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**BRECKLAND
AREA MUSEUMS COMMITTEE**

19 July 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 March 2017 to June 2017.

1. Events and Activities

- 1.1 Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse opened for the main 2017 season on Sunday 5 March and will close on Sunday 29 October 2017.
- 1.2 Throughout 2017, 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 2017, these are: *Spring Fair*, *Rock ‘n’ Roll at Gressenhall*, *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 such as *Mother’s Day* and *Gressenhall Goes Wild*. These require smaller staffing complement and utilise core parking. They are aimed to attract audiences of 500-800 visitors. Again, they are 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 2017, these include the murder mystery event *A Murder Most Novel*. These style of 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:

- *Spring Fair* (1,263 visitors)
- *Rock 'n' Roll at Gressenhall* (1,395 visitors)

Days with a Difference:

- *Mother's Day* (597 visitors)
- *Gressenhall Goes Wild* (743 visitors)
- *Open Farm Sunday* (2,036 visitors – free admission to the farm; whole site offered at £2.50 per person)
- *Big Boys' Toys* (478 visitors)

Norfolk School Holiday Activities:

- Easter Holidays: *Gressenhall Goes Wild* (5,125 visitors)
- Summer Half Term – *Toys and Tunes!* (2,086 visitors)

Pre-booked:

- *A Murder Most Novel* (116 over the two evenings)

In addition to these activities, the museum organised an additional event to help promote the new Workhouse displays. *Lottery Players' Preview* took place on Sunday 19 March, at the start of the new season. This event offered a range of workhouse themed activities and the chance to meet costumed characters, with free admission to National Lottery ticket holders. This was designed as a thank you to those who had bought tickets and had consequently supported the work of the Heritage Lottery Fund and, through this, the Voices from the Workhouse redevelopment. The event was positively received with 628 on site, of which exactly 500 came through for free with a National Lottery Ticket – 317 adults and 183 children. This is a great figure for a grey day in March. An average for our established Mother's Day event is around 440.

The Gressenhall Visitor Services Team asked the public on this day if they had been to Gressenhall before. Remarkably 137 visitors said that they had never visited before, and the perception from across the site was that a significant number of those returning to Gressenhall were coming back after a fair few years.

Future events include *Story Festival* on Sunday 9 July, which will feature two performances of *Alice in Wonderland* by the Strange Fascination Theatre Company, six weeks of daily summer activities and *Village at War* during the August Bank Weekend.

- 1.4 These events continue to attract Norfolk Museums Pass holders and to act as a driver to further pass sales. By way of an example, at the *Spring Fair* event on Bank Holiday Monday 1 May, 56% of visitors were Norfolk Museums Pass holders or Friends of Gressenhall. During the day, a further 13 Norfolk Museums Passes were sold.
- 1.5 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.

- 1.6 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 museums 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 last July. A further marketing push was made at the start of the 2017 main season, with the creation and distribution of a specific piece of print. The second phase of this project is well underway, focusing on the first floor Collections Gallery. The gallery was opened as a 'work in progress' to visitors for May Half Term, since which work has continued whilst remaining open. The majority of this installation will be completed for the Summer Holidays with the displays on the mesh panels installed in the autumn. Ultimately, around 2,000 items from the museum's rural life collections will be incorporated into the new themed displays.
- 2.2 As part of the new Collections Gallery, a dedicated temporary exhibition space has been created to house an annual show. The 2017 exhibition is entitled Rural Lives and includes photographs of Norfolk people from the past and also from today through the work of contemporary photographer J. A. Mortram.
- 2.3 Building on the success of last year's Collaborate programme, which saw the museum working with a wide range of creative individuals and groups, a successor programme has been launched for the 2017 season. This year's theme is Rural Lives, taking inspiration from the temporary exhibition as well as the wider displays in the Collections Gallery. An inspiration day for interested parties was held in May, with an exhibition of the resulting creations planned for October Half Term. Last year's exhibition featured items from a variety of disciplines including music, computer graphics, painting, textile art, 3D sculptures, creative writing photography and academic research. More information can be found on the *Collaborate* blog <https://collaboratewithgressenhall.wordpress.com>
- 2.4 A grant of £19,788 has been secured from the Arts Council England Preservation of Industrial and Scientific Material PRISM fund, to restore the Farmers' Foundry engine boiler (formerly part of the Bygones Collection at Holkham) back to working use. The restoration of the Farmers' Foundry will bring steam power back to Gressenhall for summer 2018. 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.

- 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 June 2017 the museum had 3,418 Facebook likes and 4,954 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 established and currently has 618 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://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. Four weddings are planned for the 2017 season, building on the highly positive feedback following last year's ceremonies and receptions. Following an open day in the spring, more bookings have been made for 2018 and an application for renewal of the weddings licence has been made. 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 15 June 2017 at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse.
- 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 the creation of new con rods for the 1899 Panhard et Levassor motor car. An examination by an aerospace engineering company with a history of working with veteran cars had revealed a number of hairline cracks within the metal structure of the rods. Although not visible to the naked eye the presence of these cracks within the microscopic structure of the metal

demonstrated that they had been severely weakened by repeated cycles of heat and cool and physical movement whilst the car was being operated. The rods are due to be delivered back to site in the coming weeks, with the aim of the car being fully operational later this summer.

- 3.3 An illustrated talk on the History of Magic was given by the Rev Peter Fox on Friday, 28 April, 2017, as part of a special evening event for Friends of Gressenhall.
- 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 In recognition of Megan's hard work with the volunteers at Gressenhall, we were delighted that she received the highly commended accolade in the Volunteer Manager category at the recent SHARE Museums East Volunteer Awards. Certificates were also awarded to Gressenhall's Annabel Padgett, who volunteers on the farm, and the volunteer Gardening Team, reflecting their hard work and dedicated support of Gressenhall.
- 3.7 A new programme of 'task volunteering' options are now promoted weekly to our volunteer database. These provide opportunities for individuals who would like to engage with the museum but are unable to commit to a regular weekly slot. The uptake on these requests from across the site has been highly positive, and this is an area which we are looking to develop further.

4 Learning & Outreach

- 4.1 The museum continues to be popular with school visits and over 10,500 children from across Norfolk and beyond visited last year. Bookings for the autumn are already looking strong, which is incredibly positive given the additional budgetary pressures being felt by schools.
- 4.2 This June, the Gressenhall Learning Team once again worked in partnership with Norfolk Fostering and Adoption Services on a family fun day for looked after and adopted children. This year's theme was Pirates and the museum site was brought to life with costumed characters, fun challenges, trails and art activities. This event is now an established day

in the calendar, providing much-needed opportunities for the children to make positive memories with their foster and adoptive families. In the friendly environment of our museum, the children can also catch up with old friends, carers and other familiar faces whilst making new friends with other children who have similar experiences as them. This year's event attracted over 300 visitors.

4.3 Last year, NMS and Norfolk Arts Service were 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 project reached fruition on 7 and 8 June with two open-air performances at Gressenhall, attended by enthusiastic crowds. The performances were a culmination of a unique £90,000 choral and creative writing project which brought together celebrated composer James Redwood, poet Lucy Sheerman and Sinfonia Viva with local communities to create an original oratorio inspired by the stories of those whose lives were shaped by the workhouse. Groups of singers animated different spaces inside the workhouse with all performers coming together for an open air performance with a professional orchestra and soloists in the workhouse courtyard.

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)	<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:

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