

**Title of Update: RAMM Quarterly Highlights Report, Q2**

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## **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.