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**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 31st May - **History Fair**
 - Sunday 20th June - **Father's Day**
 - Sunday 27th June - Gypsy Romany Day
 - Friday 2nd July - Pre School Alliance Day
 - Sunday 10th July - George Edwards Memorial Lecture
 - Sunday 29th and Monday 30th August - **Village at War**
 - Sunday 12th September - Heritage Open Day (free admission)
 - Friday 17th September - **Days to Remember**
 - Sunday 8th August - **Harvest Day**
 - Sunday 24th October - **Apple Day**
 - Sunday 10th October - **Heavy Horse Day**
 - Sunday 5th 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

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| (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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