



BEAST: Students put their craft skills to the test to help build the giant puppets.

Pictures: JAMES BASS

Students revive ancient animals

By **LIZ COATES**
liz.coates@archant.co.uk

Around 40 teenagers have been working on six giant puppets inspired by the West Runton elephant that walked the sands last summer.

The ancient beasts from the Pleistocene period will roam the streets of Great Yarmouth in June as part of the annual arts festival with a focus on pre-history.

Lead by the giant mammoth the 7ft models will be hoisted aloft by their creators at the showpiece parade that will kick-start the week-long celebration of all things artistic.

In their wake will be a herd of smaller creatures like voles, hedgehogs and shrews as younger children don outfits created in workshops nearer the time.

Patricia Hall, youth engagement officer at the Time and Tide Museum, said the models had been created using willow and water-proof tissue with the help of mentors from Norwich-based Tinhouse Arts.

The sturdy life-size structures including a rhino, giant deer, cave bear, hyena, wolf and sabre-tooth cat will be carried through the streets

on poles creating an arresting spectacle for townsfolk and visitors.

Working under the banner of Creative Collisions - a youth arts network based in the town - the young people spent eight days working on the animals which were native to Norfolk 700,000 years ago.

They had variously come from Great Yarmouth College, Cliff Park Ormiston Academy, Great Yarmouth High School and Horatio House.

"They did brilliantly well," Mrs Hall said. "They were all really engaged and had the benefit of working with professional artists from Tinhouse who made the elephant's head last year.

"We aim to add a few markings but they are translucent and you can see the light coming through them. After the parade we hope to display them in an empty shop and possibly light them up at night. It has been a lovely project."

The project also chimes with a touring exhibition about humans in ancient Britain which is being seen outside London's Natural History Museum for the first time.

It was funded by the Great Yarmouth Cultural Partnership.

Ali Mackenzie, lead artist with Tinhouse Arts, hailed the students for their enthusiasm, standard of

work and attention to detail.

Lauren Church, a pupil at Great Yarmouth High School, said: "I didn't realise that they would be as big as they are, I was glad to be chosen to do something so amazing."

Meanwhile Jai Steward from Cliff Park Ormiston Academy said he couldn't wait for the festival, adding: "I want to see what the reaction is like of the crowd and see all the hard work pay off."

Joseph Talkowski, who also goes to Cliff Park, said: "We didn't know that the animals were there all those years ago. I thought that Norfolk was boring."



FLASHBACK: The West Runton elephant lumbers his way across the beach.

Picture: PAUL DAMEN



TEAM EFFORT: Learning assistant from Cliff Park Ormiston Academy Mrs Karim with some of the youngsters involved in the project.



CRAFTY: One of the students gets hands-on with a puppet