



Viva Volunteers!

Oxford University Museums Volunteer Service
January - March 2018



UNIVERSITY OF
OXFORD

Quarterly Public Engagement Stats	276 Events	1508 Volunteering Hours
	188 Volunteers	532 Instances of Volunteering

'A Right Royal Adventure'

On 24th March, the Volunteer Service coordinated a special family friendly event at the Ashmolean. This was part of an HLF project to celebrate William Dobson's group portrait painted in Oxford during the Civil War. The painting inspired a range of different activities, all developed and delivered by volunteers, each of whom brought a fantastic amount of enthusiasm, knowledge, and creativity to the day. Several of the volunteers had attended a wider training session on 'Planning Your Own Activity' run by Joy and Caroline a few weeks earlier. The session aimed to introduce volunteers to various aspects of design and delivery, including the needs and motivations of different audiences, the pros and cons of different types of activity, 'a leap through learning theory', and various practicalities.

I wanted to plan an activity to make use of the studying I have done around one of my favourite historical periods. I find studying can get very stagnant and distant so it was a great way of applying my work in a different form. I also know the volunteer service and knew that I'd be well supported. As for what I gained...? Greater confidence in my public engagement but also needing to be concise and realising that not everyone needs a full history lesson.

- Volunteer feedback on the training and event



Clockwise from Top Left: Joe argues the case for Charles I not being such a bad guy; Anastasia oversees the poodle parlour, where families made their own versions of Prince Rupert's 'Super Dog', Boye; Lucy reveals some of the stories and symbols hidden in Dobson's painting; Vendi helps visitors step in to the painting thanks to some tasty-looking props, Cavalier-style clothing, and a Polaroid camera; Beth encourages contributions to a collage version of the painting; and Sylvan and Humaira have fun with some replica weapons!

A chance for volunteers to write about objects significant to their volunteering...

'My Favourite Object...' No.8

Your name: Annette

Your chosen object: Alfred Russel Wallace's correspondence

The museum the object is in: Museum of Natural History (Entomology Department: Hope Library)

What connection the object has to your volunteering: I was involved in the project to catalogue, scan, transcribe and put the letters online.

Why you've chosen the object: Alfred Russel Wallace is a 'hero' of mine, for his amazing contribution to science and natural history, and also his generosity of spirit and kindness, his modesty, enthusiasm, and appealing character. The letters reveal his wonderful relationship with his family as well as his interest in science, his friendship with Darwin and others, his interest in social issues, his feistiness, and his willingness to help others.



'My Favourite Object...' No.9

Your name: Julia

Your chosen object: Nike of Samothrace

The museum the object is in: Ashmolean (Cast Gallery)

What connection the object has to your volunteering: She features in my tour of the Cast Gallery.

Why you've chosen the object: I love it because it is so modern and so beautiful. It represents the peak moment when Greek sculpture moved from being very static and formulaic to being realistic and dynamic. But it is also before the decline of the Greek empire, when sculpture became contorted and extreme. She is beautiful and real, and could be on the cover of Vogue. She is also such an iconic image, in the Louvre in Paris, and we are so privileged to have her here in our Gallery.

Volunteer-led 'Downstairs in the Cast Gallery' tours happen every Thursday and Saturday.



Volunteer at the Museums

The Joint Museums Volunteer Service coordinates a large pool of volunteers across the Ashmolean, the Museum of the History of Science, the Museum of Natural History, and the Pitt Rivers Museum. We also work to a lesser extent with the Botanic Garden and Harcourt Arboretum and the Beale Collection of Musical Instruments. We are very grateful to our volunteers, whose vital contributions make a real and valued difference to our work. In return, we hope that volunteers enjoy sharing their enthusiasm and building their confidence and skills in an interesting and supportive environment.

Find out more about volunteering with us in the sections below, or...

[Find out about volunteering at the Bodleian Libraries](#)

[Find out about practical volunteering at the Botanic Garden and Harcourt Arboretum](#)

Please note: the Volunteer Service does not organise work experience, work placements, or internships.



Volunteering with Visitors



Volunteering Behind the Scenes



Recruiting Now



Newletters



Our Volunteers



Practical Information

On the Move

We've been trailing the long-awaited arrival of a new volunteer database for quite some time now... Well - phew and hoorah - it's really very nearly here! This term we've been busy transferring data and transforming systems, ready for the first staff training in May, and we hope to be at least fairly settled in to the new system by the end of the summer. Meanwhile, the 'www.museums.ox.ac.uk' website is also about to become defunct, so we have been busy moving all of that content to shiny new pages on the GLAM website. Please now direct any enquiries you receive about volunteering to www.glam.ox.ac.uk/volunteering.

Hello and a Temporary Goodbye

- **A Temporary Goodbye** - This is to Caroline, who - as anyone who has seen her recently will know - is about to go on maternity leave. She expects to pop into the museums for an occasional cuppa and a chat once baby arrives and will be back to work in early Spring 2019. In the meantime...

- **Hello and Welcome to Hayleigh** - Hayleigh Jutson has joined the Volunteer Service as Caroline's maternity cover and is already settling in well. Hopefully, lots of you will get the chance to meet her soon. In the meantime, a bit about her...

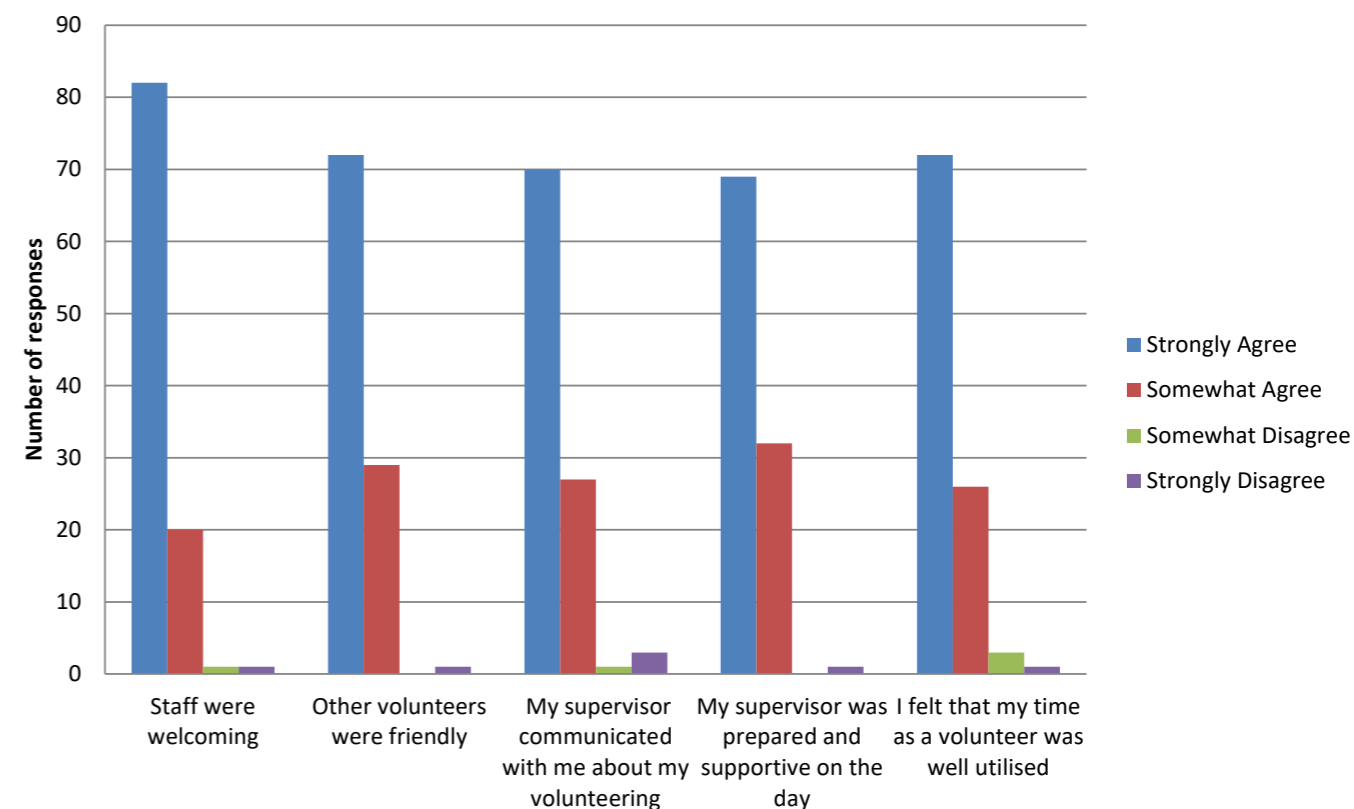
"I have previously worked at Plymouth City Museum & Art Gallery as a culture and heritage apprentice/natural history assistant and later returned as a natural history collections volunteer and subsequent curatorial assistant. During this time I supervised a small group of volunteers and have since undertaken voluntary work with the National Trust on the conservation team at Charlecote house in Warwick. As Caroline's maternity cover, I am really excited to join the team and assist with all volunteer opportunities and endeavours, and I look forward to meeting and working with you all."

- **And Another Hello** - This time to Rachel Harrison, Rana Ibrahim, and Abigail Flack, who recently joined Nicola Bird (Joint Museums Community Engagement Officer) at the Museum of the History of Science and the Pitt Rivers Museum as part of 'Multaka Oxford', an Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund project to work with community volunteers. Inspired by the 'Multaka' project in Berlin, this project aims to engage members of the Oxford refugee and forced migrant community via inclusive volunteering opportunities to improve confidence, support integration, and enhance the collections through multi-layered interpretation.

The Results Are In (continued)...

Another result to share from October's volunteer survey...

If you have volunteered in the last year, how would you rate your overall experience on the following points?





Volunteers Manon and Nicole hard at work in the Zoology lab

A Personal Perspective

"I am leading the 'Kelp Our Corals' project which aims to condition assess, photograph, and repackage a portion of the historical soft coral and sponge collection at the Museum of Natural History. This is my first experience leading a project and it has been a great learning experience so far. The project has required a lot of organization on my part both finding volunteers to participate and the administrative work. This is also my first time managing volunteers and at first I was very nervous. However, once the project started, I realized I had nothing to worry about. All of my volunteers have been lovely and most importantly they are enthusiastic about the collection and eager to learn new skills! I have had great support from my supervisor, the Life Department, and the Volunteering Service." - Stefani Cavazos, museum intern (Find out more about the project [here.](#))

Training

- **Hands-on Science 101** - Following on from the aforementioned 'Planning Your Own Activity' training, we ran a more specifically 'science' version on behalf of the Museum of Natural History and the MPLS Division in February.
- **Tours** - In the last newsletter, we mentioned a new cohort of volunteer tour guides. Having spent two full Saturdays, as well as some follow-up sessions, with them this term, we now look forward to seeing how they get on as they start delivering their first 'real' tours!
- **Volunteer Management 101** - This term, we ran two more particularly well attended sessions aimed at engaging museum colleagues with issues around best practice, policy, and ethics in volunteer management. We have now trained nearly 150 staff in the past three years, which is great! We don't intend to run any more sessions in the near future, whilst our attention is very much on the new database, but keep an eye out for more sessions later in the year... In the meantime, if you have any questions regarding recruiting and/or supervising volunteers, then please get in touch - especially if you are considering offering any new opportunities!
- **'An Introduction to...the Bate Collection'** - Many thanks to Andy Lamb, who gave a lively and wide-ranging introduction to the Bate Collection to ten volunteers on 31st January. Not only was it a chance to hear about the history and some of the highlights of the collection; it was also a chance for the volunteers to see the group of current Instrument Cleaning volunteers in action. These 'Introduction to...' sessions are a great way to engage new volunteers and to boost the confidence of existing volunteers, so please get in touch if you would like to host an introduction to your collection or department!
- **Stones 'n' Bones** - Finally, at the end of March, Joy worked with Museum of Natural History staff to train a new group of object handling volunteers - part of the programme for the current 'Settlers' exhibition. We'll report back more on the project later in the year...

We hope you've enjoyed this bumper edition of the quarterly volunteer newsletter! If you have any volunteer news you would like us to share in our next issue (Apr - Jun 2018), then please get in touch.