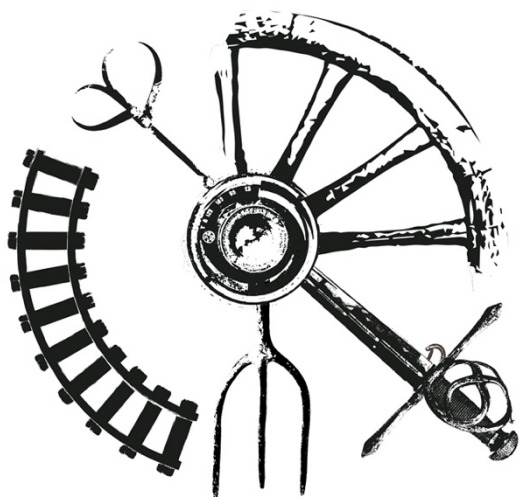




HERITAGE CENTRE BELLINGHAM

*Explore the Heritage
of the Northern Borders*

HERITAGE GROUP BELLINGHAM

MINUTES of HERITAGE CENTRE BELLINGHAM AGM

Held at the Methodist Hall, 7pm Wednesday 17 July 2024

Steve Gibbon (Chairman) opened the meeting and thanked everyone for coming.

The Agenda for the meeting would be:

- Apologies for absence
- Minutes of AGM 26th July 2023
- Chairman's Report / Trustee's Annual Report.
- Audited Accounts for 2023
- Election of Officers, Trustees and Committee.

The meeting started at 7:05pm.

Apologies for absence

Claire Craig, Stan Owen, Stuart Gordon, Clive Dalton, Maggie Mackay, Alex Richards, Ken Gaskin, Di Hutcheson, Mary Reay, Christine Wragg, Jean Turnbull, Georgina Scott, Shirley Carruthers.

Attendees

Steve Gibbon, Wesley Turnbull, Mike Gibson, Steve Herod, Pamela Mattinson, Pat Stevenson, John Stevenson, Margaret Pigg, Helen Bolton, Sue Underwood, Joanne Willoughby. Anne Galbraith, John Galbraith, Nicola Bell, Katrine Anderson, Brian Anderson, David Baines,

Terry Bragg, Pat Batey, Tracey Broadie, Maire West, Mark Watson. (22 attendees)

Minutes of AGM 2023

The Chairman asked if there were any issues arising from the minutes and whether they could be formally adopted as a record of the previous AGM. Anne Galbraith proposed them, and they were seconded by John Stevenson and thus duly accepted.

Matters Arising

None

Chairmans Report

The Chairman delivered a PowerPoint presentation which detailed 2023's facts, figures and successes, as well as challenges. He set out first a reminder of the objectives of the Heritage Centre, being to advance education of the public in the history, archaeology, geography, the environment and related aspects of the North Tyne and Redesdale valleys by management of a heritage centre in Bellingham, the provision for education, study and other suitable facilities and supporting and co-ordinating research and displays.

Key achievements in 2023 included a 3-month Exhibition at Haltwhistle, where the number of visitors was similar to those who first visited BHC when it began 30 years ago, a temporary exhibition at St. Cuthbert's, Father Christmas Grotto, LNER 100 years plus booklet, Heritage Open Days, Wood Wind and Water (including Plashetts carry over exhibition). launch of the Heritage Centre Wikipedia with much interesting material about Cruddas Terrace and over 200 biographies, Railway Carriage Enhancement, Parcel Shed Development, Digital Enhancements, particularly more screens in the centre, family centric Initiatives, collections management team's work to sort upstairs in the centre, a summer family activities week and outreach (including Haltwhistle, Redesdale, schools engagement and St Cuthbert's).

Physical Improvements include work to clear up and mount exhibitions in the Parcel Shed, refurbishments in the toilets, tidying upstairs, an upgrade to the seasonal exhibition area, and replacement of the two old carriages with the new first-class carriage which has created an excellent new environment for the Tea on the Train.

The Centre has also been mindful of its governance arrangements and can report that we received significant donations and grants including: The Rothley Trust, Museum Development and Private Donations: in August 2023 we held a Strategy Day which resulted in a new 5-year forward plan: we established a Climate Change and Environmental policy – important when seeking grants - and participated in the Museum Development Carbon Literacy Programme: and a new Trustee undertook a positive Governance Review.

The Centre is indebted to its Volunteers and Friends for their commitment. We had 10 volunteers trained as guides, two new Committee members plus one this year, one a Trustee now, three new volunteers and one retirement, and very sadly, we said goodbye to Sandra Austin. We are still in need of more volunteers. We have seen an increase in Friends' Memberships (185 members, 195 on the circulation). We are particularly indebted to Wesley Turnbull who almost single handed, managed the delivery of the new carriages, the removal of the old and the refurbishment and installation of the first new carriage. In addition, he refurbished the toilets. We also received two legacies in wills from past volunteers/Friends.

It is interesting to note the changes which have taken place over time in the profile of the customers of the Centre. At earlier times, the age profile of visitors would have been towards those who had retired, whereas now there was a greater prevalence of families visiting. Most museums see a falloff in visitors who are between late teenage years and until people had settled down and had families, and the Centre is no different in that respect.

Of course, there are challenges going forward, as we will need to seek re-accreditation during 2024/5, our volunteer numbers are critical, we need to keep Fund Raising, especially as we need funds for the delivery and installation of the second carriage, the building needs work as does the boiler, which is probably at the end of its life. Ideally we need to recruit a committee member with experience of marketing, and we need to undertake some succession planning.

Looking ahead, for 2024 and beyond, there is the installation of the second carriage to plan for, and we must deal with the second half of the Parcel Shed. We are seeking planning approval for a gable end artwork, and we must undertake further digitisation of exhibitions. We must get work underway for our re-accreditation and we will expand our outreach,

where we are already engaged with groups from WI and Rotary, and schools. We will work closely with our Redesdale links, and we will have a presence at the Elsdon and Bellingham Shows.

Our planning for future exhibitions is already well advanced. The seasonal exhibitions for 2025 will celebrate the 150th anniversary of the birth of W. P. Collier (1875-1937) and the 200th anniversary of the Stockton and Darlington Railway. For 2026, we will display the Blankenburgs photographic collection, hold an exhibition about Estate Villages: Cambo, Matfen, Simonburn, Plashetts, Reedsmouth & Riccarton, and mark the 70th anniversary of the closure of the Border Counties Railway (1862-1956), together with 100 years of Kielder Forest. For 2027, exhibitions will showcase the 120th anniversary of the opening of Barrasford Tuberculosis Sanatorium for adults (11th May 1907), the 120th anniversary of the opening of Stannington Tuberculosis Sanatorium for children (5th October 1907) and Temperance and the Band of Hope. For 2028, the themes will be Girls, Girls, Girls: Getting the vote (1928) and the 80th anniversary of Railway Nationalization (1948).

In terms of our Financial stability, we received donations, legacies & grants of £67,408, 31,587 from our trading activities, our Investment income was £1,460, and total income was £100,455 compared with £58,944 in 2022. Our total expenditure £63,396 compared with £71,938 in 2022.

We turned the corner after the disruptions of the Covid years; our footfall approached pre-pandemic levels, but trading income per head was slightly below those levels indicating people's caution about the cost of living. We maintained a healthy reserve of approximately £20,460 as of Dec. 2023, the investment in the replacement carriages was significant and higher than planned, and Tea on the Train and the carriages has taken significant investment and made a loss for the first two years – a corner we believe we turned this month.

The bottom line is that the audited accounts show total funds carried forward of £82,013. This looks a lot! But...£10,830 of grant funding is yet to be spent: £20,740 is assets and stock; we have £5,000 creditors to pay; and we have £20,460 in reserve funds. All this totals £57,030 leaving £24,983. However, from a bank balance perspective, TotT made a significant loss last year due to investment in the new carriages

and a further loss in January for the same reason but we are just about holding our own!

Steve turned next to nominations for the committee and election of officers, trustees and committee members. He informed the meeting that he was prepared to stand again as Chairman, Wesley was prepared to stand again as Vice Chairman, Katrine was prepared to stand again as Treasurer, and Stan, and Anne were prepared to stand again as Trustees. Nicola, Maire and David were prepared to stand again as committee members. With the approval of the meeting, Steve asked for a block vote for all to be confirmed in office, and this was agreed.

There were no items of any other business.

Steve expressed his thanks to all who had attended. He also recorded appreciation for all who serve as volunteers, committee members and staff in support of the Centre.

The meeting closed at 20.05, after which refreshments were served.

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