

RIPON MUSEUM TRUST Annual General Meeting 2018

Held at The Workhouse Museum, Allhallowgate, Ripon, Wednesday 18th March

Minutes

(Draft, for approval at 2019 AGM)

Present:

Trustees/Directors: Richard Taylor (Chair), Anthony Chadwick, Grenville Hargreaves, Christopher Hughes, Mandy Whitehead, Martin Webber

Proposed new Trustees: Lizzy Tyler, Alexa Vernon

Staff members: James Etherington, Wendy Hunwick-Brown, Xantha Mepham, Carrie Philip

Vice President, Ralph Lindley and his wife, Mary

Volunteers/Trust Members: Dennis Boniface, Dot Bowman, Alison Brayshaw, Roy Brooks, Drene Brooks, Simon Crossfield, Bev Hall, Phil Hardaker, Penny Hartley, Carolyn Lee, Frederick Lee, Eric Monk, Val Monk, Marguerite Moss, Christine Orsler, David Rhodes, Steve Sharman, Leslie Sharman, Joyce Taylor, Roger Trees, Lindy Webb, Mandy Wilcock, Jill Wilkinson, Andrew Turnbull (Minutes Secretary)

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair (RT) welcomed everybody to the meeting.

Apologies were received from: Liz Barron, Anne and David Boase, Harry Corps, Margaret Crossfield, Paul and Jill Freeman, Mick Stanley, Julian Smith MP, Moira Smith, David Thelwall, Alma Williams and John Witherick.

2. Minutes of the AGM held on 4th April 2017

Acceptance of the minutes of the 2017 AGM was proposed by Dennis Boniface, seconded by David Rhodes and approved by the meeting.

3. Chair's Report

RT gave an illustrated report under the theme 'Onwards and Upwards', commencing with the main achievement of last year, namely the successful opening of Sharow View. A series of slides were used to remind the meeting of the journey we have been on with a number of 'before and after' photos underlining the magnitude of the project. RT recognised the efforts of Roger Trees as Building Manager and of course, Martin Wills in his curatorial role. Also, mentioned were the unstinting fund-raising efforts made behind the scenes by David Thelwall. Finally, RT noted that there were just too many hard-working volunteers to mention all by name.

Elsewhere, the year was marked by more success at the Harrogate Volunteer Oscars and we have been short-listed for Volunteer Team of the Year at the National Museums and Heritage Awards.

RT moved on other developments during the year. These included the progress made by the Collections Team led by Esther Graham and her involvement with the Esmée Fairbairn project in conjunction with Bradford Police Museum. Following the winding up of Ripon Historical Society we are to take over the production of the society journal, the Ripon Historian; with a foot in both camps, thanks were due to Anthony Chadwick for his efforts in this regard. Finally, the Culture and Connections Project with Helen Young and Martin Webber was completed, albeit with mixed results.

The Museums have also been involved in many successful events throughout the year, such as Ripon Sights & Sounds and the Christmas Tree Festival, but again, too many to list individually

Thanks to the efforts of the garden team under the leadership of Catherine Baxter, the museum garden continues to be highly productive with local restaurant Lockwoods, remaining the principal off-taker of fruit and vegetables, generating useful income. The team is now turning its attentions to the restoration of the Masters garden.

RT then went on to commend the Learning Team for a particularly successful year.

Moving on, RT then turned his attention to the Board of Trustees, noting how hard they worked behind the scenes and mentioned the recruitment of two new trustees, Lizzy Tyler and Alexa Vernon, to be voted on later, under Section 7, Election of Board. John Witherick will remain actively involved with RMT as Architectural Advisor, although he is standing down as a trustee, and RT invited Roger Trees to say a few words of appreciation. Roger recalled that he had known John for some 30 years and seen first-hand how hard he worked. He is meticulous and thorough, with a great attention to detail and an unparalleled knowledge of the world of building regulations and planning permissions. He has carried a great deal of unseen work for the Museum and regarded by Roger as irreplaceable. The meeting recognised John's contribution with a round of applause.

With the increasing scale and complexity of our operations come greater risks as well as opportunities, and in order to manage these and reduce the direct burden on the Board, it has been decided to create four sub-groups, each to be chaired by a Board Member, reporting back to the main Board. These will be (1) Finance and Marketing; Chair - David Thelwall, (2) Human Capital; Chair - Mandy Whitehead, (3) Business Operations; Chair – Christopher Hughes (4) Curation, Learning & Research; Chair – Martin Webber. In addition, Project Boards would be established for specific, single purpose issues (e.g. Sharow View). Finally, committees for Remuneration and R&D would be called from time to time as needed.

4. Treasurer's Report

In the absence of David Thelwall, Grenville Hargreaves presented the Treasurer's Report.

Headline figures from the trading summary for 2017 revealed that total income was an encouraging £187k against a budget figure of £180k, with admission income at £131k, matching budget. However, total costs for the year amounted to £200k, exceeding the budget figure of £171k, although Sharow View expenditure did add an unexpected £10k of additional costs. One further aspect that warranted comment was Gift Aid income for the year coming in at some £4k below expectation.

Reserves carried forward amounted to £119k, an increase of £7k, notwithstanding the net loss for the year, the difference being explained by timing issues in respect of restricted projects; when money was spent on projects against when the grant was made.

GH added that visitor numbers were up 30% after opening of Sharow View.

In terms of the 2018 budget, GH reported the following figures: income £319K (including admissions of £156k and NPO grant of £105k). Costs are budgeted at £298k to leave a forecast net profit of £21k.

Cost Control is crucial and GH noted that we must hit budget this year. In this regard, monthly cashflow forecasts are being prepared. In addition, a specialist charity accounting package is to be taken on, and the Finance Committee is also to be expanded. Looking ahead, economically viable uses of SV are being reviewed, with these feeding into the Strategic plan.

5. Museum Director's Report

Under the heading of 'Looking Ahead', James Etherington (JE) gave the meeting an illustrated presentation.

The first thing commented on was the success achieved in RMT being named as a National Portfolio Organisation by the Arts Council, and with it, a grant of £140,000 per annum for the next four years. This additional money would allow us to develop in a number of areas:

- Curation - a new Curator, Leah Mellors, has been appointed, who will start on 29th May.
- Digital – to enhance our digital profile.
- Contemporary Art – commission of one art work per year over the next four years, based at the Courthouse in 2018 and the Prison & Police Museum in 2019.
- Arts Awards – initiative such as the Ripon Squigglers Art Club.
- Outreach – reaching out to rural communities with initiatives such as Dementia Forward.
- Schools Outreach – getting our message across to schools.

JE then went on to comment on the Catalyst Project which is aimed at increasing our fund-raising capacity from non-core activities, in particular, smaller local businesses and organisations as well as individuals.

JE also noted that funding from the Coins Foundation will allow us to continue with an initiative to reach out to people who need more help to start volunteering.

Moving on, JE then covered a number of points under the general heading of 'On-going Awesomeness':

- Sharow View – after the successful opening of the Main Block, JE reported on a number of exciting plans for the use of the building. Various exhibitions are planned, including, 'Rainforest of the Sea', something different and not our usual offering. Also a Secret Cinema showing is planned and tickets are selling fast for another John Kirkpatrick concert with his Tunes from the Trenches.
- Collections Project – JE was pleased to report that Esther Graham's contract had been extended to end of June and that the Collections Project had made considerable progress. Touring displays had been prepared to be shown at three sites in North Yorkshire as well as three sites in Bradford. Oral history training sessions had been set up, and progress had been made in developing an on-line site for sharing information. Finally, it was hoped to have the new Research Room open by the end of May.
- Volunteers – as ever, the efforts and support from our volunteers was vitally important and, as ever, there is a continuing search for new volunteers.
- Operations – JE offered thanks to all the teams, including, but not limited to, Front Office, Cleaning, Stitch, Knit & Natter, etc., etc.
- Learning – again, thanks were due to the hard-working learning team for their considerable achievements during the past year.
- Garden – achievements included a new greenhouse, production of more fruit and vegetables, more wildflowers, and the planting of borders in the Masters garden.
- Recruitment – JE noted that adverts had recently opened for two new posts as we looked to recruit a new Marketing Manager and a new Outreach Officer.

Finally, JE reported that radio adverts were used for the first time with RMT advertising on two radio stations, Stray FM and Minster FM. He also reported on staff numbers, noting that in terms of staff growth, in 2016, 8 staff were employed, a full time equivalent (FTE) of 4; 2017 numbers were 12 (FTE of 6.5); 2018 numbers were 16 (FTE of 9.7). In addition, at the last count, there were 142 volunteers.

6. Appointment of Independent Financial Examiners

RT noted that Stuart Baldwin of Abacus 155 has relinquished this role and the Finance Committee were recommending the appointment of a Harrogate based firm, HPH Chartered Accountants. This was proposed by Christine Orsler, seconded by Grenville Hargreaves and approved by the meeting.

7. Election of Board

As required in the constitution, one third of the directors/trustees are required to stand down at this meeting. As already noted, John Witherick is standing down and not offering himself for re-election whilst the other two, David Thelwall and Christopher Hughes are offering themselves for re-election.

RT noted that there was already one existing vacancy on the Board and as John Witherick was standing down, this became two. After an extensive recruitment process, he was delighted to welcome two prospective trustees, Lizzy Tyler, a locally-based HR consultant, and Alexa Vernon, who is Visitor Experience Manager at Fountains Abbey. Both introduced themselves to the meeting.

As no alternative nominations were received, a block vote to appoint David Thelwall, Christopher Hughes, Lizzy Tyler and Alexa Vernon was proposed by Anthony Chadwick, seconded by Martin Webber, and approved by the meeting.

8. Chairman's Forum - Any Other Business

Christine Orsler said how excited she was to see the developments taking place, whilst Martin Webber proposed a vote of thanks RT and JE for their effort over the last year.

There being no further business, RT thanked everyone for attending and the meeting was closed at 20.20.

Presentation by Sue Mackay, Collections and Programming Director at the Thackray Medical Museum

A short break followed the completion of the formal business after which Sue Mackay gave an illustrated presentation. This described her journey from her time at RMT in her role as Learning and Access Manager, before moving to Keswick and her very successful efforts at taking Keswick Museum forward. From there, she discussed her next move, becoming Collections and Programming Director at Thackray Medical Museum in Leeds.

She covered exhibitions she had helped organise, as well as covering ideas and experiences she had taken with her from her time with RMT. In doing so, she noted she had completed a full circle and now returned to Yorkshire and hoped to build on relations between RMT and the Thackray Medical Museum.

Her very enthusiastic presentation was very well received by all those in attendance.