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**BRECKLAND
AREA MUSEUMS COMMITTEE**

24 October 2013 Item No.

GRESSENHALL FARM & WORKHOUSE REPORT

Report by the Western Area Manager

This report provides information on activities at Gressenhall Farm & Workhouse from January to September 2013

1. Events and Activities

- 1.1 Gressenhall opened for the 2013 season on Sunday 10 March, closing on Sunday 3 November.
- 1.2 Gressenhall opened on Sunday 17 February for Museums Pass holders only. This *Behind the Scenes* event provided our regular visitors with the opportunity to explore the stores, meet the volunteer teams and visit parts of the site not normally accessible to the public. Workhouse tours proved to be particularly popular. There were 800 participants for this event.
- 1.3 Gressenhall has continued to deliver a broad programme of events, based around three operational models:
 - Main Event days – major events such as *Apple Day* with a full event staffing establishment including the use of parking fields. Free to Museums Pass holders.
 - Days with a Difference – smaller themed event days such as *Horse Power!* requiring a smaller staffing complement and utilising core parking. Free to Museums Pass holders.
 - Ticketed events – pre-booked and pre-paid events such as *Night at the Museum*. Reduced charge for Museums Pass holders.
- 1.4 The costs of delivering and marketing the Gressenhall event programme continue to be subsidised with funding from the Arts Council England (ACE) Major Partner funding business plan being managed by NMAS in 2012-15.
- 1.5 The 2013 programme included a number of new events:

- *History Alive!* – a Georgian living history day.
 - *Hell Hath No Fury* – a ticketed interactive drama event as part of the national *Night at the Museum* programme.
 - *Victorian Family Christmas* – a ticketed daytime event.
 - *Back to your Past* – an event targeted at local history and heritage societies
 - *The Workhouse Experience* – a living history event
 - *Gressenhall Garden Show* – an event focussed on Gressenhall's heritage gardens
 - *Grandparents Day* – an event targeted at families with a reduced charge for grandparents
- 1.6 The Main Event day *Spring Fair* took place on BH Monday 1 April. This event featured a range of family Easter activities. Union Farm marked the start of spring with a number of farm-based activities including working horses. There were 2,247 participants for this event (1,180 in 2012).
- 1.7 The new Day with a Difference event *Back to Your Past* took place on Sunday 21 April. This day saw a large number of local history enthusiasts and historical societies on site, sharing their knowledge with visitors and participating in a range of training events. There were 726 participants for this event.
- 1.8 The new Day with a Difference *The Workhouse Experience* ran on BH Monday 6 May. Drawing on school programmes developed by the Learning Team, this event explored all aspects of workhouse life and featured strong living history components. There were 647 participants for this event.
- 1.9 As part of the national programme *Night at the Museum*, Gressenhall ran two pre-booked and charged Victorian 'whodunit' drama events *Hell Hath No Fury* on Friday 17 and Saturday 18 May between 7.30-10.30pm. Visitors were able to play detective, meeting a range of suspicious characters. This event was fully booked, with 180 participants.
- 1.10 The new Main Event day *History Alive!* took place on BH Monday 27 May. This event explored aspects of Georgian life and featured a number of costumed characters provided through Black Knight Historical, included a barber surgeon, fine ladies and gentlemen, musicians and storytellers. There were 987 participants for this event.
- 1.11 The Day with a Difference *Father's Day* event ran on Sunday 16 June and featured a range of farming 'big boys toys' alongside a very popular climbing wall. There were 601 participants for this event (786 in 2012).
- 1.12 The new Day with a Difference *Gressenhall Garden Show* took place on Sunday 30 June, with visitors able to explore the Gressenhall

gardens in the company of the gardening volunteers. There were also a range of horticultural retail stands. Participation numbers for this event were disappointing at 397, despite the event taking place in the same week as the recording of Radio 4's *Gardeners Question Time*.

- 1.13 As part of the nationwide Festival of British Archaeology, Gressenhall ran the Day with a Difference *Archaeology Day* on Sunday 14 July in partnership with colleagues from the Historic Environment Service. There were 506 participants for this event (516 in 2012).
- 1.14 The new Day with a Difference event *Grandparents Day* took place on Sunday 28 July, with a reduced admission price for grandparents. This event was a development from the *Older People's Day* programme offered in previous years. There were 517 participants for this event.
- 1.15 The farm-based Day with a Difference event *A Harvest Celebration* took place on Sunday 4 August. In addition to a range of farm-based activities, there was also a strong food retailing offer on the main site. There were 601 participants for this event (739 in 2012).
- 1.16 Following the success of the pilot event in 2012, Gressenhall once again hosted the *Breckland Festival* event, organised and funded by Breckland District Council on Saturday 10 August. This family-friendly event featuring a range of arts, sports and environmental activities saw a significant increase in participation, with 2,016 on site (772 in 2012).
- 1.17 The Main Event *Village at War* took place over the BH weekend 25-26 August. A large number of WW2 enactors and vehicles were on site and the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight did a flypast on the Monday. There were 3,510 participants for this event (3,623 in 2012).
- 1.18 Gressenhall opened free of charge as part of the national *Heritage Open Day* programme, with Gressenhall featuring in the Norwich HEART HOD marketing package. There were an estimated 1,040 visits to the site during the day.
- 1.19 The Day with a Difference event *Horse Power!* took place on Sunday 29 September, in partnership with the Eastern Counties Heavy Horse Association. A large number of guest heavy horse teams were on site working in the fields, with breeds including Shires, Suffolks, Clydesdales and Percherons. There were 678 participants for this event (557 in 2012).
- 1.20 Forthcoming events include:
 - *Apple Day* on Sunday 20 October – a Main Event day
 - *Ghostly Gressenhall* on the evenings of 30-31 October – pre booked Halloween events
 - *Victorian Family Christmas* on Sunday 15 December – a pre booked event

- 1.21 Gressenhall continues to offer a broad range of themed family-friendly activities throughout the school half term and summer holidays. A comprehensive *School's Out!* programme was marketed and delivered during the summer holidays, with marketing fliers distributed to children in individual classes in schools across the Litcham and Dereham clusters. Adverts were also placed in *Primary Times*. The summer programme spanning the period 25 July to 4 September saw additional family-friendly activities taking place on site each day, structured around three different themes:
- *A Feast of Fun* – a diverse range of food-based activities
 - *Alice at Gressenhall* – Wonderland-themed activities including a Mad Hatter's tea party
 - *The Victorian Apprentice* – Victorian themed activities and a chance to earn an 'Apprentice Indenture'
- 1.22 Gressenhall hosted a recording of Radio 4's Gardeners Question Time on 24 June. Two editions were recorded in front of a capacity audience of 200 guests. The Chairman of the County Council Cllr Hilary Cox posed the first question to the panel. The recording session generated significant media interest and coverage for the site.



Chair Peter Gibbs and his panel of experts: Matthew Wilson, Chris Beardshaw, Bob Flowerdew and James Wong.

- 1.23 An Events Review meeting is scheduled for October, to provide staff, volunteers and freelancers with an opportunity to review and evaluate the 2013 event programme and begin the process of shaping the 2014 programme.
- 1.24 On Sunday 9 June, Gressenhall hosted Norwich's Heritage Economic and Regeneration Trust (HEART) *Archive Alive* mobile cinema tour bus as it made its way through the region. This exciting and unique tour featured a beautiful 1967 vintage mobile cinema offering screenings of local archive films aboard the 22-seater digital cinema.
- 1.25 Planning work is underway for a programme of activities to mark the centenary of the outbreak of World War One. The 2014 *Village at War* event will feature a strong World War One element and other display options are being considered, including connections with Gressenhall's Women's Land Army gallery and collections.
- 1.26 The *Rediscover Gressenhall* marketing campaign targeted at recruiting repeat local visitors within approximately 20 minutes drive time ran

again during April 2013. This campaign featured a discounted entry charge of £2 and aimed to recruit new Museums Pass members and capture email contact details for use in follow-up electronic marketing. The campaign fliers were distributed via parish magazines, door-door delivery, local group and venue distribution and via school clusters.

Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse

Rediscover why Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse is one of the foremost visitor attractions in East Anglia and take advantage of our very special offer any day during April 2013.

Throughout 2013, Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse has a number of special events and activities, including lots to see and do every day of the school holidays.

See www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk/gressenhall for more information.

Spring into Gressenhall this April and Save £££s
Bring this voucher to the museum ticket desk and enjoy the special admission price of £2 per person. (only valid during April 2013)

My postcode is: (for research only)

In our party today there are: Adults Conc. Children
(say how many)

In the last 12 months we have visited Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse times
(say how many)

If not, when did you last visit?

Join our **free** mailing list and we'll send you details about museums and education, culture and heritage services provided by Norfolk County Council.

Yes, I would like to join the free e-mailing list

Name

I would like to receive email bulletins:

I would prefer to receive information by post: Email address

Address:

Postcode

We'll contact you about forthcoming events and activities, keep you up to date with changes to our services and seek your views about new developments. Norfolk County Council will not sell your information to any other company and all personal information will be held and processed according to our privacy policy. **This offer cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer.**

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Heritage Lottery Fund Norfolk County Council Norfolk Museums Association NORFOLK ASSOCIATION OF MUSEUMS AND HERITAGE SERVICES NORFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL NORFOLK ENGLAND

The campaign proved to be very successful. During April 2013, Gressenhall welcomed a total of 11,272 visitors, not including school visits. 755 vouchers were received, admitting a total of 2985 visitors paying £2 each. Of these, 1498 were adults, 307 concessions and 1180 children. A further 79 visitors were recorded as being under 4. 41% of families using the vouchers had not visited in the past 12 months, while a further 32% had only visited the once. Of the number who had not visited during the past year, 51 families noted on their voucher that this was their first visit to the museum! 65% of families signed up to our free mailing list, the majority providing us with an email address—a considerable benefit to us as a cost effective method of communicating with our potential audience. The campaign period also saw a bumper number of Norfolk Museums Pass sales. In April 2012, only 40 Passes were sold at Gressenhall, admitting up to 126 individuals. During the *Rediscover Gressenhall* campaign period in 2013, some 106 Passes were sold for 341 individuals. Secondary spend on site was also boosted, with the Mardlers' Rest Café reporting an increase of 50% in transactions in April 2013, in comparison with the same period in 2012.

2. Other Museum Developments

- 2.1 The *Shine a Light* project funded through the Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund (administered by the Museums Association) is proceeding on schedule. This collections access project is based in the Gressenhall Superstores and aims to improve physical and virtual access to the reserve NMA collections. The project team comprising a project-funded officer, two Teaching Museum trainees and a group of volunteers have worked very effectively with countywide colleagues drawn from specialist curatorial departments, conservation and collections management teams. Around 120 visitors joined pilot guided tours of the Superstores as part of the Gressenhall Heritage Open day programme. A fuller tour programme will be developed for 2014. The project has attracted considerable public and professional interest through its very active social media profile. The project blog can be found at: <http://shinealightproject.wordpress.com/>
- 2.2 A Round 1 Heritage Grant application has now been submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the *Voices from the Workhouse* project. This project will focus on providing new displays in the main museum building, work yards and laundry, with an emphasis on those galleries relating to the workhouse and Norfolk's rural life collections. The outcome of this Round 1 bid should be known at the end of November. Estimated project delivery costs are £1.86m, with a projected HLF award of £1.47m (79%). If the Round 1 application is successful, development funding will be released by HLF to support the production of a full Round 2 application in spring/summer 2014. An additional funding bid of £150k has been submitted to the DCMS/Wolfson Foundation, with a decision expected in January 2014. Both the Norfolk Record Office and the National Archives will be supporting this project. The Friends of Gressenhall have already pledged £20k in match funding towards this project.
- 2.3 Gressenhall continues to maintain its strong social networking presence, with active and developing profiles on both Twitter and Facebook. Daily content continues to be uploaded. The site has a number of active social media champions who are uploading regular contributions including images. See: <http://www.facebook.com/GressenhallFW>. Blogs are being generated by Gressenhall's HLF-funded Skills for the Future project trainees at www.gressenhallfw.wordpress.com/. Gressenhall has also received a 2013 Certificate of Excellence from the influential Trip Advisor website.
- 2.4 The findings from the 2013 Gressenhall exit survey reinforces the perception of the site as a family day out, with real potential to grow its audience of adult and tourist visitors. The strength of the family audience is clear, with 70% of visitors arrived in parties including children. This high proportion is striking (national average 34%) and reinforced by 41% total visits being children aged 0-14 (Norwich Castle =24%). 40% of visitors are Museums Pass holders, with the majority

being Norfolk families. 39% are first-time visitors; 41% had not visited in the previous 12 months. 57% had visited 1 or more times in last 12 months. Fewer visitors (19%) are aged 60-80 (Norwich Castle = 24%) and 60% visitors on term time weekday visitors did not have children. Most new visitors visit outside the peak family period. The currently localised market is clear. 72% live within 50 miles and 54% within 20 miles. Only 27% visit from beyond 50 miles (Norwich Castle = 42%) and 1% from overseas. Site dwell time ranges from 4-6 hours, confirming that Gressenhall is used as a full day destination attraction by its visitors.

- 2.5 A new resin-bonded gravel path has been laid from the new Welcome Area building to the ticketing/shop building. This replaces a the previous damaged and unsightly surface. The new path provides clarity for visitors on arrival and creates a smarter approach to the site. This work was funded through the NCC Building Maintenance Fund.
- 2.6 A new CCTV system has been installed providing day/night vision cover for key areas of the museum site and farm. This system will be externally monitored out of hours. Funding for this significant security improvement has come from the NCC Corporate Minor Works programme.
- 2.7 Improved signage and additional lifebelts have now been installed along the river frontage on the farm, with guidance from the NCC health & safety team.
- 2.8 The new 1930's Seed Merchants Shop display has been opened in Village Row, featuring a new entry route from the Cherry Tree Cottage garden. This display is based on the interior of the Taylor's Seed Merchants shop in Kings Lynn. The Taylor brothers attended the opening event, where they were joined by the Chairman of the County Council. Gressenhall Collections Team volunteers have also worked with the Curator to develop the travelling temporary exhibition *Celebrating Norfolk Nurserymen* for the Collections Gallery. This exhibition highlights the work of four successful Norfolk nurserymen—the Taylors, Starks, Daniels and Cannells. The temporary exhibition will be open throughout the year until 4 November. After that, the plan is to create four mini touring exhibitions from the display, to offer to local sites associated with gardening.
- 2.9 Gressenhall continues to develop a range of commercial activities as a means of generating new income. Current commercial development priorities are:
 - The development of a site-appropriate weddings offer
 - The promotion of the room hire offer to external customers
 - The marketing of the site as a venue for commercial filming
 - The introduction of unique site-specific retail merchandise

3. Friends and Volunteers

- 3.1 The Friends continue to support a range of activities across the site including the purchase of new harness for the Suffolk Punch horses. The Friends are running a range of events for members during 2013 and continue to produce their regular *Rural Life* news.
- 3.2 The Friends have agreed to support the match fundraising campaign for the proposed HLF bid and have already earmarked £20k funding for this purpose.
- 3.3 The Gressenhall Curator continues to co-ordinate, manage and develop the volunteer teams at Gressenhall. Some 130 volunteers continue to be active on the site, organised into a number of specialist teams. Gressenhall Curator Megan Dennis has returned from maternity leave.

4. Learning & Outreach

- 4.1 The award-winning Gressenhall Learning Team continues to deliver a broad and varied programme to children and young people at pre schools, KS1-3 and secondary level. It is anticipated that 10-11,000 school children will visit the site this year.
- 4.2 The Learning Team are currently reviewing the schools offer in the light of proposed changes to the national Curriculum, particularly affecting the history curriculum. Staff are re-scoping existing offers and developing new packages to align with the new curriculum. Key learning sessions will now include:
 - KS2 Victorians: Local study at Gressenhall
 - KS2 Evacuees: A turning point in British history
 - KS2 English: develop your literacy skills
 - KS1 History: Life within living memory
 - KS2 History: Neolithic Britain
 - KS2 History: World War One
- 4.3 The two Gressenhall-based trainees recruited as part of the NMAS *Teaching Museum* programme started work in January 2013. Dayna Woolbright and Wayne Holland form part of an eight strong cohort of trainees who are employed full time for twelve months. The two trainees are working as part of the *Shine a Light* project team in the Gressenhall Superstores. The funding for these traineeships comes from ACE and the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation. Recruitment is currently underway for the next cohort of Teaching Museum trainees, who will commence work in January 2014. One of these trainees will be based at Gressenhall, working as part of the events team.

- 4.4 The Heritage Lottery Fund-funded *Skills for the Future* training project is continuing to run at Gressenhall, in partnership with the Museum of East Anglian Life. Current active posts at Gressenhall include Apprenticeships in farming, heritage gardening and heritage landscape management. Traineeships (the majority accredited) are currently running in archives & library work, curatorial work, learning and event planning. Work placements are an important part of a number of these posts. Placement partnerships have been developed with the National Trust, Norfolk Wildlife Trust, the Hawk & Owl Trust, Forncett Industrial Museum, Holkham Hall, Sandringham and Houghton Hall. A partnership with the Prince's Trust at the start of the year facilitated the delivery of additional short-term training opportunities for unemployed young people through the Trust's *Get Into...* programme.

5. Visitor Numbers

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

6. 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 |

7. Recommendations:

That the Area Museums Committee notes the report

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