Shropshire Museums
Evaluation of Future Collections Based Volunteering Proposal

The vital curatorial role of Ludlow Museum Resource Centre, which is at the heart of Shropshire Museums, would not be possible without volunteer support. Their time and dedication to our work ensures that we can continue providing a high standard of collections care.

Following a period of change to the staffing and structure of the Ludlow Museum Resource Centre, a proposal paper was made available to volunteers for comment (see appendix 1). The report below outlines the main concerns for volunteers.

Proposed Changes to Volunteer Hours

The majority of volunteers felt at Ludlow Museum Resource Centre felt that the new arrangements were workable and would meet their needs. Tuesday volunteers have been contacted in writing to ensure that any concerns they may have about proposed changes to their volunteering are considered. The loss of opportunities to volunteer at Ludlow on a Tuesday does not appear to cause any real issues.

Restricting curatorial volunteering at Shrewsbury Museum and Art Gallery to a Tuesday has resulted in a loss of some volunteers but it is hoped that with additional staff support available on that day that volunteering can be built up again successfully. This process has already started and a number of new projects are due to start at the end of June.

Communication

Communication between staff and volunteers and between the volunteers as a group was an issue raised by a number of Ludlow volunteers. It is proposed that email groups are established to ensure that:

- Volunteers can be contacted about any immediate changes to volunteering provision such as the Resource Centre being closed due to staff illness.
- All volunteers can be notified of news and key information.

It is also proposed that a group such as a private Facebook group is created to allow volunteers to catch up and discuss their volunteering experiences and issues. Following the success Shrewsbury Museum and Art Gallery Volunteer Facebook page, it has been agreed that this group will be opened to Ludlow volunteers as there is some overlap in both volunteers and information required. Invitations to join have already been circulated to Ludlow volunteers with an email address.

Communications with volunteers without email access will continue via volunteer noticeboards at Ludlow and Shrewsbury.

Training

Both Shrewsbury and Ludlow volunteers have raised the need for more training opportunities. Training on ADLIB has been requested and updates on other training opportunities as they arise.

When do the new arrangements come into place?

It is anticipated that curatorial staff will have to take a break from managing volunteers over the July / August period due to the fit out of the Buttercross for the new Ludlow Museum. Following this break volunteering will restart in September under the new structure.

Will LLMRC continue to have a natural sciences specialist after November?
Yes – Shropshire Council is committed to continuing to employ two curators: one with an archaeology/social history specialism (4 days) and one with a geology/biology specialism (3 days).

Will cover be available during staff sickness and annual leave?
We will do our very best to ensure that cover is available whenever possible but there will be times when staff cannot cover staff absences due to commitments at other museum sites or sudden illness. Will try to ensure that we are able to keep you informed as soon as possible of any breaks in the volunteering programme.

Current Volunteering Projects

LOCATION	TIME IN	PROJECT	WORK INVOLVED
LLMRC	Mon am	Shrewsbury Birds Egg Collection	- Check egg ID - Cataloguing on Adlib - Taking images - Image manipulation & file naming - Attaching images to records
LLMRC	Mon am	Social History – LMRC ceramics & Household coll.	- Cataloguing accessioned items on Adlib - Box contents list
LLMRC	Mon am	Geology – mineral collection	Accessioning & Cataloguing on Adlib
LLMRC	Mon am	Seal Collection	Accessioning & Cataloguing on Adlib
LLMRC	Mon am/pm	Social History	- Cataloguing on Adlib - Box contents list
LLMRC	Mon pm	Books Griffiths Printers book	- Sorting & inventory of all pre 1900 book collection - Cataloguing Griffiths Printers Books on Adlib
LLMRC	Mon pm	Image work	- Manipulating & resizing images - Attaching images to records - General cataloguing on Adlib
LLMRC	Mon pm	Transcription	Transcribing Ludlow Natural History Society Minutes Books
LLMRC	Tues am	Herbarium	Checking taxonomy & terminology for Herbarium on Adlib
LLMRC	Tues am Fri am	Herbarium	- Images of Herbarium specimens - Image manipulation, resizing & file naming - Creating Adlib records for Herbarium

			• Attaching images to records
LLMRC	Tues am	Photographic Collection	• Cataloguing LMRC Photographic Collection on Adlib
LLMRC	Tues am/pm	Natural History – Mollusc Collection	• Accessioning Shropshire Mollusc Collection
LLMRC	Tues pm	Fluid Collection	• Photographing, image manipulation, file naming, resizing fluid collection images • Creating Adlib records • Attaching images to records
LLMRC	Wed am	Acton Scott Archives	• Cataloguing on Adlib Acton Scott Archive Collection • Taking images of Acton Scott Archive Collection
LLMRC	Wed am/pm	Social History – Tool Collection Web ready records	• Accessioning & cataloguing tool collection on Adlib • Photographing, image manipulation, file naming & image resizing • Checking completed social history records are web ready • Uploading images to web
LLMRC	Wed am	Geology	• Accessioning & cataloguing geology specimens on Adlib
LLMRC	Wed am/pm	Research	• Researching Collectors & collections • Making projects ready to be uploaded onto DSH
LLMRC	Wed am/pm	Photography – Mineral Collection Bitterley Hoard	• Photographing, manipulating, resizing and file naming mineral collection • Photographing, manipulation, resizing and file naming Bitterley Hoard
LLMRC	Weds am/pm	Costume Collection	• Sorting & organizing the Shrewsbury costume collection
LLMRC	Weds	Costume Collection	• Sorting & organizing the Shrewsbury costume collection

	am/pm		
LLMRC	Fri am	Archaeology – Chitty Collection	• Research • Accessioning & cataloguing • Manipulating & attaching images to records
LLMRC	Fri am	Archaeology – Chitty Collection	• Photographing Chitty Collection
LLMRC	Fri am	Transcription	• Transcribing the Salwey Letter Collection
LLMRC	Fri am	Social History	• Cataloguing on Adlib personal life items • Photographing personal life items
LLMRC	Fri am/pm	Arms & Armour Collection Transcription	• Accessioning & cataloguing Arms & Armour collection • Attaching images to records • Transcribing Police Log Books
SMAG	Tues pm	Ceramics Collection	• Research • Updating catalogue entries

Proposed Volunteering Projects

LOCATION	TIME IN	PROJECT	WORK INVOLVED
SMAG Or LLMRC		Archaeology Collection	• Research into Roman Brooch Collection • Updating catalogue entries • Image manipulation
SMAG Or LLMRC		Archaeology Collection	• Research into Radsall Collection • Creating catalogue entries • Image manipulation
SMAG Or LLMRC		Archaeology Collection	• Research into Medieval Floor Tile Collection • Creating and updating catalogue entries • Image manipulation
SMAG	Tues	Decorative Art Collection	• Research into Coalport Collection • Creating and updating catalogue entries • Image manipulation
SMAG	Tues	Decorative Art Collection	• Research into Maw and Dunhill Tile Collections • Creating and updating catalogue entries • Image manipulation
SMAG	Tues	Fine Art Collection	• Relocation of print collection • Research into Roman Brooch Collection • Updating catalogue entries • Image manipulation
SMAG Or LLMRC		Social History Collection	• Cataloguing Scouting Collection • Creating catalogue entries • Image manipulation

Appendix 1
Future Collections Based Volunteering

As many of you are aware our Heritage Lottery funded 'Volunteering for Shropshire's Heritage' project has ended at a time when Shropshire Museums has to remodel its services to make substantial savings. Therefore, will are unable to maintain the volunteering opportunities at their previous level but have been working hard to try and find ways to mitigate against the current situation. We have been working closely with the Heritage Lottery Fund and Arts Council to find a way forward. We would now welcome *your comments and opinions on our plans as we want to ensure that* the new model of operation meets your needs as well as those of the Museum Service.

Where and when can I volunteer?
Collections based volunteering will be available at our two key museum sites:
- *Ludlow Museum Resource Centre – 3 days per week (Monday, Wednesday and Friday)*
- *Shrewsbury Museum and Art Gallery – 1 day per week (Tuesdays)*

What collections can I work on?
Each volunteering day will focus on a specific type of collection. This will depend upon on which collections are held at that site and which specialist curator will available to oversee the volunteering session and give specialist support. More general database and collection documentation work will be available most days.

On Monday and Fridays Ludlow Museum Resource Centre will focus upon opportunities to work on the natural science collections. On Wednesdays the emphasis will shift to the archaeology and social history collections.

On Tuesdays Shrewsbury Museum and Art Gallery will offer opportunities to work on the decorative art and fine art collections.

What tasks can I undertake?
We will be identifying key collections which we need volunteers to work on. One key issue for the service is the need to address our collection documentation backlog. We still have over 200,000 object records which need to be digitised. Therefore, our emphasis will move from research towards addressing the need for data entry onto the collection management database.

Therefore, we will ask volunteers to work individually or in small teams to work through various tasks required for specific collections:
- Creating and updating basic collections database catalogue records which can be reviewed by specialists.
- Researching specific objects and /or collections and adding this new data to our collections database catalogue.
- Photographing items which do not have images on the collections database.
- Reorganising stores, removing and returning object required for exhibitions or education sessions and repacking objects if required.

Please contact me on 01743 258891 if you have any comments you would like to discuss with me directly or pop into Ludlow on a Wednesday for a chat.

Please leave this form at LLMRC in my pigeon hole in the office before the 20 May 2015.