

THE FARMLAND MUSEUM

DENNY ABBEY, ELY ROAD, WATERBEACH, CAMBRIDGE CB25
9PQ

TEL / FAX 01223 860988(Office).

info@farmlandmuseum.org.uk www.farmlandmuseum.org.uk

Report to South Cambridgeshire District Council. October 2019.

Summary of the season up to the end of September 2019:

The season for us started on Tuesday 2nd April when the doors were opened officially for the beginning of the season. Having said this, there had been a school visit prior to opening in March, and scent-works dogs session. We ran a series of well attended children's holiday activities over the Easter school holidays, and on the Easter Saturday, we hosted the English Heritage members day. On Easter Sunday there was a Dawn service attended by people from congregations of all the churches in Waterbeach and Landbeach, which was broadcast live for the second year running on BBC Radio Cambridgeshire. In August there was a late afternoon annual service to celebrate St Clare's day, organised by the 3rd Order of the Society of St Francis. In addition she was interviewed by Christopher South on the radio with someone from Stretham Pumping station. All good publicity.

The volunteers, and trustees also had two sessions at Tesco, one to attract volunteers and one to publicise the opening of the museum and attract visitors. As a direct result, we met someone who had worked at the farm, talked to Cam Conservancy about liaison with education, met the photographer for the Cambridge Independent, who subsequently ran two articles on the museum, picked up a couple of volunteers and publicised the museum. Very worthwhile.

From the beginning of the season, we introduced annual pass tickets for all, so that people could revisit as many times as they like over the following 12 months. We are now asking all pass buyers if they are willing to sign for gift aid. This seems to be working well and so far over 70% have agreed,

Throughout the season, we have had a series of well organised events:

- May 6th , early May bank holiday, visitors to the Farmland Museum celebrated its 50th birthday with a party themed day with traditional games and activities, Maypole and Molly dancing and a free piece of cake and a balloon. Afterwards there was a celebration tea for friends, funders, sponsors, volunteers, staff and Trustees. We were delighted that a good number of District Councillors were able to come to the event.
- May Bank holiday. 1940's Living History weekend with military and civilian re-enactors. Over 400 visitors over the weekend and £2800 taken in the café and museum shop.
- Father's day event with steam trains in the stone barn arranged at short notice, but a great success with good visitor numbers and good takings in the café.

The Farmland Museum's supporters, funders and partners:



ENGLISH HERITAGE



Patrons of The Farmland Museum: *Sir Hugh Duberly Esq KCVO,CBE, Lady Rosemary Hughes, John Martin CBE, Rodney Dale. The Rt Hon Lord Smith of Finsbury, Master of Pembroke College Cambridge.*

- In July, we had a great day organized for children as part of the Festival of Archaeology week. There were handling boxes, meet an archaeologist and digging in the sand organized. Unfortunately, as this day turned out to be one of the hottest of the year, we only had 36 attendees.
- August bank holiday was the Denny Time Machine, with medieval re-enactors and camp. Again a very hot time, but we had over 250 visitors over the weekend with over £1600 taken in the café and museum shop.
- 15th September, Heritage open day with a theme of People Power. Free admission event to celebrate volunteers and founders. Attendance 122.
- 27th October. Final event Halloween: Rats, Bats and Cats. This attracted 190 people and takings in the shop and café were over £900.

Also through the school holidays there have been a series of craft and activity kids clubs which have again been well attended. Handling boxes were taken to Hatley Court in Waterbeach, and we had a visit from members of the Denson Close Day Centre and Hatley Court, and three other care/ elderly homes which were very successful. We have also sent volunteers to give a number of talks to outreach groups, we are now using volunteers because of the other demands on staff time. We had a visit from the retired farmers club, which was a very interesting and informative visit for both them and us! There have also been several temporary exhibitions through the season, including Morris Dance costume dolls from the National Museum of Folklore; Merry in Maytime from the Museum of Cambridge Tracing Traditions partnership; and Eddie's, an organisation supporting people with learning disabilities based in Milton, held an Art Exhibition with their colourful works displayed in the cafeteria for June and July. Two of our volunteers, Graham and Steve, now are displaying their work which is for sale with a percentage going to the museum.

We have also manned stalls at various events during the season including a stand at Welney Wetland Trust, Ely Cathedral harvest festival and Waterbeach feast.

We have had a few school visits over the year, but as this was the first year for our new employed staff, we aim to increase these next year. We have also had several clubs and groups visit, and have started to offer guided tours and room hire which we will develop further next year.

Feedback:

There have been some very positive comments on social media and trip advisor including:

- *Excellent, but need more investment English Heritage. June 2019*
- *Re-enactment really brought it to life...Everyone very friendly. Nice little coffee shop.27 Aug 2019*
- *Excellent value for money,..good facilities...love the bookshop...Kids loved it...Farming displays outstanding...8 July 2019*
- *Great venue for a child's birthday party...Children loved outside play area...staff extremely helpful 22 June 2019.*
- *Farmland museum is great for kids 10 June 2019*

Overall our tripadvisor rating is 4.0 star, but this is based on 73 reviews over several years. This includes some 1 and 2 star historic ratings. Our ratings for this year have all been 4 and 5 star with the exception of one 3 star (average).

One of the groups that visited was the Cambridge Hard of Hearing Club. They were shown around the museum or looked at the handling boxes and were given a cream tea in the grounds. They gave us an excellent review in their magazine and also provided feedback on the hearing supports that we used.

We also worked in collaboration with the University of Cambridge for "Summer at the Museums 2019" project. This aimed to promote family events and activities over summer and provide feedback and interpretation for each participant museum. During the events measured for this project, new visitors made up 48% of all visitors, whilst 17% were on repeat passes from this year. The average spend in the café and shop was £8.80 per adult visitor.

In addition, there were exit surveys on visitors based on simple tick boxes given to every tenth visitor for two of the events, medieval days and heritage day. We also collect postcode data, but this is currently still being worked through.

Visitor numbers:

	2016	2017	2018	2019
April	865	1399	1231	1442
May	1401	1270	1225	1412
June	881	1021	774	845
July	1392	1432	1024	849
August	1878	2119	1713	1714
September	910	1025	811	765
TOTAL	7327	8266	6778	7047*

* figures for 2019 are now recorded automatically and are more accurate than previous years.

Site changes:

For this season, we have renovated the inside of the café and provided a new customer servery, installed a new kitchen fridge and a cold drinks fridge in the café. We have provided picture rails for hanging artworks from local groups or artists with a view to selling them in the café.

The education room has been redecorated and set up for corporate hire, with a volunteer setting up a new overhead projector with appropriate wiring and Wifi provision. This has had some success, but more volunteers are needed to set up and clean after use so that it does not use the valuable staff time.

We continue to work on policies and procedures, risk assessments, and accruing evidence of all we do for accreditation as well as the efficient running of the museum. We purchased a new till for the shop this year which provides invaluable data on visitor numbers and category, income, sales numbers etc. so that we can evaluate where our income comes from and how to improve what we sell and when. We want to expand this to our café for next season.

We are still working to maintain the collection and have spent the summer completing condition reports on the outside equipment, and then treating appropriately to maintain condition. During the year English Heritage have removed all archaeological collections to do a complete inventory, photograph, and store. They will send back to us for displays on the ground floor of the abbey. This has freed a lot of space for us to better use for farmland museum exhibits.

From the beginning of the season we decided to offer a full year pass for the price of the one off visit, to encourage repeat visits and increase secondary spending in the shop and cafeteria. We await the full year results, but we seem to have achieved our targets so far of a spend per visitor of greater than £2 per visit. In addition, we are now asking all tax paying visitors if they are prepared to gift aid this entry pass.

This year has seen the negotiation of a new 5 year contract with English Heritage to care take their part of the site. We now do not charge their members to come on to site if they wish to visit the Farmland Museum, but we do get a sum from EH to compensate for our work and the visitors. This amount can be renegotiated each year over the next 5 years. We have seen a significant increase in EH members visit the site over this year.

We have reviewed our paid advertising for the season and changed much more to social media and writing articles for village magazines in South Cambs. These posts have been shared well by South Cambs. D.C. and the Museums in Cambridge Partnership, which has been a very supportive group. We have however, been disappointed by the support that we have received from "Visit Cambridge and beyond", which does cost a significant amount, and have had no help with issues on their website, and we are considering whether this is worthwhile. However,

as part of this deal, it does allow us access to put leaflets in Cambridge tourist office as part of the package. Urban and Civic have been giving us valuable coverage in the quarterly magazine that they send to local residents.

We are, as ever, grateful to South Cambridge District Council for the grant that we have received this year and we are continuing to work hard to become self-sufficient. We also appreciate the coverage they have given us in their magazine this summer as part of "things to do in South Cambridgeshire".

Staffing:

This year has been an embedding process for our two part-time Museum Officer and Commercial Officer posts. For them this has been a year of fact finding and they have both done a brilliant job. We look forward to working with them in the future. This year we went from two to on museum assistants to help open up and man the shop/kiosk.

Trustees, we have been very fortunate to attract two new Trustees, Fiona and Viv, who have skills that will be a benefit to the team. In addition, we have appointed Michael Williamson, who has been the museum's Treasurer for many years, as a Trustee. I have taken over from Jane Williamson as chair of Trustees, with effect from September, and I am grateful that Jane will remain a trustee with all of her knowledge and experience.

Volunteers, we have been fortunate to attract 7 new volunteers: two of whom will cover some hours in the shop, two for the gardens and two have taken on tours as guides. We also have one who is experienced in grants and seeking funds, and she is currently spearheading our applications for access funding to improve wheelchair and disabled access.

Future:

The Trustees are holding a series of meetings in November to solidify our long term forward plan to cover 25-30 years. We will then prioritise the steps that we will need to take in our 1-3 year plan with budgeting, and the medium term plans. We will then interlink these with the English Heritage plans, and with the Waterbeach Heritage Strategy group members plans. Members of which include the Waterbeach military museum, Wicken Fen, Urban and Civic as well as County and Parish council representation.

Over the short term, we will need to recruit more volunteers to help with education, collections, manning the shop and café, cleaning and general duties

We will need to maintain our museum accreditation.

We will need to become self-sufficient, increasing our café and shop income, increasing footfall and by taking on new income generating projects (such as possible escape room) and renting out space for corporate or external use.

Arrange space for the loan punt gun and short punt that will be coming to us over winter, with redesign of the fenman hut area.

Improved signage on the A10.

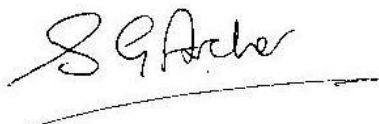
Use of buildings, such as the refectory.

Implementing more from the marketing review that was undertaken.

Increasing schools and other visits.

Refreshing displays or exhibitions to keep visitor interest.

Plus whatever else comes from the business planning process.



Signed:

S. G. Archer.
Chairman Trustees of the Farmland Museum.