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**BRECKLAND
AREA MUSEUMS COMMITTEE**

31 October 2008 Item No.

GRESSENHALL FARM & WORKHOUSE REPORT

Report by the Area Museums Officer

**This report provides information on activities at
Gressenhall Farm & Workhouse from June to
September 2008**

1. Events and Other Activities

- 1.1 The *Older People's Day* on 11 July saw good weather and 380 participants. The event was delivered in partnership with Norfolk County Council and Age Concern, who underwrote the coach service to the site. The retail and information marquee was fully booked. Breckland District Council sponsored local sculptor Neal French to support the event, which also saw Golden Oldies (part sponsored by Concertina Music Trust) and Bright Spark music workshops and the gruel kitchen in operation. There were demonstrations from the Worstead Guild of Spinners and Weavers. Other attractions included the Panhard and other veteran cars, alongside a Steam Up organised by the volunteer engineering team.
- 1.2 An extensive Summer Holiday programme ran on site from late July to the start of September, with a total of 7,677 participants. This programme involved a range of family-centred learning activities. *Art Attack* family craft sessions ran daily. Farmhouse cookery demonstrations took place on average once a week plus Sundays. Steam Up sessions ran each Tuesday. Mardler costumed activities ran each week and there were daily enactments in the Board Room. Object handling sessions were delivered twice a week, as were school lessons in the Victorian school room. Visits to the Centenary Woods were organised once a week.
- 1.3 The two-day *Village at War* event ran from 24-25 August. Despite mixed weather, there were 3,786 participants over the two days. During the event there were 1940s enactors on site including the Home Guard, Land Army Girls and an air raid warden. There was tea for members of

the Women's Land Army, alongside a Village fete and a 1940s Guide Camp. The Tramps in Armour re-enactment group, Austin 7s car group and Norfolk Military Vehicles Group were also on site. There was a "sing along" in the courtyard area and sweet rations were issued to children. Other attractions includes the March Vintage and Veteran Cycle Group, marching and drilling in the courtyard, a Women's Land Army exhibition, Steam Up, and cooking in the farmhouse. On the Monday there was a fly-past by the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight.

- 1.4 The third *Older People's Day* event on 5 September saw very wet weather but some 802 participants. Visitors included the County Council Chief Executive.
- 1.5 The *Go Green* event on 29 September saw good weather and 1,091 participants. This years event had the theme *adapt from the past, learn for the future* and comprised a family fun day investigating opportunities for helping to reduce carbon footprints and develop a more sustainable lifestyle. There was a broad range of exhibitors and stands giving information and practical advice. A "speakers corner" promoted debate about sustainability issues and there were many practical activities. The event was organised in partnership with Norfolk County Council and part-funded by the *Renaissance East* regional sustainability project currently being delivered through Gressenhall and MEAL.
- 1.6 Gressenhall hosted a Museums Association Sustainability roadshow workshop on 4 July.
- 1.7 Gressenhall welcomed the Norfolk branch of the Oxford Society for an evening event on 12 July.

2. Other Museum Developments

- 2.1 New systems of event day road signage, car parking and ticketing were implemented during August and September. These changes have improved the safe and efficient management of visitors and their vehicles on event days and released new areas of the site for activities.
- 2.2 The NMAS Western Area staff group met in Thetford on 9 September to further explore opportunities for joint working across museum sites at Gressenhall, Thetford and King's Lynn. Staff from other Western Area sites have assisted with Gressenhall event days and Western Area staff will be supporting the Ancient House Museum with Paine events in 2009. Western Area curatorial staff will also be supporting the new Gressenhall Curator.
- 2.3 The vacant Gressenhall Curator post has now been filled. Dr Megan Dennis – previously Learning Manager for King's Lynn Museums and Outreach & Learning Officer for the Norfolk Heritage Explorer project – started work on 29 September. The Curator will be responsible for:

volunteer team co-ordination; the development of a site interpretation strategy; and a rationalisation project for larger collections.

- 2.4 The new site newsletter "Gressenhall Gossip" continues to be produced. This publication is enabling staff from the museum and archaeology wings to work more closely together.

3. Friends of Gressenhall

- 3.1 The Friends have recently appointed a new Chairman and Treasurer and are planning to expand their event programme for members. The Friends have mounted a stand at a number of recent events.
- 3.2 The Friends celebrated the completion of their project to repair and refurbish the steam Garrett Steam Boiler with a "steam evening" for members on 18 September.

4. Renaissance in the Regions and Other Projects

- 4.1 Gressenhall is benefiting from significant funding delivered through the Renaissance in the Regions programme, under the current 2008-09 East of England Hub Business Plan.
- 4.2 Gressenhall continues to lead on the regional sustainability project funded by Renaissance in the Regions during 2008-09. This project delivered an expanded *Go Green* event on 28 September and a partnership conference with the New Communities regional Renaissance project is planned for 23-24 October in Norwich. The project is seeing the development of a range of practical on-site projects including improved composting, recycling and interpretation. A capital development plan is also being produced in regard to the potential for the construction of a range of sustainable buildings on site. This plan has initiated a capital funding bid to the county council. To inform the Gressenhall sustainability project, a number of staff visited the Centre for Alternative Technology in Wales during July.
- 4.3 The Renaissance-funded post of Events Co-ordinator continues to support the delivery and evaluation of an enhanced event programme. Planning for the 2009 event programme is currently underway, informed by an extensive consultation and evaluation process.
- 4.4 A number of capital projects funded through the County Council's Corporate Minor Works and other funding programmes and currently being planned and implemented. These include provision of low-level car park lighting; installation of lightning protection; safety and security improvements for oil storage tanks; improvements to the layout of the café and the relocation and ICT cabling of event day admission huts.

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| (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

Originator of report:

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