



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**

10 September 2018

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 May to July 2018.

1. Events and Activities

- 1.1 The 2018 main season commenced on Sunday 11 March. The museum is currently open daily 10am to 5pm, until Sunday 28 October.
- 1.2 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 2018, these are: *Retro Revival*, *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 including *Mothering Sunday*, *Futuristic Farming* and *Horse Power*. These require smaller staffing complement and utilise core parking. They are aimed at attracting audiences of 500-800 visitors. Again, they are offered 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 2018, these include the murder mystery event *The Devil at the Door* and *Victorian Family Christmas*. These events, held outside of standard opening hours or of the main season, offer a reduced charge to Norfolk Museums Pass holders.
- 1.3 During the period covered by this report, these events have included:
Special Event Days:

- *Retro Revival* (1,490 visitors)

Days with a Difference:

- *Futuristic Farming* (496 visitors)
- *Father's Day* (472 visitors)
- *Story Festival* (225 visitors)

Norfolk School Holiday Activities:

- May Half Term - *Create! - Toys and Games* (2,008 visitors)
- Summer holidays – *Walk in the Woods* (1,258 visitors from 25-31 July only)

- 1.4 These events continue to attract Norfolk Museums Pass holders and to act as a driver to further pass sales. Throughout the 2018 programme, an additional push on promoting this scheme to event day visitors has been made, leading to sustained and healthy sales of these passes.
- 1.5 In addition, Gressenhall organises a number of leisure learning short courses. During the period of this report, these have included Willow Garden Sculptures with basketry worker Sue Kirk and Collograph Printmaking with popular Norfolk printmaker Amelia Bowman. Both courses were fully sold out.
- 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 NMS 2018-22 National Portfolio Organisation 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 and Google adverts and the museum's 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 July 2016. The final new displays within the first floor Collections Gallery were formally launched on 10 March 2018, with the gallery having been opened as a 'work in progress' since May 2017. This gallery incorporates over 2,000 objects from the museum's rural life collections. This event marked the end of the main activity plan relating to the *Voices from the Workhouse* project although, a number of discrete projects have continued over the summer following conversations with the Heritage Lottery Fund. These include a digital marketing campaign, additional interactives for the Collections Gallery and some minor display improvements to the Transport Gallery in the Back Hall, adjacent to the new Workhouse Galleries. The latter will

enhance interpretation within this space, allowing it to complement the other displays within the main building.

- 2.2 As part of the new Collections Gallery, a dedicated temporary exhibition space has been created to house an annual show. The 2018 exhibition *Beer and Brewing - Norfolk's Rural Pubs* opened for the start of the 2018 season. This exhibition explores the changing roles of pubs and the relationships they have with their local communities. Family visitors are able to play traditional pub games including the Norfolk favourite 'twizzler' and a plaster panel created by the artist John Moray-Smith is one of the objects on display.
- 2.3 Building on the success of the 2016 and 2017 *Collaborate* programmes, which saw the museum working with a wide range of creative individuals and groups, *Collaborate 2018* is themed around the temporary exhibition's subject of pubs and brewing. This programme was formally started with an inspiration day on Friday 23 March, to enable interested individuals and groups to explore more of the museum's collections and stories. An informal meeting was arranged for participating groups and individuals in early July, to allow them to share their ideas and increase their knowledge and understanding of the subject and museum collections. Their creative outputs will then be displayed within the museum in October. An accompanying programme of outreach to local groups and pub quizzes has been delivered to enable more individuals to engage with the theme, to be inspired, and to create their own beer mat to add to the displays. Updates are available through the *Collaborate* blog <https://collaboratewithgressenhall.wordpress.com/share/>
- 2.4 The use of cutting edge technology allowing visitors to 'meet' real people from the workhouse's history have been well received. However, for some visitors they have the potential to cause sensory overload. Following the successful pilot project in 2017 when adjustments were made for autistic visitors during "early bird" openings, delivered in partnership with Autism Anglia, further openings have been held in 2018 on Sunday 29 April and Monday 30 July, with a final one planned for Tuesday 23 October.
- 2.5 During recent years, the Norfolk Collections Centre has opened more frequently to support Gressenhall events and activities, following the reorganisation of these large object stores during the *Shine a Light* project funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund. During the period covered by this report, the centre was open for three days during May half-term and as part of the museum's Father's Day event. In addition, the centre has held tours of the West Runton Mammoth on Tuesday 10 April and Tuesday 12 June, with the opportunity to hear more about this spectacular object from Dr David Waterhouse, Senior Curator of Natural History with NMS. Further tours are planned for Tuesday 16 October.

- 2.6 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. As of the end of July, the museum had 4,416 Facebook likes and 5,440 Twitter followers. A Pinterest account is also supported with a wide range of boards including 'Weddings at Gressenhall' and an Instagram page is established and currently has 988 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)

- 2.7 Gressenhall continues to develop a range of commercial activities as a means of generating income, including room and venue hire. Five weddings have successfully taken place during the 2018 season, organised by the museum team, and negotiations continue with an events management company to develop this offer further. 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 remain active, with bi-monthly Committee Meetings held at the museum. 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.
- 3.2 In 2017, the Friends generously agreed to support a project to restore the Farmers' Foundry engine boiler (formerly part of the Bygones Collection at Holkham) back to working use. This was in addition to a grant of £19,788 from the Arts Council England Preservation of Industrial and Scientific Material PRISM fund. 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. Initial conservation work identified that additional resources were required to make the engine fully operational. An application has

been submitted to Arts Council England for the additional conservation work and to support a project to create a portfolio of volunteering opportunities, creating more diversity within the teams working with this engine.

3.3 The Friends continue to operate the Gressenhall second hand bookshop, generating income for the Friends. Recruitment of a team of active Bookshop volunteers has helped to ensure that new donations are processed daily and the shelves tidied. As a result, income from this shop continues to grow.

3.4 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 May to July the volunteers gave over 653 hours of time on site to support the museum, with additional volunteers working from home on digitalisation projects.

4 Learning & Outreach

4.1 School visits have held up well, building on the success of 2017-18 when 10,600 children visited. This is a strong performance in the light of continued financial pressures on schools, illustrated by the fact that during 2017-18, for the first time in ten years, three schools cancelled bookings due to a lack of funds.

4.2 On Saturday 9 June, the Gressenhall Learning Team organised a Mental Health Wellbeing Day for young people. *Pause for Wellbeing* was delivered in partnership with a range of local service providers including NCC Early Help, CAMHS and the YMCA. YMCA delivered Wellbeing workshops, Gressenhall staff facilitated art activities and the marquee was used as a marketplace for LSPs to meet with young people and families. This was the first time that this event had been held. There was positive feedback from the providers, alongside participating individuals and their families.

4.3 As a follow up to the *Pause for Wellbeing* event, a mental health wellbeing training session is being provided by the YMCA to key staff at Gressenhall in September. The course aims to raise awareness and understanding of mental health issues in young people and to provide training about ways to assist in a first aid situation.

4.4 The 12th annual 'Family Fun' event in partnership with NCC Family Placement and Adoption Services was held on Saturday 23 June. A record 592 family members attended. This increase in numbers was assisted by the favourable weather, the efforts of NCC staff and a new Foster Family Facebook group to publicise the event. Furthermore, it

seems clear that, for many foster and adoptive families, the event has simply become a date for the diary. The Learning Team, assisted by freelancers, delivered a range of magic-related activities and the NCC Libraries Service introduced visitors to magical story books. A communal picnic in the courtyard gave visitors a chance to meet each other and members of Family Placement and Adoption Services in a relaxed and safe environment.

4.5 Planning is currently underway for two further events for children in receipt of support from NCC Virtual School Sensory Support, building upon an event for older children in April at which VSSS staff re-emphasised the importance for families and children to have a safe space in which they can meet each other and their support staff. The events are planned for 3 and 4 September 2018, with different dates for different ages of young people.

4.6 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) Finance

Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse receives funding to support core operations and activities from Norfolk County Council. A number of activities are financed as part of funding to Norfolk Museums Service from Arts Council England as a National Portfolio Organisation under the terms of the current 2018-22 Business Plan. Project activities are funded from a range of external sources including the Heritage Lottery Fund. The source of these funds are detailed within the report. The above report includes no additional or unfunded financial implications.

(b) Property

Unless specified, the above activities relate to the Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse and Norfolk Collections Centre site. The above report includes no additional implications relating to property.

(c) Staff

The team at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse are supported by a wider team of colleagues within Norfolk Museums Service. Some current posts are funded by external project funding. The above report includes no additional implications relating to staffing and personnel resources.

(d) Information Technology

Digital operations at Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse are supported by Norfolk County Council's IMT department. Social media is delivered by the

Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse team. The above report includes no additional implications relating to Information Technology.

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

Tel: 01362 869254 e-mail: hannah.jackson@norfolk.gov.uk