

MUSEUM news



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INSIDE

NEWS

Museum boards – ‘male, pale, stale’ 1
Art Fund Prize last ten 2
Kids’ manifesto 2
Mary Rose’s secrets 3

NH PROFILE

Rhiann Harris 4



LOCAL FOCUS

Honeywood Museum 5

No to Britishness museum 6

NH DEBATE

Stuart Davies on the recession, you and Keynes 7

MUSEUM IN THE NEWS

1 – Broadfield Glass Museum 8
2 – Theatre at the V&A 8



HERITAGE REVISITED

Robert Hewison on how the ‘industry’ has changed 9

NATIONAL HERITAGE GUIDE

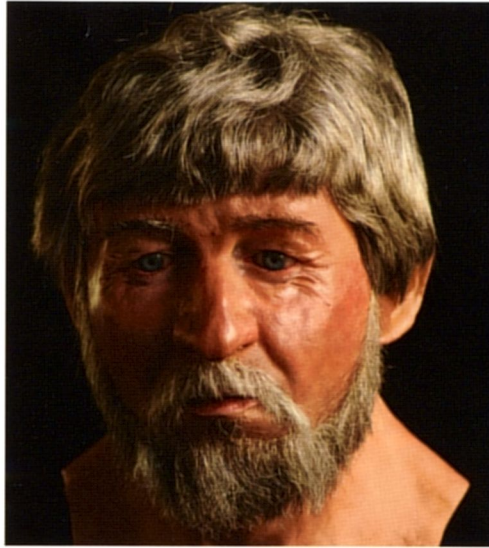
A selective list of current and forthcoming museum and gallery exhibitions 10-15

EVENTS

Forthcoming visit to the Handel House Museum 16

Museum News goes virtual

This will be the last printed Museum News for the time being. Because of the rising costs of printing and distribution, the next issue, due in October, and subsequent issues will be published online only at our website, at nationalheritage.org.uk, where you will find all the news and features supporting the interests of museum and gallery visitors and users, and the role of museums and galleries in the UK. Our popular listings will also appear on the website. – *Simon Tait, Editor.*



The face of Henry's navy

We don't know his name, but know a good deal else about this sailor, who died when the Mary Rose went down in the Solent in 1545 and whose skeleton was found in the wreckage. He was the ship's bosun, the officer closest to the crew, who could be identified by the possession of his bosun's whistle or call. He was in his early 40s, quite elderly in a crew that was mostly aged between 17 and 24, and although short by modern standards was powerfully built, indicating a lifetime at sea. Scientists can even tell that he was born and bred in south-west England. This astonishingly detailed reconstruction of his appearance has been created by a partnership of the forensic scientist Dr Lynne Bell and Richard Neave, a leading medical artist. *Full story, page 3.*

Museum boards ‘male, pale and stale’ – MLA chief

The boards of publicly funded museums and galleries have been branded “male, pale and stale” – by the chief executive of the Museums Libraries and Archives Council, Roy Clare.

“The inherent problem in the public sector of self-generating ruling class maintaining this ‘male-pale-stale’ environment in governance” he said, meaning that too few women, too few young people, and many too few from the black, Asian and multi-ethnic sectors (BAME) are appointed to museum boards.

The difference, he says, is not so much between the heritage sector and the visual and performing arts, as between the public and private sector, and the crucial factor is the rules about appointments to boards following the Nolan Committee report on standards in public life.

Nolan was concerned to eradicate the “tap on the shoulder” process of recruiting to the boards of public bodies, to ensure appointments on merit. But what is happening is that the “pool” from which board members, particularly for national museums and galleries, is drawn has solidified.

“So the inherent problem in the public sector of self-generating ruling class maintaining this ‘male-pale-stale’ environment in governance” he said, meaning that too few women, too few young people, and many too few from the black, Asian and multi-ethnic sectors on boards (BAME).

The effect of too many white middle-aged men on our museums’ governing bodies is that the many different stories a museum collection can tell that

would appeal to the growingly diverse sectors of modern British society are not drawn out. “We’ve got collections with really huge potential to represent diverse stories, but the governance of the board does not reflect that” he said. “That’s the key starting point for me”.

The problem relates as much to his own board at the MLA as anywhere else, but he hopes there are signs of change. DCMS has an advisory board on heritage comprising the likes of Clare, Carole Souter of the HLF, Mark Jones of the V&A and National Museums Directors’ Conference, and English Heritage CEO Simon Turley, which recently presented a key paper to the head civil servant in the department, Jonathan Stephens. “He has reacted positively” Clare said, and in April the first ever networking session involving chairs and chief executives from the sector was due to take place at DCMS.

“The private sector has got more freedom in terms of how to appoint trustees, and that freedom when used well can extend to bringing onto a board people who can make a difference for you in one sector or another. Private sector charities have brought in very imaginative people who wouldn’t compete under Nolan for public sector jobs” Clare said.

The pool has to be widened, and Clare hopes to that the current rebuilding of the MLA board will set an example of having more women, young people and trustees from BAME backgrounds – but the problem remains, he admits, that the team appointed by DCMS to select likely candidates are three white middle-aged males.