



Kent Museums Group
Protecting Kent's Heritage

Minutes of the General Meeting held at Sevenoaks Museum on 7th May 2014

Present: Chair & Secretary: J Harrison; S Corn, C Boxer, P Divall, L Palmer, J Higgs, M Esain, C Griffiths, C Ward, A Cottee, S Gosling.

1. Apologies:

J Adamson, K Chaney, R Morley, J Fryer, R O'Brien, T Hill, K Harris, M Goodhew, S Lace, R Horton, D Boston, M Thomsett.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting & matters arising

Minutes of the AGM at Rochester Guildhall Museum on 7th March 2014 were approved.

The Horniman Museum's 'Object in Focus' programme funding officially ends in November but Sarah Mahood still taking 'pencil' bookings for next year in case funding is extended (which we hope it is!)

3. Safeguarding update

Following a late invitation to Haidee Thomas, Museum Engagement Officer, Surrey Museums Consultative Committee, to speak to KMG on the subject, JH read notes from Haidee as she was unavailable:

The old CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) checks are now called Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) checks. There is a lot of useful information about the changes on the Independent Safeguarding Authority website

<http://www.isa-gov.org.uk>

Areas for people to be clear about first in their decision-making on who should or shouldn't have a DBS check are:

- Is there one person who is responsible for delivering the sessions (e.g. Education Officer whether paid or unpaid - sounds like Muriel possibly) and do they deliver any of those sessions completely by themselves, unsupervised?*
- How often do you deliver education sessions to children and young people? (These can be school, or informal children and family activities.)*
- Is there any other member of staff who delivers session of any kind to children and young people, unsupervised ie. no other adult present?*
- Do you have paid posts, or are you a volunteer-run organisation?*

A DBS check would certainly be needed for anyone whose 'role' included carrying out regular activities with "at risk" groups (children, young people and vulnerable adults), and 'regular' is defined as any time on more than 2 days in any period of 30 days (ie. 2+ times per month). The guidance suggests 'with the same group' (again,

looking at potential to groom) however, it is advisable that you and anyone else likely to deliver workshops to at risk groups has a DBS check.

Who should or shouldn't be checked is sometimes harder to decide at volunteer-run organisations where roles aren't always defined. However, there would probably still be some more likely to take on the education sessions than others. Discussions would need to be had about frequency of sessions then. If they were only a few times a year, and there were always two or more people present, then no DBS check needed. If more frequent - back to the more than 2 days in any period of 30 days (ie. 2+ times per month) then, get someone DBS checked. Volunteers and volunteer organizations do not have to pay for DBS checks. Anyone who has been through the HR process for a Local Authority, with 'at risk' groups in their role, should have been DBS checked.

Grey areas come up around people whose work include sessions with children and young people where you would be with them unsupervised - and then the regularity with which they would be involved with sessions and how often they help deliver determines whether they get a DBS check or not.

A museum/gallery should also consider that whenever an 'at risk' group is in the museum, no child would be alone with a member of staff who did not have a DBS check. If for example a child needed the toilet or First Aid, they should either go with a member of the school staff who brought them, or if they have to go with a member of museum staff, then it should be with someone who has a DBS check, It is safer to leave a group of children together with non-DBS checked adult(s) while an individual (with DBS check) accompany an individual child.

If sessions happen fairly infrequently, and no one is really required to have a DBS check, then the organisation just needs to ensure that enough staff have been agreed for any planned session to have a pair of adults go with any individual if necessary. A CRB still held by staff from another job is not valid - that CRB is attached to the 'role' they held elsewhere.

Having a robust Safeguarding Policy in place is a very good idea, even as a volunteer organisation so that all members of staff know how to behave and proceed in order to keep 'at risk' groups safe, and how to keep themselves safe too. Getting some basic training for staff would also be very good news. Kidscape, SAFE and NSPCC all do great training sessions. It is important that people are aware of what to look out for and how to respond appropriately if something arises, because 'not responding' or getting it wrong can have such serious consequences. Any information that raises awareness in this area is important.

Many staff find the subject of child protection very difficult and also find the prospect of being checked quite threatening, however, not everyone would have to be checked - it is illegal to do that if their role does not include working with 'at risk groups' by the way. A blanket 'check everyone' is an infringement on people's civil rights.

Many people think that Safeguarding is all red tape, and over-egging something that is very unlikely to happen in a museum. Actually museums are quite vulnerable from the point of view that the 'red-tape is not as tight as the more formal learning environments, and have therefore become 'easier' grooming ground. Horrible to say, but it's true - and we have had experience of these situations occurring in a couple of our SE museums. Better to be aware, have some basic Safeguarding knowledge, some basic agreed practice and policy in place (even a simple terms of agreement) than to put anyone who comes to your museum or gallery for pleasure at risk. It is our duty of care.

As a member of the public, individuals have a legal requirement to protect those at risk by common law (and yes, that does mean calling police if you felt a child/young person was under threat.) However, as a museum, what you are doing is being responsible as an organization. As an organization, you have to be aware of hazards and risks, and health & safety issues because there is a legal requirement for you to protect those in your environment

or you may be liable - Safeguarding is another part of that safety obligation, except with far more serious consequences than a burst pipe.

4. World War I Commemorative Events

Sarah announced there would be a SE regional meeting of those who have signed up to the 1914 project website (400 members in the SE). Meeting likely to be end of November at Chatham Historic Dockyard.

JH noted two relevant points for museums undertaking WWI projects: The Royal Engineers' Museum has objects available for loan (museum conditions, must be cased, etc) – contact docsofficer@re-museum.co.uk for details

Swale Borough Council are offering grants of up to £750 for commemorative projects in Swale. Prompt uptake is recommended! Contact martingoodhew@swale.gov.uk for details

5. MDO Update

Sarah has been working with Dr Agnes Gulyas, Principal Lecturer in the Department of Media, Art and Design and teaching on the Media and Communications, Media and Cultural Studies and Multimedia Journalism programmes <http://southeastmuseums.org/news-and-opportunities?item=77> . New website being developed which will map/feature basic details of Kent & Medway Museums including links to social media. This will link with the KMG website (soon to be completed by JH). Send your museum's details including Facebook/twitter details to sarah.corn@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Following emergency/disaster training by HDRS, HDRS are offering expert emergency recovery assistance in the event a museum has a major disaster. £500 per museum, BUT Sarah has negotiated a group membership where HDRS will offer the service to a group of museums for the same price, hence 10 museums would pay £50 each...well worth joining!! Contact sarah.corn@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Sarah is also trying to organise a Kent & Medway Salvage Group (similar to the Emergency Response Team from a few years ago). This is an informal group whose members agree to help other members in the group in the immediate aftermath of a major flood/fire etc. No charges involved, just mutual support. Contact sarah.corn@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Kent & Medway Learning and Access Group has been rejuvenated with the designation of a dedicated person – Keith Dunmall, Audience Development & Learning Manager at the Powell-Cotton Museum.

There is a new web resource being developed for learning materials and related resources. <http://www.engagingwithmuseums.org> where museums can upload resources, documents, photographs to the site and teachers login as members to access and download such material...an ideal (and free) way to publicize your learning service!

The South East Museum Development Service is holding its regional conference at Brooklands Museum on 10th November to showcase successful projects (and network with colleagues from across the SE)

6. KMG development

JH asked members for their views on future direction for KMG. A short discussion focussed on a perceived gap between ACE and museums at grass roots – JH and SC explained that broad appeal training had shifted towards much more specific, needs-driven projects as assessed by Sarah on her travels. As a result, support/development projects and in-house training relies more on museums being identified as needing specific support whilst also looking at their own operation to identify needs. Discussion rested on a real need for smaller museums to be assessed/audited – by KMG – in support of the excellent work Sarah – party because smaller museums don't always know what it is they need.

Following distribution of minutes, members are welcome to email their thoughts/comments/suggestions to john.harrison10@virgin.net for further discussion.

7. Any Other Business

Based on her direct experience of borrowing from the Horniman Museum, Maria Esain heartily endorsed the 'Object in Focus' project

8. Next Meeting

Next meeting will be at **10am on 19th September at Ashford Borough Council Offices, Ashford.**

Thanks to Sue Gosling for provision of our meeting room and refreshments today.

Following the business meeting, Emily Nisbet-Hawkins – Preventive Conservation Officer for Kent & Medway, Surrey, E&W Sussex – delivered a thorough insight into threats to collections and the preventive measures we should take to protect our collections. Emily's powerpoint presentation is attached to the emailed minutes.

Emily is available to do full conservation audits and has equipment/'toolkits' available for free loan. Contact emily.nisbet-hawkins@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Members' News

Fleur-de-Lis Museum, Faversham

Visitor numbers to date in 2014 are slightly up on last year. Gallery Exhibition visitors have improved by 35%, helped by some interesting artistic displays.

Our accreditation process is in full swing – we were invited to apply in January for an August deadline. We are well under way, led by Clive Foreman with vital help from our mentor, John.

Our new Learning Activities Manager Julie Ricketts has already carried out several projects with schools, currently concentrating on the village of Graveney.

Chart Mills

Opened last month for the season, visitor numbers are up on last year. Several group visits and special events are planned.