

## House Management Report for the 28<sup>th</sup> EVMT AGM, 30<sup>th</sup> May 2024

In November 2023 a small team of volunteers took on various roles and duties formerly part of the House Manager role. This division of labour enabled us to navigate the difficult move out of Church House and back in again related to the pest treatment and to subsequently be in a position to re-open to visitors at the beginning of March. Work in the galleries was extensive, challenging and highly visible; work behind the scenes was equally extensive and challenging but by its nature less visible. Tasks included setting up new accounting, admin, and IT procedures whilst tracking down 2 years' worth of orders, invoices and receipts for our bookkeeper, accountant and ultimately HMRC. Other matters related to accounting have been covered in the Acting Treasurer Report. Volunteers who were already involved in a number of ongoing roles in the museum have now taken on additional duties related to House Management as well as in roles serving the Executive Committee, all at a time when the number of experienced long served volunteers is dropping, due to advancing years, burn out, lack of time, or as with Peter Brand, sadly passing away. We will miss Peter's support across so many areas of the museum and were all so very sad to lose him.

### IT in the Museum

During 2023-2024 a new Modes PC was purchased to replace a defunct one and TinyTag environmental monitors were sent away for re-calibrating. The cost, c.£750 was covered by a grant from the National Archive.

The IT office systems in the museum have long been a concern as we haven't had an IT expert review it for suitability, durability, and recoverability in over 6 or 7 years. The first of the above appears to be covered as we use standard Windows PCs, all Windows 11, with standard office products. We use free versions where suitable but gaining access to these products isn't always straightforward as more and more security software comes into play each year. This makes the sharing of PCs between users 'awkward' as pin numbers or passwords and logon IDs need to be unique or shared. Add to the support of PCs our tablets for the shop and donations, networks to join everything together and now a touch screen with associated software then you can see the support task is getting greater.

For years support of the systems and software has been based on someone in the museum knowing what they are doing. If that knowledge is no longer available then the museum is at danger of losing data, accessing the website for changes, and developing the website to attract donations, visitors etc. A technical support company was invited in to provide a quote to support our systems but unfortunately after visiting the Museum and being shown the various systems they declined to provide a quote and when they were called to discuss it, they didn't call back.

In all support arrangements you need more than one person capable of maintaining systems. We believe there is now only one person in the organisation with the understanding of the Museums IT infrastructure and website, so we urgently need another person with even just an inkling of how PCs and websites work. Training will be provided internally and if funds allow, we could go to external courses where there is currently no knowledge.



### **Gift Aid**

The gathering of data to get 'free' money from HMRC was a neglected task for some years. Accurate records have to be kept in case of an HMRC review being called. The base data is an up-to-date membership file, evidence of a Gift Aid declaration, and payments records via bank statements/counterfoils and/or our accounting system (Sage). This data was not always available and subsequently we may have missed out on some refunds. However, now we have a dedicated membership secretary and a treasurer the task of producing the GA spreadsheet should be straightforward. We have now claimed all of the available years and are currently working on 2023-24.

### **Shop**

The shop appeared to be successful but again records of stock and purchases were irregular, so it was difficult to judge. It was also very difficult to find the item being bought on the shop tablet, so often it would be put down as a donation or something not at all related to the product. The new shop manager, Clare Seymour saw the answer to the stock control and purchase records was barcodes. A small project was set up with various tests being done on the best way to record stock and provide ease of use for the Stewards. The Museum can now rely on correct stock management and purchases and the Stewards have a simpler way of recoding sales.

Richard and Julie Johnson produced the 2024 museum calendar which sold out very quickly and we were unable to satisfy demand. They also had a museum stall at the weekly market on several occasions boosting shop sales throughout the year. Additional copies of the annual *Eden Valley Heritage* magazine, edited by Jean French, Helen Jackman, and Joan Varley, were sold in the shop.

A full stock take has been undertaken and analysis of sales to December 2023 by Clare which indicates that local products and pocket money items were consistently popular. The policy adopted since the 2024 reopening has been to improve stocks of these items, and in particular local publications which were poorly represented. It is also hoped to showcase local crafts, although they have proved more difficult to source. At the same time, we have improved display and will be reducing the number of different items stocked. Those which did not fit the profile of a local history museum shop, such as imported 'novelties', and poor-quality jewellery, have either been removed from sale or reduced in price. We will seek to dispose of products removed from sale at a boot sale or similar outlet. The pricing policy adopted is only to accept products for sale for which a minimum of 35% profit can be achieved. Gross sales during March and April 2024 have totalled around £350 and although precise profits cannot be assessed due to the previous sketchy records of shop purchases, the profit realised on newly purchased stock was £77 and it is reasonable to assume that these sales in total represent a profit of around £150 for the museum. The restocking and general development of the shop is a 'work in progress' which obviously is constrained to some extent by funds available for purchases. However, it is hoped that the shop will become more of a go-to resource for the local community and visitors, and thus reflect the high regard in which the rest of the museum is held.

### **Stewards**

A very big thank you is extended to all members that set aside time and effort to steward and keep the museum open. If anyone knows, or could suggest, other people to contact that they feel might like to help, Richard Johnson would be most grateful to be notified.



### Members

Julie Johson has taken over membership. We currently have 154 members (3 honorary) and 5 corporate members.

### Guided Walks

There were 3 scheduled guided walks during the summer of 2023, all during the daytime. A programme of scheduled walks for this summer has been arranged, with an evening walk in September. This is a programme that could be organised independently of the office, as it was previously, so if there is a member or volunteer who would be willing to step up and take this on, Joan Varley would be pleased to hear from them.

### Visitor Numbers

Year	Visitor Numbers	Outreach Numbers	Total
2019	2777	449	3226
2020	749	45	794
2021	1131	153	1284
2022	1980	342	2322
2023	<b>2170</b>	<b>458</b>	<b>2,628</b>

2024	Visitors		Activities, Outreach & Events		Total
	Adults	Children	Adults	Children	
Jan	closed	closed	12	60	72
Feb	closed	closed	closed	closed	0
Mar	207	29	59	0	295
April	149	35	7	5	196
May			8 U3A visit		

Contributors to this report:

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