

ANNUAL REPORT, 2023



MISSION and PUBLIC BENEFIT

Topsham Museum is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) established in 2020 to succeed the Topsham Museum Society (TMS). Assets and members were transferred to the CIO and the mission remained the same: to advance the education of the public by providing and managing a public museum, and collecting, recording and displaying objects and information pertaining to the local history, flora and fauna of Topsham and the Exe Estuary.

We believe this report demonstrates that the Trustees are delivering on our mission, as resources allow, benefiting the local community and the wider public with:

- An accredited free-to-all museum with gardens and Tea Room, operating to standards of best practice
- Displays and special exhibitions, curated for maximum public engagement and regularly refreshed
- Artefacts and other resources collected, preserved, catalogued and cared for in line with best practice
- Children's activities; a wide-ranging public lecture programme; visits for special interest groups
- Publications with content of historic and local interest
- Facilities and support for local and family historians
- A resource for developing a sense of place amongst new residents of greater Topsham and beyond
- Numerous opportunities for local people to help run a valued volunteer organisation
- Access to one of the most interesting buildings in the local area.

REVIEW OF 2023

Visitor Numbers

The Museum remains a well-regarded and much-loved part of Topsham's community, and part of the town's offer to visitors. It was open from late March until late October 2023 and attracted 9,255 visitors. In addition, organised group visits outside of normal opening hours attracted 399 adults and 183 children.

Collections

Care for our collections - those on display and in storage - falls to volunteer teams. Items are in generally good condition with additional covered protection or vital repairs conducted where necessary.

To encourage greater engagement with visitors, we have two handling boxes - one on Romans and the other on World War II evacuees - while we are increasingly keen on room stewards becoming familiar with objects on display. Guides and folders have recently been extensively updated to help stewards interact better with our visitors.

We continue to turn down many more items than we accept, however, and Trustees have authorised the disposal of some items that will never be displayed.

Exhibitions and Telephone Box

Our special exhibition was on Dick 'Pincher' Pym, a Topsham fisherman and footballer, who played in the first Wembley Cup Final (the 'White Horse Final') in 1923. We were greatly assisted by the Pym family, Exeter City FC and Bolton Wanderers FC in creating this exhibition, which attracted a high number of visitors - many of them newcomers to the museum - and generated much positive publicity.

We hosted temporary exhibitions in the Tea Room on Topsham AFC, illustrations by Museum volunteer Phil Keen, and mosaics by artist Alison Hepburn. A repurposed telephone kiosk in central Topsham advertised our activities.

Research and queries

The Research team dealt with 70 enquiries on family history, ships' biscuits, the soup kitchen, Youth Club, Vivien Leigh and Matthews Hall, most from the UK but also from Australia, France, Luxembourg, Belgium and the USA.

Maintenance and kitchen improvement

Major maintenance of 25 Strand continued to be the responsibility of Exeter City Council (ECC) but the volunteer maintenance team ably handled other repairs and maintenance. A refit of the Tea Room kitchen was skilfully planned by its volunteer manager, assisted by a trustee, and came in on time and within budget: this has created more space, addressed some safety issues, and will allow improved and faster customer service.

Museum garden

A dedicated team worked hard to maintain and develop the garden adjoining the museum, and the riverside garden on the other side of Strand. The yew trees have been cut back and a small Mediterranean gravel garden developed in light of warmer, drier summers. These will enhance the garden's reputation as a popular venue for afternoon teas.

Publications

A biography of Dick Pym accompanied the exhibition. The free 'Topsham Trails' leaflet is available from pick-up points in Topsham: over 15,000 copies have been collected since first publication in 2019 and we are grateful to Visit Exeter for funding a reprint. The annual journal, *Topsham Times*, was published and sent to members.

Secret Gardens

We were delighted that, after a hiatus due to Covid, we could run Secret Gardens in 2023. We fortunately picked a dry, warm June day: 14 residents opened their gardens, some welcoming 1,400 visitors. Afternoon teas and a plant stall did a roaring trade and overall an event profit of some £13,000 was raised and will be spent on our collections.

Other Events, Lectures and Markets

The Museum arranged monthly public lectures (April to October) in Matthews Hall covering subjects including floods along the Exe Estuary, film costume design, and the refurbishment of the Royal Albert Memorial Museum in Exeter. Three winter evening lectures - timed to appeal to a younger, employed audience - were delivered by John Allan, the Archaeologist at Exeter Cathedral; Dr Sam Smiles from Southampton University; and Mark Stoye, Professor of early modern History at the University of Southampton.

Dick Pym was remembered with a blue plaque - Topsham's first - erected on Underway. We were grateful for the support of the Exeter Civic Society in achieving this. The museum also hosted a book launch and a guitar recital.

Children's' activities

The monthly 'Story, Song and Snack' aimed at under-fives, attracted a small but growing audience. For older children there were paper-based trails, and a football-related hands-on display. One-off events included Easter's garden treasure hunt, bird spotting and bee keeping days, a 'Games of Yesteryear' event and a Halloween craft day. The Museum worked with community organisation Love Topsham on a Christmas Trail. New for 2023 were 'Games in the Garden', housed in a model half-dinghy.

Community Outreach

Dick Pym's football and other soccer items were taken to The Topsham Primary School, and Marpool Primary School pupils were again sent back to 1939 and evacuated to Topsham, where Museum 'billeting officers' received them.

Talks on Topsham history were presented to groups in Woodbury, Kenton and Ottery St Mary, and handling items shared with residents at Globefield sheltered housing.

Free walking tours of Topsham were conducted twice weekly by volunteer guides between May and September, while the telephone box on Fore Street hosted changing displays. In late autumn an online Friends Newsletter was launched - an attempt to bring Museum news and previews to casual visitors and lecture attendees.

Volunteers

Volunteers are our lifeblood, we serve as a magnet for local people 'giving something back'. A review of the volunteer recruiting process took place and an encouraging 25 new recruits in 2023 remain active today. We had three students temporarily helping in the Tea Room.

The Tea Room runs an end-of-season ‘thank you’ lunch and out-of-season coffee mornings for volunteers: at one event in late 2023 Michael Norman, who led the room stewards since 2015, stepped down and won warm thanks from fellow volunteers and Trustees.

Membership

At the end of 2023 we had 321 members, slightly down on 2022. Subscription fees increased 50 per cent in 2023, having been unchanged for eight years. Our member-only events were a talk by Richard Pym (Dick Pym’s grandson) and a visit to the Bridge Inn.

Towards A Virtual Museum

Work began on a new website with improved visuals and navigation and enhanced information on visiting, research and supporting the museum financially. A link to *Collections Online* will display artefacts, art, photographs, and documents, many of which are not on physical display. A new administration database, developed by a volunteer, will enhance understanding of ‘people’ data, simplify group communication and improve our ability to draw out statistics. An existing online tool, newly customised by a different volunteer, will enable more efficient and flexible rostering of room stewards and Tea Room volunteers as we strive towards paperless operating.

Information Boards

The Museum has worked with Love Topsham to develop maps and heritage information boards for key locations in the town. This remains a work in progress with talks underway with ECC planners and councillors.

Strategy

Much effort went into the creation of a Five-Year Strategy to outline priorities for funding, collections, public engagement, modernising and inclusion, while consolidating the Museum’s role in the local and Exeter-wide communities. It has ambitious but realistic targets for visitor numbers, outreach, and in particular revenue. Trustees began work with the Management Team and volunteers to deliver early stages of the strategy.

Trustees

The Museum Annual General Meeting on 13 April 2023 saw these people elected or confirmed: Jenny Ellis (Chair), Graham Norwood (Vice-Chair), Gill McLean (Secretary), Rodney Spiller (Treasurer), Jan Lawson, Emma Laws, Don Mildenhall, Peter Morris, Heather Kay, Will Atkinson and Jeff Nicholls. In 2021, Rachel Nichols BEM became President of the Museum and has continued to make a major contribution, for which we are very grateful.

Management

Trustees set the strategic direction for the Museum and monitor its delivery while day-to-day operations remain overseen by a Management Team of volunteers, chaired since April 2020 by Julie Rashbrooke.

Topsham Museum Trading Ltd (TMT) - which was formed in 2007 to administer the trading activities - is now a wholly owned subsidiary of Topsham Museum. Its activities include the Tea Room, Museum shop, fundraising, group visits, and special events.

During 2023, TMT donated profits of £43,928 to the museum. The directors of TMT during the year were Stevie Barrett, Alan Caig, Fi Douglas, Rodney Spiller and Jenny Ellis.

The museum has no paid staff but engages a self-employed cleaner, while the Royal Albert Memorial Museum (RAMM) provides invaluable professional assistance: RAMM’s Tom Cadbury is our Curatorial Advisor.

Financial

The accounts for 2023 form part of this Report. The accounts have been examined independently by Veronica Mathieson and approved by the Trustees, who particularly wish to thank Peter Betteridge for his invaluable and dedicated work maintaining the Museum accounts.

Insurance

The building and land occupied by the Museum were left to ECC by the late Dorothy Holman and the CIO occupies the premises under a lease from ECC, due to terminate in 2026. For the first time in 2022, the Museum paid rent and reimbursed ECC for the building insurance. In 2023 this amounted to £3,200 in rent and £3,484 in insurance.

The Museum is in discussion with ECC about its lease and financial position post-2026, including addressing a significant backlog in maintenance of the building.

Reserves Policy

The Trustees maintain financial reserves for unforeseen circumstances such as dips in income or significant unscheduled expenditure. The approach also reflects that most annual expenditure is incurred during the first quarter when pre-opening maintenance is undertaken and the shop re-stocked: significant income does not start until April when the Museum re-opens. Including these factors, the Trustees have a policy of maintaining minimum year-end reserves of £30,000 to £35,000. This policy will be reviewed during 2024.

On 31 December 2023, cash in the General Fund stood at £187,121 (£163,367 in 2022), and in the Designated Fund £88,748 (£99,044 in 2022).

The Designated Fund, also known as the 'Legacies and Gifts Fund' was created in 2011 from legacies and gifts received by the Society with the intention that these funds should not be used for day-to-day expenditure but should be reserved for special projects.

OUTLOOK FOR 2024

Lease

2024 will be a key year for continuing discussions with ECC on the renewal of the lease on the building. Although our lease does not expire until March 2026, our aim is to complete the process in advance, chiefly to improve our ability to apply for grants but also to avoid any diminution of the Museum's standing, significance and community benefit.

Repair of render

Towards the end of 2023, ECC agreed to fund and manage essential repairs to the render on the Shapter Street side of the building. It is hoped the budget will allow for painting the front of the building and the windows. The work schedule remains weather dependent.

Romans Day

Building on archaeological and other research into Topsham's history during the Roman settlement of Britain, a Study Day was planned for March 2024, involving locally based archaeologists and historians presenting recent findings and research.

Exhibition

2024 marks the 80th anniversary of D-Day, and the exhibition will explore events leading up to the invasion of Europe on 6 June 1944, focusing on wartime Topsham and featuring contributions by local people and places to D-Day preparations. Tea Room displays will include paintings by local artist Ray Balkwill, cheeky wartime cartoons by Exeter cartoonist George 'Stil' Stillings, and contemporary work by amateur craftspeople in Lymestone.

Lectures

A full series of six summer and three winter lectures is planned for 2024.

Strategy

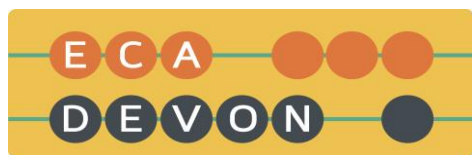
Our work on the Five-Year Strategy will step up a gear: we will work to integrate its aims into day-to-day activity of the Museum, work with a professional fundraiser to identify grants and new sources of income; and further highlight our collections, amenities and significance to the growing Topsham population and the wider Exeter community.

Jenny Ellis CB
Chair of Trustees

TOPSHAM MUSEUM (Registered Charity No. 1185943)
CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF INCOME & EXPENDITURE
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

Page 1


	Notes	Unrestricted funds General £	Designated funds £	Restricted Heritage Lottery project fund £	Total £	2022 £
Income and endowments from:						
Donations and legacies						
Gifts and donations		2,114	1,050	0	3,164	11,607
Legacies		0	0	0	0	0
Gift aid relief	13	3,765	0	0	3,765	0
		<u>5,879</u>	<u>1,050</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>6,929</u>	<u>11,607</u>
Trading activities						
Shop sales	3	16,080	0	0	16,080	20,685
Tea room sales	3	26,781	0	0	26,781	23,893
Fund Raising Events		18,423	0	0	18,423	6,380
		<u>61,284</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>61,284</u>	<u>50,958</u>
Other charitable activities						
Membership subscriptions	2	4,740	0	0	4,740	3,199
Visitors' donations		3,653	0	0	3,653	3,094
Grant from Exeter City Council		350	0	0	350	0
		<u>8,743</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>8,743</u>	<u>6,293</u>
Investments						
Bank interest and other interest		1,938	0	0	1,938	521
Total		<u>77,844</u>	<u>1,050</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>78,894</u>	<u>69,379</u>
Expenditure on:						
Raising funds						
Cost of Shop sales	3	6,799	0	0	6,799	6,431
Cost of tearoom sales	3	8,837	0	0	8,837	7,040
Bank, card & DonR charges		1,746	0	0	1,746	1,538
Support costs	4	6,227	0	0	6,227	4,274
	13	<u>23,610</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>23,609</u>	<u>19,283</u>
Expenditure on:						
Charitable activities						
Depreciation of fixed assets		5,212	3,383	20,275	28,870	27,579
Topsham Trail Brochure and Promotion		-350	0	0	-350	39
Paddleboat		0	0	0	0	550
Legal and Professional		700	0	0	700	1,834
Education		367	0	0	367	127
Lectures - Fees & Donations		0	0	0	0	674
Paid from Designated Donations	11	0	7,963	0	7,963	1,542
Exhibits		983	0	0	983	2,074
Collections Management System		2,100	0	0	2,100	2,100
Gardening		398	0	0	398	323
Publications		0	0	0	0	3,627
Publicity		271	0	0	271	486
Rent payable to Exeter City Council		3,200	0	0	3,200	3,238
Repairs & maintenance		3,070	0	0	3,070	5,824
Training		0	0	0	0	0
Support costs	4	14,529	0	0	14,529	9,972
		<u>30,480</u>	<u>11,346</u>	<u>20,275</u>	<u>62,101</u>	<u>59,989</u>
Total Expenditure		<u>54,090</u>	<u>11,346</u>	<u>20,275</u>	<u>85,710</u>	<u>79,272</u>
Net income		<u>23,754</u>	<u>-10,296</u>	<u>-20,275</u>	<u>-6,817</u>	<u>-9,893</u>
Transfers between funds	11	0	0	0	0	0
Net movement of funds		23,754	-10,296	-20,275	-6,817	-9,893
Reconciliation of funds						
Total funds brought forward		163,367	99,044	27,810	290,221	300,113
Total funds carried forward		<u>187,121</u>	<u>88,748</u>	<u>7,535</u>	<u>283,404</u>	<u>290,221.00</u>



Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/ members of	Topsham Museum		
On accounts for the year ended	December 2023	Charity no (if any)	1185943
Set out on pages	1		
Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner	<p>The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Charities Act) and that an independent examination is needed.</p> <p>It is my responsibility to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• examine the accounts under section 145 of the Charities Act,• to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act, and• to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.		
Basis of independent examiner's statement	<p>My examination was carried out in accordance with general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair' view and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.</p>		
Independent examiner's statement	<p>In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in, any material respect, the requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the Charities Act; and• to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the Charities Act <p>have not been met.</p>		
Signed:		Date:	14 February 2023
Name:	Veronica Mathieson		
Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):	Exeter Community Accounting		
Address:	Exeter Community Accounting, 48 Willeys Avenue, Exeter EX2 8EP		