

**Title of meeting:** Culture, Leisure and Sport Decision Meeting

**Subject:** Portsmouth History Fair Update report

**Date of meeting:** 10 October 2014

**Report by:** Head of City Development and Cultural Services

**Wards affected: All** All

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**1. Requested by:**

Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Sport

**2. Purpose**

2.1 To update the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Sport on the Portsmouth History Fair held at the Central Library on 12 July 2014 and the plans for future development.

**3. Information Requested**

**3.1 Background**

The first Portsmouth History Fair, organised in conjunction with Staunton Park Genealogy Centre, held on 19th July 2013 was judge a success by the organisations taking part and the public that the decision was taken to repeat the event in 2014. The event is delivered within existing Library and Archive budgets. Costs are low because the event is essentially facilitating offers from the collections and local groups and specialists.

**3.2 The aims of Portsmouth History Fair are:**

- To raise awareness of the History Centre resources and services - to residents and visitors.
- To make the History Centre a hub and catalyst in the city for historical activity
- To Increase understanding of Portsmouth history and heritage
- To increase access to the collections by all ages abilities and cultures living in the city.
- To increase awareness of the collections by visitors to the city, and researchers, nationally and internationally

### **3.3 The event**

In order to achieve the above aims the Portsmouth History Fair provided:

- Residents and visitors with an opportunity to view some of the important items in the archive and library local history collections, with this year a display of items relating to historic fairs in Portsmouth.
- Opportunities for engagement between the public and archivists and History Centre staff.
- A venue for local historical and genealogical organisations and groups to showcase their work to the public.
- Access to experts in the field for help with research and areas of interest.
- Organisations and groups with an opportunity for networking.
- A programme of talks on a wide range of local and family history topics.
- Members of the public with opportunities to purchase surplus local history books for sale.

3.3.1 Invitations were sent out to the groups and organisations attending the 2013 event plus others expressing an interest. Others were identified by Portsmouth History staff as being of potential interest to the public. Space was allocated in line with the responses including the requirements of participants for access to power and Wi-Fi to demonstrate their services

3.3.2 2014 saw an increase in the number of organisations attending - this rose from fifteen participating in 2013 to eighteen in 2014. A list of the organisations participating can be found at Appendix A.

### **3.4. Date of the event**

Portsmouth History Centre regularly attends events in South East Hampshire, particularly those organised by Staunton Park Genealogy Centre in Fareham and Havant, and Hampshire Genealogical Society's event in Horndean. As these events are usually in the autumn it was decided to hold the Portsmouth event in the spring or early summer to build on the popularity created by the intensive use of the History Centre by local students through the spring.

### **3.5 Venue**

The first Portsmouth History Fair was concentrated on the second floor of the Central Library with all the stallholders being accommodated on that floor. The talks were held in the Conan Doyle viewing room, exhibitions on the first floor and a book sale on the ground. The success of this first event meant that changes had to be made to accommodate the increased demand from local organisations and groups. The space for the talks at the first event proved problematical in that space was restricted and the noise from outside the library meant that some of the audience were unable to hear the speaker. This year the decision was made to use the whole

space on the second floor for the stallholders and to move the talks to the third floor.

- 3.5.1 Exhibitions on Jonas Hanway and the Conan Doyle spiritualism display were made available on the first floor with a book sale on the ground floor.
- 3.5.2 The decision to use mainly the second floor of the Central Library was made for practical considerations in that the History Centre staff based on that floor could support both the public attending the event and the stallholders. However in 2014 it was felt by some that the area was rather cramped, particularly as we had to fit in some last minute organisations so any future events may well have to use some of the space on other floors of the Central Library.

### **3.6 Talks**

- 3.6.1 To widen the range of talks in 2014 it was decided to ask local organisations and groups if they would be willing to offer a talk. The response was excellent giving the public a choice of six talks to attend on a range of topics. The Menuhin room and Room F on the third floor were used to run two talks simultaneously. There was however feedback that some people would have liked to have attended talks running at the same time so future events will be planned to avoid this problem.
- 3.6.2 A list of talks can be found at Appendix B

### **3.7 Publicity and promotion**

- 3.7.1 The principle means of publicity was through a flyer listing the participating groups and the list of talks. This was widely distributed to Libraries, Museums, and Community Centres etc. The flyer was also sent by email to groups taking part with a request that they used it on their own websites.
- 3.7.2 A landscape version of the flyer was produced for display on the big screen. However, although arrangements were made to show this, and archive film on the big screen the arrangements fell through, possibly because there was another event in the Guildhall Square in the morning.
- 3.7.3 Posters were produced for each talk and these were widely displayed in the History Centre and all libraries.
- 3.7.4 A listing was placed on the PCC website, in Flagship, on the Visit Portsmouth and Hampshire County Council websites and there was brief information in the "News" responding to a press release.

### **3.8 Evaluation and feedback**

- 3.8.1 Verbal responses from the groups attending showed indicated that they felt that it was a very worthwhile event and some have already booked for 2015. As the event was spread over four floors of the Central Library there were difficulties in estimating the numbers attending the event.
- 3.8.2 An analysis of the visitor numbers on preceding and subsequent Saturdays shows that the likely total is between 310 and 340. While this is a positive increase on year one the aim for subsequent years is to increase this, to make the event an activity for much wider participation A more robust mechanism for measuring participation will be put in place for future events.
- 3.8.3 There was a very positive response to the talks and the speakers, but some concern that it was not possible to hear all the talks as some overlapped due to the constraints of the day.
- 3.8.4 Some exhibitors expressed concerns related to the availability and access to IT connectivity. Others noted a space limitation and crowding of the stalls. The staff noted a very limited attendance by children and young families and felt there were opportunities in this area

### **3.9 Factors to inform planning for 2015**

- 3.9.1 Portsmouth History staff will be planning the 2015 event in the New Year. Taking heed of the 2014 feedback, direct observations and overall response to the event, the following aims will be added for 2015.
- To increase the participation by local organisations and societies by 10%
  - To increase the footfall at the event by 15%
  - Increase breadth of access in terms of age, ability, culture and geographical spread
- 3.9.2 The following amendments and enhancements will be put in place to achieve the above aims:
- To enable the offer to expand and become more visible the whole Central Library building will be utilised for the event.
  - To put on the event on a date that avoids conflicting with other attractions and competing activities in the city. This is likely to place the date in late spring when students are still in residence and there are less distractions from the seafront.
  - To provide an offer to engage and entertain children attending the event.
  - To produce a publicity and promotion plan that maximises the potential of PCC resources, website, Flagship etc. and local media.
  - To facilitate a mixed range of talks on local and family history topics to engage a wider audience in terms of age, ability and culture.

- To resolve IT and digital issues experienced in 2014. The introduction of technologies associated with Super Connected Cities should resolve this.

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Signed by:

**Stephen Baily**

**Head of City Development and Cultural Services**

**Appendices:**

**Appendix A: List of organisations attending:**

Baffins Reminiscence Group  
Conan Doyle Collection  
Cop the Needle theatre group  
D-Day Museum  
FamilySearch  
Fort Widley - First World War Remembrance Centre  
Friends of the RN Museum, Explosion! And HMS Victory volunteers  
Hampshire Genealogical Society  
Hampshire Record Office  
Mary Rose Trust  
National Museum of the Royal Navy  
Portsmouth History Centre  
Portsmouth Museums - Lest We Forget First World War project  
Portsmouth Royal Dockyard Historical Trust  
Portsmouth Society  
Royal Armouries  
WEA  
Westerman Yarns

**Appendix B List of talks:**

10.30am	Women Dockyard workers in World War 1 Dr Celia Clark (Menuhin Room)
10.30am	Percy F Westerman - a lifetime of writing adventures Nigel Gossop (Room F)

## THIS ITEM IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY



- 12 noon Portsmouth and D-Day  
Andrew Whitmarsh (Menuhin Room)
- 12 noon Dockyard days out and excursions c.1880 - 1914  
Dr Melanie Bassett (Room F)
- 1.30pm All you need is love? Creating and maintaining historical archives  
Dr Dave Allen (Room F)
- 1.30pm The Theatre Royal's hidden past  
Donna Bish (Menuhin Room)

### **Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972**

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

<b>Title of document</b>	<b>Location</b>
Evaluation forms given out at the event	Central Library
Correspondence from exhibitors	Central Library
Minutes of meetings with the History Centre team	Central Library, Portsmouth History Centre