



# AGENDA

**NOTE: In the case of non-members, this agenda is for information only**

- Committee - BRECKLAND AREA MUSEUMS COMMITTEE**
- Date & Time - FRIDAY, 4TH JUNE, 2010 AT 10.00 AM**
- Venue - GRESSENHALL FARM AND WORKHOUSE MUSEUM, GRESSENHALL**

**Persons attending the meeting are requested to turn off mobile telephones**

**Committee Members:**

**Breckland Council**

Mr P.J. Duigan  
Mrs J. Ball  
Mr M. Fanthorpe  
Mr R.G. Kybird  
Mrs P.A. Spencer

**Co-optees**

Mr H. Stephens  
Mr R.S. Key  
Mrs C. Walters  
Mr D. Balckburn

**Norfolk County Council**

Mr M. Brindle  
Mrs D. Irving  
Mr C. Jordon  
Mr M. Kiddle-Morris  
Mr J. Rogers

**Substitutes**

Mr J. Joyce

**Ex-Officio**

Mr J. Bracey  
Mr S. Dunn

Member Services  
Elizabeth House, Walpole Loke,  
Dereham Norfolk, NR19 1EE

Date: Monday, 24 May 2010

1. **MINUTES**  
To confirm the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2010
2. **CHAIRMAN**  
To elect the Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing year.
3. **VICE-CHAIRMAN**  
To elect the Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing year.
4. **APOLOGIES**  
To receive apologies for absence.
5. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**
6. **URGENT BUSINESS**  
To note whether the Chairman proposes to accept any item as urgent business, pursuant to Section 100(B)(4)(b) of the Local Government Act, 1972.
7. **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**  
Members are asked at this stage to declare any interests which they may have in any of the following items on the agenda.
8. **ANCIENT HOUSE MUSEUM OF THETFORD LIFE** 6 - 8  
Report by Oliver Bone
9. **GRESSENHALL FARM & WORKHOUSE REPORT** 9 - 13  
Report by Robin Hanley.
10. **NEXT MEETING**  
To agree date for the next meeting.

**BRECKLAND COUNCIL**

**At a Meeting of the**

**BRECKLAND AREA MUSEUMS COMMITTEE**

**Held on Friday, 12 February 2010 at 2.00 pm in  
Council Chamber, King's House, Thetford**

**PRESENT**

Mr P.J. Duigan (Chairman)	Mr M Brindle
Mrs J. Ball	Mr M. Kiddle-Morris
Mrs P.A. Spencer	Mr J. D. Rogers

**Also Present**

Mr R. Key	Cllr J. Bracey
Mr D. Blackburn	
Mrs C. Walters	

**In Attendance**

Oliver Bone	- Curator of the Ancient House, Museum of Thetford Life
Robin Hanley	- Western Area Manager
Vanessa Trevelyan	- Head of Norfolk Museums & Archaeology Service
Helen McAleer	- Committee Officer

**1/10 MINUTES**

The meeting commenced at 2.00pm with the Vice-Chairman, Mr Kiddle-Morris in the Chair.

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 October 2009 were agreed as a correct record.

**2/10 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr S Dunn, Mrs D Irving, Mr C Jordan and Mr R Kybird.

**3/10 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Mrs Christine Walters was welcomed to her first meeting. Mrs Walters was replacing Mrs Brenda Ravencroft as representative of the Friends of Gressenhall.

**4/10 URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

**5/10 DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

Mr M Kiddle-Morris and Mrs C Walters declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 6 (Gressenhall) as members of the Friends of Gressenhall.

**Action By**

Action By

**6/10 GRESSENHALL FARM AND WORKHOUSE REPORT**

Mr P Duigan arrived at the meeting and assumed the Chair. He welcomed Mr John Bracey, Vic-Chairman of the Joint Museums Committee, to the meeting.

Robin Hanley presented his report and explained that there had been changes to the staff structures in the western area since he wrote it. Previously Oliver Bone had been curator at Thetford and Tim Thorpe had been curator at King's Lynn. A new post of curator of both King's Lynn and Thetford had been created and he congratulated Oliver on assuming that post. Tim Thorpe would take on the duties of Collections Officer for both towns. Steve Harris would assume premises and Health & Safety responsibilities for both locations and this would free up time for the curatorial teams.

The written report covered the period from September 2009 to January 2010 and Robin briefed Members on its contents.

Events

*Days to Remember (18 September)* – The weather had been kind and over 1,000 visitors had attended this event which was aimed at people over 55 and had provided an opportunity for working closely with other agencies involved with older people.

*Heavy Horse Day (10 October)* – This was a smaller scale event and had been used as a pilot scheme using only the usual open day staff resources. It had focussed on one of the unique selling points of Gressenhall, the Suffolk Punches.

*Apple Day (25 October)* – With 3,404 visitors this had been the biggest attendance in recent years. The site had coped well and it had been a tremendous day celebrating all things to do with apples and the autumn.

*Christmas Experience (26 December)* – This had been reduced to a one day event and had been blessed with reasonable weather. Activities included Father Christmas, fairground rides, Victorian characters in costume, carol singers, hand bell ringers and cookery in the farmhouse.

The Produced in Norfolk shop would continue through 2010 and would focus on demonstrations on event days. It was seen as a good way of supporting local craftsmen.

The critical factors on event days were catering, car parking and toilets! All had performed well and the café and other food outlets had themed their catering to fit in with the events.

The event programme for 2010 had been finalised and included both old and new events which would hopefully attract existing and new audiences. The season opened on Mothering Sunday (14 March) and other highlights were the Food Fair (3 May) which was a big retail event with the focus on food and farming; and a new smaller event for

**Action By**

Father's Day (20 June) which would have the theme of 'Big Boys' Toys' and would include a display of modern combines and tractors alongside the older exhibits.

**Other Museum Developments**

Work was progressing on the Land Army Gallery and the Friends were heavily involved in fundraising for this project. The target opening date was March 2011.

During the closure there had been a programme of works which included the erection of safety fencing around the adventure playground; installing a removable pine floor section to the chapel, to provide a flat surface; and insulation and draft exclusion works to improve energy efficiency and reduce fuel bills.

There had also been major refurbishment works on the farm buildings and the Roots building would include a display explaining the history of Union Farm and the rare breeds.

**Friends and Volunteers**

Fundraising campaigns continued for both the Women's Land Army Gallery and the Suffolk Punch Horse Appeal.

**Renaissance in the Regions**

As part of this project a new Eco-building was being planned to replace the ticketing huts. This would probably be of straw bale construction with compostable toilets which could also be accessed from the adventure playground. Work was scheduled to commence in the Summer of 2010.

**Learning and Outreach**

The team had worked on developing new and enhancing existing projects. An innovative session for older high school students would ensure greater participation and interaction and would explore the theme of "Was the Workhouse so Bad?"

In November 2009 Gressenhall Chapel had hosted the Beetley school nativity play, with over 80 students performing.

Another group of young people, not in education, employment or training (NEET) had taken part in the creation and editing of a film exploring the changing attitudes to women. Normally such schemes saw a high drop-out rate but in this instance all had stayed to the finish and received accreditation at the end of the programme which had been co-ordinated by the Western Area Community Outreach Officer.

Robin noted that the Farm Apprentice had started in January. This post was for 18 months and included day-release to Easton College and had been funded by Renaissance in the Regions.

They would also be recruiting for 2 'Future Jobs Fund' six month placements, the following week. One would be attached to the learning team and the other would work in collections.

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The visitor figures were circulated. These were slightly down on the previous year but the fact that there had been fewer events did not seem to have impacted on overall numbers. School visits had reduced slightly but the Learning Team was working hard to deliver the new programme.

Vanessa Trevelyan commented that Gressenhall had a lively programme of events and maintained its numbers by constantly refreshing itself.

The volunteers and Friends provided sterling support to the staff throughout the year, working harmoniously to deliver an excellent service. This was an important element and more support was being offered to volunteers. A second volunteer conference had been held, as a way of saying thank you and also to provide an opportunity to meet other volunteers from around the district and share experiences.

**7/10 ANCIENT HOUSE MUSEUM OF THETFORD LIFE**

Oliver Bone presented his report which looked back over the autumn and winter.

A commemorative DVD of Thomas Paine was now available and his death mask (from the Ancient House) was one of the ten Norfolk objects to feature in the BBC's local version of A History of the World. Radio Norfolk were doing an article on Thomas Paine and would be visiting Ancient House to interview local people.

The museum had an ambitious events programme as it was important to encourage repeat visits from the local audience. It also joined in with other activities in the town and those of partner agencies.

At Christmas the Ancient House had participated in the popular switch on of the Christmas lights and had featured a window display of knitted decorations produced through the community knitting project.

Oliver would be attending a meeting to discuss involvement in the Thetford Festival Week to be held from August Bank Holiday and was hoping to persuade David Osborne to give a talk on festivals in the town.

Children from the History Club would be participating in a play on Harry Bensley, who was reputed to have walked round the world, wearing an iron mask and pushing a pram!

An exhibition and programme of events on the Maharajah Duleep Singh was planned to take place from 18 June 2010. It was hoped that a painting of the Maharajah could be borrowed for the exhibition, from a private collector. The Daily Express had featured an article about the Maharajah earlier in the week and had included photographs provided by the museum.

The current exhibition in the museum, which had opened in January, was about people who had settled in Thetford. It started with mammoth butchers and worked forward to the present day and

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included a feature about a previous mayor of Thetford, who had been the first black mayor in Britain.

The kitchen at Ancient house had a display about rabbits as a previous occupant had been a Warrener and it was hoped that the museum would feature in a rabbit cookbook.

Oliver also mentioned work that had been done to install an induction loop at the museum to improve access to the talks and performances held there for those with hearing problems.

The current mayor of Thetford (Mrs Spencer) reminded Oliver that the Town Council had a painting of the Maharajah Duleep Singh which the museum could borrow for their exhibition if required.

Vanessa Trevelyan concluded with a word of caution about the current financial situation. She explained that they were facing funding pressures and that the projected budget for the next three years was very tight. The Renaissance in the Region funding would end in March 2011 although new project grant funding should be available in place of revenue funding.

If the Unitary decision went ahead it would have implications on the Museums Service. There was no further information about that at the moment but it should be borne in mind. Senior Managers were, however, good at getting the funding that was around and this was one of the more successful County Museum Services in the country.

It was noted that Vanessa had served for 10 years in office and the Chairman congratulated her on reaching that milestone.

**8/10 NEXT MEETING**

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on **Friday 4 June 2010**, at **10.00am** at the **Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse**. Members would have the opportunity to see the improvements to the chapel and to look at plans for the new Land Army Gallery.

At the conclusion of the meeting Members were invited to visit the Dad's Army Museum, where the Manager, Corinne Fulford, was in attendance to provide answers to any questions.

The meeting closed at 3.05 pm

CHAIRMAN

**BRECKLAND AREA MUSEUMS  
COMMITTEE**

**4th June 2010 Item No.**

**Ancient House, Museum of Thetford Life  
Report by the Curator, Ancient House**

**This report outlines work at the Ancient  
House from February 2010 – May 2010**

**1 School and Visitor Figures**

Visitor figures for the Ancient House have continued to rise since the re-opening after refurbishment in 2006. The year 2009-10 saw a very good March attendance, largely due to an excellent number of visits from schoolchildren. This meant we more than caught up total for the previous year when the Thetford Treasure of gold jewellery and silver spoons was lent for display at Thetford by the British Museum.

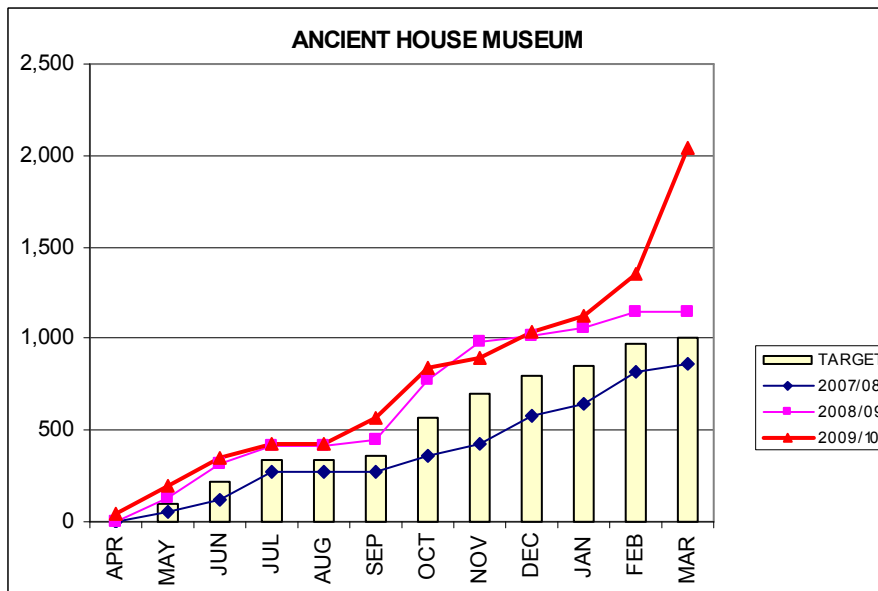


Chart showing the improvements in school attendance at the Ancient House.

Delivery to schools is carried out by a mix of the Learning team, notably Melissa Hawker Learning Officer, freelancers, volunteers and the Museum Learning Assistants. The March visits by schools were for sessions inspired by the current Moving Stories exhibition and subsidised by this project. Sessions included an activity encouraging children to decide how to catch a mammoth.

**2 Under 5s 'Mini museum club'**

The Museum is keen to include all ages and has recently started a monthly club for very young visitors and their parents. Armed with torches and magnifying glasses the youngsters explored the museum and discovered interesting things. A good start with 10 children plus carers.





### 3 Events



The Easter Holidays saw lots of visitors trying new crafts for the first time, discovering how a Victorian servant lived, painting pulp eggs and going on an Easter chick hunt. Staff made eggs using the traditional pulp eggswas made in Thetford during the late 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Nearly 40 people turned up to paint an egg, and were intrigued to discover the process of how they were made.

The Moving Stories exhibition and related events continue to draw new visitors into the museum. The afternoon talks linked with the exhibition have been very popular and over subscribed each month.

Mary Watkins, one of the museum's 'Knit and Knatter' group, who also spins, joined us on textile day to give spinning taster sessions to visitors. The volunteer group known as the Thetford Treasures, Penny and Betty held mini workshops in tea tie dying and embroidery, the Knit and Knatter ladies along with staff offering 'learn to knit' sessions and demonstrated their skills. In the Victorian kitchen, Laura Cole-Matthews demonstrated felt making and encouraged visitors to make their own piece to take home.



### 4 Talks programme



#### Moving Stories - Afternoon talks

Stephen Pope from Gressenhall gave a talk on Norfolk Workhouses, featuring Thetford. Several of the audience remembered visiting or working at the St Barnabas site during the 1950s.

## 5 House Alive – Victorian Servants

Mary Jane Smalley, who worked at Elveden Hall and features in the Moving Stories exhibition inspired this House Alive. Melissa Hawker entertained lots of our younger visitors with stories of how domestic servants lived and worked. Visitors also had the opportunity to help our Victorian servant prepare some food, which was cooked on the range



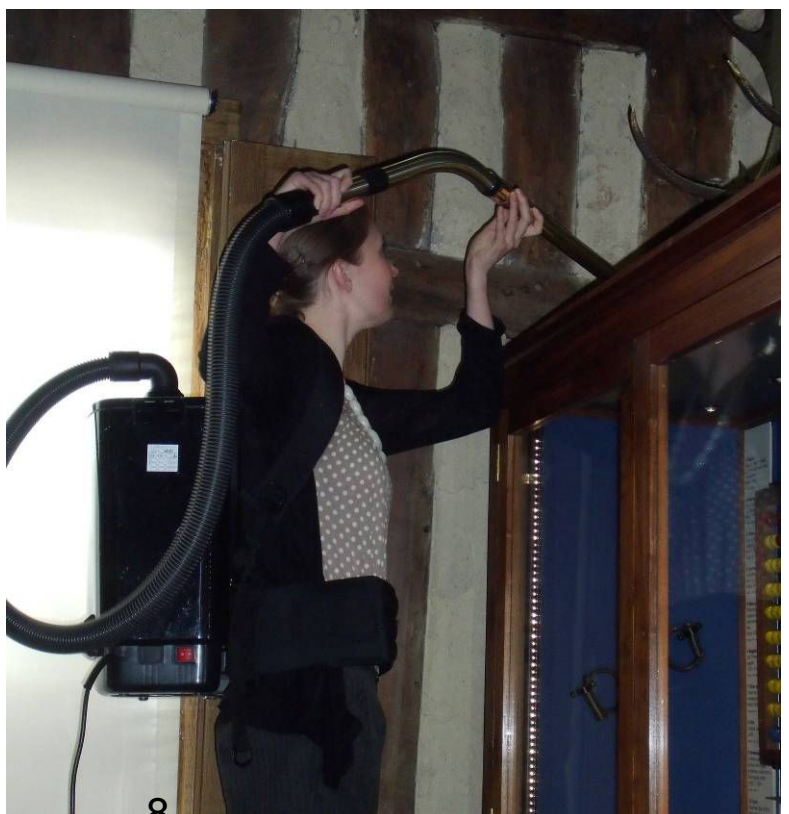
## 6 Maharajah Exhibition

Work continues on the Maharajah exhibition, due to open in June. We have been working with Kiyoko Nishi, our MA intern; the exhibition will feature items on display for the first time.

## 7 Conservation cleaning

Sarah Norcross-Robinson has been working closely with the team at Ancient House on a variety of issues recently.

The Collector's room is now beautifully clean thanks to Sarah's help and advice, with the Tudor Hall next on the list.





If you need this report in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact Robin Hanley on 01362 869254 and we will do our best to help

**BRECKLAND  
AREA MUSEUMS COMMITTEE**

**4 June 2010          Item No.**

**GRESSENHALL FARM & WORKHOUSE REPORT**

**Report by the Western Area Manager**

**This report provides information on activities at  
Gressenhall Farm & Workhouse from February to  
May 2010**

**1. Events**

- 1.1 The Museum opened to the public for February half term, although visitor numbers were adversely affected by the wintry weather. The site opened for the 2010 season proper on Mothering Sunday, 14 March.
- 1.2 *Easter Fair* ran on Saturday 10 October, marking the start of the 2010 event season. There was a wide range of activities taking place across the site, culminating in an impressive parade of Easter bonnets and costumes. Visitor numbers were pleasing, with 2,650 participants on site (2,584 in 2009).
- 1.3 During 2010 a number of smaller additional events days will be run at Gressenhall as part of the revised event programme. These smaller events will be centred on the farm and are modelled on the successful *Heavy Horse Day* piloted in 2009. The smaller events see the site operating in standard opening mode including car parking, with fewer staffing resources being required than on a major event days. The first of the smaller events for 2010 was the *Spring Working Day on the Farm*. Visitors were able to see several teams of heavy horses from the East of England Heavy Horse Society working the fields in preparation for planting. There were 350 visitors on site for this event.
- 1.4 The retail-focussed *Food & Farming Fair* took place on 3 May. Despite poor weather, there were 1,521 participants on site (1,683 in 2009). The day also featured the a large car rally from the Broadland MG Owners Club Heritage Run, for which a hire charge was made. Rally

participants were offered discount admission to the event and visitors were able to admire some 175 classic cars.

- 1.5 Forthcoming events include the traditional *Norfolk History Fair* on 31 May and a smaller Father's Day special event on 20 June with the theme of *Big Boy's Toys*. The *Village at War* event will take place on 29 and 30 August, with the theme of *Glitz in the Blitz*.
- 1.6 Each event day has featured the *Produced in Norfolk* shop in the Learning Courtyard. This shop hosts craft demonstrations by Produced in Norfolk members.
- 1.7 The remaining event programme for 2010 is as follows (key events in **bold**):
  - Monday 31<sup>st</sup> May - **History Fair**
  - Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> June - **Father's Day**
  - Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> June - Gypsy Romany Day
  - Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> July - Pre School Alliance Day
  - Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> July - George Edwards Memorial Lecture
  - Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> and Monday 30<sup>th</sup> August - **Village at War**
  - Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> September - Heritage Open Day (free admission)
  - Friday 17<sup>th</sup> September - **Days to Remember**
  - Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> August - **Harvest Day**
  - Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> October - **Apple Day**
  - Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> October - **Heavy Horse Day**
  - Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> December **Christmas Event**

## 2. Other Museum Developments

- 2.1 Work is progressing well on the development of the new Women's Land Army Gallery at Gressenhall, with funding of £50,000 from the Wolfson Foundation/DCMS already in place. The Friends continue to provide active support for a further fundraising campaign including a *Forties Night* dance on 5 June. Work is continuing on planning the gallery design and research work is being undertaken including the assembling of collections and memories from Land Army veterans. The new gallery is due to open for the 2011 season.
- 2.2 As part of an ongoing programme of display improvements, re-decoration and re-display works have been completed in Cherry Tree Cottage and in the Farmhouse. The Roots building on the farm has also been refurbished and now features new displays on the history of Union Farm and an introduction to the rare breeds and horses. These re-displays have been guided by Gressenhall's new site interpretation strategy.
- 2.3 A range of site maintenance and improvement projects continue to be undertaken. These include works in the adventure playground and damp-proofing work in Cherry Tree Cottage. In the main workhouse

building, funding from the County Council's Carbon Energy Reduction Fund has enabled the installation of roof insulation in key areas, as well as draught-proofing works on historic windows.

- 2.4 Sensitive improvement works in the Chapel have seen the creation of a flexible flat floor space for events, schools, temporary exhibitions and for hire. Improvements have also been made to the Training Room, where NCC hirers can now access corporate ICT networks. A Renaissance-funded marketing campaign promoting Gressenhall as a meeting and conference-hire venue will be commencing in June.
- 2.5 The birdwatch camera system on the farm has been extended with funding support from the Friends, with an owl box now being added to the system. Visitors are also now able to personally direct and zoom a new camera that provides view across much of the farm site.
- 2.6 The Gressenhall Curator Megan Dennis is currently on maternity leave. Sally Akcroyd – an experienced museum curator – has taken up the maternity cover post and is already working well with volunteer teams.

### **3. Friends and Volunteers**

- 3.1 The Friends continue to actively raise funds for the Suffolk Punch Horse Appeal, using this money to support a number of horse activities across the site. The youngest Suffolk Jimbo is currently off-site undergoing basic training.
- 3.2 The Friends continue to take an active role in the fundraising campaign for the Women's Land Army Gallery project. The Friends have already committed £5,000 towards the fundraising target. A 1940's fundraising dance will take place at Gressenhall on 5 June.
- 3.3 The Friends have revamped their newsletter to good effect. *Rural Life* now features extensive use of colour photography, with the Summer issue featuring the work on restoring the Panhard car radiator.
- 3.4 The Gressenhall Curator continues to co-ordinate, manage and develop the volunteer teams at Gressenhall. Some 120 volunteers continue to be active on the site. Both the engineering and gardening teams have new voluntary team leaders.

### **4. Renaissance in the Regions**

- 4.1 Gressenhall is continuing to benefit from significant funding delivered through the Renaissance in the Regions programme, under the 2009-11 East of England Hub Business Plan.

- 4.2 Gressenhall continues to lead on the regional Sustainability Project for the East of England, working in partnership with a number of sites including the Museum of East Anglian Life. As part of this project, plans are progressing well on the development of a new “eco-building” at Gressenhall, to provide event day ticketing facilities alongside additional toilets accessible from the playground. The building will be constructed using traditional and sustainable locally-sourced building materials including straw bale, rammed earth and cob. Building work is due to commence in Summer 2010, following receipt of necessary planning permissions.
- 4.3 The regional sustainability project was the focus for two training seminars delivered as part of the Renaissance East SHARE training programme. These sessions launched a programme of green audits and green action grants and were held at Stockwood Park in Luton and at Gressenhall, with delegates drawn from large and small museums across the East of England.

## **5. Learning & Outreach**

- 5.1 There were over 10,000 school and pre-school visits to Gressenhall in the year 2009-10. This is a tremendous achievement by the site’s Learning Team at a time when school visits are under increasing pressure due to health & safety, travel and timetable restrictions.
- 5.2 The Learning Team at Gressenhall continues to deliver a broad and creative learning programme for schools, ranging from the popular *Three Little Pigs* session for younger children through to the challenging *Was the Workhouse so Bad?* session for high schools, with its high dramatic content.
- 5.3 Learning Officer Katie Smith is working towards a *Forest Schools Level 3* qualification, which will help extend the use of site-based resources such as Centenary Wood to support both formal and informal learning .
- 5.4 Gressenhall is supporting programmes for young people categorised as NEET (not in education, employment or training). A land skills based course is being developed in partnership with NCC Adult Education.
- 5.5 Gressenhall continues to host a Renaissance-funded 18-month Farm Apprenticeship post in partnership with Easton College. Gressenhall is also hosting two 6-month placements under the Future Jobs Fund programme funded jointly through Renaissance and the Department for Work & Pensions.

## **6. Visitor Numbers**

- 6.1 Up to date visitor figures will be circulated at the meeting.

## 7. Resource implications

- |     |                               |      |
|-----|-------------------------------|------|
| (a) | <u>Finance</u>                | None |
| (b) | <u>Property</u>               | None |
| (c) | <u>Staff</u>                  | None |
| (d) | <u>Information Technology</u> | None |

## 8. Recommendations:

That the Area Museums Committee notes the report

Originator of report:  
Dr Robin Hanley  
Western Area Manager  
Gressenhall Farm & Workhouse  
Tel: 0773 3001 301  
e-mail: [robin.hanley@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:robin.hanley@norfolk.gov.uk)