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August 2015

The summer holiday season is Nottingham Castle's busiest time and the team at the Castle have enjoyed welcoming thousands of visitors over the past few weeks.

We've also been beavering away with work on the Castle transformation. Here's what we have been up to over the last month:

- A Geotechnical Study has been completed on the feasibility of the proposed new lift, which will enable visitors to travel through the Castle Rock.
- Geological, arboreal, ecological and topographical surveys are now being undertaken on site. A team of ecologists are surveying the bat population of the Castle site.
- The Project Team has been busy reviewing the Conservation Management Plan for the Castle site. This provides an assessment of the values of different architectural elements, details any special permissions required regarding potential works and provides recommendations for future conservation and management.
- Plans are in place for students from Nottingham Trent University students to get involved in work on the Castle transformation as part of their courses. For example, students on the Museum and Heritage Management course will conduct research into how visitors will move around the site.
- Members of the Project and Design Teams enjoyed a fascinating tour of the Whitworth Gallery in Manchester, which has just completed a £15 million refurbishment and won several architectural awards. Colleagues were particularly interested in the new environmental conditioning and lighting systems, as well as the response from visitors to the improvement works.



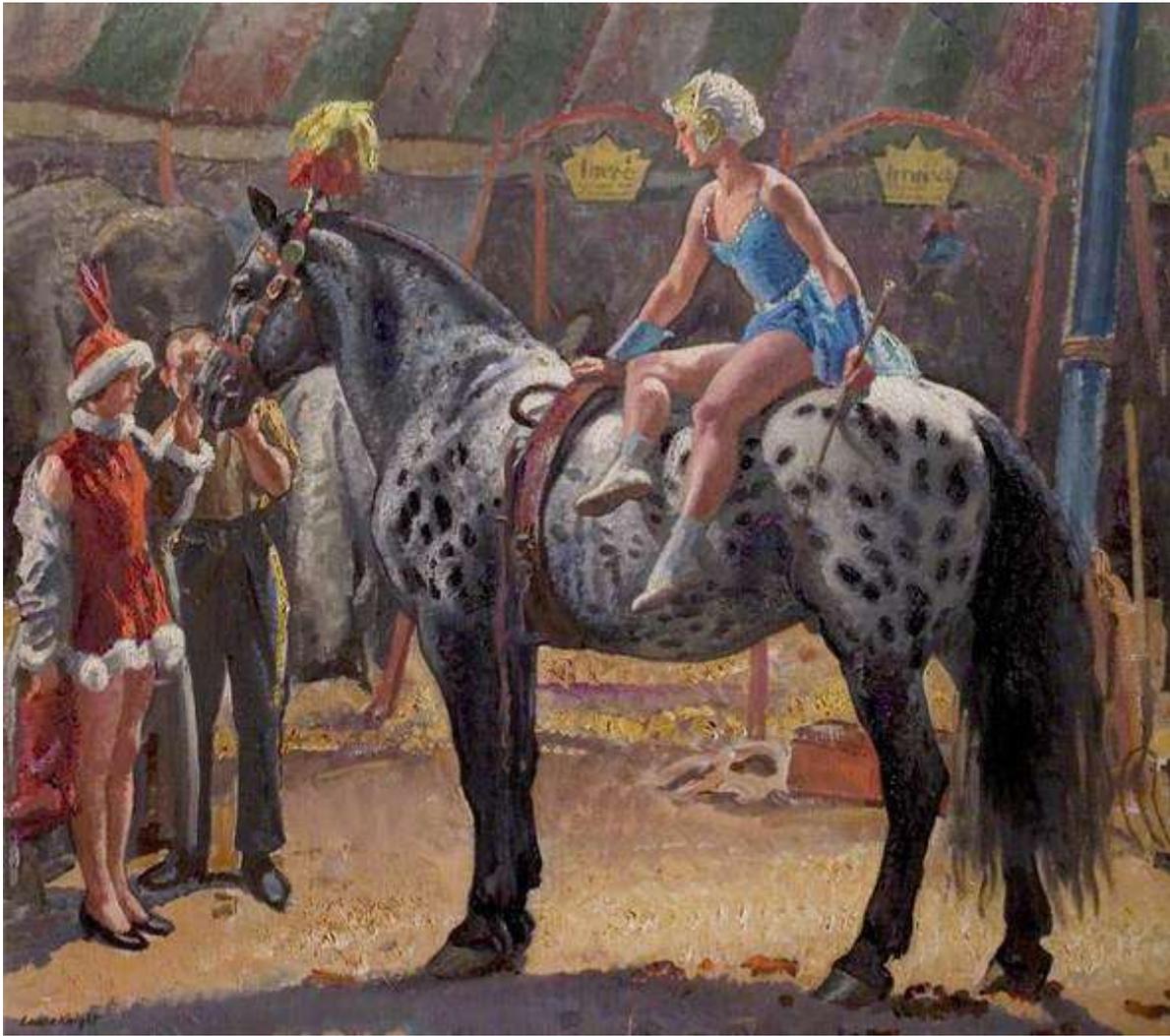


Profile: Deborah Dean, Visual Arts Collections and Exhibitions Manager at Nottingham Castle

“I’ve been at Nottingham Castle since 2007 and my role is to manage the Visual Arts team and programme, including exhibitions, events and the care and display of the City’s collections of Fine Art, Decorative Art, Costume and Textiles. Before this, I was Manager of the former Angel Row Gallery, Nottingham, and of the City Art Gallery & Museum in Worcester.

“My Mum was born in Nottingham and I spent my early years in the Midlands, so my first visit to the Castle was on a school trip, aged seven. I never imagined that I’d work here one day but I think this first visit to an art gallery prompted my love of art and I later studied History of Art History, followed by a postgrad course in Gallery Studies.

“I’ve been lucky to work on many interesting projects over the years but highlights include working for the City Council on the development of the Nottingham Contemporary building, and working with artist Christina Mackie on her sculpture commission for the Castle, thanks to us winning the 2011 Contemporary Art Society Annual Award. However, nothing quite compares with the Castle Transformation Plan and I’m very excited to be leading on the new Creative City galleries.”



Object of the month: Elsie on 'Hassan', 1929-30, Oil on canvas, NCM 1930-49, by Dame Laura Knight (1877-1970)

During a career spanning over seventy years, Laura Knight became the most famous woman artist in Britain, achieving celebrity status and she will certainly feature in the new Creative City galleries that are part of the Castle Transformation. Among her many achievements, she became the first woman artist to be elected to the Royal Academy and was also commissioned to paint the Nuremburg trials at the end of World War II. At a time when many women artists found it difficult to access the same training and opportunities as their male counterparts, she was something of a trail-blazer.

Laura was born in Long Eaton, near Nottingham, to a struggling family involved in the lace trade. She enrolled at the Nottingham School of Art in 1890 when she was just thirteen years old and her early drawings reveal her precocious talent and confidence in line drawing. It was also whilst at the School of Art that she met her future husband, the Nottingham-born painter Harold Knight.

Over her long career, Laura became known in particular for her paintings of gypsy life, circus performers, dancers and the theatre - especially glimpses of life back-stage, 'behind-the-scenes'. This picture, Elsie on 'Hassan', is a fine example and is one of several paintings purchased by Nottingham Castle from the artist during her lifetime. Laura's obsession with the 'big top' began in the 1920s when she visited the circus at Olympia and befriended the impresario Captain Bertram Mills, and in the early 1930s, she joined Carmo's Circus on a tour of Midlands' towns. In this painting, Elsie, a bareback rider, sits on one of the dappled Knapstroper horses known fondly as 'n'lum nuddings'. Both are in costume and appear to be captured at the moment immediately before

or after a performance.



Kids go FREE at Nottingham Castle this Summer!

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Heritage Open Day and Mela Celebrations at Nottingham Castle - 12 & 13 September

Enjoy FREE entry to Nottingham Castle on 12 & 13 September as Nottingham celebrates Heritage Open Day Weekend.

On Sunday 13 September, Mela celebrations will also take place at Nottingham Castle. Don't miss the parade, music, dance and family activities!

