



AGENDA

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

- Committee - BRECKLAND AREA MUSEUMS COMMITTEE**
- Date & Time - MONDAY, 27TH FEBRUARY, 2017 AT 2.30 PM**
- Venue - ANCIENT HOUSE MUSEUM, WHITEHART STREET, THETFORD, IP24 1AA**

Persons attending the meeting are requested to turn off mobile telephones

Committee Members:

Breckland Council

Councillor P. Duigan (Chairman)
Councillor C. Bowes
Councillor H. Clarke
Councillor P. Darby

Co-optees

Dr K. Robinson

Norfolk County Council

Mr M. Kiddle-Morris
Mr W. R. J. Richmond
Mr P. Smyth

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

Date: Monday, 20 February 2017

1. **MINUTES**

To confirm the Minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2016.

3 - 8

2. **APOLOGIES**

To receive apologies for absence.

3. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

4. **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.

5. **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

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. **GRESSENHALL FARM & WORKHOUSE REPORT**

Report by the Operations Manager – West.

9 - 16

7. **ANCIENT HOUSE, MUSEUM OF THETFORD LIFE**

Report of Curator.

17 - 24

8. **NEXT MEETING**

To make arrangements for the next meetings. Suggested dates are:

Wednesday 19 July 2017 at 2.00pm – Gressenhall Farm & Workhouse Museum

Monday 13 November 2017 at 2.00pm – Ancient House Museum, Thetford

Wednesday 21 February 2018 at 2.00pm – Gressenhall Farm & Workhouse Museum

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

BRECKLAND AREA MUSEUMS COMMITTEE

**Held on Monday, 4 July 2016 at 2.00 pm in
Ancient House Museum, Whitehart St, Thetford IP24 1AA**

PRESENT

Councillor C Bowes (BDC) Mr M. Kiddle-Morris (NCC)
Mr H E J Clarke (BDC) Mr P Smyth (NCC)
Mr P R W Darby (BDC)
Mr P.J. Duigan (BDC)

Also Present

Mr D. Blackburn
Dr K Robinson
Mr J Ward

In Attendance

Oliver Bone - Curator of the Ancient House, Museum of Thetford Life
Imy Clarke - Teaching Museum Trainee
Dr Robin Hanley - Head of Operations & Learning
Melissa Hawker - Learning Officer
Hannah Jackson - Operations Manager – West
Samantha Johns - Collections Development Manager
Wayne Kett - Collections Development Assistant
Helen McAleer - Senior Democratic Services Officer

1/16 CHAIRMAN (AGENDA ITEM 1)

RESOLVED that Councillor Duigan be appointed Chairman for the ensuing year.

2/16 VICE-CHAIRMAN (AGENDA ITEM 2)

RESOLVED that Councillor Kiddle-Morris be appointed as Vice-Chairman for the ensuing year.

3/16 MINUTES (AGENDA ITEM 3)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4/16 APOLOGIES (AGENDA ITEM 4)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor W Richmond (NCC).

5/16 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS (AGENDA ITEM 5)

The Chairman welcomed Councillors Bowes and Clarke to their first meeting. He noted that the Committee had vacancies for two co-opted Members and suggested that Mr Robert Kybird be invited to the next meeting with a view to him being co-opted onto the Committee.

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6/16 URGENT BUSINESS (AGENDA ITEM 6)

None.

7/16 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS (AGENDA ITEM 7)

No declarations were made.

8/16 ANCIENT HOUSE MUSEUM REPORT (AGENDA ITEM 8)

Mr Oliver Bone presented the report which covered the period from September 2015 to June 2016.

The Thetford Remembers Project, originally planned over two years, had been extended to October 2016. Events linked with the Charles Burrell and the Dads Army Museums. The Somme Anniversary had just been marked and a future event to mark the end of World War One in November 2018 was being considered.

Councillor Darby had attended a commemorative service for the Desert Rats at High Ash where there were still parts of the base which could be toured. He asked if that information was publicised.

Mr Bone agreed that more could be done.

The Chairman mentioned that Peace Day in July 1919 would be celebrated during the Dereham Carnival and Ms Hawker confirmed that it was on the Agenda for the Thetford Carnival that year as well.

Councillor Clarke was interested in the Teenage History Club as he felt it was important to capture young people's imagination early to ensure their future involvement.

Dr Hanley said that Ancient House was exemplary for their engagement with young people which was a credit to Ms Hawker. They also offered the Arts Award accreditation scheme.

Mr Bone suggested that a young person could be invited onto the Committee. After some discussion and due to the fact that young people tended to move on to further education, it was agreed that a nominated member from the History Club should be invited to attend the next meeting held at Ancient House.

OB/MH

Mr Bone then spoke about the Flint Rock exhibition and the museum's links with the Archaeology Museum of Obsidian in Nagawa, Japan. A group of Japanese teenagers would be visiting the following week and a programme of activities had been arranged to show them things connected with the heritage of Norfolk.

Councillor Ward informed Members that he had visited Nagawa with Ms Hawker for a short visit to the big obsidian mine and the museum and they had both been made very welcome.

Ms Hawker explained the events organised for the three day 'East Meets West' conference to be held in Thetford. Thursday 14 July would be for schoolchildren, with activities led by university groups. The sites of Grimes

Action By

Graves and the Obsidian Mines in Nagawa would be twinned. On Friday 15 July there would be speakers from Japan and from the UK and then on Saturday 16 July there would be a Families Day with costumed characters, demonstrations of flint and obsidian knapping, and recipe testing linked to the pottery project. All the activities would be free, thanks to money from various funding streams.

Mr Bone went on to speak about the origins of the museum. Ancient House had been a gift from Prince Frederick Duleep Singh and due to that connection it received visits from Sikhs from around the world. The museum had featured in a recent Sikh Heritage documentary which been shown of Sikh channel TV on 25 May 2016. A future project would be to change one of the upstairs rooms to create a Duleep Singh Gallery.

Another upcoming project was an exhibition of Thetford Pulpware which would run from December.

The Teenage History Club had been invited by the Mayor of Thetford to lead the countdown for lighting the beacon for the Queen's 90th birthday. They had also helped to entertain people by showing off the flint artefacts now on display in the Flint Rocks exhibition.

Councillor Smyth asked about the teenagers in the club and Ms Hawker advised that they were a diverse group with at least 60% being made up of lower educational achievers. They worked hard and it was a great opportunity for them to succeed and gain the Arts Award Accreditation certificate.

Ancient House had been awarded 'Best Norfolk Attraction (under 50,000 visitors) at the 2015 EDP Tourism Awards. They had been nominated by a member of the public. The museum had been 'mystery shopped' by a visiting family and found to meet all the requirements. The only small thing they had been picked up on was that the volunteers did not wear badges. That omission had since been rectified with badges provided by NCC.

The Chairman thanked Mr Bone and Ms Hawker for their presentation.

9/16 GRESSENHALL FARM & WORKHOUSE MUSEUM REPORT (AGENDA ITEM 9)

Ms Hannah Jackson presented the report and circulated flyers of the programme of events for 2016. She explained the difference between major event days, which had a premium ticket price, and the smaller themed 'Days with a Difference'.

There had been a mixed bag of event success over the report period. The Spring Fair had had to be cancelled for safety reasons, due to Storm Katie.

Councillor Ward suggested that a Steam Weekend might be a good event. Ms Jackson advised that steam machines were already included in events such as Apple Day and Fathers' Day but his suggestion would be considered.

Councillor Smyth asked that an attempt be made to involve people with dementia in events aimed at older people. Norfolk County Council was adding impetus to the role of Culture, Heritage and Arts in supporting

Action By

Wellbeing. The older population was increasing hugely in Norfolk and museums needed to work with other organisations to support activities targeted at this demographic.

The Museum had been undergoing a major redevelopment of its displays in the HLF-funded Voices from the Workhouse project. A soft opening had commenced over the May Bank Holiday which had given a chance to test the new displays before the formal launch which would be held on Friday 8 July 2016. The marketing campaign would link into Voices from Norfolk, working with other museums.

Project 'Collaborate' was exploring the ways that Gressenhall could work with a wide range of creative groups and display the skills of artists, photographers, writers, etc.

Mr Blackburn noted that the Shared Museums Art Project (SHARE) had a number of networks. One was for engineering and they could get involved with the project which dismantled, repaired and put machines back into working order.

Gressenhall made good use of Social Media and had recently received another Certificate of Excellence from TripAdvisor. They had started to use Pinterest, particularly to promote the use of the site as a wedding venue. They had already hosted their first wedding and had two more booked.

The Friends of Gressenhall supported a range of activities including the bookshop which continued to grow its income. It sold all sorts of books and also varied its offer to match events being held at the museum.

The exact number of hours worked by volunteers was difficult to measure, although a figure of 8,836 volunteer hours had been recorded for 2015. A more accurate recording process had been introduced to provide HLF contribution in kind match funding for the Voices from the Workhouse project.

The award winning Learning Team continued to deliver a broad and varied programme and school numbers remained strong. They also provided projects targeted at children in care and working with prisoners supporting mental health and wellbeing rather than training.

Councillor Ward asked if Gressenhall would be interested in working with the Medieval Mystery Play project being run by Norwich Castle and Ms Jackson said they would be delighted to be used as a venue and to work with other providers.

Councillor Ward mentioned that the Ghost events were also very popular and Ms Jackson advised that there were already a number of Paranormal Groups interested in the Museum.

Regarding providing events for dementia sufferers, Ms Jackson explained that the Museum had worked with Breckland Council on a range of activities for dementia sufferers and their carers.

The Chairman noted that in recent improvements at Breckland Council particular attention had been paid to dementia friendly signage and décor.

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Dr Hanley explained that the Museums, Culture and Arts played a wide role in dementia. The Museum of Norwich was a registered dementia friendly site. They also worked with an access advisory group mainly for those with visual or physical needs, but they would be alert to making changes to improve access for all where possible.

Ms Jackson informed Members that NMS had been a finalist in the Norfolk Tourism Awards Golden Years Scheme 2015 and had worked in partnership with other organisations to provide a fantastic resource for dementia sufferers.

Councillor Darby mentioned the 'loan boxes' for Care Homes and said that demonstrations were well received by residents.

Dr Hanley said they worked with the Library Services to create 'Reminiscence Kits'. There was funding available for out-reach work with groups, including care homes.

Ms Clarke said that she would be willing to work with local groups to create themed boxes to take to care homes.

Attendance figures for all Norfolk Museums were tabled; they incorporated schools' visits. Nationally attendance figures were suffering but in Norfolk school visit figures were growing thanks to the Learning Teams.

Overall visitor figures at Gressenhall were down on the previous year but there were a number of reasons for that:

- Storm Katie had affected the Spring Fair which normally attracted a good number of visitors;
- The Easter Holidays had fallen at different times in those two years;
- The refit of the galleries at Gressenhall resulting in the temporary closure of some key galleries;

Councillor Smyth asked to be informed if there were any issues with school visits as he would then raise the matter with Childrens' Services.

Dr Hanley noted that a key driver for the new galleries was to broaden the audience base and to attract tourists and older visitors rather than just families. The marketing campaign would be aimed at new audiences.

The Chairman thanked Ms Jackson and Dr Hanley.

10/16 GRESSENHALL COLLECTIONS REVIEW REPORT (AGENDA ITEM 10)

Ms Samantha Johns introduced the report which had been produced in accordance with the Collections Development Policy following the rationalisation process which identified material to re-home.

The collection centre had been made more accessible and was now open for 17 days a year. The Policy had changed, introducing a more rigorous approach to collecting and disposal. Loans were now only for a five year period.

The list attached to the report had been presented to the Rationalisation

Action By

Committee and they had reviewed it thoroughly in line with the NMS Collections Management Strategy 2014-18 which is informed by the Museum Association's Code of Ethics.

Councillor Darby asked what happened if no other museum expressed an interest in the items.

Mr Kett explained that they were advertised to other museums for a two month period during which time accredited museums were pro-actively contacted. That led to a high success rate and items often went straight onto display. However, if there was no success, contact was then made with other organisations which would retain the object in the public domain. If all efforts failed, the matter would be taken back to Committee when a decision would be taken whether to sell, auction or dispose of the item, or in some cases, refer the item back to be kept. Every item in that process would be given an accession number.

In response to a question from Mr Blackburn it was confirmed that there had been no change to the Policy recently.

The Chairman asked how many times the Committee would receive such a list and Dr Hanley explained that external funding had enabled increased attention being paid to the reserve collection housed at Gressenhall. A dedicated staff team had worked through the collections not previously reviewed. It was therefore anticipated that the number of objects for review would diminish over time.

Ms Johns explained that the aim was to embed good governance practice into all projects which would be good for all collections.

The Chairman suggested that it would be good for Members to see before and after pictures of the collection centre so that they could see the difference.

Councillor Clarke asked who paid when an item was transferred and he was advised that normally the recipient museum or organisation paid.

RESOLVED that the objects listed in Appendices 2-5 of the report, be deaccessioned.

11/16 NEXT MEETING (AGENDA ITEM 11)

The following dates for future meetings were provisionally agreed:

2.00pm on Thursday 3 November 2016 at Gressenhall Farm & Workhouse Museum (tour before the meeting commencing at 12.30pm)

2.00pm on Monday 20 February 2017 at Ancient House Museum, Thetford

If these dates/times are not convenient, please contact helen.mcaleer@breckland.gov.uk or teresa.smith@breckland.gov.uk.

The meeting closed at 4.00 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**

20 February 2017

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 July 2016 to January 2017.

1. Events and Activities

- 1.1 Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse opened for the main 2016 season on Sunday 6 March and closed on Sunday 30 October 2016.
- 1.2 For 2016, Gressenhall continued 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 2016, these were: *Spring Fair*, *Village at War* and *Apple Day*. A premium ticket price, established in 2015, was implemented again to reflect the high level of activities taking place. Free admission continued to be provided to Norfolk Museums Pass holders.
 - Days with a Difference – smaller themed events such as *Gressenhall Goes Wild* and *Rock ‘n’ Roll at Gressenhall*. These required smaller staffing complement and utilise core parking. They were aimed to attract audiences of 500-800 visitors. Again, they were 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 2016, these were a Halloween family party entitled *Ghostly Gressenhall* and *Victorian Family Christmas* events. These events, held outside of standard opening hours or of the main season, offered a reduced charge to Norfolk Museums Pass holders.
- 1.3 During the period covered by this report, these events have included:
Special Event Days:

- *Village at War* (1,390 visitors on Sunday; 2,130 visitors on Monday)
- *Apple Day* (2,006 visitors)

Days with a Difference:

- *Gressenhall Goes Wild* (520 visitors)
- *The Workhouse Experience* (347 visitors)
- Heritage Open Day – free admission (2,169 visitors)
- *Horse Power* (780 visitors)

Norfolk School Holiday Activities:

- Summer Holidays: *I'm in the Workhouse - get me out of here!* theme followed by a *1940s Home Front Mystery* theme (11,339 visitors)
- October half term – *Create!* (2,153 visitors)

Pre-booked:

- *Ghostly Gressenhall* (243 over the two evenings)
- *Victorian Family Christmas* (528 over the two days)

The most recent events were the two *Victorian Family Christmas* days which were fully booked, following coverage in The Guardian. Families were able to join in with the carol singing with Upper Octave and watch magic lantern shows. They took part in festive crafts including making traditional Christmas decorations. There was the chance to taste biscuits and drop scones cooked on the range, as well as the slightly less-appetising workhouse gruel. Whilst enjoying traditional games and spooky Victorian ghost stories, visitors had to make sure they kept their hands on their belongings as the Artful Dodger was lurking about, seeing if he could get a little Christmas bonus!

Future events prior to the start of the main season include half term activities between Monday 13 and Friday 17 February 2017, when the museum will reopen from 10am to 4pm daily. These are themed around the Norfolk character of Jack Valentine.

- 1.4 A review of the 2016 programme took place on Tuesday 1 November, following which details of the 2017 events were confirmed. These include an enhanced *Rock N Roll at Gressenhall* event, participation within the national *Open Farm Sunday* programme, and an October *Museums at Night* evening offer which will be free to those with a current National Lottery ticket. The latter will act as a thank you event towards the end of the Voices from the Workhouse project, making a connection between HLF funding and the twice-weekly draw.
- 1.5 These events continue to attract Norfolk Museums Pass holders and to act as a driver to further pass sales. At the 2016 *Apple Day* event, 54% of visitors were Norfolk Museums Pass holders or Friends of Gressenhall. During the day, a further 23 Norfolk Museums Passes were sold.

- 1.6 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 2015-18 Major Partner Museum ACE business plan.
- 1.7 The Gressenhall events programme is promoted via a specific piece of print, as well as an increased programme of digital marketing including Facebook adverts. As well as the museums own social media presence, paid Facebook advertising was taken out for *Village at War* and *Apple Day*. Through this, and the organic reach of the Facebook event pages, *Village at War* reached an audience of 47,000; *Horse Power* 10,000 and *Apple Day* 21,000. On the *Village at War* Facebook event page, 742 noted that they were 'interested' in attending; 217 'went' and 73 'shared' the event with their friends and family. During a brief survey on site of 233 visitors, 18% referenced Facebook as the primary way that they heard about the event.

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 on Friday 8 July 2016, following a soft opening at the start of the May Half Term. The second phase of this project is now underway. It will focus on the first floor Collections Gallery and the creation of an interactive handheld device. Both of these elements will be completed in spring 2017. Work on improvements to the Collections Gallery is underway, including redecoration, new flooring and case lighting. Around 2,000 items from the museum's rural life collections will be incorporated into the new themed displays.
- 2.2 During October Half Term, the Chapel was turned into an exhibition space for *Collaborate*. This project has seen the Workhouse building, rich collections and fascinating narratives from the archives being shared with creative and engaged individuals and organisations. The project developed out of Curator Dr Megan Dennis' work with the Museums Association Transformers Programme. The process started in January with an 'Inspiration Day' for all interested parties. Links were established and staff throughout the organisation set about supporting groups and individuals to access workhouse stories. The final exhibition featured items from a variety of disciplines including music, computer graphics, painting, textile art, 3D sculptures, creative writing photography and academic research. A similar programme of engagement and exhibition is planned for 2017, under the theme of 'Rural Lives'. More information can be found on the *Collaborate* blog <https://collaboratewithgressenhall.wordpress.com>

- 2.3 The *Collaborate* exhibition also featured the three workhouse touring exhibitions, co-ordinated by Assistant Curator Lauren Ephithite. Gressenhall was one of 22 workhouses in Norfolk, and staff worked with Aylsham Heritage Group, Downham Market Heritage Group and Wicklewood Archive Group to research the stories of their local workhouses. During the summer, the temporary exhibitions toured venues local to their towns, including libraries and local heritage sites. They were displayed together for the first time as part of *Collaborate*.
- 2.4 The Engineering volunteer team at Gressenhall have cleaned and restored some of the machines within the laundry through a project funded by the Arts Council England Preservation of Industrial and Scientific Material PRISM fund, as part of the wider Voices from the Workhouse project. The volunteers worked with Assistant Curator Lauren Ephithite and NMS Conservator David Harvey. These machines were used when the building was a County Care Home for the Elderly, but have not been in operation since the museum took over the building in 1975. Final work is now underway and the aim is that by restoring these machines we will be able to run them during event days from the 2017 season onwards.
- 2.5 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 end of December 2016 the museum had 3,065 Facebook likes and 4,608 Twitter followers. A Pinterest account has also been established with a wide range of boards including 'Weddings at Gressenhall'. An Instagram page has also been recently established and currently has 38 followers. Furthermore, Gressenhall continues to generate regular blogs about work taking place at the museum. The site was once again awarded a Certificate of Excellence in 2016 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://gressenhallfw.wordpress.com/>

[http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse](http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Gressenhall_Farm_and_Workhouse)

- 2.6 Gressenhall continues to develop a range of commercial activities as a means of generating income, including room and venue hire. Two weddings and receptions were held on Saturdays in late July and early August, with highly positive feedback. Together with the initial wedding ceremony in The Old Chapel in May, these events have enabled the team leading on weddings to evaluate and further develop the

operational delivery of these in advance of a further four confirmed bookings for 2017, with more already exploring dates in 2018. 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 AGM took place on 16 June 2016 at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse. No changes were proposed to the committee who were duly re-elected.
- 3.2 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. In recent months, the Friends have funded an assessment of the renovation work required to return the Farmers' Foundry engine to working order. This engine previously formed part of the Bygones Collection at Holkham Hall. This assessment identified the level of work required to restore the engine and the museum is now working with the Friends to identify additional funding sources available to undertake this work.
- 3.3 On Wednesday 13 July, the Friends hosted a special evening event for members to explore the work of bees in creating honey. This included a talk from Norfolk Beekeeper Venetia Rist who oversees the beehives on Gressenhall Farm. A talk on the history of magic has been arranged for members in April 2017.
- 3.4 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. Income from this shop continues to grow.
- 3.5 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 2016, the volunteers across the site gave over 9,750 hours of time to support the museum.
- 3.6 During the 2016 school summer holidays a Family Volunteering scheme was piloted. This work supported the careful packing of the museum collections previously on display within the Collections Gallery, prior to redevelopment of this space. The aim was to develop the way we interact with families, who form a significant proportion of the museum audience, increasing their participation with the collections by giving them a real collections-based job to do rather than an activity. Eight hour-long sessions were run, attracting 54 people: 22 adults and 32 children. Each

family was asked to pick their favourite object that they had packed, stating why they had chosen it. These 'favourite objects' will form a small temporary exhibition when the gallery reopens. We also intend to invite the same families to return for an exclusive preview of the redeveloped space.

4 Learning & Outreach

- 4.1 School visit numbers in the Autumn term at Gressenhall were positive. In particular, the KS2 Neolithic day proved popular, with more than 600 children visiting in a single, and very busy, week. The Learning Team rely upon feedback from visiting teachers and, as a result, have modified one of the four sessions during the day. This session, which formerly focused on pastoral farming and shelter-building, has been broadened, and sets of reproduction clothes have been made to give children the opportunity to dress like Neolithic people.
- 4.2 Following the Voices from the Workhouse development, the museum opened for a *Victorian Christmas* programme once more for primary schools, attracting around 500 children. Children were put to work in the workhouse, made peg dolls and listened to traditional tales as they found out about Christmas for rich and poor and tried to discover who had been leaving oranges in the workhouse.
- 4.3 Looking ahead, school bookings remain strong for the coming year. Once Upon A Time, a traditional tales event for 5 to 7 year olds is already fully booked for June and July. The Learning Team have utilised the January pause in delivery to schools to carry out further development work, addressing a particular curriculum need following an enquiry from a teacher. This has led to the development of a new event for Key Stage 1 children focusing upon 'time'. The day explored different experiences of time through the eyes of the family of Christopher High, a family who entered the workhouse in the mid-nineteenth century and whose statues now grace the main courtyard. Amongst other activities, the children will think about seasonal time as they work out on the fields, weekly chores as they help clean the farm house, boring time as they pick oakum in the workhouse, play time on the swings in the boy's yard and, of course, telling the time in the school room.
- 4.4 Gressenhall is ideally suited to working with children and young people with particular needs, due to its varied settings and displays both indoor and outdoor. Over the years, the Learning Team have developed a specialism in this respect and continue to work closely with Norfolk's Special Schools. We were very pleased that, in addition to meeting their learning needs and having a great day out, an evaluation form from a recent visit thanked staff for treating their children 'with dignity and respect'. The team were also flattered to be asked to run an activity for a small group of young people with complex needs about Ancient Greece. Although not an area of focus within the Gressenhall museum collections

or site, the Learning Team were told that they were so good with young people that the school would like to visit. The resulting event - 'Greekenhall' - will shortly be making an appearance, with the tastes, smells and sounds of Ancient Greece, a quest to make a scary mask to defeat the Medusa and potentially some Greek dancing to finish.

4.5 Learning Officer Katie Smith is currently on maternity leave. Her maternity replacement is Rebecca Hale.

4.6 NMS and Norfolk Arts Service have been successful in a Grants for the Arts funding bid to Arts Council England, for a project to be delivered in partnership with Sinfonia Viva, a nationally recognised orchestra. This exciting project will see an orchestral and sung performance by Sinfonia Viva and a choir of school children, volunteers and members of adult community groups at Gressenhall in June 2017. The words will be co-produced by school children and community groups and will be performed at evening and schools' performances. Gressenhall's Learning Team will be heavily involved in developing an Inspiration Day to provide material for the choral piece and in a Sharing Day following the main performances at which schools will share their own creative responses to the stories from the workhouse. The project is a wonderful opportunity to highlight the continued contemporary relevance of the workhouse and to promote Gressenhall's offer shortly before the start of the summer holidays.

4.7 During the summer, Gressenhall hosted two Professional Internship Programme (PIPs) placements. The first of these saw Samuel Ellis, a student at the Institute of Food Research, spend twelve weeks at Gressenhall from May to August 2016 working on a project entitled "Medical History in the Workhouse". Sam was interested in exploring the differences between historical research and scientific research as well as utilising the opportunity of working at a public museum to gain transferable skills in team work and public engagement. Sam initially conducted an audit of the items within the museum collections linked to medical history and updated documentation relating to these. He then identified which were suitable as future exhibits, as well as researching medical care during the period that the site was a Poor Law Workhouse, using sources such as surviving minutes from Guardian board meetings. This then led to extensive genealogy research of medical officers and notable patients and cases at the institution, some of which featured within the Collaborate Exhibition. A second student, Sam Walpole carried out a similar programme of research, documenting and recording the graffiti on the walls of the Workhouse buildings. The PIPs scheme gives the museum a fresh look at the way the museum works and the collections held, providing significant benefits to the museum as well as the students.

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

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**

20 February 2017

Item No.

ANCIENT HOUSE, MUSEUM OF THETFORD LIFE

Report by the Curator

This report provides information on activities at Ancient House, Museum of Thetford Life from July 2016 to January 2017

1. Exhibitions and associated events

**1.1 Thetford Remember 1914 – 1918
Commemorative events**



Under the Thetford Remembers project there have been several events over the summer and early autumn 2016. These have included an exhibition of photographs and artefacts at Thetford Guildhall, an event at the Methodists church and a screening of the Battle of the Somme film made in 1916. A talk on the History of Tanks, first tested in the Thetford area, was given in September as part of Heritage Open Day.

The project was extended by Heritage Lottery Fund to allow the final events to take place. These included the last event which was the opening of the commemorative garden in Thetford's King's House gardens on the 11th November 2016 following the Armistice Day commemorations on the Market Place. The project is now complete and an illustrated evaluation report has been supplied to the HLF. Funding for the Thetford Remembers project has come from Heritage Lottery Fund and from Arts Council England.

The 1914 kitchen display and the First World War Thetford Camp displays will continue until 2018.

The Town Council is planning to be part of a nation-wide evening beacon event to mark November 11th 2018 and the Museum is in early discussions with the Council about contributing to this.

1.2 Flint Rocks! Exhibition

The last main exhibition at Ancient House was 'Flint Rocks!' telling the story of flint in all its aspects. The last day of Flint Rocks was Sunday 27th November 2016. The display covered the geology, social history, archaeology, art and craft of flint and featured unusual dimensions of the material such as its use to make Wedgwood teapots, flint sounds from a kind of flint xylophone, and the production of sculpted flint dogs.

On display was a panel depicting a pony. This was lent to the exhibition by Nick Dickson of Breaking New Ground, who oversaw its extraction from Brandon Library during demolition work. There was also an exhibit created by Volunteer and artist in residence Dan Morgan, who had made a model imagining two flint miners working across the millennia. A Neolithic miner, with his antler pick and flickering lamp is about to come face to face with Arthur 'Pony' Ashley, the last of the Brandon gunflint miners from the earlier 20th century. Dan's finished model featured in the exhibition.

A section of the exhibition featured prehistoric Japanese obsidian, kindly lent by the Archaeology Museum of Obsidian in Nagawa, central Japan. Further assistance with the exhibition had also been given by English Heritage and by Norfolk Museums Service colleagues David Waterhouse, Curator of Natural History and Francesca Vanke, Curator of Art. 3D design was done by Katie Jeffs from the Design and Technical Department and conservation was by colleagues from the NMS conservation department. Volunteers Dan Morgan and Keith Robinson helped with photographing and selecting flint artefacts. A flint necklace by Bill Basham had been loaned to the Museum by the Museums Service at Bury St Edmunds and has now been returned.

This exhibition was part of the Breaking New Ground programme to conserve and interpret the Brecks area of Norfolk and Suffolk. Breaking New Ground receives major funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

1.3 Pulp, Pin Trays Pails and Pots, the story of Thetford Pulp Ware exhibition

The current main exhibition in the Museum's programme opened on the 16th December with a stakeholders opening event on the 3rd February. The display focuses on the story of Thetford Pulp Ware, a distinctive local industry. Thetford Pulp Ware was made in the town's Pulp Works from 1879 until the 1950s. In many ways a green industry it used power from the river to pulp up recycled materials such as old jute bags to make useful articles for the home, for shops and for industry. Decorated with a variety of colourful paint finishes, the products were lightweight, durable and waterproof. They were used for all sorts of purposes including washing-up bowls, baby baths and buckets.

During the Second World War Churchill's secret documents were brought under armed guard to Thetford's Pulp Mill. There they were then transformed into items such as baby baths or fuel tanks for fighter planes. Also during the

war, pulp ware was made into decoys to fool the enemy and the fake pulp soldiers became known as the Thetford Army.

From the start the company made safety helmets. There is a testimonial in an early catalogue from a man who unfortunately had a weight of half a hundredweight (50kg) dropped from four feet onto his head. Luckily he was wearing a pulp ware helmet and although the helmet had to be forcibly removed the man lived to tell the tale. The company made helmets right through the last century and after a change of names from the Patent Pulp Manufacturing Company Ltd. the company continues business in Thetford as Centurion Safety Products. The Museum has been in touch with Centurion during the production of the exhibition and has arranged with permission for a new line of postcards on sale in the museum shop.

This exhibition will run through until December 2017. Exhibitions at Ancient House are funded by Arts Council England as part of the support given to Norfolk Museums Service

2 Forthcoming Displays

2.1 Duleep Singh Gallery Feasibility

Feasibility work is being undertaken 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. A recent gift of a portrait of the Maharajah is planned to be included in the displays.

3 Learning with Adults, Children and Young People

3.1 Activities for children and Families

The Museum continues to offer a varied programme of holiday activities for members of the public, including craft events and trails. In addition the museum's after school History Club, Teenage History Club and monthly Museum Club continue to be offered.

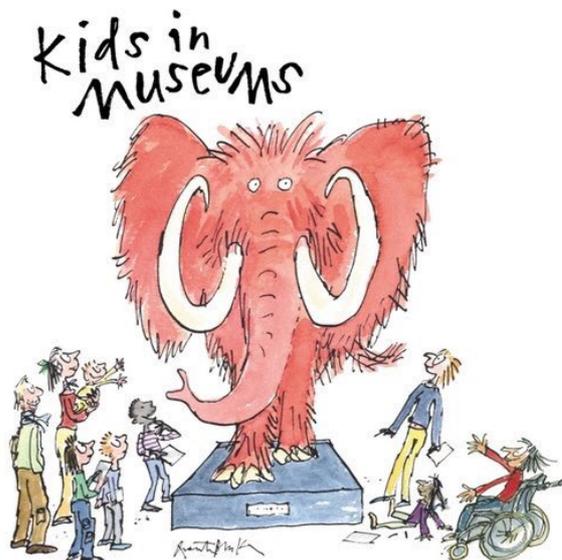
During the school holidays the Ancient House Museum continues to offer a popular programme of themed gallery discovery trails, with a new trail available for each week of the school holidays. Recent trails have included a Christmas trail and a Royal themed trail.

3.2 Nagawa, Japan – Thetford Norfolk Teenage Exchange

The Museum's teenage history club was much involved in a visit by 14 Japanese teenagers last July, 'Obsidian Ambassadors', as part of the Flint Obsidian / Thetford Nagawa exchanges. Members of the Thetford Teenage History group went to Japan last summer. The Japanese teenagers were

shown places of cultural and historical interest in Norfolk, including NMS museums at Gressenhall, Cromer and Norwich and English Heritage sites at Castle Acre and Grimes Graves.

3.3 Takeover Events



In August, the teenagers participated in a Teen Twitter Takeover. The young people joined 50 other heritage organisations across the world who enabled teenagers to takeover their museum twitter feeds. This was part of an annual Kids in Museums event which aims to empower teenagers and give them a voice. Teens had the opportunity to explore behind the scenes, look through boxes of prints, take #MuseumSelfies and hunt for Pokemon amid the Tudor beams. During the day, teens in Thetford

tweeted with teens in London, Durham and Canada. A group of teens at Time and Time Museum, Great Yarmouth issued challenges which sent the young people all over Ancient House seeking answers. The teens also uncovered some fantastic Victorian humour which they shared with Bob Nicholson, historian and curator of @VictorianHumour. Takeover days give children and young people opportunities to showcase their talents by getting involved in decision making, working alongside adults and gaining valuable work experience by taking on adult roles for a day. Ancient House has a long-term commitment to supporting local young people through this scheme. Earlier this year, this work was recognised by the Children's Commissioner when Ancient House was awarded a Gold Commendation for participating in the Children's Commissioner's Takeover Challenge.

For the Christmas Lights Switch On event in late November, the young people also 'took over the event' with a Mystery theme and were commended by visitors for their confidence and ability. The Youth opening of the pulp exhibition in December included another Takeover element with a drama based on the story of secret documents being brought to Thetford in the Second World War for pulping and making into something useful.

3.4 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. Recent topics have included A History of the Ancient House by the Curator. Attendances average 15-25 and a number of talks are often delivered by NMS staff.

3.5 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.

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.

A notable collaboration from the summer was the display of artwork by year 9 pupils from Thetford Academy at the Ancient House, inspired by the Flint Rocks exhibition. A successful private view with parents, teachers and pupils was held in the Museum and artwork was displayed in the museum's bow window. We hope to work with the Academy again in a similar way in 2017.

4 Ancient House and the Media

4.1 Museum on 'Look East' regarding new postage stamp featuring Grimes Graves

The Museum featured in a news bulletin on 17th January on BBC's *Look East* about Grimes Graves's appearance on a new postage stamp with illustrations of prehistoric Britain. A short interview with the Curator was included.

4.2 Thetford in 100 Artefacts, monthly column in Thetford and Brandon Times

Staff at the Ancient House continue with their project in partnership with Andrew Fitchett from the EDP's *Thetford and Brandon Times* to write a monthly column. Entitled *Thetford in a Hundred Artefacts*, recent pieces have included a Victorian kitchen range, the coat of arms designed for Duleep Singh by Prince Albert and a flint arrowhead. The article provides an opportunity to highlight objects from the museum collections and to promote forthcoming museum events.

4.3 Social media

The Museum continues to develop its social media presence with Twitter and Facebook accounts. At time of writing, the Museum currently has 2,338 Twitter followers and 534 likes on Facebook.

The Museum joined other museums across the world for International Museum Mash Up day. Museum Mash Up is a day of "shared experimentation with a focus on improvisation and embracing risk taking". It was started in 2015 in America. At Ancient House both our young people's groups, History Club and Teenage History Club, participated. Members were

presented with a random selection of museum objects and challenged to find links between them. Imagination and improvisation were more important than factual accuracy. Once links had been identified, the groups worked on creating an 'experience' inspired by the connections. The 'experiences' ranged from found poetry to drawing to an aroma quiz. Jen Oleniczak Brown, founder of Museum Mash Up commented: "I'm blown away by the kids ... so happy the history club is part of the Mashup!!" Find out more about the event here <https://storify.com/TheEngagingEd/international-museum-mashup-day>

Other Twitter events the Museum has been involved with include the #ArtStarTrail (National Gallery) before Christmas and #Heritagetreasures (Heritage Lottery Fund) in January.

5 Other Museum Developments

5.1 EDP Tourism Award Best Norfolk Attraction (under 50,000 visitors)

In November 2015, the Ancient House was awarded Best Visitor Attraction in the Norfolk Tourism Awards. The judges were particularly impressed with the customer service of the museum staff. The award has helped the museum publicise its activities through the year.

5.2 Volunteers

A small team of volunteers continues to 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, the delivery of sessions for schools and preparing resource boxes for learning activities.

5.4 Poetry Workshop

As part of the Breaking New Ground initiative, the Museum has served as a venue for a poetry writing workshop by Sandlines using flint as an inspiration. One of the participants used the Flint Alphabet as inspiration to make an alphabet poem about Bill Basham of Brandon who knapped the alphabet in the 1920s.

5.4 Museum Trainee Scheme

During 2016 -2017, the Ancient House Museum is hosting a 12 month Teaching Museum traineeship provided through the NMS *Teaching Museum* programme, funded



by ACE as part of the 2015-18 Major Partner Museum business plan. Imogen Clarke, one of 6 hosted by the museums service as a whole is our current Trainee. She has worked on a project to provide handling boxes for learning activities.

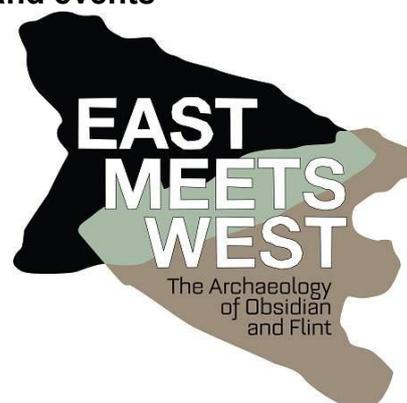
Imogen has settled in very well and will be undertaking a range of museum work to gain experience for her future career.

5.5 Civil partnership ceremony at Ancient House

In August Ancient House hosted its first civil partnership ceremony. The couple were attracted to the atmosphere of Ancient House for their special day. Guests took the opportunity to explore the museum and try out the dressing up costumes. The small courtyard garden proved popular during the sunny afternoon for photographs and toasts. One of the couple commented: "Our Civil Partnership was a dream event made extra special by [the museum staff]."

5.6 East Meets West flint and obsidian conference and events

In July 2016 the Ancient House team, working with the UEA, Sainsbury's Institute and English Heritage, hosted three days of international activities including a conference on flint and obsidian held in Thetford, a day of schools activities and a family event in Kings House gardens. Part of the July activities was a ceremony held at Grimes Graves to mark an archaeological twinning between Norfolk's flint mines and the Hoshikuso Obsidian mines in Japan – a world first.



5.7 Artist in Residence scheme

Dan Morgan, Ancient House Artist in Residence, has imagined what might have happened when Thomas Paine, Thetford's famous revolutionary son returned to his home town to visit his 91-year old mother. Speaking about the project, Dan said: "This summer I have created a model to fit in with the museum's exhibits. The young Thomas Paine must have walked regularly down White Hart Street, past the Ancient House in the 18th Century; I have made a diorama scene of him proclaiming the stirring of his republican thoughts in the streets of Thetford."

This is Dan Morgan's third summer as Ancient House's Artist in Residence. In 2014 he used the museum's pottery collections and Sir Thomas Brown's "Hydriotaphia – Urne Buriall" to produce still lifes. In 2015 he created two model flint miners for the Flint Rocks exhibition. Dan's completed Paine model was displayed as part of Ancient House Heritage Open Day on 10 September.

5.8 New Acquisition – Thomas Paine’s Rights of Man

The Museum has acquired a rare French 1791 edition of Rights of Man (Droits de l’Homme) by Thomas Paine. The acquisition has been paid for by the generous support of the Thomas Paine Society, the Thomas Paine legacy committee and the Friends of Thetford Museum. A presentation event of the book is planned for Monday 27th February. The Museum plans to incorporate the book into the Thomas Paine displays.

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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