

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR LEISURE, CULTURE, AND YOUNG PEOPLE

COUNCILLOR DAMIAN TALBOT

PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING

DIRECTOR: MARTIN EDEN

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BLACKBURN MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY

Now showing Watercolour

In 1954 local man Edwin Leach Hartley made one of the most important gifts to Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery, a collection of 88 watercolours containing the work of major figures in the history of British art such as Turner, J R Cozens, Thomas Girtin, John Sell Cotman and David Cox. The E L Hartley's collection is not as well-known as the Hart or Lewis Collections. The very delicate nature of watercolours means they are preserved in storage and shown less often than other items in the museum collections. The lighting in the gallery is set at a low level so that the works are not damaged further during this treat for visitors.

Outside the Museum

31 January -19 April – Blackburn Museums collections are on show at the London Venue 2 Temple Place. Items from the Hart, Hartley, Lewis and Bowdler collections can be seen beside highlights from Towneley Hall and the Howarth Art Gallery. The exhibition has had a huge amount of press interest and large visitor figures

In addition to Museum Friends talks offered each month we are able to offer a lecture by Professor Nigel Morgan on the illuminated manuscripts in the Hart collection. Following on from last year's international conference on the Hart collection and as part of our academic partnership with the University of London this will be the first in a series of lectures that re-evaluates the importance of the collection to national culture.

TURTON TOWER

The Tower opened to visitors in 7 March and is looking forward to another successful season of for visits and events

LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICE

Easter holiday activities for children

All five libraries will have operated fun craft activity sessions over the Easter holidays. The craft sessions will be based on the story of 'The Wind in the Willows'. The sessions are suitable for children aged 4+, but children under 8 must be accompanied by an adult. Admission is by free ticket, available from each library

Community living room

The community living room project, which brings arts and craft activities for older people into libraries is now entering its second phase.

During January and February a series of taster sessions were held in Blackburn, Darwen and Mill Hill libraries. In phase two, there will be the chance to explore some of the activities in more depth over several weeks, based on the feedback from the taster sessions. A range of free activities are on offer including sewing embellishments, tin craft, silk painting and block printing.

WELLBEING SERVICE

The new Wellbeing Service was launched in April 2014 to simplify access to a wide range of services that can help local people improve their health and wellbeing. Since April, we have worked closely with local GP Practices and the 3rd Sector to raise awareness and increase referrals to the Wellbeing Service.

Having a single point of access to the Wellbeing Service is working and we have supported 2,610 residents in the nine months from April – December, equating to 119% of the annual target. Over 50% of all referrals were made by GP's and 73% of all residents accessing the wellbeing service demonstrated improvements in their mental health and wellbeing scores

The Wellbeing Service has also recently been launched across the Council to support colleagues to stay healthy. Referrals from managers and staff self-referrals are now increasing month on month.

KING GEORGE'S HALL

Continuing the success of the rock & pop acts, King George's Hall hosted artistes such as Hayseed Dixie, the Drifters, Go West, Placebo, Paul Weller and the hotly-tipped Yorkshire band Allusondrugs. The 2014/15 Blackburn Classics Season has also continued with performances by the Halle Orchestra and Manchester Camerata.

Collaborating with the Cathedral Outreach on 'A Celebration of Dance' and the Children's Services Department on 'Sing Together' KGH hosted a total of 7 concerts involving over 2,700 local school children, performed in front of an audience of over 6,500.

On 6th February Blakeys had record bar takings for a free gig when the Wagon wheels played the venue. Pre-concert meals continue with a good take up of these for the Rigoletto opera and the Classical music series. Del Boy and Rodney from Only Fools and Horses visited KGH for a sell-out comedy dinner with over 150 people in attendance.

DARWEN LIBRARY THEATRE

Recent concert highlights include performances by the Talon Eagles and a SOLD OUT show by Echo & the Bunnymen singer, songwriter and founder-member; Ian McCulloch.

Funding from the Arts Council initiative 'Plugged-In' has enabled us to continue presenting Live and Encore screening of all the National Theatre's latest productions. It also funded a children's half-term special 'Ruby Flew

Too', Circus Geeks 'Beta Testing' and Proper Job Theatre Company's production 'The Shape of Things to Come'.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES

Off for Fun – Easter Holidays

The Off for Fun Easter Programme ran from Monday 30th March until Friday 10th April. A wide variety of activities were scheduled to take place across the Borough, for all age ranges from 5 – 19 years. Activities included:

- Play/Youth projects – every afternoon at Shadsworth Leisure Centre, Darwen Youth Centre and Audley Sports and Community Centre
- MUGAs – every evening at seven venues across the Borough.
- Programme of Positives Activities – including: the barge, activity residentials, adventure days, cycling and water fun sessions at Queens Park.

The Leisure Inclusion team also offered full and half day provision for Children with Disabilities at Kaleidoscope Youth Centre. Activities included dance & movement, cooking, Easter arts & crafts, boccia and sensory activities. All other generic youth provision throughout the Borough will remain for the duration of the holiday period.