

MAGnet meeting for March 2008 held at the National Maritime, Cornwall in Falmouth

### **10.30 Arrivals and refreshments**

Museums present were: NMMC, Bude Heritage centre, Bodmin Museum, Penlee House, Falmouth Art Gallery, Constantine Heritage Centre, Geevor Tin Mine, Cornwall Record Office (CRO), St Ives Museum, Tate St Ives.

Apologies were sent from: St Agnes Museum Porthcurno Telegraph, Fowey Museum, Mount Edgcumbe, and Lostwithiel Museum.

This was a good turn out and it was pointed out that meetings during school holidays were helpful. Many thanks to Stuart at the NMMC for hosting the meeting.

### **11.00 MLA Southwest, a regional update from Jan Horrell**

Notes are available as a PDF at:

<http://www.museumsincornwall.org.uk/extras/magnet/> With the news that MLA regional agencies are to be phased out with a small centrally based core team remaining to represent the sector in each region, we would like to thank staff for their support. It has not been easy for MLA SW to deliver this past year and with the coming of a single unitary authority for Cornwall it is essential for the museum sector here to work more closely together. The Strategic Commissioning Programme will continue to run – details to become available imminently. A small handful of museums will be adopting the Schools Participatory Database. It is hoped that in time more museums will follow. The advantages in getting us all to use the database are obvious however for some it does not catch all the information required and managing two databases is not ideal. As yet there has been no news as to what the SW Hub museums will be doing. If you would like to take a look at the database the address is: [www.mlaschools.org.uk](http://www.mlaschools.org.uk)

MDF funding from MLA SW will continue for 08/09. This will continue to fund the Cornwall Museum Learning Development post as well as projects. These will cover Family Friendly gallery spaces, national events and MAGnet.

### **11.30 Museums and Galleries in Cornwall – what's on?**

The round robin revealed that school visits were continuing to increase, however the spring term is usually a busy one. With rising costs of transport some schools are sending 2 classes at a time – this seems to be a growing trend and museums are having to cope with logistics of up to 70 children on their site at a time. There was news of a range of new projects, partnership forging, with updates on continuous development of learning resources. An interesting point raised by

Bryan Stevens from St Ives Museum was that there is no museum in Cornwall that focuses on the story of the fishing industry. St Ives museum has improved their gallery spaces and set up what they believe to be the most complete pilchard cellar in the county. Interest was expressed in holding a MAGnet meeting at St Ives so that we could take a look at their displays on this important part of the county's past (and present).

**12.15 Museums in Cornwall website – update**  
[www.museumsincornwall.org.uk](http://www.museumsincornwall.org.uk)

The website has been overhauled using Museum Development Funding. 8 museums have a schools information page. It is hoped with time that more will follow. Please take a look at your page. There is still work to be done to promote the website to teachers. RCM are going to have a page set up listing museums that also provide services to schools on a regular basis with links to your websites. This is just one approach to trying to reach teachers – as you are aware this is a difficult egg to crack and more remains to be achieved in this area. It will remain a priority for the time being. A report looking into the feasibility of a regional education website for the SW is available as a PDF doc:  
<http://www.museumsincornwall.org.uk/extras/magnet/>

12.30 Lunch

**1.15 Variations on an activity trolley, Stuart Slade at NMMC**

Deborah Rogers introduced some of the self directed activities that happen during school holidays. Family audiences have grown enormously. Tips were: keep it simple; provide easily understood instructions and consider carefully how visitors will receive them; parents required to stay with children so provide for the adult too, the more scrapheap-like the task the more dads seem to like it; keep it gallery based; give rewards (stickers work well); build an area with installation where results can be displayed if this is their wish; simple colouring/sticking activities work well creating 'quiet' reflective areas that are appreciated by families; work with exhibitions team to include interactives for families from the start moving away from tacked on tasks; consider local visitors – they need something worthwhile to re-visit; activities slow the visit down and allow deeper exploration; push the boundaries on what is appropriate for gallery spaces.

**1.45 Explorer Back Packs, RCM**

Examples of family friendly activities were introduced. Dressing up is popular – simple examples are hats, capes, bags, back packs etc. Themed trails are still popular but trying to move away from using clip boards and asking children to

find 'things' to draw or count. Emphasis is on using thinking skills – a list of these are available as a PDF: <http://www.museumsincornwall.org.uk/extras/magnet/> Other popular items are binoculars, or magnifying glasses. Occasionally things go missing but it is still worth doing in terms of increasing visitor numbers and second visits. All temporary exhibitions at the RCM now have some form of family friendly activity and the learning team work with the exhibitions and curatorial staff from early stages. Important that these activities vary from display to display, otherwise interest wears off. Getting a balance is important.

## **2.15 Activity Buckets, Kerry Rice, Tate St Ives**

At Tate St Ives Kerry Rice has been running the family programme. Some activities are free and some have a small charge of £2. For example monthly held Super Sundays are aimed at local visitors and are free. All are produced in-house. They are drop-in mostly as this suits family visitors. They must be connected to the exhibitions and cross generational. Kerry showed us a lump of 'vegetable putty' which go into their 'Activity Buckets'. It is non-toxic, never hardens and very therapeutic! Very popular. Available from a company called Supply zone it is called 'sofun'. The guiding principles for family friendly activities at Tate St Ives are: learning, income, enjoyment, extending/enhancing visit, partnership

Many thanks to Stuart and Kerry for their practical presentations. If there is something you would like to try please contact Anita Pryor. **MDF funding for 08/09 will be targeted at development of family friendly gallery based resources.** Please contact her if you have an idea you would like help with.

## **3.00 MAGnet – ideas on keeping in touch**

The future of MAGnet was discussed. The group feel strongly that it should continue but with some changes: a new name so that archives can also be included; there was discussion about broadening out to include all heritage organisations, or even other educational providers such as Zoos etc. Something to think about and feedback on at the next meeting. Museums will take it in turns to lead on fixing themes, speakers, agendas and chairing meetings whilst Anita Pryor will continue to assist with arranging venues, and circulating information and general admin tasks. Basic elements of meetings valued are: news roundups, someone to deliver news at a regional/national level, outside speakers, skills sharing. It was emphasised that the agenda will continue to reflect museum learning issues, whilst care of collections will remain under the guidance of Sarah Cooper, Cornwall Collections Management Development Officer.

Geevor Tin Mine have offered to take on this role for the time being.

A provisional date has been set for Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> November. This is the first day back after the halfterm – which tends not to be a busy school visit day. Bryan Stevens has offered to host the meeting for the first half to look at Cornish Fishing and how we approach interpretation. Lunch could be at Tate St Ives with an afternoon session held there. Constantine Museum and Falmouth Art Gallery have also offered to host meetings. Please go to: <http://www.museumsincornwall.org.uk/extras/magnet/> to get details for next MAGnet meeting. Any ideas for future meetings please contact Fiona Young on 01736 788662 or [fiona@geevor.com](mailto:fiona@geevor.com)

3.15      Close