



Viva Volunteers!

Oxford University Museums Volunteer Service
July - September 2017



UNIVERSITY OF
OXFORD

**Quarterly Public
Engagement Stats** **293 Events**
160 Volunteers

1374 Volunteering Hours
501 Instances of Volunteering

Helping to Make a 'Big Weekend' a Big Success!

On the weekend of 15th/16th July, the Ashmolean hosted its first 'Big Weekend' event - on the theme of Anglo-Saxons and Vikings. Working alongside staff and costumed reenactors, 28 volunteers welcomed nearly 7,000 visitors and ran object handling and craft activities inspired by the museum's Watlington Hoard and Alfred Jewel.



Party Time at the Pitt!

Volunteers were also out in force on 29th July - this time helping with a day of creativity at 'Pitt Fest: Remixed', the last in a series of annual festivals-in-a-day organised by the Pitt Rivers VERVE team. Nineteen volunteers took part, including five who were mentored to design and deliver their own collections-inspired activities. *"If you could include a big thanks from the team for ALL the amazing help volunteers have given us over the 5 years of VERVE, that would be fantastic. We could not have completed the project without their (and your!) support."* - VERVE staff



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

'My Favourite Object...' No.5

Your name: Lizzy

Your chosen object: Arthur A Kennedy's mandolin

The museum the object is in: Pitt Rivers

What connection the object has to your volunteering: I was first told about it by Caroline when I began volunteering as a tour guide at the Pitt Rivers and subsequently included it on my First World War tour.

Why you've chosen the object: I find the story behind this instrument and the issues it raises about war, fighting, and hope in horrific circumstances very moving. I think the fact that it belonged to someone who lived locally and who personally donated it to the museum also touched me. And I love the 'secret' scrap of newspaper that's been pasted inside it and can only be seen with a torch positioned just so.



'My Favourite Object...' No.6

Your name: Richard

Your chosen object: The Light Lute Harp

The museum the object is in: Bate Collection

What connection the object has to your volunteering: I spent quite some time conserving this instrument as part of the Bate's 'Instrument Cleaning' volunteer team.

Why you've chosen the object: It was quite a long job and I was particularly pleased with the outcome. It looked a bit sad when I first saw it. The body was cracked, some of the ornamental carvings were damaged or missing, the tuning pegs were loose and inoperative, the gold rose in the acoustic hole was broken off, and it had a possible infestation. To bring it back to a condition where it could be returned to the collection required periods in a freezer, much moulding to replace the missing areas, touch up painting, and a good deal of remedial renovation. With all this done and the instrument rebuilt and strung, I was particularly pleased to see it returned to its place on public display. After the 3 months' work, I now have a very soft spot for it!



In Brief...

- **Training** - In September, nine more staff attended 'Volunteer Management 101' training, which not only covers the ins and outs of the Museums' Volunteer Policy but also addresses the ethics of volunteering and best practice in volunteer management. All staff tasked with thinking about and/or acting upon volunteer issues are encouraged to attend. The next session will be 1-4 on Mon 22nd Jan.

Also a reminder that all staff are invited to attend audio description training alongside volunteer tour guides and object handlers. The next session will be 10-1.30 on Mon 13th Nov.

- **Summer Holiday Fun** - Summer is always a busy period in the volunteer calendar, with events happening on most days across the museums and more outdoor opportunities available at the Garden and Arboretum. Many thanks to all of the volunteers who lent a helping hand, as well as to the many staff who supported them.

From the Three Perfections (of Chinese Art) to Personal Reflections (on Chinese Art)



In July, visitors to the Ashmolean's two Chinese Paintings exhibitions were again offered a tour with a difference as part of 'Art in Crisis'. Following on from last year's success, Joy and Caroline again worked with staff and clients from Crisis Skylight Oxford to develop and deliver joint tours aimed at connecting people with art by encouraging them to take a closer look and give their personal responses. We all really enjoyed learning about the works and about the history behind them (all of which was completely new to us!) so thank you to Shelagh Vainker, Yan Liu, and Felicitas von Droste - as well as the wider Eastern Art department - for their enthusiasm and support. But, of course, the real credit goes to Andrew and Craig, who led the tours. Not only did they really engage with the project and do masses of independent research, but they also took on board feedback and continued to improve and impress from week to week. Who knows which galleries we'll be popping up in next year, but we look forward to getting involved again!

It was all new information to me. Even though I work here, I've never looked at these collections. It has started me wanting to learn a lot more and given me a really inspiring way into the subject.

The passion and enthusiasm of the presenters and the imaginative journey they took me on - I'll really remember the paintings and I want to see more.

Fantastically engaging, really drew me into unfamiliar art and made it relevant, appealing, and interesting. Brilliant tours by both leaders! Thank you!

Fascinating background to four paintings - the artists, the materials they use, and how to look at these Chinese works.

Goodbye, Hello, and Still Here...

Whilst the end of the Pitt Rivers VERVE project (mentioned above) meant that we bid a fond farewell to VERVE Volunteer Officer Madeleine Ding at the end of September, we look forward to welcoming the Ashmolean's new Volunteer Manager, Emma Hermon, at the end of October. In the meantime, Michalina Szymanska continues to offer invaluable support to the Volunteer Service as part-time temporary admin assistant.

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 Oct - Dec 2017.

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