

Minutes of Eden Valley Museum Trust Annual General Meeting Friday 27th May 2022, 7pm, at Rickards Hall

Present

Lee Ward (Chair), Alan Layland (Deputy Chair), Diane Banks (retiring Hon Treasurer), Executive members: Margot McArthur, Jean French, Hilary Brand (Chair of Curatorial Team), Richard Johnson; Martin Frost (House Manager), Lorraine Ganney (incoming Hon Treasurer) and a further members.

1. Apologies for Absence

Alan Smart, Joan Varley, Stuart McGregor, Peter Brand, Cheryl Bell, Lennox Cato, Pauline Broussard

2. Minutes of previous AGM, 27th May 2021

Proposed by Lee Ward, seconded by Alan Layland The motion was carried and these were signed as a correct record of events.

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Chairman's Report

Made available online in advance

LW commented that it had been an 'interesting' year, coming out of the pandemic and reopening after lockdown. He put on record his thanks to MF for all his hard work getting the museum ready for reopening. The year has brought fresh challenges with some volunteers having retired or not doing so much. This has caused some problems with stewarding. He expressed his thanks to all those who continued to serve as stewards and asked that members spread the word about the need for fresh volunteers.

Behind the scenes one of the main challenges has been the accreditation, which is now virtually completed. A lot of time has been taken up with concerns of financial governance, and tough decisions have had to be made, causing a few sleepless nights. The need to manage a potential deficit led to a decision to let go the Collections Manager. Finances are now on a sounder basis than previously and over the next year the budget should begin to reflect this.

This has created an opportunity to look at the governance structure and how we can run collections in a different way using volunteers. So in this area too volunteers are more welcome than ever before. He gave thanks to all those who have been working hard behind the scenes, with exhibitions and cataloguing and all the unseen jobs necessary to keep the museum running.

LW announced that he would not be standing for re-election, as he was having to take on more caring responsibilities at home, and could not now put in the time and effort the post of Chair deserved. He commented on how much he had enjoyed the role and hoped to continue in some way – perhaps as a steward!

AL voiced the thanks of all the Exec for the wonderful job Lee had done over the last few very difficult years.

5a: Curatorial Report

Made available online in advance

HB referred to the factual information on the written report and added to it a quick SWOT analysis of the Curatorial side of the museum, based on impressions of getting involved in the museum as a newcomer over the last few months. The Strengths that quickly became obvious were the great wealth of research that had been done over the years and the rich variety of artefacts and the quirky charm of the place. Another first impression was of puzzlement as to who was in charge on the curatorial side, with no one person named as curator, two paid employees working very well but somewhat separately and with some volunteers having left and others having become less involved. A Weakness therefore seemed to be that things had become somewhat fragmented. However, existing curatorial volunteers have gathered together as a team, and some new volunteers are now coming in, so that is a great Opportunity to gather new people, new ideas and perhaps a fresh perspective. There will always be Threats and while finance will continue to be one of them, the other big challenge ahead is to build a strong and coherent team. HB commented that suggestions and comments from Members on the curatorial side of the museum would always be welcome.

LW thanked the Curatorial team for their hard work. The Museum has always had a reputation for quality, and it is good to see this continuing.

5b. House Management Report

MF reported that Covid had had a big effect, especially on numbers coming to the museum, and commented that this would probably continue at least until the end of the year. It has also had an effect on donations which are still down. In response to the move from cash to use of credit cards, a card reader has now been installed in the entrance hall. He remarked on how he had seen the curatorial team pulling together and hard work in many other spheres. He thanked Terry King for his work on writing pieces for the Edenbridge Chronicle on the events hosted by the Museu. There is a great need for more public engagement, especially in getting the town walks started again. There is the beginnings of a new team to do this, but others are needed to learn how to do this. Work has been going on toward more public engagement, including the Jubilee events on 2nd and 3rd June, and on a Traditional Craft Fair to be held in the Courtyard on Saturday August 27th and continuing live events are needed. We need to do more to engage with the town, to get new people in, and become again a central focus in the town. He thanked everyone for their contributions to the museum and concluded by saying he looked forward to a bright future.

LW thanked Martin for all he had done.

6. Treasurer's report

DB reported that she would be stepping down as Hon Treasurer, due to pressure of other commitments. Obviously income had continued to be reduced over the year because of Covid. Although some grants

had been obtained specifically because of this, they were all project specific and so did not necessarily help with ongoing expenses. Because of this the museum had been looking at a loss of about £1300 and this had made it necessary to cut down on staff costs. However there are healthy reserves of about £23,000 which should secure the museum's future for a further 3 years, which means that compared to many other small museums and other organizations we are in a healthy position. Nevertheless, there is a continuing need for fundraising and new fundraisers are needed. Martin has done a good job of rejuvenating the shop and therefore a 2.5 times rise in revenue is forecasted. It is expected that the museum will break even in the forthcoming financial year. She then invited questions

Helen Jackman noted that insurance seemed to have gone down dramatically and queried why. MF explained that we had just managed to obtain a very good deal on contents and public liability insurance.

MF reported that the Auditor's costs had been kept unrealistically low in previous years and would be increasing this year.

7. Receiving and approving Annual Report and Accounts

Proposed by Lee Ward and seconded by Alan Layland. The motion was carried

8. Appointment of Independent Examiner

Proposed by Diane Banks and seconded by Alan Layland. The motion was carried.

9. Election of Officers and Executive Committee (Block vote)

A statement by Alan Smart, standing for Chairman, was read out. He apologized for his absence, being currently in Washington DC, but due to retire and return to Edenbridge in June. He paid tribute to the extraordinary work being done by everybody in very difficult times, and especially to LW who had born the brunt of much of this. He looked forward to joining the Museum team in whatever capacity.

Election of all those standing was proposed by Jane Higgs, seconded by Helen Jackman and carried unanimously.

Elected members:

- Alan Smart – Executive Chair
- Alan Layland – Interim Deputy Chair, Member
- Lorraine Gannev – Treasurer
- Margot McArthur
- Hilary Brand
- Jean French

10. Request for Volunteers and Exec. Members and process of application

A new Deputy Chairman is still needed, although AL has offered to continue in the role until such time as the appointment is made. HB had volunteered to do the minutes for this meeting but a new Hon.

Secretary is desperately needed. Other Exec. Members are also needed. MF explained that rather than wait for the next AGM, if and when people step forward for these roles, members will be asked to respond by postal vote. Anyone interested in these or any other volunteer roles should contact MF in the first instance. Jean French has taken on the role of Volunteer Co-ordinator for the Curatorial side. Job descriptions have been issued for some of the Curatorial roles needed and a meeting for new volunteers has been organized for Saturday 18th June.

11. Chair’s Final Comments

LW said that it had been a privilege to serve such a great museum. He thanked the Exec, and especially AL who had been a great support through difficult times. He was proud that post- pandemic the museum was still open. Other small museums and similar organizations have gone under but we are still here.

Jane Higgs commented that of all the organizations that received Millenium start-up grants many had already gone under 10 years ago. We are one of the survivors!

12. Any other business

MF reminded members to attend the Jubilee events and Claire Donithorn said that making of cakes and sandwiches and other help would be appreciated.

On behalf of the Heritage magazine team, Jean French requested that people make a record of what they were involved in over the Jubilee so we can collate information on this bit of living history.

The meeting closed at 7.49pm

Signed

Date

Chair, Eden Valley Museum Trust

Pending approval and signature at 2023 Annual General Meeting

In attendance:

Lee Ward
Alan Layland
Diane Banks
Lorraine Ganney
Richard Johnson
Hilary Brand
Martin Frost
Jean French
Margot McArthur
Rosemary Eade
Kay Wilson

Claire Donithorn
Julie Johnson
David Kibble
Lyn Layland
Pat Bracher
Helen Jackman
Bob Orridge
Jenny Chettle
Joan McCall
Jane Higgs