

SCRUTINY BULLETIN

The papers attached are primarily for Councillors' information but will be made publicly available on the internet, with the exception of Part 2 items. They may relate to work in progress or updates on reports which have already been considered by the Scrutiny Committees.

The provision of this information does not override the authority of the Standing Orders as set out in the Council's Constitution. For example, Councillors remain entitled to ask for a specific item to be placed on a Scrutiny agenda, request a call-in or to ask questions of a Portfolio Holder.

If require further information please contact Jo Quinnell, Assistant Democratic Services Officer at committee.services@exeter.gov.uk

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Scrutiny Bulletin: 21st October 2024

Title of Update: Treasury Management Quarter 1 Report

Relevant Officers: David Hodgson, Strategic Director – Corporate Resources

Claire Hodgson, Finance Manager - Corporate

Contact for general enquiries:

Jo Quinnell, Assistant Democratic Services Officer, Democratic Services, Room 4.36

Email: jo.quinnell@exeter.gov.uk. Tel: 01392 265197

1. What is the update about?

The CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) Code of Practice for treasury Management 2021 recommends that members be updated on treasury management activities at least quarterly. The Treasury Management Strategy for the coming year, the annual Treasury Management outturn, and the mid-year review are presented to Executive and Council. Other quarterly updates are not required to be formally presented to Council. This report provides an update on the first quarter of 2024/25 in compliance with the Code.

2. Report Details:

2.1 Interest Rate Forecasts

The Council has appointed Link Group as its treasury advisors and part of their service is to assist the Council to formulate a view on interest rates. The PWLB rate forecasts below are based on the Certainty Rate as at the end of May 2024. These set out a view that both short and long-dated interest rates will start to fall once it is evident that the Bank of England has been successful in squeezing excess inflation out of the economy, despite a backdrop of a stubbornly robust economy and a tight labour market.

Link Group Interest Rate View	28.05.24											
	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25	Dec-25	Mar-26	Jun-26	Sep-26	Dec-26	Mar-27
BANK RATE	5.25	5.00	4.50	4.00	3.50	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.00	3.00	3.00
3 month ave earnings	5.30	5.00	4.50	4.00	3.50	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.00	3.00	3.00
6 month ave earnings	5.30	4.90	4.40	3.90	3.50	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.10	3.10	3.20
12 month ave earnings	5.10	4.80	4.30	3.80	3.50	3.40	3.40	3.40	3.40	3.20	3.30	3.40
5 yr PWLB	4.90	4.70	4.50	4.30	4.10	4.00	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.80
10 yr PWLB	5.00	4.80	4.60	4.40	4.30	4.10	4.10	4.10	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.90
25 yr PWLB	5.30	5.20	5.00	4.80	4.70	4.50	4.50	4.40	4.40	4.40	4.30	4.30
50 yr PWLB	5.10	5.00	4.80	4.60	4.50	4.30	4.30	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.10	4.10

2.2. Treasury Management Strategy

The Council approved the 2024/25 Treasury Management Strategy Statement, including the Annual Investment Strategy, at its meeting on 20 February 2024. In accordance with the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice it sets out the Council's investment priorities as being; Security of capital, Liquidity, and Yield. Officers review the creditworthiness of counterparties when making investment decisions, and Link provide updates of changes to credit ratings.

The Council's investment strategy was to continue to hold small surplus funds and to seek to utilise its Call Accounts, Money Market Funds, use the Government's Debt Management Office and use short-dated deposits which would be placed with Local Authorities, Banks or Building Societies in-line with the Council's counterparty list.

The Council's stated borrowing strategy was to defer borrowing until later years, where possible, and to reduce the size of the Council's investment balance instead, however some targeted long-term borrowing may be undertaken where the costs will be offset against future income streams.

3. Investments

3.1 The Council's fixed term deposits held at 30 June 2024 were:

Amount	Investment	Interest rate	Date Invested	Maturity Date	No. of Days
£5,000,000	London Borough of Barking & Dagenham	5.55%	03/01/24	03/07/24	182
£2,000,000	Barclays Green notice account	5.25%	19/07/22	65-day notice	Min: 65
£1,000,000	Barclays Standard notice account	5.25%	19/07/22	65-day notice	Min: 65
£8,000,000					

3.1 The Council had access to four Money Market Funds during the period. The money market funds allow immediate access to our funds and spreads risk as it is pooled with investments by other organisations and invested across a wide range of financial institutions.

Amount	Investment	Interest rate*
£5,500,000	Federated Investors	5.24%
£2,000,000	CCLA - The Public Sector Deposit Fund	5.21%
£0	Black Rock Asset Management	5.20%
£10,000,000	Aberdeen Investments	5.23%
£17,500,000		

* Interest rate is variable (therefore rates quoted are an average to 30 June 2024)

- 3.2 The Council made investments in the CCLA's LAMIT Property Fund in 2016. It should be noted that investments in property funds are a long-term commitment which means that there can be fluctuations on the return from the investment.

Amount	Investment	Dividend Yield 23/24
£5,000,000	CCLA – LAMIT Property Fund	5.21%

4 Borrowing

- 4.1 When the 2024/25 budget was set the Council's Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) at 31st March 2024 was expected to be £235.120m, rising by £6.522m to £241.642m by 31st March 2025 to fund the capital programme. The Council is in an under-borrowed position, meaning that the CFR has not been fully funded with loan debt as cash supporting the Council's reserves, balances and cash flow has been used as a temporary measure. This strategy is prudent as borrowing costs remain high.
- 4.2 The Council's long-term borrowing is currently £164.447m (£92.203m General Fund and £72.244m HRA) and there is no short-term borrowing. No further external borrowing has been undertaken during the quarter.
- 4.3 Details of loans are set out overleaf:

Principal Amount outstanding as at 30 June 2024	Lender	Interest rate	Loan type	Date of repayment
£56,884,000	PWLB maturity (HRA)	3.48%	Maturity	28/03/2062
£1,856,000	PWLB 25 year annuity	2.34%	Annuity	11/01/2044
£1,804,090	PWLB 25 year annuity	2.08%	Annuity	04/04/2044
£4,086,796	PWLB 30 year annuity	1.61%	Annuity	26/09/2049
£7,939,891	PWLB 35 year annuity	1.71%	Annuity	26/09/2054

£33,914,626	PWLB 50 year annuity	1.80%	Annuity	26/09/2069
£15,360,000	PWLB maturity (HRA)	1.31%	Maturity	14/04/2070
£42,601,839	PWLB 50 year annuity	1.78%	Annuity	24/12/2071

- 4.4 The ongoing borrowing requirement will be monitored and a decision of whether to take further borrowing will be made in light of need and current and forecast interest rates. If additional borrowing is required advice will be sought from the treasury management advisors in order that the most cost-effective form of borrowing can be secured. The decision of whether to take external long-term borrowing is delegated to the Section 151 Officer and Leader of the Council.

5 Compliance with Treasury and Prudential Limits

The Council sets in February each year prudential indicators for Treasury Management to ensure that proper control of borrowing and investing is maintained. These indicators can be found in the Council's budget book. At Quarter 1 2024/25 there is no projected significant deviation from these indicators.

During the quarter ended 30 June 2024, the Council has operated within the treasury and prudential indicators set out in the Council's Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2024/25. No difficulties are envisaged for the current or future years in complying with these indicators.

All treasury management operations have also been conducted in full compliance with the Council's Treasury Management Practices. The approved limits within the Annual Investment Strategy were not breached during the quarter.

SCRUTINY PROGRAMME BOARD

Thursday 5 September 2024

Present:-

Councillor Williams, M (in the chair)
Councillors Mitchell M, Parkhouse, Pole and Rees

Also Present

Service Lead – Legal & Monitoring Officer, Democratic Services Manager,
Democratic Services Officers (PMD and LS)

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SCRUTINY NOTE OF 17 JUNE 2024 MEETING

The Scrutiny Note of the previous meeting held on 17 June 2024 was agreed as a true and accurate record.

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SCRUTINY COMMITTEES AND PORTFOLIO AREAS

Members and officers noted the new Portfolio areas following the May 2024 election and remarked that some Portfolio Holders had competencies that sat with both Scrutiny committees.

During discussion, Members commented on:-

- the importance of holding service provision rather than Portfolio Holders to account;
- whether the agenda front page was somewhat misleading by emphasising Portfolio Holders rather than their competencies;
- the role of the Scrutiny Programme Board in identifying the most relevant Scrutiny committee for each proposal received;
- the need for flexibility and fluidity; and
- the need to avoid duplication across both Scrutiny committees while maintaining accountability.

Councillor M Mitchell also noted that there were several discrepancies within Exeter City Council's Constitution on the greater topic of Scrutiny; the Monitoring Officer recognised that this would need to be addressed. Officers also reminded Members of the importance of conversations taking place between Scrutiny committee members between meetings.

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SCRUTINY PROPOSALS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS

Members were advised that no Proformas had been received by Democratic Services. Councillor M Mitchell reminded Members of the importance of the sequencing of proposals, from the submission stage all the way to the Scrutiny Forward Plan via the different steps in between.

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REPORTING PERIOD FOR ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT

Officers advised that, under the current format, the reporting period for the Annual Scrutiny Report was out of sync with the current administration. In this respect, it was proposed by Democratic Services, and agreed by SPB members, that the

following be produced:-

- a 'stop-gap' Annual Scrutiny Report covering the period from September 2023 until April 2024, prefaced by Councillor Allcock, who was the Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Board during that time; then
- a full Annual Scrutiny Report, prefaced by Councillor M Williams, covering the period from May 2024 to April 2025.

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ROLE OF SCRUTINY BULLETIN

Members made the following comments on the role and format of the Scrutiny Bulletin:-

- the Scrutiny Bulletin should become a live document that Councillors could refer to in real time;
- the term 'Scrutiny Bulletin' could at times be misleading and 'Member Bulletin' would be more appropriate;
- a 'Member Bulletin' could also provide an index of Member Briefings;
- there should be an option to place planned Scrutiny items on hold to make way for matters arising;
- there should be a clear link between the Scrutiny Bulletin and the Scrutiny process; and
- the Bulletin could be used as a 'repository' for items deemed non-urgent.

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DRAFT SCRUTINY WORK PLAN

Members noted the Draft Work Plan and commented on:-

- the need for Scrutiny Members to be informed of when a report is going to Committee;
- Live & Move;
- how rolling six-monthly updates that had been agreed in the past were not necessarily still relevant or required;
- the possibility to see Member Briefings added to the Forward Plan; and
- the possibility to produce a digested version of the Executive Forward Plan.

(The meeting commenced at 1.00 pm and closed at 2.42 pm)

Chair

Scrutiny Bulletin: 18 October 2024

Title of Update: RAMM Annual Review 2023-24

Relevant Officers: Helen Hartstein, Audience Development Manager

Julien Parsons, Collections and Content Manager

Alison Hopper-Bishop, Conservation and Support Services Manager

Joseph Harvey, Operations Manager

Contact for general enquiries:

Jo Quinnell, Assistant Democratic Services Officer, Democratic Services, Room 4.36

Email: jo.quinnell@exeter.gov.uk. Tel: 01392 265197

1. What is the update about?

The Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery has published its annual review for the last financial year – 2023-24. The review is attached.

2. Background

Each year, RAMM produces an annual review which shines a light on the work of the museum over the previous financial year. It is an opportunity to celebrate the museum's achievements and thank its various funders.

3. Current position

From illuminated manuscripts to subterranean spaces, last year RAMM brought inspiration and excitement to the people of Exeter. This review demonstrates how the Council's investment in the museum brings so much joy to visitors of all ages and backgrounds and provides an opportunity to thank the museum's other significant funders, particularly Arts Council England.

4. Future position

n/a

5. Are there any other options?

n/a

6. Conclusion

The Annual Review highlights all the exhibitions, events and experiences that took place at the museum over the previous financial year (April 2023 to March 2024) and sheds light on the hard work that goes on behind the scenes. It covers everything from visitor numbers to conservation efforts, acquisitions to exhibitions and digital development to retail sales.

We hope you enjoy reading it.

rammm

Annual Review
2023 – 24

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Councillor Bob Foale
Portfolio Holder for Arts, Culture & Tourism
Exeter City Council

From illuminated manuscripts to subterranean spaces, last year RAMM brought inspiration and excitement to the people of Exeter. It is heartening to see how the Council's investment in the museum brings so much joy to visitors of all ages and backgrounds.

The *Gatekeepers to Heaven* exhibition saw six exquisite Anglo-Saxon manuscripts return to Exeter for the first time in over 400 years from the Bodleian Library in Oxford. It was a privilege to view them close-up. To complement the exhibition during the summer, the museum's garden was transformed into a medieval arena, with sword fighting, archery, falconry and craft activities.

Hollow Earth: Art, Caves and the Subterranean Imaginary was an exhibition appealing to a different audience. It explored the concepts of thresholds, darkness and prehistory, featuring major works by the 18th-century artist Sir Joseph Wright of Derby, the famous Surrealist René Magritte and abstract artist Henry Moore, amongst others. It also provided a darkly inspiring theme for the events programme, including an underground Lates event and a Cave Critters party for youngsters.

The museum also embarked on an exciting and groundbreaking collaboration with the University of Exeter to provide open access to its collection of digital images. The GLAM-E Lab is spreading awareness of the museum's art works and ensuring the museum's collections are available for use by everyone for free.

RAMM supports Exeter City Council's wellbeing agenda, this year partnering with Wellbeing Exeter and Age UK Exeter. RAMM's two community connectors linked older people to cultural experiences; I was particularly moved to

hear about one man who was inspired to leave his house for the first time in three years to come to the museum.

At the other end of the age spectrum, we started work on the Dartmoor Frame of Mind photography project which has been empowering young people experiencing mental health challenges to improve their wellbeing through photography.

Much of this work took place while the museum was undergoing a major building project to replace its ageing Victorian roof. Thanks to the Museums Estate and Development Fund (MEND), administered by Arts Council England, this work will ensure that the museum will be watertight and well-insulated for years to come. Inevitably, this has had an impact on events and venue hire offerings as space has been limited, and a couple of the galleries have been out of use for a few months. I would like to thank RAMM's visitors for bearing with us throughout this work.

This annual review shines a light on much of the visible work of the museum, but I wanted to mention the behind the scenes work which often goes unnoticed. I have been particularly impressed by the amount of effort that goes into making the museum environmentally sustainable.

This review shows the important role RAMM plays in the cultural life of the city. As Exeter City Council's flagship cultural service, it is a vibrant public space that promotes a sense of pride and joy in our local population. It attracts people and businesses to our city. It gives young people the chance to be inspired and uplifted and all of us a sense of connection with each other and the world around us.



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Sublime Symmetry: the mathematics behind De Morgan's ceramic designs

Sublime Symmetry investigated the use of mathematical principles in De Morgan's beautiful ceramic designs.

William De Morgan (1839 – 1917) was one of the most intriguing and inventive ceramic designers of the late Victorian period. His conjuring of fantastical beasts and manipulation of meandering flora and fauna fascinated his contemporaries and still captivates today. During his career, William De Morgan revolutionised the field of ceramic design with his reinvention of lustreware, dedication to exploring Middle Eastern designs, invention and use of his own kilns, and his wonderful patterns.

Through examination of the mathematical devices used in his designs, *Sublime Symmetry* presented De Morgan as a natural mathematician and talented draughtsman.

Exhibitions



Fish Punch Bowl by William De Morgan © Trustees of the De Morgan Foundation

This exhibition was curated for RAMM by Sarah Hardy, Director of the De Morgan Museum, and featured objects not exhibited as part of the previous tour. Objects were generously loaned by the Trustees of the De Morgan Foundation.

Gatekeepers to Heaven: religion, knowledge and power in medieval Exeter

The ancient city of Exeter had one of the most impressive cathedrals in medieval England. Its bishops were at the heart of the religious, cultural and political life of the city and country. For most ordinary people, the guardians of the church and its sacred texts were truly the gatekeepers to heaven. Among Exeter's most powerful bishops were Leofric (1050 – 1072) and John Grandisson (1327 – 1369). Both amassed magnificent collections of manuscripts, making the cathedral library a renowned centre of European learning.

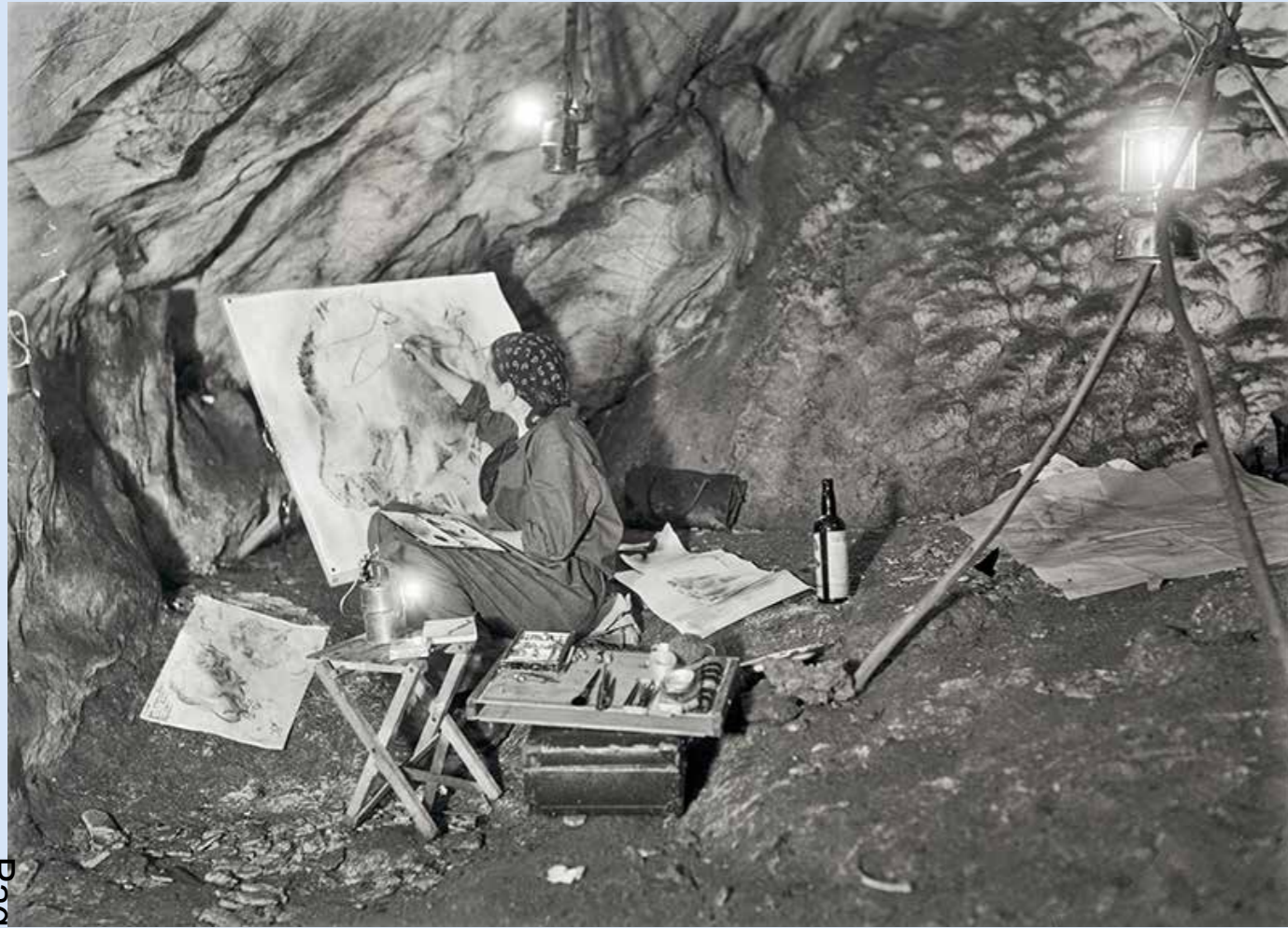
This landmark exhibition brought back six exceptional medieval manuscripts to Exeter for the first time in over 400 years. The manuscripts were loaned by the world-famous Bodleian Library in Oxford where they form part of the founding collection of 1602. Originally, the manuscripts were part of Exeter cathedral's impressive medieval library. Each one shed light on the medieval world and Exeter's place in it. They showed the power of words, pictures and books, and how the concerns of the Middle Ages reflect those of our own times.

This exhibition was made possible with generous loans from The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford, grants from the Weston Loan Programme with Art Fund, RAMM Development Trust, Friends of RAMM and support from donor Maddy Jevon, RAMM Patron, and as a result of the Government Indemnity Scheme.

RAMM would like to thank HM Government for providing Government Indemnity for Gatekeepers to Heaven and Hollow Earth, and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport and Arts Council England for arranging the indemnity.



MS Bodl 717 fol vi verso © The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford



Unknown photographer, Elisabeth Pauli at work in Northern Spain, 1936 © Frobenius-Institut, Frankfurt am Main

Hollow Earth: Art, Caves and the Subterranean Imaginary

Hollow Earth was a major thematic art exhibition bringing together a wide range of responses to the image and idea of the cave.

Spanning works by more than 30 artists, it included painting, photography, sculpture, and video, with objects from ancient history through to modern and contemporary art on display.

Items from RAMM's collection were also exhibited, including a selection of extinct animal bones and antiquities found in caves from around the world. Devon holds a unique place in history as the birthplace of cave-hunting, declared William Pengelly, the Victorian pioneer of systemic cave research in England. The county contains some of the UK's most important prehistoric cave deposits.

The exhibition descended into the depths to consider questions of thresholds, darkness and

prehistory and featured major works by the Victorian painter Sir Joseph Wright of Derby, famous Surrealist René Magritte, Abstract artist Henry Moore, Contemporary filmmaker Michael Ho, and Guyanese Expressionist painter Aubrey Williams, as well as new commissions including large-scale watercolour paintings from Chioma Ebinama and a film installation by Lydia Ourahmane.

Hollow Earth: Art, Caves and the Subterranean Imaginary was a Hayward Gallery Touring exhibition, developed in partnership with Nottingham Contemporary and in collaboration with Glucksman, Cork and RAMM, and was made possible as a result of the Government Indemnity Scheme.

**HAYWARD
GALLERY**
TOURING



Pressing Images: prints from Exeter's fine art collection

Pressing Images: prints from Exeter's fine art collection uncovered the roots of printmaking in early modern Europe. The exhibition illustrated to visitors the results of the revolution brought about by the introduction of the printing press, which democratised art by making images accessible and affordable for the first time. This ground-breaking invention paved the way for mass-produced images, transforming art from an exclusive luxury into a shared cultural experience.

A multifaceted selection of 45 works on paper and print plates, woodblocks and other printing tools led audiences on a captivating journey through time, from 16th-century woodcuts to the cutting-edge creations of the 21st century.

Highlights included Adam and Eve after the German master Albrecht Dürer (1504), one of the earliest surviving woodblocks by Jost Amman (1539–1591), William Hogarth's 18th-century satirical engravings, 19th-century Japanese prints, works by Devon-born trailblazer Dorothea Wight (1944–2013), and much more.



ARTIST ROOMS: Bill Viola

American artist Bill Viola (born 1951) is recognised internationally as a pioneer of video art. His work explores universal human experiences – birth, death and the unfolding of consciousness – and is shown in museums and galleries worldwide.

This exhibition presented three intimate and moving works from his well-known series *The Passions*.

Image above:
Bill Viola *Catherine's Room* (detail) 2001
ARTIST ROOMS Tate and National Galleries of Scotland
© Bill Viola Studio. Photo: Kira Perov

ARTIST ROOMS is a national programme and collection managed by Tate and National Galleries of Scotland with the support of Art Fund, Henry Moore Foundation and using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England and Creative Scotland.



'Best thing ever'
 'Every one was banging – a brilliant programme well put together'
 'You're working with such brilliant artists here'
 'Exeter is really improving'

Feedback from visitors

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Contemporary Art

The museum's internationally significant collections provide inspiration for professional artists to create new work in a variety of media. This year RAMM commissioned locally based artists Ashanti Hare (Plymouth) and Janet Sainsbury (Exeter) to create new work inspired by very different objects.

Ashanti Hare created a performance inspired by *minkisi* or 'power bundles' from the Congo in RAMM's World Cultures collection. Working with RAMM's Curator of Ethnography, Hare researched the African origins of Vodou and Vodon practices as well as water gods in a range of African and Norse mythologies finding that water was a metaphorical bridge between worlds.

Explaining their approach to creating the performance Hare said:

'I have been exploring the idea of a sentient River Exe which reveals itself as the watcher connecting physical and documented histories of Exeter with the wider South West through the oral histories of global majority people and wildlife that travel to it.'

The handmade objects used by Ashanti Hare in their performance were subsequently displayed in the courtyard core wall alongside a *nkisi* from the museum's collection together with a documentary film of the performance. The commission also formed an evening of innovative contemporary performance art and dance. Devon-based artists and dancers Richard Chappell Dance and NooN shared their experimental performance in response to human connections and the ecological emergency.



Janet Sainsbury is well known for her contemporary approach to portraiture. For her commission she chose to study four women artists whose work is in RAMM's art collection: two Exeter-based contemporary artists, Michelle Sank and Amy Shelton, and two artists with links to the south west, Barbara Hepworth (1903–1975) and Gillian Ayres (1930–2018).

Sainsbury engaged directly with the work of all four artists, visiting RAMM's offsite stores to see paintings by Ayres and Hepworth and studying Sank's and Shelton's work in recent exhibitions at RAMM. Selected sketches and finished paintings were displayed in RAMM's courtyard core wall.

A short video filmed at the artist's studio nearby and in the museum provided RAMM visitors and online community with an insight into the making of the work for RAMM. An 'in conversation' with RAMM's Contemporary Art Curator & Programmer and Janet Sainsbury also took place alongside an additional, temporary display of extra artwork.



Janet Sainsbury
 Barbara Hepworth 2023
 © Janet Sainsbury

'Having my work on display at RAMM has been an amazing opportunity. The six months has gone by quickly and I've enjoyed every aspect! Thank you so much for the commission, the studio visits, the interview & conversation, it has all been a wonderful experience.'

Janet Sainsbury

Collections



New additions to the collection have come from as close to home as RAMM's roof – two sheets of lead signed by tradespeople over the decades – and as far away as a monkey skin cape from Kenya.

Most numerous are the additions to the Natural Sciences collection. By far the largest collection came from Toddy Cooper, a local naturalist. He donated his extensive collection of over 1500 specimens of spiders, fleas and lice, as well as his nature and weather diaries from 1961–2021. Barbara Benfield continued to add to the collection of lichens she has deposited at the museum and more Devon plant specimens arrived as a transfer from Manx National Heritage as part of their collections review.

Finding an Anglo Saxon ring is rare in Britain. Ornatly decorated gold rings, such as the one found in Wembworthy near Chulmleigh, are even rarer. Around the ring are cat-like heads with large, almost bat-shaped ears. Between each pair of masks there are two intertwined beasts. RAMM purchased this ring through the Treasure Act with support from grants and donors.

NEW ACQUISITIONS 51
INCOMING OBJECT LOANS 160
OUTGOING OBJECT LOANS 31



Another piece of treasure is a tiny medieval silver gilt pilgrim badge of St Barbara. She was associated with towers and lightning and was the patron saint of miners and military engineers (people associated with explosives).

Collecting both old and new, RAMM also added contemporary artworks to the collection. A fundraising campaign allowed RAMM to acquire a major work by Dartmoor-based photographer Garry Fabian Miller. *The Darkroom's Fading Presence* is a luminogram created by shining light through layers of cut paper and glass onto photosensitive paper, making the photograph without a camera. A partnership with the National Gallery helped RAMM acquire two new works by Céline Condorelli. *Bulk: Everlasting Colour* and *Pentimenti (0751)* address the boundaries between public and private, art and function, work and leisure, to reimagine what culture and society can be as well as the role of artists within them. All three works will be on display at RAMM later this year.

A generous donation allowed RAMM to add ten contemporary, enamel portrait miniatures by Gillie Hoyte Byrom to the collection. They are inspired by historic portraits.



Thank you to our funders
Anglo Saxon ring: Purchased with support from Arts Council England/V&A Purchase Grant Fund, the Headley Trust, Friends of RAMM, C James Cadbury Charity, private donations from RAMM Patron, Julian Steer-Fowler, Erin Cox Jewellery and a private donor.

St Barbara pilgrim badge: Purchased with support from the C James Cadbury Charity

Garry Fabian Miller work: Purchased with support from Arts Council England/V&A Purchase Grant Fund, Art Fund, Friends of RAMM, RAMM Development Trust and donations.

Celine Condorelli works: Presented by the Contemporary Art Society through a partnership with the 2023 National Gallery Artist in Residence programme, with the support of Anna Yang and Joseph Schull, 2023/24



One of RAMM's best known paintings, *Portrait of a Man in a Red Suit*, has featured prominently in two landmark exhibitions this year: *Black Atlantic: Power, People, Resistance at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge* and *Entangled Pasts, 1768–now. Art, Colonialism and Change at the Royal Academy, London*. Both exhibitions investigated the long relationship between Britain and its colonies and their impact on British culture.

As an 18th-century painting of a Black Briton, although tantalisingly still unidentified, RAMM's portrait is incredibly pertinent to contemporary debates on the nature of British identity.

RAMM also lent five objects to the British Museum's *China's Hidden Century* exhibition including a pair of Mandarin boots and a beautifully decorated floral scroll.

Open Access



An elegantly dressed Indian lady by an unknown Indian artist. Watercolour on paper, about 1780.

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After a year of research, review and preparation, in January 2024 RAMM revealed its bold new Open Access Strategy to the public.

It is the result of a collaboration between RAMM and the GLAM-E Lab – a partnership of law schools at the University of Exeter and the New York University consisting of legal academics and specialists working together to develop open access policies for galleries, libraries, archives and museums.

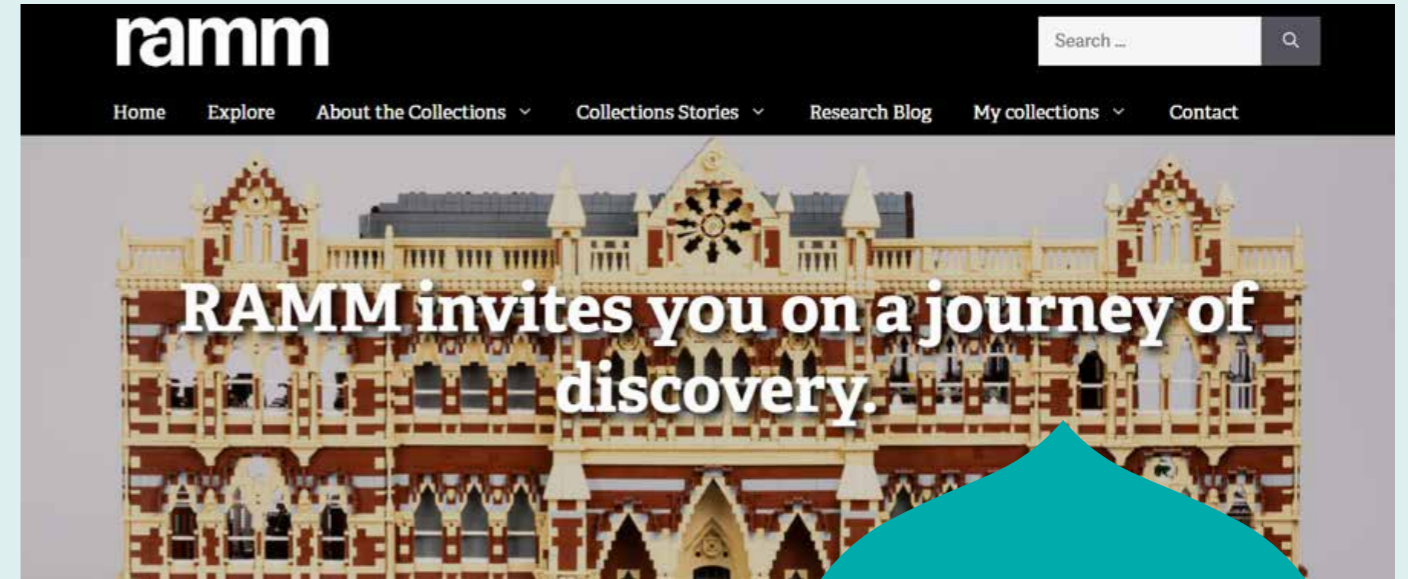
Recognising recent shifts in copyright legislation, RAMM has now released hundreds of its collection images which are in the public domain free to use for the public. This followed a trial in 2023 where 63 images, mostly depictions of Devon and Exeter, were added to Wikimedia Commons, resulting in an astonishing 6.16 million views. Over the course of 2023, at least 41 had been added to 65 Wikipedia articles in seven languages, ranging

from Richard III to the English Civil War and the Baedeker Blitz. Images will be released in batches over the coming twelve months.

The project is funded by the UKRI's Arts and Humanities Research Council and the University of Exeter's AHRC Impact Accelerator Account.



Deceiver mushroom (*Laccaria laccata*). Hand-coloured magic lantern slide by Theodore Green, 1933.



A digital asset management system (DAMS) will integrate with the museum's collections database, enabling staff to quickly generate new and topical content.

In May 2023 RAMM secured £247,708 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for an innovative project – 'Changing Stories: Connecting and collecting with Exeter's communities' – which will embed lasting change in the way local people are consulted, and their voices recorded, catalogued and shared by RAMM through new web content and gallery interpretation.

At the heart of 'Changing Stories' is building a digital asset management system (DAMS) which will integrate with the museum's collections database, enabling staff to quickly generate new and topical content. This is particularly needed for RAMM's engagement work with local community groups that generates new stories and ideas about the museum's local collections, but which currently has no permanent home. This means people accessing the online catalogue are missing out on valuable local knowledge and insight. The National Lottery Heritage Fund's Dynamic Collections campaign was set up to help with just such a problem. It supports collecting organisations across the UK to become more resilient and open up their collections.

Dynamic Collections: Changing Stories at RAMM

Behind the scenes work has begun on creating the new digital infrastructure and prototyping digital object labels for the *Making History* gallery at RAMM. Also, the museum has begun work with local group *Hikmat* on the first of two community projects related to the project.

New communities have been engaged in a series of 'Getting to Know You' events held at the museum, drawing family groups from a wide variety of backgrounds: Afghanistan, China, Pakistan, Palestine and Somalia. Sessions were themed around food and included looking at and discussing food-related objects from RAMM's *Making History* gallery.

Changing Stories will run until January 2026. The museum extends its thanks to The National Lottery Heritage Fund, RAMM Development Trust and the Friends of RAMM for their support.





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Conservation

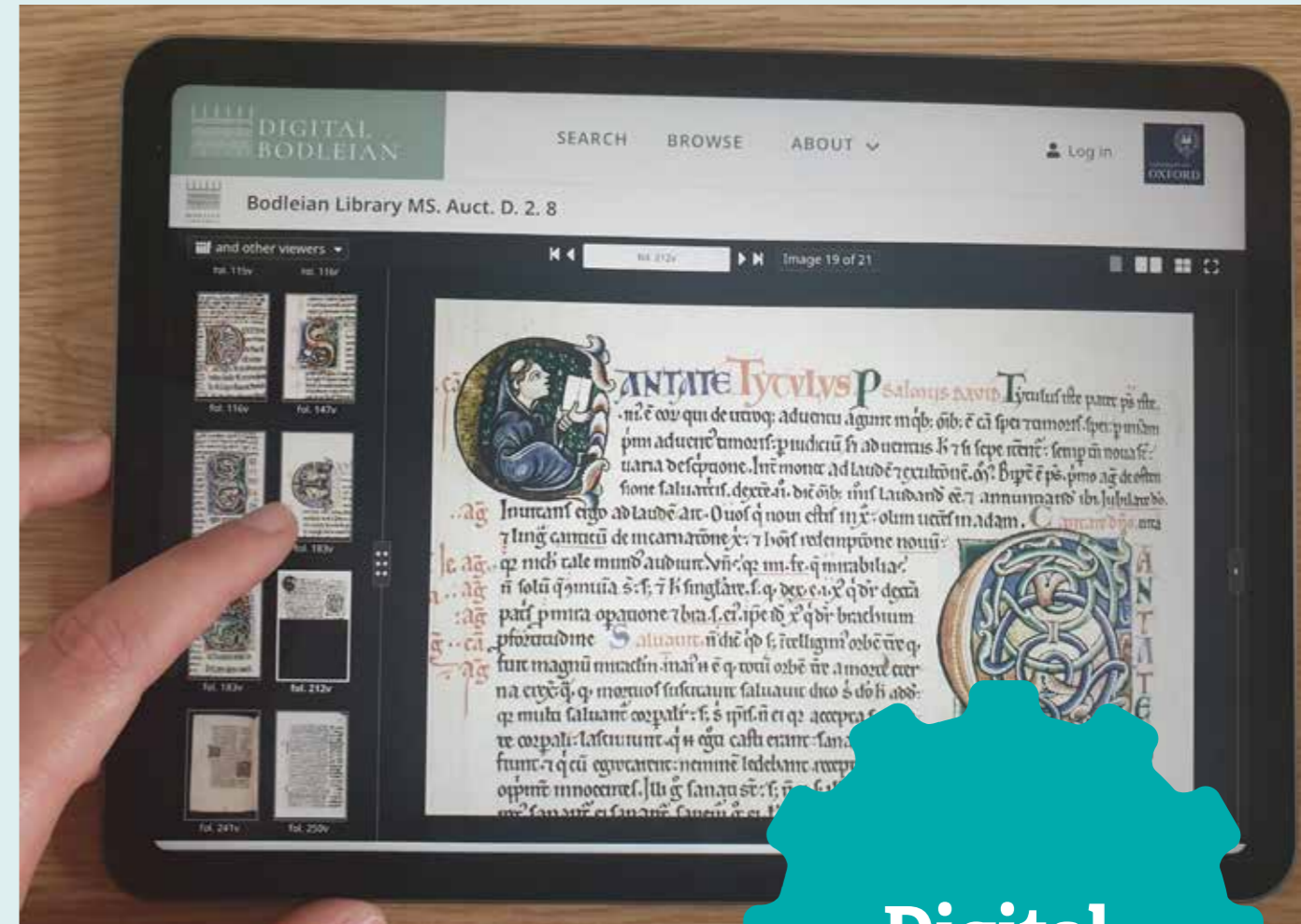
RAMM's exhibition schedule kept the conservation team busy condition checking, conserving and installing objects for five temporary exhibitions, one small Viewpoint Display and three contemporary art installations. From small owl taxidermy to silver rings and from lantern slides to gilded frames, the objects the conservation team worked on covered the full breadth of RAMM's collection.

The preparations for RAMM's summer exhibition for 2024 saw bicycles, ice skates and a 19th-century perambulator being treated in the conservation laboratories. Many of these items have not been on display before.

A highlight for RAMM's Senior Conservator was a visit to the Conservation Department of the Courtauld Institute to have a closer look at RAMM's Portrait of a Man in a Red Suit together with their conservation specialists. The painting was examined with infrared and ultraviolet light and the pigments analysed via x-ray fluorescence. It was hoped that the results of this examination would give clues as to who might have painted this charismatic portrait, but sadly our man in a red suit kept his secrets.

We also continued our outreach work, spreading the word about museum conservation by taking part in the #AskAConservator campaign on X and talking all things conservation on local radio station Phonic FM as part of International Women's Day. We helped train the next generation by hosting two student placements over the last year and taking part in an event organised by the Institute of Conservation's Emerging Conservators Network.

Last, but not least, we also worked towards making our conservation laboratory greener by introducing a recycling scheme for our disposable gloves, probably the largest part of our conservation waste.



Digital

During 2023-24 RAMM built on the successful launches of the new main and collections websites. The museum also launched its new Open Access policy and partnership and continued its transition to Microsoft 365.

rammuseum.org.uk

2023-24 was the second year for RAMM's redesigned website. Since launching the site, average engagement rate has increased steadily from 59.39% in Q1 to 64.07% in Q4. RAMM reaffirmed its commitment to accessible digital content by commissioning a new British Sign Language 'welcome to RAMM' video. This BSL and captioned film features on the home page.

rammcollections.org.uk

RAMM launched *Collections Explorer*, its revamped online collections website, in May following development the previous year. Collections Explorer features over 18,000 fully searchable object records, with users able to search via topics or project tags. Since launch, traffic has increased tenfold with the average engagement rate in Q4 exceeding Q1 by 9.31% (average engagement rate 38.39%)

[Social media](#)

Across RAMM's main three social media channels (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter/X) the museum had over 30,000 followers at the end of March 2024. RAMM's accounts reached over 100,000 people across Instagram and Facebook (data is no longer provided for Twitter/X), and over 50,000 on YouTube.

RAMM achieved 124,000 video views across the different channels in the period. Eighty-six percent of audiences spend a quarter or more of their time on social media watching videos, making video a vital tool for reaching audiences.

The Exeter City Council and Visit Exeter social media accounts helped amplify the museum's messages and reach more people: @ExeterCouncil and @VisitExeter.



Events

'We love these events...
Lovely atmosphere and mix
of people.'

Lates attendee



We began the year welcoming families to take part in a wide variety of creative workshops inspired by RAMM's collections – from making an Ancient Egyptian amulet to ornamental birds; designing Indonesian shadow puppets to creating miniature Roman soldiers.

Throughout the summer we offered a medley of medieval-themed events inspired by the *Gatekeepers to Heaven* exhibition. Children took part in sword fighting battles, tested their aim shooting arrows, watched in awe as birds swooped above their heads in our falconry shows in the garden, and created traditional baskets and swords from willow. We ran creative sessions making illuminated bookmarks, medieval coin pouches, shields and trebuchets.

Things headed underground in the autumn with a creepy cave critters party, where we switched the lights off and encouraged visitors to discover cave dwelling demons and delights. We welcomed an armadillo and other underground dwelling beasts during half term; with mythical monster tales and cave artwork also making an appearance.



Knitting, crocheting, mending and sewing, all inspired by our collections, were on offer for our adult audience this year in intimate craft workshops. Our short courses continued with sessions on printmaking and Regency dress.

Our successful, sell-out, adults-only RAMM Lates continued with a focus on the *Earthspells* and *Hollow Earth* exhibitions. Visitors enjoyed poetry, dance, music, craft, talks, workshops, a silent disco and much more. Strange goings-on and cryptic clues formed part of our murder mystery evening featuring a Dartmoor-themed adventure. We were delighted to welcome classical music back to RAMM with *Winter's Edge*, a festive musical extravaganza event in December. This was a wonderful evening featuring vocal and musical performances inspired by the season.

Engagement



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The engagement team's work this year has used creativity to boost wellbeing, provide joy and create a sense of belonging for all ages.

Exeter City Council's investment in the museum enabled RAMM to take its dementia-friendly multisensory sessions to care homes, clubs and hospitals. The museum joined local social prescribing networks to host two Wellbeing Exeter community connectors helping over-50s through culture. An Exeter City Football Club group – where some members hide loneliness behind banter and hot chocolate – chatted about paintings, nesting birds and local history. Monthly Friendly Fridays, which combined tours, objects, craft activities and a cream tea, succeeded in inspiring people to leave the house – one person for the first time in three years.

We worked with colleagues in Exeter City Council to promote the museum as a warm space for Exeter citizens in need; take objects to social housing community rooms for older residents; and provide café vouchers for mental

health support organisations. In addition, the RAMM café hosted Knitstop, a low-cost initiative of Wool on the Exe to teach knitting in accessible locations.

The museum used the calm galleries and handling collections to connect and meditate with artefacts, in a mindfulness course run in partnership with Devon Recovery Learning Community.

Project Buzz, a lively exhibition of insect swarms created by 12 local community groups of children and young people aged 4 to 18, took over the RAMM café between June and February. Their artwork brought RAMM's insect collections to life with a conservation message for future generations, and offered young participants a chance to meet and learn from local artists.



Project Buzz: a creative arts project involving children and young people.

Exeter College UAL diploma Dance students performed in response to artist Bill Viola, wearing skirts created by A-level textiles students. ▶

The team's remit to spread creativity among children also included history-themed activities at social housing community days and summer holiday free lunches, coach visits for rural families on low incomes, and welcoming the Balloons charity for bereaved families.

RAMM, University of Exeter Computer Sciences Department and Exeter Science Centre worked with local neighbourhood and community groups to co-produce content for RAMM's Transport exhibition. Through a series of workshops, the groups explored transport-related issues faced by local residents, including pollution, congestion, public transport, and inequalities of transport.



Skills development



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RAMM's skills development programme continues to provide opportunities for people to gain new skills and experience and grow in confidence.

Youth Panel

RAMM recruited 15 young people with a passion for museums to take part in our Youth Panel this year. They successfully curated a café exhibition called *Data-day life* which explored how data from our daily life can be creatively expressed in engaging and innovative ways. The panel worked alongside artist Molly Rooke to create their banners to celebrate the uniqueness of daily life, inspired by the exhibition Artist Rooms: Bill Viola. Another highlight was the Youth Panel's sold-out event, *Seize the Clay* where they collaborated with *Something Lovely Pottery* to encourage participants to create designs inspired by the William De Morgan exhibition, *Sublime Symmetry*.

Future Skills

19 participants enrolled on RAMM's Future Skills programme which encourages individuals of any age to explore various roles within the museum sector, including collections research, exhibitions, marketing and events. This year, Future Skills participants helped produce a viewpoint exhibition on portrait photography.

Supported Placements

RAMM has continued to offer supported placements for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to allow them the opportunity to explore meaningful work experience in the cultural sector. This year, RAMM has worked with 5 students from Exeter College, Ellen Tinkham College and Adamson Employment support (in connection with the job centre).

Skills Development

Student Placements

RAMM has hosted 19 student placements this year from students from Exeter College, University of Exeter, University of Plymouth and University of Derby. These students have helped throughout the museum, including Collections, Audience Development, Visitor Services and the Development Team.

In addition to student placements, we have also participated in a number of schemes hosted by the University of Exeter. For instance we have hosted three students to complete an Access to internship which is a paid opportunity offered to students who meet Widening Participation criteria, one student completed a paid Student Business Placement in Marketing, one student completed a Pathway to Arts, Culture and Heritage placement helping update the shop's website and 21 Liberal Arts students participated in a ThinkTank challenge which asked them to research and present new ideas on how we encourage people to make their first visit to the museum. ▶





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Last year, RAMM's 287 volunteers contributed over 14,200 hours' work to the museum. This represents a 33% increase on the number of hours given last year.

2023-24 saw our museum-wide volunteer programme bounce back to 96% of pre-Covid numbers. This recovery was exceptional and was achieved a year before we had anticipated.

Ensuring that our volunteer workforce is representative of our local population is a key objective for the museum. It is important to us that everyone who works at the museum feels welcome and part of the team. Equality, diversity and inclusivity are key priorities for the volunteering programme. This year 50% of our volunteers were 25 years of age or under, 20% of the team declared a disability and 26% identified as LGBTQ+.

As well as visitor and tour guides, the volunteers have supported and enabled many services and projects, including the continued reintroduction of our in-gallery object handling, our schools programme, family learning, exhibitions, and permanent collections. It is equally important that we collect and act on feedback from our visitors with the help of our volunteer visitor survey team.

Visitor facing roles are only one aspect of volunteering, with more going on behind the scenes in collections research, conservation, and marketing.

RAMM's volunteer engagement lead also contributed to the Exeter Heritage Partnership (EHP) volunteering programme to build a more resilient multi-venue volunteering infrastructure for greater Exeter.

2023-24 saw our museum-wide volunteer programme bounce back to 96% of pre-Covid numbers.



13,805 students across all age ranges have independently visited the museum

RAMM's schools programme has experienced a strong year delivering face-to-face learning to 2,448 Key Stage 2 pupils on subjects such as Roman Devon, Exeter and the Blitz during the Second World War and Ancient Egypt.

In addition, 13,805 students across all age ranges have independently visited the museum, interacting with our exhibitions, permanent displays, and in-gallery object handling.

The museum launched its first regular dedicated home education offer. Families were invited to visit the museum to learn about the Romans in Devon, Second World War, and Ancient Egypt, plus one-off craft workshops inspired by World Cultures.



RAMM worked with local artist Molly Saunders and Exeter College students to co-produce See Things Differently activity game cards, with the aim of engaging younger audiences with contemporary art.

The team also launched online teaching resources, a legacy from the groundbreaking 2022 exhibition *In Plain Sight* about Devon's links with the transatlantic slave trade.

RAMM strives to be a welcoming place for everyone, whatever their background, and the Visitor Services team continues to exemplify the excellent quality of visitor engagement that RAMM has long been recognised for.

Visit England's Visitor Attraction Quality Scheme (VAQAS) assessed the museum in June 2023 and we were thrilled to achieve a score of 86%, an improvement on our previous score. The report highlighted the strength of the visitor service:

'It was particularly noticeable how friendly and welcoming everyone was...all staff continue to offer a very good level of service.'

Feedback from visitors has also been excellent. One visitor wrote to us in July saying:

'The friendliness of the staff that left the deepest impression. Three different staff members approached me to offer advice/information. I don't remember ever having experienced that at a museum before...'



Accessibility

RAMM is recognised locally and nationally for being an accessible museum and this year saw more museums and heritage organisations contacting RAMM for advice on how to make their venues more accessible for everyone. This year, we created several new resources. In partnership with Living Options Devon and Exeter Studio Sound Gallery, we created a new audio guide designed specifically for people with visual impairments which explores 16 iconic museum objects. We also created a new BSL video for our website which offers a warm welcome and useful information for visitors who use BSL. We now create visual stories and offer relaxed sessions for all our exhibitions.

Colleagues have received training from internal and external organisations to ensure they have the right skills and knowledge. This year saw the team undertake deaf awareness and Start to Sign training from the RNID as well as well as Mental Health Awareness training. RAMM's own Accessibility Champions continue to deliver Disability and Deaf awareness training to new staff and volunteers. We have also worked with the Bristol Museums Trust and Julian House to further explore person-centred, positive communication.

We work with Visit Exeter to showcase the museum to both local visitors and tourists. This includes featured blog posts on the Visit Exeter website, What's On event listings, and social media takeovers of the Visit Exeter Instagram account.



This year saw the launch of the RAMM Souvenir Guide. With input from across the RAMM team, the new-style guide provides visitors with information and inspiration both during and after their visit to RAMM. The guide has been well received and has entered our book best sellers list, which was headed by the *Sublime Symmetry* catalogue. Our new ticketing system enabled us to offer visitors the popular option of a discounted catalogue with their exhibition tickets. The other three books on our hit list all had a local focus, including RAMM's own *Alfie's Night Out* which was re-launched with a new choice of Victoria Byron illustration for the cover, this time featuring Gerald the Giraffe.

2023-24 was the best retail year for the Shop at RAMM since its opening in late 2016. Christmas sales are always good for the shop as local residents and visitors discover something different to give as gifts across all age and price ranges. This summer however was also particularly successful with its focus on medieval manuscripts: our sales ranged from books about going to church in medieval

England to knight's swords and quill pens. These were accompanied by beautiful William De Morgan-inspired jewellery and homewares for *Sublime Symmetry*. Later in the year we moved to cave-themed gifts to reflect the *Hollow Earth* exhibition: adults were intrigued by the books *Underland and Underworlds*, while children were fascinated by *The Street Beneath my Feet* and soft-toy bats.

The shop displays artist-maker craft, prints and artworks by local artists and those from further afield. This year we welcomed new work from artist-makers including Ann Bruford, Sarah Hemmings-Vourda, Bronwyn Williams-Ellis and Stories in Silver jeweller Steph Tooley. We also featured a wide collection of prints by artists from Exeter's Double Elephant print workshop to accompany the *Pressing Images* exhibition.

How will you Support RAMM today?

ramm.uk/Support



Join the mailing list

ramm.uk/Connect

Keep in touch by signing up to Connect online. It's free and only takes a couple of minutes. Hear about the things you love and never miss out.

Volunteer

ramm.uk/Volunteer

RAMM depends on a family of dedicated volunteers. We'd love to welcome you to the team.

Play the Exeter Community Lottery

ramm.uk/ExeterLottery

Choose the RAMM Development Trust as your local good cause. Do good whilst being in the running to win big. Good luck!

Make a donation today

ramm.uk/Donate

Online you can make a one-off donation or set up a regular monthly or annual gift. At the museum you can use our cash or contactless donation boxes. If you can, do remember to Gift Aid your donation and increase its value by 25% at no extra cost to you.

There are so many ways to get involved with RAMM. From you as an individual deciding to join the mailing list, to big organisations sponsoring the next inspiring exhibition.

If you are not yet supporting RAMM, please do consider one of the following options.

If you are already supporting RAMM, thank you! Perhaps there is another option that would interest you? For example, if you currently make the odd donation, would you consider setting up a regular gift or joining the Friends of RAMM?

Whatever you choose to do, it will go a long way in supporting the museum's work, whether that is caring for a single object, or curating an inspirational programme of activity for us all to enjoy – every act of support matters.

Become a Patron

ramm.uk/Patron

Get closer to RAMM life through the Patron scheme.

Sponsorship

ramm.uk/Sponsorship

Do you own or work for an organisation who likes to support the community through sponsorship?

Do get in touch. Your support helps to keep Exeter's heritage and history alive.

Join the Friends of RAMM

ramm.uk/Friends

Meet like-minded people with a passion for heritage and culture and enjoy a programme of special events and benefits. You can buy a Friends membership as a gift for a loved one.

Gifts in wills

ramm.uk/GiftsInWills

Make history with your gift to the future. Request a free RAMM gifts in wills pack using the link which includes a useful Q&A section.

Thank you for your incredible contribution

RAMM is an Exeter City Council Service and is grateful for the investment the residents of Exeter make in the museum.

DONORS

Thank you to everyone who gave a gift to support RAMM's work this year. From £1 to £1,000, every donation was put to hard work and this Annual Review is testament to what you made happen.

GIFTS IN WILLS

Thank you to those who remembered RAMM with a gift in their will. Thank you also to those who have pledged a gift in their will for when the time comes. The team is always so touched when supporters remember RAMM in this very personal way.

GRANT GIVERS

Art Fund
Arts and Humanities Research Council
Arts Council England
Arts Council England/DCMS MEND
Arts Council England/V&A Purchase Grant Fund
C James Cadbury Charity
Contemporary Art Society
The Costume Society (Elizabeth Hammond Grant)
Elmgrant Trust
Exeter & District Classical Music Trust
Exeter Chiefs Foundation
Exeter City Council
Exeter Literary Society
Friends of RAMM
Garfield Weston Foundation with Art Fund
Headley Trust
National Lottery Heritage Fund
Norman Family Charitable Trust
RAMM Development Trust

PATRONS

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Thank you to all our Patrons who wish to remain anonymous.

SPONSORS

Bonhams
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Special Thanks

We would also like to give special thanks to all of our loyal Friends of RAMM members, the dedicated team of volunteers who help RAMM to do so much more than would otherwise be possible, and the passionate Trustees running RAMM's independent supporting charities – thank you.

PARTNERS

RAMM and its parent body, Exeter City Council, would like to thank all the museum's partners. They enable the public collection of over one million objects, to be used in innovative and creative ways with the communities we serve. RAMM would like to give special thanks to the University of Exeter and Arts Council England, for the ongoing supportive partnerships we hold with them.

Adamson Employment Support
Age UK Exeter
ARTIST ROOMS
Arts University Plymouth
Avocet Wealth Partnership Ltd
Balloons
Bath Spa University
Beacon Centre
BeBuckfastleigh
The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford
Bookbag bookshop, Exeter
Bristol Museums

The British Museum
Canada Council of the Arts
CEDA
Centre for Creative Industries, Exeter College
Chiara Betti, Freelance Curator
Culture Health & Wellbeing Alliance (CHWA)
The Dales
Dartmoor Preservation Association
The Trustees of the De Morgan Foundation
Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
The Devon and Exeter Institution
Devon Carers
Devon Development Education
Devon Diversity Consultants
Devon Recovery Learning Community
Devon Wildlife Trust
Diversity Trust
Double Elephant Print Workshop
ECFC Sporting Memories Group
Ellen Tinkham College
Exeter City Council older persons housing
Exeter City of Literature
Exeter College
Exeter Community Trust
Exeter Culture
Exeter Live Better
Exeter Living
Exeter Phoenix
Exeter Pride
Exeter Respect
Exeter Science Centre
Franklyn NHS Hospital
Girlguiding (Brownies)
Green Tree Court
Hayward Gallery Touring
Hikmat Devon
HM Government
Intercom Trust
Joe Blatherwick Photography
Jurassic Coast Trust
Learn to Live: 19-25
Libraries Unlimited
Living Options Devon
Literature Works
Magic Carpet
Mary Schwarz
Meridian Raw
The Museum Platform
National Galleries Scotland
Northcott Theatre
Nottingham Museums
Participate Arts
Pelican Project

Pete's Dragons
Quay Words
Quirk Theatre
Radical Ecology
Refugee Support Devon
Richard Chapelle Dance
Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia
Sound Gallery Exeter
Somin Somatic
Surface Impression
Tanglewood Creations
Tate
University of Derby
University of Exeter
University of Plymouth
Watermeadow Court
WayMakers
Wellbeing Exeter
Westcountry Schools Trust
Windrush Group
Wool on the Exe
The Westcountry Study Centre
X-Plore Youth
YAY! Cornwall
YMCA
Youth Arts & Health Trust

ARTISTS

Alistair Lambert
Amanda McCormack
Ashanti Hare
Bill Viola studio
Céline Condorelli
Clare Parker
Edgardo Ayala
Emma Welton
Felicity Shillingford
Garry Fabian Miller
Gemma Nash
Janet Sainsbury
Kay Walsh
Lucy Stein
Michelle Williams Gamaker
Molly Saunders
Naomi Vincent
Rosie Stiling
Ruth Bell
Sarah Gillespie
South West Dance Hub Company
Steve Claydon



Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery
Queen Street, Exeter EX4 3RX

Open Tues 10.30am to 5pm
Wed to Sun 10am to 5pm
Closed Mon and most bank holidays

ramm@exeter.gov.uk
rammuseum.org.uk

Flowers in a Vase Tile Panel by William De Morgan
(c.1890) © Trustees of the De Morgan Foundation

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Scrutiny Bulletin: 18 October 2024

Title of Update: RAMM Quarterly Highlights Report, Q2

Relevant Officers: Helen Hartstein, Audience Development Manager

Julien Parsons, Collections and Content Manager

Alison Hopper-Bishop, Conservation and Support Services Manager

Joseph Harvey, Operations Manager

Contact for general enquiries:

Jo Quinnell, Assistant Democratic Services Officer, Democratic Services, Room 4.36

Email: jo.quinnell@exeter.gov.uk. Tel: 01392 265197

1. What is the update about?

This is the quarterly highlights report for the Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery, showing museum activity for the period July to September 2024.

2. Background

The quarterly highlights report, along with other reports showing activity against targets, is taken to RAMM's Oversight Panel and reported to Arts Council England as part of its National Portfolio Organisation funding agreement. The oversight panel consists of six councillors and two external representatives.

3. Current position

Activity plan

Visitor Experience (Activity 1)

- Following the completion of the MEND project, scaffolding has been removed from the exterior and interior museum, vastly improving the visitor experience of RAMM.
- There has been an intense period of volunteer recruitment including 22 visitor and exhibition guides and 7 new visitor survey volunteers recruited and trained. Better Impact (IT provider of RAMM's volunteer management system) asked RAMM to be a case study of best practice. We have also presented our iVolunteer methodology and system to the SW Heritage Trust to aid their adoption of a volunteer management system.
- Gallery handling activities are established in the museum – World War II and Roman Devon.

- A review of museum interactives has been carried out and a working party has been set up to develop a funding application for new interactives.

Exhibitions and Events (Activity 2)

- From June a new display in the Viewpoint windows features a selection of artworks and ephemera of two of Devon's most popular landscape painters, William and F.J. Widgey. (Continues to 12 Jan 2025.)
- In July the ever popular 'What do you collect?' case was filled with model railway carriages and engines to complement RAMM's transport exhibition 'Are We Nearly There Yet?' which continues in main temporary exhibition galleries until 29 September.
- At the end of September, a new youth-led Café display opened showcasing nature photographs from the Dartmoor Frame of Mind project. This initiative saw 24 12 to 18 year-olds from across Devon venture onto Dartmoor with photographer Jo Bradford in the spring and early summer months, learning some top nature photography tips using their smartphones. Around 70 young people, family and friends gathered for a celebration event in the café space on 26 September to launch the co-curated community display.
- 800 children took part in our transport themed school holidays events programme. This included building and decorating wooden gliders, crafting a paper hot air balloon and propeller powered boats. We welcomed back Brick Ideas who led a series of eight transport themed Lego workshops throughout August.
- A highlight of the summer was the bombastic, energetic and down-right hilarious 'Imaginarium' which descended on the garden on two separate occasions. Led by the boisterous Uncle Tacko, the troupe of travelling performers delighted audiences outside and inside the museum with flea circuses, storytelling, stunts, tricks, singing and outrageous shenanigans.
- The City-centre 'Digging Exeter' event on Saturday 14 September attracted 500 people. RAMM set up dig pits in the local shopping centre for children to search for genuine pot sherds, pieces of flint, cow bones, metal buckles – all originally found beneath the ground in Exeter. They were also able to chat to archaeologists on the day and engage with their local history.

Digital (Activity 3)

- Since the adoption of RAMM's open access strategy (Nov 2023) RAMM has uploaded 818 CC0 artworks onto Wikimedia Commons, 117 of which have been used on Wikipedia articles in 23 different language Wikipedias. Each batch goes through copyright clearance ensuring that the images selected are all in the public domain.
- RAMM has signed up for Bloomberg Connects, a free mobile app featuring guides to hundreds of museums, galleries and cultural spaces. It is currently going through the onboarding process.
- Delightful animations (featuring hot chocolate and snow) by patients on a dementia assessment ward facilitated by RAMM were published on the website.

Contemporary Art (Activity 4)

- RAMM's two commissions for 2024/25 by internationally renowned artist Alex Hartley and filmmaker Ashish Ghadiali are both now complete and ready for installation in RAMM's autumn exhibition 'Dartmoor: A Radical Landscape'.
- In September Netti Habel's screen-based artwork 'I Cling to the Sky' was opened in the café area. It complements the Dartmoor exhibition due to open on 19 October.

Habel's work shows women living and working on Dartmoor in their chosen locations lit by the moon. (Continues to 23 March 2025.)

- Continuing its presence in the museum, RAMM's commission 'The Silver Wave' by Michelle Williams Gamaker is in World Cultures (Americas) along with the objects from RAMM's collection that inspired it. It continues until 27 October 2024.

Children and Young people (Activity 5)

- The home education programme continued with children taking part in Ancient Egypt and Romans in Devon educational sessions in July.
- Following the pilot of Time Odyssey visits during the summer term, the programme is up and running for the autumn term. A suite of materials has been provided. Art Explora visited the museum and commented that RAMM's delivery and facilitation was 'the gold standard'. RAMM is exploring how it can increase numbers whilst balancing with the existing schools programme (Life and Death in Ancient Egypt, Romans in Devon and The Second World War and the Exeter Blitz.) This existing programme is consistently sold out and popular with University of Exeter students who wish to join us as part of the Aspiring Teachers programme.

Individual Creativity (Activity 6)

- RAMM provided two days of craft activities inspired by RAMM's travel exhibition for young children at the Beacon Community Centre as part of their summer activity days and free summer lunches programme.
- RAMM welcomed back two groups of around 50 families from lower socio-economic income areas in South Devon as part of the 'Hello Summer' activity programme across Devon. Families had a tour of the exhibition and a workshop making hot air balloons and gliders.
- RAMM returned to mental health wards for older people in Franklyn NHS Hospital with dementia-friendly object-handling on a summer theme.
- RAMM was successful in acquiring Lottery funding for Museum Meet Up, a year-long wellbeing programme aimed at over 50s struggling with anxiety and depression. A coordinator has been recruited to liaise with participants and local social prescribers.

Skills Development (Activity 7)

- 8 students aged 15-17 completed work experience.
- 6 people joined a new supported placement programme for people with a learning difficulty and/or disability.
- 7 participants joined the Future Skills programme.
- 10 students started a placement, including Audience Development, Conservation and Collections work.

Dynamic Collections (Activity 8)

- RAMM staff and artist Simon Lee Dicker delivered the first in a series of 6 workshops with participants from Hikmat. 15 participants had the opportunity to learn about and handle objects from RAMM's collection and then learnt new skills to enable them to create a series of pottery vessels. The workshops explore the connection between food and place and will collect multiple comments and viewpoints on this theme.
- RAMM has commissioned Preston Street Films to create a film documenting the process of working with communities to collect multiple viewpoints and voices and making the digital archive more accessible to our visitors through the Dynamic Collections project.

- The Museum Platform has won the contract to rebuild the South West Collections Explorer, the online aggregator for museum collections. This is part of the essential re-organisation of RAMM's digital collections infrastructure enabling the development of a new digital Asset management System needed for the Dynamic Collections project.

Community engagement and university collaboration (Creative Arc) (Activity 9)

- RAMM collaborated with ECC social housing team (providing free ice cream, snacks and information) to bring children's creative activities themed around transport and food in two underrepresented neighbourhoods – Wonford and Summerway. Visitors included adults encountered in previous events who had discussed their desire for local, accessible creative activities for children, with RAMM able to demonstrate its response and thank them for valuable feedback.
- Adults were invited to chat in documented conversations which will inform and inspire co-created art and digital content for 2025 exhibitions Tastes Like Home (adorning the café space with an artistic impression of taste, smell and sound) and Beyond the Plate (including contemporary quotes to humanise food poverty, illustrate local food cultures and provide perspectives on important relevant issues).
- RAMM has initiated a collaboration with Exeter University academic to incorporate and update mapping of food action into digital interpretation for Beyond the Plate exhibition.

Investment principles plan

Ambition & Quality

- The Ambition & Quality Action plan 2024-26 has been rolled out and users invited to comment on the launch version.
- The Impact & Insight report used for the Ancestral Voices Designation Challenge Fund project was completed. Overall experience among survey participants was high (100 either good or excellent) as were the dimension scores: 83 rigour, 80 captivation and 79 insight.

Inclusivity & Relevance

- The Accessibility Champions group met and agreed to redesign large print caption holders following feedback from a visually impaired person.
- RAMM responded to a community request from the Hindu Cultural Centre to provide space in World Cultures gallery after hours for prayers and celebration around a 19th-century Ganesh. The community donated a new garland for Ganesh, and said it was a moving and meaningful experience that many families had travelled up to two hours to attend. Some community members left comments on the gallery interpretation around Hindu objects.
- The museum promoted messages of universal welcome for Refugee Week.
- RAMM collaborated with a local LGBTQ+ group on the Out There festival.
- The museum provided feedback from neurodiverse colleague into wider council initiatives.
- RAMM's data officer produced a demographics report showing how representative RAMM's visitors, volunteers, staff, leadership and 'Board' (councillors) are of Exeter's local population.

Environmental Responsibility

- Funding agreed for an externally contracted decarbonisation audit of the building and its infrastructure. Launching 03.10.24 with the aim to deliver a viable action plan for PSDS Phase 4 (2024 for 2025-26).
- RAMM reaches the milestone of over half of its workforce being Carbon literate trained. With currently 53% trained and delivering pledge actions. A further 14% of the team are awaiting training dates. RAMM extends its ambition to include training of advisory panel members.
- MEND funded Reroofing project comes to practical completion,
- Partnership with LOVE Food CIC on Tastes Like Home connects RAMM with local food and environmental players at community level.

Dynamism

- The Fundraising and Development team spent a very insightful morning hosted by the Global Advancement Team at Exeter University. The RAMM team is looking at fresh approaches to invigorate fundraising and potential for philanthropic giving as a direct outcome of the visit.
- RAMM boosted sense of connection with City Council colleagues by providing free lunchtime mindfulness sessions using museum and objects for wellbeing.
- This year's Staff Sounding board took place at the end of September and gathered feedback and useful input from across RAMM teams in relation to key questions across all 4 Investment Principles; How should we communicate RAMMs environmental progress to visitors, How do we increase philanthropic giving, How do we make RAMMs accessibility offer more visible to visitors on site, and, what criteria should we use to rate the success of an exhibition.
- RAMM's data officer gave advice to Chelmsford Museum regarding Spektrix.

4. Future position

n/a

5. Are there any other options?

n/a

6. Conclusion

RAMM continues to deliver a varied, inclusive and ambitious programme of activities to its audiences in the city and further afield. It is performing well against its targets and KPIs.

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