

North Herts Museum update: Wedding Dress Exhibition

We've been involved in a partnership project since last year with Stevenage Museum and the British Schools Museum called [Museum Champions](#). It is funded by Arts Council England, and allowed the three museums to appoint a Volunteer Development Officer. The aim has been to diversify and strengthen our volunteer programmes at each museum, try new things, and share what we've all learned. North Hertfordshire Museum recruited a group of 35 young people aged 14-18 from two Hitchin secondary schools to explore youth volunteering. They worked in groups to think up events to promote the new museum, and one of their first events was a pop up museum in the Market Place on 19 March. The students designed and distributed the poster, devised handling activities and attended on the day. Over 200 people stopped to chat and many put their name down for an e-mailing list to be kept informed about progress towards opening.

One of the groups of young people has worked hard over several weeks to prepare a small display to be part of the 'Flowers and Wedding Dresses through the Ages' event at St Mary's Church, Hitchin on 25th and 26th June. The girls, from year 12 at Hitchin Girls' School, are interested in going on to university to study a mixture of history of art, history and English Literature. They wrote labels for four wedding dresses, loaned to the display from the Learning Collections of North Hertfordshire and Stevenage Museums. They also helped to set up the display in the church, padding mannequins to give the dresses the right shape.



The girls practising padding the mannequins for display



Some of the finished displays in St Mary's Church, Hitchin. L-R: An Edwardian tea-dress-style wedding dress and a ballerina style wedding dress from 1956.

The volunteers have enjoyed their experiences so far, particularly the chance to work with others, planning events and working in groups. It gave them a chance to see what life is like for adults working in museums, and to study artefacts.

The group are now taking a break during the exam season and will be back at the museum again just before the summer holiday.

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