

Museums Worcestershire Annual Review 2018-19

In 2018 – 19 Museums Worcestershire continued to be

Visible: We worked with national partners including Arts Council England, The Art Fund and The Royal Collection

Viable: We secured more than £176,000 of additional funding and generated £1.5m of economic impact

Valued: 98% of visitors say their whole experience visiting the museums is very good or good In July 2018 hosting of the Joint Museums Service transferred from Worcestershire County Council to Worcester City Council.



Members of The Commandery and Art Gallery & Museum Membership Schemes enabled the conservation of *Cockle Gatherers* by Arthur Hacker and the acquisition of a Charles I pendant.

Thank you to our visitors and funders for supporting our work

• those who have invested large grants to enable us to become more resilient and sustainable

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- those who support the difference we make through our exhibitions, projects and events
- and those who give whenever they can to support the museums they know and love



Our Museums: The Commandery

The Commander's won the Worcestershire Visitor Attraction Award for Excellence in 2018

Since improvements were made to the visitor experience in 2017

- dwell time has increased, with 34% of visitors now staying 2-3 hours (previously 26%) and 8% stay more than 4 hours (previously 3%)
- 63% of visitors made their first ever visit in 2018-19
- 66% of visitors to The Commandery are day trippers or overnight visitors, bringing £253,000 into the local economy
- £12,500 income has been brought in from weddings and hires



The Commandery also received a Sandford Award for Excellence in Museum Education, demonstrating the Commandery's high level of commitment to visitor engagement and lifelong learning.

"Our topic is all about the English Civil War and the Battle of Worcester. This trip taught us a lot about Worcester's history. I think this is one of the best visits we've had"

Year 5, Holy Trinity School, Kidderminster

Commandery Arts Project

funded by Arts Council England and The Elmley Foundation

Paper Rebellion and Civil War Stories integrated an arts-focused approach with learning about Worcester's role during the English Civil Wars. Sessions were delivered to schools, art clubs and Home Educators. 450 students enjoyed watching a playful and interactive theatre piece telling the story of the English Civil War.

"Staff adapted work to suit and were really good at accommodating special needs students"

I hadn't thought about... "How the war affected our lives today"... "How much history we have around us"... "How important Worcester was in the Civil War or what the actual causes were"

Our Museums: Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum

The impact of the outstanding exhibition programme has increased dwell time with 49% of visitors staying between 1-4 hours and 5% staying 3-4 hours.

Our digital community continues to grow with Facebook followers increasing by 18%.

The Art Gallery & Museum continues to have the largest economic impact of the museums with more than £900k being generated in 2018-19 and almost £100k secured in additional grant funding.

Worcestershire World War One Hundred commemorative events were drawn to a close with a poppy drop on Armistice Day 2018



What Do We Want Exhibition

funded by the Weston Loan Programme with the Art Fund

In July 2018, workshops took place with artist Mark Titchner to work with community groups across Worcester to find out their hopes, ideas and dreams to inform new artworks displayed in the gallery and across the city.

"Made me feel more confident" Maggs Day Centre user "Valued – listened to – involved in my community and the art of the city" Arboretum Resident

Ice Age Exhibition

funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Arts Council England, Council for British Archaeology West Midlands, and West Midlands Museum Development Fund. Delivered in partnership with Worcestershire Archives & Archaeology Service

The summer of 2018 saw the culmination of an 18month project celebrating half a million years of the area's prehistory, through exhibitions at the Art Gallery & Museum and The Hive, alongside a programme of education, research, and exploration.

177,000 people visited the Ice Age exhibitions and almost 3000 people participated in workshops and talks.

The exhibition provided opportunities for generations to enjoy our museum spaces and displays together, grandparents and their grandchildren reading together in an Ice Age shelter, families creating batik cave paintings or even learning how to knap flint axes.

"A long time since we came to museum - a good afternoon out with two youngest and Grandad"

Our Museums: The County Museum at Hartlebury Castle

The creation of the unified visitor destination has shifted audiences to a full day visit, with 23% of visitors staying more than 4 hours.

93% of visitors rate the staff welcome at Hartlebury as very good.

77% of visitors rate the whole experience as very good (Audience Finder Museums benchmark 67%). The destination was awarded a Visit England Hidden Gem accolade.

> Following significant investment from the Heritage Lottery Fund to our partners on site Hartlebury Castle Preservation Trust, the full Castle offer was officially opened in May.

In July 2018 the County Museum opened a new display, *On Ancient Tracks*, exploring important archaeological finds in our county. The new spaces and overall visitor experience have been very well received by visitors.

A new room on the visitor route tells users the story of the origins of the County Museum collection, beginning with the Parker family from Tickenhill Manor. The room was formally opened by the Parker's grandson, James Tangye Parker, in June.

"My visit to the Bishops Palace fulfilled a childhood dream – it was spectacular!"

"I have visited since I was 5, I'm now 44. My mum visited here as a child too so it's been passed down the family, and now I bring my own children."

Bita Vardo (Little Caravan)

Hartlebury's volunteer workshop team have completed a major project to build a 2/3 sized model of a traditional Burton caravan, to be explored by families while they spend time together in the new Café.

Volunteer Mark Clements, under the supervision of expert wheelwright Ced Lewis, put in many hundreds of hours over 3 years to create the new attraction using traditional techniques.

"Picnic area is a nice place to sit, lots of birdsong. We found the visit interesting and relaxing."



Supporting Our Communities

Outreach

As part of Museums Worcestershire's role in the Worcestershire World War One Hundred project, an outreach project took a replica WW1 bell tent to schools, parks and other museums and incorporated object handling and poetry sessions.

"Thank you so much for bringing your artefacts – the children in Years 4 and 6 loved the day. Thank you for making their learning of Remembrance Day fantastic."

- 4,816 children and adults participated in informal learning opportunities
- 5,498 students enjoyed formal learning sessions at the three museums
- We welcomed over 200 home educated children and young people

Sandford Award

Both the Worcestershire County Museum at Hartlebury Castle and The Commandery were awarded the Heritage Education Award for excellence in recognition of the quality of their formal learning programmes.

"The Commandery Teaching Team offers a first class experience. They are dedicated and well-informed and deliver an interesting and exciting day of interactive and hands-on learning activities."

"Learning whilst at the Worcestershire County Museum is meaningful, focused and fun."

Wellbeing

16% of visitors to our museums come 'to escape from everyday life' 13% of visitors to our museums come 'for time to reflect'

Suitcase Stories

Museums Worcestershire working with Arts Uplift Community Interest Company began a second round of Suitcase Stories in 2018 working with people living with dementia and their carers to improve health and wellbeing using music and museum objects.

"Lifts your spirits"

"This session really helped my breathing to become relaxed" "Wonderfully relaxing"



Museum Collections

Museums Worcestershire on Tour

55 objects from the Worcester City and Worcestershire County collections were loaned out to be star exhibits at partner museums such as the Museum of Royal Worcester, Yale Centre for British Art and the Holborne Museum in Bath.

The collections on tour were seen by more than 740,000 people.

Collections Care

148 items were newly acquired this year for the collections of Worcester City and Worcestershire County museums

More than 350 objects were newly displayed. A significant amount of collection care work has been carried out throughout the County Museum's founding Tickenhill Collection with the help of a skilled team of volunteers. Documentation and policies have been updated, objects identified cleaned and repackaged and collection research shared through articles, public talks and display.

Development Projects

The Heritage Lottery-funded Ice Age project allowed conservation to and cleaning of key natural history specimens in the city collection for display in our summer exhibition.

Funding from West Midlands Museum Development allowed conservation and repair to fossil specimens, most notably an Ice Age bison skull.

Funding from Severn Waste in partnership with Worcestershire Archaeological Society at Worcestershire County Museum allowed for the 3D scanning and printing of a fragile mammoth tusk found at Clifton Quarry in Worcestershire for display and to ensure a replica of the very delicate original specimen be available for future study.

Sharing Knowledge

Advice across a number of areas of museums expertise was provided to Museum of Royal Worcester, Worcestershire Arts Partnership and Worcestershire Masonic Library and Museum.





Our Volunteers

Museums Worcestershire enjoys the enthusiasm and commitment of 56 volunteers across its sites who have given 3,974 hours across education, activities and collections.

New Collections Documentation Volunteer

Sam Elwell, a student at the University of Worcester, was recruited to support our Registrar with the documentation in the collection. Sam will review the Herbarium collection documentation and learn how the museum labels and categorises objects in the collection.

"I'm really enjoying seeing behind the scenes of the day to day running of the museum. I'm getting to know a little known collection and developing an inventory. It's nice to know that I'm developing skills that I can take with me to future employment."

A huge thank you to all our volunteers who do such magnificent work for all our museums.

We appreciate your enthusiasm, knowledge and commitment.

Looking ahead

- A new strategic plan will take Museums Worcestershire forward to address opportunities and challenges over the next five years and beyond
- A successful bid to the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation will allow us to tell the story of the rise and fall of Worcestershire's international gloving industry
- Bringing more great art to Worcester's doorstep through the exhibition programme

Museums Worcestershire: Visible, Viable and Valued