



Kent Museums Group
Protecting Kent's Heritage

Minutes of the 2013 Annual General Meeting
held at Rochester Guildhall Museum on 7th March 2014

Present: Chair & Secretary: J Harrison; S Corn, C Boxer, T Hill, M Thomsett, J Ricketts, J Scott, P Divall, D Boston, J Carruthers, S Mahood, R Huxley, S Huxley, S Lace, L Palmer, L Case, C Reader.

1. Apologies:

C Griffiths, J Adamson, K Chaney, R Morley, A Boxall, J Fryer, D Wills, R O'Brien.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting & matters arising

Minutes of the general meeting at Fleur de Lis Heritage Centre on 23rd September 2013 were approved.

Andrew Freeman from Rochester Guildhall Museum had reported back on confirmed call status for fire alarms following a meeting with Kent Fire & Rescue Service. Despite a sympathetic hearing from the KFRS, they are unable to attend fire alarms unless they receive confirmation that the alarm is not a false alarm. Their priority is always risk to life not to historic buildings or collections.

C Boxer noted that alarm batteries only have a relatively short life without power to recharge, and recent flooding had disrupted power to the alarms in Woodchurch; the battery drained and failed leading to a false alarm – something to be aware of if there is a power cut of more than a few hours!

3. Accounts for period 1st November 2012 – 31st October 2013

Accounts for the above period were circulated prior to the meeting (below) and JH reported there was a small loss of £3.00 on the year's financial activity – due in part to a drop in membership renewals.

Statements of Accounts 2012 - 2013

Opening balance at 1st November 2012 £3951-85

Income

Subscriptions £350-00

Expenditure

Lecture fee £210-00

Refreshments (2 events) £128-00

Subs to Kent History Fed £15-00

Sub-total £353-00

Closing balance at 31st October 2013 £3948-85

Totals £4301-85

£4301-85

Our Treasurer noted that some correspondence was still being sent to his old address, mainly from larger organizations; his new address is on the Invoice. Also, that some payments are sent without any indication of the museum to which it relates [JH will embolden the current request on the subs invoice].

4. Chairman's Address

JH gave a short address: It is clear that KMG is financially secure especially now that 99% of members' paperwork is delivered electronically, so reducing sizeable postage and photocopying costs. However, there seems to have been a dip in membership renewals last year and I query why this might be so (beyond the usual forgetfulness) – certain speakers' topics attract some members whilst some are deterred, but are we 'trained out', or is a more demanding round of Accreditation making it difficult for people to find time to attend. Any comments would be welcome as we aim to provide useful meetings for the sector.

External support in Kent & Medway is at a high, perhaps its highest – we have a full time MDO who has been able to spend more time visiting and helping individual museums; the Development Service has managed to retain local control and delivery rather than being drawn into wide SE priorities and delivery, something that hadn't worked as well in Kent & Medway due to the differing nature of museums in this part of the SE Region; and the 'micro-consultancy' steered by Sarah means that museums who receive help from a consultant are more likely to get good 'after-sales' service from a local provider, rather than much larger, high quality consultancies delivering their help from as far as Edinburgh who are then unable to 'pop in' and see how things are going 6 months after the project. In general terms, the Museum Development Service has matured after many years of navigating shifting sands, and – in Kent & Medway – is now delivering a much more suitable and effective service.

Smaller volunteer-run museums without salary overheads have been largely recession proof over the last four years or so and the current climate of very proactive support for those working towards Accreditation (at least) means that there is little stopping smaller museums taking some progressive steps towards improvement.

5. Elections

No nominations were received for Officer positions or for Council membership. JH noted that we do need to find at least one more Council member to replace Peter Boreham and Kim Norton, both of whom had taken early retirement.

A continuance of current Council members and Officers until the next AGM was agreed unanimously.

6. Subscriptions

JH reminded members that subs now run with the calendar year and there were a few members still hadn't renewed.

BACS payments must be communicated to David using the subs invoice so that he has details of where the payment is from.

7. 'Objects in Focus' Programme – a presentation by Sarah Mahood, The Horniman Museum

Sarah Mahood, Collections Access Officer at The Horniman Museum, explained a current programme of loans from The Horniman to other museums.

The Programme provides access to the stored collections of this large museum in order to develop access to material and develop new partnerships, whilst also lending to museum that have been unable to afford to borrow.

Objects are supplied with cases, site specific interpretive support and printing, design and printing of publicity material using borrower's corporate branding, environmental assessments and support, packing and transportation, and specialist speakers who can contribute to the promotion and understanding of the object(s). All this is FREE!! The only cost is adding the objects to your insurance for the period of the loan.

Loans are 2-3 months, with a run-in for planning, printing etc of 6 months. The programme has just over a year left to run. Go to <http://www.horniman.ac.uk/about/object-in-focus-loans> for more details or contact Sarah Mahood on smahood@horniman.ac.uk

8. MDO News

Sarah gave a short overview of the Museum Development Service (attached as pdf) and asked for feedback on what is working well so far and what can be improved. Please pass any comments to Sarah directly sarah.corn@brighton-hove.gov.uk

9. Any Other Business

JH informed members of a new MBE in our ranks – Alice Boxall has been awarded an MBE in the New Year's Honours List; many congratulations to her – a lovely commendation for her hard work!

10. Next Meeting

Thanks to Simon Lacey and his staff for provision of our meeting room and refreshments today (and congratulations on his new post as Director of the Guildhall Museum!).

Next meeting will be at **10am on 7th May at Sevenoaks Library and Museum.**

Following the AGM and business meeting, Judith Carruthers organized group discussions relating to relationships with teachers and schools. Schools, Training and Networks & Social Media groups gave the following feedback and advice in open discussion:

Schools:

- Difficult to establish relationships with teachers due to limited time on both sides
- Museum loan kits help to make contact with individual teachers
- Attending external forums e.g. LEA & curriculum development helps to network and be responsive to teachers' needs
- Direct contact with schools e.g. twilight sessions at the museum, attendance at staff meetings etc helps to delineate and shape the museum offer

- Written communication is redundant and usually 'binned' by admin staff; direct emails to individual teachers is more productive
- Museum newsletters direct to teaches also

Training:

- Support and mentoring from museum sector is vital to development of learning services in smaller museums e.g. KMLAG
- Advocacy and fundraising for these services also important e.g. from local Councillors, Rotary Clubs etc
- Training in curriculum changes
- Contacting/visiting other museums to assess their learning offer
- Internal skills audit and specific recruitment for learning

Networks & Social Media:

- Use the GEM website, especially the discussion forum (free)
- Use social media to publicise learning opportunities and events – will also help to recruit new volunteers
- Twitter needs to be a rapid response service hence is more of a commitment to run properly

Members' News

Hythe Local History Room

Due to the winter storms, the Local History Room adjoining the Library has been closed for some months. Water damage has caused the ceiling to collapse in one of the areas. It is hoped to reopen at the end of March. Meanwhile enquiries have now been dealt with, following a period of illness by the Curator, and preparations have started on a Great War Centenary exhibition as part of the Hythe Festival later this year.

Otford Heritage Centre

Otford Heritage Centre's present display is titled 'Otford before 1914'. In July we will display local WW1 artefacts including WW1 silks, letters etc. Another display - organised by the local Brownie Pack - celebrates the 100th anniversary of the Brownies.

Alison Weir visited Otford in November 2103 to give a lecture on Richard III and will return with another fascinating lecture in December 2014. We are taking part in the Historical Societies Fair in Sevenoaks Library in March

Visitor numbers were down slightly last year but we hope they will improve this year. The refurbishment of the display cases has been completed and re-arranged, giving a different aspect to the Centre.

The local cubs have recently visited the centre and we hope the local schools will return after enjoying their visits in 2013.

Fleur-de-Lis Museum, Faversham

Visitor numbers to date in 2014 are 40% up on last year. Welcome news after a static year in 2013! Gallery Exhibition visitors also improved by 30%, mainly due to an excellent display of archive material in the form of pictures, maps and small artefacts, set up by Clive Foreman.

Our accreditation process is in full swing – we were invited to apply in January for an August deadline. We are well under way, led by Clive Foreman with vital help from John.

Our new Learning Activities Manager Julie Ricketts has already carried out several projects with schools, currently concentrating on the village of Graveney.

Chart Mills

Now closed for the season, visitor numbers were well up last year, helped by group visits and special events.