

HASTINGS AND ST LEONARDS MUSEUM ASSOCIATION

Minutes of the AGM held on Sunday 3rd December 2023

Present: 22 members

1. Apologies for absence:

Lin and John Westcott, Peter and Jenny Wiles, Lucy Armitage, Ken Palen, Tony Hardiment, Richard Collison, Alice Roberts-Pratt, Caf Feane and Jim Breeds

2. Minutes of 2022 AGM:

Agreed as correct (proposed by Eve Montgomery and seconded by Nigel Sinden)

3. Matters arising:

- a) Eve Montgomery asked for an update on the Went Tree Trust. Susannah replied that she had recently spoken to Catherine Harvey and she had said that a meeting is to be held soon to sort out the remaining funds.
- b) Eve suggested an amendment to the Association constitution to remove members who are not viable or existent as there have been a number of life members who we have not been able to contact for some time. Dee Daly suggested that details should appear on the Annual Accounts to make the position clear. Richard agreed to follow this up.
- c) Eve asked if the SumUp card reader has a facility for blind people to use the machine. Dee said she would check to make sure it was compliant.

4. Annual reports and accounts:

The full report is available below.

- a) Chair: Richard explained that the property which has been left to the Association as part of the bequest may be sold to Hastings Borough Council's Housing Company for social housing rather than be sold on the open market.
 - 1.) The Association offered £3000 to the museum last year to spend on their shopping list but only £600 has so far been spent. The museum card reader has arrived but is not yet installed as HBC protocols have held up the process. It has not yet been paid for. The museum has ordered a new 'Welcome' sign, to which the Association has offered to contribute half the cost. The Association has also agreed to pay for a Christmas tree in the museum this year as HBC is not supplying one.
 - 2.) Community members are due to be appointed to the HBC Museum Committee in the near future, replacing some councillor members. Andy Batsford said that there would be an update at the next committee meeting in the new year.
 - 3.) Steve Peak had bought the 1859 John Laing map at an online auction which is of great significance for Hastings. The Association has offered to contribute to the cost.
 - 4.) The Association paid for the repair of a painting in the possession of the museum recently.

b) Treasurer's Report:

The full report is available on the Association website

Dee introduced the Annual Report, which has been audited very efficiently by Laura at HVA.

1.) Dee said that more money needs to be given to the museum in the next year as this is the prime reason for the existence of the Association. There have been some issues with dealing with the HBC finance department. Cllr Andy Batsford was asked if he could help improve the process and communication with finance so the Association can pay for items more quickly and easily.

2.) The SumUp card machine has been a great help for raising money at events throughout the last year. The small fee for use of the machine has paid for itself multiple times.

There was a vote of thanks to Dee for all her hard work throughout the year and in producing the accounts. The report was fully accepted. Proposed by Sue Fellows and seconded by Bill Montgomery.

c) Membership Secretary:

Richard Street reported that there were currently 103 members of the Association, 78 life members and 25 annual members. 5 members who did not pay last year have just renewed. He said it would be good to welcome more members in the coming year, especially younger members.

d) Secretary and Events Report:

The full report is available below. Susannah put forward some of the ideas for future events, both at the museum and outside. She said that she was pleased that a number of events over the past year had been in collaboration with other groups, such as the RNLI and Commonwealth War Graves Foundation. This has brought both financial and community benefits as well as providing some interesting talks and outside visits. Ken Palen has been helping with advertising events on local news websites and to local organisations.

There was a vote of thanks to Susannah and Ken for helping to organise and publicise the events.

5. Election of President: Brion Purdey was elected unopposed for another year.

6. Election of Vice-President: As Chair of the HBC Museum Committee, Cllr Batsford fills this role automatically.

Election of officers:

- a) Chair: Richard Street
- b) Treasurer: Dee Daly
- c) Secretary: Susannah Farley-Green
- d) Events: Susannah Farley-Green, Ken Palen
- e) Membership: Richard Street

f) Auditor: Hastings Voluntary Action (HVA)

All were re-elected unopposed.

7. Election of Executive Committee:

Steve Peak, Andre Palfrey-Martin, Hilda Kean, Bill Montgomery and Ken Palen

8. Election of representatives to the Hastings Borough Council Museum Committee:

Richard Street (ex officio as chair), Hilda Kean, Steve Peak, Susannah Farley-Green and Andre Palfrey-Martin

All of the above proposed enbloc by Sue Fellows and Dee Daly

9. Museum Report, including proposed purchases:

As Alice and Caf had given their apologies for the meeting, Richard summarised Alice's report which is available below. Cllr Batsford added his comments. He thanked the museum staff for being so helpful and hardworking following Damien's departure at the end of 2022. The National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) Award had been a great achievement and accolade to all staff and their community outreach work had been pioneering.

He reported that Adam Wide, a locally based authority on museums and other cultural organisations, has offered to work with the museum on finding new funding streams and ideas for raising revenue. There will be no cuts to the museum budget in next budget but it was expected that improvements would be made in raising revenue through shop sales and function bookings in the next financial year.

Hilda Kean thanked Andy Batsford and Nigel Sinden for their support for the museum through the HBC Museum Committee. She said that all members of that committee should be passionate supporters of the museum and its staff.

Andre Palfrey-Martin said that Alice Roberts-Pratt had been most helpful in encouraging the work of museum volunteers and staff. Her guidance to all has been very strong during difficult times.

There was a vote of thanks to all museum staff from all present at the meeting.

10: Any Other Business:

Richard read out some thoughts from Caf Feane who was unable to deliver her presentation. She would like to meet with Association members some time early next year to discuss the ideas for the future of the museum outlined. Copies below.

Item 4a. ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Another year has passed. It seems that each year passes faster than the one before or is that just a sign that we're getting older?

Your committee has met 5 times so far this year and will have met once more by the time you read this. We are pleased that one or more of the Museum's staff has attended each

one to keep us up-to-date with what's happening at the Museum and seek our thoughts and suggestions.

As you will recall, Damian Etheraads left last December and his role as Senior Curator was taken by Alice Roberts-Pratt after a few months' delay. We'll leave Alice to cover the Museum's activities in her separate report.

In December, we learned of a bequest to the Association by a local man. We emailed the Council's Chief Legal Officer to be told that this was not true and it has been left to the Council for the benefit of the Museum. After 10 months of disputing the Legal Officer's view with fantastic pro bono support from Michael Foster (solicitor and former MP), we have finally reached the point where we have agreed that the funds from the bequest once realised will be placed in a discrete bank account held by the Council in its role as trustee which can only be used to the benefit of the Museum's collections. Our major concern was that, given the Council's well-publicised financial difficulties, they might use the money to help support their budget.

Early in the year, we agreed to purchase a card reader for the Association so that people could pay for events and membership and make donations using their bank card. This has proved very successful with a comparatively small fee being taken by the provider, SumUp. A similar machine for the museum that we paid for following last year's AGM has not yet been brought into use due to technical complications.

A proposal to diversify the membership of the HBC Museum Committee (which was mentioned at last year's AGM) by including community members as well as councillors and Association representatives to meet grant application requirements has made little progress following the staffing changes at the Museum.

We agreed to cover the £170 costs of restoring a damaged painting and also to pay towards the cost of purchasing the John Laing 1859 Hastings Council map for the Museum.

At the October meeting of the HBC Museum Committee, we were informed that all future meetings of the committee would be formal meetings bringing an end to the nonsense of having two of the four meetings a year as "informal" meetings with no minutes of official record made of discussions and any decisions having to wait three months for the next "formal" meeting to be implemented. Your representatives have been arguing for this for several years so it shows that persistence can work.

4d Secretary and Events Report 2023

This year has been a very active one for our members and supporters with a number of well attended talks and visits to local places of interest.

In March we enjoyed a fascinating and well-attended talk at the museum by Haydon Luke, the Fairlight-based historian about the history of Fairlight Radar Station and the important part it played during WW2 and the Cold War.

At the end of April, we held an interesting talk at the Church of the Holy Spirit at Rye Harbour, given by Martin and KT Bruce from Rye Harbour RNLI. As part of our visit, we also learnt about the story behind the Mary Stanford Memorial in the cemetery and walked to the harbour afterwards to view the painted pebbles memorial next to the lifeboat station. Proceeds from the event were shared between the Museum Association and Rye Harbour RNLI.

In May, Trevor Hopper led an interesting Robert Tressell (Noonan) walk around Hastings, looking at the sites connected with Tressell and scenes from 'The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists'. This was very well attended and kept us all fit as we negotiated the many twittens and steps between Queens Road and the West Hill.

Brion and Marion Purdey gave us a fascinating tour of Rye, Rye Town Museum and the Ypres Tower Museum in June, on a very warm and busy day, mingling with many tourists and negotiating the cobbled streets.

For our July event we experienced very damp weather on a guided tour of St Andrews Church at Fairlight and its fascinating graveyard. Some climbed the tower though the views were rather restricted given the weather. Our expert guide, Paul Draper, and the Priest in Charge, Sandi Wickens, made us very welcome and provided hot drinks to help us to dry out in the church after getting soaked. Attendance was limited for understandable reasons but we were able to make a small donation to St Andrews Church Tower Fund.

On September 2nd we returned to the museum for an excellent talk about the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and their work, both locally and internationally, given by Dave Hatherall from the Commonwealth War Graves Foundation, the educational department of the CWGC. On 1st October we followed the talk by a well-attended and interesting guided visit to the CWGC graves and monuments in Hastings Cemetery, given by local CWGF guide, Martin Barry. As a result of these two events, we were able to make a generous donation to the CWGF and they have written us a thank you letter which we can be proud of.

Suggestions for 2024 events

Talks

Haydon Luke on smuggling and/or Fairlight and its ancient history

Phil Hadland and Lynn Cornwell on 'Piltdown and other hoaxes' and a 'hands on' session about interesting archaeological 'finds'

Stuart Conquest, Chess Grandmaster, on the Hasting International Chess Congress and its history

Kevin Boorman on the history of local railways

Hastings Bomb maps

The history of Hastings and St Leonards hospitals

Guided visits

Small-group tours of The Mermaid Inn, Rye

Talk and tour in Alexandra Park and a visit to the restored greenhouse

The Brede Giants and the nuclear bunker

The British Gypsum Mines
Church in the Wood and cemetery
Tressell Walk Part 2
History of St Leonards guided walk

If you have other ideas, we would very much like to hear about them.

Finally, a thank you to your committee members and representatives on the HBC Committee who have all worked hard to ensure the Association continues to function and provide interesting, informative events as well as overseeing the work of the wonderful staff at Hastings Museum & Art Gallery.

9. Museum 2023 Report

It has been a steep learning curve in the year since Damian left the museum, I want to thank you all for your continued support and patience while I find my feet in my new role. I have appreciated your support, friendship, enthusiasm, and advice and look forward to continuing our journey together.

A lot has happened this year the highlight being awarded National Portfolio Organisation status by the Arts Council, but here is a summary:

Visitor Numbers to date: 15,942.24

Target: 11,000.00

Income to date: 43,357.84

We have had approximately 14 weddings this year as well as other hires and events. We finally installed our coffee machine which is already paying for itself.

Exhibitions

Hastings Open closed 15 January 2023. We received over 400 entries totalling some 1100 art works. 84 works made the final show. Submission to the Hastings Open 2022 exhibition generated £4,500 in entry fees. The exhibition featured paintings, drawings, prints, photographs, films, sculptures and illustrations by UK-based artists– many of them living and working locally. We would like to thank the judges, Angela Childs, Ellen Prebble, Euan Roberts, Fiona Denning, Kenton Lowe, Laetitia Yhap and Patricia Finnegan for their help and support. The next Hastings Open is tentatively programmed for autumn 2024.

Donations: The Went Tree Trust opened on 31 January. The exhibition showcases some of the significant and lesser-known objects and collections donated to the museum by the Went Tree Trust. Alderman Tree was Mayor of Hastings four times between 1891 and 1904. When he died in 1927 at the age of 82 he left a trust fund to buy objects for the museum collection. The significant collections include the Tressell collection, Burton collection, Baird collection, Badham collection, Taylor collection and the Windycroft collection. We also include our JMW Turner painting. The exhibition has been well received and it has given

visitors the chance to see some of our local history that has either never been on display or very rarely. This was publicly opened by the mayor on 24th February, and the story was covered by the Hastings Observer.

. Two loaned-in touring exhibitions were held over the summer which were Brick by Brick and Mythomania.

Brick by Brick featured work by international artists, designers and photographers who use LEGO® bricks as their medium. This family friendly exhibition offered a range of opportunities for visitors to get creative with construction bricks and includes a LEGO® wall. This exhibition as well as the mini figure trail attracted 500 people per day during the Easter Holidays.

Mythomania, featured works by Canadian artist Ian Kirkpatrick who uses graphic design software to produce intricate 2D and 3D artworks out of materials including stainless steel, vinyl, corrugated cardboard, Perspex and Dibond. The surfaces of his pieces are filled with complex iconographies drawn from past and present, remixed into commentaries about pressing social themes such as war, climate change and migration.

Stored out of Sight

16 September – 30 December Stored Out of Sight is an exhibition focused on revealing hidden disability history from the collection. The exhibition has been co-produced by seven people who are D/deaf, Disabled or Neurodivergent. These group members have researched and discussed objects from the collection throughout the year, and their work has culminated in the exhibition that highlights disabled people, although often not thought of, have always been part of history.

The exhibition also highlights disability activism in the 90s and the importance of fairer representation today. Without this movement, Disability would still be seen in the medical model, and change would not have been as fast-moving or as impactful as it has.

Coming up in 2024

The Ellen Prebble Exhibition

This is the first solo exhibition of work by Hastings-based artist, Ellen Prebble. The unique collection of works illuminates this emerging artist's passion for the natural world and new perspectives on the Museum's own natural history collections. Curated in partnership with Project Art Works, a supported studio based in Hastings.

Playing the Race Card

This exhibition is a highly anticipated follow up to the original Playing the Race Card exhibition at Greenhalf Studio in 2022. This open-call exhibition will be accompanied by a vibrant programme of talks, performances and workshops across Hastings, celebrating Black culture, resilience, resistance and happiness. Artists are currently being invited to respond to the theme of 'Black Joy'. Submissions close on 29 September; works will be curated externally with support from Home Live Art and the Hastings Museum & Art Gallery team.

Hastings Open 2024

Walkway past, current and next.

Photographs of a Victorian Voyage, curated by Sarah French, closed 29 January 2023. Sarah gave two tours as part of the exhibition programming.

11 Feb – 12 March is Old Town & Beyond, featuring oils and watercolours by local artist and art teacher Mike Funnell.

18 March – Thom Kofoed 'Why I long to be a Sex Symbol'

18 June – Photographs by Nour Al Din Al Azou – Portraits of the Dove Café

22 September – 29 October – Oneiropraxis

7 November – 7 January Fossil Finder in us all

In addition to the temporary displays and installations mentioned above there have also been a number of others around the museum. These include the Hastings Week display – female chess players, Pier 150, 'Object', Issam Kourbaj's Imploded, burnt, turned to ash, Crowley's Curse, Jack in the Green 40.

Coming up in 2024 – Hastings Music Festival, John Logie Baird anniversary, RNLI anniversary, Gansey installation, Artists in Residence, Sussex Bonfires.

Events programme.

Hastings Week talks

Highlights tours

Family Trails

Starlings Music Group

Make and takes

Planetarium

Lego Labs

Relics Roadshow

Room 101

Dinosaurs in our storeroom

Yoga at the museum

Christmas Fair

Homework Club

Museum Book exchange

Queer History Trail launch

Ghost Hunting

Jack in the Green talk

Giant building workshop

May Pole dancing and talk

Dead Zoo

Sanctuary Festival

Christmas Fair

Film showing for Black History Month

Trans Pride

Sound Baths

Story Telling Festival

Embroidery drop in

To name but a few!

Plaines Gallery reopened in July. Gallery now fully interpreted, more objects out on display, The space is now working as a gallery again rather than a space left from a repacking project, previously objects in there had no labels and we now represent more First Nations rather than just the Plains tribes.

Schools and learning

In July we sadly said goodbye to Foteini who we can all agree put in a huge amount of work in developing a solid schools offer. In September we welcomed Asten who has already made a huge impact and is developing the learning offer further.

Volunteering

Our volunteers have completed over 1000 hours of volunteering. We continue to be grateful to our volunteers for all their help. Tasks have included Local Studies Room, auditing of fine art boxes and ceramics, postcards and photographs, gallery invigilation, exhibition installation, helping with disposals to name but a few.

Building

Security improvements to various doors - Quote only

Fit bars to exterior of higher-level windows to Brassey Lobby / Durbar Hall - Quote only

Repair of powered high-level window

Brassey Lobby external rendering repair

Repair/replace two exterior security lights

Security shutters for gift shop & lower walkway - quote only

Durbar Hall locks - quote only

Weeds cleared from the main flat roof of the museum and chimneys

Gas safety inspection and boiler service, including safety valve check.

Lower walkway interior downpipe repair

Local Studies lighting replacement with LED

Kitchen floor vinyl replacement

New key safe mounted to wall in office

Loose rubber strips on stairs replaced

Lower walkway rain downpipe leak repair

Painting of putty on ground floor windows following replacement with laminated glass

Removal of corroded and dangerous lanterns from front entrance

Repair to lead flashing on west side of gallery roof

Thorough weeding /vegetation removal of roof of Durbar Hall

Repair to office door closer

Southern Lightning system upgrade works

Security bars added to upper windows of Durbar Hall

Digilock added to ground floor kitchen door

Main front staircase stair tread strips replaced

Grounds maintenance – thorough vegetation clearance

Vegetation cleared from Durbar and flat roofs

Replacement or reinforcement of Store, Education Office, Roof and Ceramics Balcony doors

Extension of disabled access ramp at front of museum kerbside

Remedial electrical works to bring current install up to standard based on Electrical

Installation Condition report

There are also ongoing issues with water ingress via the roof of the Durbar Hall. A contractor has been engaged by Mike Courtnege, HBC Principal Building Surveyor, who is advising and overseeing the work on this issue.

Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund

The project came to an end at the end of September, the team worked with community groups including D/deaf and Disabled, Home Education, LGBTQIA+, People seeking sanctuary.

Some of the amazing outputs include the Queer History trail around the museum, the Stored out of Sight exhibition, Portraits of the Dove Café exhibition and a new archaeology workshop for Home Education.

NPO allows us to continue the work with these communities as well as expanding our reach into deprived areas and addressing the climate crisis as well as a huge amount of work around Collections Access and the Governance of our museum to include community members. Money has been allocated and the projects are underway, we look forward to some incredible outputs including amazing exhibitions and programming from our groups.

Acquisitions

HASMG:2022.47 – Jackie and the Queens photographs and placard from Jack in the Green

HASMG:2022.48 – Digital photographs of the Gay Bogies

HASMG:2023.3 May Queen Crown from 90th May Queen Crowning

HASMG.2023.2 Local folk musician Barry Dransfield folk art doll and portrait

HASMG.2023.2.1

Loans

Laetitia Yhap, The Boat, Oil on board, 1987 (HASM:1991.62) For an exhibition: Sussex Landscape: Chalk, Wood and Water at Pallant House Gallery, 8-9 North Pallant, Chichester, PO19 1TJ. 12 November 2022 – 23 April 2023.

Request from National Gallery Thérèse Lessore, The Dare-Devils, oil on canvas, 91.4 x 71.1 cm. Discover Degas and Miss La La at the Cirque Fernando, to be held at the National Gallery, London from 6 June – 1 September 2024

Sainsbury Centre Norwich Museum – Native North American Art exhibition to be open in Spring 2024 with the Cherokee/Choctaw artist Jeffrey Gibson.

Barbara Bodichon – Tate Britain 2024 – Women Artists

10. Future Proofing the Museum – Caf Fean

In the New Year I would love to meet with you all in a room, (a warm room), where we can discuss an evolving topic – Future-proofing the Museum.

I want to know from you, what a Community Museum is, could be, and should be.

How do we tackle important topics that have always been important, but are becoming ever-more urgent:

- Incorporating climate change
- Social justice
- Supporting and enabling different protected groups to access collections and make a meaningful connection with the history of Hastings and the surrounding area
- Who is missing?
- How do we get more people in & out through the doors?

In conversations with the Museum Association representatives I have met thus far, there is a feeling that it is important not to forget where it all came from: and to bring to life the local history stories that are so unique to this place.

How do we move forward together, and what is the best way of staying in touch?
