

Dereham Heritage Trust

Chairman's Report 2023

Introduction Overall, we feel that this has been a particularly successful year. While visitor figures to the museum were down a little, numbers attending our evening talks are increasing significantly, and the number of our followers on Facebook is most encouraging. The post-Covid return of the Annual Dinner, in the Ploughshare at Beeston, was a great success. We published a new guidebook to the cottages (see below). We have also started the process of having a Dereham-wide discussion based on the committee's view that heritage provision for Dereham is not adequate and something needs to be done about it. Our view is that we need a Heritage Centre in the Town Centre to celebrate the past, the present and future possibilities of our great town. But DHT can't do it alone: we need the widest possible debate.

Bishop Bonner's Cottages

For 2023, the main changes in the displays were to give greater emphasis on cottage life to enhance the kitchen area in the north room (which is also the entrance for visitors).

Our target was to open for 66 three-hour sessions, on Friday mornings 10 till 1 and on Saturdays 10 till 4 from 6th May to 30th September. We had enough volunteers to open in all but two of those sessions when there were last minute problems. Over the season we admitted 529 adults and 86 children. Those figures include the four September Heritage Open Days when we had a staggering 286 adults and 46 children. We also had five group visits from both Norwich and Wymondham, as well as from the Brownies and a local school.

Of those visitors who filled in the feedback form, all said that they enjoyed their visit "a lot", which is very satisfying.

Our 2024 season

Preparations are well in hand for the 2024 season. This year we will be highlighting the businesses, trades and shops located in the town centre during the period from the 1860s to 1890s. This will give our visitors a glimpse of Dereham when it was a thriving market town with a population of over 5,000. It will show examples of employment and trade in the variety of shops and businesses trading in the town centre.

Items from our Archive on display will be linked appropriately to an individual trade or shop. For example, we there will be a Victorian Writing Box along with its contents which could have been purchased from Leonard Hatfield, stationer, printer and bookseller, situated in the Market Place.

There will also be a box of a items which will be suitable for children to handle and to identify!

Museum acquisitions

Many donations of items important to the heritage of the town have been given during the past year including a tremendous amount of material pertaining to Hobbies and an 1840 framed watercolour of Church Street and St Nicholas' given to us after the closure of Case & Dewing in whose premises it hung for many decades. A framed oil portrait of W F Crane, founder of Cranes Trailers, is in the process of being donated to our care.

We also attended an auction to acquire the silver desk seal of Sir John Fenn (1739-1794) who lived in Hill House in the marketplace. This unique seal includes his coat of arms set against a castle with his crest above and 'NORFOLK' below. Well known as an antiquarian he was also a respected magistrate heavily involved in the judicial system in the county and was High Sheriff of Norfolk in 1791.

New guidebook to the cottages

The most important exhibit we have is the building itself. Our understanding is made complicated by the fact that 1502 in the pargeting on the front wall and at the southern end of the building is clearly not the date of these buildings. The true date needs to be established from a structural study of the carpentry in the timber frame. Having organised such a survey, we were able to produce a comprehensive review of the dates of the three cottages covering the seventeenth century, starting with the south cottage, being the oldest, from the early 1600s. We are pleased to say the guide has sold well. It was designed to be read as you went around the cottages, although many took it home to read afterwards.

The Town Council has paid for the restoration of the pargeting which is now correctly coloured pure white.

Greater marketing and publicity

The creation of a Facebook page, combined with new posters each month for the lectures, featuring wonderful artwork for each occasion, has made an enormous difference and has greatly increased awareness of our programme of events and of the wider work of the Heritage Trust within Dereham.

A Heritage Centre for Dereham?

There is no doubt that Dereham gets a raw deal when it comes to heritage provision compared with Swaffham, Watton, Wymondham and Aylsham. So, we believe it is time we did something about it. We organised a meeting for 28th February with invitations going out to a selection of the movers and shakers of our town to come together to discuss what we could achieve. But we have emphasised that we are too small as an organisation to do this on our own. We hope this can be linked to the initiative taken by George Freeman MP and the Rev Paul Cubitt which we hope will start the process of making the town a more enjoyable place in which to work and live.

Bob Davies 1935-2023

We deeply saddened by the death of our longest-serving volunteer and supporter, Bob Davies. Bob and his wife Margaret served the Dereham Antiquarian Society for well over 20 years, organising coach trips and outings for members. We miss him.

Dereham Heritage Trust

Accounts 2023

note

Archive		
2022	Income	2023
30.00	Charges, sales and donations	0.00
800.00	Grant from Dereham Town Council	1000.00
830.00		1000.00
	Expenditure	
300.00	Utilities	300.00
2469.24	Purchases and acquisitions	997.00
23.99	IT	228.80
255.00	Subscriptions	272.00
0.00	Insurance	0.00
0.00	Admin	0.00
0.00	Training	0.00
40.00	Services	41.00
3088.23		1838.80
-2258.23	Surplus/Deficit	-838.80

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Museum		
2022	Income	2023
938.40	Entrance	778.21
212.58	Donations	141.23
97.40	Sales	74.65
2867.00	Grant	0.00
4115.38		994.09
	Expenditure	
84.00	Utilities	230.00
1544.81	Maintenance	572.54
44.81	Publicity	53.07
0.00	Cost of sales	204.49
121.89	Volunteer support	79.65
99.31	Insurance	99.31
1894.82		1239.06
2220.56	Surplus/Deficit	-244.97

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Trust			
2022	Income	2023	
722.00	Subscriptions	732.00	
373.97	Door takings	460.00	10
29.00	Sales	31.46	
60.59	Donations	274.22	11
<u>1185.56</u>		<u>1497.68</u>	
	Expenditure		
285.64	Hall hire	481.00	12
290.00	Speakers	340.00	
20.00	Refreshments	9.00	
75.63	Communications	186.16	13
0.00	Cost of sales	0.00	
<u>671.27</u>		<u>1016.16</u>	
<u>514.29</u>	Surplus/Deficit	<u>481.52</u>	
2022	Summary totals (surplus/deficit)	2023	
-2258.23	Archive	-838.80	
2220.56	Museum	-244.97	
514.29	Trust	481.52	
<u>476.62</u>	Surplus/Deficit	<u>-602.25</u>	
Total funds available			
17512.07	Account balance at 1 January	17988.69	
476.62	Plus surplus/less deficit for year	-602.25	
<u>17988.69</u>		<u>17386.44</u>	

I have examined the above Accounts and the supporting documents provided to me and confirm that they fairly reflect the transactions of the Trust for the year and the position at 31 December 2023

Signed *signed copy available at meeting*
(Jim Stebbings)

Date