

“The man who made the museum”: Arthur Smith and the founding of Lincoln’s City and County Museum

PART ONE

Museums are places of continuity and modern museum curators cannot fail to be aware of and affected by the work of their predecessors. By extension, they also live in the knowledge that their daily activities will survive as a legacy for future heritage custodians. Some museums are defined by great Georgian or Victorian collectors, whose personal generosity provided the core of the collections and often a magnificent home for them. In the case of The Collection: Art and Archaeology in Lincolnshire, known for most of its 112 year existence as the City and County Museum¹, there is no single early benefactor, though a great many individuals undoubtedly deserve our gratitude for their beneficence. Instead of a Hans Sloane or an Elias Ashmole², the early growth of the museum must instead be attributed to its first curator, Arthur Smith. Although by no means a household name, even in his own lifetime, his dedication and vision make him the honorary father of museum curatorship in Lincoln.

The early life of Arthur Smith

Arthur Smith was born in Leicester in 1869, the eldest child of George and Harriet Smith. George was also Leicester born and worked as a shoe and boot maker. Arthur’s earliest years were beset by upheaval, as the family moved to Halifax in 1871 and then a few years later to Grimsby, the town that would become Arthur’s spiritual home and the place where his lifelong interest in the natural sciences would develop. Shortly after arriving in Grimsby, the Smith family grew larger as Arthur’s younger siblings Annie (1876) and George (1879) were born.

An important influence on the young Arthur was a man named Charles Tero, a Durham-born cobbler who undoubtedly made his acquaintance through his father’s business. Although not wealthy and living in a two-roomed cottage in a less than salubrious part of town, Tero was also a veteran entomologist who nurtured Arthur’s blossoming interest in *lepidoptera* (butterflies) and *coleoptera* (beetles) and had gathered a large collection.³ This newfound interest obviously took firm hold as Arthur applied to join the Grimsby Naturalists Society in 1886, but was denied as he was too young.⁴ He would successfully join the following year.

In 1891, when he was 21 years old, Arthur began to work alongside his father in the family trade. The established business of ‘George Smith, leather merchant and boot and upper manufacturer’ now became ‘George Smith and Son’. The business also moved premises at around the same time, though not very far, from 103 to 143 Freeman Street, one of Grimsby’s primary commercial areas. Though Arthur would work in the family business for the next decade, he would not follow in his father’s footsteps for the rest of his life.

Shortly after joining the Grimsby Naturalists Society in 1887 he had become an officer of the organisation and sub-curator of its museum, but by the mid 1890s the

Society had disbanded. A new organisation, the Grimsby and District Naturalist Society, was soon born from the ashes with Arthur an enthusiastic and leading participant. When the inaugural meeting was held on June 30th 1896, not only was Arthur appointed the new secretary, but his house on Convamore Road was the venue, and he read an essay entitled 'How to Start and Conduct a Working Naturalists Society' to the three other members present.⁵ He was clearly a driving force behind the initiative. His determination was instantly demonstrated by his active attempts to expand the Society and promote the study of natural history more widely in Grimsby. He wrote a number of letters to the local press in support of plans to create botanical gardens in the town, proposing that children's play areas be constructed alongside more educational labelling of plant specimens, and that a lodge with a small museum be the centrepiece.⁶ By 1900 the Society had 73 members⁷ and a small museum at the Municipal Buildings on Convamore Road, containing a collection of shells described as 'one of the best arranged in the provinces'.⁸ This combination of vision and determination was no doubt a factor in Arthur's successful appointment to the curatorship of the new Lincoln museum a few years later.

Arthur's appetite to become involved in every aspect of natural history is demonstrated in an article he wrote on the 'Fishes of Lincolnshire', when he told of making contact with the Grimsby longshore fishermen and identifying for them any fish that they caught but could not recognise. In return, he ventured with them on trawling expeditions in the Humber and made notes of specimens he encountered.⁹ He became a Fellow of the Royal Entomological Society prior to 1902 and a Fellow of the Linnaean Society in that year. His interest in all aspects of the natural world is demonstrated through his work as Lincoln's Observer for the Meteorological Office between 1917 and 1928.

In February 1906, on his appointment to the curatorial post at Lincoln, his fellow Grimsby Naturalists Society committee members presented him with an illuminated document and a purse of money. The document expresses their gratitude for his service to the Society and wishes that he 'may long be spared to continue the career of usefulness that you began among us.' His departure from Grimsby was even noted in the Hull Daily Mail, as a prominent man who was leaving the town.¹⁰

While his reputation as a natural historian and museum curator grew, his personal life had also developed. On 24th December 1892, Arthur had married Laura Louise George, a Yarmouth born dressmaker 3 years his junior. Arthur's mother Harriet had also been born in Yarmouth, and this connection perhaps led to their meeting. Two years later their first son, named Arthur after his father, was born and in January 1905, a year before moving to Lincoln, they had a second son, Oliver.

The founding of the City and County Museum, Lincoln

The City and County Museum opened its doors in 1907, but the need for a public museum in Lincoln had long been recognised. Although the Mechanics Institute had a small museum in the city¹¹ and other organisations had attempted to display their collections, this was not the same as a public institution. In 1878 the Mayor of

Lincoln, F. J. Clarke, proposed that the 'old county hospital'¹², recently empty following the opening of the current Lincoln hospital, be purchased and converted into a 'school of art, a local museum and public library, and reading rooms.'¹³ Visits to the city by the Royal Archaeological Institute (1848 and 1880) and the British Archaeological Association (1889) had elicited letters from their members urging the need for a public institution.¹⁴ In 1911, the eminent Oxford professor and pioneering Roman scholar Francis Haverfield would write to Arthur, expressing that he 'used to regret deeply that a town so important in itself and so rich in antiquities as Lincoln had no museum.'¹⁵

Local organisations attempted to stimulate activity. The Lincolnshire Naturalists' Union (hereafter 'LNU') founded a Museum Committee in 1893 in response to a number of important local collections leaving the county.¹⁶ The Committee even obtained the use of rooms in the east gate of Lincoln Castle to set up a temporary natural history museum, in the hope that it would lead to the founding of an institution 'worthy of the second largest county in England'.¹⁷ The Museum Committee consisted of a number of notable names in the Lincolnshire antiquarian community, including John Cordeaux, the Reverend William Fowler and Edward Mansel Sympson, along with local dignitaries such as the Dean of Lincoln and Joseph Ruston. The temporary museum was curated on an honorary basis by Alfred Fieldsend, a local naturalist and taxidermist, and was opened on October 3rd 1895 by the Bishop of Lincoln.¹⁸

In both 1893 and 1896, the Reverend John Clare Hudson and Edward Mansel Sympson (editors of the 'Lincolnshire Notes and Queries' antiquarian journal) and the Reverend Edward Adrian Woodruffe-Peacock put forward arguments in favour of a wide-ranging museum covering archaeology, natural history and geology, from the earliest times until the present day. They recognised that the biggest obstacle for the foundation of the museum was not the collections, for they were confident that material in private hands would be donated, but a suitable home. Suggestions included the Georgian and Victorian gaols in Lincoln Castle, and sites on Silver Street or Church Lane where the museum might be merged with a new Free Library, which was desired for the city with equal fervour.¹⁹ The most outlandish suggestion was to build the museum next to the Methodist Chapel on Bailgate, 'set(ing) Newport Arch at liberty for the principal entrance.' If this weren't unorthodox enough, the further suggestion was made that the Stonebow be moved from the High Street to form a secondary arched entrance to the grounds. This was justified on the basis that 'the removal of the Stone Bow [sic] from the High Street will someday be a necessity.'²⁰ Thankfully this prophecy has not yet been realised and the Stonebow remains in its original position. Woodruffe-Peacock went so far as to set out his specification for the perfect individual to manage the institution:

*"A curator of the widest culture and sympathies must be found, who for a moderate but sufficient salary, will throw his whole heart and soul into collecting, sorting, and cataloguing the materials to be obtained in the county, and to getting them, if possible, into the Museum. For this purpose he should be a member of all of the honorary committees and work harmoniously with each of them to forward the common object – the formation of a perfect public collection."*²¹

In an 1895 letter to the Chronicle, he added that the curator 'should have his residence under the same roof as the museum, for he will have to give his time wholly to the work of the institution, its correspondence, and to keeping the various catalogues and registers up to date.'²²

To the undoubted chagrin of these many individuals, it was not to be until 1901 that the city finally turned its attention to the foundation of a museum. At this time there was a spate of such foundations across the country, and Lincoln was in reality one of the last of the great historic cities to establish a public museum.²³ The driver for the founding of the museum was the 1891 Museums and Gymnasiums Act which, as an adjunct of the Public Health Act, allowed Councils to establish both museums and gymnasia for the betterment of the working classes. A loan of £3,441 was applied for to purchase the 13th Century Greyfriars building, to be supplemented with a further £1,000 for repairs and alterations. It is at this time when it becomes apparent that support for the foundation of a museum was not universal within the City Council. The suitability of Greyfriars was also questioned, as it had previously been used as a museum by the Mechanics Institute and 'found inadequate due to the bad light.'²⁴ It seems that the intention of some elected members was to use the loan as a convenient source of non-local funds for the required repair of Greyfriars, but that the establishment and success of the museum were not a primary concern.²⁵ On November 19th 1901 a Local Government Board Inspector, Mr R. H. Bicknell, visited Lincoln and held an enquiry with members of the Council with regard to their loan application to purchase Greyfriars. Portions of the enquiry were reported in the media, and are enlightening with regard to the attitudes expressed towards the LNU's existing museum at Lincoln Castle.

*"Mr Bicknell then asked if there were any other museums in Lincoln, and if so, whether they were under the control of the Corporation? Mr Page: 'There are some stuffed birds somewhere about the Castle, I am so told'. Mr Tweed (to the Inspector): 'I am afraid the Deputy Town Clerk is stuffing you'. (laughter). 'I don't believe there are any; I have never seen them.' Mr Bicknell: 'There are only a few things?' Mr Tweed: 'A few sparrows and old rooks.' (laughter). The Inspector: 'But on what grounds do the Corporation think a museum is necessary at all?' Mr Page: 'There has been an enormous outcry for one all our lifetime.' The Inspector: 'If you get a museum what have you got to put in it?' Mr Page: 'Oh, we keep digging things up, all sorts of stones and curiosities which Mr Watkins could descant upon for two or three hours'. The Inspector: 'I hope he won't.' (laughter)."*²⁶

The flippancy with which the LNU's museum was belittled was decried in a letter to the Lincolnshire Echo four days later by a Grimsby resident writing under the pseudonym 'Advocate'. The author wrote that they regretted 'the frivolous way in which the question was dealt with' and that 'a visit to the castle might benefit those who do not seem to be quite sure whether there is a museum there or not.'²⁷

The LNU, despite this derision of their efforts, continued to lobby for the development of a public institution. One meeting of the Union, held on December 1st 1904, had in attendance one Arthur Smith of Grimsby, who had only recently

become a member but would that same evening be elected Organising Secretary of the Union, no doubt due to the enthusiasm he was demonstrating at Grimsby. At that meeting he heard the Museum Committee report that they had decided to transfer the Union museum's collections to the Corporation of Lincoln 'to ensure its preservation and increased usefulness.' A grant of £5 was also to be made to 'defray the cost of repairing bird cases and other expenses.' The main event of the evening was a paper read by Henry Preston, whose collections would later be the foundation of Grantham Museum, in which he espoused the vital role of the museum's curator in driving the institution and retaining links with private collectors.²⁸ Did that evening's talk inspire Arthur to think that a new museum at Lincoln might come under his curatorship? It was clearly not the first occasion he had thought about the position. In a letter to the Lincolnshire Echo in December 1901, in support of the aforementioned letter by 'Advocate', Arthur had expressed his pleasure that a Lincoln museum was being proposed, stressing that the appointment of a suitable curator was the first priority, and offering his assistance to that person in the form of specimens.²⁹

It must have been a disappointment to Arthur that Grimsby did not found its own public institution, but when the opportunity arose at Lincoln it seems that he took it without hesitation. Although he would surely have been destined to become the curator of a Grimsby Museum, 'Lincoln, with more fore-sight and greater public spirit, robbed Grimsby of its curator.'³⁰ On February 1st 1906, Arthur Smith began work as the curator of the new Lincoln City and County Museum.

Notes for part one

¹ The name 'The Collection: Art and Archaeology in Lincolnshire' came into being in 2005 with the merging of the City and County Museum (opened 1907) and the Usher Gallery (opened 1927).

² Donors of the extensive founding collections of the British Museum and the Ashmolean in Oxford respectively.

³ Transactions of the Lincolnshire Naturalists Union, Volume 2, pg 241.

⁴ Transactions of the Lincolnshire Naturalists Union, Volume 9, pg 89.

⁵ Lincolnshire archives '2 LCL 1'.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Hull Daily Mail, January 24th 1900.

⁸ Unreferenced newspaper clipping December 6 1900, in Lincolnshire Archives '2 LCL 1'.

⁹ Smith, Arthur, 'The Fishes of Lincolnshire', Transactions of the Lincolnshire Naturalists Union, Volume 3

¹⁰ Hull Daily Mail, February 22nd 1906.

¹¹ A number of important 19th Century finds now in The Collection were formerly held by the Mechanics Institute, which was situated at various times in the Sheep Market, the lower floor of the Greyfriars and on Danesgate. Coincidentally, the City and County Museum would follow the Mechanics Institute to the latter two addresses.

¹² The 'old county hospital' was the Lincoln Infirmary, constructed in 1776 and now known as Chad Varah house, on Wordsworth Street.

¹³ The proposal gained support from a number of influential individuals and received an amount of local newspaper coverage in late 1878 and early 1879 (see F. J. Clarke's scrapbook of newspaper clippings, now at Lincoln Central Library). Despite a positive report on the suitability of the building, the holding of a public meeting and the offer of some private donations, it seems that funding was the ultimate downfall of the proposal. Clarke died on 28th January 1888 at the age of just 46, but would undoubtedly have been a supporter of the eventual museum foundation.

¹⁴ Lincolnshire Notes and Queries, Volume 3, pg 74.

¹⁵ Unpublished letter from F Haverfield to A Smith, November 14th 1911, The Collection museum history files.

¹⁶ Baker, Walter F. (Ed.), 1895, *The Transactions of the Lincolnshire Naturalists Union*, pg ix. The collections specifically cited as having been lost to the county were the 'Franklin relics' and the 'Ellison collection of paintings'.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Lincolnshire Echo, October 3rd 1895.

¹⁹ Lincolnshire Notes and Queries, Volume 3, pg 242.

²⁰ Ibid, pg 243.

²¹ Lincolnshire Notes and Queries, Volume 4, pg 165.

²² Chronicle, April 16th 1895.

²³ For example, the Fitzwilliam in Cambridge opened in 1816, the Yorkshire Museum in 1828, the Royal Albert Memorial Museum in Exeter in 1870, the Grosvenor Museum in Chester in 1886 and Norwich Castle Museum in 1895.

²⁴ Lincolnshire Echo, December 4th 1901.

²⁵ Chronicle, December 6th 1901.

²⁶ Chronicle, November 22nd 1901.

²⁷ Lincolnshire Echo, November 23rd 1901.

²⁸ Grantham Journal, December 3rd 1904.

²⁹ Lincolnshire Echo, December 2nd 1901.

³⁰ Transactions of the Lincolnshire Naturalists Union, Volume 9, pg 89.



‘Arthur Smith as a young man’. Copyright
Lincolnshire County Council



'The restoration of Greyfriars, being undertaken by Lincoln architect William Watkins'. Copyright Lincolnshire County Council



'Early natural history displays on the upper floor of Greyfriars'. Copyright Lincolnshire County Council

“The man who made the museum”: Arthur Smith and the founding of Lincoln’s City and County Museum

PART TWO

The development of the City and County Museum

When Arthur Smith moved his young family to Lincoln in 1906 to take up the curatorial role that would encompass the remainder of his working life, he must have wondered what the future held. Although officially appointed the museum’s curator, there were in truth no collections to curate and the Greyfriars building was in the final stages of its comprehensive renovation. He was, in essence, a curator of nothing. Tom Baker, who became Arthur’s assistant and eventual successor at the museum, would later recall,

“I remember Arthur telling me that when he arrived to take up his appointment he was horrified to be shown a building with nothing in it but a roll-top desk and his brief was to proceed to bring together archaeological and natural history material suitable for a museum”¹

Despite this initial shock, Arthur set about his task with gusto, utilising his existing contacts within the natural history community and striving to increase public awareness of his work and encourage donations of local archaeological finds. He was aided by other supporters of the fledgling institution, particularly those who had so strongly desired its existence. In March 1907, a letter to the Mercury signed by the Bishop of Lincoln, Joseph Ruston (then the Mayor) and Alfred Hunt (President of the Lincolnshire Naturalists Union) made a public appeal for objects of ‘archaeological, historical, natural or general interest’ to be loaned or donated to the museum in order to make it ‘worthy of the county of Lincoln’.²

By the time the museum officially opened its doors on May 22nd 1907, little over a year after Arthur took up his post, the collections consisted of over 12,000 objects, comprising natural history, archaeology, geology, decorative art and ‘bygones’. Many of the objects in the latter two categories would later be transferred to other local museums and galleries specialising in social history and the arts.³ A significant element of the early archaeological collection came from the Dean and Chapter of Lincoln Cathedral, as it contained important antiquarian finds, including material from the River Witham once in the possession of Sir Joseph Banks.

In an article in the 1905/6 Transactions of the LNU, Arthur wrote with some pride that ‘the County Museum is now an accomplished fact.’⁴ Far from simply celebrating his achievements to date, however, he set out his aims for the new institution:

“The main object is to have specimens that will portray the history of our County – its antiquities and Natural History. Several members have already materially assisted, and it is asked that all will keep diligently on the lookout for desirable acquisitions, so that what now remains in the County can be brought together for protection and preservation in a central position. Then all may see what our shire has done in History and its contribution to scientific knowledge.”⁵

As Arthur recognised, the official opening of the museum was far from the completion of his work. During a Council meeting in June 1907, Councillor Bell expressed concern that 'if the museum was opened at eight or ten o'clock, and closed at four, what opportunity had the working classes of attending or visiting the museum?' He was reassured by Councillor Pennell that 'when it was completed, and well stocked with objects of interest, he had no doubt there would be several evenings a week when it would be available to the public.'⁶ Councillor Pennell's promise rang true, for by 1913 the museum's established opening hours were 10am to 4pm every day, with extended evening openings until 8pm every Wednesday and Saturday.⁷

The initial opening hours do not seem to have affected local interest, however, as the museum attracted 65,263 people in the first year, visitor figures that would not be bettered until the opening of The Collection almost a century later. Satisfaction with the museum was equally high. The Royal Archaeological Institute recorded in a letter that Arthur was 'deserving of great praise for the results achieved in such a short time' and for the 'excellent arrangement of the collection'.⁸ An anonymous visitor to Lincoln in 1909, in a long letter describing his experience of the city, commented that the museum was 'making rapid strides under a skilled curator into the front rank of local museums'.⁹ It would also be noted that the museum was attracting many school children, students, international researchers and even artists¹⁰ and that Smith 'makes a point of having something new on exhibition every day'¹¹ to encourage repeat visits.

Despite the early popularity of the museum, support for the founding institution from the Council remained questionable. The Gazette criticised the Council for giving little official mention to the museum, for never giving it 'the warmth of a formal opening' despite most of their other institutions being granted one, and chiding that some councillors had not even visited the building.¹² The echoes back to the irreverence with which the LNU museum had been referred to in 1901 (see part one of this article) are striking.

In 1905, when the Council had discussed the appointment of a curator, Councillor Pratt spoke against it entirely, stating that the post was not required as 'there might be a few collections of stones passing their doors' but that 'personally he would allow them to pass'.¹³ The Council's Finance Committee meeting of April 2nd 1907 saw Councillor Bell querying a penny rate for the funding of the museum, saying that 'he thought they had not received value for money', and that 'while it might be some means of education, it was more of a luxury' and 'he was by no means sure that the citizens were prepared to spend so much money on sentimentality'. Councillor Pennell reassured him that the Finance Committee were 'keeping a watchful eye' on the museum.¹⁴ Similar rhetoric even made its way into election campaigning that same year with Mr Coombes, standing for Carholme Ward, citing the museum as the Council's latest 'extravagant scheme', claiming that it was an unnecessary expense with rates as high as they were.¹⁵

In March 1908 the issue of Arthur's salary made the newspapers when it was proposed that it be raised from £130 to £150 a year. Councillor Bell expressed dissatisfaction, stating that the money would be better spent on finding employment for the unemployed, as 'the curator was well paid for a nice soft job.' Councillor Pratt then replied that although he once 'had an argument against the starting of the museum', since it had opened he had changed

his opinions and that 'any gentleman who exercised the influence (Smith) did throughout the county was well worthy of £150.' He continued, 'I have the greatest objection to refuse to pay a man like Mr Smith his due. His influence is very great, and he is well worthy of the raise in salary we propose to give him.'¹⁶ Other councillors agreed and the pay rise was backed with only 4 dissenting votes. Arthur's achievement in turning the opinions of Councillor Pratt around from his 1905 objections to the curatorial post even existing should not be underestimated. It was clear, however, that the museum, despite its initial success, did not have the full support of the elected members, with some seeming almost ideologically opposed to the existence of the institution.

Although Arthur was facing local political pressure on top of his curatorial duties, his work continued to be credited by others. In 1928, Sir Henry Miers embarked on his influential 'Report on the Public Museums of the British Isles', in which he criticised the nation's museums in the most severe terms for not fulfilling their role of either exciting the public or providing a useful resource for students. One of his strongest criticisms was that collections had been assembled without a clear purpose and that this had resulted in museums becoming 'storehouses of miscellaneous collections and objects', with too many attempting to emulate national collections without the space or quality of objects to do so. More scathingly, he went so far as to observe that 'heterogeneous jumbles of "curios" still survive in a good many parts of the country and masquerade as museums'.¹⁷ Miers wrote to Arthur in 1929, following a brief visit he had made to Lincoln. Arthur had not been there to meet him personally, but Miers commended his work, as the Lincoln museum seemingly avoided making many of the errors of judgement and presentation that Miers disparaged:

"I was much impressed by the excellent use you have made of a difficult building, and the admirable order into which you have got your well-labelled and well-exhibited collection. I can assure you that I spent a very pleasant half an hour in your Museum, and am very glad to have made its personal acquaintance. You have been so wise in concentrating on subjects of local interest."¹⁸

The focus on local material that Miers (and indeed others) complemented was integral to Arthur's development of the collections from the outset. This Lincolnshire focus also extended to Arthur's promotion of the museum and of local history and archaeology, aiming to inspire and educate the wider public in a way that other curators did not always prioritise. For example, the museum had a plan of the city at the entrance with places of interest marked, encouraging people to explore the historic environment at a time when tourist information boards did not exist.¹⁹ He engaged in a prolific series of articles in the local press, using his own illustrations and an engaging writing style (for example entitling a piece on the civilian *vicus* at Roman Lincoln 'Like a YMCA Canteen for the Entertainment of Roman Soldiers').²⁰ The long running articles served as a vehicle for both disseminating news of recent finds and museum acquisitions, and for more general education about ancient history. His appeals for people to report archaeological discoveries and not damage finds through inappropriate cleaning are still being echoed to this day, and led to many discoveries being recorded and often donated to the museum. The quality and quantity of Arthur's output was acknowledged by the media itself, the Echo printing a note in 1928 commenting that it was rare for a non-journalist to have contributed so much for so long.²¹

Arthur's popular media articles became the basis for a series of published booklets on subjects such as the 'Roman Antiquities in the City and County Museum', 'Coins of the Roman period found in Lincolnshire' and 'A Catalogue of the Town and Trade Tokens of Lincolnshire issued in the 17th Century'. Numerous letters in The Collection's archives attest to the popularity of these booklets with praise for them arriving from across the country, including from eminent archaeologists. The first booklet on Roman antiquities sold 600 copies in a fortnight despite not being advertised.²²

Arthur was not only involved in local issues, but also with the growing museum profession nationally. He actively participated in the Museums Association, and was one of the first curators to receive its Diploma. He attended his first national conference in 1909 and presented a paper at the 1911 conference on the importance of photography in recording the historic urban landscape in the face of rampant development.²³ He was elected to the Council for the first time in 1913²⁴, and at the 1921 (Paris) and 1922 (Leicester) conferences he was respectively elected to the Executive Council²⁵ and made Vice President.²⁶

Arthur's standing in the museum community is demonstrated by a 1929 letter from Linnaeus Hope, the Director of the Carlisle Museum and Art Gallery. Hope wrote that he was being forced by the Town Council to retire on reaching the age of 65, despite the Museum Committee's wish to retain his services. His main gripe, however, was that his replacement was to be the town's librarian and he bemoaned the appointment of someone who not only lacked the requisite skills to manage the museum but was to receive a higher wage. He begged Arthur to use his influence within the Museums Association to stop them going to Carlisle for the annual conference in protest at this demeaning of the role of the professional museum curator.²⁷ Ironically, a similar situation would occur following Arthur's own retirement in 1934. The Museums Journal highlighted that the advertisement for the position of Director of Lincoln Libraries, Museums and Art Gallery stressed the importance of library management experience, but made no mention of museum or gallery curatorial skills. The Journal wryly enquired, 'is it to be presumed that this was regarded as insignificant?'

Arthur was not alone at the museum, and suitable tribute must be paid to two men in particular who worked alongside him. William Scotney had been appointed as Caretaker in 1905 to begin preparing the Greyfriars building for its new purpose. He would work alongside Arthur for the following 34 years until Arthur's retirement, retiring himself a year later and dying four years after that in 1940.²⁸ Sadly, Mr Scotney's input into the development of the museum has not been well recorded, but one anecdote is worthy of retelling, if only as an indicator of social attitudes at the time. A visitor to the museum in 1929 was shocked to find four young people causing trouble for the caretaker, with one even smoking a cigarette. When questioned about it, Mr Scotney replied that he sometimes had to be positively rude to people before they could be induced to behave properly. The majority of them, he said, were country people in the city for the day.²⁹

In 1927 the museum appointed a 'technical assistant', a 15 year old schoolboy called Tom Baker, on a wage of 10s a week.³⁰ This was prompted by a reorganisation of the local authority due to the merging of the museum, libraries and the newly opened Usher Gallery. Baker would later recall that he was chosen out of six applicants, because he was the only

one who 'understood the language'.³¹ He put that down to his own father, who had developed his interest in archaeology when he was a boy and had taken him to building works in the city. He would go on to be Arthur's eventual successor as both curator of the museum and secretary of the LNU, and a hugely influential and pioneering figure in Lincolnshire museums, archaeology and natural history over the following half century. At the centenary of the LNU in 1993, he recalled that Arthur was a 'great character', who 'used to smoke a pipe and the first thing he did in the morning was to light it and the last thing at night was to put it out.' He described his predecessor as an 'all round naturalist' and a 'dedicated man'.³²

That Arthur had perhaps begun to slow down in his latter years at the museum is highlighted by the archaeologist C.W. Phillips, recalling his experience of meeting Arthur in 1929:

*"The Curator, Arthur Smith, was an elderly man who sat, wreathed in rank tobacco smoke, in a tiny office. He was kindly and was ready to talk and share any knowledge he possessed but he was obviously nearing his retirement and it was my impression that news of the discovery of the Ark of the Covenant on the Wolds would not have shifted him from Lincoln City."*³³

Arthur's personal life, retirement and death

Although little documentation about Arthur's personal life survives, it seems he lived a happy and contented family life in Lincoln. On arriving in the city in 1906, the family first lived at 17 Claremont Street, off Monks Road, before moving to 133 Monks Road in 1912/13. By 1919 the family had moved again to a larger house at 64 Mount Street, off Burton Road, where they would remain until Arthur's retirement.

Arthur's wife Laura had been a dressmaker in Grimsby, but does not appear to have worked while in Lincoln outside of being a wife and mother. She suffered from serious illness in 1926 when she was 54, as evidenced by a letter to Arthur in The Collection's archives, which detailed how the Mayoress of Boston had read out the text of a lecture on his behalf when he was unable to attend in person due to caring for her.³⁴

Arthur had left his father's business behind him many years before, but his own eldest son would follow in his footsteps. The younger Arthur Smith was working as a Junior Assistant at Lincoln Central library in 1911, when he was 17 years old. He was curator of the Newark Municipal Museum from 1918 to 1960, the beginning of his museum career overlapping with the end of his father's by a number of years. In the introduction to his 1927 booklet, 'Guide to the Roman and pre-Roman Antiquities in the Museum', he thanked his father 'for tuition and an enthusiastic approach to the work of museums.'³⁵

Arthur retired from the museum and as secretary of the LNU in 1935. He had been made President of the latter in 1934 in recognition of his service, and received honorary life membership upon his retirement. Newspaper coverage of his retirement was glowing in its praise for his achievements, the Echo commenting that 'he will have every reason to lay down his task with a feeling of satisfaction and with the knowledge that he has really accomplished something'.³⁶ His role in building the museum from nothing led to the Echo

giving him the epithet used in the title of this article – he was indeed the ‘man who made the museum’.³⁷

Following his retirement, Arthur and Laura initially moved to Lowestoft in Suffolk, but returned to Grimsby a few years later where Laura died in 1943, aged 72. The following year Arthur returned to East Anglia, to Beccles, where he would see out his days, dying in 1947 at the age of 78. The date of Arthur's death, April 15th 1947, brought a strange coincidence, as it occurred the very day after the death of a lifelong friend of his, Dr William Wallace. Wallace, a native of Berwick on Tweed and a keen entomologist, had moved to Grimsby in 1902 and sought out Arthur as the secretary of the Grimsby and District Naturalists Society. Wallace joined the LNU in 1905, a year after Arthur, and was elected President in 1911.

Obituaries to Arthur were penned by Tom Baker in both the LNU Transactions and the Museums Journal. In both, he praised Arthur's lifetime of work, writing that 'Mr Smith was the life and soul of this Union'³⁸ and noting that 'although his interest was at first in the natural sciences, he soon became a very competent archaeologist and his pioneer research work in the city and county formed a foundation for subsequent investigations.'³⁹

Tom Baker wrote in 1993 that he supposed that nobody remembered Arthur Smith.⁴⁰ I hope that with this article his contribution to Lincolnshire's museums, archaeological heritage and natural history may in future be given greater recognition. The foundations that he laid continue to affect the daily work of his museum to this day.

Notes for part two

¹ Lincolnshire History and Archaeology, Volume 20 (1985), pg 6.

² Lincoln, Rutland and Stamford Mercury, March 15th 1907.

³ Specifically the Museum of Lincolnshire Life and the Usher Gallery. The objects transferred to the Usher Gallery would later come full circle when The Collection was created and the two institutions linked.

⁴ Transactions of the Lincolnshire Naturalists Union, Volume 1, pg 106.

⁵ Transactions of the Lincolnshire Naturalists Union, Volume 1, pg 164.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ The City of Lincoln Directory 1913, pg xlii.

⁸ Unpublished letter from G.D. Hardinge-Tyler, Royal Archaeological Institute to A Smith, September 3rd 1909.

⁹ Chronicle, August 14th 1908.

¹⁰ Leader, October 9th 1926.

¹¹ Chronicle, May 28th 1909.

¹² Gazette, April 10th 1910.

¹³ Lincolnshire Echo, December 6th 1905.

¹⁴ Chronicle, April 5th 1907.

¹⁵ Lincolnshire Echo, October 30th 1907.

¹⁶ Leader, March 7th 1908; see also Chronicle, March 6th 1908 and Gazette, March 7th 1908.

¹⁷ Miers, Sir Henry, *A Report on the Public Museums of the British Isles (other than the national museums)*, 1928.

¹⁸ Unpublished letter from Sir A Miers to A Smith, April 2nd 1929, The Collection museum history files.

¹⁹ Chronicle, February 28th 1930.

²⁰ Echo, February 28th 1929.

²¹ Echo, March 16th 1928.

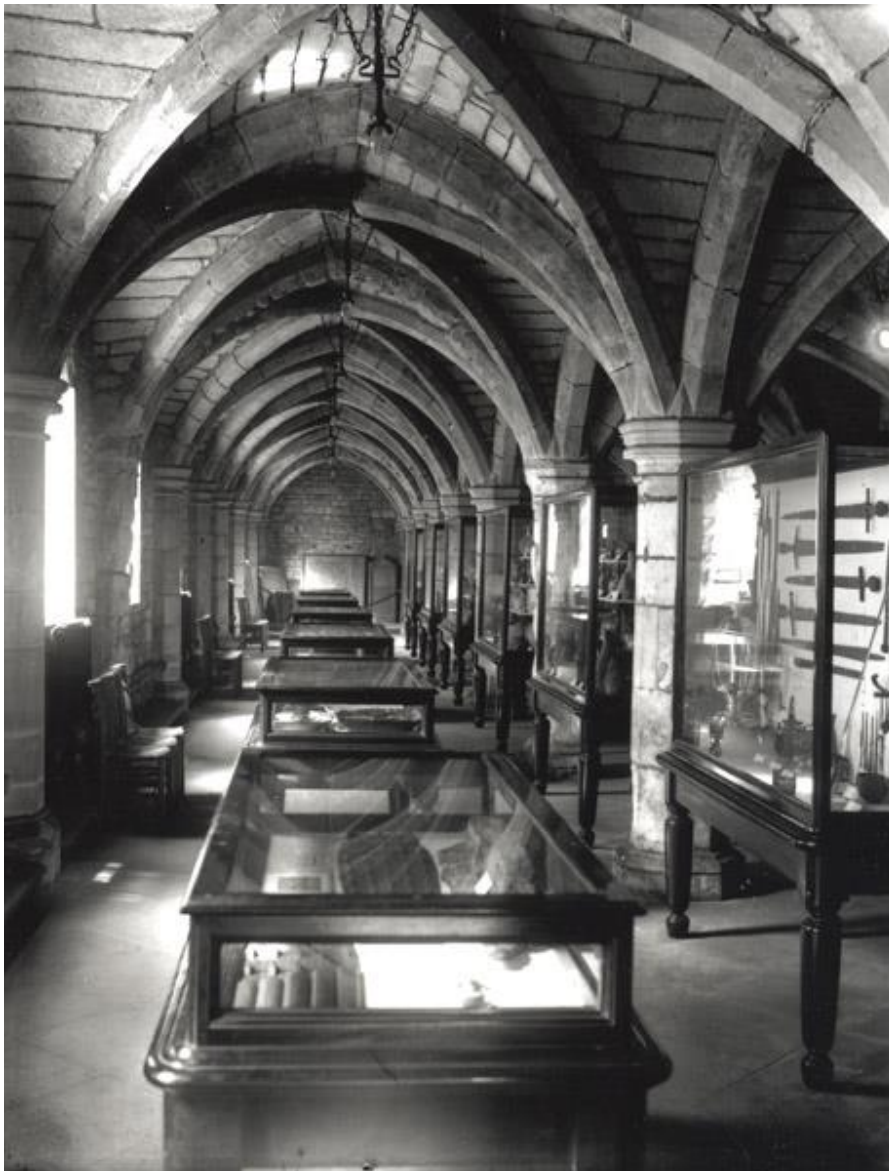
²² Gazette, August 15th 1908.

²³ Museums Journal, Volume 11, 1911-1912, pg 32.

²⁴ 'The Museums Conference at Hull, July 1913', Hull Museum Publications No 101, October 1913.

²⁵ Museums Journal, Volume 21, 1921-1922, pg 47.

- ²⁶ Museums Journal, Volume 22, 1922-1923, pg 70.
²⁷ Unpublished letter from L Hope to A Smith, May 22nd 1929, The Collection museum history files.
²⁸ Lincolnshire Echo, January 25th 1940.
²⁹ Echo, May 28th 1929.
³⁰ Lincolnshire History and Archaeology, Vol 20 (1985), pg 6.
³¹ Ibid.
³² Ostler, Jane and Key, Roger, Centenary Transactions of the Lincolnshire Naturalists Union 1893-1993, pg 29.
³³ Phillips, C.W., 1984, Memories of Lincolnshire, in Field, N and White, A (Eds.), *A Prospect of Lincolnshire* (the editors).
³⁴ Unpublished letter from Boston Council to A Smith, May 13 1926, The Collection museum history files.
³⁵ Smith, Arthur, *Guide to the Roman and Pre-Roman antiquities in the Museum*, Newark Municipal Museum Publication No 2, August 1927, pg 7.
³⁶ Echo, December 14th 1934.
³⁷ Ibid.
³⁸ Transactions of the Lincolnshire Naturalists Union, Volume 12, pg 49.
³⁹ Museums Journal, Volume 47 (1947), pg 54.
⁴⁰ Ostler, J. and Key, R., Centenary Transactions of the Lincolnshire Naturalists Union 1893-1993, pg 29.



‘Greyfriars in the 1930s’.
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'Formal portrait of Arthur Smith, 1930s'.
Copyright Lincolnshire County Council



'Arthur Smith on his last day at the museum'.
Lincolnshire Echo, January 15th 1935.