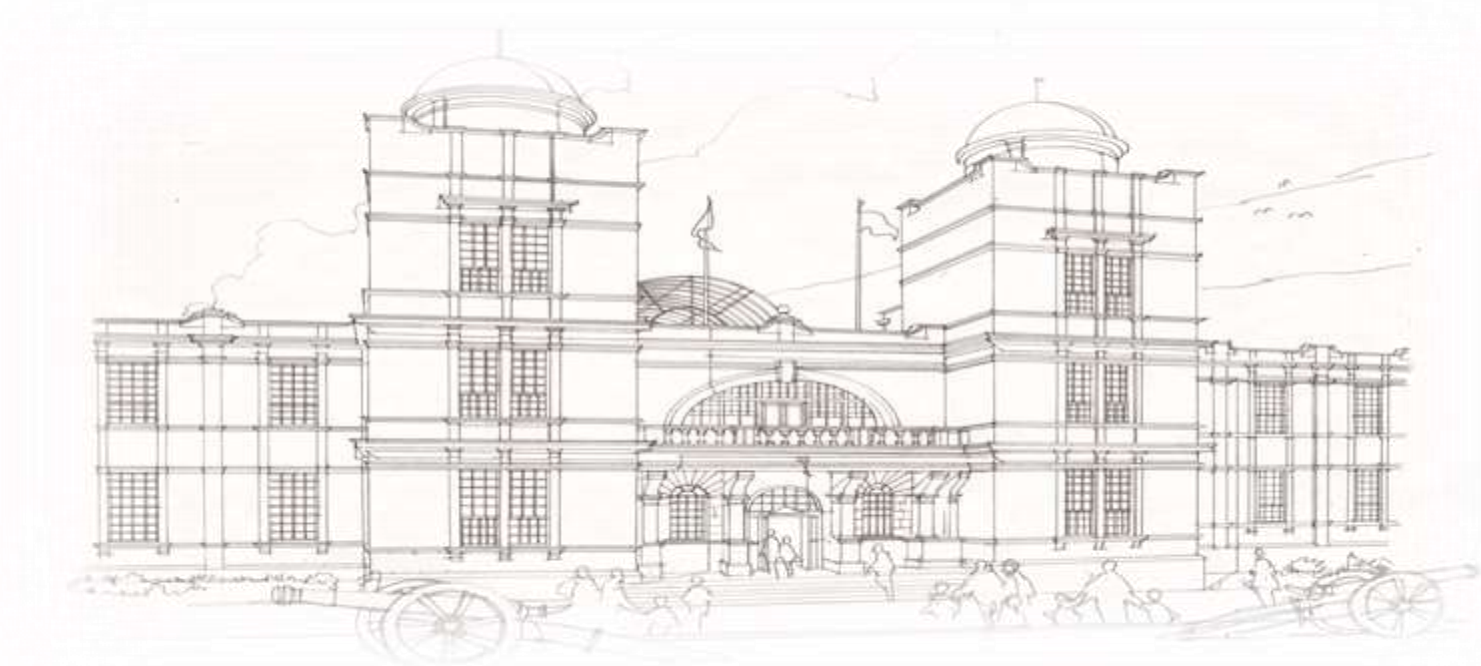


Sustainable Volunteering at the Royal Engineers Museum

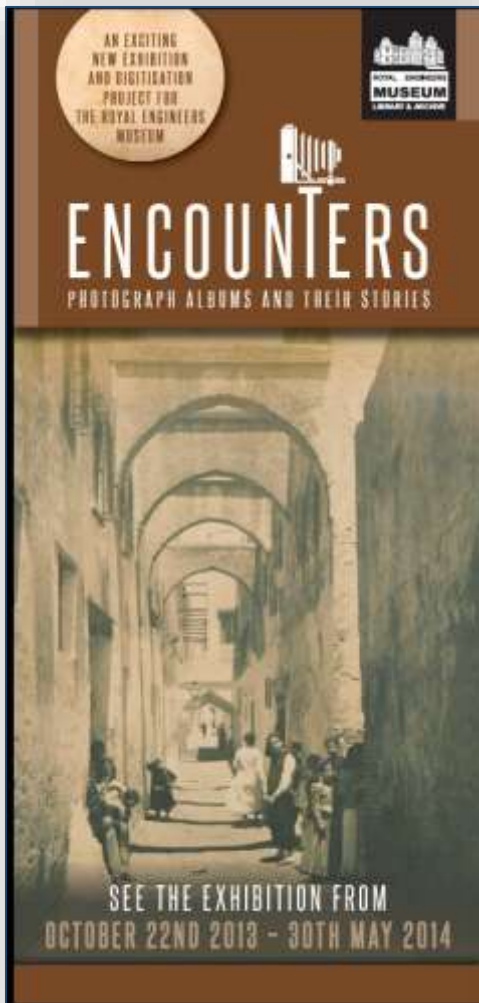


Rebecca Nash, Head Curator

Danielle Sellers, Deputy Curator (Collections Management)



Life at the Royal Engineers Museum...



Volunteer Management 2008-2012....

A growing problem?

- ❖ Friends of the RE Museum
- ❖ Long term volunteers resigning
- ❖ Recruitment difficulties
- ❖ End 2011 had about 2 'curatorial' volunteers; 5 NADFAS; 10 'technical'
- ❖ No single POC for volunteers
- ❖ Multiplicity of **or** no induction procedures
- ❖ No training programme
- ❖ Unmanaged expenses
- ❖ Operation necessity giving volunteers autonomy
- ❖ Near misses!



Development needs

Meeting the challenge

- ❖ Strategic development plan:
 - Collections cataloguing
 - Collections audits
- ❖ New staff structure
- ❖ Improvements in infrastructure:
 - AdLIB
 - Library:Museum connectivity
- ❖ 2012 Audit and new influx of volunteers



Negotiating the Minefield...

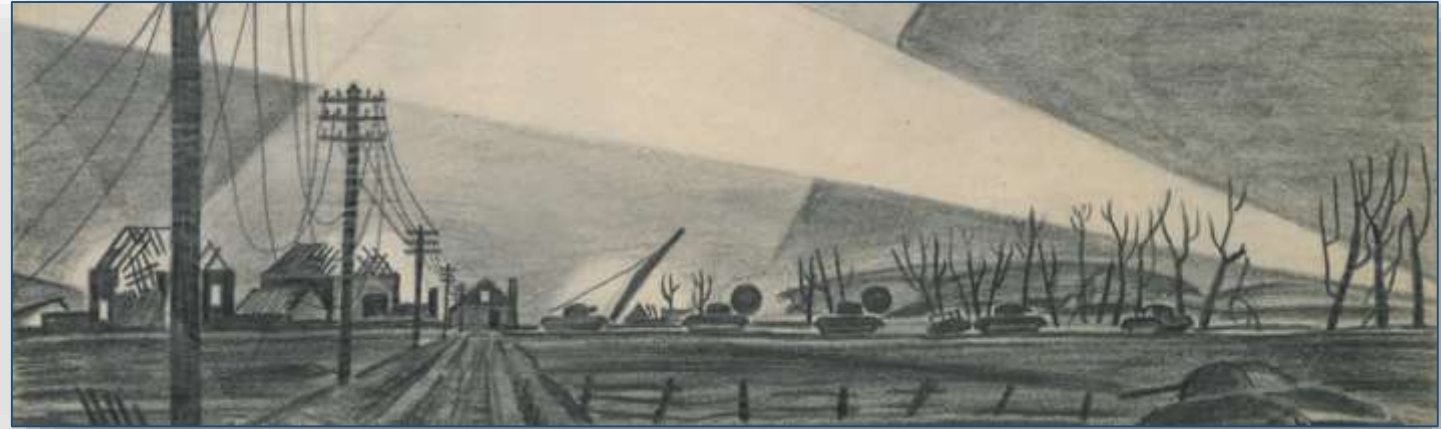
The Project

- ❖ Work with other Museums
- ❖ Discuss issues and problems
 - Helped you realise you were not the only one with problems!
 - Similar issues faced by most places
- ❖ Enabled us to focus on the volunteers and our relationship with them
- ❖ Made you look at possible issues that may arise and how you could deal with them
- ❖ Share problems and solutions
- ❖ Action Learning sessions
- ❖ Great support from Maggie, Barbara and Sarah
- ❖ Nudges when needed and there to answer any questions or offer suggestions



Direction of travel

What we did...



- ❖ Involved current volunteers
 - Questionnaires about experience so far
 - Informal discussion and chats about the project
- ❖ Looked closely at what role volunteers had in the Museum
 - developed role descriptions
 - helped greatly with recruiting
 - managed expectations of volunteers joining the team
 - assured staff that volunteers were not being recruited to replace paid staff
- ❖ Researched what other Museums, Galleries, Charities and Institutions were doing
- ❖ Discussed the project, development and outcomes with the Curatorial Team
- ❖ Consulted the Management and Trustees

Gaining management support

Arguments For...

- ❖ Risk mitigation and management
- ❖ Volunteers are a force multiplier
- ❖ Volunteers are community participation
- ❖ Volunteers are excellent ambassadors
- ❖ Essential that trustees aware of full costs
- ❖ Easier to introduce changes if approved by Trustees

Support Gained...

- ❖ Adoption of strategy strengthened project
- ❖ Allocation of resources:
 - Staff
 - Time
 - Budget



Paperwork, policy and ...PLANNING!!

- ❖ New Strategy, Policy, Agreement and Registration form
- ❖ Role descriptions
- ❖ Recruitment structure in place
- ❖ Three month introduction period
- ❖ Travel expense policy in place
- ❖ Opportunities for additional training and courses
- ❖ Volunteer handbook introduced
- ❖ Information pack for relevant volunteer role
- ❖ Thank you days and Christmas event
- ❖ Volunteer Co-ordinator role



Problems

- ❖ Some issues remain with pre-existing volunteers
- ❖ Role descriptions for pre-existing volunteers are still to be implemented
- ❖ HR were initially against accepting the new paperwork role descriptions
- ❖ Unpopular roles struggle to be filled



Happy staff & happy volunteers!



For the Museum

- ❖ Defined structure and purpose to volunteer programme
- ❖ Streamlined & targeted recruiting
- ❖ Volunteers with appropriate skills & interests
- ❖ Reduction on management time
- ❖ Consistent attendance routine
- ❖ Controlled budget
- ❖ Appropriate management tools
- ❖ Targets achieved

For Volunteers

- ❖ Understanding of Museum's structure & purpose: handbook and info pack
- ❖ One dedicated supervisor
- ❖ Clearly defined expectations: task & role
- ❖ Consistent attendance routine
- ❖ Training & development programme
- ❖ Guilt free travel expenses
- ❖ Thank you days
- ❖ Ownership, purpose and satisfaction

Tips

- ❖ Talk to your staff and volunteers about their experiences
- ❖ Get management on board
- ❖ Read as much as you can about what other museums and institutions using volunteers are doing/their approaches
- ❖ Ask for help and advice
- ❖ Most important, assess your volunteering needs

Websites that may be of use:

<http://www.volunteering.org.uk/>

<http://www.swfed.org.uk/>

www.re-museum.co.uk

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