

Charity Commission Annual Report 2023

This is the annual report that the Trustees of Richmond Walking and Book Festival are legally required to make to the Charity Commission. It covers the period 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023.

Governance

Richmond Walking and Book Festival (the Trust) is a charitable incorporated organisation with limited liability. The Trust's only voting members are its charity trustees (foundation model constitution). It is governed by its constitution and was registered as a charity by the Charity Commission for England and Wales on 7 October 2020 – registration number 1191688. The Trust's registered office is:

17 New Road
Richmond
DL10 4QS

Objectives and Activities

The objects of the Trust are:

- (1) The advancement of education in the arts for the public benefit, in particular the art of literature, by the provision of an annual book festival in and around Richmond, North Yorkshire.
- (2) The promotion of community participation in healthy recreation by providing guided walks with the aim of offering opportunities for exercise and access to the countryside, local history, the physical and natural environment, flora and fauna through the medium of an annual walking festival in and around Richmond, North Yorkshire.

Public Benefit Statement

The objectives of the Trust are set out above. The Trust has fulfilled these objectives by providing a walking and book festival from 15th to 24th September 2023 plus a small number of events outside of this period. In making decisions and exercising its powers the Trust has had due regard to the Charity Commission Guidance on Public Benefit.

Organisation

The Trust is managed by a Board comprising all of the Trustees. Some operational decisions are delegated to subgroups for walks, book events, and marketing. The Board of Trustees is assisted in its roles by some volunteers but there are no paid employees. It is estimated that over 40 people helped with the 2023 Festival.

Friends and Supporters

The only members of the Trust are the Trustees. The Trust has a Friends scheme but Friends have no voting rights. There are currently 51 Friends (51 in 2022) including 18 paid friends in 2023, 4 friends for life, 9 Trustees and 20 advertising friends. We have a supporters email list (including Friends) of 557 (467 in 2022) people.

The Trustees

The Trust constitution requires that there should be a minimum of three trustees. There were nine trustees during the year and at the year-end.

Barbara Gravenor	Chair
Susan Young	Book Events Subgroup

Geoff Wall	Walk Coordinator
Jane McLennan	Minute Secretary and Book Events Subgroup
Brian Benson	Walk Subgroup
Judith Clark	Book Events Subgroup
James Gravenor	Treasurer and Book Events Coordinator
Karen Wyndham-Webb	Sponsorship and Friends Coordinator
Kathryn Streatfield	Book Events Subgroup and Brochure Coordinator

Links to other organisations

The Trust maintains close links with Richmond Town Council, a number of non-profit making bodies, providers of venues and accommodation, local businesses and local schools. The Trust is a member of Original Richmond Business and Tourism Association and is affiliated to the Swaledale Outdoor Club.

Risk Management

The Trust identified a number of risks in providing both guided walks and book events and reviewed these risks during the year and implemented appropriate measures to reduce and manage those risks. The Trust also took out relevant insurance.

The 2023 Festival

The Walking & Book Festival 2023 ran from the 15th to 24th September. There were book events outside of this period on 13th May, 19th August and 24th August. The Festival was a success judged both financially and by the respondents to a survey we conducted: 100% of those who responded said they would recommend the Festival to a friend. Customer comments were overwhelmingly positive. 350 (335 in 2022) people participated in the 31 walks provided and 792 (790 in 2022) tickets were issued for 19 book events. 1 book event was cancelled because the speaker was unable to attend and 1 event because the venue was no longer available. 2 walks were cancelled and 3 walks were modified because of bad weather. The strong partnership with Richmond School continued with school pupils previewing and reviewing talks and producing posters. Free tickets were given to some pupils. We offered a 50% reduction on the ticket price for people on income related benefits or in full time education or accompanying carers, for all walks and for book events. Excluding Georgian Theatre Royal events 23 concessionary tickets were sold (compared to 48 in 2022).

The Speakers

Feedback from the speakers who gave talks at the Festival was very positive.

Independent Review of Educational Content of Festival

The Trust commissioned an independent review of the Educational content of the Festival from Delphine Ruston, former Head of English at Richmond School and Sixth Form College. This review is attached in full as an appendix 1 to this report.

Finances

In 2023 sponsorship and advertising income paid for the promotion costs. The walking events produced a surplus of £1,179 after donations were made to the National Trust, the Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust and the Lower Ure Trust. The book events produced a surplus of £471 after donations to Ukrainian charities and the Peter Robinson bursary at Leeds University. After deducting administration expenses the Festival made a surplus of £903 (£5,180 in 2022) which when added to our balance brought forward means that we carry forward a balance of £18,288 as at 31 December 2023 to underwrite future Festivals. £2,880

of this balance is reserved for the potential repayment of grant to Richmondshire District Council should the Festival be discontinued in future years.

This leaves a "free" reserve of £15,408 as compared to the Trust's aim to maintain reserves of £15,000.

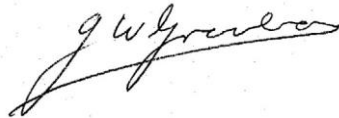
Statements of Receipts and Payments and Assets and Liabilities are attached as Appendix 2.

Barbara Gravenor
Chair
Richmond Walking and Book Festival

Signed by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Gravenor', written in a cursive style.

Barbara Gravenor, Chair
Date: 14 January 2024

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Gravenor', written in a cursive style.

James Gravenor, Acting Minute Secretary
Date: 14 January 2024

Appendix 1

Richmond Walking and Book Festival 2023 – Education Report

The 2023 Richmond Walking and Book Festival programme offered 32 walks, 20 of which were new, covering a wide area of the Yorkshire Dales, into Teesdale and as far as Roseberry Topping on the edge of the North Yorkshire Moors. There were 20 book events, covering topics as diverse as the environment, ecology and climate, history – both recent and ancient - and biography. Contributors included local authors and historians and specialists who work for key environmental organisations, along with those of national and international scope and repute.

The main Festival programme ran 15-24 September but actually began in August with two events for children, an innovation funded in partnership with Catterick, Richmond and Colburn Community Libraries (CRACCL) as part of their Summer Reading Challenge. Offering children's events in the summer holidays and making them free and therefore open-access, has made all the difference. The first event was with Gabriella Gordon, local author of the children's detective novel, 'Sweet Crime, Sweet Justice' about a theft from a sweet shop. Fourteen 8-11 year-olds, along with parents, learned how Gabriella invented her detective series to entertain her own children. She then set-up activities where participants became investigators themselves in order to solve the crime. These were highly interactive and there was a buzz of excitement as children worked in pairs to estimate the height of the criminal, to see what could be learnt from foot and finger prints, and to theorise about likely character traits depending on the sweets that had been stolen. The afternoon concluded with a Q&A session where children offered their imaginative findings and quizzed Gabriella about her writing process. The library had half a dozen copies of the novel to borrow and there were also some on sale. As the session ended children were heard pleading with parents to get a copy. It was a highly successful event with children enthused about exploring reading and perhaps even their own writing.

The second event, at Catterick Library with science-writer, Mike Barfield, was attended by forty-nine 7-11 year-olds and adults. Dressed as an astronaut, Mike gave an entertaining presentation, involving the audience with lots of questions, about the planets and the universe, drawing on his latest book, 'A Day in the Life of an Astronaut'. As at Richmond, there were copies of the book to borrow and some children also purchased their own, signed copies.

The success of this joint initiative between the Festival and CRACCL shows that it is well worth pursuing next year; and it raises the question, is there scope for some walks aimed at young people?

The Festival has a well-established record of pursuing environmental, ecological and climate change issues. In this respect, the 2023 programme provided perhaps the most educative events to date, with participants challenged to engage with new ideas and findings from the latest research.

One of the first events was a walk followed by an evening talk with Jack Cornish, Head of Paths at Ramblers and author of 'The Lost Paths'. Having spent the past five years walking forgotten and neglected paths, Jack described how hundreds of thousands of miles of routes across England and Wales connect communities and are deeply embedded in our cultural and environmental history but by 2026 10,000 undiscovered paths stand to be lost. He made the powerful argument that people have a need to be connected with the world around them, its history and physical geography; that nature provides an essential opportunity to explore self; and that ecological breakdown occurs when people are denied access to the land - which is why paths must be preserved.

There were four planned 'Discovery Walks': to explore a peat bog with a Yorkshire Dales National Trust Ecologist; a river walk with a member of the Yorkshire Dales Rivers Trust to learn about natural flood management; a forest walk on the Aske Estate with a member of the Forest Team; and a walk with guides at the National Nature Reserve and quarry at Nosterfield. Unfortunately, the first walk was cancelled because of bad weather.

However, the walk at Nosterfield National Nature Reserve is a good example of the range and depth of what participants can learn in the space of a day. In the morning, participants visited the reserve and with the help of two expert bird watchers viewed wildlife on the lakes, while also helping each other to identify flora. In the afternoon, the group visited Nosterfield quarry where botanist-volunteers from the Lower Ure Conservation Society explained their pioneering project to develop the old site into a wetland, using not just common reeds but also heritage plants such as great fen sedge which historically has been more characteristic of northern wetland. There was also a fascinating walk around a poly-tunnel where the Society is growing over a hundred important plant species whose seed they will share with other conservation projects.

Key themes and issues of the walks and talks were brought together by paleo-biologist, Thomas Halliday, an Associate Research Fellow at the Department of Earth Sciences of the University of Birmingham, who gave an impressive talk on his book, 'Otherlands'. Drawing on two of his sixteen chapters and an excellent slide-show presentation, Thomas gave a glittering insight into the evolution of Earth – what happened 40m years ago, the way landscape is a product of time as well as space, how no ecosystem is intrinsic, and crucially where and how cataclysmic changes will happen as a result of climate change. There was much detailed scientific information, the product of Thomas's cutting-edge research and the talk was challenging to the lay person but it was also highly informative and stimulating. Thomas concluded with an impassioned summary of the current state of Earth: how we are no longer living under the same climatic system as the 1970s; how every country in the world is warmer than its historical average; how the Antarctic Sea is where cataclysmic change will happen; and an indictment of Britain as the second worst country in Europe for biodiversity. However, he also made a claim for hope as the motivation for action and cited Costa Rica as a country that has successfully doubled its rainforest in twenty years as a result of an effective government programme to help landowners restore the environment. The audience went away with greatly enhanced knowledge and many questions to fuel further investigation.

Another theme of the Festival was human histories, with a range of illuminating talks about significant, often over-looked figures and events, past and present. There was a good balance of men and women: Polar historian, Michael Smith talked about his new biography of Ernest Shackleton, 'By Endurance We Conquer', and Hugh Fenwick talked about the Robert Stephenson Trust; a walk around the Swaledale village of Reeth with the local museum curator revealed key locations used by novelist, May Sinclair (1863-1946); Joanna Williams provided an alternative history of the Suffragette movement through her biography of the pioneering Lydia Becker; and Nicholas Milton revealed the importance of ornithology to both soldiers and political leaders, drawing on his book, 'The Role of Birds in WW1 and WW2.'

A highlight of the Festival was the sell-out evening at the Georgian Theatre Royal with historian, Lucy Adlington from History Wardrobe, talking about her latest book, 'The Dressmakers of Auschwitz: the true story of the women who sewed to survive'. Much has been researched and written about the Holocaust but, through a chance email, Lucy unearthed a remarkable story about a group of twenty-five women who established a salon in Auschwitz to create fashions for elite Nazi women. Lucy achieved a striking balance between entertainment and wit (with numerous fashion items on display from her extensive textile collection) and a deeply serious exposé of the women's traumatic situation and their heroic resilience.

Another event whose subject was human crisis and how to respond to it was given by Sir Nick Young, Chief Executive of the British Red Cross (2001-2014). Drawing on his recently-published memoir, 'My Years with the Red Cross', Nick talked about his leadership of various charities, culminating with his work for the Red Cross through such crises as the Iraq War and the Asian Tsunami. Significantly, he also talked about the challenges the world faces today with climate change and the role of individual responsibility.

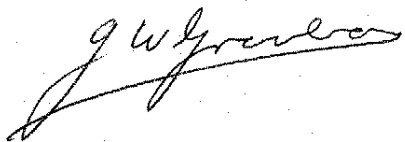
The Festival focuses on walks and talks but there were also two practical, skills-based activities: a new, day-long introduction to navigation held in Swaledale with seven attendees; and for the second year running, two bookbinding workshops run by local bookbinder, Delphine Ruston. A mixed group of ten people attended the bookbinding, for example a mother and her teenage daughter, an older man who wanted to learn about bookbinding because he had researched an ancestor who was a bookbinder, and a young couple who were avid readers and were curious to learn how books are made. In the space of three hours participants learned how to make a chapbook and a hard-back notebook. Seven people expressed an interest in taking their new skills further in a next-level workshop.

Through its diverse range of walks and talks, the Festival offers a dynamic education in cultural and environmental subjects. Not limited by the requirements of any educational organisation or 'qualification', participants can engage freely, making their own connections, whether that is learning from an expert on location or by listening to one of the first-rate talks.

Delphine Ruston
12.10.2023

Richmond Walking & Book Festival Accounts 2023		
	1 January - 31 December 2023	1 January - 31 December 2022
Receipts and Payments	£	£
Receipts		
Grants	1,000	4,600
Donations	935	80
Friends scheme	435	420
Gift Aid	186	97
Sponsorship and advertising	2,050	2,100
Quiz night & coffee morning	195	395
Book events	9,078	10,385
Book sales	1,784	2,884
Bar	192	152
Bag sales	12	26
Walks	2,443	2,223
Sub-Total	18,310	23,362
Payments		
Book events - speaker & related expenses	8,758	8,802
Book purchases	1,436	2,450
Bar costs	83	116
Purchase of bags	195	0
Walk expenses	1,108	1,643
Bank charges & commission	575	762
Advertising, promotion & website	3,975	3,189
Other expenses	1,278	1,220
Sub-Total	17,407	18,182
Surplus for Year (unrestricted funds)	903	5,180
Statement of assets and liabilities at 31 December	2023	2022
Cash in Bank	18,288	17,385
Represented by Unrestricted Funds	18,288	17,385

Signed by James Gravenor Treasurer



14 January 2024