

# RUSSELL-COTES

HOUSE • GALLERY • GARDEN

- Role:** Freelance Researcher and Volunteer Coordinator –  
The Russell-Cotes and the Royal Bath Hotel Visitor Book 1889 – 1896
- Location:** Home based but office space could be made available at Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum. The successful candidate must be able to travel to Russell-Cotes for meetings with staff and volunteers.
- Timescale:** The project must be completed by December 2019.
- Fee:** Up to £3,000 including VAT, travel and expenses (based on 2 days per month for 10 months). The fee will be subject to employment tax deductions.
- Status:** This contract is with Bournemouth Borough Council as a freelance supplier.

## Background:

The Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum is a rare example of the residence of a Victorian private collector. The house was built by Merton and Annie Russell-Cotes in 1901 and given to the people of Bournemouth in 1920. It attracts visitors from around the world with its extraordinary atmosphere and internationally renowned art collections.

In autumn 2018 the Museum acquired the Visitor Book of the Royal Bath Hotel, Bournemouth, with support from the Friends of National Libraries and individual donations.



The Royal Bath Hotel was bought by the Museum's founders, Merton and Annie Russell-Cotes in 1876 and developed into one of the finest hotels

in Britain, if not Europe, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Filled with paintings, sculpture and souvenirs from their world travels it was regularly reviewed as 'a temple of art' and frequented by the rich and famous of the Victorian world who beat a path to the hotel and the then small and exclusive seaside resort of Bournemouth. The Visitor Book covers 1889 to 1896 and reveals exactly who stayed at the hotel, which made the Russell-Cotes fortune. An initial survey shows that signatures include Oscar Wilde, Lord Alfred Douglas, actors Henry Irving and Ellen Terry, royalty including Prince Henry of Battenburg, artists such as Sir John Millais, PRA, and Sir Hubert von Herkomer, and musicians Charles Halle and Dame Nellie Melba.

The leather-bound book has 100 double page spreads with an average of about 20 signatures per single page resulting in about 4,000 different entries. High-resolution images have been taken of the book.

### **Objectives**

The Museum wants to transcribe the visitor's book and to explore some of the people, events and social history it contains. The intention is to display the book in the museum and use it to engage our audiences and reveal the importance of the hotel in the history of the family, museum and town of Bournemouth. We want to share this important information with staff, volunteers, visitors and the wider public.

The Museum wants to achieve this by working with a team of volunteers on this project so that there is ownership and engagement from existing and new Museum volunteers (tour guides, stewards, researchers) and it is an opportunity to develop research and presentation skills.

### **Outcomes**

Transcribe the pages into a searchable spreadsheet

Conduct research on:

- Interesting and significant personalities who visited

- Any events/information relevant to the Russell-Cotes family, hotel and history

- Any events relevant to the history of Bournemouth

- The Social history revealed

Use the research to generate information for press-releases, website, social media during the project

Work with staff to identify the best location, case etc for the permanent display of the Visitor Book in the historic house

Provide the content for staff to develop permanent interpretation to accompany the Visitor Book to include a physical facsimile version

Ensure information is appropriately filed/stored for future retrieval

Disseminate information to staff, volunteers, public through presentations, talks, articles etc

### **Project Timetable**

Volunteer Recruitment has begun – 6 volunteers already recruited and ready to work

Freelancer to start in February/March 2019

Monthly meetings to be held with volunteers/staff at the Museum to support their research

Project completion and permanent redisplay by December 2019

The project is timed to fit with the reinterpretation and redisplay of various rooms in the historic house in 2020.

### **Resources**

Staffing – Museum Manager, Curator and Programmes Officer will give project support

Visitor Services Team Leader will support with volunteer recruitment

Marketing Officer will support with PR

Freelancer will have access to museum's computer database and physical files

Meeting space and some volunteer expenses will be provided and desk space can be provided by prior arrangement.

Resources and expertise at Bournemouth libraries, Dorset History Centre, Bournemouth Universities and Hampshire Record Office

### **Reporting**

The freelancer will report to the Museum Manager on progress on a monthly basis

### **Payment**

Payment quarterly on the submission of an invoice, with final payment once the project has been completed.

### **Application Process:**

The successful candidate will be expected to demonstrate:

- Relevant degree
- Understanding of the brief and context
- Experience of working with volunteers
- Experience of a similar project – archive, museum etc
- Excellent communication skills for different audiences

Candidates are invited to submit a CV and covering statement which details their knowledge, skills and experience. Please include:

- The names and contact details of two referees
- Evidence of Public Liability and Professional Indemnity Insurance
- Estimated minimum number of days that would be committed to this project and availability
- Estimated fees, including expenses

Applications should be received by Thursday 31 January 2019 and sent to Sarah Newman, Manager, Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum [sarah.newman@bournemouth.gov.uk](mailto:sarah.newman@bournemouth.gov.uk) ; 01202 451812