

MuseumsMonthly

The latest news and announcements from Southend Museums Service.

This Issue...

Reopening our venues!

After being closed for most of 2020 we are excited to be reopening in May.

Beecroft Art Gallery News

Curator's Choice

Object in Focus... Springtime!

A bright 1960s leaflet advertising Southend-on-Sea's beautiful parks and gardens in springtime.

Return of a C17th gun carriage

Southend Museums has seen the delivery of a beautiful 17th century gun carriage from The London shipwreck

Night Sky

This month's planetarium pick is Leo and the Lyrids

Spring cleaning our sites

A glimpse behind the scenes as we prepare our sites for reopening

Southend Museums

Southend Central Museum

The Beecroft Art Gallery

Prittlewell Priory

Southchurch Hall

www.southendmuseums.co.uk



Central Museum on Victoria Avenue

Reopening our venues

Our venues will be reopening on Tuesday 18th May, subject to government guidance.

Our venues will be following our summer opening hours:

Central Museum 11-5

Beecroft Art Gallery 11-5

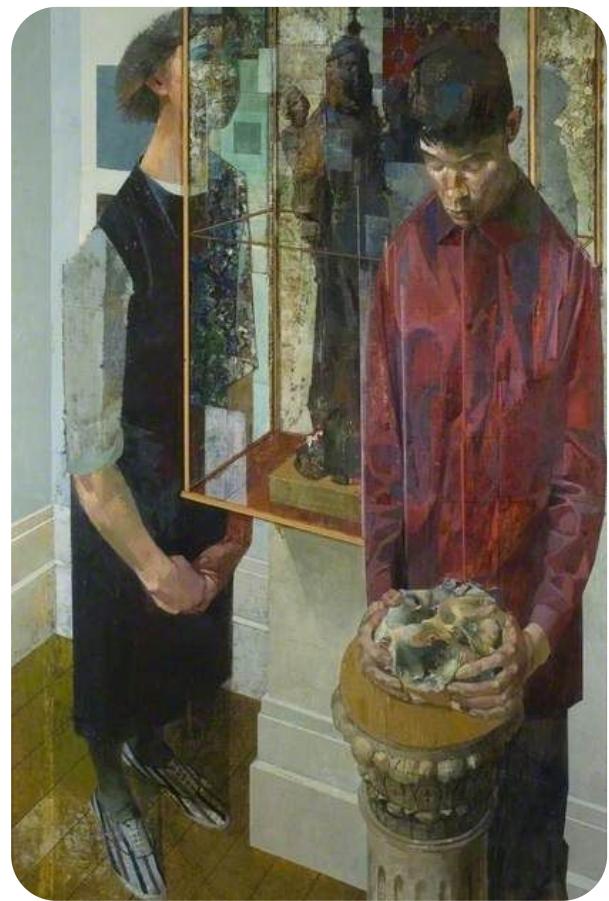
Prittlewell Priory 11-5, Visitor Centre 10-5

Southchurch Hall 11-4

Please be patient with us as we navigate safe and responsible opening of our venues. Keep an eye on our social media channels for lots of exciting collections content in the meantime.

We can't wait to welcome you back to our buildings!

Curator's Choice



'Proximity' by Norman Blamey

This month's selection is a piece which gave our art curator his love of art: 'Proximity' by Norman Blamey.

Proximity is a striking work, measuring over 5 feet in length, and depicting a scene of two figures standing in a gallery; one, a woman in a long smock dress, peering into a display case, the other, a man in a bright red shirt, clutching a flint rock on a stone pillar. A puzzling depiction, almost dreamlike but arresting and clinical, with the obvious guide lines in pencil and geometric shapes confirming this. It's adorned with finely cut timber, fixed to the canvas and the thick layers of paint, to which Blamey was known for, adding a lifelike, three dimensional quality that contrasts with the stretched limbs, that add a sense of surreal.

The work was purchased from the Royal Academy and added to the Beecroft collection in 1966 and it was displayed in the entrance, in our old home in Station Road, for many years. The connection meant that Blamey was a regular visitor and on one occasion a selector for the annual Essex Open.

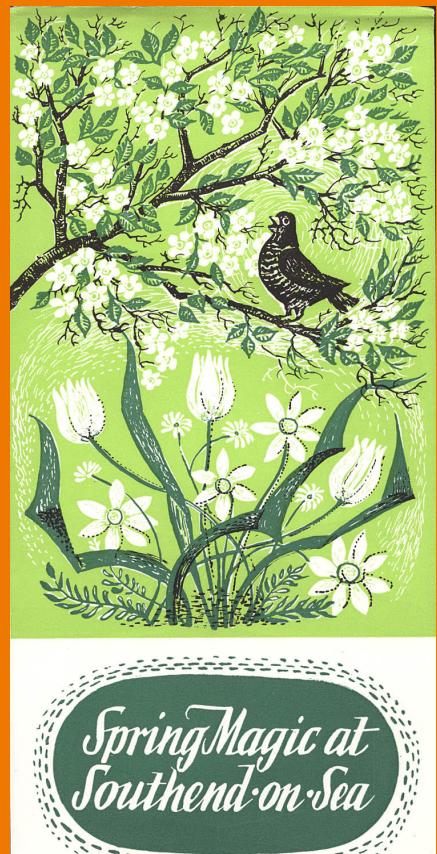
'Proximity' is currently on display in Colour and you can take a look yourself from May 18th.

Object in Focus

With the beginning of spring we thought we would give you a spring-themed object this month!

A 1960s leaflet advertising the joys of Southend's parks and gardens in springtime. The leaflet gives directions to all the parks - including Prittlewell Square, The Cliffs at Westcliff and Leigh, Chalkwell Park and Priory Park.

On the back of the leaflet it tells us that 'Flower time at Southend-on-Sea does not end with the Spring, but continues right through the season until late Autumn. The Chalkwell Park Rose Garden is particularly attractive and features the newest varieties of roses. There are many lovely parks, public gardens, and pleasure grounds with beautiful floral displays...'



Return of a 17th Century gun carriage



Last year Southend Museums had a very exciting delivery... an almost complete and intact wooden gun carriage from the 17th Century English warship The London! This image was taken in store recently whilst the carriage is still stored safely in its crate.

The carriage was recovered in the summer of 2015 and was sent to York Archaeological Trust for conservation. The gun carriage is an important part of our knowledge of England's social and naval history. The gun carriage is constructed of several wooden elements, all elm, and measures around 1.57m long.

The London was a 76-gun second-rate ship of the line in the Navy of the Commonwealth of England originally built at Chatham Dockyard and launched in 1656. In 1665 tragedy struck when the London was accidentally blown up and sank in the Thames Estuary.

The London is a Protected Wreck managed by Historic England. The wreck is at on-going risk of loss through erosion and a licensed programme of surface recovery and limited excavation is in place.

Leo and the Lyrids

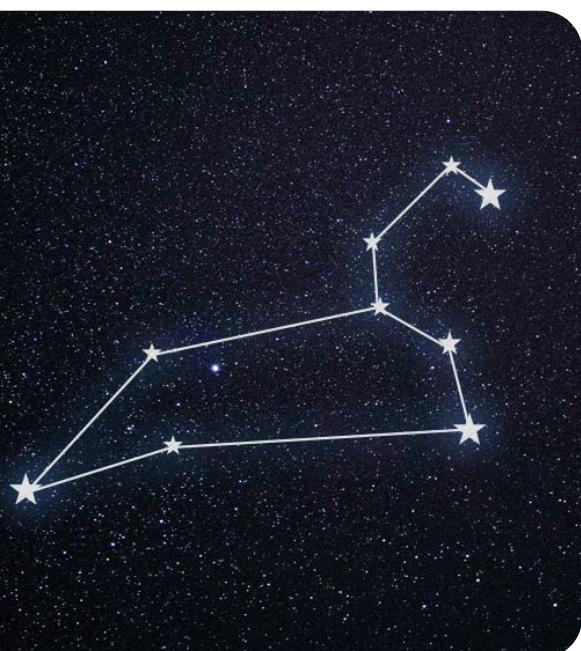
The Lion in the Sky

In Greek mythology, this group of stars was seen as the Lion of Nemea, killed by Heracles in one of his twelve labours.

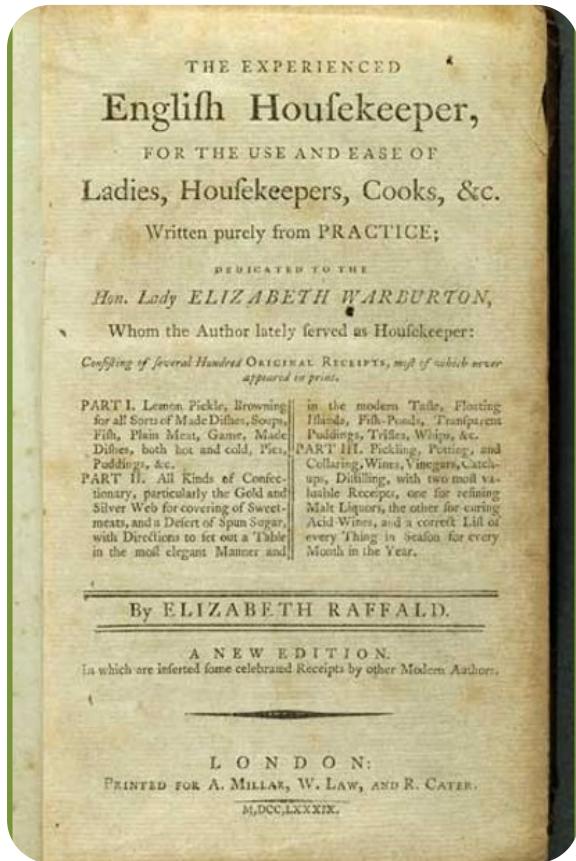
Leo is one of the largest and most ancient of the 88 constellations and is easy to spot in the night sky.

Looking south, Leo lies between the constellations of Virgo and Cancer. Look for the coat-hanger or sickle-shaped head of the lion.

This month also sees the Lyrid meteor shower between the 13th and 29th of April. The 22nd will see it at its peak. The best time to see shooting stars is from midnight onwards but do look out anytime after dark and see how many you can spot!



Spring cleaning our sites



Housekeeping manual, 1789

As we gear up to reopening our museum sites once more, there are some tasks that need to be carried out and conservation housekeeping is one such job that ensures our historic buildings continue to look their best. Southchurch Hall and Prittlewell Priory are two of our sites that benefit from this form of preventative conservation and with the right training, is something that our volunteers have enjoyed helping us with over the years.

The earliest records of housekeeping date back to the 16th century and today we follow the National Trust's guide to caring for historic interiors and objects. So why do we make all this effort with cleaning? Among the most common enemies in historic houses are dust and dirt which, if left unchecked, will settle on objects and the surfaces within the building itself.

These layers of dirt can attract moisture and insect pests, such as furniture beetle and moths, which in turn begin to feast upon the materials that make up the objects, often causing irreparable damage. The particles in dust are often abrasive and if left to settle and combine with moisture in the environment, create layers of hard, concreted material which can build up, obscuring fine detailing and damaging fragile surfaces.

The need to keep our historic properties clean is a key element of preventative conservation, but this must be measured with the fact that we should never overdo this task and certainly not using domestic cleaning products. We use gentle cleaning techniques and tools such as soft brushes and microfibre cloths and our staff are guided by our own bespoke housekeeping manuals with a defined cleaning rotation in place so that a piece of furniture or an object is never over-cleaned.

When our buildings were privately owned, the interiors and most precious objects were only left unprotected or uncovered when guests were entertained. Now, as part of our museums service and open to the visiting public, we have a duty of care to preserve these precious time capsules for future generations to enjoy and we are very much looking forward to welcoming visitors back into our buildings very soon.

