



# Viva Volunteers!

## Oxford University Museums Volunteer Service

### April - June 2019



UNIVERSITY OF  
**OXFORD**

## Annual Stats

### Apr 18 - Mar 19

**584** volunteers gave **21,386** hours!  
Many thanks to all of our wonderful volunteers and to the wonderful staff who support them!

## Volunteers' Week 2019

Whilst it's important to show volunteers how much we value them throughout the year, Volunteers' Week (1 - 7 June) is always a particularly great time to celebrate their ongoing support, commitment, and enthusiasm, and to bring them together for some extra social events. This year, we were able to offer eight behind-the-scenes and specialist tours led by staff across the Ashmolean, History of Science Museum, and Museum of Natural History (many thanks to those staff!). Joy and Hayleigh also hosted the annual Volunteers' Summer Party - this year at the Museum of Natural History - with colourful catering by Waste2Taste, a cool, summery soundtrack playing in the background, and plenty of friendly chatter. Our thoughts are already turning to the Christmas Party...



Volunteers enjoying tours of Islamic Scientific Instruments at the HSM and the Object Conservation Studio at the ASH

Volunteers enjoying the chance to meet and catch-up with each other over a plate of delicious food at the MNH

## Multaka-Oxford Object Handling



Multaka volunteers Rukan and Tom brought in a piece of cloth from the Ka'bah in Mecca and a Chinese musical instrument, which makes bird calls, to connect with objects in the museum.

What's the connection between a Braille watch, Buddhist and Catholic prayer beads, and a Peruvian textile? The answer: they've all featured in recent object handling at the History of Science Museum. Caroline worked with Rana Ibrahim, the museum's Collections Project Officer, to train seven Multaka volunteers to pilot a new format for object handling. Volunteers were asked to bring in and share with the public a personal object that they could connect with two museum 'starter' objects (an astrolabe and a Qibla indicator). The aims were to help bring different perspectives to the museum's collections and to show their continued relevance. The pilot ran May - July and will be evaluated over the summer.

## Other Multaka News...

Many congratulations to the Multaka-Oxford team for winning Volunteer Team of the Year at the Museums + Heritage awards in May. The project was also Highly Commended in the Partnership Working category. With a new exhibition and personal-perspectives tours at the Pitt Rivers Museum, the aforementioned object handling at the History of Science Museum, a Networking Day, and a well-deserved celebratory event, the staff and volunteers have certainly been busy!

## From Document Scanners to Event Planners...

In the past three months, we have had an unprecedented number and variety of new and existing roles being recruited for, including:

- Digitisation of Historic Conservation Documents - Ashmolean
- Digitisation of Western Art Prints - Ashmolean
- Digitisation of the Cyprus Collection - Ashmolean
- Coin Documentation - Ashmolean
- 'Pompeii' Exhibition Welcome Desk - Ashmolean
- Welcome Desk - Ashmolean
- Herbarium Room Hosts - Botanic Garden
- Multaka-Oxford Object Handling - History of Science Museum
- Visitor Hosts - History of Science Museum and Pitt Rivers Museum
- Multaka-Oxford Event Planner - Pitt Rivers Museum
- Jurassic Fossils Re-boxing - Museum of Natural History
- Geology Archives - Museum of Natural History
- Sunday Family Friendly Sessions - Museum of Natural History
- 'Out of the Deep' Object Handling - Museum of Natural History
- Social Media and Video Content Creation - Museum of Natural History

## Close Encounters of the Turd Kind

In May, one of the volunteers added an unusual postscript to an email, which led to an exchange about... dung beetles! As Gerry explained, 'When in Sarawak in April, I saw and filmed a dung beetle! After having volunteered for Bacterial Buddies [object handling at the Museum of Natural History], I can't tell you how exciting this was. I shared this with Georgia, one of the other volunteers, who also was entranced! Thank you for choosing me as one of the volunteers for the Bacteria exhibition. I enjoyed the sessions very much, as did the visitors to our table.' She then sent a photo, adding that 'the dung beetle rolled the dung away from sight within a few minutes. We wouldn't have seen it at all if the proboscis monkey hadn't just been across and left a sample!'



## 'Ruskin 200: Closer Look' Tours

During May and June, Caroline worked with Kathy Clough, Exhibitions Officer at the Museum of Natural History, and staff and clients from local homelessness charity, Crisis Skylight, to develop and deliver a new Ruskin-inspired tour. The tour was based upon similar 'Art in Crisis' tours run at the Ashmolean in 2016 and 2017, but was, this year, themed to fit in with the MNH's [Ruskin 200 programme](#).

Following a series of workshops exploring John Ruskin, his connection to the building, and his wider thinking and influence, Andrew and Amber went on to give their personal perspectives on a 'Closer Look' theme: Andrew encouraging visitors to look more closely at the architecture, and Amber encouraging them to look more closely at the kingfisher, *T.rex*, and *Archaeopteryx* in a detailed compare-and-contrast way.



As in previous years, the result was inspiring, informative, and unique.

Particular thanks to the staff who supported the project by contributing to training or attending the tours, which ran on 28th June and 5th July.

*Lovely to be guided by non-professionals... They were clearly passionate... Full of energy... Really enjoyed the breadth of knowledge and the unusual detail chosen - visitor feedback*

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

## 'My Favourite Object...' No. 14

Your name: Ben

Your chosen object: Porphyry head of a Roman Emperor

The museum the object is in: Ashmolean

What connection the object has to your volunteering: It features on my tour 'Byzantium'

Why you've chosen the object: It is a very nice example of late Roman/early Byzantine sculpture, produced in the 4th century CE. It is fascinating because the figure is among the first generations of Roman Emperors to wear crowns. Why did they start to wear crowns? Come on the tour to find out!



## In Other News...

- In June, Michalina left the Volunteer Service, prior to starting a new Collections post at the Hunterian in Glasgow. We thank her for all of her help over the last couple of years and wish her the best of luck! Meanwhile, we had the very good news that Hayleigh's post is being funded for another year. If you have any questions about volunteers helping with one-off opportunities, then continue to get in touch with her. If you have any questions about volunteers helping more regularly or on projects, then get in touch with Caroline.

- Before she left, Michalina - together with Simon Glenn, another Volunteer Service alumnus - ran four Saturday taster sessions for volunteers interested in Ashmolean Coin Documentation. Like most behind-the-scenes roles, this opportunity is usually only offered on weekdays, so this was a useful chance to test the idea of weekend volunteering... all spaces were filled!

- The next 'Volunteer Management 101' training will be 11 - 2.30 on Monday 23rd September at the Museum of Natural History. The training not only covers the ins and outs of the Museums' Volunteer Policy (including recently updated Staff Guidance), but also addresses the ethics of volunteering and best practice in volunteer management. All staff tasked with thinking about and/or acting upon volunteer issues are strongly encouraged to attend.

- The Botanic Garden, Harcourt Arboretum, and Bodleian are starting to come into the Volunteer Service fold, meaning that we are now heading towards being fully GLAMorous!

## And Finally...

When Caroline emailed the volunteers about the Museum of Natural History's Ruskin 200 art competition, she was delighted to receive an email from volunteer Norman with this humorous picture attached. He explained, 'As it happened, when you wrote I was going through the cupboard of long forgotten art materials and thought I might have time to do a drawing and submit it to the competition. So I came to town, looked round the exhibition in the Museum main hall and took some photos. I painted the Museum with a giant dodo peering over the top and people running away in terror and falling out of windows and one person still typing at her PC as she tumbles to the ground. It was great fun!' Hopefully the person still typing away isn't someone from the Volunteer Service! The winning entries are now on display in the museum; plus keep your eye on the museum website for additional artworks.



We hope you've enjoyed this edition of the quarterly volunteer newsletter!  
If you have anything you would like us to share in our next issue (July - September 2019),  
then please get in touch - we'd love to hear from you and share your volunteer news.

[www.glam.ox.ac.uk/volunteering](http://www.glam.ox.ac.uk/volunteering); [volunteering@museums.ox.ac.uk](mailto:volunteering@museums.ox.ac.uk); @GLAMVols