

BRECKLAND AREA MUSEUMS COMMITTEE

4th June 2010 Item No.

Ancient House, Museum of Thetford Life Report by the Curator, Ancient House

This report outlines work at the Ancient
House from February 2010 – May 2010

1 School and Visitor Figures

Visitor figures for the Ancient House have continued to rise since the re-opening after refurbishment in 2006. The year 2009-10 saw a very good March attendance, largely due to an excellent number of visits from schoolchildren. This meant we more than caught up total for the previous year when the Thetford Treasure of gold jewellery and silver spoons was lent for display at Thetford by the British Museum.

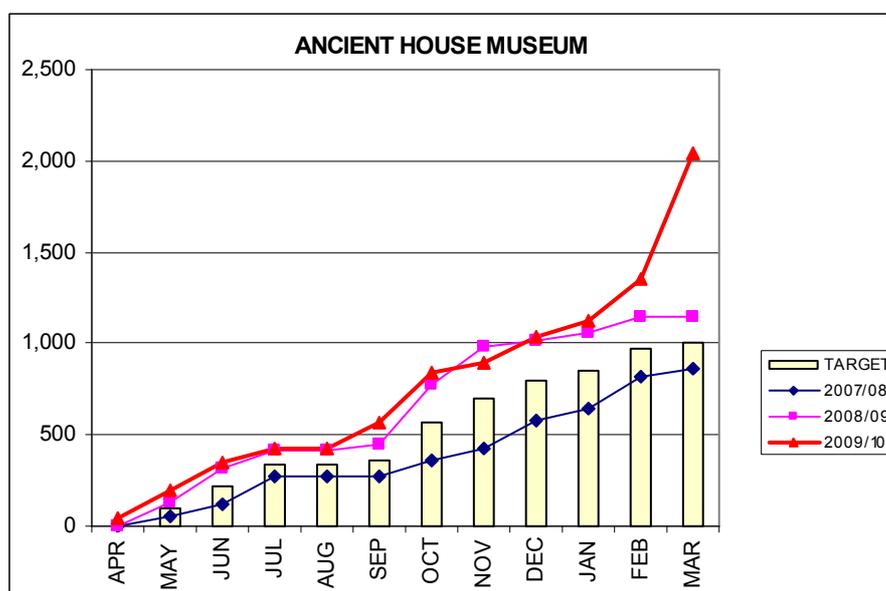


Chart showing the improvements in
school attendance at the Ancient House.

Delivery to schools is carried out by a mix of the Learning team, notably Melissa Hawker Learning Officer, freelancers, volunteers and the Museum Learning Assistants. The March visits by schools were for sessions inspired by the current Moving Stories exhibition and subsidised by this project. Sessions included an activity encouraging children to decide how to catch a mammoth.

2 Under 5s 'Mini museum club'

The Museum is keen to include all ages and has recently started a monthly club for very young visitors and their parents. Armed with torches and magnifying glasses the youngsters explored the museum and discovered interesting things. A good start with 10 children plus carers.



3 Events



The Easter Holidays saw lots of visitors trying new crafts for the first time, discovering how a Victorian servant lived, painting pulp eggs and going on an Easter chick hunt. Staff made eggs using the traditional pulp eggswas made in Thetford during the late 19th & 20th centuries. Nearly 40 people turned up to paint an egg, and were intrigued to discover the process of how they were made.

The Moving Stories exhibition and related events continue to draw new visitors into the museum. The afternoon talks linked with the exhibition have been very popular and over subscribed each month.

Mary Watkins, one of the museum's 'Knit and Knatter' group, who also spins, joined us on textile day to give spinning taster sessions to visitors. The volunteer group known as the Thetford Treasures, Penny and Betty held mini workshops in tea tie dying and embroidery, the Knit and Knatter ladies along with staff offering 'learn to knit' sessions and demonstrated their skills. In the Victorian kitchen, Laura Cole-Matthews demonstrated felt making and encouraged visitors to make their own piece to take home.



4 Talks programme



Moving Stories - Afternoon talks

Stephen Pope from Gressenhall gave a talk on Norfolk Workhouses, featuring Thetford. Several of the audience remembered visiting or working at the St Barnabas site during the 1950s.

5 House Alive – Victorian Servants

Mary Jane Smalley, who worked at Elveden Hall and features in the Moving Stories exhibition inspired this House Alive. Melissa Hawker entertained lots of our younger visitors with stories of how domestic servants lived and worked. Visitors also had the opportunity to help our Victorian servant prepare some food, which was cooked on the range



6 Maharajah Exhibition

Work continues on the Maharajah exhibition, due to open in June. We have been working with Kiyoko Nishi, our MA intern; the exhibition will feature items on display for the first time.

7 Conservation cleaning

Sarah Norcross-Robinson has been working closely with the team at Ancient House on a variety of issues recently.

The Collector's room is now beautifully clean thanks to Sarah's help and advice, with the Tudor Hall next on the list.

