

York Museums Trust Performance Report: October 2013 – March 2014

Executive Summary

YMT's biggest current project continues to be the York Art Gallery Development. The gallery closed to the public on 31 December 2012 and the main works are currently underway; we are planning to re-open in June 2015 with 60% more exhibition space, improved visitor facilities and the new Centre of Ceramic Art (CoCA). Over this reporting period we were awarded £300,000 from the DCMS/Wolfson Fund for the project. The project is now fully funded.

Work has begun thinking about the opening exhibitions which will focus on the gallery's permanent collection, particularly the gifts and bequests the gallery has received over the years, including from collectors such as John Burton, FD Lycett Green, Dean Milner White and W.A Ismay.

We are also very close to the end of our major development at York Castle Museum. This has been funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. This will see a refurbished Debtors Prison creating new exhibition spaces, better learning spaces and offices 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 that opens to the public on 28 June. Scrutiny members have been invited to the private view on 16 July.

YMT are also leading on a regional marketing initiative to publicise the various events, exhibitions and displays focusing on WWI in this centenary years across museums and galleries in Yorkshire and the Humber. This is similar to our role in organising **Art in Yorkshire**, the fourth of which we launched recently showcasing the best art exhibitions in the region.

We were successful in winning a public vote in the annual, national Museums at Night competition, beating off stiff competition from the Courtauld Gallery and two other London venues; a real coup for York. We hosted some great events with the artist Grayson Perry on Thursday 15 May which will be included in the next report.

Our major regional role continues with the Museums Development Team working with smaller and medium sized accredited museums across Yorkshire and Humberside. Over 60 Museum organisations have received direct advice or support from the team, with a very high satisfaction rate. The team have just finished applying to Arts Council England for the second round of funding to offer this support across the region again through

2015-18. We see this work as a vital tool to increase YMT's visibility and recognition in the region and beyond.

We continue to work with City of York Council (CYC) on the Exhibition Square development and the timetable for its development has now been agreed. A first stage will see the Better Bus project take place after the Tour de France and a second stage will involve the main part of the square and will take place in early 2015 in time for the reopening of the gallery. The initial concepts will be designed by the landscape designer who we are working with on the new gardens in the Museum Gardens. This will help deliver a consistent and coherent design for the whole area. These initial concept designs will be presented to the major stakeholders for a further stage of public consultation. The main stakeholders will be YMT, CYC, University of York, York Civic Trust and English Heritage. Now that the decision has been made to keep Lendal Bridge open to all traffic, we will also need to think about more protection for the square from pollution and traffic noise if it is to become a pleasant public space where people will want to linger.

We are currently planning to expand the gardens to the rear of York Art Gallery where we hope to establish three new gardens, an edible woodland, an Artists' garden, and a garden of Yorkshire Flowers. We have consulted widely on these plans, and the first two, thanks in part to CYC capital funding, will be ready in time for the opening of the gallery. We are still in discussions with English Heritage about the design of the garden of Yorkshire Flowers and the pathways connecting Museum Gardens with the new gardens.

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, Preston, and Huddersfield and is currently on display at Scarborough before moving on to Barnsley and finally Harrogate. 700 pieces from the Ismay ceramic collection were on display at the Hepworth as part of an installation by artist Matthew Darbyshire. Eight ceramics by William Staite Murray are included in the exhibition, ***Art and Life: Ben Nicholson, Winifred Nicholson, Christopher Wood, Alfred Wallis and William Staite Murray 1920-1931***. The exhibition was first shown at Leeds Art Gallery then Kettle's Yard, Cambridge and has now opened at Dulwich Picture Gallery, London. We also continue to have a select few work on display at Fairfax House and also the National Gallery and at Tate Britain.

Staff Numbers at the end of April were: 70 full time, 34 part time, 58 casual totalling 162.

Analysis of Performance

a) Stabilising visitor figures

The Yorkshire Museum did very well over the reporting period; the slight dip at the York Castle Museum could be due to part of the museum being closed during our major development. Full year visitor figures showed a 2% rise in total. Our 'two museums for £10' offer continues to be very popular. The dip in York St Mary's is due, we think, to York Art Gallery being closed.

Total Visitors: 6 months from October 2013 to March 2014
(excluding conference visitors)

	Actual	Last year	% Change
York Castle Museum	119,513	123,496	-3%
York St Mary's	5,602	11,306	-50%
Yorkshire Museum	51,733	41,061	+26%
Grand Total	176,848	175,863	+1%

In addition we estimate that annual number of visitors to the Museum Gardens is 1,730,880.

b) Delivering new income streams

The support of City of York Council has been instrumental to our success over the last 12 years, but of course we are very aware of the funding difficulties that councils across the country are under so we were not at all surprised when we received word that the council would have to cut our revenue funding. We have strived since we began to create new and greater income streams and the success of our Trading Subsidiary is testament to this and it continues to show a strong performance and in 2013/14 retail, catering and venue hire delivered a profit of over £223,000. This income feeds back in to support the Charity under a tax-free Gift Aid arrangement.

We continue to explore a YMT supporters scheme, employing someone to lead on this. We see this scheme as a vital tool to keep a network of supporters updated on our work whilst also becoming a healthy income stream.

We are very grateful for CYC's commitment to our capital works and we have begun to think about investing to save, so for instance that more of our venues will use LED lighting so that we can decrease our utility bills in future years.

Much work has also been done in the early part of 2014 in applying for the second round of funding to remain an Arts Council England major partner museum. Currently YMT is one of only 16 organisations designated thus in the country. This equates to £3.3m over three years and we will hear the result on 1 July.

c) New exhibitions and interpretative service

Due to the closure of York Art Gallery, York St Mary's has become York Art Gallery's contemporary art space. York St Mary's reopened on Friday 4 April with the return of the ***Aesthetica Art Prize***. This exhibition showcases excellence in contemporary art and features shortlisted artists in the categories of Photographic & Digital Art, Three Dimensional Design & Sculpture, Painting & Drawing and Video, Installation & Performance. Aesthetica is a York based organisation that publishes a magazine and organises the short film festival in York. This will be the first of three exhibitions this year at this space including, Julian Stair and Bruce Nauman.

We have installed a display in the Yorkshire Museum's Reading Room, a 'cabinet of curiosities' style display examining the life of James Atkinson, one of the founders of the Yorkshire Philosophical Society and donor of a range of material to the Museum. This was co-curated with the Laurence Sterne Trust who have loaned us books from the time, and a strong relationship between the two institutions has been established.

A special exhibition ***Shakespeare's First Folio***, featuring an extremely rare edition of the First Folio went on display in the medieval gallery. The display is part of a partnership with Skipton Museum/Craven Council and the folio will be on loan until July 2014 as part of the Tour de France Grand Depart Cultural Festival. Prior to this we had a special exhibition featuring the York House Book on loan from York City Archives, displayed as part of the celebration of Richard III.

We also displayed an exhibition on Tempest Anderson that proved to be very popular, coinciding with the centenary of his death.

Our first online exhibition as part of our partnership with the Google Cultural Institute has gone live, focussing on the collection and archive of the major ceramics collector Bill Ismay:

<http://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/exhibit/w-a-ismay-collector-connoisseur-of-studio-ceramics/QRpzaaM2?hl=en>. This has sparked a huge amount of interest and is a beautiful way of presenting our collections online. Work has begun to produce a second online exhibition tentatively entitled 'Making Money: 1000 years of coinage in York' that will focus on 10-15 coins, one from each century between 700 and 1700, which illustrate York's status as the second mint of England.

One of the two main events of last years Illuminate York festival took place in the Museum Gardens with a display being projected onto the Yorkshire Museum.

d) Create an education strategy

Headline educational figures for the period are as follows:

	YCM		YM		Total	
	12/13	13/14	12/13	13/14	12/13	13/14
Children from York schools	1,261	1,950	1,239	1,306	2,500	3,256
Children from non-York schools	9,189	8,539	2,552	3,826	11,741	12,365
HE and FE student visits	517	1,695	111	242	628	1.937

Formal Learning

Learning numbers have increased over the period and we have plans to rework and renew elements of the formal learning schools offer in response to the National Curriculum changes and in the light of research into our school visits and visitors.

Highlights over the period have included 31 A-level photography students from York College having a guided tour of the Bruce Nauman exhibition at York St Mary's that stimulated much discussion about the nature of art and how artworks can act as a catalyst for wider discussion and debate.

We piloted new workshops for schools on volcanoes, a Dino Dig workshop and SLIME!

Informal Learning

Activities over the school holidays have included apple jam making at York Castle Museum, and volcano activities at the Yorkshire Museum to tie in to the Tempest Anderson display where actor Chris Cade also dressed as Tempest Anderson who told stories of his life as Sheriff of York and as a volcanologist around the world. We also held a very popular Easter Bunny trail round the York Castle Museum, leading to the Toyshop where children were rewarded with a small chocolate egg. The trail run for three weeks due to the different school holidays, and 5,000 eggs were won.

Family Learning

"In the Museum Night Garden" took place on 30 October, looking at the nocturnal wildlife in the Museum Gardens. This included partners the University of York Physics Dept and York Astronomical Society. A fire show also took place outside the Hospitium and an estimated 2,000 people attended the event.

Family Saturdays were held that continue to be very popular.

Adult Learning

Highlights have included sew and sew Sundays sessions; talks on Richard III; a workshop on Bronze Age metal working; our book club; a life drawing class ran in association with CYC; and curators Talks on the Arras Culture, the Bedale Hoard, Spring Flowers and Shakespeare in Yorkshire. All were very well attended.

Community Learning Partnership

We have helped to set up the York Community Learning Partnership. This partnership includes City of York Council, York College, York Explore and other key providers of adult and community learning in the city. Initially the partnership will concentrate on co-ordinating marketing, helping to facilitate progression for learners and involving a wider range of providers in the service. There is no financial commitment.

Genesis

Genesis is our 14 to 19 yrs old engagement programme. We work in partnership with NYBEP (North Yorkshire Business and Education Partnership) to engage with secondary schools in the city and beyond. We have devised a number of projects and competitions to inspire and involve young people, directly relating to their studies and career interests. These have included working on a magazine that will engage local communities and visitors in the new 1914 exhibition at the Castle Museum, and an animation challenge focusing on the collections and WWI. We have worked with schools including Joseph Rowntree School, All Saints School and Archbishop Holgate's.

Territories

Activities have included workshops for couples where one has dementia; sessions for people with mental health issues and sessions for York Carers Forum.

e) Increase use and involvement by residents

We currently have 366 active volunteers on our books as at the end of April, totalling 7,025 contributed hours across all of the sites over the reporting period.

We have a volunteer gardens project up and running in the Riverside area at the Castle Museum. Our garden volunteer is currently helping to prepare a Physic Garden area under the Castle walls, as well as establishing a composting area and general weed control.

We have started to recruit to our new 'family volunteering' programme and our first family volunteers, a mother and daughter pair, will start with us in the summer. This will enable us to fill the gap in our volunteering offer as it gets us around the complicated child protection issues which arise from having under 18s as volunteers. Under 18s will volunteer alongside a family member; they will both go through our full training and induction programme, in the same way that all our other volunteers do, but they will only ever work together, so there will be no supervision issues. This means that for the first time we can accommodate school-age children who are undertaking Duke of Edinburgh awards, as long as they have a family member willing to volunteer with them.

As the Yorkshire Museum Library project develops at a pace, we are making some changes to bring the cataloguing of the books in line with that of other collections. This will also provide a great opportunity for our library

volunteers team to develop new skills and get more involved with the collection and how we work with it.

We have made contact with local groups who will be part of our **Local Links** project, an Art Fund initiative for which we were awarded £10,000. This involves building connections with ten local communities to learn more about 10 Early Medieval objects in the collection that were found in their locality often by members of the public.

York Castle Museum and the Yorkshire Museum took part in this year's Residents Festival and both were busy as ever.

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

Also of interest are visitor comments on Tripadvisor where York Castle Museum comes fifth out of all attractions in York and the Museum Gardens eleventh.

g) *Ensure the cataloguing of the collection*

The YMT collection is now successfully integrated into the Trust's new websites and will be available to the public when the new websites are launched in the summer. Visitors will have access to some 150,000 records (with only minor exclusions) and more than 40,000 images.

The successful Wikipedia project, which showed the huge benefits of releasing museum content onto the web under open licenses, has sadly come to an end. However, we have submitted a funding bid to Wikimedia UK to extend and expand this project into a regional role. If successful, we will embed our resident's digital expertise into the Museum Development Yorkshire programme of regional fora.

We have also launched a digital volunteering project that will see 12 volunteers helping us to audit the copyright status of works in the Fine Art collection. This is the first phase of a major cataloguing programme that will put our desire to publish images held by the trust on a firm footing.

Rationalisation of the architectural stonework collection and the brick and tile collection has now been completed. Material with little significance has been laid out for burial at one of our stores. Overall this liberates a considerable amount of storage space, in turn providing much needed room for further improvements in collections storage.

We successfully raised the £30,000 needed to purchase the Towton gold torc and £51,636 for the Bedale Hoard. Other recent acquisitions include a Travel Agency ledger for R. B. Mills Travel Agency York listing holidays sold from 1957 -1976; a Wedding Dress made in York and worn by the bride of a Canon from York Minister; a PCS union flag; World War One memorial order of services; a group of eight ceramics produced in the 1990's by Jenny Beavan.

Acquisitions for the new WW1 exhibition include a Trench map for Gommecourt and material relating to local family of John Richard Ford and Thomas Wright Burnett, including information on the cycling battalions and prisoners of war.

Janet Barnes, Chief Executive
York Museums Trust, 6 June 2014

Abbreviations:

CoCA - Centre of Ceramic Art

CYC – City of York Council

YMT – York Museums Trust

NYBEP - North Yorkshire Business and Education