

# Herefordshire Museum Service Support Group

Registered Charity (CIO) No. 1171756



## ANNUAL REPORT April 2024 – March 2025

### Report from the Chair Denise North

In last year's Annual Report, Jane Adams gave a rundown of the projects and initiatives with which the Group has been involved, from the period of protesting about threats of major cuts to the Service, to formally and practically supporting efforts by the then Museum Service team to acquire the Herefordshire Hoard. The 2023-24 Annual Report is available on our website if you wish to read again.

The tenth year in the life of Herefordshire Museum Service Support Group is an important milestone in that our small charity is still here. Set up to support the professional Museum Service at a time when swingeing cuts by the Council posed a threat to the cultural offer, we continue to tailor our actions and activities to offer the most appropriate support. We applaud Herefordshire Council's investment in the professional museums team and offer them help where we can. Thanks to our friends and Members over these ten years.

We work with Damian and the team on accessing various grant opportunities and to fund directly smaller purchases to enhance collections and boost appeal to the public. We also help with promotion of events, work as ambassadors and as a partnership for practical gains.

Charities such as HMSSG can apply for grant monies



unavailable to local authorities and in autumn 2024 the Heritage Reimagined project proposed to install new signage at the renamed Old House and History Store. To enhance the appearance and visibility of the two buildings the new signs were in place in late March 2025 and with the thorough overhaul of the



interior of the House feedback has been favourable. Visitor numbers are increasing and by next spring the full year's statistics will be available. On speaking to people around the House it shows that small scale improvements, not only major overhauls, make a difference to visitors' experiences.



In the ten years since the founding of HMSSG, it has been involved in efforts to extend collections, fund conservation work on artefacts, acquire pieces unique and historically important to this county, country and, in some cases internationally, and work to maintain a profile for itself and Herefordshire Museums and Galleries (HMAG to be brief). As

an essential element in the quality of life boosted by engagement with history and cultural treasures, the role of museums and creative outlets is positive if resources and facilities are supported to allow the public's access to be consistent, engaging and easy.

## **About HMSSG as an organisation**

The Trustees serving in the year 2024/5 were Jane Adams, Jacki Allison, Christy Bolderson and Denise North.

In our tenth anniversary year, we have a change of Chair effective since March and some new faces around the committee and Trustee table. Jane has been involved with the charity since the early days, and her tenacity is never to be underestimated. We won't write more here other than a huge thank you Jane, for your time, skills and dedication. Rest assured we shall continue to uphold the best values of the Group as we move into a new phase as an independent complementary branch to HMAG.

Our colleagues, Christy Bolderson as Treasurer, Jackie Allison as Trustee and Chris Bucknell on our Committee continue to serve the charity's purpose and form a cohesive team. We also acknowledge input from Kate Seekings whose work to modernise our newsletters and communications in 2024 made an important contribution. Kate's other commitments meant she had to leave us in late 2024 but we wanted to thank her here. We hope our members will vote in favour of our proposed new Trustee, Elizabeth Pimblett, known to many of you already from her earlier roles in the Museum Service and for the last eight years as Director, Museum of Cider here in Hereford.

I became involved with HMSSG in 2020 at the stage when the Museum Service team were, like the rest of us, frustrated in trying to work alongside teams from other

organisations in lockdown conditions. In this case it was the team at Department for Culture, Media and Sport involved with the Treasure Valuation Committee whose role it was to advise the coroner who decided whether the artefacts looted in 2015 were treasure and which process necessary to decide their long-term ownership. The rest is history and the original tranche of coins, and the jewellery, are in this building in safekeeping. Their home will of course be the redeveloped building in Broad Street, along with other collections currently stored here awaiting their new staging. Some will not have been on view for several years and we look forward to seeing old friends in a new light. Literally.

## **The major priorities**

The key element of future success will be the Council's completion of the redeveloped museum and gallery in Broad Street. Recognised as the headquarters building of HMAG, the public are, not surprisingly, eager to know when will their local treasure house reopen. Damian Etheraad's input to this report below illustrates what is going on behind the scenes, where the team are working on their plans to take full advantage of new redefined space, new ways in which to display county collection highlights and enable the public to see, participate and learn with opportunities to witness at close hand the fabulous holdings in Herefordshire. With the HMAG team at full complement and much work going on behind the scenes the outcome of their labours will be clear once doors open. In the meantime, we all wait.

The team are working to boost the appeal of the Old House and History Store, aware that with one building closed for a considerable period, the others must run business as usual and offer the public opportunities to see, hear about and benefit from the experience. Not all these initiatives are dependent upon the physical buildings in Hereford but Damian will say more.

It is a long time since the Museum Service team staff and volunteers cleared the building of the collections in 2023, and we must all be patient until the various building redevelopment phases complete and doors open in 2027. If the waiting seems lengthy to us as the public, imagine how the team feel.

## **Herefordshire Hoard**

The Hoard treasures spent from early spring 2024 at Jorvik as part of their Viking Festival and into the summer as a complementary display alongside various collections of Viking treasures. Our Hoard was welcomed, and much positive feedback gleaned. The twist in the tale adds to their story. Radio Wales' Fool's Gold podcast series has just

rerun on Radio 4. Dramatic flourishes aside, this explores many aspects of this complex story.



We await news of the process whereby the coins recovered in the Durham case are (or not) declared as treasure and will then work with Damian to gauge the role which HMSSG will play in the campaign to acquire the 44 coins. As a small charity we will step up to the challenge as needed. The timing of the decision by the Treasure

Valuation Committee is still unclear but we will update our members as we know more.

Press reports of another coin discovery with potential links to our Hoard, in Croydon, show that publicity around the case may continue to make possible recovery of more coins.

### **Look out for BBC Radio Wales original series, recently re-run on Radio 4: Fool's Gold, now on BBC Sounds.**

The series gives an overview of the period leading from the unlicensed discovery in 2015 of the coins and jewellery in Eye near Leominster, to the court case, sentencing and jailing of the two perpetrators in 2019.

The HMAG team have been offering Hoard themed open sessions and schools workshops continue.

### **Rebrand, rename, refresh**

In the last year the service and team have been rebranded as Herefordshire Museums and Galleries, and their work until doors open in Broad Street is to focus on plans for the use of the redeveloped building as a centre for the public to see, experience and enjoy the assets held for the public's enjoyment, education and engagement. Other plans coming to fruition focus on engaging with the public where they may be rather than the public coming to a building as a static base. Look out for Museum on the Move, whose competition winning design will be known by the time of our AGM. The new edition of What's On across the museums will be available in September. The edition for spring-summer 2025 proved popular, giving a hard copy resource highlighting events hosted by the team or speakers enlisted for their specialist knowledge.

## **Report by Damian Etheraads, Head of Culture, Museums, Libraries, Archives**

### **Rebranding Herefordshire's Museums and Galleries: A Year of Growth and Transformation.**

Over the past year Herefordshire Museums and Galleries has undergone a significant transformation not only in name but in approach, ambition, and engagement. The rebranding represents more than a shift in identity; it signals a renewed commitment to widening participation, deepening engagement and ensuring the collections are accessible, relevant and meaningful for today's audience.

#### **A New Identity for a Changing Service**

The decision to move from Herefordshire Museum Service to Herefordshire Museums and Galleries reflects the evolution of our work. Museums today are not simply places that store the past - they are spaces that foster creativity, dialogue and discovery. The new name represents better the broad scope of our work in preserving collections, inspiring creativity and connecting communities.

This rebrand also aligns with the redevelopment of Hereford Museum and Art Gallery, a flagship project that will redefine the cultural landscape of Herefordshire. This transformation will create a more dynamic and welcoming space, allowing visitors to engage with national level exhibitions, contemporary galleries and innovative learning opportunities - bringing history, art and ideas to life for us all.

#### **Transforming Hereford Museum and Art Gallery**

We have been making significant strides towards the transformation of Hereford Museum and Art Gallery. This has included refining our plans for the new spaces, developing engaging content, and ensuring the museum will be a place that truly reflects and serves Herefordshire.

A key milestone in this process has been the appointment of Vinci Construction as principal contractor, marking a significant step forward in turning our vision into reality. Their expertise will help deliver a high quality, sustainable and inspiring museum space that reflects the rich heritage and creativity of the county.

Community involvement is central to shaping the gallery development. A key part of the process has been our work with a range of community voices, ensuring that the redevelopment is shaped by those who will use and benefit from it. Co production is a vital part of the progress. It is a way of working that ensures museums are shaped by the people they serve. The team have been working hard to create co-production groups that represent a range of voices from people with different backgrounds, ages, and

interests. Our co-production groups will shape everything from gallery content to accessibility improvements.

These conversations have deepened our understanding of how people connect with museums and have influenced our approach in meaningful ways and ensure that the museum will reflect real stories, real experiences and real connections, making it a place *for everyone*.

### **Building capacity: Volunteers and Participation**

A key success of the past year has been expanding volunteer involvement. The museum has moved away from the traditional ‘volunteers as helpers’ model towards one where volunteers contribute through structured, project-based roles. This ensures meaningful engagement and allows the service to work with a wider and more diverse group of people.

The number of volunteers has grown significantly, with people supporting a range of projects, from collections care to event delivery. Sensational Museums has played a key role in expanding accessibility particularly through its focus on inclusive museum experiences.

### **Securing Funding for Innovation**

This year has also seen major successes in securing external funding. Grants from organisations such as the Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund, the HERDS project and the Natural History Museum’s Fixing our Broken Planet initiative have supported new programming, research, and collections care. These grants not only provide vital financial support but also affirm the credibility and growing influence of the service on a national scale.

### **Engagement across Herefordshire**

Beyond the walls of the museum, Herefordshire Museums and Galleries has been active across the county, leading initiatives such as Voices of the Wye, which captures oral histories linked to the river Wye, and community roundtables which bring together local people to give their views on the redevelopment of Hereford Museum and Art Gallery.

At the heart of all this work is a simple but powerful aim: to ensure that Herefordshire’s cultural heritage stays relevant, accessible, and valued - not just in the present but for generations to come. The past year has demonstrated what can be achieved when museums evolve to meet the needs of their communities and the future holds even greater potential.

We can see from the breadth of Damian and the team's work that much goes on. He will field any questions about the initiatives after the business part of the AGM.

## **HMSSG and the future**

As we approached the tenth year of HMSSG we decided to conduct a review of our record of accomplishment and potential for future working in complementary fashion to the HMAG team. We were grateful to have input from Damian, Sam Shuman and Kate Riddington who lead the professional team whose work and care on behalf of the public ensures the cultural assets of Herefordshire remain secure, accessible and appreciated by all who choose to explore. The outcome of this review was to confirm that our role should continue as a direct grant giver, and recipient of grant monies only available to charity organisations which enable us to support the ambitions of the team to acquire or enhance collections. We are hosting our own events, looking to boost our offer to members and will look to work with other organisations serving as Friends to various elements of our county cultural holdings.

If you are not yet an HMSSG member then please join us as, with an expanded membership, we can offer more opportunities to learn about and from the assets held in the public collections held in the county. Engagement with cultural assets via museums and contact with historical objects and subject matter is shown to be beneficial to mental well-being. Who would not find that desirable?

On behalf of my colleagues and myself thank you again for the support you offer and please talk to any of us about how you may help us as we evolve into a Friends organisation fit for the future.

**Denise North**

### **Chair, Trustees HMSSG**

Thanks to Herefordshire Council and British Museum for selected photographs included in the report. All others by D North. Thanks to Jane Adams for her help in compiling this report.

## HMSSG Financial Statement for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025

Financial Accounts 2023/2024 Hereford Museum Services Support Group (HMSSG)	Cash at 1/4/24	Actual 2024/2025			Cash at 31/3/25
		Income	Expenditure	Net	
<b>Restricted Activity</b>					
<b>Maintenance &amp; development of museum and art collection</b>					
Revenue Development	170.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	170.00
<b>Promotion of public access to collections</b>					
	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Advance arts, culture, heritage &amp; science appreciation and understanding</b>					
Donations received for the Herefordshire Hoard	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>
Hoard Cash Donations		0.00	0.00	0.00	
Hoard Card Donations (via sum up)		0.00	0.00	0.00	
Hoard Online Donations		0.00	0.00	0.00	
Hoard Other		0.00	0.00	0.00	
Donations received in Museum Collections - Hoard	12,556.34	325.00	(2,110.00)	(1,785.00)	10,771.34
Donations received in Museum Collections	1,734.97	131.85	0.00	131.85	1,866.82
<b>Unrestricted Activity</b>	<b>2,337.11</b>	<b>779.89</b>	<b>(520.75)</b>	<b>259.14</b>	<b>2,596.25</b>
Subscriptions		260.00	(0.75)	259.25	
Donations		220.00	0.00	220.00	
Gift Aid		299.89	0.00	299.89	
HVOSS subscription		0.00	0.00	0.00	



Website Fee			0.00	(470.00)	(470.00)
Insurance			0.00	0.00	0.00
AIM membership			0.00	0.00	0.00
Printing & Postage			0.00	0.00	0.00
BAFM membership			0.00	0.00	0.00
Other			0.00	(50.00)	(50.00)
			0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Profit / Loss</b>			1,236.74	(2,630.75)	(1,394.01)
<b>Total Balance Sheet Reserves</b>	<b>16,798.42</b>				<b>15,404.41</b>

<b>Bank Reconciliation</b>		
Cash - Lloyds Account 1/4/24	16,798.42	<a href="#">2024_March_Statement.pdf</a>
Cash - Lloyds Account 31/3/25	404.41	<a href="#">2025_March_Statement.pdf</a>
Cash - Lloyds Savings Account 31/3/25	15000	<a href="#">Savings_March_2025.jpg</a>
Cash - PayPal 31/3/25	0	<a href="#">PayPal transactions 2024/2025 financial year.PDF</a>
<b>TOTAL CASH IN BANK</b>	<b>15,404.41</b>	
<b>Trial Balance</b>	<b>15,404.41</b>	
Difference	0.00	