Chairman’s Report on behalf of the Trustees

Alford Heritage Museum AGM 2022

I am pleased to report we have finally been able to get back to a more normal year and although Covid has not disappeared its effects are much more muted.

This has allowed the museum to follow a normal programme of events and enabled us to be open for the whole season from April to a normal closing time at the end of October.

Events at the museum have included a Tractor Run, a couple of fairs with another to take place next Saturday, Museum Minis which was aimed at young children, and a very successful Night at the Museum event and the return of the Hamewith concerts which were very well supported. As I previously mentioned we still have the Autumn Fair next Saturday and on Sunday 30th October the last day we are open this year we have an end of season crank up which will not only feature stationary engines but model steam engines as well.

The trustees have continued to build on the work done in 2020 and 2021 and, as well as dealing with the running of the museum and helping with the organisation of the various events, considerable time has been spent on the Business Plan and as part of this it is hoped to be in a position soon to employ architects to not only cost the repairs to the building fabric but also to look at some much needed improvements. A new guidebook for the museum has been produced as well as a spruce up of the entrance to the museum, both the outside of the porch and also the inside foyer and shop/reception. A start has been made on cataloguing the collection as currently there is no list for the contents of the museum.

To publicise the museum, we have attended Lumsden’s Mary Fair, the Castle Fraser Rally and put on a display of bygones on the NFU stand at Keith Show as well as the usual social media publicity. We also hosted an evening for the Alford Local History Group and participated in the National Doors Open Day Event in September.

Many of you will have noticed the removal of the machinery in front of the museum, some of which had been there since the museum opened, the idea is to allow different items to be displayed here, currently you may have noticed some round bales which will shortly be decorated by some of the groups in Alford. Inside the museum a certain amount of tidying up has taken place with the area round the weighbridge opened up and redundant fire hoses removed and water pipes rerouted. We also shortly expect to be losing some of the exhibits from the museum which have been on loan since the museum opened. It is likely these will be sold from the museum, this will leave us with space in the museum which will allow us to reorganise some of the other exhibits and add some new exhibits to the collection. Several items which we would previously not have had room for have already been obtained and although currently stored off site should be in the museum before it reopens next year. The new collection policy is now in place and is designed to try and ensure items added to the collection have a strong tie to the local area which will ensure over time the museum has a strong regional identity. The space created by the return of some of the items that have been on loan also opens up the possibility of bringing in exhibits for a season or two and we have made a start on this with the loan of Emily, the third scale traction engine, which has been on show this year. We have been able to obtain use the field at the rear of the museum which has been cut and tidied up so we could use it for events and although this is currently on a temporary basis, we are hoping to have a more permanent arrangement in place soon.

The change to a SCIO last year brought changes to the types of membership available with members of the community being able to join as community members which not only gives them a say in what happens at the museum but allows us to keep them informed, we now have 94 community members. The new Friends of the museum category which allows free unlimited entry to the museum has 54 members which equates to 94 adults as some are joint or family memberships.

We have been fortunate to retain our existing volunteers and have also added to this multi skilled band of people during the year and hope to have 2 regular days per week when volunteers are working in the museum over the winter.

Our volunteers are very important as they take on all the jobs in the museum, be it manning the front desk when we are open, helping at events, setting up and cleaning exhibits, gardening, cataloguing the collection, tidying, cleaning, painting and maintenance both inside and outside the museum.

We have also been fortunate to retain Lyza Riddell as the Museum Development Officer for this year and have already extended her contract for next year as well. I would like to take this opportunity to thank her for all the work she has done so far. I would also like to thank my fellow trustees for their work throughout the past year and all the volunteers as we would have got very little done without you.

It is also a good chance to thank the many companies and organisations from Alford and the surrounding area who have helped or donated items for raffles and fund-raising events during the past year.

I finished my report last year by saying we had achieved a huge amount of work in the past year, but it was but a tiny part of a much larger job and that is just as applicable today.

Can I thank you all for your support over the last year and I look forward to your support for next year and the years following.

Thomas Jackson, Chair 7 October 2022