

Time to Review and Start Anew...

2019 has been a particularly busy year for the Volunteer Service, with staff and structure changes within the team, ongoing work on the new volunteer database (and associated training of staff and volunteers to use it), the addition of the Botanic Garden and Weston Library to the Service's remit, a review of the Museums' Volunteer Policy and Guidance documents, and an extraordinary number of new roles to recruit for - all on top of our general work of vetting volunteers and coordinating the *Ad Hoc* Activity and Event Helper pool.

We have therefore earmarked most of January and February to take stock, make sure that our processes are clear, and create a new set of instructions for everyone using the database. We will, of course, be contactable during this time - and may very well be getting in touch with you! However, we may not be able to respond to enquiries immediately. Thanks in advance for your understanding!

Cambrian Close Up

What difference does 500 million years of evolutionary history make?! That is one question being posed to visitors as part of the Museum of Natural History's new volunteer-led 'Cambrian Close Up' activity. Volunteers help visitors to find out by making connections between animals alive in the Cambrian period (over 500 million years ago) and animals alive today. The activity, which was inspired by the current 'First Animals' exhibition, includes the chance for visitors to handle real fossils and - a first for the museum - to immerse themselves in ancient oceans through a virtual reality experience! The activity, which happens every other Saturday (alternating with 'Out of the Deep' object handling), began in September 2019 and is set to continue until September 2020.



Cambrian Close Up volunteers having a go at matching ancient and modern animals and using the virtual reality headset as part of their training

From Document Scanners to Event Planners, continued...

In the last newsletter, we reported an unprecedented number of volunteer roles being recruited for during the previous three months. We have had even more since!

- Digitisation of Western Art Prints - Ashmolean
- Coin Documentation - Ashmolean
- Welcome Desk - Ashmolean
- Cast Gallery Tours - Ashmolean
- Lunchtime and Afternoon Tours - Ashmolean
- Western Art Italian Drawings Research - Ashmolean
- Eastern Art Tokyo Exhibition Research - Ashmolean
- Friends' Membership Activities - Ashmolean
- Coin Handling - Ashmolean
- Hope Book Collection Cleaning - Ashmolean
- Rock Garden Gardening - Botanic Garden
- Hardy Collection Gardening - Botanic Garden
- Plants that Changed the World Gardening - Botanic Garden
- Glasshouse Gardening - Botanic Garden
- Winter Gardening - Botanic Garden
- Visitor Hosts - History of Science Museum
- Secondary School Support - History of Science Museum
- History and Highlight Tours - History of Science Museum
- Multaka Tours - History of Science Museum
- Multaka Event Planning - History of Science Museum
- Sunday Family Friendly - Museum of Natural History
- Cambrian Close Up - Museum of Natural History
- Bowman Collection Documentation - Museum of Natural History
- Science Saturdays - Museum of Natural History
- Board Game Science - Museum of Natural History
- Stone Tools Documentation - Museum of Natural History
- Palaeontology Database Entry - Museum of Natural History
- Entomology Collections - Museum of Natural History
- Saturday Object Handling - Pitt Rivers Museum
- History and Highlight Tours - Pitt Rivers Museum

Many thanks to all of the volunteers and volunteer supervisors involved!

Also, a reminder that if you have not already spoken to us about wanting to recruit in January or February, then we will now not be able to recruit for you until March. Do get in touch with Caroline via volunteering@museums.ox.ac.uk if you want to recruit after that (ideally allowing 6 weeks before you would like volunteers to start). She will then send you our new 'Volunteer Role Template' to fill in as a first step.

In Other News...

- In July, the Volunteer Service hosted the Summer meeting of BOBVol at the Museum of Natural History and Pitt Rivers Museum. The focus was on 'Volunteer Diversity' and included a 'personal perspective' tour by Thabo from the Multaka-Oxford project. Joy and Hayleigh also attended the Autumn meeting, held at Didcot Railway Centre, in November. The topic this time was 'Volunteering and Age', including discussion around Safeguarding. Joy continues to serve as Secretary for BOBVol, which is the local regional network of the [Heritage Volunteering Group](#).

- In October, the Volunteer Service coordinated the GLAM stand at the University Freshers' Fair. Thanks to all colleagues who gave their time to talk to hundreds of new students

during the 2-day event: explaining and enthusing about the various collections, and encouraging people to sign up on mailing lists, come along as visitors, and/or get involved as volunteers.

- Another 20 members of staff have attended Volunteer Management 101 training in the last few months. We will circulate the date of the next training session (in the spring) as soon as possible, so that all volunteer supervisors who have not yet been trained can put it in their diaries. Attendance is strongly encouraged, as it is an opportunity to consider various practical and ethical issues around volunteer recruitment and management at both the University and more widely.

- Work is ongoing on the Volunteer pages of the GLAM website. Please continue to direct all volunteering enquiries to <https://www.glam.ox.ac.uk/volunteering>, but be aware that content and formatting will be changing over the coming weeks.

- The Multaka-Oxford project has received funding for another year, to carry on its work to make volunteering opportunities more accessible and inclusive for forced migrants. In September, the team, which works across the History of Science and Pitt Rivers Museums, also won the [Collections Trust Award 2019](#). Congratulations to everyone involved!

- Thursday 5th December was International Volunteers' Day. As a 'thank you' to volunteers at the Ashmolean, the Museum's Volunteer Manager, Ruth Farnan, organised a trip to Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, which brought together volunteers from different teams and provided an opportunity to think about how another, similar museum works. She hopes a trip will now become an annual fixture in the Ashmolean volunteer calendar...

Party Time

Thanks to everyone who came to the GLAM Volunteer Christmas Party at the Museum of Natural History in December. It was a fun and festive evening, featuring racing turkeys, wrapped up mystery objects, a museum-themed quiz, 'Human Bingo', Christmas crafts, food, drink, and plenty of socialising!

Thanks particularly to all of the staff who lent a hand with setting up, tidying away, and serving in between. It was great to see so many faces.

Next up... Volunteer Week in June!



Tour-tastic

We have always known that tours are a popular volunteering opportunity. Whilst the Ashmolean's Lunchtime, Afternoon, and History and Highlight tours pre-date the Volunteer Service (by some years!), other tours have grown in both number and scope under the Volunteer Service, from an initial group delivering two History and Highlight tours a week at the Museum of the History of Science (as was) in 2008 to volunteers now leading regular History and Highlight tours at the History of Science and Pitt Rivers Museums, Architecture tours at the Museum of Natural History, and 'Downstairs in the Cast Gallery' tours at the Ashmolean.

Some of the tour guides have been with us since the beginning; others have joined more recently, and our latest round of recruitment has brought in even more 'new blood'. Not only was it the first time in more than 15 years that the Ashmolean recruited openly for its Lunchtime and Afternoon tours, but it was also an opportunity to top-up some of the other teams, too.

In fact, Joy, Caroline, and Ruth were overwhelmed by both the quantity and quality of applications: shortlisting and auditioning 34 out of 43 applicants across three days in late October, before Joy and Caroline trained 24 volunteers on 'How to be a Good Tour Guide' across four days in November. The volunteers are now working with staff at relevant museums to develop and hone their tours, and we look forward to watching them share their new skills and knowledge with the public in the New Year.

For information on all upcoming tours across the Museums (including Multaka tours), have a look at What's On. NB Caroline will also be getting in touch with staff soon to gather potential interest in supporting the annual 'Crisis' tour programme.

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

'My Favourite Object...' No.15

Your name: Lynn

Your chosen object: Short-necked plesiosaur

The museum the object is in: Museum of Natural History

What connection the object has to your volunteering:

My first session of volunteering for GLAM was gathering feedback from museum visitors about the splendid new display, 'Out of the Deep', which includes this big, fossilised vertebrate that lived in the sea during the Jurassic period.

Why you've chosen the object: I can imagine it swimming over my garden... we regularly turn up fossilised lumps of Jurassic coral and oysters, and I am very happy with the idea that this plesiosaur (which was found in Yarnton) would have swum in the same sea. They have an unfamiliar way of swimming that is shown on the display video, with four large flippers.



We hope you've enjoyed this bumper edition of the volunteer newsletter. From next year, we are planning to send it out every four months, so our next issue will cover January - April. If you have anything you would like us to include, then please get in touch - we'd love to hear from you and share your volunteer news.

www.glam.ox.ac.uk/volunteering; volunteering@museums.ox.ac.uk; [@GLAMVols](https://twitter.com/GLAMVols)