

Curatorial Department, The Auckland Project Curatorial Research Assistant (Reformation)

Freelance Researcher Brief

Fee: negotiable depending on experience
Dates: Three months initially, from August 2021, 30-35 days
Location: Remote working with occasional site visits in Bishop Auckland.
Reports to: Senior Curator Faith

Overview

The Auckland Project (TAP) is looking for a self-motivated and experienced researcher to join the project team to work on the delivery of a new museum that explores the story of faith in Britain and its meaning today.

The Curatorial Research Assistant (Reformation) will support the Senior Curator and Curatorial Team in delivering content for displays in the Faith Museum relating to the Long Reformation period (roughly 1500-1745) in Britain. This is a rare opportunity to be part of an entirely new, NLHF funded, museum, and to participate in the heritage aspect of a major regeneration project for North East England.

The role will suit an individual with strong research expertise in the history of the Reformation in Britain and some experience of object-based research. The successful candidate will have the confidence and motivation to work alone and remotely away from Bishop Auckland whilst developing strong working relationships with the curatorial team.

Specific Duties

- Provide curatorial research assistance for five of the forty themed displays planned for the Faith Museum, contributing to the collecting, interpretation and presentation of objects and stories of Faith in Britain during the Long Reformation in England, Scotland and Wales.
 - 2.07 *Reformation to 1547* (with particular emphasis on William Tyndale, Sir Thomas More and Bishop Cuthbert Tunstall)
 - 2.12 *Reformation 1547 onwards* (identify 2-3 key stories of personal witness to faith, eg Thomas Cranmer, the Northern Rising)
 - 2.13 *C17 Anglican material culture* (church, state and home)
 - 2.14(a) *Recusants*
 - 2.14(b) *Dissenters* (Quakers, Methodists, Covenants, Presbyterians and others)
- To collaborate with the Assistant Curator on content and narratives for the Timeline that forms the backbone of the gallery interpretation in Galleries 2a and 2b, covering the period c.1500 – 1832.
- Support the Senior Curator in developing and delivering the exhibition and interpretation plan for Faith, developing engaging narratives and object lists.

- To research suitable stories, loan objects from UK collections (public and private) and, where appropriate, acquisitions.
- To carry out picture research and provide suggestions and sources for illustrations for gallery graphics.
- To make contact with potential lenders and discuss loan ideas.
- To assist in writing loan requests.
- Carry out further research existing loan and collection objects: these include a 1536 Tyndale New Testament and other Bible translations and Prayer Books, a portrait miniature of Thomas More, Recusant and Quaker artefacts, oil portraits and prints.
- To compile information on objects and narratives for Content Description Sheets for Galleries 2a and 2b.
- To present difficult themes from British history with a balanced, nuanced and neutral narrative, preferring voices from the period to a strong curatorial voice.
- To ensure an appropriate balance of north-eastern, Welsh and Scottish experience of the Reformation among wider national stories.
- To ensure a balance of historic object types, avoiding over-reliance on books, documents and prints.
- To attend regular team meetings (currently held remotely, or a blend of remote and in-person) and occasional workshops on site at Auckland Castle.
- To deliver content in line with agreed deadlines and programme.

The Auckland Project

The Auckland Project is working to create positive change for those living, working and visiting Bishop Auckland and to ensure the town's future is as magnificent and vibrant as its past.

The Auckland Project (TAP) was founded by Jonathan Ruffer in 2012 with an ambitious and radical vision: to transform a 900-year-old bishop's palace, Auckland Castle, from a private dwelling into a vibrant world class, art, faith and heritage destination. By creating a visitor attraction of national significance in Bishop Auckland, County Durham, TAP aims to provide a catalyst for regeneration of the town and surrounding area. Our mission is to work with the local community and other partners to raise aspirations and opportunities through arts, heritage and a culture of learning.

As a visitor destination, The Auckland Project incorporates Auckland Castle (opened November 2019), the Mining Art Gallery (opened October 2017), Auckland Tower visitor centre, the Deer Park and Walled Garden, The Spanish Gallery (opening Autumn 2021) and the Faith Museum.

For more information about The Auckland Project, please visit aucklandproject.org or search Auckland Project on Facebook and Twitter.

The Faith Museum

The Faith Museum is the first museum in England to explore the story of faith in Britain and its meaning today.

Using historic and contemporary objects, works of art and stories, it poses three main questions:

- What is faith?
- How has faith shaped Britain?
- What does faith mean for me?

Visitors will be able to discover stories of faith from 5,000 years of history, from the beliefs of communities in the deep past to today's multi-faith society.

The Faith Museum's subjects - faith, society and time - are invisible and intangible, but the objects displayed and the stories told are all witness to the faith of the people of Britain and the impact of that faith, over time, on life and events in Britain and beyond.

The museum is neither a place of worship nor a debating chamber, but uses objects and stories to generate self-reflection. We want to help visitors learn about the experience of faith so that they can better understand why it has mattered to people in the past and still matters to people now. The outcomes for each visitor will depend heavily on their own personal beliefs and perspectives, but we aim to create a museum that gives everyone a chance to think, reflect, and enjoy.

The objects on display will be from our small but growing permanent collection and long-term loans from private collections and museums will be essential for representing the stories we seek to tell and capturing the imagination of our visitors. Local communities will provide oral histories and objects that tell contemporary stories of faith in Britain today.

By exploring faith through the medium of British history and creative arts, visitors will be able to examine ways in which faith has shaped Britain's past and continues to have a meaningful impact on people and society today and for the future.

The Auckland Project has received major funding for the Faith Museum from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the Jerusalem Trust for the building (designed by Niall McLaughlin Architects), design and fit-out of the museum. The exhibition designer is Edinburgh-based Studio MB. Lenders to the Faith displays include the British Museum, the Victoria & Albert Museum, the Jewish Museum London and Cambridge University Museums.

Knowledge, Skills and Experience

Essential

- Demonstrable research skills in history, art history, theology, early modern archaeology or a related field.
- Completed, or studying for, a postgraduate degree in a relevant subject with focus on the Early Modern period and Reformation in Britain.

- Demonstrable experience in faith-related topics.
- A commitment to object-based research.
- Interest in the display and interpretation of historic artefacts and material culture.
- Awareness of good practice in conservation, display, handling and interpretation of historic objects.
- Proficiency in Microsoft Office and ability to manage information systematically and accurately.
- Excellent oral and written communication skills. Sound knowledge of grammar and syntax.
- Ability to write and communicate inspiring object-based stories for a general museum audience that emphasise the role of faith.
- Awareness of sensitivities relating to the history of faith.
- Excellent organisational skills with a meticulous eye for detail.
- Self-motivated, with the ability to work well under pressure. Confident when coordinating multiple activities to meet deadlines. Focused, goal-driven approach to research.
- Proven ability to work independently, flexibly and remotely whilst collaborating with the wider team.

Desirable

- Long-term interest in working in museums and heritage sector.
- Experience of collections-based research.
- Ability to judge quality and condition of historic artefacts.
- Experience of work or volunteering in the museum/heritage sector.
- Knowledge of UK public and private collections relating to your subject specialism.
- Ability to think visually and interpret imagery in the visual arts.

Location

The majority of this role can be done remotely, although remote and physical access to a good research library would be an advantage. Attendance at occasional workshops and presentations on site at Auckland Castle will be required.

Timescales

Draft object lists and storylines are to be completed before Developed Design commences. All loan requests should be made at the same time.

There may be a further stage of research drafting written interpretation.