

Herefordshire Museum Service Support Group

Registered Charity (CIO) No.1171756



ANNUAL REPORT 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021

HMSSG works to support and develop the Museum Service, which comprises the County's History and Art Collections held in trust for Herefordshire's people; the Museum and Art Gallery in Broad Street; the Museum Resource and Learning Centre where the Collections are stored; the Black and White House Museum in High Town; and the professional staff team.

Charitable Objects: 1. *To advance the education of the public by supporting the maintenance and development of Herefordshire county museum and art collections and promoting public access to those collections.*
2. *To advance the arts, culture, heritage and science... by promoting public appreciation and understanding of the archaeology, history, heritage, culture, natural science and visual arts of Herefordshire through those collections, and related use, preservation, curation, interpretation, exhibitions and activities.*



Poster image advertising Ice Age Herefordshire. Sadly, this was the only exhibition the museum service were able to mount in 2020/21 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Trustees' Report

The 2020 – 2021 Trustees were Jane Adams (Chair), Christy Bolderson (Treasurer) and Jacqueline Addis.

Throughout the year HMSSG prioritised (i) lobbying Herefordshire Council (HC) to develop a sustainable strategy for the Museum Service, supporting their outline plans for re-development and (ii) developing our mechanisms to offer practical support to the service.

Redevelopment of Herefordshire Museum and Art Gallery

At the time of the last Annual Report (July 2020), Herefordshire Council's strategy for the Museum Service remained on hold. The opportunity to submit plans for investment in cultural services as part of Hereford's Stronger Towns Fund bid brought a welcome change. An outline project for the redevelopment of Hereford Museum and Art Gallery in Broad Street as a dedicated museum and art gallery for the county collections was approved in January 2021. An associated project to move Hereford City Library to Maylord Orchard was also approved. Herefordshire Council are now developing a full business case for both these projects.

Recognition of the potential contribution of the county museum service to the cultural and economic life of Hereford and Herefordshire by the Stronger Towns Fund Board and the national assessment panel will come as no surprise to our members. HMSSG can be proud of their sustained lobbying against cuts and in favour of investment since the support group was formed. Our priority now is to support this project to ensure its success.



Impression of possible exterior to the remodelled building in Broad Street. The façade will be retained but the design will incorporate new features, perhaps including a rooftop viewing gallery and an entrance to the rear of the building.

The interior gallery space will be increased to deliver a modern museum experience whilst retaining listed features such as the Woolhope Room.

The Stronger Towns Fund Board have offered £5m funding to the scheme. The total cost is expected to be between £15 and £20m, most of which is expected to come from Herefordshire Council, Heritage Lottery Fund and other grant-funding bodies. The Council has put in place project management arrangements to ensure the project is worked up and delivered. Few details are yet in the public domain but it is expected that public consultation will take place in the last quarter of 2021. The redevelopment of the building is expected to take place over two years in 2023/24.

HMSSG expressed our support for the scheme in the preparatory stages and are in communication with the Council about how best we can support the development of the project. It has been indicated that we will be involved in the public consultation process.

Herefordshire's Viking Age Hoard

We reported last year that Herefordshire Council expected to be offered the opportunity to acquire this notable hoard of objects and coins for the county. Restrictions due to the pandemic meant that the work of the Treasure Committee at the British Museum was suspended. It is hoped that an offer of acquisition will be made before the end of 2021.

Once this happens the proposal to acquire the Hoard for the county must go through the council's governance and decision making process. If the scheme for acquisition is approved then fundraising can begin along with plans for its public display. HMSSG have offered to help the Council with any fundraising required and preliminary discussions about this are now underway. A time limit of a few months in which to raise the necessary funds is usually set.

The story of the HOARD has continued to attract national and international interest. You may be interested in reading an article published in the *New Yorker* in November 2020 entitled 'The curse of the Buried Treasure'.

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/11/16/the-curse-of-the-buried-treasure>



A gold finger-ring, arm ring or bracelet and small crystal sphere mounted in a frame of four gold strips are among the objects in the Herefordshire HOARD.

Other activities and support for the museum service

GIFT AID and processing of public donations

HMSSG's charitable status brings direct financial benefits to the museum service. Donations made by visitors in the gallery spaces are processed by HMSSG so that GIFT AID can be claimed and thus increase funds available to support the collections. Donations from visitors fell in the year as the galleries were only open for a few months. Approval to purchase the following item for the collections was given in 2020/21 although delays due to the pandemic meant this was not paid until 2021/22.



Support for HC grant applications

As a recognised community support group for the museum service, HMSSG are able to support grant applications made directly by HC to various funding bodies. In 2021 this will include an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the proposed museum development.

Private Views and events

Restrictions on the number of people able to meet together has meant that we have not been able to hold private views, talks or other events since March 2020.

Communications with our Members

A written Annual Report and Accounts for 2019/20 was distributed to members in July 2020. The trustees also issued Newsletters in January 2020 and December 2020.

Trustees

The HMSSG constitution allows for between three and eleven trustees. The three current trustees were all appointed in 2018. The normal term of office is three years which means that all three are up for re-appointment. The trustees remain committed to the need for HMSSG, or an equivalent charitable organisation, to enable Herefordshire's museum service to run in an effective and efficient manner suited to the conditions of the twenty-first century. All three are prepared to stand for up to a further three years.

Committee members

The trustees have been supported by Julie North who has managed the HMSSG website and facebook page. We are pleased to welcome Denise North and Susan Edwards who have joined us as committee members in 2021.

Membership

We are very grateful to loyal members whose support is vital to enable the charity to continue to operate.

HMSSG Financial Statement for year to 31 March 2021

Financial Accounts 2020/2021 Hereford Museum Services Support Group (HMSSG)	Cash at 1/4/20	Actual 2020/2021			Cash at 31/3/21
		Income	Expenditure	Net	
Restricted Activity					
Maintenance & development of museum and art collection					
Revenue					
Development	170.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	170.00
Promotion of public access to collections					
Website					
Development	0.00	0.00	(30.00)	(30.00)	(30.00)
Lego Exhibition	365.95	0.00	0.00	0.00	365.95
Advance arts, culture, heritage & science appreciation and understanding					
Donations received in Museum Collections	390.31	1,501.58	0.00	1,501.58	1,891.89
Unrestricted Activity	2,545.20	145.00	(201.00)	(56.00)	2,519.20
Subscriptions		175.00	0.00	175.00	
Gift Aid		0.00	0.00	0.00	
Website Fee (pre-paid 2018-2020)		0.00	(201.00)	(201.00)	
Profit / Loss		1,646.58	(231.00)	1,445.58	
Total Balance Sheet Reserves	3,471.46				4,917.04

HMSSG Trustees: Jane Adams, Jacqueline Addis, Christy Bolderson, 14 November 2021

Herefordshire Museum Service 2020/21

Visitor numbers	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
Hereford Museum and Art Gallery	2,608	19,430	10,345
Black and White House Museum	2,019	11,390	12,384
Total	4,627	30,820	22,729

Visitor numbers in 2020/21 were adversely affected by pandemic restrictions which meant that the Museum and Art Gallery was only open between 13 August and 5 November. The Black and White House was open between 13 August and 30 December. We are very grateful to all our volunteers who helped ensure the galleries could reopen safely. Following best practice guidance some exhibits, such as hands-on activities for children, were removed.

The unforeseen closures meant that only one of the three exhibitions scheduled between April 2020 and March 2021 was mounted. Susan Edwards 'Homage to Local Heroes' was rescheduled from September 2020 to September 2021 but sadly 'Discworld & Beyond' by Paul Kidby had to be cancelled. Ice Age Herefordshire (see below), originally planned for 4 April to 20 June 2020, was mounted from 13 August to early November and proved very popular with all age groups. Total visitors during the period of the exhibition were 2,068 (Adults 1470, Children 598). Additional activities were enjoyed by 94 adults and 110 children.

As far as possible, other services continued as normal. Items were received into the collections, access for researchers was facilitated and the Black and White House was decorated for Christmas.



Museum service staffing levels

Herefordshire's county museum service has a skeleton staff who do an amazing job in caring for the collections, running three sites and putting on a varied programme throughout the year. The indicative Whole Time Equivalent staff in various functions are.

Curatorial, exhibitions and collections	2.08
Museum front of house	1.96
Administration	0.13
Project Officer (shared across all MLA)	0.16
Total	4.33 FTE

The business model for the operation of the redeveloped Museum will need to provide a significant investment in staffing levels to deliver the potential benefits to our communities.

Volunteer support

Our thanks are due to the enthusiastic volunteers who regularly dedicate time to support the museum service front of house team. Without volunteer help the Museum and Art Gallery would not be open to the public on a regular basis.

Volunteering at the MRLC was suspended throughout the year. (In 2019/20 some 12 individuals worked with the collections team).

Ice Age Herefordshire

The highlight of the year was *Ice Age Herefordshire*, curated by Herefordshire Museum Service in collaboration with Museums Worcestershire, Hereford College of Art, Herefordshire Wildlife Trust, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust, and Herefordshire Amphibian and Reptile Team, with funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Thanks and congratulations to everyone involved in delivering this fascinating and fun show for all age groups. It lifted our spirits when most needed.

Displays outlined the geology of Herefordshire and changes in local landscapes and environments, with a particular focus on the creation of kettle holes, or 'Ice Age Ponds'.



Among the bones of extinct animals on display was a mammoth tusk which had been stabilised and conserved. Funding for this was paid for by public donations via HMSSG.

Other exhibits included bones of animals that survived the Pleistocene Ice Age and artefacts made by early humans.

Artwork by students at Hereford College of Art explored the meaning and effect of modern day Climate Change.

The pandemic has emphasised the potential of digital exhibitions to reach audiences who cannot attend the galleries in person. An Ice Age Herefordshire Virtual Exhibition was developed and made available via the Herefordshire Council website.

Looking ahead to 2021/22

After many years of financial cuts, Herefordshire museum service are now embarking on a period of investment and improvement in services for communities across Herefordshire.

HMSSG's priorities for 2021/22 are to support and promote

- The redevelopment project for Herefordshire Museum and Art Gallery
- The acquisition of the Herefordshire Hoard for the County
- The work of the museum service

As the restrictions due to the pandemic eased, a full programme of activities has been delivered in 2021/22. Highlights include

- Hereford's May Fair: celebrating 900 years
- Round the year from Stonewall Hill: Mary Rennell and contemporary artists
- Susan Edwards, 'Inspired by Local Heroes'
- Grayson Perry 'The Vanity of Small Differences'
- Celebrating 400 years at the Black and White House Museum

Support HMSSG and the Museum Service

HMSSG needs to develop in order to offer the service effective support. Please help us to do that.

- Join as a member. Find us on <https://herefordshiremuseumsupport.org.uk/>
- More time and energy to contribute? Why not join the committee or find out about becoming a trustee. Contact Jane Adams on herefordmuseumgroup@gmail.com.
- Become a volunteer in the public gallery spaces. Contact Julia.radburn@herefordshire.gov.uk.

