a fabulous time helping the history team to decant 17,000 objects from the Debtors Prison to James St stores. This rare opportunity to work so closely with both the team and the objects on such a large scale has been really appreciated by volunteers and the history team have certainly appreciated the extra hands.

We had excellent coverage at the Observatory and in some weeks managed to open almost every day.

A small geocache was placed in the garden at the start of the summer to assess interest and feasibility. It has proved very popular and the gardens team are working with the digital team to extend this into a full-blown geocache trail through the garden.

### **f) *Achieve high visitor satisfaction***

Visitor surveys carried out in summer 2013 by Spirul Research showed that at:

York Castle Museum:

- 97% of visitors were either satisfied or very satisfied with their visit
- 99% would recommend the museum to others
- 94% would visit again

At Yorkshire Museum:

- 96% of visitors were either satisfied or very satisfied with their visit
- 98% would recommend the museum to others
- 91% would visit again

### **g) *Ensure the cataloguing of the collection***

Planning and moving objects for 1914 has been the main focus of the history team's work. Objects have been boxed, moved and updated on Adlib. Over all approximately 17,000 objects have been moved. This has involved creating 900 new boxes, as well as moving many larger objects which cannot be boxed. The existing documentation was poor in many areas and the team tackled this by auditing everything that was to be moved.

Rationalising the bulk archaeology collections (ceramic building materials, animal bone and architectural fragments) at YMT's store at Birch Park has begun. All Roman and Anglo-Saxon material have now been brought together

and rationalised; material has also been identified for transfer to Riccall or deep storage at Birch Park by clamping (shallow burying in the soil and grassed over).

Time was also spent over the summer months moving and auditing our human remains collection, and re-housing our archaeological paper archive to create a more usable, accessible resource for staff and researchers.

A copy of YMT's collections database is now online. The software is being tested and the first digital representations of our collections data will be publicly accessible soon.

Acquisitions have included a 1853 pattern Enfield musket rifle; WW1 Rum Jar; a 1980's mobile phone and camera; WW1 handkerchiefs; a work *Ego Geometria Sum IV: Boat, aged 2 years* by artist Helen Chadwick; *Winged form* by Victor Priem; a selection of seven small pots by Beryl Sutcliffe; dolls belonging to Madeline Blaess, a York resident in the early 20th Century; a Carols on Kirkgate Record; the archive of Craven's the York based sweet manufacturer; and the second gold torc.

Loans over the period have included a medieval human skull loaned to York Archaeological Trust as part of a new exhibition examining diseases in medieval York; the marble head of Constantine returned to York from its exhibitions in Milan and Rome; five Anglo-Scandinavian grave slabs were lent to York Archaeological Trust for display at 10 Coppergate for their summer exhibition, 'Heroes'; and the ceramic pieces to the Hepworth and Leeds.

Janet Barnes, Chief Executive  
York Museums Trust, November 2013