



# AGENDA

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

- Committee - BRECKLAND AREA MUSEUMS COMMITTEE**  
**Date & Time - MONDAY, 14TH MAY, 2018 AT 10.30 AM**  
**Venue - ANCIENT HOUSE, MUSEUM, THETFORD**

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

**Committee Members:**

**Breckland Council**

Councillor C. Bowes  
Mr H. E. J. Clarke (Chairman)  
Mr P. R. W. Darby  
Mr S.G. Bambridge  
Mr R.G. Kybird  
Mr T. J. Jermy

**Co-optees**

Dr K Robinson  
Mr D. Blackburn

**Norfolk County Council**

Mr P.J. Duigan (Vice-Chairman)  
Mr F. Eagle  
Mr W. R. J. Richmond  
Mr M. Kiddle-Morris

**Ex-Officio**

Mr D. Buck  
Mr J Ward

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

Date: Tuesday, 2 May 2018

	<u>Page(s)</u> <u>herewith</u>
1. <b><u>MINUTES</u></b> To confirm the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2018.	3 - 7
2. <b><u>APOLOGIES</u></b> To receive apologies for absence.	
3. <b><u>CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS</u></b>	
4. <b><u>URGENT BUSINESS</u></b> 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.	
5. <b><u>DECLARATION OF INTERESTS</u></b> The duties to register, disclose and not to participate for the entire consideration of the matter, in respect of any matter in which a Member has a disclosable pecuniary interest are set out in Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011. Members are also required to withdraw from the meeting room as stated in the Standing Orders of this Council.	
6. <b><u>GRESSENHALL FARM AND WORKHOUSE REPORT</u></b>	8 - 14
7. <b><u>ANCIENT HOUSE MUSEUM OF THETFORD LIFE REPORT</u></b>	15 - 20
8. <b><u>NEXT MEETING</u></b> To note the details of the next meeting, 10 September 2018 10.30am at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse Museum.	

**BRECKLAND COUNCIL**

**At a Meeting of the**

**BRECKLAND AREA MUSEUMS COMMITTEE**

**Held on Monday, 26 February 2018 at 2.00 pm in  
Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse Museum, Fakenham Road, Gressenhall, Beetley,  
Dereham, NR20 4DR**

**PRESENT**

Mr H. E. J. Clarke (Chairman)	Mr F. Eagle
Mr P.J. Duigan (Vice-Chairman)	Mr M. Kiddle-Morris
Councillor C. Bowes	Mr R.G. Kybird
Mr P. R. W. Darby	Mr W. R. J. Richmond

**Also Present**

David Blackburn (Co-optee)

**In Attendance**

Dr Robin Hanley	- Head of Operations and Learning
Hannah Jackson	- Operations Manager - West
Mr Oliver Bone	- Curator of the Ancient House, Museum of Thetford Life
Julie Britton	- Democratic Services Officer

**Action By**

**1/18 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 1)**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2017 were agreed as a correct record.

**2/18 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 2)**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Gordon Bambridge, Councillor Terry Jermy, Councillor John Ward and Dr Keith Robinson.

**3/18 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (AGENDA ITEM 3)**

The Chairman hoped that everyone enjoyed the tour of the Norfolk Collections Centre that took place prior to the meeting.

In future, meetings would commence at 10.30am; however, if a tour was included, Members would be asked to be at the venue by 9.30am.

On another matter, Members were asked if they would prefer to go paperless; Members were asked to inform the Democratic Services Team at Breckland Council if they did not want a paper copy of the agenda in future.

Another announcement made was from Hannah Jackson, the

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Operations Manager at the Museum. Prior to the start of the season on Saturday, 10 March 2018, there would be a preview day aimed at Norfolk Pass Holders, Friends of Gressenhall and anyone who played the National Lottery. This event would be more of a drop-in session and would be promoted to all groups, organisations and individuals who had helped to create and support the Voices from the Workhouse project.

**4/18 URGENT BUSINESS (AGENDA ITEM 4)**

None.

**5/18 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS (AGENDA ITEM 5)**

None.

**6/18 ANCIENT HOUSE MUSEUM OF THETFORD LIFE REPORT (AGENDA ITEM 6)**

Oliver Bone, the Curator of the Ancient House Museum of Thetford Life presented the report and provided Members with a detailed overview of the exhibitions and events that had taken place since November 2017 which included:

- Handmade, Millennia of making Exhibition;
- Pulp, pin trays, pails and pots, the story of Thetford Pulp Ware exhibition; and
- Thetford Remembers, 1914 – 1918 – Commemorative events.

Councillor Kybird asked about the poppies that were being knitted for the 'Battle's Over' event taking place on 11 November 2018 to mark the centenary of the Armistice. He knew of other people who were knitting poppies but did not know who to send them to. Mr Bone said that he would keep everyone informed accordingly.

It was noted that the Thetford Remembers project had recently been chosen as a case study by the Heritage Lottery Fund for a publication about projects that it had enabled. A meeting had been arranged to take this forward.

The forthcoming displays were also highlighted, one of which was the Thetford and Punjab Festival and Exhibition. There would be several weeks of activities in July 2018. Included in these festivities would be a Maharajah Duleep Singh exhibition and a painting from the National Museums of Scotland would be loaned to Ancient House for this occasion from July until the end of November 2018.

Feasibility work continued for making a new display at Ancient House to make more of the unusual connections between the Museum and the Maharajah Duleep Singh and his family. A recent gift of a portrait of the Maharajah was planned to be included in the display. On the bank holiday Sunday in August, up to 10,000 people were expected to visit Thetford to commemorate the death of Duleep Singh.

The Museum once again took part in the town's Christmas Lights Switch and in the recent half term there had been a good turnout for the Anglo Saxon event; unlike the Silver Social Partnership event that

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had been poorly attended.

The Museum was filmed for the BBC's Antiques Road Trip in August 2017 and the programme was broadcast on 22 January 2018. Ancient House was also featured in a news item for ITV for the 150<sup>th</sup> birthday of Prince Frederick Duleep Singh, broadcast on the evening news on 20 January 2018.

Referring to other Museum developments, Mr Bone highlighted the fact that during 2017-18 the Museum had been and would be hosting a 12 month traineeship provided through the NMS Teaching Museum programme funded by the Arts Council England. Sam Belotti, the Museum's current trainee, was doing very well and would be undertaking a range of museum work to gain experience for his future career.

The visitor numbers were circulated and showed that year to date attendance figures were on track as the previous year. Dr Robin Hanley was very pleased with the visitor numbers and felt that all sites were making a valuable contribution with excellent programming.

The subject of marketing future events was discussed. The way events were marketed was changing for example a Wildlife weekend at Norwich Castle was advertised through Facebook which cost nothing and attracted over 3,000 visitors.

Councillor Darby had noticed that the Time & Tide Museum had attracted more visitors than previous years in September. Members were informed that this was the Titanic exhibition that took place in the summer.

Councillor Duigan questioned the visitor numbers in November for Ancient House which was less than previous years. Mr Bone explained that other events in Thetford at the same time had an impact on the Museum.

Councillor Richmond asked if the trainee was just based in Thetford. Members were informed that these trainees got a taste of life and were involved in all activities at all the Museums across the County. It was noted that other trainees had gained permanent jobs in the Museum sector. Dr Robin Hanley pointed out that there had been a really good success rates from those placements.

The Chairman felt that all credit should go to Mr Bone for the trainee system and he thanked him for his report.

**7/18 GRESSENHALL FARM AND WORKHOUSE REPORT (AGENDA ITEM 7)**

Hannah Jackson, the Operations Manager for Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse presented the report and circulated a 'What's on 2018' leaflet to Members which was still considered to be the most popular way to advertise events at the moment. These leaflets would be sent out to all local and countywide organisations.

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Gressenhall continued to offer a broad programme of events based around four operational models:

- Special Events days
- Days with a Difference
- Norfolk School Holidays Activities; and
- Ticketed Events

Two new events planned for 2018 was the Father's Day – Beer and Brewing on 17 June and the Victorian Family Christmas planned for 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> of December.

The Museum opened its doors to the public in the recent half term holiday but visitor numbers were down most probably due to the inclement weather conditions.

Councillor Duigan mentioned the leaflet distribution and pointed out that there should be a specific place in the libraries where they should be displayed as he had noticed on several occasions that these leaflets were buried amongst other tourism material. Dr Robin Hanley said that he would contact Norfolk County Council's Head of Library Services, Janet Holden to discuss whether these leaflets could have more of a centrepiece within the libraries.

The Chairman mentioned Breckland Council's Market Town Initiative and felt a more joined up approach should be taken.

Other Museum developments included the successful grant award from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the Voices from the Workhouse project and a dedicated space had been created to house an annual show. The 2018 exhibition Beer and Brewing - Norfolk's Rural Pubs would open for the start of the main season. This event would look at the changing roles of pubs and the relationships that they had on their local communities.

Gressenhall's Curator Dr Megan Dennis had been given the funding to visit Minnesota to develop links with the Digital Humanities Forum at Carleton College.

Also, in recent months the Friends of Gressenhall had generously agreed to support a project to restore the farmers' Foundry engine boiler (formerly part of the Bygones Collection at Holkham) back to working use. All volunteers played a very important part in the Museum's livelihood and last year at least 9,000 hours had been provided and Members were pleased to note that the number of volunteers was increasing.

As far as marketing was concerned, maintaining and growing a strong Social Media presence remained a key priority for the Museum and the site now had four Social Media Champions to ensure the regular publishing of interesting content on Facebook and Twitter to engage with an ever widening audience.

Visitor numbers for 2017-18 to date was very strong and hidden

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behind these numbers were positive income figures. Members were asked not to take notice of the December 2017 visitor numbers that were slightly down from previous years as a couple of school trips had been inadvertently omitted from the chart and the Christmas event had been cancelled.

Councillor Duigan asked for his thanks to be conveyed to Megan Dennis for her help with the Dereham Antiquarians.

Councillor Darby wanted to know more about the outreach work and asked if Care Homes were visited. The Operations Manager advised that Gressenhall did go out to a number of groups including Care Homes.

Councillor Richmond asked whether the Museum had approached Easton College in relation to the Futuristic Farming event in May. In response, Members were informed that the Royal Norfolk College of Farming had been approached.

The Chairman wished all concerned a very successful season and thanked the Operations Manager for her report.

**8/18 NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 8)**

The Chairman looked forward to seeing everyone at the next meeting on 14th May 2018 at 10.30am at Ancient House, Thetford.

Councillor Richmond conveyed his apologies for the May and September meetings.

The Chairman asked the Democratic Services Officer to check the dates of Norfolk County Council meetings to avoid any future clashes.

The meeting closed at 2.30 pm

CHAIRMAN



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

**BRECKLAND  
AREA MUSEUMS COMMITTEE**

**14 May 2018      Item No.**

**GRESSENHALL FARM AND WORKHOUSE REPORT**

**Report by the Operations Manager – West**

**This report provides information on activities at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse from February to April 2018.**

**1. Events and Activities**

- 1.1 Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse closed for the 2017 season on Sunday 29 October 2017. The museum reopened from Monday 12 to Friday 16 February 2018, 10am to 4pm. The 2018 main season commenced on Sunday 11 March. The museum is currently open daily 10am to 5pm.
- 1.2 Gressenhall continues to offer a broad programme of events based around the four operational models:
  - Special Event days – major events which require full event staffing and set up, including the use of large parking fields. For 2018, these will be: *Retro Revival*, *Village at War* and *Apple Day*. A premium ticket price applies on these days to reflect the high level of activities taking place. Free admission continues to be provided to Norfolk Museums Pass holders.
  - Days with a Difference – smaller themed events including *Mothering Sunday*, *Futuristic Farming* and *Horse Power*. These require smaller staffing complement and utilise core parking. They are aimed at attracting audiences of 500-800 visitors. Again, they are offered free to Norfolk Museums Pass holders.
  - Norfolk School Holiday activities – extra themed activities delivered each day of the Norfolk School holidays, with minimal increase in staffing. Free to Norfolk Museums Pass holders.
  - Ticketed Events – pre-booked and pre-paid events. For 2018, these include the murder mystery event *The Devil at the Door* and *Victorian Family Christmas*. These events, held outside of standard opening hours or of the main season, offer a reduced charge to Norfolk Museums Pass holders.

- 1.3 The museum reopened for the weekdays of February Half Term, with a programme of activities exploring the theme of Spring cleaning (936 visitors). Visitors helped prepare for the new season and discovered what happens behind the scenes when the museum is closed, including how museum objects are looked after, and pests kept away, with activities at the Norfolk Collection Centre.
- 1.4 Prior to the start of the main season, a preview day was held for Norfolk Pass Holders, Friends of Gressenhall and Players of The National Lottery. *Welcome to the Workhouse* took place on Saturday 10 March 2018. All groups, organisations and individuals who have helped to create and support the *Voices from the Workhouse* Project were invited, to form a celebration of the end of this redevelopment. 228 visitors met costumed characters and engaged with a wide range of craft activities inspired by the stitched letters of workhouse inmate Lorina Bulwer.
- 1.5 On Sunday 11 March, the museum officially opened for the 2018 season and held its first “Day with a Difference” format event of the year: *Mothering Sunday*. In addition to the usual card making and free cream tea for all mums within the Mardlers’ Rest Café, the events team worked with the *Women Reaching Women* partnership of organisations working in Norfolk and around the world. These groups delivered a diverse range of activities for the whole family including stalls, crafts, talks, singing and story-telling. The partnership is made up of a range of organisations including Mother’s Union, Soroptimists, Leeway, GATE, Freedom Charity, Norwich Dedza Partnership and Diversity Plus. The event was highly well received, with 614 visitors which is higher than the average 500 visitors for this early season event.
- 1.6 The theme for the Easter holidays was Bugs and Beasties with the chance to discover the variety of insect life living on the site and make their own weird and wonderful beastie in Art Attack! An Escape Room activity proved particularly popular, where the aim was for families to prove themselves worthy of being the assistant of bug-expert Professor Bugsley. This theme continued on the Easter Bank Holiday Monday with *Gressenhall Goes Wild*. Visitors to this “Day with a Difference” had to don wellies and raincoats to brave the bitterly cold and wet weather, meaning that although all planned messy fun and natural crafts activities were delivered, woodland exploration was moved undercover in the chapel. Despite these conditions, 232 visitors joined us and the feedback from those families was overwhelmingly positive.
- 1.7 These events continue to attract Norfolk Museums Pass holders and to act as a driver to further pass sales.
- 1.8 The costs of delivering and marketing the Gressenhall event programme continues to be subsidised with funding from the Arts

Council England (ACE) as part of the 2018-22 ACE business plan as a National Portfolio Organisation.

- 1.9 The Gressenhall events programme is promoted via a specific piece of print, as well as an increased programme of digital marketing including Facebook adverts and the museum's own social media presence.

## 2. Other Museum Developments

- 2.1 Following the successful grant award of £1.47m (79%) from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the *Voices from the Workhouse* project, the redeveloped workhouse spaces were formally launched July 2016. The final new displays within the first floor Collections Gallery were formally launched on 10 March 2018, with the gallery having been opened as a 'work in progress' since May 2017. This gallery incorporates over 2,000 objects from the museum's rural life collections. This event marked the end of the main activity plan relating to the *Voices from the Workhouse* project although, following conversations with the Heritage Lottery Fund, a digital marketing campaign is planned for early summer 2018 to help promote the new full offer.
- 2.2 As part of the new Collections Gallery, a dedicated temporary exhibition space has been created to house an annual show. The 2018 exhibition *Beer and Brewing - Norfolk's Rural Pubs* opened for the start of the main season. This explores the changing roles of pubs and the relationships they have with their local communities. Family visitors are able to play traditional pub games including the Norfolk favourite 'twizzler' and a plaster panel created by the artist John Moray-Smith is one of the objects on display.
- 2.3 Building on the success of the 2016 and 2017 *Collaborate* programmes, which saw the museum working with a wide range of creative individuals and groups, *Collaborate 2018* is themed around the temporary exhibition's subject of pubs and brewing. This programme was formally started with an inspiration day on Friday 23 March, to enable interested individuals and groups to explore more of the museum's collections and stories. Their creative outputs will then be displayed within the museum in October. An accompanying programme of outreach to local groups and pub quizzes is currently planned to encourage more individuals to engage with the theme, to be inspired, and to create their own beer mat to add to the displays. During the year, updates will be available through the *Collaborate* blog <https://collaboratewithgressenhall.wordpress.com>
- 2.4 Gressenhall's Curator Dr Megan Dennis continues to develop links with the Digital Humanities Forum at Carleton College, Minnesota. This innovative liberal arts college have created a 3D virtual model of the workhouse as it was in 1779. During January/February 2018, Carleton

College fully funded Megan to enable her to visit the college for one week. This enabled her to work with the Carleton students to create additional material for the suite of iPads for visitor use and for display on the permanent projectors within the gallery spaces. This project has demonstrated the museum's ability to use the flexible content management system *Darwin* to constantly update and re-fresh the digital offer at the museum. These iPads were formally launched for the start of the main 2018 season. They are available to pre-book via the museum's online ticketing system, or can be obtained from the shop on arrival. They are free to borrow and are aimed at families and groups returning to visit the new displays.

- 2.5 The use of cutting edge technology allowing visitors to 'meet' real people from the workhouse's history have been well received. However, for some visitors they have the potential to cause sensory overload. Following the successful pilot project in 2017 when adjustments were made for autistic visitors during "early bird" openings, delivered in partnership with Autism Anglia, further "early bird" openings have been planned for 2018. The first one of these took place on Sunday 29 March with 21 visitors taking up this opportunity. Several of these visitors had not been to Gressenhall before, suggesting that these events are opening the site up to new families.
- 2.6 During recent years, the Norfolk Collections Centre has opened more frequently to support Gressenhall events and activities, following the reorganisation of these large object stores during the *Shine a Light* project funded by The Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund. During the period covered by this report, the centre was open for three days during February half-term to explore 'what's been eating the collections?'. The team had examples of the damage that pests could do to objects, specimens of the various pests (and magnifying glasses) and information about how museums can treat such infestations. These activities attracted 81 visitors over the three days. For Mothering Sunday, families could print their own Mother's Day cards and explore the centre's printing collections, attracting 71 visitors. On 10 April, the first of the 2018 West Runton Mammoth tours were held, with 13 bookings and exceptionally good feedback on the opportunity to hear more about this spectacular object from Dr David Waterhouse, Senior Curator of Natural History.
- 2.7 Maintaining and growing a strong Social Media presence remains a key priority for Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse and the site has four Social Media Champions to ensure the regular publishing of interesting content on Facebook and Twitter. All staff are encouraged to support this, supplying content and images. These Champions also respond to enquiries and reviews made via these channels, Trip Advisor and Google Reviews. At the time of writing the museum had 3,977 Facebook likes and 5,351 Twitter followers. A Pinterest account is also supported with a wide range of boards including 'Weddings at Gressenhall' and an Instagram page is established and currently has

910 followers. Furthermore, Gressenhall continues to generate regular blogs about work taking place at the museum. The site has been awarded a Certificate of Excellence from the influential TripAdvisor website.

To connect with Gressenhall, please visit:

<https://www.facebook.com/GressenhallFW>

<https://twitter.com/GressenhallFW>

<https://www.pinterest.com/gressenhallfwh/>

[https://www.instagram.com/gressenhall\\_fw/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/gressenhall_fw/?hl=en)

<https://gressenhallfw.wordpress.com/>

[http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Gressenhall\\_Farm\\_and\\_Workhouse](http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Gressenhall_Farm_and_Workhouse)

- 2.8 Gressenhall continues to develop a range of commercial activities as a means of generating income, including room and venue hire. Five weddings are already booked for the 2018 season, and negotiations continue with an events management company to develop this offer further. The aim is to deliver a high quality offer whilst ensuring that such bookings do not detract from key museum activities.

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

- 3.1 The Friends of Gressenhall remain active, with bi-monthly Committee Meetings held at the museum. The Friends of Gressenhall continue to support a range of activities across the site including significant levels of funding towards the upkeep of the Suffolk Punch horses.
- 3.2 In 2017, the Friends generously agreed to support a project to restore the Farmers' Foundry engine boiler (formerly part of the Bygones Collection at Holkham) back to working use. This was in addition to a grant of £19,788 from the Arts Council England Preservation of Industrial and Scientific Material PRISM fund. This engine was manufactured by the Farmer's Foundry Company, Great Ryburgh, just seven miles from Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse. The portable steam engine was used to power a range of different processes including threshing work, corn-mills, centrifugal pumps, stone-crushers, dynamos, chaff-cutters, hay-balers and saw benches. Initial conservation work identified that additional resources were required to make the engine fully operational, and an application was submitted to the Association of Industrial Archaeology in March 2018. An outcome is expected in May/June.
- 3.3 The Friends continue to operate the Gressenhall second hand bookshop, generating income for the Friends. Recruitment of a new team of active Bookshop volunteers has helped to ensure that new donations are processed daily and the shelves tidied. As a result, income from this shop continues to grow.
- 3.4 The Gressenhall Curator Dr Megan Dennis continues to co-ordinate, manage and develop the volunteer teams at Gressenhall. Around 120

volunteers are currently active on site, organised into a number of specialist teams. Volunteer hours are currently being recorded to provide HLF contribution in kind match funding for the *Voices from the Workhouse* project. During January to March, when the museum was predominantly closed, the volunteers gave over over 827 hours of time on site to support the museum, with additional volunteers working from home on digitalisation projects.

## **4 Learning & Outreach**

4.1 School visits have held up well and 10,600 children have visited in the year 2017-18. This is a strong performance in the light of continued financial pressures on schools. These pressures are illustrated by the fact that during 2017-18, for the first time in ten years, we have had three schools cancel bookings with us due to a lack of funds.

4.2 Partnership work with other NCC departments continues to develop and the Learning Team have recently organised a day for older children in receipt of support from NCC Virtual School Sensory Support. Despite appalling weather, spirits remained high and staff and families reported a wonderful day. VSSS staff have re-emphasised the importance for families and children to have a safe space in which they can meet each other and their support staff.

4.3 Planning continues for a Mental Health Wellbeing Day for young people on 9th June 2018. Meetings have been held with a range of local service providers including NCC Early Help, CAMHS and the YMCA. The Learning Team have been pleased and impressed with the positive response and Staff within these organisations immediately recognise the important role that museums can play in supporting Public Health initiatives. The day will follow a similar model to that of our Fostered and Adopted families and VSSS days. YMCA will run Wellbeing workshops, Gressenhall staff will facilitate art activities and the marquee will be used as a marketplace for LSPs to meet with young people and families.

4.4 Gressenhall continues to be registered with NCC as a Care Farm. The site is currently offering funded work-based placements to a number of adults with learning difficulties.

## **5 Visitor numbers**

5.1 Visitor figures for the period will be circulated at the meeting.

## **6 Resource implications**

### **(a) Finance**

Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse receives funding to support core operations and activities from Norfolk County Council. A number of activities are financed as part of funding to Norfolk Museums Service from Arts Council

England as a National Portfolio Organisation under the terms of the current 2018-22 Business Plan. Project activities are funded from a range of external sources including the Heritage Lottery Fund. The source of these funds are detailed within the report. The above report includes no additional or unfunded financial implications.

(b) Property

Unless specified, the above activities relate to the Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse and Norfolk Collections Centre site. The above report includes no additional implications relating to property.

(c) Staff

The team at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse are supported by a wider team of colleagues within Norfolk Museums Service. Some current posts are funded by external project funding. The above report includes no additional implications relating to staffing and personnel resources.

(d) Information Technology

Digital operations at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse are supported by Norfolk County Council's IMT department. Social media is delivered by the Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse team. The above report includes no additional implications relating to Information Technology.

## **7 Recommendations:**

7.1 That the Area Museums Committee notes the report

Originator of report:

Hannah Jackson

Operations Manager – West, Norfolk Museums Service

Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse, Gressenhall, Dereham, Norfolk NR20 4DR

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**BRECKLAND  
AREA MUSEUMS COMMITTEE**

**14 May 2018      Item No.**

**ANCIENT HOUSE, MUSEUM OF THETFORD LIFE REPORT**

**Report by the Operations Manager - West**

**This report provides information on activities at Ancient House, Museum of Thetford Life from February to April 2018**

**1. Exhibitions and associated events**

**1.1 *Handmade, Millennia of Making* Exhibition**

The current exhibition, *Handmade, Millennia of Making*, opened at the Museum on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> December with a 'Takeover event' by the children from the museum's after-school History Club and the young people from the Teenage History Club. The display was officially opened by Cllr Phillip Duigan from the Area Museums Committee. The exhibition focusses on the craftsmanship of artefacts in the museum collections, exploring different materials with sections on textiles, ceramics, wood, metal and stone. Objects on display include a wooden nurse and child doll from the 1840s, an intricate and colourful patchwork quilt, prehistoric flint tools, a mantrap once used on the Kilverstone estate near Thetford and a 17<sup>th</sup> century acoustic jar which was once built into a wall at the former Central Hotel on the Thetford Market Place.

The titles of the different sections include contributions by volunteers who made the Textile and Paint headings. The display was curated by the Ancient House team supported by collections volunteers. As well as 'taking over' the opening event, the History Club children feature on the introductory graphic panel pictured with some of the objects on display. The exhibition continues until 8 September 2018.

**1.2 Thetford Remembers 1914 – 1918  
Commemorative events**

Following the Museum's delivery of a town-wide programme of commemorative events focussed on the anniversaries of 1914, 1915 and

1916, the Ancient House Museum will be contributing to the Town Council's plans for *Battle's Over* a nation-wide evening beacon event to mark the centenary of the Armistice on November 11<sup>th</sup> 2018 with a display of the knitted Field of Poppies exhibit with one poppy representing each of the Thetford's fallen. The Museum is also involved in early plans for an event in the summer of 2019 to mark the peace and aftermath of the First World War. A major Armistice exhibition at Norwich Castle in late 2018 is planned to cover Norfolk's experience of the First World War and the Armistice and the Ancient House will be lending material for this.

In addition, the Museum continues to display a First World War kitchen.

## **2 Forthcoming Displays**

### **2.1 Thetford and Punjab Festival and exhibition**

The Ancient House team has been working with Indi Sandhu and Giles Waterfield from the Essex Cultural Diversity Partnership on a successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a Thetford and Punjab Festival to take place in July 2018. A series of town-wide events are planned over this period covering various art forms and cultural connections.

In the Museum we plan to provide an exhibition about Maharajah Duleep Singh and his family to include a loan from National Museums Scotland of a painting by renowned contemporary artists, the Singh Twins of the Maharajah entitled *Casualty of War*. Work is underway to negotiate the arrangements for this loan.

The museum team will be working with historian, author and Maharajah Duleep Singh archivist, Peter Bance to create the exhibition which will involve interventions and displays all around the Ancient House Museum. This exhibition will be on display from 7 July to 1 December.

### **2.2 Duleep Singh Gallery Feasibility**

Feasibility work continues for making a new display in one of the upstairs rooms at Ancient House to make more of the unusual connections between the Museum and the Maharajah Duleep Singh and his family, especially his son Prince Frederick Duleep Singh. A number of private donations have been received towards this project totally approximately £2,500.

The Museum plans to submit a bid to the HLF later in 2018 to cover the costs of the permanent display project.

### **2.3 Teenage History Club Exhibition Project**

Learning Officer Melissa Hawker is currently working with the museum's Teenage History Club on a project to curate an exhibition. As part of our Arts Council England programme as a National Portfolio Organisation, the museum is committed to diversifying both the audiences to the museum and also those voices within its displays.

The teenagers are leading on the content and direction of the exhibition which will explore the history of LGBT+ communities. This links with the 50th anniversary of the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality, drawing on the collections of the museum. As part of their investigation they visited the V & A in London in November where they went on a special tour of the museum with curator Dan Nouveau and his team of volunteer guides.

The resulting exhibition will be open to the public from 22 September to 1 December.

### **3 Learning with Adults, Children and Young People**

#### **3.1 Activities for children and Families**

The Ancient House Museum continues to offer a popular programme of themed gallery discovery trails, with a new trail available for each week of the school holidays.

During February half term, the theme was Anglo Saxons and Vikings. At the Tuesday Discover Day, families could meet costumed characters and handle real Anglo-Saxon objects, strike their own Anglo Saxon coin and try their hand at blending Viking cheese. A similarly themed trail was also available throughout the week, where visitors were encouraged to help Sweyn Forkbeard gather his Viking horde for the invasion of Thetford to win a prize.

The recent holiday trails focused upon Easter chicks and spring cleaning. A Discovery Day was held on Tuesday 10 April for families to discover how Victorians kept their houses neat and tidy. As part of this event, they could explore cleaning methods of the era, including brown sauce to polish copperware and banana skins to polish shoes.

#### **3.2 Museum Clubs**

The Mini Museum Club aimed at those under 5 remain popular. During the period of this report, themed sessions for this age group have included a teddy bears' picnic, a session devoted to dinosaurs and activities exploring colour and shape.

As part of events across the county to mark a century of suffrage, individuals and organisations were welcomed to the Ancient House on 14 February for a special event to explore the lives of Princesses Sophia and Catherine Duleep Singh. Their story was eloquently told by members of the museum's after school History Club, who had been studying the history of the Duleep Singh family.

#### **3.3 Textile groups**

The Museum continues to hold Knit and Knatter sessions at the Museum. A spinning group also meets at the Museum on a regular basis and offers demonstrations to visitors. The knitting group assisted with the Handmade exhibition by making letters in textile to make a title for this section of the

display. Examples of their work are also on display and a knitted tricycle has formed a popular aspect as one of the museums' changing window displays.

### **3.4 Silver Social Partnership event**

Ancient House Museum is pleased to be a community host within Breckland Council's Silver Social partnership. The Silver Social is an exciting new programme of daytime arts events in the heart of Norfolk, promoting engagement and participation among older people in rural communities. With funding from the National Lottery Arts Council strategic touring fund, Silver Social brings 'something a little different' to daily life in rural Breckland, in the form of creative workshops and live performances.

On 19 February 2018, the museum hosted a Sing Your Song workshop with internationally acclaimed singer Kate Dimbleby. Unfortunately, numbers to this session were low, but those who did attend were able to explore their voice, listen and remember the songs that inspire them.

A free workshop with award winning poet Martin Figura to explore writing from personal memory will be held at the museum on Monday 4 June, before heading to Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse on Wednesday 6 June.

### **3.5 Talks programme, in association with the Friends of the Museum**

A programme of illustrated talks continues to be offered at Ancient House Museum on Tuesday afternoons. Attendances average 15-25 and a number of talks are often delivered by NMS staff.

Recent topics have included an introduction to the Handmade exhibition by Curator Oliver Bone, Thetford's Revolutionary son Thomas Paine by former Teaching Museum Trainee Sam Bellotti, and how England was portrayed in art and illustration in the 1930s to 1960s by Dan Morgan.

### **3.6 Schools**

The Museum continues to offer a wide range of learning opportunities for schools. Delivery of the sessions is typically by a combination of museum staff, experienced freelancers and volunteers. A tried and tested format is to offer a 'carousel' of activities around the building with groups of schoolchildren moving between the activities such as object handling, drama, craft and food.

## **4 Ancient House and the Media**

### **4.1 Thetford in 100 Artefacts, monthly column in Thetford and Brandon Times**

Staff at the Ancient House continue with their project in partnership with Rebecca from the EDP's *Thetford and Brandon Times* to write a monthly column. Entitled *Thetford in a Hundred Artefacts*. The article provides an opportunity to highlight objects from the museum collections and to promote forthcoming museum events.

Recent entries include a pair of mittens created in 2008 by the museum's Knit

and Knatter group as part of the town's commemoration of the bicentenary of Thomas Paine's death.

#### **4.2 Social media**

The museum continues to develop its social media presence, with Twitter and Facebook accounts being maintained by staff. The Ancient House Museum accounts continue to grow with the Twitter account having 2,705 followers while the Facebook account has 661 follows. During the period of this report, the Museum engaged extensively with the #MuseumWeek annual campaign, which inspires content with a different hashtag each day of the week.

### **5 Other Museum Developments**

#### **5.1 Volunteers**

A small team of volunteers meet on a weekly basis in the Museum. Volunteers have continued with a programme of documentation work involving the photographing and cataloguing of some of the recent acquisitions. The team's work enhances and illustrates the museum catalogue available online through the museum service's collections website.

Volunteers also contribute to the Learning work through delivery of the Mini Museum Club for the under 5s, the delivery of sessions for schools and preparing resource boxes for learning activities.

#### **5.2 Friends of the Museum**

The Friends of the Museum continue to support the Museum through fundraising and promoting the Museum in the town. The Friends are currently planning a visit to West Stow further to a talk on 50 years of archaeological excavation of the site by Richard Hoggett which is planned for May.

#### **5.3 Teaching Museum Trainee Scheme**

During 2018-2019, the Lynn Museum is hosting a 12 month Teaching Museum traineeships provided through the NMS *Teaching Museum* programme. Samantha Parker is the new Curatorial Trainee, based at the Ancient House and Lynn Museum. Her traineeship is funded through the Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation 2018-2022 Business Plan. Amongst a range of other activities, Sam will help on the Thetford and the Punjab Festival, museum events and work with colleagues to support visitors with autism to explore the museum.

#### **5.4 Staff Development**

Melissa Hawker, Learning Officer has delivered a programme for the Museum Learning Assistants to help them deliver events for families and schools. In addition, the Ancient House team recently undertook customer service training as part of a programme of work across Norfolk Museums Service.

### **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

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