

HENFIELD PARISH COUNCIL – MUSEUM COMMITTEE

**Meeting of the Museum Committee
held on Wednesday 26th August 2020
at 2.30pm via Zoom conferencing**

PRESENT: Cllrs A Donoghue (Chairman) and J Jones (taking Minutes), Mr A Barwick (Curator), Mr R Gordon (Friends of Henfield Museum – FoHM), Mr L. Jago (FoHM).

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr S Robotham (Assistant Curator); Ms A Roberts (left the meeting at 3pm).

MINUTES

1. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

None.

2. APOLOGIES

Cllrs C Simmonds and A Sharp.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 27th MAY 2020

Approved; to be signed at a later date due to current restrictions.

The Chairman adjourned the meeting.

OPEN FORUM

There were no members of the public present.

The Chairman reconvened the meeting.

4. MATTERS ARISING

a) Noticeboard in Bus Shelter

The board had been reinstated. However, the Curator noted that the plastic “glazing” is bowed and needs refitting. He will notify the Parish Office.

b) Museum Website

Mr Gordon reported that this is now ready to launch. He will continue to add content himself, for the time being. We own the domain for five years, for a small fee. The contract with the host is for two years, after which this can be evaluated. The website will be publicised on social media, BN5 magazine and the Parish Magazine, and also to museum volunteers and FoHM and the History Group. There will be links from the Parish Council website and also from Horsham Museum. The Chairman suggested that there could be an area on the site where volunteers could sign up; Mr Gordon agreed to include this within the “Getting Involved” section. The owners of the rights to Elizabeth Robins’ archive have agreed to allow the museum to use their images; however, commercial use would require further discussion.

The Gift Shop section currently only includes a listing of items for sale; selling online is not yet possible. The Curator observed that this would be complicated because the proceeds of sales would be due to several different vendors. The Chairman agreed to research the cost of a cashless payment system.

c) Roving Table Displays

Mr Gordon would be creating a display around the Byshopp mark. A formal handover of this special object would take place once circumstances permit.

Possible locations for the display were discussed, but it appeared likely that it will have to remain in the museum until other buildings are fully open. The Curator considered that its presence would not hamper movement around the museum.

d) Borrer Letters Transcription

Mr Gordon stated that he would shortly be sending out another batch of these.

e) Publicity of Voluntary Opportunities

The Curator advised that he would be publicising the need for volunteers to help carry out the Action Plan through the website and social media, using the poster ("Your Museum Needs You") as a visual image.

5. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reported that she, the Parish Council Chairman and the Parish Clerk had met with three representatives of the Henfield Hall on 16th June 2020. They had discussed a strategy regarding the use of community buildings in the village, including that of the Hall as a centre of arts and culture. There is now a possibility that the museum may have its own representative on the Hall Management Committee. Quotes were to be obtained for an extension to the Hall, above the museum, which may lead to a grant application.

6. FORWARD PLAN FOR 2020

a) Access Database and Scanner

It was agreed to carry this item forward until Cllr Simmonds returns from holiday.

b) Museum Leaflet

It was decided that under current circumstances it would be difficult to distribute these and to wait before sending the updated version to the printer, perhaps until a "launch" event was arranged during the spring of 2021. To be carried forward to future meetings.

c) Year of Natural History

Mr Gordon reported that he has more recordings to upload to the website. He would like to encourage more community engagement in this project.

d) Agree next Action Points

It was agreed that volunteers needed to be recruited to carry out the Forward Plan. Mr Jago suggested that FoHM members could be sent a copy of the Plan and asked what they would like to work on. They could be asked to choose what they consider to be the most important objectives and whether or not they were able to work on them personally. Mr Gordon agreed that this would be helpful and that it could be done quite quickly. Mr Robotham agreed to carry out the same exercise with members of the History Group.

7. MUSEUM RE-OPENING

To review Covid-19 regulations and discuss potential re-opening.

The risk assessment carried out by the Curator and Mr Robotham had been circulated.

It was agreed that the door to the museum should remain open to ensure good ventilation, as it was not desirable to use the system which was believed to re-circulate air from the Hall. It would be preferable that volunteers and visitors were not touching the door more than necessary, and it also looked more welcoming to visitors. The Curator thought it might be necessary to provide a heater for volunteers. The revised instructions to volunteers needed to state that the door should remain open.

It was also agreed that the instructions should state that if a volunteer developed Covid-19 symptoms whilst in the museum, they should contact the Parish Office by telephone, rather than by going there in person.

Mr Gordon observed that volunteers would need to be proactive and clear with visitors as to the safety rules. The Curator stated that signage about these rules was already planned.

With regard to hygiene procedures, volunteers would be asked to wipe down surfaces at the end of their sessions. It was agreed that it would be helpful to provide them with a specific checklist of items which should and should not be wiped/sprayed.

The Chairman asked about procedures when members of the public wished to donate items to the museum. After discussion, it was agreed that potential donors be given the Curator's contact details in the first instance; this needed to be added to the instructions for volunteers.

Ms Roberts suggested that it would be helpful to contact Elaine Sansom, Museum Development Officer (South East Museum Development Programme), regarding the Recovery Grant which is currently available; the closing date for applications is 15th September at 12 noon. It might be possible to obtain a grant towards the resources required in order to re-open safely. Mr Gordon enquired whether this fund might also pay for a programme of photogrammetry. Ms Roberts considered it preferable to focus on re-opening, rather than ask for a grant for two projects in one application, but that Ms Sansom could advise on this. It was agreed to focus on the re-opening project for the time being. (Ms Roberts left the meeting at this point.)

Following a discussion, it was agreed that the Curator would send out the new instructions and ask volunteers whether they were willing to return to duty. He would conduct 1:1 training about the new procedures in the museum itself. Opening days and hours might need to be modified, depending on the number of volunteers available, and to allow time for additional cleaning. The Curator would discuss the handling of the A-frame and notices with the Clerk, as the Parish Office staff would be responsible for putting these outside.

The Chairman advised that the risk assessment should be placed on the Parish Council website, together with an indication of the opening date. This date would depend upon the trained volunteers and the necessary equipment and cleaning materials being in place. The Clerk was ordering cleaning materials for the Parish Office, and those for the museum could be added to the list. The Curator believed that the plastic screen would cost approximately £60, but he did not yet know what its delivery date would be. It was agreed that the necessary items should be purchased and an application made for the Recovery Grant for reimbursement of the costs. The provisional date for re-opening was agreed as Monday 14th September; this would be a "soft" opening to give volunteers time to become accustomed to new procedures.

8. CURATOR'S REPORT

a) Acquisitions

The report had been circulated prior to the meeting. The Committee approved all acquisitions listed.

b) Disposals

Mr Robotham reported that he had sent a list of items to the Sussex Museums Group, and was awaiting responses. The Chairman asked whether previous batches of items, which had not been disposed of after completing all the protocols, could now be put up for sale, to raise funds for the museum. Mr Gordon commented that it would need to be made very clear why any such items were being sold. It was agreed that these could be offered to FoHM, advertised online or placed for auction at a jumble sale (once these had resumed).

c) Review of Policies

i) Emergency Plan

The Curator reported that he had discussed the Parish Council's responsibilities with the Clerk. He was awaiting confirmation from the Henfield Hall Steward that Hall responsibilities were being carried out. The Chairman suggested that the Curator ask the Clerk to write to the Hall Management Committee with this request. The Curator also reported that he had confirmed with all named helpers that they were willing to continue in their roles. He would send the final copy of the Plan to all parties, once the necessary confirmations had been received from the Hall.

ii) Instructions to Volunteers

These had been superseded by the latest instructions, which included Covid-19 procedures.

9. FRIENDS OF HENFIELD MUSEUM – REPORT FROM ROB GORDON

The Henfield Heritage Trails, the River Trail and Commons Trail had been launched on the Hidden Henfield website. Leaflets had also been prepared, although it was not currently clear how these might be distributed. Mr Gordon was working on another point for Sandy Lane. The next trail would be to the north-east of Henfield, including Ewhurst and Shermanbury.

Mr Gordon was also working on various articles for the local magazines. Posts on social media were receiving pleasing levels of attention. The Friends were not having physical meetings, but some members were following on social media and newsletters were being sent out. The AGM had been postponed until early 2021. Nine of the Wade watercolours had now been restored and it would be possible to use one as an additional Christmas card design; the Chairman suggested that this might be a good project for a volunteer. Some background work was still being done on the oral history project. Mr Jago commented that it was still possible to raise funds by selling books through Peter Bates.

10. FINANCIAL REPORT – REPORT FROM THE CLERK

Progress Report – 2020/21

Donations of £20 and proceeds of book sales were £15. No expenditure had yet been incurred. The annual inspection would need to be paid for shortly.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Curator commented that there were several blanks on the Museum section of the Parish Council website. The Chairman replied that she and Cllr Jones would now be arranging for there to be links from there to the museum's own website. Such items as agendas, minutes and policies would remain on the Parish Council site, perhaps with a

“What’s On” section. Mr Barwick agreed to provide some appropriate wording. Mr Gordon has already linked the museum site to the Parish Council website.

Mr Jago asked whether the interactive map in the Hall car park would inform visitors that the museum was nearby. Cllr Jones understood that the touch screen facility was not currently working, but agreed that once such restrictions were lifted, it should be possible to ensure that the museum website was accessible from the map.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 25th November 2020 at 7pm via Zoom conferencing – note the return to evening meetings.

Meeting closed 4.58pm.