

Museums for changing lives

# Studies in Partnership: Maritime Heritage East



# Acknowledgements

The work described in this booklet is supported by Renaissance, the MLA's ground-breaking programme which is transforming England's non-national museums. It strives for excellence, and through targeted investment, and cultivation of local, regional and national partnerships, it is realising the sector's potential to make a real difference to people's lives. Central government funding is enabling regional museums across the country to raise their standards and deliver real results in support of education, learning, community development and economic regeneration.

In the East of England, Renaissance is managed by the Renaissance East of England Office, and delivered by the four large museum services which together make up the East of England Museum Hub:

- Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service
- The Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge
- Luton Culture
- Norfolk Museums & Archaeology Service

You can read more about the impact of the Renaissance programme in the East of England by visiting our website:  
[www.mla.gov.uk/renaissanceeastofengland](http://www.mla.gov.uk/renaissanceeastofengland)



The  
Fitzwilliam  
Museum



Cover Image: Volunteers and students engage with MHE collections at Time and Tide Museum

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# Maritime Heritage East: In a nutshell

**"In creating strategies to equip coastal towns for the 21st century, the historic environment is an adaptable and powerful resource. It offers a platform for economic, social and environmental sustainability."**

*Regeneration in Historic Coastal Towns, English Heritage*

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partners across Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk make up the Maritime Heritage East network

**"The partnership provides an excellent opportunity for the member organisations to work together, foster links and provide an overall outcome which is greater than the sum of its parts."**

James Steward, Eastern Area Museums Manager

# £4.2m

of EU funding secured by 30 European partners, including MHE, for the conservation and promotion of maritime heritage in France, Belgium, the Netherlands and the UK

**"Our various regions are united by the sea and this initiative will enable us to improve and develop our maritime heritage sites, take part in cross-border events, share best practice and promote the rich heritage of our coastal areas."** Jane Chitty, portfolio holder for Strategic Development, Economic Growth and Tourism, Medway Council

# 30,000

visitors attended the 2010 Maritime Festival in Great Yarmouth

# Foreword

In the current economic climate there is a greater emphasis than ever on working in partnership to deliver services more efficiently and more responsively to local needs.

This booklet is one in a series of six highlighting ongoing projects led by East of England museums which have partnership working at their heart. Taken together they demonstrate that museums have a valuable contribution to make in:

- Engaging local people in decision-making
- Promoting community cohesion through exploration and celebration of the past
- Providing economic benefits through employment and tourism.

Communities benefit when museums share resources and expertise with each other:

- **The Greater Fens Museums Partnership and Maritime Heritage East** are networks which bring together museums with similar collections to celebrate and promote unique aspects of the region's past. Economies of scale are combined with a richer offering to the public and more effective promotion of heritage to visitors.
- **Something Borrowed** is a partnership with the British Museum which is enabling smaller museums in the East of England to borrow items from the BM's collections, creating new opportunities for tourism and learning.

Museums are also working increasingly with partners beyond the cultural sector:

- **Growing Communities** provides a forum for museums, local communities and planning departments in Growth Point areas in the region to explore how the past can help shape future development
- **Stepping Stones** has brought together 24 museums in a partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions to create 32 jobs and apprenticeships for long-term unemployed young people
- **The Sustainability Project** is unlocking the potential of rural life museums to engage the public in debate around environmental and social issues, as well as joining forces with other organisations to find ways of reducing the sector's carbon footprint.

This work is supported by Renaissance, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council's ground-breaking programme that is transforming England's non-national museums. The staff leading these projects are funded by Renaissance East of England which has also developed the strategic vision and infrastructure to help the sector become more outward-looking and innovative.

The projects showcased in this series show museums have a part to play in making the Big Society a reality – by providing a unique space for communities to learn about their past and get involved in shaping their future.

Vanessa Trevelyan  
Head of Norfolk Museums &  
Archaeology Service  
President, Museums Association  
October 2010

# Maritime Heritage East: Working to promote our maritime heritage

**"The creation of the MHE partnership, the first of its kind in the UK, is really terrific news. The message is that development of our maritime heritage enhances the quality of life and supports economic regeneration, social cohesion and community spirit."**

Roy Clare, Chairman of Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, former Director of the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich

It is not surprising that the sea looms large in the national psyche given that no settlement in England is over 70 miles away from it. The shaping impact

of the sea is felt nowhere more acutely than here in the East of England with 250 miles of coastline, stretching from the Wash in the north to the Thames Estuary in the south.

It is a region steeped in maritime history: from famous heroes such as Nelson and Henry Blogg, to the fishermen of the great herring fleets at Yarmouth and Lowestoft, to the Fifties holidaymakers who flocked to major resorts like Southend and Clacton. In more recent times, it has also experienced many of the unprecedented changes and challenges that have faced our



Trawler off Great Yarmouth, © P. Marks, HMS project

coastal communities from the second half of the 20th century onwards; the decline of industries like fishing and traditional tourism has hit hard, with continuing levels of high deprivation in some areas. Added to this are the more recent problems of erosion compounded by the threat from global warming and rising sea levels.

Maritime museums are a key element in providing high-quality destinations to attract tourism, helping to shift negative perceptions and offering local communities a means of exploring and celebrating their past.

In this context, the creation of Maritime Heritage East (MHE)<sup>1</sup> is a significant development. Running across the East of England, MHE aims to develop the position and importance of maritime history, both within the region and nationally. The only partnership of its kind in the country, it now brings together over 40 maritime organisations to explore opportunities for joint working, both with each other and the tourism sector, in promoting the region's rich maritime heritage.

The MHE partners are champions of their local cultural heritage. Many of them also function as thriving



The Manchester Gallery, Sheringham Museum, Norfolk

community spaces, where they encourage, support and inspire local people. The MHE project provides a link between these often geographically isolated communities, uniting them through a shared enthusiasm and heritage. The focus for the partnership has always been to stimulate social and cultural renewal with projects that encourage museums, wherever possible, to work with other partners to promote growth and development. MHE is an important step forward in ensuring that museums play their part in re-energising their localities, providing a focus for pride and identity.

<sup>1</sup> Maritime Heritage East originated at the Time and Tide Museum of Great Yarmouth Life, one of twelve regional 'Gateway' maritime museums across the UK tasked with the responsibility of taking a regional lead in promoting the interests of museums with maritime collections. The 'gateways' work together and with the United Kingdom Maritime Collection Strategy, (UKMCS) led by the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich, to ensure an integrated approach to maritime heritage issues.

# MHE website

[www.maritimeheritageeast.org.uk](http://www.maritimeheritageeast.org.uk)

Launched in 2008 the MHE website is designed to open up a dialogue between online visitors and the museums about their maritime collections and heritage. The website not only seeks to promote and protect regional maritime identity but also bring together collections across the regions and celebrate the contribution that maritime heritage has made to the history of the East of England. Most importantly the website fosters partnership working between museums and institutions: expertise and knowledge are shared and presented through a unified platform.

The MHE website has recently united two people from across the world. After an appeal on the website, Janet from Canada and Irene from the Isle of White discovered a shared maritime genealogy through Captain Thomas Harper White from Norfolk. Irene has found other living members of the family and has keenly shared this information with her previously unknown Canadian relative through the medium of the MHE website.

The vast knowledge that the MHE museums and website holds in trust is now being used to benefit a wider maritime community.



*The Dutch Fair* by George Vincent,  
1796-c.1831

"Maritime Heritage East was my first port of call whilst trying to find images for an exhibition about the shared maritime history of Norfolk and the Low Countries. The images given to us made a wonderful addition to our exhibition, with the stunning Vincent painting being the jewel in the exhibition's crown. The exhibition was enormously well received."

Laura Crossley, Norwich Heritage Economic and Regeneration Trust (HEART)

# Promoting tourism

In 2009 MHE joined 30 European partners in a £4.2 million Interreg IVa funding bid for a major project called *HMS: Heritage and Maritime Memories in the Two Seas Region*. It aims to work with tourism organisations and cultural partners in France, Belgium, the Netherlands and the UK to:

- Invest in capital projects
- Invigorate existing tourist attractions
- Introduce joint marketing initiatives and best practice.

The project is bringing together local authorities, museums and attractions from the four countries and will ensure both the conservation of maritime heritage sites and public access to them. Other plans include: ensuring the high standard of visitor facilities; developing state-of-the-art multilingual guides and providing educational facilities and trails. The project will also aim to raise awareness of the strong maritime cultural links these countries share through a crosscutting theme entitled *Coastal Lives*.

As part of the project, a £200,000 oral history and training initiative, championed by MHE, will also record personal stories, increasing our knowledge of cultural links. MHE aims to develop the partnerships created with this first bid to secure further funding. This project marks a milestone for the partnership as the funding has been secured through a collective bid by MHE partners, large and small, along with contributions from three county councils.



Maritime Festival, Great Yarmouth

*"Our various regions are united by the sea and this initiative will enable us to improve and develop our maritime heritage sites, take part in cross-border events, share best practice and promote the rich heritage of our coastal areas. It will also enable us to develop attractions in some of the more deprived areas of our regions, bringing in visitors and boosting the local economies."* Jane Chitty, portfolio holder for Strategic Development, Economic Growth and Tourism, Medway Council

# Social and environmental sustainability: Saving money and resources

As part of the MHE Interreg European project, *Heritage and Maritime Memories in the 2 Seas Region*, Time and Tide Museum has installed a new, multilingual audio guide system. Working with the Museum of the Broads, both partners were able to save thousands of pounds on software and other project costs through economies of scale. Joint training aided staff in troubleshooting and information sharing will continue. The audio guide can interpret in many languages and for many ages and abilities. It also benefits visitors with a visual impairment. Four new language tours in French, German, Dutch and Portuguese have been created for Time and Tide Museum with the assistance of colleagues in Adult Education and Community Services. The new technology will

allow staff to update the audio guide as and when needed, and has also enabled the creation of trails, quizzes, customer feedback and temporary exhibition tours. Meanwhile Time and Tide's old audio guides have been reused by the Elizabethan House Museum in Great Yarmouth.

By working together, both museums are making themselves more socially sustainable as they interpret their respective maritime cultures to wider audiences.

The project is also helping to reduce energy costs; the Orpheo System only charges for 2-3hrs per night, while the hand-held guides use a longer life battery system. The system is already contributing to savings, alongside other measures such as the introduction of LED lighting in the galleries: results for quarter one of this year show a 45% reduction in electricity usage for Time and Tide in comparison with previous years.

**"The partnership provides an excellent opportunity for the member organisations to work together, foster links and provide an overall outcome which is greater than the sum of its parts."**  
James Steward, Eastern Area Museums Manager



Museum of the Broads

# Identifying lost treasures, safeguarding skills

MHE is all about sharing: knowledge, support, help, and expertise. There is a goldmine of information available to communities and museums through the MHE network.

For example, Aldeburgh Museum contacted MHE for help in identifying a dredged fisherman's find from the depths of the North Sea, described briefly as "large, heavy and maritime"! Two teams of volunteer researchers from MHE partners The Alfred Corry Lifeboat Museum and The Excelsior Trust kindly offered their knowledge and expertise to aid identification of what turned out to be the wreckage of a British merchant vessel from the 1800s.

Skills, traditions and history are all pivotal to the preservation of maritime heritage and the available maritime knowledge in the East of England is vast. However, many subject specialisms are in danger of becoming lost as the current generation of museum enthusiasts and professionals reach retirement age.

Maritime Heritage East addresses these issues by delivering bespoke training to museums staff and volunteers on specific projects, thereby safeguarding skills for the future. It also ensures members take advantage of the training and advice offered by SHARE, Renaissance East of England's innovative skills-sharing network.

If the East wants to achieve the goal of being a region of maritime excellence we need to acknowledge and celebrate what we have now, and set about supporting the methods to preserve and communicate it to the widest audience possible.



The Excelsior at Plymouth,  
© Peter Dawes

**"All useful and pitched at a level which I found informative. All questions asked were answered in full and from extensive experience."** Delegate evaluation from 2009 specialist training course on the care of ship models, provided through the SHARE scheme

# MHE exhibitions and events: Effective delivery

The MHE project has created and delivered three years of temporary exhibitions which have drawn on links with our partners locally, nationally and internationally. The exhibitions programme aims to represent issues of historic and cultural significance that will challenge, celebrate and engage audiences whilst promoting the extensive maritime heritage of the region.

Exhibitions have included an environmentally-aware touring exhibition, *It is Your Ocean – What will you do to save it?* produced by the National Maritime Museum (NMM) and the locally-focused *Shipwreck: For those in Peril* which presented stories of heroism and survival from along the east coast.

In producing the programme, MHE has kept sustainability in mind, using environmentally friendly materials and reusing elements where possible: for example parts of the NMM exhibition have been successfully incorporated into permanent displays in two MHE partner museums in Essex and north Norfolk.

Our next exhibition, *Two Shores*, looks at the coastal life of East Anglia and the region's relationship with its neighbours across the North Sea in France, Belgium and the Netherlands. The story is told through the experiences of people who make their living from the North Sea – in the offshore and fishing industries, leisure and tourism, ports and ferries.

## MHE Coast exhibition





### Craft demonstration, Herring Day 2009, Time and Tide Museum, Norfolk

Visitors will be able to hear from offshore workers whose jobs are changing with the development of new industries like wind farms, from fishermen whose work has been affected by reduced fish stocks and from marine archaeologists who are helping us to understand the geography of the North Sea and our region's physical connections with mainland Europe.

Drawing on the collections of MHE partners, maritime objects, 'tools of the trade', paintings, photographs, maps, letters and documents will bring these stories to life. They will be presented alongside ancient objects like stunning prehistoric North Sea hand axes, a Mesolithic harpoon head and fossil bones found under the sea which remind us of the long and fascinating history of these two shores.

By providing a supportive infrastructure and a collective presence at a national level, MHE is ensuring high-quality exhibitions are available to both local people and visitors to the region.

### Building audiences

In 2010 MHE contributed to Time and Tide museum's delivery of a more focussed and better targeted events and exhibitions programme which resulted in a 23% increase in visitor figures compared to the previous year. More effective planning and marketing in partnership with local colleagues in the cultural sector have increased awareness of the services that the museum offers the community.

For example Great Yarmouth Museums (which includes Time and Tide together with the Elizabethan House and Tolhouse museums) used the annual Museums at Night campaign very successfully to attract new audiences: a combination of special events and good local publicity attracted over 2,000 visitors to the museums in four hours, a 13% increase on the previous year.

"The Maritime Heritage East partnership is a ground-breaking initiative of regional collaboration which has substantially raised the profile of maritime heritage within the East of England. It has brilliantly applied the original ideals of the UK Maritime Collections Strategy and has provided the maritime heritage sector with an effective blueprint for co-operation on maritime collections and awareness-raising." Kevin Fewster, Director of the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich

# Future plans

Maritime museums are clearly well positioned to provide communities with a sense of place and identity, particularly through historic collections.

Yet for museums to succeed today, there needs to be increased awareness among both museum staff and the public as to the role museums can play within their communities. It is the aim of the regional partnership of Maritime Heritage East to address these issues and work together with our partners to celebrate the unique and special cultural heritage of this region.

Ongoing plans for MHE include:

- Continuing support for events like the Maritime Festival in Great Yarmouth, which draws in 30,000 visitors over the two days, and which help ensure our maritime cultural heritage does not disappear
- A touring exhibition about our unique maritime heritage which has already been seen by 100,000 visitors to the Boulogne and Brekens maritime festivals in 2010 and which will travel to the East of England in 2011, thereby supporting the partnership and developing audiences
- Using the results of a survey of archives with maritime interests to further raise the profile of maritime culture.

**"The maritime festival brings together all partners from both the public and private sector to ensure that together we can collectively provide a better resort to help businesses survive and flourish and ensure that jobs are created and sustained."**

Kirsty Burn, Marketing & Promotions Manager, Greater Yarmouth Tourist Authority

**"This is a great achievement and provides some very useful information to help with future strategic planning for maritime museums in the region."**

Sheila Watson, Lecturer, University of Leicester, speaking about the archives survey



Children's workshop, Time and Tide Museum, Great Yarmouth

# Maritime Heritage East Partners:

## Essex:

The Beecroft Art Gallery  
Brightlingsea Museum  
Burnham-on-Crouch and District Museum  
Harwich Lifeboat Museum  
Harwich Maritime Museum  
Harwich Redoubt Fort  
Maldon Museum  
Mersea Island Museum  
Nottage Maritime Museum  
Southend Museum  
Walton Maritime Museum

## Norfolk:

Cromer Museum  
The Elizabethan House Museum  
The Fisherman's Heritage Centre  
Lynn Museum  
Marshland Maritime Museum  
Mundesley Maritime Museum  
Museum of the Broads  
The Nelson Museum  
The Peter Coke Shall Gallery  
The RNLI Henry Blogg Museum  
Sheringham Museum  
Time and Tide Museum of Great Yarmouth Life  
Tolhouse Museum  
Town House Museum  
True's Yard Fishing Heritage Centre  
The Wherry Yacht Charter Charitable Trust

## Suffolk:

Aldeburgh Museum  
The Alfred Corry Lifeboat Museum  
Dunwich Museum  
Excelsior Trust  
Felixstowe Museum  
HMS Ganges Museum  
Ipswich Museum  
Ipswich Maritime Trust  
Lowestoft Maritime Museum  
The Lydia Eva and Mincarlo Charitable Trust  
Museum of Knots & Sailors' Ropework  
Orford Castle Museum  
Royal Naval Patrol Service Museum  
Southwold Museum  
Southwold Sailor's Reading Room  
Suffolk Underwater Studies  
Sutton Hoo

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