

**MUSEUM MANAGEMENT JOINT WORKING PARTY held at 7.30 pm at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 28 APRIL 1998**

Present:- Councillors Mrs M R Green, D J Morson, D M Miller and G W Powers (Uttlesford Members); Ms S Kirk-Patrick, N B Newman, E Planterose and A Watson (Museum Society Representatives).

Officers in attendance:- Mrs C Allison and M T Purkiss.

**I. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE MEETING**

It was agreed that Mr N B Newman be appointed Chairman for the meeting.

**I. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The notes of the meeting of 15 January 1998 were received.

**I. REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MUSEUM SOCIETY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

Mr Newman reported on the previous meeting of the Museum Society. He stated that there had been a number of areas of concern. Firstly, work had commenced on fitting lead to the flat roof. However, neither the Curator nor the Museum Society had been given prior notice of this work. Concern had also been expressed at proposals to undertake alterations to the property next door to the Curator's house. The Curator would arrange to inspect the plans at the Town Council offices and Mr Newman would make arrangements to discuss the proposals with the neighbour's architect. Additionally, there were also problems with the Curator's house and there had been some flooding in the basement. It was understood that the Council had undertaken to implement a survey of the property. However, this had been delayed following the recent departure of the Development Officer. The Working Party were concerned that this work should be undertaken as soon as possible and asked the Committee and PR Manager to forward these comments to the Council's Property Services Manager.

Mr Newman reported that a new Treasurer had been appointed. He also paid tribute to the excellent work which had been carried out by Gordon Plumb. He stated that Charles Stanley and Co had been appointed as advisers on the Share Portfolio and the Town Council were the trustees of the Museum's title deeds.

Mr Newman stated that the Society had been saddened by the decision to cap the Museum's budget particularly as no prior warning had been given. Councillor Powers reported that he would be meeting with the Chief Executive on 29 April 1998 to discuss a number of matters including the funding of the Museum. He mentioned that the Council's Policy and Priorities Working Group had given the Museum a high priority in the list of services. Mr Newman stated that it was extremely important to keep all Members of the Council aware of what the Museum was achieving particularly in relation to its role in education. The Committee and PR Manager suggested that one way of achieving this would be to arrange a Member Workshop and it was felt that this would be useful particularly if it was held at the Museum and incorporated a "hands on" session.

Mr Newman stated that some concern had also been expressed at security at the Newport Depot. The Curator reported that some new fire protection alarms were being considered. Mr Newman reported that Julia Bazley had completed works on ceramics and glass. Julia was part time and she completed the work in her own time paid for directly by the Museum Society. The Museum Society had also contributed towards the new local history guide.

RECOMMENDED that arrangements be made for a Museum Workshop for Members.

**I. CURATOR'S REPORT**

Mrs Allison submitted a report on the Museum's activities for the period January to March 1998. She stated that the Museum had continued to maximise the opportunities afforded by winning one of the Museum of the Year awards. A flier had been produced with details of the exhibitions in the coming year and highlighting the winning of the award and would be widely distributed throughout the Uttlesford area and beyond.

The Curator reported on the recent "People and Parliament: the Civil War in Saffron Walden" exhibition which had closed on 22 March and on the "Edward Bawden: Designs on Life" exhibition which had opened on 10 April 1998. It was pleasing to note that there had been a long queue of families waiting to take part in the "Beastly Prints" activity on 16 April, an educational session as part of the current exhibition.

She reported on recent events and, in particular, reported that Jenny Gibsone had taken a small selection of Natural History items to the Saffron Walden Library for a half day workshop as part of the SET week 1998 (Science, Engineering and Technology week). She expressed concern that light levels in the ethnography gallery were continuing to pose a problem for the Conservation Officer and it would probably be necessary to engage the services of a lighting specialist.

School visits continued to be successful with the Ancient Egyptians still featuring heavily in the Education Officer's teaching sessions. The Museum had also attracted visits from special needs groups, which had proved very successful. This was an important part of the Museum's work, providing access and support to people of all abilities and all ages. The Curator reported on the "History Through Objects" course which the Museum had ran over a period of ten weeks on behalf of Cambridge University Board of Continuing Education. The course had proved very popular and had been fully booked. It was hoped to run a further course next year and the possibility of holding Saturday workshops was also being investigated.

The Museum had been presented with an award by the Uttlesford Access Group in recognition of provision for disabled visitors. Despite the lengthy consultation with the Town Centre Manager little progress had been made on providing new road signs. It was understood that the pavements within the town were too narrow to provide the tourist fingerposts which were a prominent feature of many other historic towns. The Working Party also considered that there was a need to provide better signs at the entrances to Saffron Walden which incorporated details of the facilities available within the town, similar to those at Thaxted and Great Dunmow.

It was noted that the security gate on the temporary exhibition gallery was now in place. A survey of the fire requirements within the Newport store had also been commissioned from one of the Museum's existing security contractors. The Curator would discuss the problem of the lack of adequate fire detection systems at the Newport site at the next Risk Management meeting.

The tapestry project was continuing, with one fragment having been prepared ready for display in the summer exhibition "Falling Apart at the Seams" and a further fragment being worked on by Gillian Holman, a qualified seamstress and Museum volunteer, under supervision at Hatfield House.

The Curator was pleased to report that Sarah Kenyon had joined the staff on 2 February 1998 as the replacement Natural Sciences Officer and she had very quickly settled in as part of the team. Maureen Evans had continued to liaise with Uttlesford Volunteer Bureau on recruiting new volunteers. Lynn Morrison and Sarah Kenyon had utilised the services for three weeks of a Prince's Trust volunteer, Stuart Crook. Claire Robinson, the MA conservation student from Durham University, who had given highly valued assistance to the Museum during her four months stay, had left at the end of January for her next placement on the Isle of Wight.

On 20 April 1998, James Everitt, from Cromer would be coming on a three month contract which was partly grant aided by SEMS, to continue the work on inputting the data on the archaeological collections which had been so ably begun by Rachel Atherton last year.

## **I. SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS**

Mr Newman raised the question of whether the Church Street and front gates should be locked to improve security and prevent the Museum grounds being misused. It was considered that, if possible, these gates should be secured and the matter would be investigated further. He also suggested that the fire brigade should be requested to undertake a further exercise at the Museum and the Curator would pursue this matter further.

## **I. LOTTERY FUNDING**

In response to a question from Councillor Mrs Green, the Curator reported that staff were investigating what facilities were most needed at the Museum to ensure that a convincing bid could be made for lottery funding in the longer term. Discussions with other interested parties would, of course, also be included in the process.

**I. NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held in early August - a date to be arranged.

The meeting ended at 9.15 pm.

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