

Herefordshire Museum Service Support Group

Registered Charity (CIO) No.1171756



ANNUAL REPORT April 2023 – March 2024

Trustees' Report Overview of the Year

The year 2023/24 was characterised by patient and dedicated hard work by the Museum Service towards achieving the long-cherished vision of a revitalised service and redevelopment of the Broad Street building. Significant progress was made in the year and this has come closer to fruition in recent months. The Heritage Lottery Funding (HLF) for the redevelopment project and associated activity plan was confirmed in July 2023. Planning approval for the building design was finally confirmed in July 2024 giving the green light to the next stage of the project with a provisional reopening scheduled for late 2026. Our thanks go to Damian Etheraads, Head of Art Gallery and Museum, who has successfully steered the project through many phases of the planning process since the first application in February 2023.

Project funding secured from the HLF and increased resources from Herefordshire Council have also enabled Damian to reconfigure an expanded staff team with all appointments now made. We are delighted to welcome new staff members to Herefordshire and look forward to working with them as plans develop. We also want to record our grateful thanks to Judy Stevenson, Catherine Willson and Julia Radburn who left Herefordshire Museum Service in the year, acknowledge their dedicated public service over many years and wish them well for the future.

Capacity for the public to enjoy the collections was further reduced in 2023/24 due to the planned process of redevelopment. The Art Gallery closed in April 2023 and the Museum in mid-July when Hereford Library moved into temporary premises at the Museum Resource and Learning Centre (MRLC) and the building was closed to the public. The complex task of taking an inventory of each object and moving the collections out of Broad Street to safe storage in the MRLC was completed over this period. Despite these restrictions the team welcomed 13,158 visitors to the Black and White House, Broad Street and MRLC in the year, up from 10,082 the previous year.

The Herefordshire Hoard has continued to delight visitors from the county and further afield and was on loan to the Jorvik Centre in York from February 2024. The fascinating story of these treasures continues to evolve in surprising ways – more details are given later in this report.

The Black and White House Museum remained open throughout the year providing a range of activities to visitors and families. Herefordshire Council funded necessary

repairs to the exterior but sadly the weather in the wet summer of 2023 meant that these could not be completed. They have been rescheduled for summer 2024.

For HMSSG 2023/24 was a year of consolidation after the extensive fundraising for the Hoard in 2022/23. When we were formed in 2015 our primary aims were to safeguard a viable Museum Service for Herefordshire and to press for a modern museum fit for the twenty-first century to enable the county collections to be enjoyed. Although at times very little progress could be made and these objectives seemed quite unachievable both have now been secured. Later in this report we look back at and celebrate some of our key achievements to progress these aims over almost a decade. Thank you for all your support over the years. The trustees and committee remain committed to providing a charitable support organisation for the Service and over the next few months will be taking time to review how we can best do this.



Damian Etheraads and members of HMSSG viewing the Herefordshire HOARD in the MRLC. From left: Damian Etheraads, Carolyn Mace, Ian Lewis, Christy Bolderson and Hazel Maidman.

Trustees and Committee members 2023-2024

HMSSG's governing document requires there to be no less than three and no more than eleven trustees.

Jane Adams (Chair), Christy Bolderson (Treasurer), Jacqueline Allison and Denise North served as trustees during the year. Jane Adams, Jacqueline Allison and Christy Bolderson were appointed in 2021 for three years. All are willing to stand for re-election as trustees. Denise North was appointed at a trustees' meeting on 28 February 2023

with the appointment approved by members at the AGM in September 2023. Her term will end in 2026.

The trustees were supported by committee members Chris Bucknell and Ian Lewis during the year to 31 March 2024. Ian Lewis resigned in June 2024. Our thanks go to him for his work with us, especially in keeping our website up to date. Kate Seekings joined the Committee in the year and is taking a lead on our newsletter. Chris Bucknell and Kate Seekings are willing to serve on the Committee for the year to 31 March 2025.

HMSSG Financial Statement for year to 31 March 2024

	Bank balance 1/4/23 £	Income £	Expenditure £	Net £	Bank Balance 31/3/24 £
Restricted Funds					
Museum collections maintenance & development	170	0	0	0	170
Advance arts & culture HOARD donations	13,840	250	-1,534	-1,284	12,556
Advance arts & culture Other donations	1,002	733		733	1,735
Total restricted funds	15,012	983	-1,534	-551	14,461
Unrestricted	2,227				2,227
Subscriptions		190			190
Website fee			-20		-20
BFM membership			-60		-80
Unrestricted funds	2,227	190	-80	110	2,337
Total	17,239	1,173	-1,614	-441	16,798

HMSSG's objectives

HMSSG is a registered charity which works to support and develop Herefordshire Museum Service, which comprises the County's History and Art Collections held in trust for Herefordshire's people; the Museum and Art Gallery in Broad Street; the Museum Resource and Learning Centre in Friars Street where the collections are stored; the Black and White House Museum in High Town; and the professional staff team.

Charitable Objects:

- 1. To advance the education of the public by supporting the maintenance and development of Herefordshire county museum and art collections and promoting public access to those collections.*
- 2. To advance the arts, culture, heritage and science... by promoting public appreciation and understanding of the archaeology, history, heritage, culture, natural science and visual arts of Herefordshire through those collections, and related use, preservation, curation, interpretation, exhibitions and activities.*

In 2023/24 priority was given to continuing to demonstrate public support for Herefordshire Council's projects to invest in the museum service and deliver the redevelopment project.

HMSSG Trustees: Jane Adams, Jackie Allison, Christy Bolderson, Denise North,
26 August 2024

A brief history of Herefordshire's museums and museum service

Now that projects to redevelop the building in Broad Street as a dedicated Art Gallery and Museum and the Shire Hall in Hereford as a library are going ahead it is appropriate to look back at the origins of Herefordshire's museums and the long campaign for better museum, art gallery and library provision. Much of the information below is taken from the booklet *An Ornament of the City: 125 Years of Hereford Free Library and Museum* written by Isabel Churcher, Robin Hill and Carol Robinson and published by Herefordshire Council in 1999. Ask at the library if you would like to read the pamphlet in full.

The Hereford Free Library and Museum in Broad Street opened on 8 October 1874, 150 years ago this year. The idea had first been proposed by the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club in 1871. The exterior design, described as Anglicised Venetian Gothic, has always been celebrated with the building described as 'truly an ornament of the City'.



Detail of façade of the Art Gallery and Museum, Broad Street.

Objects donated by several members of the Woolhope Club formed the basis of the original museum collection. These include geological specimens donated by Rev. J D La Touche and insects given by T A Chapman. Sadly there is limited information about

the earliest collections as the first catalogues for the collection date from 1915 when record keeping was improved. The museum proved popular and in 1909 there were around 8,000 visitors. In 1912 an extension funded by donations from the Pulley family was opened which provided additional space for the library and a dedicated art gallery.

In 1929 the Old House Museum (now the Black and White House) opened in High Town, developed by the council. These services were led by a joint librarian and curator with the first museum assistant appointed in 1954. In 1966 the Churchill House Museum opened in Churchill Gardens, Aylestone Hill, as a costume museum. In 1973 the Hatton gallery was added to exhibit the Brian Hatton Collection. Sadly the Churchill House Gallery closed in 2001, after which a smaller collection of objects from the Brian Hatton collection were displayed in part of the Art Gallery.

Further plans to enlarge both the library and the museum and art gallery were being discussed from the 1960s with a mezzanine floor added to the library in 1963. By the 1970s the option of providing a new base for the library and dedicating the Broad Street building to the art gallery and museum was being discussed. In 1974, the centenary of the opening of the library and museum, Herefordshire and Worcestershire County Council committed to building a new library. A critical report on the museum from the National Museums Association and the Carnegie UK Trust added to pressure for improvement and led to the appointment of Nick Dove as Museum Curator and Anne Sandford as Assistant Curator. Anne was promoted to curator in 1978 serving until 1996. She was replaced by Isobel Churcher who was appointed Heritage Services Manager when Herefordshire Council was established in 1998. The new Council also committed themselves to providing a new library and museum.

Financial difficulties and voluntary supporters have long had an impact on the Library and Museum Services. As noted above, the first objects in the collection were donated by members of the Woolhope Club. In 1927 there was public subscription to raise funds to enable the Kenchester Roman mosaic pavement to be displayed in the stairwell. This remained a prominent display item until the building closed in July 2023. In 1928, the 'Friends of the Museum and Art Gallery' was set up to buy pictures for the art gallery and in 1977 the Friends of Herefordshire Museum and Arts was established. Following severe cuts to the Museum Service team in 2014, HMSSG was established in 2015 becoming a registered charity in 2017. Our organisation is specifically focussed on support for the collections, Service and galleries.

Financial pressures over the years led to a failure to maintain regular maintenance at the Broad Street premises. The poor condition of the building led to the closure of the upper floors with items transferred from there to the new Museum Resource and Learning Centre, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, which opened in 2004. Asbestos found in the building led to a period of closure in the 2010s and in 2022 the

failure of the lift led to the restriction of visitor numbers on the first floor due to fire regulations.

Despite the numerous barriers faced over the years exhibitors and staff demonstrated their commitment to present interesting exhibitions and the public continued to show their support for their Museum Service. Some exhibitions, long in the design, were marred by unsightly measures to prevent water leaks and the threat of ceiling collapse. While Catcher Media's popular exhibition of work by Hereford-based photographer Derek Evans was on, some areas of the gallery were closed off, but visitors continued to come along.



Unsightly temporary barriers were needed to cordon off areas of the gallery deemed unsafe due to water ingress during Storm Denis in March 2020.

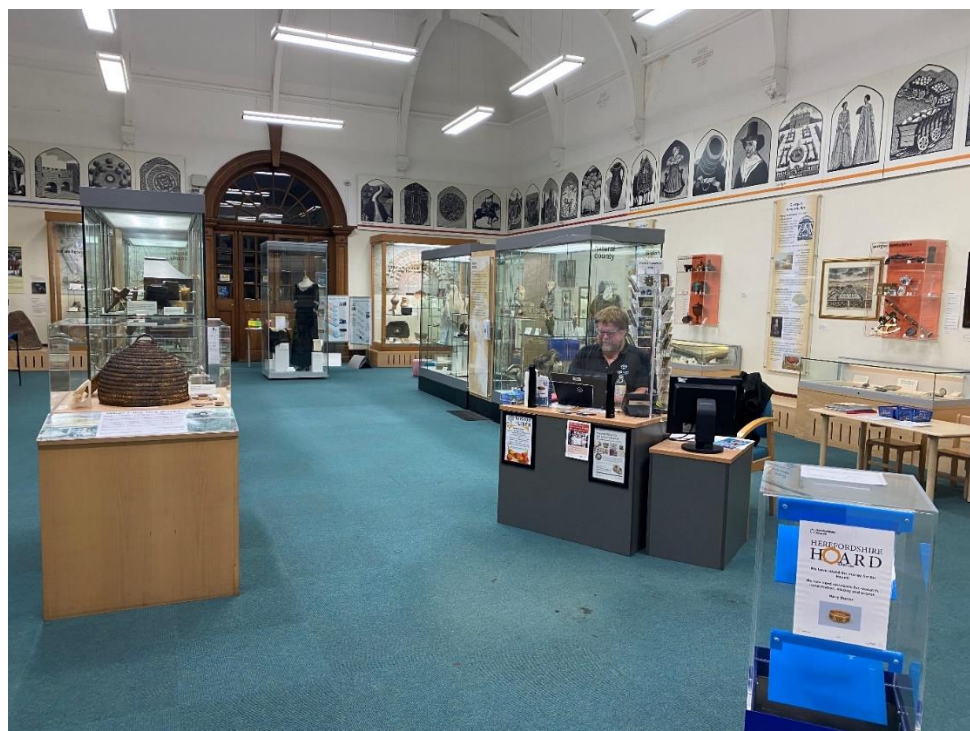
When Grayson Perry's 'The Vanity of Small Differences' was exhibited in late 2021 the number of visitors to the museum and art gallery was restricted to ten with a minimum of four staff and volunteers needed to meet fire regulations. The only upside was that visitors were able to enjoy the art works in peace. In spite of these restrictions 4,066 people attended the exhibition, generating income of around £20,000 which was sufficient to cover the direct costs incurred in mounting it.

By the time the building closed in July 2023 it was no longer able to function as a viable public building. The long wait until the reopening in 2026 will be worthwhile as it will finally enable our communities to enjoy the public collections held in trust by Herefordshire Council in a setting fit for purpose and accessible to all.



A maximum of ten visitors at any one time gave plenty of space to enjoy Grayson Perry's 'The Vanity of Small Differences' in 2021.

The images below record the museum gallery in Broad Street in recent years. We look forward to seeing the county collections presented in the new galleries to be developed over the next few months.



View from door into the museum. The perspex screen for staff was installed during the Covid pandemic but was later removed.





Recording the decant from Museum

In April 2023 the museum team began work on the lengthy process of decanting collections from the Museum in order to expedite essential surveying of the fabric of the building.

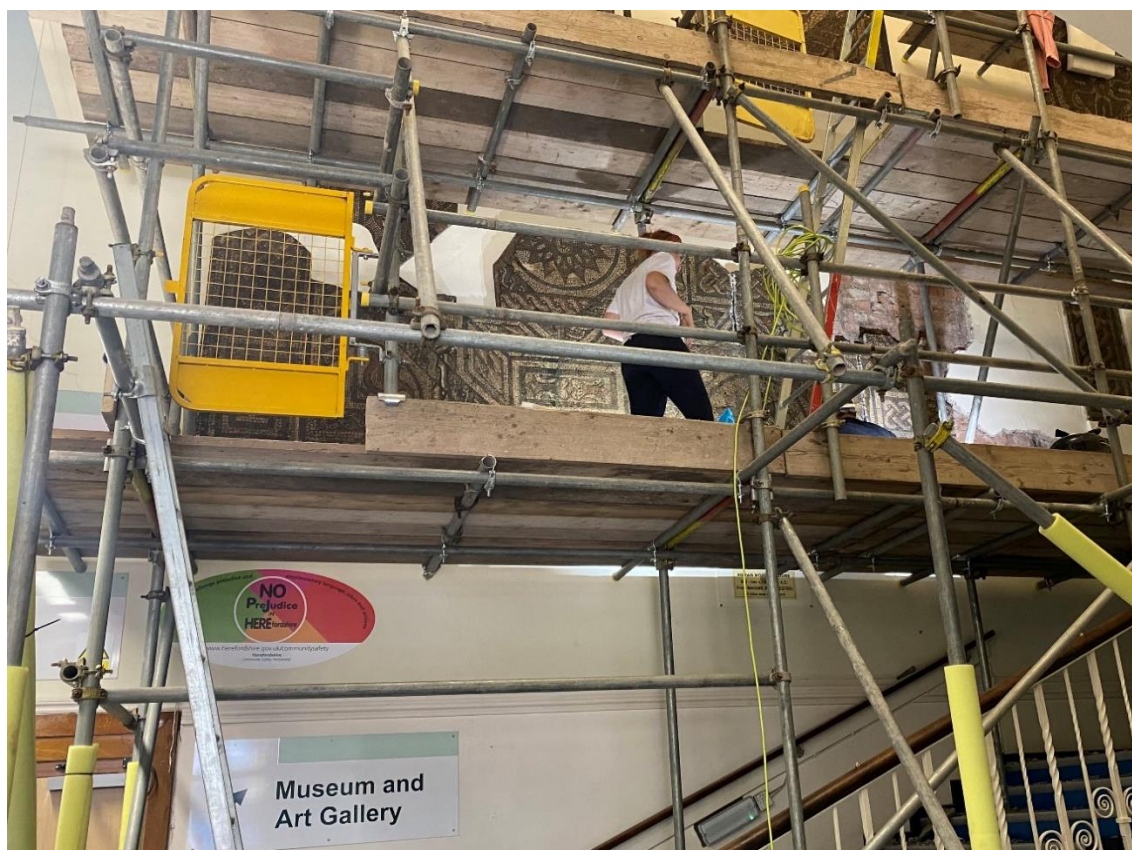
It proved a very interesting exercise and a chance to see some of the collections at close quarters for photographs, measurements, record and condition checking and flagging of items in need of conservation.

While staff managed the inspection and transfer of most items the move of the wall-mounted Roman mosaic from Kenchester required a specialist team.

Never let it be said that the team is not a huge repository of information about the artefacts in their care, whether they (the items) appear overtly rare, potentially valuable or fairly commonplace, related to everyday living. Herefordshire has an eclectic collection range with wide appeal and some real highlights and, with the scope of the redevelopment intending to make for easier and more regular rotation of collections for themed exhibitions, the public will be able to see more of these in the coming years. Of course, the decant exercise was a two-step process. What is decanted from one place has to be housed in another.....so that's why good record keeping is essential.



Catherine Willson and Judy Stevenson in the midst of work to examine and record each item in the Museum displays prior to their transfer to the MRLC.



Specialists working to remove the Roman mosaic from Kentchurch (Magna) for storage.

With the collections safely stored in MRLC unless out on loan, the elastic capacity of that building has been stretched. Further pressure on space has resulted from the MRLC also serving as the temporary home for the city library from July 2023. At the time of writing it is anticipated that the library will be soon moving to larger temporary premises in Hereford Town Hall pending completion of the new library in the Hereford Shire Hall building.

HMSSG's achievements 2015-2024

It is timely to reflect back on and celebrate HMSSG's achievements since its foundation in 2015 in the midst of a crisis period for Herefordshire's cultural services - museums, libraries and archives. In 2014 the museum staff was reduced to a bare minimum with plans to close the Broad Street Art Gallery and Museum and invest in the Old House. Following refurbishment and rebranding as the Black and White House, this reopened as a paying attraction. HMSSG was successful in bidding for funds from Herefordshire Council for two projects, one to look at opportunities for income generation and the second to promote volunteering in the service. Demonstrating a willingness to develop practical solutions to keep the service going and crucially, galleries open, was effective. The development of a volunteer team, led by Julia Radburn, meant that the Art Gallery and Museum in Broad Street was never closed on a permanent basis.

Perhaps the real low point for the Service came in 2018 when the council commenced the process of outsourcing cultural services and progressed as far as completing a soft-market test. HMSSG worked with colleagues in the Friends of Herefordshire Archives (FHAS) and Joint Action for Herefordshire Libraries (JAHL) to oppose these moves. These three groups contributed to a Local Authority benchmarking process which agreed that Herefordshire's investment was very low. Pressure was brought to bear to encourage the Council's Scrutiny Committee to consider the issue and representations were made at Cabinet and Council Meetings. Public support was clear throughout and included a demonstration outside the Shire Hall.

Museum services were especially vulnerable to severe cuts and closure as, unlike library and archives services, Councils have no statutory duty to support them. In order to ensure no option was left unexplored, HMSSG participated with the Council in a review of options for organisational models to run the museum service. This was funded by the HLF 'Resilient Heritage' funding stream available at the time and resulted in a report by consultants Prince and Pearce.



Campaigners demonstrating their strong support for Local Authority run cultural services before a crucial Council meeting held at the Shire Hall, Hereford in 2018.

The longstanding threats to all these services were only finally resolved with a change in Council administration in 2019. The availability of capital funds from the Stronger Towns fund which has generously supported the redevelopment of the Broad Street building as a dedicated art gallery and museum and the provision of a new library for Hereford City in the Shire Hall kick started the current plans to invest in these services.

The realisation that heritage services can bring real economic benefit through culture-led regeneration was brought home in the campaign to purchase the Hereford Hoard. HMSSG was a crucial partner in the fundraising campaign which raised the £776,250 to purchase the Hoard. This success raised local aspirations and ambitions and demonstrated that national funders also recognise the value of Herefordshire's cultural offer. Under Damian Etheraads the team has proved to be successful in making bids to several national schemes to support the redevelopment.

The fabulous Viking Day in Hereford on 10 April 2022 which launched the campaign, underscored the fantastic public support for cultural services.



Viking Day, 10 April 2022. Bottom left, Judy Stevenson, Julia Radburn and Sarah Chedgzoy with volunteers at Viking day. Other photos show re-enactors from Brumvik and Black Crow in the field.

Significant volunteer effort was essential in supporting the small professional museum team to deliver the events and activities which underpinned this successful campaign. HMSSG members and committee gave generously of their time in the delivery of community events around the county. These included talks by specialists, family days and opportunities to see original items from the Hoard. Over 3,000 visitors attended these events.

HMSSG and its members can be proud of their work to support the Museum Service. Other projects we have helped with over the years include the purchase of objects which have come to light via the Portable Antiquities Scheme and from local metal detectorists. We have also raised money for the restoration of the wall paintings in the Black and White House and some paintings by Brian Hatton.

Looking ahead: service redesign and redevelopment of Herefordshire Art Gallery and Museum

In early 2023 Damian Etheraads came into post as Hereford Museum and Art Gallery Lead, bringing significant experience from other museums and cultural organisations which is being brought to bear on the practicalities of the redevelopment of the Broad Street building, the refresh of the other museum properties and the restoration of a full complement team after so many years of an extremely lean resource and minimal budget scope. Exciting times lie ahead for all working directly as team members, volunteers and those of us who work on specific projects and programmes.

The new team are now in place. Damian is supported by Samantha Shuman, Senior Visitor Experience Officer, who heads up the visitor experience team and Kate Riddington, Senior Curator who leads the curatorial, exhibition and learning teams. Permanent posts are funded by Herefordshire Council and with others funded for a fixed term by the HLF as part of their support for the redevelopment project. Herefordshire is now remarkable for significant investment in its public Museum Service. This is something to celebrate as services across the country are facing significant financial pressures.

The service redesign has been long in the planning but is now moving into final delivery stage. In summary, in June 2022 Herefordshire Council confirmed it would fund £8.5million of the projected £18.5million capital sum needed for the scheme with a further £5million committed from the Stronger Towns Fund and £5million for the museum fit out and associated five-year activity plan from the HLF.

Historic features of the building, including the façade and the Woolhope Room, will be retained but the design will also incorporate new spaces including a rooftop terrace and a flexible education and events room seating up to eighty people. Gallery space will be increased allowing for enhanced permanent displays as well as temporary exhibitions, a shop and café. The planned opening date is late 2026. Entry to the permanent galleries will continue to be free.

While the flagship redevelopment of the Art Gallery and Museum in Broad Street, Hereford attracts much of the attention, we recognise that the revitalisation of the Museum Service has far wider ambition and reach. Working in partnership with relevant organisations the team aim to provide a service for all Herefordshire's communities. The Service has been successful in securing additional funding to further improve accessibility and public participation. These include £100,000 from the Esme Fairburn Foundation to develop an events programme for the Hoard and participation in the Sensational Museum project.

Safeguarding public access to the county museum collections and employing a viable professional museum team have been the key aims of HMSSG since we were

founded, some nine years ago. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the successful planning of this vital cultural project. We look forward to hearing more about opportunities for people of all ages from across the county to have a say in what they want from our county's museums and collections.

Herefordshire Hoard – the journey continues

A busy period for HMSSG working initially in support of the Museum Team to prepare grant applications and bids to various national funding bodies for the acquisition of the Herefordshire Hoard. An exercise long in the making and even longer in the waiting time due to the constraints of bidding and conducting background work for the campaign during Covid lockdowns. The delayed central government process eventually resulted in the green light being given to fundraise and acquire the treasures for the people of Herefordshire and wider public. In early 2022 a formal partnership agreement was signed by HMSSG and the Museum Service Team in preparation for a campaign lasting 16 weeks including public engagement events large and small. Launched with a Viking Day hosted at the Hereford Rowing Club in April 2022, the public were given their first opportunity to hear about the story, the reason for the campaign and the importance of the artefacts locally, historically and nationally to Herefordshire and the wider area. With a target sum of £776,250 necessary to secure the acquisition, time was precious to engage enough public support, enthusiasm and a degree of donations locally as well as the buy-in of national funding bodies such as Arts Council, National Heritage Lottery Fund, and Garfield Weston Foundation. Funds from these bodies made up the majority of the sum needed. HMSSG Trustees and committee worked at the events, gave talks to highlight why this cause was important at such a difficult time financially, supported the museum team and garnered donations, large and small, from the small and large enthusiasts who wanted to see the treasures back in the county in which they'd been buried.

The campaign team worked to engage generous individual donors who gave to the cause such was the importance of restoring the artefacts to their rightful place. The campaign period garnered sufficient monies to acquire the treasures, and the enthusiasm from the public continues to affirm the work carried out by the team and all the volunteers who invested their time, skills and enthusiasm.

Groups and societies request talks about the Hoard story and a programme started in February 2023 organised and given by HMSSG with fees designated for Hoard upkeep, research, and display. Schools have hosted workshops which highlight to students the moral of the Hoard story as well as the historical context of the Viking era and impact on the land and people. Development of these sessions was partly funded through grants applied for by HMSSG.

In recognition of the Hoard campaign work, HMSSG were delighted to be shortlisted for the British Association of Friends of Museums Impact Award 2022 and were Highly Commended.

The journey continues however and in late 2023 two men were convicted in Durham of conspiracy to sell coins judged to be part of the Herefordshire Hoard. Handed down sentences of five and a half years each this underlines how seriously heritage crime theft is regarded. What next for this tranche of the coins? We await confirmation from central government of the process to ensure Herefordshire Museums are ready to fundraise to meet the target – a similar sum to the original acquisition £766,250 – and bring this part of the Hoard Home to Herefordshire. We hope you will support us in this endeavour and help even more of the treasure to be relocated into the redeveloped Museum and Gallery building in 2026/7.



Inside Out: collaborative project cultural services

Inside Out is the project that takes museum objects out from their place of storage and using digital artistry transports them to non-museum locations across the county where people live, work and visit.

Digital artists, Nuala Hussey and Andy Round worked with staff from Hereford Garden Centre and members of the public to choose objects from the collections and then created exciting digital installations for touring.

Nuala's hop stilt projection is a beautiful layering of images in striking colours based on the hop stilt in the museum stores. Andy's interactive arcade style game is inspired by an original hand carved mid-Victorian Noah's Ark. A labyrinth of images, film and text that explores themes from climate change to Victorian Britain using a series of buttons.

The installations have been seen at a garden centre, libraries, children's holiday clubs and HARC. They are aimed at all ages and are now available for organisations and venues to book and borrow. For more information about the project and booking the installations visit <https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/history-lives/inside>

Looking ahead to 2024/25 and beyond

The future for Herefordshire Museum Service is bright. HMSSG's priorities for 2024/25 and beyond are to support and promote

- The development of a strategy for the Museum Service
- The redevelopment project for Herefordshire Museum and Art Gallery
- The development of a robust operational model for the Service
- Development of the collections and access to them - including the Herefordshire Hoard

Support HMSSG

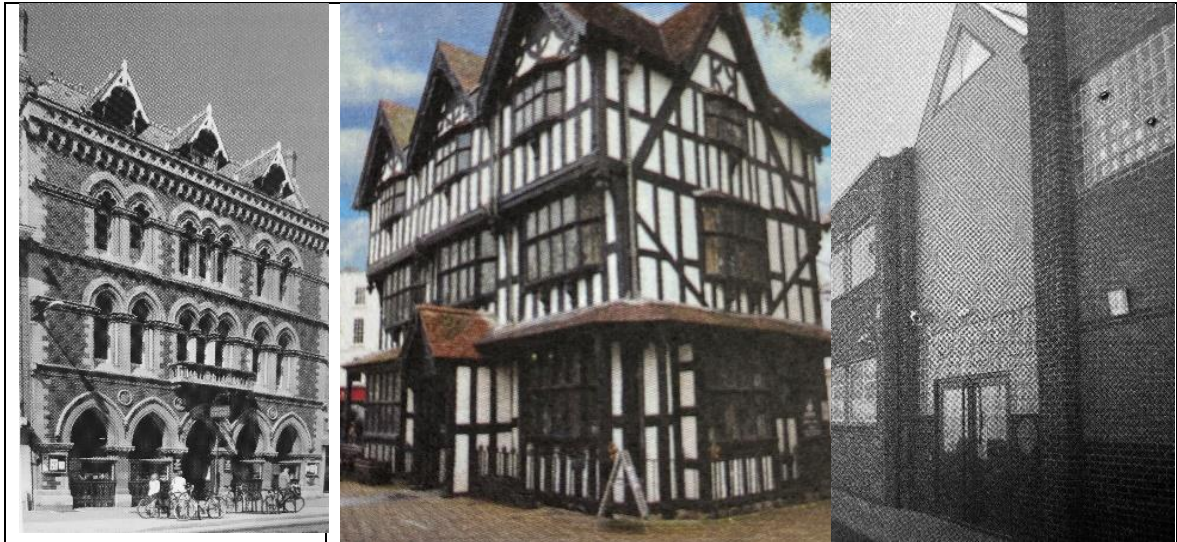
HMSSG needs to develop in order to offer the service effective support. Please help us to do that.

- Join as a member. Find us on <https://herefordshiremuseumsupport.org.uk/>
- More time and energy to contribute? Why not join the committee or find out about becoming a trustee. Contact HMSSG on herefordmuseumgroup@gmail.com

Keep in touch with all the new developments and opportunities to get involved with the museum team

Connect with the museum team via Facebook and Twitter/ X on

[Herefordshire Museum Service Facebook](#) and [Herefordshire Museum Service Twitter / X](#) or email them directly at HerefordMuseums@herefordshire.gov.uk.



Herefordshire Museum service operates from three buildings across city of Hereford. From left: the Art Gallery and Museum in Broad Street, the Black and White House Museum, High Town, the Museum Resource and Learning Centre, Friars Street.



Produced by Jane Adams for
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9 September 2024.