

Appendix 3 Museum of Norwich

The Museum of Norwich was known until 2013 as The Bridewell Museum. Since its redevelopment and redisplay (2009-2012) the focus of the museum has changed from Norwich trades and industries to the wider story of the development of Norwich as a city.

2. History of the collections

The Museum of Norwich at The Bridewell, formerly the Bridewell Museum of Trades & Industries, has its origins in the 1920s. In 1923 Sir Henry Holmes, a successful shoe manufacturer, bought the Norwich Bridewell with the intention of giving it to the City as a museum of local trades and industries. The Bridewell building itself already had a rich history, as home to the first Mayor of Norwich, as well as latterly becoming the city's House of Correction.

The museum was opened by the Duke of York in October 1925. It presented items linked to Norfolk crafts and industries, with displays on printing, shoe making, local building techniques, agriculture, textiles, transport and engineering, country crafts and leather working. A display on blacksmithing was installed in the undercroft in 1936 and relocated upstairs in 1966. Those visiting in the 1950s would remember the display of live birds, which complemented the display on local canary breeding.

In 1975, the rural life collections were transferred to the newly established Gressenhall Museum, establishing a newly developing focus for the museum on the City of Norwich rather than the county of Norfolk.

In 1985, John Newstead, a local pharmacist, donated his extensive collection relating to pharmacy. The collection of over 2,400 items was then, like today, displayed as a traditional chemist shop made up of the contents and shop fittings of over sixty separate shops from across East Anglia

The museum reopened in 2012 after a major redevelopment project. Following extensive public consultation, the building was made fit for the 21st century with ten refurbished galleries telling the story of Norwich and its people. New displays chart the progress of Norwich from Medieval times up to the present day, with the focus on telling those histories through individual lives. Objects from Strangers' Hall, the Costume & Textiles collection and Norwich Castle Art collections were used to support the new focus. In particular large 20th century domestic life collections were used in galleries which focus on the city from 1900 onwards.

3. An overview of current collections

The collection comprises nearly 23,000 objects, ranging broadly from the 15th to late 20th centuries, with particular focus on the mid-19th to late 20th century.

Since the 1970s, the accessioned collections have focussed on the trades and industries of Norwich although, following on from the 2012 redevelopment project, the collection is broadening to include other elements of the city's social history, for

example collections linked to Norwich City Football Club. They have specific strengths in the Norwich boot and shoe trade, local industries such as textiles, engineering, food manufacture, printing and brewing as well as an extensive photographic library of local images. We are currently working in partnership with Picture Norfolk, part of Norfolk Library & Information Service, to digitise the very best of these photographic collections.

The boots and shoes, Norwich textiles, metalwork and pharmacy collections are seen to be especially significant. The boot and shoe collections have developed most strongly over the past 20 years and will remain our primary collecting focus. The pharmacy collection is also highly regarded. The Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain regards it as a unique collection, unrivalled in other museums, and deems it as of national importance.

Star objects include the newly refurbished Jacquard loom, Barnard's wire netting machine and the Shand Mason steam fire engine; and of course, the recreated pharmacy.

Many items in the new displays are drawn from the domestic collections from Stranger's Hall Museum, as well as costume and textiles, art and decorative art collections from other NMS departments based at Shirehall, Norwich. All collections on display were strictly selected to fit the new focus of the museum, to show a more people focussed social history of the city, from its medieval roots to the present day.

The redevelopment project triggered a major collection relocation and latterly storage reorganisation programme. This includes the beginning of an ongoing rationalisation process, which has been identifying collections that fall outside of the museum's city, rather than county, focus.

4. Themes and priorities for future collecting

At the time of writing NMS no longer employs a Collections Curator at the Museum of Norwich. Following the termination of this post in 2014, the existing staff members have been tasked with completing outstanding post-project documentation and ongoing collections care. Tasks previously assigned to the Collections Curator, including collecting, have been temporarily suspended. NMS is still collecting social history from the Norwich area through Strangers' Hall and the Costume & Textile collections, and it is reassessing its capacity to continue collecting for the Museum of Norwich.

Geographical area

The general area covered by the collecting policy of the Museum of Norwich is that represented by the City of Norwich along with its suburbs beyond the city boundaries proper. In certain circumstances the Museum may collect from a wider area as defined in the themes for collecting below, with reference to other museums in that area.

The Museum's collecting area was once the whole of Norfolk, and focused on trades and industries. Since the redevelopment the museum has a new focus telling the story of Norwich. Any future collecting will focus on Norwich alone.

Subject areas

Social History – general

Any future collecting will focus on developing oral histories, building on work done to include 'peoples stories' as part of the redisplay project (where oral histories were collected from shoe workers, chocolate workers and other Norwich residents). New collecting to include stories of the Second World War in the city, including families who took in children in the kindertransport scheme.

Social History – Community Life

The museum has recently rebranded and repositioned itself as The Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell. The new proposition is for the museum to be at the heart of city life, and actively engaged in the local community. Any future collecting on community life will be used as a way of engaging with different community groups, e.g. running sessions outside the museum with partner organisations, to raise the profile of the museum. It will focus on:

1. Post-1960s life in the city, in particular social life and sport (especially speedway)
2. The ambition is to bolster collections relating to the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s with a specific Norwich provenance.
3. Valentine's Eve in Norwich
4. Pippa Miller ephemera & art work

Social History – Domestic Life

There are no plans to collect in this area.

Social History – Personal Life

A new display at the museum relates to personal experiences of being gay, and also being disabled. There is potential to explore these personal stories by collecting a limited number of objects to bolster the existing display.

Social History – Working Life

Collecting in this area has been a priority in the past, and a wide ranging collection has been built up. Consequently only particularly significant objects or items will be considered in the following areas, and duplication of existing collections will be avoided:

1. Textiles industry
2. Shoemaking
3. Chocolate manufacturing
4. Bolton & Paul Ltd
5. Service industries such as insurance and banking
6. Shopkeepers
7. New creative and industries and the expansion of the UEA and its Research Park.

Limitations on collecting

Museum storage space at the Museum of Norwich is very limited which is a severe constraint on collecting significant local material. This makes it essential at present to

be very selective when adding to the collections. Some storage space is available at the Norfolk Collections Centre at Gressenhall Farm & Workhouse, particularly for larger objects, but this is also limited.

5. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

1. Collections related to Norfolk building materials, currently stored in the Undercroft
2. Collections related to windmills, and possibly railway development, currently stored in the Undercroft.
3. Collections displaced by the project redevelopment such as Boston's Pawnbrokers, which have no limited future display potential within NMS and which are difficult to store effectively
4. Collections of furniture, mainly 19th & 20th century and in poor repair, currently stored in the Undercroft
5. A small amount of material related to Norwich City Football club
6. Brass rubbing collection
7. Encyclopaedia Britannica and other non-Norfolk specific book collections

7. Collecting policies of other museums

As well as the general considerations for NMS as a whole, the Museum of Norwich will make special consideration and reference to the collecting policies of the City of Norwich Aviation Museum and Dragon Hall.

In cases where local material is perceived to be significant to the collections of specialist NMS departments or museums it should be accessioned there but made available on loan to the Museum of Norwich for display if required.

