



# Viva Volunteers!

Oxford University Museums Volunteer Service  
April - June 2017



UNIVERSITY OF  
OXFORD

**Quarterly Public Engagement Stats**    **288 Events**    **1349 Volunteering Hours**  
**178 Volunteers**    **517 Instances of Volunteering**

## Congratulations!

Congratulations to volunteers Clara and James who both received awards at the Oxfordshire Charity and Volunteer Awards ceremony at the Town Hall in May. They were nominated for their outstanding contributions to 'Out in Oxford', 'Wow!How?', 'Science Saturdays', and 'Super Science Saturday', respectively. The 'Out in Oxford' volunteer team was also nominated for the 'Best New Group' award, and the Volunteer and Community Engagement Service, Ashmolean, and Crisis Skylight Oxford were nominated for the 'Working Together' award for 'Art in Crisis' 2016.



Volunteers Clara and James proudly posing with their awards

## Party Time!

Celebrations continued in to June as we marked National Volunteers' Week and hosted the annual Volunteer Summer Party. Sadly, the bright sunshine of the last two years failed to make an appearance this year, but there was still a nice crowd of volunteers, as well as some suitably grateful staff on hand to welcome and chat to them. Special thanks to Chris Jarvis, who gave two very engaging talks about the Museum of Natural History swifts, and to all of the staff who helped set up, serve, and clear up!



Just some of our 600+ wonderful volunteers enjoying a summery feast

A chance for volunteers to write about objects significant to their volunteering...

### 'My Favourite Object...' No.3

Your name: Ian

Your chosen object: Iron Age Celtic Stater [handling object, shown here]

The museum the object is in: Ashmolean

What connection the object has to your volunteering: I am especially intrigued by the Iron Age period and how technologies changed and people moved about. Coins tell a story that many people do not realise, so coin handling (which I do) is a great way of meeting and talking to visitors.

Why you've chosen the object: It is a great artefact for people to touch. A wonderful way to engage children when you say they are about to handle a gold coin that is nearly 2,000 years old. It makes everyone smile and want to learn more. Plus, one of the faces on the coin is not there, or is it? Another great discussion waiting to take place...



### 'My Favourite Object...' No.4

Your name: Ilenia

Your chosen object: Tetradrachm from Gela, with a depiction of the river-God Gelas (a man-headed bull) [similar to the one shown here]

The museum the object is in: Ashmolean, Money Gallery

What connection the object has to your volunteering: When I volunteer with coin handling sessions I often refer to the 'Ancient Greece' showcase across the gallery to show how each self-governing city from the Ancient Greek world was producing its own coinage.

Why you've chosen the object: This is a coin from my home town in Sicily, from the time when it was a Greek polis. Sometimes we forget how national identities and heritages can be fluid and multicultural. When I pointed it out to a young boy, and he realised that if he was born here in the UK 2,000 years ago he would have probably been a Roman, he was very surprised and excited!



### Staying with Coins...

In June, ten enthusiastic new volunteers joined Joy and Caroline on consecutive Friday evenings for 'Hands-on Coins' training. With an additional set of Watlington Hoard-inspired coins to discuss, we had to drop the ever-popular 'Coin Speed Dating' activity; however, volunteers still enjoyed newly-named 'Musical Coins', as well as the chance to play with Lego (we do try to make our training sessions engaging!). Many thanks to Volker, Julian, and Shailendra from the Coin Room for leading the first session. Coin handling happens 11.30-3.30 every Saturday in the Money Gallery.



During his post-training practice session, new volunteer Tristan helps visitors to discover the stories behind the images on coins dating from c. 320 BC Greece to 19th Century Britain and Persia

### More Training Updates...

- **Volunteer Management 101** - In April, ten more staff attended 101 training, taking the total number past the 100 mark. If you would like to attend the next session (covering everything you need to know about working with volunteers in the museums), then put 10-1 on Wednesday 27th September in your diary and get in touch now!

- **Introduction to Audio Description** - Also in April, Susan (Community Engagement), Joy, and Caroline ran another three sessions about visual impairment and audio description, attended by 27 volunteers and 10 staff. Two of the sessions were aimed at the 'Out in Oxford' volunteers so they could incorporate audio description in to their new audio guide. We will be offering three more sessions in October and aim to have trained all volunteer tour guides by the end of the year. Joy and Caroline also delivered a session, 'The Power of Audio Description', at this year's National Heritage Volunteer Conference at the Museum of Wales.

- **Saturday Object Handling** - In May, Caroline worked with Carly Smith-Huggins (Pitt Rivers) to train a new cohort of seven object handlers. The current theme is 'New Acquisitions', which gives volunteers the chance to talk about not only the objects themselves but also how they came to be in the museum. Object handling happens 11-1 every Saturday near the Intro Case.

- **Curiosity Carnival: Developing Engaging Interactive Activities** - Together with Carly Smith-Huggins (Natural History and Pitt Rivers) and Sarah Lloyd (Natural History and Botanic Garden), Joy and Caroline delivered two sessions in June for researchers taking part in Curiosity Carnival, Oxford's contribution to European Researchers' Night in September. The sessions were well attended by staff from across the University's divisions keen to think and talk about how to engage the public with their work.

- **Art in Crisis** - Throughout June, Joy and Caroline worked with staff from Ashmolean Eastern Art to introduce four Crisis Skylight clients to Chinese paintings and to different ways of talking about them. Find out how the resulting tours went in our next newsletter...!



Volunteers Lizzy and Helen, who spoke at the session, both deliver primary school sessions and tours, as well as featuring on the WWI audio

### Volunteer Voices

Have you asked your volunteers for their feedback recently? On 3rd April, the Pitt Rivers handed over the monthly Staff Short Talk to some of its regular public engagement volunteers, who spoke enthusiastically about their experience leading primary school sessions and highlight and history tours.

Highlight Tours happen at 2.30 and 3.15 on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Plus, as we continue to mark various First World War centenaries, why not listen to the Pitt Rivers's WWI tour with a difference, in which volunteer guides highlight the truly international nature of the conflict using objects in the collection. Listen [here](#).

If you have any volunteer news you would like us to share in our next quarterly newsletter, then get in touch! Our next issue will cover Jul - Sep 2017.

[www.museums.ox.ac.uk/volunteers](http://www.museums.ox.ac.uk/volunteers); [volunteering@museums.ox.ac.uk](mailto:volunteering@museums.ox.ac.uk)