

# Catering

**Nearly seven years ago Chris Brown of TurpinSmale Catering Consultants contributed articles in the AIM Bulletin for museum café operators. The world of catering has changed, and the company's Charles Manners is taking a look at what museums should be aware of today**

## Food for thought

### 1. How catering is changing

The biggest change in catering has been the growth in coffee shops, with major brands Costa, Starbucks and Caffè Nero leading the way. Sales across the market are 10% higher than last year as the café culture tightens its grip, and these brands are influencing the direction of travel for all cafés.

Everyone now sees the importance of cafés in museums, not only to provide a space for visitors to relax and enhance their visit, but also as a commercial opportunity. A good café can increase the overall museum dwell time and provide the glue for the overall experience.

What is also evident is that consumers' expectations of quality products, well presented, has continued to evolve, with an increasing emphasis on innovation and new products, great displays and fresh home-made products.

Tripadvisor has become (like it or hate it) the best mystery shopper measure, and it is important to address and to respond to posts, in particular any negative comments.



Well run and attractively presented cafés can also command premium pricing, which adds to the visitor spend, which ranges across the country from £1 to £4 per visitor, depending on the offer, location and local competition.

Staffing remains and will continue to be challenging. However, well trained, friendly and engaging staff make all the difference, and it is an area that can never be taken for granted.

Museums planning changes or refurbishment should consider a number of areas for the future:

- Catering staff should ideally have access to good quality staff changing rooms and toilets; too often this is not the case. If you look after staff they will look after customers!
- Interior design (furniture, lighting, colours) and connection to the museum ethos and mission is all too often missing, with the café space open and too clinical. Watch what's happening in the high street where both brands and individual operators cleverly weave their messaging into not only the design but the food offer; use humour and fun to add interest.
- Additional purchase points, e.g. mobiles, coffee and ice cream carts, strategically located at the entrance to the museum will drive sales and are unlikely to dilute existing business.
- Outside patios and terraces, visible to all visitors, well designed, with quality outdoor furniture and umbrellas are a significant draw particularly during the summer.
- The use of technology will in the future play a much greater role, from EPOS information, to mobile tills, customer self-ordering and payment, and promotions to generate sales; we are at the beginning of a fast changing period.
- The need to demonstrate what you are doing for the environment and the less fortunate is and will become important e.g. food banks, food provenance and waste.

**Next issues: food and menu changes, and the use of outsourcing and volunteers.**

contributed an initial £77,000 to begin a comprehensive redevelopment of the 16th century moot hall, before the museum trust applies for a full grant. The museum houses Roman and Anglo Saxon artefacts and records from the Tudor period when the hall was built, and celebrates the lives of local figures such as Benjamin Britten and Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, the first female

# In Brief

## Uncertainty for EU museum workers . . .

AIM has expressed concern about the future of non-UK EU citizens working in independent museums with the current uncertainty surrounding their future following Brexit. The association was present at a roundtable event convened by the Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) in February, attended by representatives from a range of organisations, including Arts Council England, Heritage Lottery Fund, the National Museum Directors Council and the Museums Association. Some national and flagship museums have expressed concern about loss of vital staff including specialists, curators, researchers and people working in front of house roles. AIM executive secretary Tamalie Newbery told *Museums Journal*: "It is particularly concerning to be potentially losing this element of the workforce at a time when many museums are thinking about being more diverse and international. This situation only applies to some members of course." DCMS is currently in regular dialogue with the Department for Exiting the European Union.

## . . . and culture after Brexit

The Culture, Media & Sport Select Committee has opened an inquiry into the impact of Brexit on the creative industries, tourism and the single market. Sir Peter Bazalgette, giving evidence on his last day as chair of Arts Council England, said "... post leaving the EU we are going to have to be more open to the world than ever before, and more open to the world's culture. I think creative industries have an incredible role to play in that because of the way soft power helps our trade and political relationships across the world." Meanwhile, the Heritage Alliance, of which AIM is a member, is working closely with the Government and the sector to explore concerns and opportunities following the publication of the Brexit White Paper. The Alliance will also be gathering evidence and highlighting current funding and regulations which are important to the sector.

## BAfM 2017 Robert Logan Award

The British Association of Friends of Museums (BAfM) has launched its Robert Logan Award 2017, which includes a £500 prize and is open to people under the age of 30 working in the heritage sector. Applicants should be making an outstanding contribution to their museum, including attracting wider audiences. They must submit an outline of their project by 1 May 2017, with a full submission by 1 August. Further details are at

# What else . . .

- Suffolk's rich coastal heritage will be brought to life using virtual reality and an £800,000 revamp at **Aldeburgh Museum**, housed in one of Britain's longest-serving