

SUGGESTIONS FOR SETTING UP A 'FRIENDS' INFORMATION & WELCOME DESK

by *Mary Lambert*

- 1:** Seek permission from the Museum's Director.
- 2:** Seek discussion and advice from Education Office.
- 3:** Circulate potential volunteers with proposals and indicate commitment required (e.g. one session of 2-3 hours per fortnight) and details of initial training.
- 4:** Discuss and formulate training days (say 2 or 3 days : 10.00am – 4.00pm) with Education Office.

Possible topics for inclusion:

- 1: Past history of building;
- 2: Formulation of museum;
- 3: Key figures in development;
- 4: Provenance of collections;
- 5: Structure of museum's service;
- 6: Who's who of current staff;
- 7: Who's who of Friends;
- 8: Key objects and themes in collections and suggested routes of exploration;
- 9: Familiarisation of exhibits and areas of interest represented;
- 10: Public relations - tips on dealing with the public's enquiries, positive approach to complaints etc. Importance of friendly welcome and attitudes;
- 11: Familiarisation of systems provided for volunteers to use;
- 12: Introduction to background reading, i.e. essential training books and leaflets for new members in Loan Pack;
- 13: Guidance in enrolment procedures for Friends.

5: Ask those interested to fill in application form (our example on pages 3 and 4).

6: Appoint someone to draw up rota, taking availability times from application forms and personal checking. (See rota preparation notes on page 2.)

7: Circulate completed rota with name and address list of others involved in order to facilitate 'swaps'. Reliability and responsibility in making 'swaps', if unable to keep duty date, to be emphasised.

8: Establish regular monthly lectures i.e. last Tuesday of every month, 2.00pm – 3.00pm. Speakers usually from staff on different aspects of collections, occasionally outside trips of local history interest, mainly to keep up to date with displays, exhibitions etc.

9: Consider Annual Social function, buffet lunch etc.

10: Publish quarterly newsletter to include details of monthly lectures plus rota for forthcoming months.

11: Inaugurate system of filing on table and access to it, possibly trolley with files and display boards; secure storage space when not in use.

12: Desk essentials:

- 1: Notebook and pens for comment and messages;
- 2: Attendance book to sign in on duty;
- 3: Loan pack (see 4.12) and loan pack record book;
- 4: 'Guidelines' book for service at desk;
- 5: Clear membership/renewal procedures;
- 6: Files on Friends and museum collection, collection checklist etc;
- 7: Scrapbook for newspaper cuttings;
- 8: Telephone/intercom for communicating with office without leaving desk.

13: Consider badges for volunteers.

14: Establish regular training sessions for new volunteers/ refresher for existing ones - possibly every two years with 'Question and Answer' sessions in intervening years; (i.e. imaginary or real questions from visitors and correct answers and access to filing systems).

15: Don't be surprised if most enquiries relate to the whereabouts of the 'Loos!'

SUGGESTIONS FOR PREPARATION OF ROTA

by Josephine Mundy

1: Calculate how many volunteers will be needed to cover the number of days you propose to have the table open, at two at a time, two sessions a day. If you begin with two days a week and ask for a commitment of once a fortnight, you will need.

2: I have a card index for volunteers with name, address and telephone number, and a temporary renewable card (scrap cardboard adequate) with name and days available, preferred times am and pm and after making each timetable enter here what has been allocated to each person - this serves as a useful method of checking against your timetable; you can also enter here when people say they will be away for a fortnight and allow new extra days to make up and will obviate too much swapping around.

3: The most useful volunteers are those who are completely flexible and don't mind what day or time - but most have other fixed milestones in their week and have to be catered for.

4: The rota should be circulated (suggest with newsletter) at least in the month before it becomes operative, to give people a chance to swap if necessary.