

The Volunteer

**A Life in the Day
Wellington and Nelson
And much more...**



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Editorial by Helen Webb:

Welcome to this new-look 3rd issue of your newsletter with the usual mix of articles and pictures. We hope you'll be inspired to send in your contributions: the more the merrier! Comments on our new look, which we've created ourselves in the office, are also welcomed.

We include an article on our very successful, and first, Volunteers Seminar and Lunch which was held in early June. The day included a group photograph (reproduced on our front cover). Hard copies, presented in a smart black mount, can be bought for £5.30 from the Volunteers Office.

Since our last issue we've had some staff changes. John Hogg, our Volunteer Coordinator, left last month when the external funding for his post expired. We wish him every success in the future, and thank him for all his hard work. We now have a Gallery Assistant called Vicky Weaver on secondment. Both Vicky and I are happy to answer any questions, and to help you in any way we can. The Museum is currently advertising for a number of volunteer roles and if you've any friends who'd be interested in joining please direct them to our website.

In particular we're seeking Queen's House Room Guides. Those considering applying for this role can learn more at one of our Open Days. The next two will be held in the Queen's House between 11.00 & 15.00 on Wednesday 4 August and Saturday 11 September. All are welcome.



On a more domestic level, we need to draw your attention to the acute shortage of car parking spaces on the main museum site. Work on the Sammy Ofer Wing has reduced capacity on weekdays. Currently 150 passes have been issued for a car park which only holds 100 cars. This may appear unusual but it works because of the shift patterns that staff work over 7 days. The car park frequently operates at full capacity and this is why no more passes are available. However volunteers coming in on bank holidays and weekends should speak to the Volunteers Office. On these days the car park operates as a pay-and-display for the public and passes might be available. We feel sure you'll understand our position on this.

And finally we present a summary of the Volunteer Programme as at June 2010. Volunteers help us out in every Division of the Museum as follows. Thank you as always for everything you do for us.

Directorate (3): Director's office, Press Office, Membership Office

Collections (15): Paper & Textile Conservation Studios

Research & Planning (35): Navy Board papers, Uncatalogued pamphlets, Sea Charts catalogue, Museum & Archive Records Centre, Brass Foundry, Fred Olsen Line catalogue

Exhibitions & Programmes (20): Family Programme, Public Programme, Envelope Team

Finance & Enterprise (3): Retail support, Picture Library, Photographic Studio

Royal Observatory (23): Talks / Office / Horology, Flamsteed Society

Operations & Human Resources (17): Family Ambassador, Interactive Gallery, Escorted tours, Travel Survey, Health & Safety

National Historic Ships (2): Office support

A Life in the Day of Anna Rolls, Scientific Instrument Conservator

"Conservation is archaeology but without the mud"

Apparently, if you're stuck on a boat in the middle of nowhere, then you would want to be with Anna Rolls, our next "Life in the Day of" interviewee.

Here she talks to Vicky Weaver:

Who are you, and what do you do?

I'm Anna Rolls, the Scientific Instruments Conservator, which is quite a new role. Essentially I work with the metals conservation team and in horology, helping conserve, maintain and sometimes restore scientific items in the collection. I get objects ready for exhibitions, condition check items prior to storage and work towards improving the condition of the collection in the stores. Oh, and I also wind clocks one day a week!

So, presumably that means you always know the right time?

You would have thought so, but I still sometimes manage to be late for things!

So what does clock-winding entail, if it's not a silly question?

There are 35 to 40 clocks around the site, taking a whole day to wind up. It's not just about using a key to wind the clocks. You want to determine the error in the clocks, which can help you tell whether the clock is running OK, and sometimes you need to re-set a clock, which means stopping it. I'm often asked by people "what are you doing?". I think that most people don't really appreciate that these are mechanical clocks and, considering that some of them are over 200 years old, they are incredibly accurate: most are accurate to within a few seconds, and one is kept accurate to within half a second. So, if you want to know the correct time, go to the Shepherd Gate Clock outside the front of the Observatory!

What does your typical day consist of (when you're not winding clocks)?

The great thing about my job is that I don't have a typical day. When I'm working in the metal conservation studio I can spend hours removing dirt off an object, which is always a satisfying feeling. In conservation you don't set out to make an object look brand new, but you want to get to the stage where it can age gracefully; the aim is for it to look like we haven't worked on it.



Do you have a favourite piece in the Museum?

I'm not the sort of person to have favourites. For me it's more about the collection as a whole. I love going into the stores; it's like an Aladdin's Cave in there! I also love some of the regulators: they're so beautifully made and precise, but not showy. Things interest me at different times; I'll love one thing for its aesthetic qualities, and something else for its engineering or craftsmanship.

What's the best thing about your job?

Working directly with the collection. These objects are a direct connection with history and so it's a real privilege working with them. Also, I learn something new every day and each day is different from the next.

Moving away from work, how do you relax?

I enjoy cooking; I've recently started baking cakes, though I find it hard not to eat them! I also enjoy dancing.

What did you want to be when you grew up?

I wanted to be everything! I remember particularly wanting to be a vet; I grew up with All Creatures Great and Small and wanted to be James Herriot! I also wanted to be an archaeologist. I liked the idea of finding treasure, but not of getting wet and muddy. That's the great thing about conservation: it's like archaeology, but without the mud!

If you weren't at work, where would you be?

In Suffolk with my boyfriend. I manage to get out of London most weekends; expensive, but worth it!

What are you working on at the moment?

At the moment the top priority is working on a range of silver ship models for display at Chatham. I'm also working my way through some sextants in the store, conserving them where appropriate.

So, does your work on all these instruments mean that you know how they all work?

Not all of them. Certainly the ones that need to be taken apart I make sure I know what they are and how they work. With something like the sextants though, I think if I was stuck on a boat in the middle of nowhere I'd probably be able to navigate myself somewhere!

Is there a piece in the collection you would love to work with?

The pieces that I most admire I would be really daunted to work on. With the work that's being done on Harrison's H2 at the moment, I would be terrified of breaking it! I love getting objects back to an aesthetic, if not a functioning, condition, and people often don't realise that lots of the stuff in museums' stores are not in pristine condition, and need a lot of work doing to them. That's where I, and the other conservators, come in.

Volunteering at the NMM

106 people gifting 15,000 hours in 2009. 1 amazing achievement. Welcome to the National Maritime Museum's Volunteer Programme.

Thursday 3 June 2010 saw the NMM celebrate its volunteers' contributions as part of National Volunteering Week. Volunteers from all over the Museum were invited to join the management team and the Director, Kevin Fewster, for a morning of events and lunch in the Great Hall, Queen's House.

Volunteers were given a series of presentations enlightening them to projects and developments museum-wide, gaining them a rare glimpse at the Museum's agenda.

The day was brilliantly organised and all that attended enjoyed getting to meet such a variety of people from all backgrounds. Kevin Fewster hopes this will be the first *annual* volunteers event and I'm told that the feedback received since the event has been extremely encouraging.

Kevin first realised the value of volunteers in the museum environment whilst working in maritime museums in Australia, and particularly when he was the Director of the Australian National Maritime Museum. I was fortunate enough to question him further:

"I fast came to appreciate the tremendous contribution that volunteers could make," Kevin explained. "The tasks that they do expands the sheer amount of work that the museum is able to undertake, and the very presence of volunteers within the museum helps build links between the museum and its wider community."

With the continued hard work of Kevin and his team, plus the NMM's Volunteer Manager Helen Webb, the programme looks set to expand and grow, hopefully leading to an extensive, welcoming volunteering community within the Museum.

It is occasions like this that make you wonder, who are the people volunteering their time at the Museum, and what do they do? I am very pleased to introduce you to a couple of our dedicated volunteers:

Meet ... Tarah Butler

Age: 21

Favourite Item in the Museum: The Flotation Tank.

Tarah is studying History at the University of Essex, Colchester. She volunteers at the Museum assisting children's workshop activities and would do so more often if she didn't have the busy student lifestyle. She talks about her experience here so far:

"I volunteered at the Museum to get an insight into educational programmes and valuable work experience. I have gained invaluable experience in working with children and families, and working with such a large range of people is one of the aspects of volunteering that I enjoy the most."

Meet ... Blanche Sears

Age: "A golden age"

Favourite item in the Museum: Nelson's coats

Blanche, one of our 'golden girls' here at the Museum, has followed an interesting path in her time as a volunteer. She belongs to NADFAS (the National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies) and joined the NMM team when NADFAS were asked for volunteers to assist the Paper Conservation Department. She started her time here working with over 2000 letters written by Nelson. She works on opening, preserving and logging historical maritime-based letters. Blanche finds herself being easily "taken back in time" and getting to know the subjects of her letters and their families. Blanche really enjoys volunteering and is pleased that "age is no barrier" and that she truly "feels valued".

Bryony Chinnery, Press Office volunteer



In our first issue **John Hogg** contributed a riddle called "Cooking the Books". Readers who remember this piece will have realised that this cash counting conundrum was one of these infuriating riddles with no easy solution. Here John offers 2 discussion topics for you to ponder, and we'd love to hear your reactions:

Did Admiral Horatio Nelson and Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington actually ever meet?

- Historians have for many years searched for absolute proof that such a meeting occurred but are yet to find it.
- In an office in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office building in Whitehall stands a Georgian fireplace. This fireplace is recorded as having been removed during a refurbishment from the former office of Lord Castlereagh, then Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, in Downing Street, to its current location at the FCO.
- Above the mantelpiece of the fireplace, secured to the chimney breast wall, is an engraving, after the Victorian artist J. P. Knight. The engraving depicts two men who are standing at either end of the fireplace and there is a bottle and two glasses resting on the mantelpiece.
- One of the figures is undoubtedly Nelson, and the other Wellington.
- The fireplace in the sketch is an excellent depiction of the fireplace which now stands in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Of course this is inconclusive evidence that these two men enjoyed a drink in Downing Street together. The artist could have formed the sketch from memory; though a written testimony from him, which is also secured to the fireplace wall, claims he witnessed the event.

What do you think? Do you know anything from your own research that may throw some light on this matter?

Discuss, Debate, Enjoy.



Ship or boat?

A volunteer on a training course recently asked her tutor "What is the difference between a ship and a boat?". The instructor's reply was "Well a boat is a vessel which is small enough to be carried on a ship". Ah! But...

During the Falklands conflict two Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessels the *Sir Galahad* and the *Sir Tristram* were attacked by missiles fired from Argentinean jets. Sadly there was a great loss of life and the vessels were both severely damaged. *Sir Galahad* was so badly damaged that she was eventually scuttled (a new vessel of that name was later built). *Sir Tristram* was loaded onto a ship and carried to the UK where she was repaired, re-fitted and returned to service.

The Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessels of the *Round Table* Class were affectionately referred to by RFA crew members as the *Sir Boats*. There were 5 of them: the *Sirs Galahad, Tristram, Geraint, Percival and Be-divere*. They were capable of carrying a minimum of 200 troops, had their own cranes and derricks, carried lifeboats, and were capable of landing and carrying helicopters. Were they ships or boats?

Cargoes

Quinquireme of Nineveh from distant Ophir,
Rowing home to haven in sunny Palestine,
With a cargo of ivory,
And apes and peacocks,
Sandalwood, cedarwood, and sweet white wine.

Stately Spanish galleon coming from the Isthmus,
Dipping through the Tropics by the palm-green
shores,
With a cargo of diamonds,
Emeralds, amethysts,
Topazes, and cinnamon, and gold moidores.

Dirty British coaster with a salt-caked smoke stack
Butting through the Channel in the mad March days,
With a cargo of Tyne coal,
Road-rails, pig-lead,
Firewood, iron-ware, and cheap tin trays.

John Masefield (1878 - 1967)



We plan to publish a poem in every future issue. We expect you have a vast number for us to choose from—do let us know. Above is a classic to start us off.

Pun Corner

This issue, instead of puns, we've been sent a word puzzle as follows:

How is that the word FISH can be spelt GHOTI?

GH is pronounced "F" as in "enough".

O is pronounced "I" as in "women"

TI is pronounced "SH" as in "nation".

Can you send in any more like this? Or perhaps any idioms or expressions with hidden maritime origins, such as "a square meal"...

Special offer for staff and volunteers at So Organic in Greenwich town centre

So Organic, located at 22 Nelson Road, Greenwich currently have a special offer for NMM staff and volunteers. It is:

10% off all purchases in store on presentation of your NMM swipe card (NB if you do not have a swipe card contact the Volunteers Office)

50% off beauty treatments on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays only. NB these treatments must be booked in advance and the Greenwich Business Discount mentioned when booking. There is limited availability on this rate.

So Organic (0208 305 5357) is a shop with treatment rooms attached. In addition to beauty treatments they offer an acupuncturist, an osteopath, a nutritional therapist and a Shiatsu & pregnancy massage therapist. Their website is www.SoOrganic.com

Our copy deadlines are:

Friday 1 October 2010

Monday 10 January 2011

Max 900 words