

Norfolk Museums & Archaeology Service: Case Study

Museum: The Bridewell Museum, Norwich Project: The Bridewell History Wall

Why we did it: The Bridewell History Wall is a key element in the refurbished Bridewell Museum. This £1.5m Heritage Lottery Fund project saw the transformation of the Grade 1 listed building into an accessible, modern museum, newly focused on telling the story of the city and its people. The History Wall embodies our core aim to make the museum for and about the people of Norwich— a 10 metre long photographic mosaic, displayed in a light box in the museum's entrance, it was largely created from images donated by the city's residents via a social media campaign.

What we delivered: The public campaign for History Wall images ran from April to May 2012. People donated in several different ways: via a website, by post or email and through social media which proved the most popular method. The project outstripped our expectations:

- **9,800 photos** were donated, from people sending one treasured family photo to others who allowed access to an archive of hundreds
- The donated photographs represent most social classes and cover **every decade** from 1900
- A **dynamic online community** was created with **1,032 Twitter** followers and **1,148 Facebook** likes, and the concept created a 'buzz' with plenty of media coverage.

The end result of all this activity is a permanent major new artwork, a physical expression of local people's pride in 'their' city.

Who benefited: The project fostered a sense of community among those who donated images, many of whom have visited the museum subsequently to find their contribution and point it out to families and friends. Since the museum reopened on 3 July 2012, the museum has attracted over 15,000 visits [up from 5,000 visits a year pre-redevelopment]: the History Wall has proved one of the most popular exhibits, attracting visitors into the museum and prompting discussion and reminiscence.

What happened next: An active programme of events, including a city-wide Valentine's Eve celebration, holiday activities for families and a reinvigorated schools programme, continues to build on this community spirit, confirming the Bridewell Museum's place at the heart of the community, and encouraging visitors to make sense of their own place in this fascinating, changing city.

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“Spent 3 hours in the Bridewell yesterday – loved it. The History Wall is a stunning creation, I couldn't drag myself away.”

The Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service (NMAS) is a multi-award winning service comprising **ten museums and a study centre**. The Service aims to inform and inspire people's interest in the cultural and natural heritage of Norfolk, and address relevant contemporary issues by:

- **Collecting, preserving and interpreting material evidence of the past**
- **Stimulating creativity, inspiration and enjoyment**
Providing an enjoyable way to learn throughout life
- **Engaging with the widest possible audience**
- **Enriching people's lives and creating a sense of place and identity**
- **Enabling people to understand and value other cultures**

It is a high performing service. In 2010/11 **380,000** visits were made to the museums, and **43,000** schoolchildren participated in formal learning events.

The Norfolk Museums Service was established in 1974 when the County and District Councils in Norfolk agreed to delegate their museum powers to a Joint Committee to manage museums through a county-wide Museums

Service. The museums in each district are managed by local Area Museum Managers who liaise closely with each District and ensure that the museums support local strategies and initiatives.

NMAS is one of only 16 Major Partner Museums receiving substantial revenue funding from Arts Council England in order to achieve ACE's vision for museums:

"A museums sector that is delivering inspiring public programmes using high quality collections to reach more and more people, especially children and young people. The sector is innovative; it shares best practice and is embedded in communities and responsive to audience needs. It is made up of strong, sustainable organisations with a highly skilled and diverse workforce; it is excellently led."

For more information contact:

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