

Annual Report
2019



mmf

Maidstone Museums' Foundation



All lit up: Maidstone Museum's brilliant new look with floodlighting fully funded by MMF

MMF President Sir Robert Worcester KBE DL

MMF Board (2019)

Mark Baker (Hon Chair)

Mike Evans (Hon Vice Chair)

Stephen Farrant (Hon Treasurer)

Trevor Sturgess (Hon Secretary)

Ivan White (Hon Minutes Secretary)

Cllr Paul Harper (Chair, Economic Regeneration & Leisure Committee,
Maidstone Borough Council)

Janette Lloyd (Schools and Education)

David Pickett (Engagement and Volunteering)

John Newcomb (Legal and Newsletter)

Bill Stotesbury (Design/Publicity)

Fran Wilson

“MMF underlines the importance of our museums to the attractiveness of Maidstone and the wellbeing of all of us”

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Maidstone Museums' Foundation Registered Charity No. 80154

Report from the Chair

In my report for 2018, I remarked that the year had been challenging and stimulating. The same could be said of 2019. The Foundation continues to play an important part in the life of Maidstone's 'jewels,' namely its amazing museums.

As in previous years, youth has continued to be an important focus of our activity. We value our partnership with Invicta Grammar School and are particularly grateful to head teacher Julie Derrick and Education Trustee Janette Lloyd, assistant head teacher, for their enthusiastic support. Our membership continues to grow, in particular families, many of whom come through our links with Invicta, a role model for education/museum partnership, especially at secondary level. This work supplements the Museum education team's tireless engagement with primary schools.

I'm grateful to Trustees who volunteered for duty at the Museum Pop-up Shop in Fremlin Walk. MMF gave wholehearted support to the proposed £5m museum transformation scheme (more in the Fundraising section).

Coming up Rosies: MMF chair Mark Baker with Rosie Watson, winner of the inaugural Maidstone Young Artist Award



Our financial support for floodlighting the historic Museum building has enhanced its beauty, particularly in the winter months (more later in the report). We continue to underline the importance of our museums to the attractiveness of the County Town and the wellbeing of all of us.

As ever, I thank my fellow Trustees, our Museum Student Ambassadors and all Museum staff for their dedication and hard work. We face many challenges but are united in our commitment to make every resident of the County Town and beyond proud of Maidstone's treasured museums.

Mark Baker (Honorary Chair)

Finance

Substantial growth in membership

2019 proved to be another year of financial consolidation. Overall charitable funds at December 31, 2019, remained much in line with the end of 2018 at just under £9,000. However, it was also the year of significant financial planning and preparation for a major Transformation Project to upgrade and improve the main Museum facilities over several years, with external funding being a key condition of success.

MMF trustees were briefed on plans and united in their support. A restricted fund to ring-fence donations was set up. The charity ended the year both financially and strategically well placed to contribute towards the anticipated fundraising effort in 2020.

2019 also saw further substantial growth in Friends' membership, with MMF recording its best ever year for generating income from renewals and new joiners. By the end of the year, membership represented more than 520 people and six local corporate supporters.

Membership in numbers: Corporate: Six, Life: 46, 10-year: Two, 25-year individual: Three, Single: 41, Joint: 27, Family: 95 Revenue came principally from subscriptions and public donations placed in boxes in the Museum's reception area, Dinosaur Gallery and Ancient Lives Gallery.

Financial decisions were implemented in a timely manner and fully met the prime aim of furthering the charity's objectives. The technical content of fundraising and promotional material was always cleared before publication. Periodic management accounts confirmed income and expenditure surplus/deficit to date and reserve values.

A detailed review of the Charity's income and expenditure is set out in the Annual Accounts, a copy of which is available on written request to the Charity's registered office. The 2019 accounts are subjected to a voluntary independent examination.

Stephen Farrant (Honorary Treasurer)

Fundraising

Each year the MMF Board is supportive, where appropriate and required, of the acquisition and/or restoration of an artwork or artefact, and/or the purchase of small items of equipment. These are all recommended to the MMF Board for consideration by the Museum.

In some years there is a requirement to contribute to a 'major project' (the identification of significant capital works needed, consistent with the Museum medium term plan). The general methodology of such fund-raising is spelt out in one of MMF's Policies (policy 1 – Fund-Raising Policy).

In 2019 the primary role was the support given to the Museum for small projects. These were:-

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|---|--------|
| - 2019 Young Artists Award event (inc prizes) | £441 |
| - 2019 sponsorship Special Exhibition
(Endangered Species) Art Competition | £300 |
| - Purchase of Iguanadon Artwork (for display) | £400 |
| - Sponsorship of Volunteer Thank You lunches | £187 |
| - Funding exterior floodlighting main courtyard | £1,300 |

Towards the end of the year Maidstone Borough Council launched its Museum Transformation project, Officers had been working on plans for a year, and reached the point where they sought member approval to formally progress, both for the proposals and in the area of fund-raising. In September 2019 a report was submitted to the Council's Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee, outlining the approach – which included the Council applying to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) for £3.9m support, together with identifying the need to raise 20% matched funding (£980,000). These proposals were agreed unanimously and the Council committed £250,000 towards the matched funding total.

Importantly, the Council saw MMF as a key partner, welcoming its positive presentation to the committee, and commenced collaboration with it on plans to raise the matched funding through the establishment of a joint Advisory Board.

Engagement and Volunteering

The MMF Board distributed a Members and Friends Questionnaire with 10 questions designed to improve general communication and MMF presence, and benefit the Museum. It was well received and a short report compiled from the feedback.

Observations and Information gained included the opportunity to interact and inform the MMF Board. Members were invited to become more involved if they wished. For example by becoming a Museum Volunteer. The work and focus of MMF requires more public interaction and publicity.

There was unanimous support for MMF, the Museum, a 'Jewel in Maidstone's Crown,' and all its many and varied activities. This exercise may be repeated at regular intervals to develop engagement and guide future event planning.

Tidings of Comfort and Joy at Market

Trustee Ivan White set up an MMF stand at the Christmas Market, raising a good sum from sale of various products, especially art works donated by Geoffrey Hall.

MMF Trustee Ivan White with Geoffrey Hall postcards for sale at the Christmas Market in Maidstone Museum



Friendship

Rosie's sculpture scoops top prize in MMF Young Artist awards

Rosie Watson from Sevenoaks was the inaugural winner of the Maidstone Young Artist of the Year competition. In the first year of MMF sponsorship, student Rosie, then 16, was all smiles after chair Mark Baker presented a £250 cheque. The theme was 'Friends'. Her winning entry *Flame Lily* was a mixed media piece depicting one of her best friends who hails from Zimbabwe. "Each of the hanging pieces represents a part of her personality such as ambitious, amiable and courteous, as well as using the colours of the Zimbabwe flag to surround her face," said Rosie. Ellie Ross-Wilkinson, then 20, from Maidstone was runner-up for *A Journey*, a pair of striking images in coloured pencil of herself and a friend.

Mark said: "This is a museum that looks to the future, especially regarding young people, encouraging them to use the museum and all it offers. The awards are one of many ways of achieving this goal. We look forward to supporting the awards again in 2021".



*Flame Lily:
Rosie Watson's
winning creation*

Putting on a Show



It's show time: MMF Trustee Trevor Sturgess and Roz Meredith, Maidstone Museum's Learning and Events Officer, at the Kent Show

MMF Trustees teamed up with museum staff to spread the message at the Kent County Show. The show is one of the biggest events in the county calendar and attracted more than 80,000 visitors over three sunny days in July 2019.

More than 1,000 people entered the treasure trove, delighting in the exhibits and things to do, asking questions and making comments.

The gazebo stand may have been only 6m x 3m, but it packed in a lot. It was sub-divided into several themes focusing on the Museum's strengths – dinosaurs, Japanese artefacts, Ancient History (Roman and Egyptian), local and natural history, and fashion (with hats to try on).

Photos of Old Maidstone attracted attention. The close MMF/Museum collaboration at several events over the past few years was exemplified at the Kent Show.

MMF and Museum Host BAFM Regional Day

Maidstone Museum and MMF were privileged to host BAFM Regional Day and worked closely together to ensure it ran smoothly.

Friends' groups have to tread a diplomatic line with the museum they support. Yet a low-key approach can diminish the potential role of Friends who, in an era of constant threat to museums, should be the conscience, defender, supporter, fundraiser, sounding board and flagwaver for their Museum.

On September 24, 2019, more than 20 delegates reflected on this challenging relationship when Maidstone Museum hosted British Association of Friends of Museums (BAFM) South East Regional Day. They heard three case studies, two from Kent and one from Medway.

Anne Stobo, chair of the Friends of Tunbridge Wells Museum, spoke about the ambitious £13.2 million expansion plans for the Amelia Scott Library and Art Gallery, highlighting the Costume and Portrait Gallery celebrating Georgian and Regency elegance, including a gown, believed to have been worn at the court of King George III.

Mike Evans, MMF Trustee and chair of BAFM South East, with speakers at the regional day held in Maidstone Museum



Angela Conyers, chair of the Friends of Folkestone Museum, spoke about the revival of the town's Museum that dated back to 1857 but had since had a chequered history.

Lorraine Hand, secretary and event organiser of the Friends of Guildhall Museum, Rochester, housed in a building dating from 1687, called it "one of the finest civic buildings in Kent." The Museum was founded in 1897, in honour of Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee and moved into the Guildhall in 1979. 2020 marks the 150th anniversary of the death of Charles Dickens and the Friends are supporting the opening of a new gallery and hosting the 2020s BAFM Regional Day.

Subsequent discussion covered the challenge of attracting more young people and supporters from the BAME community, and issues concerning the funding of acquisitions. The day ended with a guided tour, led by a member of staff, of Maidstone Museum's Japanese Gallery.

MMF is a member of BAFM.



Audience at BAFM regional day in Maidstone



Teachers hear a presentation by Museum Student Ambassadors

Schools and Education

Chalking up a year of significant engagement

In late January, we held a regional teachers' event to encourage schools to consider a partnership similar to the one established by MMF and Invicta Grammar School.

Invicta's Museum Student Ambassadors made a presentation about their roles, encouraging school engagement. They created a Challenge booklet based on the Museum collections and special exhibitions to launch at the event.

Unfortunately, forecast snow prompted cancellations and attendees were mainly from the Primary sector. However, they were enthusiastic, asked questions and sought the ambassadors' views. Several requested advice and guidance on new creative project ideas based on the collections.

The Challenge booklet was distributed to all schools countywide but sadly the take-up was less than expected, possibly due to timing, school schedules and lack of personal follow-up. Further ideas will be discussed in 2020.

Our ambassadors plan a creative partnership project with Senacre Primary School that will incorporate the Ancient Lives and Natural History galleries, with an exhibition in the summer of 2020



Partnership raises profile and attracts new Friends



MMF stand at Invicta Grammar School Open Evening

A key element of the Invicta/MMF partnership is the profile that the Museum has with our new parents. For families of students joining the school, a letter outlining the partnership and an MMF Friends' application form are sent with the new entrants' pack each spring encouraging families to join. This successful initiative attracts around 60 families a year and generates significant profile and income for MMF and the Museum. A stand promoting MMF has become a regular feature of the annual school Open Evening for new entrants. The Museum loaned artefacts to show visitors. Ambassadors created a 'Guess the Object' activity popular with younger visitors, explained what the Museum and MMF do, and handed out application forms.

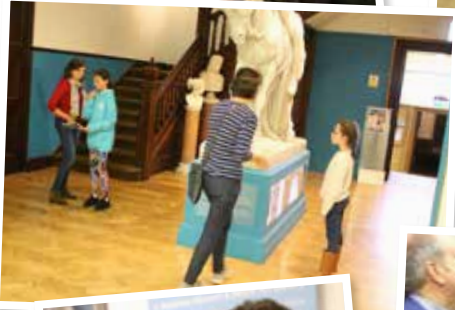
Thank you event for new Friends

As a thank you to new Invicta family Friends, an evening event with refreshments was held in October, outlining the importance of the Museum to Invicta, and how the collections and MMF enhance learning opportunities. Roz Meredith, the Museum's Learning and Events Officer, spoke about the wider education programme.

Visitors were divided into three groups, each in turn seeing the Japanese Gallery, the vast collection of objects held in storage, and joining object trails. Ambassadors and Museum staff devised these trails with prizes on completion. The evening was a great success.



*MMF/Invicta
Friends' evening*



Ambassadors attend board meetings

Ambassadors regularly attended and contributed to monthly MMF board meetings, with the encouragement of the school but expected to catch up on missed work. Rotated attendance lessened impact but all attendees felt the experience was beneficial. Ambassadors are keen to widen the scheme to other schools and a meeting at Maidstone Grammar School for Girls was held in July. More work is needed but it is hoped that in 2020, a network of Junior Ambassadors can be developed to enable better transition and continued engagement as students move to the Secondary Sector.

Reports from our Museum Student ambassadors

“I valued the insights”

As part of our work with the MMF, in 2019 we launched a competition for primary schools to participate in. The competition included a series of diverse challenges that corresponded to areas of the curriculum such as literature and the arts. The evening spent with primary school teachers to introduce these challenges was an enjoyable and memorable one. Another enterprise was a collaboration with museum ambassadors from Maidstone Grammar School for Girls. A rewarding aspect of being an ambassador was the board meetings we were able to attend and I valued the insights these meetings gave. The 20-year plan demonstrated the long-term vision for Maidstone Museum and I look forward to the developments of the future.

Kiu

“Valuable experience”

In July 2019, the other ambassadors and I attended the opening of the Endangered and Extinct Gallery. This was based around the work of local artist Val Hunt whose works depict lost or endangered species and are made out of items that would have otherwise been thrown away, and supported by the Big Cat Sanctuary. This was a valuable experience as we were

able to both appreciate the gallery and gain further understanding of the Museum’s work and the significance of its temporary exhibitions.

Varying combinations of ambassadors also attended board meetings throughout the year, creating mutually beneficial communication between the School and Museum and a forum in which we would update one another. These meetings allowed us to experience board meetings and liaise with MMF representatives about our current work and next steps as the school ambassador team.

Charlotte



“A fun enjoyable night”

The School's partnership with the Friends of the Maidstone Museum programme saw a successful evening take place on October 11, created for members to enjoy the galleries and learn more about the Museum's displays. Museum Student Ambassadors attended to answer questions and make sure all guests had the best possible experience. The team of Ambassadors included two new additions from Year 10 who took the opportunity to get to know the team and the role. The evening began with two presentations from Roz Meredith, the Learning Events Officer and Mrs Lloyd who talked about the School's involvement in the Museum and the brilliant resources it could provide in various areas of curriculum. Roz talked about the Cur8 programme run at the Museum and also discussed the ways the Museum aided and enriched learning.

After the brilliant start to the evening, families were given opportunities to participate in trails that led them around various galleries and collections, a drama workshop and an exclusive behind-the-scenes tour to see objects not normally on display to the public. One exciting artefact was a mammoth tooth which families were able to hold. All who attended left knowing more about the Museum and with a smile on their faces from a fun, enjoyable night. From feedback, we established the following useful data:

Aspects visitors enjoyed:

- Quizzes/hunt for objects around the museum
- Behind the scenes tour
- Seeing students get involved and help out
- Welcome drinks
- Museum staff to talk to and ask questions
- How much there was to explore including connection between exhibits
- Learning about the people who started the collections

Aspects visitors would like to see:

- A talk about an object, collection or exhibit
- A night or talk specifically about Maidstone history
e.g Vinters Park House
- Questions to staff after a talk
- A relaxed night where parents can listen to talks and learn more about the Museum and its interesting collections

Izzy

Pop-up Shop Opens a Window on the Museum

MMF leased a Pop-up Shop in Fremlin Walk shopping centre to promote the Museum. Whilst this seemed a simple solution from a legal point of view, it was fraught with risk as MMF did not wish to become liable for business rates and the other duties and obligations that a landlord must undertake in law.

The Museum's public liability insurance was extended to cover the shop and MMF applied for the charity discount on business rates. Fremlin Walk management kindly agreed to pick up the part of the rate that was not discounted. Although the shop was only open on Saturdays or for special occasions because of staffing and volunteer issues – several MMF Trustees staffed the stand – it proved a great success, raising the profile of a Museum of which sadly many were unaware. Many visitors provided memories from their youth and brought old Maidstone to life. Meanwhile, children have enjoyed the chance to play and learn on what might otherwise have been a

'boring' shopping day. The Board is considering other ways to use this facility to further promote the museum, perhaps through small-scale events.

Meanwhile, six issues of the bi-monthly MMF Newsletter were sent to Friends during the year.



Let There be Light!



Switched-on: The Mayor of Maidstone Cllr Marion Ring with the choir of Invicta Grammar School

MMF funded the floodlighting of the Museum's Victorian frontage. Cllr Marion Ring switched on the lights at the start of the Museum's sixth annual Christmas Concert on Tuesday December 3, 2019. Choirs from Invicta Grammar School sang "We wish you a Merry Christmas" on the courtyard steps in front of the illuminated listed building after the switch-on. Cllr Ring said: "This is an historic occasion and the Museum building looks stunning. We in the County Town should all be so proud of our Museum. The singing was beautiful and celebrated this special occasion so well."

Looking Ahead

Museum is source of wellbeing, health and pride

2020 promises to be an exciting year for the Museum, with ambitious plans for a £5 million Transformation Project. This will depend on backing from the National Heritage Lottery Fund and the willingness of supporters, trusts and foundations to match any funding pledged by the NHLF. We hope for a favourable decision and, if so, will engage potential funders. We aim to make more use of the Pop-up Shop in Fremlin Walk. MMF and its Student Ambassadors will continue to wave the flag for Maidstone Museum – profile-raising, volunteering, organising member-only events, financially supporting identified needs, and promoting membership.

MMF is committed to engaging with the young and the belief that Maidstone Museum enhances the wellbeing, mental health and pride of residents in Maidstone and beyond. It also generates economic benefit from tourism, making the County Town an even more attractive place for visitors.

It is important for everyone to know of the past to better understand the present and future. But Maidstone Museum is not stuck in the past. It is a forward-looking treasure, informing, educating, entertaining and stimulating all communities, providing a valuable resource for everyone, whatever their background or age.

Trevor Sturgess, MMF Trustee (Honorary Secretary)

Christmas Cheer at the Museum



Sing out: an Invicta Grammar School chorister at the Christmas concert



Registered Charity No. 80154

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