

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting**  
**held on Monday 22 May 2023 at 7.00pm at**  
**THE BIRCHAM CENTRE**

**Trustees Present**

Les West (Chair), Dr Ian Kenvyn (Vice Chair), Clare Kenvyn, Ian McGilvray, Carl Lamb

**Members of the Public**

Brenda Green, Barry Baker, Brenda Gostling, Judy Smith, Jan Henry

**Apologies**

Gill Long (Trustee), Polly Brockis (Centre Manager), Sam Garnham (Trustee); Roisin Howard (Trustee)

**Minutes of the AGM held 25 April 2022**

Approved and signed by Les West

**Matters Arising**

All dealt with in the reports

**Annual Reports**

Chairman's Report (attached)

Reserve Policy/Safeguarding/Health and Safety (attached)

Operation and Administration (attached)

Archive Report (attached)

Community Partnership

Ian Kenvyn gave a verbal report. He highlighted the fact that since the pandemic many volunteers had not returned and therefore there was a great shortage of people nationally who were willing to volunteer across a wide range of organisations and charities, The same situation was the case locally in Reepham. He explained that the Community Partnership had been set up to try and engage with local residents to fill the gaps. The group had mapped the requirements and provided information sheets about the different opportunities to volunteer.

Brenda Green suggested that it might be worth having a table in the Bircham Centre during the Food Festival on Sunday to advertise the initiative.

Ian went on to inform the meeting that the walled garden talks at the Bircham Centre were due to start on Tuesday lunch times from 6 June until 4 July at 12.00 noon. The theme of the talks this year was connections with speakers considering the connections between people, community, place and material items.

### **Finance Report (attached)**

The meeting accepted the financial accounts for 2022 and thanked Ian Boldero for financial support and work in auditing the accounts. The meeting agreed to appoint Ian Boldero & Co as the examiner for the next year.

### **Public Participation**

Jan Henry informed the meeting that she had been instrumental, many years ago, in driving forward the restoration of the building including the roof when it was in a very poor condition. She wanted to congratulate the trustees on the current operation of the Centre and all that is being done to upkeep the building. The Chairman thanked Jan for her kind words and support.

Brenda Green commented that there was no report on the charity shop and books, as there was no trustee responsible for the overview of this important part of the Centre's activity and income. The Chairman informed the meeting that the trustees recognised this and were keen to rectify it as soon as further trustees were appointed. Brenda said that the shop had trialled a period of opening additionally on Friday afternoons, which had proved to be beneficial. As this was now part of the shop's regular opening times, it would be advertised. In addition, she pointed out that storage was still an issue for the shop. The Chairman pointed out that as soon as the new shelving was completed for the storage of books more space would become available for the shop.

Carl Lamb pointed out the availability of AI software platform solutions for grant applications. This would be discussed and considered by the trustees.

### **Nominations of Trustees**

There were no nominations from nominating bodies., However the board had received interest from two prospective trustees which were being followed through.

The meeting closed at 8.00pm.

The formalities of appointing the Chair and Vice Chair would be dealt with at the next trustee meeting on 12 June 2023. All the trustees present were happy to continue for a further year and signed the nomination sheet.



**At the Heart of Reepham  
Open for All**



**Annual Report 2022**

## **Introduction**

The Bircham Centre was left in trust to the residents of Reepham and the surrounding area by Samuel Bircham in 1919 as a reading room and community meeting space for charitable purposes.

The Centre is managed by a committee of twelve trustees, whose responsibility is to ensure that the original purpose is upheld in line with the constitution. In order to achieve this, trustees are responsible for generating sufficient funds to ensure the preservation of the grade II listed building, so it is available for present and future generations to benefit from the services it provides. The use of the building by the community is seen as the primary purpose of the charity. The trustees usually meet monthly for formal meetings, and provide advice and support between meetings.

## **Legal Status and Constitution**

The name of the charity is 'The Bircham Centre'. It is a charity founded by Trust Deed dated 15 August 1919. It is registered by the Charity Commission of England with the registration number 242536.

The Registered Office is The Market Place, Reepham, Norfolk NR10 4JJ.

## **The charity's main professional contacts and staff**

Audit and Accountancy – Boldero & Co  
Bankers – HSBC & COIF (Charities Investment Fund)  
Insurance – Grout Insurance Brokers

The Trustees employ the following part time staff:  
Polly Brockis - Centre Manager (16 hours per week)  
Robert Taylor - Caretaker (8 hours per week)  
Three cleaners (total of 15 hours per week)

The charity is dependent also on groups of volunteers, supporters and helpers to assist with the operation of the centre. The trustees are responsible for their direction, recruitment and training. It is recognised that such assistance and volunteering is absolutely key to the operation and future of the charity.

## Trustees

Les West	Chairman	2019 - present
Ian Kenvyn	Vice Chairman	2022 - present
Ian McGilvray	Maintenance Committee lead	2020 - present
Clare Kenvyn	Link for Reepham Archives	2022 - present
Barry Barker		2019 - 2022
Louisa Dreisin		2019 – 2022
Sam Garnham	Chairman of Reepham Bowls Club	2019 - present
Carl Lamb		2020 - present
Gill Long		2020 - present
Roisin Howard		2020 - present
Sarah Fisher		2021 - 2023

## AGM Chairman's Report

Welcome to the 2023 annual meeting which reports on the activities of the Bircham Centre for 2022. It was a year of further recovery from the pandemic, supporting community groups and individuals by providing activities and services to encourage them to take advantage of all that the Centre has to offer. I have to say we are not there yet, as things have not totally returned to pre-covid times, but we are moving in the right direction.

We sat in this room a year ago and thanked Stuart Lane and Julie Smith for their service as trustees as they reached the end of their term of office. Little did we know that within two months we would learn of the sudden death of Stuart. This came as a great shock to all of us. Stuart was not only the Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees, but also the link trustee for the archive group and a member of the maintenance subcommittee. He has been greatly missed and I am pleased to report that the trustees have decided to honour his service to the Centre by naming the archive rooms the 'Stuart Lane Suite'.

During the year we also thanked Barry Barker and Louisa Dreisin who resigned as trustees. We welcomed Clare and Ian Kenvyn as new trustees. I thank all the trustees for what they do to support the work of the Centre in so many different ways. On behalf of the trustees. I also thank Polly for all that she does as Centre Manager supporting the staff and users of the Centre, often going far beyond her contractual duties. Many people have a lot to thank Polly for in the way she cares and supports the different community groups and individuals. Our thanks also to Robert, our caretaker, for his care of the building and to our cleaners, Sammy, Tina and Hayley.

We are blessed with a number of faithful volunteers who work in the shop, book room, garden, archives and our finances. Our particular thanks to Brenda, the shop manager, and her deputy, Judy, for the large number of hours they put in every week in the shop. Also, to John and Linda in the book room and Jane, who leads the dedicated team of voluntary gardeners. Without these dedicated helpers the Centre would struggle to undertake all that it does.

During the year the trustees met on ten occasions, which included the Annual General Meeting and a strategy meeting to consider the way forward which culminated with the formation of an action plan for the year. As a result of this, the trustees decided to engage a local part-time Communication and Marketing Consultant, to develop our communication strategy along with the development of a new website. It is good to have Brenda Gosling as part of the team and we have seen the benefits from her work, since the new website was launched.

During the year we have had a number of changes to tenants and room uses. The group of ladies who run 'The Birch', the hot desk facility in Room 10, gave us notice that they felt it was not viable. We completed negotiations with Ian Boldero financial services to take over the lease for Room 10 on a long-term basis. Also, the Diocese of Norwich gave us notice that they no longer needed Room 12 as the parish administration office. This meant that Reverend Helen and Annabelle, the Parish Administrator, moved out at the end of the year. We were sad to lose Helen and Annabelle from the Centre. However, this gave us an opportunity to review the use of the rooms upstairs. The Trustees decided to refurbish Room 12 and move the counselling services from Room 11 to Room 12. Since then, we have noticed an increase in the hire of this space. Room 11 then became available for use as the Centre office, which created a much better space for Polly, as the Centre Manager. In turn these changes will also provide additional storage space for the shop and books downstairs, once the work to build new shelving has been completed.

A major project during the year was the refurbishment of the hallway and replacement of the noticeboards. This work was funded as part of a grant from the Community Lottery Fund and now provides a much better and brighter welcome to visitors to the Centre. As part of the refurbishment of the hallway, we were proud to have twinned our two toilets, one with a latrine in Zambia and the other with a latrine in Malawi. This was another example of the Reepham local community reaching out to people in need in developing countries. During the year the trustees also commissioned an engineering survey in order to investigate the drainage issue at the front of the building. Having received this report, the trustees now understand the problem, however, due to other priorities work to rectify this matter has been put on hold at present.

The main purpose of the Bircham Centre charity is to provide services and space for the local community in Reepham and the surrounding area to meet and also to maintain the Grade II listed building given to the town in 1919, to ensure it is available to current users and future generations.

During the year, the Trustees were successful in obtaining a grant from the National Lottery to help the Centre recover and re-engage with the local community following the pandemic. After the success of the garden talks in 2021, the Trustees arranged a further series of talks in 2022, which were well attended. Thanks go to Ian and Clare Kenvyn for organising these, supported by Polly. These have now become a regular feature. During the year the Centre hosted a number of other community events, including a family event to celebrate Norfolk Day in conjunction with the Lions.

From November the Centre took part in the Winter Warmers initiative funded by a Norfolk Community Foundation grant, to open places for people to meet within a warm space. We made available the Bircham Centre on Monday mornings, staffed by volunteers. This initiative was clearly appreciated by the community as we had an average of 15 people using the facility every week. Although the initiative officially finished at the end of March 2023, the Trustees decided to continue providing this service to the community.

In addition to the grants, the Centre received donations during the year from individuals totaling £12,018, which the Trustees were very thankful for. Also, to the many members of the 200 Club who continue to support the Centre financially. The Centre also acted as a channel for other bodies to obtain grants from Broadland District Council, including Reepham Artists and Makers and the newly formed Reepham Community Partnership, which the Centre is part of.

## **Plans for 2023**

I am pleased to report that we have been successful in obtaining a grant of £20,000 from the 'Pride in Place' initiative managed by Broadland and South Norfolk District Councils for urgent repairs to the roof and attic spaces. This requires us to find match funding for the project. The trustees therefore launched a fund-raising campaign 'Raise the Roof' on 31 March 2023. I am pleased to report that we are halfway towards our target of £10,000. There is still some way to go, but we have got off to a good start. The last half is always much harder than the first half. With our funding authority's agreement, we have now let the contact for the repair work to King & Co. and look forward to the work being completed over the summer period.

The holly tree at the front of the building will be cut down. We received permission from the Planning Department to remove the tree as it is dead. This will create space for the roof repairs at the front of the building to be carried out. Once the repairs have been completed, it is planned to tidy up the area and provide an ornamental tree in a large pot in memory of Brenda Palmer, a great supporter of the Bircham Centre, funded by a donation given by her husband, John.

## **Reserve Policy**

The Trustees aim to obtain sufficient funds each year so that the maintenance of the building and the work of the charity can continue and develop.

The Trustees aim to keep a reserve of at least 50% of annual expenditure.

## **Safeguarding**

During 2022 there were no safeguarding matters brought to the attention of the trustees.

The trustees reviewed and updated the safeguarding policy in March 2023, which is available on the website.

## **Health and Safety**

During 2022 there were no reportable Health and Safety incidents reported to the trustees. The trustees monitor the Health and Safety of its employees, volunteers and users of the Centre on a continuous basis, which is a standing item on the trustees' agenda. Health and safety is led by the trustees one of whom, namely Carl Lamb, has ultimate responsibility for this area.

The trustees reviewed and updated its Health and Safety policy in March 2023, which is available on the website. Within this Policy Statement the trustees recognise their duties and obligations in ensuring the health, safety, and welfare of the employees of the centre along with volunteers and anyone else who may be affected by the centre's activities including visitors and contractors.



## **Operation and Administration**

The effects of COVID and lockdown continued to be felt through 2022 but a pattern of regular schedules, reporting and hirings returned. The new poster sites installed in the hall became a focal point of information, enabling us to share what goes on in the community and centre. A number of the organisations we had previously partnered with for charity shop overstock did not make it through the pandemic, however we still continue with the ethos of recycling and re-use with donations unusable to us going out to too many agencies. These include the Helen and Douglas Hospice, The Rage Rooms, St Martins's, World of Books and the local clothing banks for the Fire Fighters and Town Council. Certain collection services began again with the centre being used as a central hub for old spectacles, hearing aids and stamps, these all went out to benefit wider communities internationally.

Our volunteer gardeners continued grow edible produce in the allotment and this was put out for free and gratefully received by the community. Use of the Bircham Garden rose through lockdown and that trend continued through 2022 The LIONs gifted new benches for the frontage and that space is now another community gathering spot.

Thanks must be noted to Bev Hurley for facilitating a strategy meeting for the board, the discussions helped us all focus on priorities and requirements moving forward through the year.

Two volunteer Treasurers, Jo Smith and Joy Pickering provide invaluable support. Over 2022 the standard monthly accounting was added to with grants from the National Lottery Community Fund, Norfolk Community Foundation, district and local councils. We are increasingly aware that to do anything additional to basic opening we need to acquire additional funding, appreciate all the support we receive and have adapted to systems where time is utilised in sourcing and applying for grants.

We registered for Gift Aid in 2022 and began reclaiming VAT on financial donations, this provides an additional 25p for every £1 cash donated.

Trustees stepped down during the year and gaps they left in operational requirements have been absorbed where possible, but we do need additional help.

Sincere thanks go to Les and the board for all their continued time and care for the Bircham Centre.

## **Financial Report**

Income for the year is shown as £46,849.2, £10,000 up on 2021. We have been the grateful recipient of grants and significant large donations this year.

Expenditure was 4.6K more than the previous year. The most obvious line of increase shows in electricity and telephone. Although we have been affected by the raised utility costs we had secured a fixed deal through to Oct 2024, which has buffered us from worse

effects, a percentage of the increase difference is down to the increased amount of time we were able to open in 2022.

The deficit shows as £7669.27 but inclusion of the various grants and pre agreed move of 5K from our reserves towards maintenance and refurb requirements gives a positive bottom line of £6536.86. It should be stated that at the point of audit certain grants had not closed down so expenditure against those was due to come out. Significant bills for the hallway were not received until January. With predicted expenditure for those items our management accounts indicated a working deficit of 1K end of year.

The Bircham Centre would like to thank Ian Boldero & Co for financial support and work in auditing our accounts and would like to hereby appoint them as the examiner for the next financial year.

Administration & Finance Reports: Polly Brockis Centre Manager

## **Archive Report**

The Archive continues to be run by a small group of volunteers. The archive rooms are open weekly on a Wednesday morning for volunteers to undertake a range of activities, and is open to the public on the first Saturday and Wednesday of each month (as well as by appointment). There were some changes to the running of the Archive during the year, for a number of reasons. Ann Middlemas, who was a central member of the Archive volunteer team stood down as a volunteer, as did Jenny Harding the Archive Administrator. The remaining and new volunteers now work with a flat structure covering tasks on an 'as and when' basis and have reduced their monthly meeting cycle to a quarterly cycle. Furthermore, very sadly Stuart Lane - trustee and vice-chair of the Bircham Centre - died unexpectedly and was replaced by new trustee Clare Kenvyn as the link between the Archive and Bircham Centre. The Archive would like to thank Stuart and all the volunteers, past and present, for their contributions. The Archive is also grateful to the Bircham Centre and Polly Brockis for all ongoing financial and other support.

The Archive seeks to raise awareness of its resources and encourage visitors in a variety of ways. It now has a banner that advertises its opening, which is displayed on the Bircham Centre railings. The Archive has benefited from the revamp of the Bircham Centre's website and the cross-linkages. Social media presence is maintained through the Archive's own website and facebook pages, with regular articles to provoke interest. Enquiries have been received from a number of people, covering a range of topics.

Over the year effort has been put into developing links within the community. A meeting was held with the Reepham Lions about the potential for some collaborative work, however the small number of volunteers currently involved in the archive is a barrier to taking this further. The Archive has also had contact with the Primary School, one of whose year groups was studying the 1950s as a topic. A pupil from the High School also accessed the resources in the Archive for an assignment.

One of the principle activities of the volunteers is the sorting and sifting of existing and newly donated documents. During the past year the team has completed the scanning of documents into the Omeka database; this is a fantastic searchable resource which can be accessed remotely as well as from within the Archive. The final stage of the digitisation of the collection of large maps is near completion. Geoff Fisher & Charles Butcher have been processing and stitching the photographed maps enabling them to be investigated on our website. The photography was managed with the loan of specialised equipment from the Norfolk Record Office as part of the Archive's training begun in 2020/21. The Archive's PC has had some work to improve its performance. Open morning visitors have included a judge researching for a demonstration poaching trial, and the head gardener from Blickling. As in previous years, the team collaborated with Reepham Life to produce the 2023 Reepham Calendar, which raises valuable resources for the Archive. For Queen Elizabeth II's Jubilee Celebrations a digital and physical exhibition was created and put on public display. This attracted many people and provoked lots of interest. This exhibition will be updated and expanded on for the celebrations associated with the coronation of King Charles III.

Clare Kenvyn

The Bircham Centre

## Income &amp; Expenditure for the Year ended 31st December 2022

	2022	2021
<u>Receipts</u>		
Hirings	10,641.50	6,601.00
Library rent	2,736.50	2,736.50
Library cleaning	1,495.00	1,495.00
Furlough received	-	3,693.51
200 Club	1,272.00	1,800.00
Shop	20,987.71	13,039.45
Book sales etc. (Red Box)	6,583.57	4,893.78
Donations received	2,018.55	1,335.48
Bowls Club	150.00	150.00
Sundry	11.28	5.09
Interest on deposits	432.66	5.43
Archive Room	520.50	956.00
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	46,849.27	36,711.24
<u>Payments</u>		
Cleaning	9,539.30	8,967.83
Insurance	4,388.73	4,155.76
Water	417.89	253.83
Electricity and telephone	8,133.26	4,575.64
Accountant's report and payroll	420.00	420.00
Rates	230.40	117.61
Administration	17,447.89	14,404.38
Repairs & maintenance	6,985.13	7,091.91
Health & safety	755.69	1,978.97
Garden maintenance	5,243.06	6,196.60
200 Club	530.00	640.00
Tea Room	26.57	72.81
Sundries	330.10	784.84
Archive Room	70.52	239.98
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	54,518.54	49,900.16
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Deficit (Surplus) before special building work	(7,669.27)	(13,188.92)
Less:		
Special building work	-	600.00
Bowling club	150.00	150.00
Grant expenditure	11,110.87	4,255.32
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	11,260.87	5,005.32
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Add Grant income	25,467.00	16,984.36
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Deficit	6,536.86	(1,209.88)
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The Bircham Centre

Balance Sheet at 31st December 2022

	2022	2021
HSBC Current Account	13,982.25	3,146.55
COIF Deposit Account	<u>41,246.53</u>	<u>45,813.87</u>
	55,228.78	48,960.42
Debtors & prepayments	1,214.50	946.00
	<u>56,443.28</u>	<u>49,906.42</u>
Trust funds B/fwd	49,906.42	51,072.30
Add Surplus for the year:	6,536.86	(1,165.88)
Trust funds C/fwd	<u>56,443.28</u>	<u>49,906.42</u>
Unrestricted funds	44,660.72	49,906.42
Restricted funds	11,782.56	-
	<u>56,443.28</u>	<u>49,906.42</u>

The Bircham Centre

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The Bircham Centre

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