

# THE SANDWICH MEDIEVAL TRUST



## ANNUAL REPORT DECEMBER 2023

# THE SANDWICH MEDIEVAL TRUST

Registered Charity Number 1178864

TRUSTEES: Dave Batchelor, Julia Baxter, Paul Damon, Steve Laslett,

Bob Martin, Lynne O'Donoghue. [www.sandwichmedieval.org](http://www.sandwichmedieval.org)

The Sandwich Medieval Trust was registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) in June 2018 with the stated aim, *"To advance education for the public benefit on matters to do with the late medieval period, i.e., approx. 1330 to 1480, with a special focus on the heritage of Sandwich Town, Kent, in particular but not exclusively by providing a maritime and land-based crafts living museum"*.

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

This is the fourth annual report since the Sandwich Medieval Trust was established and the Medieval Centre situated on Sandwich Quay became a reality.

The Trust is an Educational Charity, its fundamental aim to educate through living history. The Medieval Centre has become an essential part of Sandwich Town's visitor experience significantly adding to what Sandwich Town has to offer to townsfolk and visitors alike.

It is most pleasing and reassuring to read unsolicited feedback from visitors that underlines how well our volunteers and reenactors are doing in realising the educational objective. The following is an example:

*"My wife and I visited your centre this morning. We had no idea it even existed. We are from South London and thought we would pop in for 5 minutes to see what it was all about.*

*We spoke at length with a lady who greeted us at the door and the clerk dressed in black.*

*Over an hour later we left having been told so much of the work you are undertaking, not only in the Centre but in the wider community, particularly with the children.*

*We have since looked at your very informative Facebook page and website. Gosh is all I can say. You are doing such a great job and Sandwich is such an interesting town."*

This extract is from a review of TravelLab posted in September: *“It’s a great place to experience medieval crafts, cookery, and war strategy. A winning combination”*.

The Centre also featured on the Channel 5 programme, ‘Susan Calman’s Great Days Out’, broadcast in November 2023 and available to view on our website: <https://sandwichmedieval.org/>

The Centre continues to educate and inform across a range of medieval crafts with our volunteers in period dress demonstrating a wide variety of crafts and skills. The success and popularity of the Centre is entirely due to knowledge and efforts of our Trustees and volunteers who give so much time and enthusiasm. They deserve all of the public recognition which fortunately is forthcoming. We do need to recruit more volunteers and are pleased to welcome a number who did join in 2023.

We actively reach out to schools and other groups and were pleased to host a group of Spanish students this year – see the report on page 5 on Schools and Workshops.

In addition to keeping the Centre open for some days every week of the year, the reenactors stage special outdoor events. Le Medieval experience in June, as part of Le Weekend, filled the Quay Green with reenactors, over fifty tents and demonstrations. Visiting reenactor groups commented that it is the best medieval meet in Kent.

The Trust has a well-populated website and makes full use of social media. The strong following we have is reflected in the numbers reported on page 14.

Whilst the Centre continues to be the main centre of activity, work continued on the project to create a full-sized replica medieval ship, a cog named the *Nicholas*. A rain proof cover was purchased in 2022 which has helped avoid deterioration of the deck and hull. It is hoped that after a spell in dry dock, work will accelerate in 2024 to add to the good progress reported in the Maritime Section overleaf.

Finally, at the end of another highly successful year, the Trust continues to be in a sound financial position as covered more fully at the end of this report.

**Steve Laslett**

**Chair of Board of Trustees**



## MARITIME



*We have also started to invite members of the public on board the Nicholas on Saturdays and Sundays when the weather is good, to view our progress.*

The main focus of our work during the past year has continued to be on the *Nicholas* project.

The presence of the *Nicholas* on its mooring at Sandwich Quay generates a great deal of interest in the project and our work in the Centre. The hull is an asset to the quay area and will contribute to the development of the historic maritime ambience along the banks of the river Stour as envisaged by the Sandwich Heritage Harbour Group.

The trustees and a small team of enthusiastic volunteers, including a group of Sea Cadets, have continued to work on the *Nicholas* throughout the year, replacing rotten deck beams and planking and the rotten hull uprights and planking. We have also installed the windlass and the capstan at deck level.

Our blacksmith has continued the fabrication of a second anchor on the forge in the Centre and hopes to be able to forge weld the anchor arms to the shank which will demonstrate the heating capabilities of a medieval forge.



The fabric cover installed on a temporary timber framework to protect the deck and hull from inclement weather has been a great success; it provides sufficient headroom for us to be able to work underneath it in all weathers thus increasing our productivity during the Winter and Spring months. We have also started to invite members of the public on board on Saturdays and Sundays when the weather is good, using our gangplank, to view our progress.

In July we hosted Susan Calman at the Centre and on board the *Nicholas*. She spent time talking to two of our Trustees, Bob Martin and Paul Damon, and the visit was broadcast as part of the Kent section of her 'Grand Days Out' television series in October.

Our aim from next year onwards will be to fabricate the fore and stern castles in the workshop and install them on the hull before moving on to erect a mast, install a sail and rigging and, in time, modify the internal hull area to allow visitors to sample medieval life below deck. To this end, early in 2024 we will be taking the *Nicholas* to a dry dock for a month so we can complete the repairs to the deck and hull in an efficient and orderly way.



*Windlass and Capstan Installed*

## SCHOOLS AND WORKSHOPS



*Egg tempera painting class*

Workshops took place throughout the year including Blacksmithing, Baking, Bookbinding, Calligraphy, Illumination, Wheat Weaving, Circular Netting, Mead Making and Tablet Weaving. There still remains a lot of interest for workshops for future dates. We hope to add Fletching to the range of workshops in the future.

Have-a-go crafts including Calligraphy, Wheat Weaving and Egg Tempera painting ran very well during the Sandwich Festival weekend in August, with many children and adults alike enjoying themselves whilst gaining interest in the workshops offered at the Centre. The calligraphy tables were full both days with all ages, including those who had never tried but always wanted to. Others who had enjoyed this craft as a child were delighted to have another opportunity.



*Wheat Weaving Class*





*Calligraphy Using Quills*

Quills were used to try and practice a medieval book hand and the work of the scribes of the time were explained with examples and material reproductions. Mainly children tried their hand at some egg tempera painting onto woodcut prints which depicted scenes of the seasons. Visitors were very excited to complete a corn dolly with the Wheat Weaver, who patiently led them through the various stages of weaving wheat.

## **School Visits**

Our school leaflets continue to be taken by interested visitors to the Centre, whether they be teachers, staff or parents of children from schools.

A Spanish language school with a group of 25 pupils aged 16 and 17 made a successful visit to the Centre which included our craft workshops. They are making a return visit in April 2023. We received very positive feedback from the organiser:

“I wanted to say thank you very much to you and your lovely group of ‘medievals’ for looking after us on Monday. It really was a wonderful day and your hard work was very much appreciated. I do hope that we will be able to do it again, that is if you will have us! You all must have been exhausted by the end of the day.”

A small group of eight students from Nonington School visited the Centre in October for an hour of craft demonstrations which finished with the students teaming up for some of the medieval games we have, with a few trying the quill and ink. This school is now keen to revisit for some hands-on workshops.

Enquiries for school visits have continued through the year, a few from local schools and a couple from travel agencies from France specialising in school trips to the UK and Ireland.

## **Group Visits**

The Cinque Ports Scribes made a group visit to the Centre in July which included 22 members of this East Kent-based calligraphy society, all of whom were very keen on this area of history. Although they have their own accumulated knowledge of scribes and their work, they were nevertheless keen to see the mini scriptorium for themselves.

The visit to the Centre was chosen for the group's annual outing and they thoroughly enjoyed themselves for over an hour, watching and interacting with our provided demonstrators with the additional bonus of the Tablet Weaver and Barber Surgeon. The group also made a generous donation to the Trust.

Discussions with English Heritage are ongoing regarding group visits to the Centre for their Members' Days Out.



*Children's Corn Dolly Workshop*



## RE-ENACTMENT

We started the year with a new event looking at the history of animal guising and the origins of the hooden horse. Bringing Alive Sandwich Heritage (BASH) created a pop-up exhibition at the Centre and organised a traditional hoodening walk, taking in a few local pubs. The walk finished up at the Centre where we provided a hot wassail cup for all the public while a traditional play was performed, the Deal Hoodners providing the music.

A new addition to the Centre has been a series of custom-made games tables. The four tables have been hand carved by Alan Hinton Crafts. The first couple were delivered in time for the February half-term games event led by one of our volunteers, Andrew Hall. Since then, the tables have been used on a daily basis by visitors to the Centre.



*The popular medieval gaming table*

For Easter half-term we had five days of extra crafts and demonstrations including cooking demonstrations and cheese-making, along with all our usual crafts.

In early June we hosted the brilliant Cats Eye Carving for two weeks as part of Southeast Open Studios. The stone carver set up a stone carving workshop in the Centre giving visitors the chance to see and even have a go at the ancient craft of stone carving.



*Stone carved gargoyle*

Our biggest event so far was held on 10th & 11th June as part of the town-wide Le Weekend event. The Quay Green was transformed into the biggest medieval tented camp Sandwich has seen for a long time (see *front cover*). Over 100 reenactors from eight different groups set up over fifty tents for the weekend providing living history, cookery and combat demonstrations along with crafts, have-a-go archery and axe throwing, games, music and dance, puppet theatre and not forgetting a very well-stocked tavern!



*Medieval activities on the Quay Green*



In July, the Centre took part in the Sandwich Folk and Ale Festival, with a day of medieval mead and beer-making demonstrations. Visitors got to see the traditional ways of making mead and beer using raw ingredients.

For Sandwich Festival weekend in August, we set up a have-a-go encampment on the Quay Green giving visitors the opportunity to try many different crafts and enjoy music and dance, puppet theatre and even some axe throwing.

Once again in September we took part in the National Trust organised Heritage Open days. We held two weekends of events which included an historic games evening and a small living history encampment on the Quay Green by the local group, Ost Centingas.

Particularly successful were the flat pack kits of cogs, designed by trustee Bob Martin, for children to cut out and assemble during their visit, contributing to their knowledge of the medieval cog. Several families got involved with this new learning tool. The Trust plans to have the cog kits on general sale at the Centre next year.



*Making model medieval cogs from kit sets designed by Bob Martin (left)*



*Have-a-go archery*



*Encampment on the Quay Green*





Blacksmithing in the Centre's forge

Finally in December, to finish off the year, we always love taking part in the Sandwich Advent Window event. We enjoyed a mini craft market, hot cup of wassail and festive cooking demonstrations along with a medieval Christmas window display.

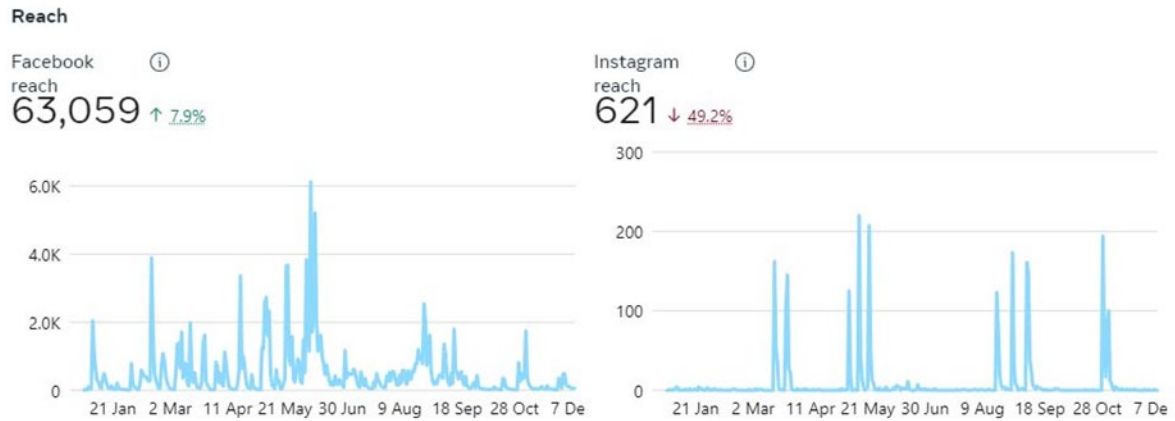


*Christmas Advent Window*

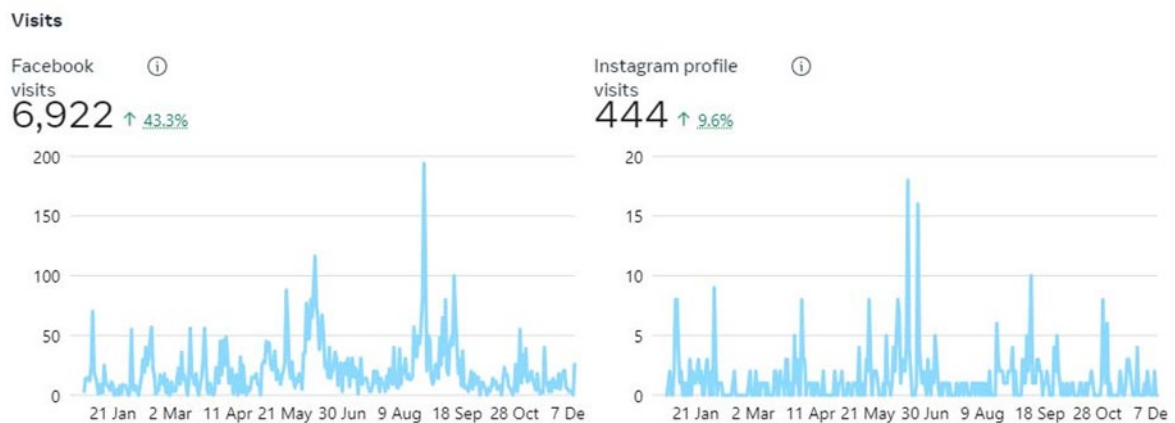
## WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Our social media following continues to grow and we find ourselves using platforms like Facebook to our full advantage to advertise our events and share information to all our followers. Some of our pre-event posts have a reach of over 6,000 people.

The graphs below show the reach of our social media posts throughout the year:



These graphs show the number of visits to our social media pages throughout the year:





We have consistently received excellent reviews on Google, Facebook, Tripadvisor and email testimonies including these:

*Good evening,*

*My wife and I visited your centre this morning (...)*

*Over an hour later we left having been told so much of the work you are undertaking, not only at the centre but also in the wider community, particularly with the children. You might remember us ...we bought a number of the bagged games....*

*Oh! and on your recommendation we visited the church and went up the clock tower, and had a Pizza in the Drill Hall.*

### **Facebook, Tripadvisor & Google reviews**

- *stumbled across this place today..... definitely worth a visit. Very interesting and very knowledgeable people. Will definitely visit again to see the progress on the boat!!!*

- *What a hidden gem. Very welcoming and knowledgeable team. Please go and explore.*

- *Lovely experience learning about how things were made back in these times. The staff are lively and full of interesting information. Well worth a visit.*

- *A MUST VISIT WHILST IN SANDWICH*

*Really friendly welcome*

*All in character*

*Live forge and nice exhibits*

*All free apart from mead making*

*Lots of history and perfect area*

- *What an experience. The medieval centre is a lovely place on its own to visit but they also offer experiences too. I was lucky enough to be given a day's experience blacksmithing for my birthday at Sandwich Medieval Centre and had previously been to look around.*

*The session I was given was a full day starting at 10 am and running until 4 pm. All the staff were extremely welcoming and made me feel so comfortable and the session was run by Steve. The blacksmithing forge was traditional with its bellows and fuel and you get a very traditional experience working with all the hand tools. What is there to say about Steve... He's brilliant: so informative and knowledgeable. He spoke through all the steps and explained processes well. Now, blacksmithing is quite physical but Steve offers to take over when you might need a break and obviously models certain steps but you can do as much as you want. I came out with the pieces that I had made but most importantly a great smile on my face.*

*I would say that this experience is well worth the money and I would recommend it to anyone. I certainly would like to do it again.*

- *Friendly, enthusiastic and knowledgeable people. Highly recommend. They run various medieval workshops.*





## FINANCIAL REPORT

Since the bank balance was strong enough to fund ongoing work on the major project, the Cog *Nicholas*, the Trust did not apply for any grants during 2023.

Income from other sources remained strong with Trustees and volunteers giving freely of their time to support fundraising at events and at St Mary's Arts Centre concerts.

It is pleasing that donations from the public given as they visit the Centre totalled £3,586, almost enough to cover the expensive but essential cost item - insurance, which was £3,800.

Expenditure on the cog *Nicholas* was just £2,112 compared with £9,296 last year. This reflects the fact that all work was done by volunteers with no significant external costs. As the project matures, additional high spend will be incurred, but the Trust is well placed to meet 2024 costs without further grant support.

Income exceeded expenditure by £3,386 leaving a bank balance at financial year end of £29,091.





*The well-stocked tavern is a popular venue at weekend events*



*Volunteers celebrating in the Centre*



# The Sandwich Medieval Trust

## Summary Accounts 2023

Notes	Income	2023	2022
1	Grants	0.00	18000
2	Events	5745.86	4591.67
	Donations from the public box	3586.90	5502.63
	Sales after costs	288.61	26.09
	Workshops	1442.76	621.63
	DDC Lotto	78.00	79.50
3	St Mary's Concerts Support	3872.90	1309.85
	Miscellaneous	33.56	0.00
	<b>Total Income</b>	<b>15048.59</b>	<b>30131.37</b>
	<b>Expenditure (net of VAT)</b>		
	Web	137.50	155.00
	Boat and Tools	2111.98	9295.91
	Building Costs	563.28	138.88
	Equipment	3203.83	4261.51
	Consumables	863.84	1804.11
	Professional Services	89.10	126.75
	Insurance	3802.95	4180.21
	Miscellaneous	0.00	40.00
	Publicity	890.00	686.00
	<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>11662.48</b>	<b>20688.37</b>
	Net improvement	3386.12	9443.01
	Adjusted Balance brought forward	25096.69	17178.00
	<b>Available Funds</b>	<b>28482.81</b>	<b>26621.01</b>
	Represented by Current Account	29090.74	25096.69
	VAT Account	-607.93	1524.32

### Notes

1 No Grants applied for in 2023

2 Events included Hooten day, 40s, Le Weekend, Sandwich Festival

3 The Trust volunteers worked with St Marys concert promoters on six occasions