

# Museums Worcestershire

Annual review 2017-18





Museums Worcestershire is a partnership between Worcester City Council and Worcestershire County Council

31% of our visitors say "visiting museums is an important part of who I am"

44% of our visitors found us for the first time in 2017-18

40% of our visitors visit with their children

96% of visitors say their whole experience visiting the museum was very good or good

*Taken from Audience Finder research*

## In 2017-18 Museums Worcestershire continued to be

**Visible** We worked with national partners including the British Museum, Arts Council England and The Royal Collection.

**Viable** We secured more than £156,000 additional funding in grants and donations

**Valued** We welcomed 26% more children and young people into our museums



**Thank you** to all our visitors  
for supporting and enjoying our museums

**Thank you** to all of our funders, including those who have invested large grants to enable us to become a more resilient and sustainable organisation; those who have funded exhibitions and projects, and our new Members who support the museums they know and love through their Membership.

**Thank you** also to Iain Rutherford who retired in July 2017 after leading Worcester and Worcestershire's museums for more than 30 years.





## Museum Futures - Five Years 2013-18

### Building a sustainable future for our venues

- First two phases of The Commandery development completed, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Arts Council England and the two partner local authorities
- Working with partners Hartlebury Castle Preservation Trust, the unified visitor destination is near completion with the County Museum at the heart of the visitor offer at Hartlebury Castle
- New fundraising initiatives have brought in £1.2 million additional funding for museums over 5 years
- Significant projects which have changed lives in Worcestershire:
  - Trained 17 young heritage professionals through the Skills for the Future programme
  - 77 people living with dementia and their carers engaged with Suitcase Stories
  - The acquisition of the Bredon Hill Coin Hoard, 20 dedicated volunteers worked on its conservation, and we supported 4 heritage partners with exhibitions across Worcestershire

**The Joint Museums Committee of Councillors from both partner authorities has overseen all these developments:**

Anthony Blagg  
Andy Roberts  
Lynn Denham

Lucy Hodgson  
David Wilkinson  
Karen May

Roger Berry  
Marc Bayliss

Geoff Williams  
Mike Johnson



## It Happened Here! Relaunch of the Commandery

- Funding from HLF, Worcester City Council, Worcestershire County Council and several sponsors allowed Museums Worcestershire to install exciting new exhibitions and visitor interpretation at the Commandery. These included audio & video, handling items, and new gallery space to display our collections. The beautiful Grade 1 listed Commandery is complemented with beautifully displayed rooms and interactives that allow us to interpret the English Civil War and the birth of democracy in Great Britain.
- Ongoing building refurbishment under the guidance of Historic England ensured the wellbeing of the Commandery and included renovation of walls in the Great Hall and works to the roof, as well as increasing visitor access around the site.
- Funding from Arts Council England gave us greater environmental control that will ensure the Commandery is warm and dry for our visitors, and offers the best conditions for our collections and significant loans from others
- New branding and a marketing campaign brought visitors into Worcester, increasing city-wide economic impact and making the historic site more sustainable in the longer term.

- Admissions income up 60% at end of March 2018
- Four out of five visitors from outside the city
- Retail income up by 31%
- Since the launch, 96% of Tripadvisor reviews have been positive, 64% have been 'excellent', giving a five-star rating to The Commandery.
- The proportion of visitors staying between 1 and 2.5 hours increased from 79% to 94% and 3% stayed more than 4 hours : previously very rare.
- A change in primary visitor motivation from 'visiting as a way to spend time with friends and family', to the 'desire to learn something' shows its reputation as an informative historic experience.

*"Wonderful to see The Commandery come alive again and to rediscover Worcester's Civil War Story, told with such imagination and insight. Love it!"*

*"Please pass my congratulations to all involved in creating a fantastic museum. The Commandery is now something the city can be proud of and I hope it will go from strength to strength."*



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**



## Our Museums: Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum

Partnerships with national museums and a commitment to bringing internationally renowned artists to Worcester means we continue to draw visitors from outside the city and county, contributing more than £1.5m annually to the visitor economy

*"Amazed at quality of Worcester City Collection. Really worth seeing"*

### **SPRING *David Cox and his Contemporaries:***

- 20,800 visitors
- 46% of visitors came from outside WR postcodes
- 38% had never visited the Art Gallery & Museum before
- Economic impact £630k

*"We were in Worcester for the weekend and visited the museum and art gallery. It was great to find out information about the city's history having never been here before. There was an amazing exhibition of David Cox paintings. I would thoroughly recommend a visit if you're in the city"*

### **SUMMER *Celebrity***

- 16,100 visitors

*"Loved it! Absolutely amazing to see these wonderful things in Worcester"*





## **AUTUMN** *Warhol to Walker: American Prints from Pop Art to Today*

- 10,400 visitors
- Highest January visitor figure since 2013
- Visitors from further afield including Birmingham, Dudley and Nottingham
  - Achieved a total reach of **61,703** across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram

*"Came to see the Warhol, but learned much more"*

*"Great to see this sort of thing/quality of work so close to home!"*

### **Events**

A new series of events has opened up the Art Gallery & Museum to new audiences.

- *Museum after Hours* events have attracted several hundred people to enjoy poetry, music and cocktails.
- The Art Gallery & Museum participated in the BBC Civilisations Festival with a day of celebrations bringing together our World Cultures collection and Worcester's communities.

### **Open Gallery: Community Exhibition Space**

The *Open Gallery* has gained momentum in the last year creating deeper connections with Worcester communities.

We have worked with the University of Worcester Illustration Department, Arts in Minds and Worcestershire Young Carers to run workshops linked with our exhibitions to provide community curated displays of their work.



## Our Museums: Worcestershire County Museum at Hartlebury Castle

"What a gem! Cleverly put together with some unique exhibits. As we get older you sometimes feel that 'you've seen it all before' but it's not like that here, well done!"

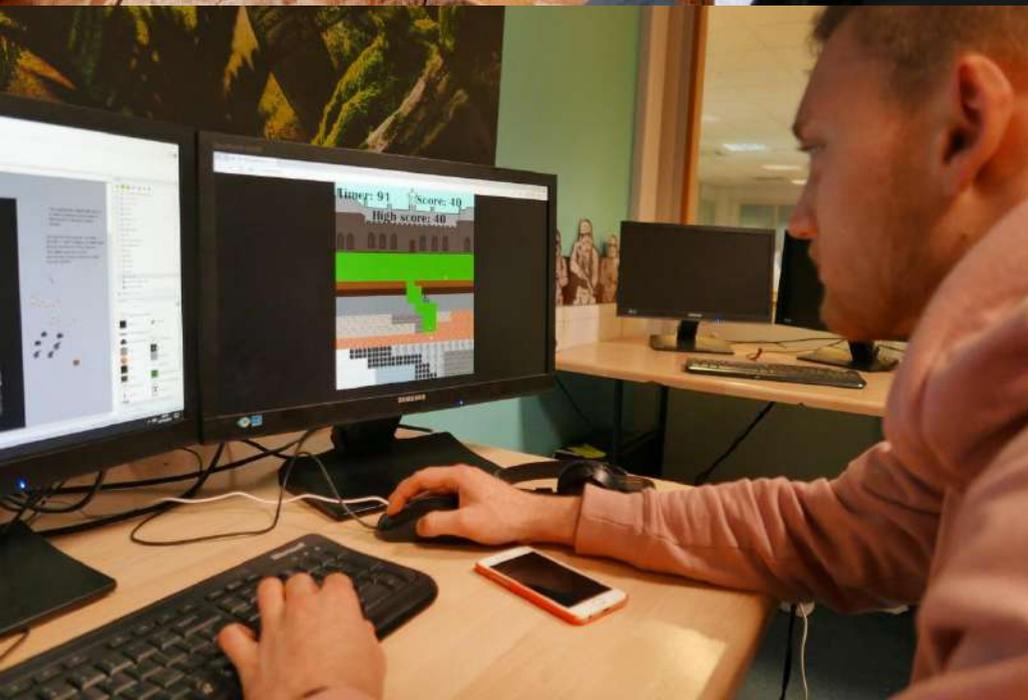
### In partnership with Hartlebury Castle Preservation Trust

Throughout the year work has progressed to create a unified visitor attraction with the County Museum at the heart of the improved offer.

The shop, reception and visitor toilets were repainted and refreshed in time for the new visitor season.

- Public events continued to be well attended and appreciated. *Summer Fun* saw over 2600 visitors coming to join in activities in August.
- A new café, *The Bishops Table*, opened in March is a great addition to the visitor facilities at Hartlebury. It seats up to 70 people and has outdoor seating and a small children's play area.
- Our fantastic workshop volunteers Ced Lewis and Mark Clements completed 3-years work building a 'play caravan' from scratch to form the





centrepiece of the new children's play area. The skills of the team are clearly visible in the quality workmanship and beautiful painting. The caravan is known as *Bita Vardo* which means *Little Caravan* in Romany.

- Kidderminster College Games Development students have created computer games for the new archaeology gallery opening in July 2018

*"One of the best museums I've ever seen – so well presented. Interesting, informative (but not too much!), an 'active' museum, even for adults!"*

*"Beautifully laid out, really interesting artefacts. Looking forward to when the rest of the Castle opens. Will visit again."*

*"It was great reminiscing about the past, especially in the old laundry and kitchen."*

*"The most interesting museum I have ever visited – we were here for three hours."*

## Our Museums: The Commandery

*"Completely amazing! So much to see and do behind the walls of this building. Once again the staff are dedicated to their environment and to ensuring all their visitors regardless of age can enjoy and learn all about the importance of this building, not just on one September day in 1651 but through Worcester's history."*

- The Commandery offered a year of crowd-pleasing events including Living History as part of the *Love Worcester* Heritage Festival, Oak Apple Day, and the Storming of Fort Royal. We are grateful to the Worcestershire Ambassadors for sponsoring the launch events. Our partnership with the Worcester Re-enactors encouraged as many as 1000 visitors a day to visit on event weekends.
- Visitors and school groups were treated to daily workshops delivered by The Commandery's award winning Interpretation Team. The Battle of Worcester Society added to our programme with their annual program of evening lectures and the Drumhead Ceremony on Fort Royal Park.
- Commandery Coffee grows under the care of young business – owner Gemma Round. As well as supporting all of our events, Gemma has a loyal community of customers who come to unwind and soak up the ambience of our canal-side café.





- Our commitment to promoting health and wellbeing continues as Worcester's *Healthy Walkers* departed from The Commandery every Tuesday, and Les Pearson of City Parks Department led the monthly gardening volunteers.

- *The Friends of Fort Royal and Commandery Gardens* and Worcester City Council gained Green Flag status for Fort Royal Park. In partnership with The Commandery, The Friends ensured that Easter, Halloween, Solstice and Summer Bank holiday events were all complemented with community days at the park. *One World in Our Park* saw the two collide as Worcester re-enactors spilled out of The Commandery and besieged the public event in a day enjoyed by thousands of Worcester residents.



*"I had known the outside of The Commandery for about 70 years but had never had a tour inside. Don't wait that long - go now!! We went on my 82nd birthday. What a birthday treat - so much to see."*

*"The cafe is lovely-great service, fabulous cakes and the best cup of coffee in Worcester."*

*"I took my daughter (9) and son (14) to find out about some of the history of Worcester. I thought we were only going to be there about an hour max thinking it was just a small place but when we got there we were amazed at how big it was and how much there was to see and there was lots of info. We ended up staying there for over 4 hours. My kids want to go back ASAP."*

# Museums Worcestershire Digital Presence

Several digital areas **grew by a significant 25%:**

The Museums Worcestershire **website** had a quarter of a million page views, an increase of 25% compared with the previous year.

Thanks to The Commandery's Facebook **#CivilWarStory** campaign which included videos, behind the scenes photos and the interactive Civil War Soldier boards, the venue's Facebook followers increased by 25% to over 2,000. The 16 **videos** posted on The Commandery Facebook page had over 14,000 views, accounting for 25% of the overall page reach.

**Twitter** engagement is continuing to grow. We posted the #OnThisDay hashtag regularly, encouraging audiences to access and engage with our collections digitally in a relevant and fun way. These posts had over 4 times more impressions than normal tweets, and an average of 10 retweets per tweet.

A tweet from Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum's **#WarholtoWalker** exhibition was retweeted by the British Museum, resulting in 25,000 impressions & 300 engagements.

Globally **Instagram** is now the 6<sup>th</sup> biggest social media platform and we continue to build our Museums Worcestershire Instagram, which reached over 1000 followers this year.

**The Commandery - Worcester**  
Published by Charlie Fothergill (?) · 8 May 2017 ·

A 2-minute video about why we're creating 'Worcester's Civil War Story' at The Commandery.

Featuring:  
Philippa Tinsley [Senior Curator, Museums Worcestershire]  
Richard Shaw [Chairman, Battle of Worcester Society]... See more

**Worcester's Civil War Story #CivilWarStory**  
02:00  
of it in Worcester we're unaware all those amazing stories that h

Get more likes, comments and shares  
When you boost this post, you'll show it to more

7,540 people reached

41

Tweet Activity

**Museums Worcs** @worcestermuseum  
Worcester City Art Gallery are working hard to install **#WarholtoWalker** in parnership with @britishmuseum - Open Sat  
<http://bit.ly/2z7BXIV>  
[pic.twitter.com/91xzuDCRMo](http://pic.twitter.com/91xzuDCRMo)

Reach a bigger audience  
Get more engagements by promoting this Tweet!

**Get started**

Impressions	24,269
Total engagements	296
Media engagements	146
Detail expands	43
Likes	35
Link clicks	28
Retweets	23
Profile clicks	14
Hashtag clicks	5
Replies	1
Follows	1

## Collections

14 items were newly acquired this year for the collections of Worcester City and Worcestershire County Museums

- Thanks to the help of the Friends of Worcester City Museums, we were able to purchase a HH Lines sketchbook.
- A small Bronze Age hoard is the only Bronze Age metalwork hoard in the collections and an exciting addition for this year.

More than 100 objects from the collections were newly displayed in the three museums.

### Museums Worcestershire on Tour

Objects from our collections are often loaned out to be star exhibits at partner museums

- *Chadding on Mounts Bay* by Stanhope Forbes was the star loan in Penlee House Gallery and Museum's exhibition *Stanhope Forbes: Father of the Newlyn School*.
- Pop up displays of Ice Age objects were made to the The Almonry at Evesham and Droitwich Heritage Centre, funded by West Midlands Museum Development, as part of the *Lost Landscapes of Worcestershire* project.

### Collections Care

- In preparation for the *Ice Age* exhibition we have been conserving taxidermy and significant Ice Age specimens. The Worcester City collection's polar bear has been shampooed, the bison has had his cracks filled and painted and the moose was rescued from the attic of the City museum where it had been since the 1930s.
- Museums Worcestershire curators and staff worked in partnership with Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service on a Historic England-funded project examining rationalisation in archaeology collections. Museums Worcestershire was one of five museum services chosen nationally to participate.





### Sharing Curatorial Knowledge

- Our regular bite size talks continue to thrive with visitors enjoying talks on Lea and Perrins, Ice Age research and an introduction to Benjamin Williams Leader.
- 51 objects appeared in the Worcester News as part of the *Museum object of the week* feature exclusive to Museums Worcestershire.
- Museums Worcestershire buildings, curators and collections had wide media coverage in 2017, appearing on *Midlands Today*, *Bargain Hunt*, Radio 4's *The Kitchen Cabinet*, BBC Hereford & Worcester, and in *The Times* and *Military History Magazine*



### Development Projects

- Collections have been front and centre of the successful new displays at The Commandery including the death mask of Oliver Cromwell and a Civil War coin hoard from Redditch.
- Funding from West Midlands Museum Development and the Art Fund in partnership with the BBC Civilisations Festival has allowed curators to get to know the City's World Cultures collection. Some of the most significant items in the collection include a Tahitian bark cloth associated with the HMS Bounty mutineers.
- In 2017 Museums Worcestershire, in partnership with Worcestershire Archaeological Society, secured a grant of £23,000 for a new archaeology display at the County Museum. The gallery, which opens in July 2018, will link to the new prehistory curriculum for primary school children and new education sessions will be developed to enhance pupils understanding of this subject.

## Volunteers

Museums Worcestershire enjoys the enthusiasm and commitment of **70 volunteers** across its sites who have given us **4,670 hours** across education, activities and collections

The Worcestershire Cultural Volunteering website hosted by Museums Worcestershire has recruited 112 volunteers for 21 cultural organisations in Worcestershire.

*"I wanted to volunteer partly to regain confidence and also to brush up my skills and hopefully develop new ones to prepare me to return to employment. I enjoy visiting heritage sites and have a background of working in education, so volunteering with the museum's education team just seemed to fit. As an organisation which thrives on having volunteers helping out the team were very welcoming.*

*"My favourite role to date has been helping with the loans boxes which schools and groups can borrow to bring history alive. It's great to have 'ownership' of a project as a volunteer, but have the guidance and advice of very experienced staff on hand to guide me."*



**A huge thank you to all our volunteers who do such magnificent work for all our museums. We appreciate your enthusiasm, knowledge and commitment.**



## Learning and community

26% increase in children and young people visiting our venues

*"It was wonderful to see our students so engaged. The range of activities was perfect for them. Some of our students suffer with both concentration and behaviour problems, and all have an SEN issue, so I was delighted with the way they presented - calm and willing to learn, able to speak up and engaged. We will definitely be visiting again."*

### Museum in a Box

- New loans boxes bring resources into the classroom to enhance a school visit to our museums. A *Pop Art and Printmaking* resource box for schools was created for the *Warhol to Walker* exhibition at the Art Gallery & Museum and is suitable to teach Art and Design, but also Local History with Redditch links to artist Eduardo Paolozzi and his use of mosaic.
- The newly created *Civil War* loans box includes student and teacher resources, as well as real objects and copies of documents such as the *Declaration for the Arrest of Charles Stuart*.
- 1,440 students have engaged with the loans boxes.

### **In partnership with the University of Worcester**

The Art Gallery & Museum supports students from the University of Worcester in understanding how to teach using real museum objects, and use their local museums to enhance learning for children and young people.

The museum learning team work with the PGCE, B Ed and Early Years departments to look at handling objects ranging from WW1 through to Natural Sciences. This helps trainee teachers explore new ways of teaching the National Curriculum inside and outside the classroom from the specialist knowledge of our staff.

### **Working with Home Educators**

- The number of children who are home educated is on the increase; the Art Gallery & Museum team are specialists in working with these users and this year we have extended this work to the County Museum.
- We staged a Home Educator day attended by 25 adults and 23 children.

### **Welcoming Looked After Children**

- We worked with Worcestershire County Council teams to offer free entry to looked-after children.
- The Commandery hosted young people's groups and workshops.





# Looking Ahead to 2018-19

Hartlebury Castle launches as a new visitor attraction for Worcestershire. A new gallery opens at the County Museum dedicated to archaeological Worcestershire.

Worcester Art Gallery & Museum brings internationally renowned artists Matisse and JMW Turner to Worcester.

A new strategic plan encompassing Museum Worcestershire's ambitions for its venues, collections and users in 2019-2024.

**Museums Worcestershire:  
Visible, viable and valued**