



Trustees' Annual Report for the period

		Period start date			Period end date			
		Day	Month	Year	Day	Month	Year	
From		1	4	2023	To	31	3	2024

Section A Reference and administration details

Charity name

Other names charity is known by

Registered charity number (if any)

Charity's principal address

Beccles and District Museum	
Leman House, Ballygate	
Beccles, Suffolk	
Postcode	NR34 9ND

Names of the charity trustees who manage the charity

	Trustee name	Office (if any)	Dates acted if not for whole year	Name of person (or body) entitled to appoint trustee (if any)
1	Barry Darch	Chairman	Chairman until 19 June 2023	
2	Andy Lovegrove	Secretary		
3	Paul Gurbutt	Treasurer		
4	Robert Bacon			
5	Lacey Baxter	Chairman	Chairman from 19 June 2023	
6	Linda Last			
7	Jack Morris			
8	Chris Scott			

9	Richard Sword		
10	Alan Wheeler	Curator	Curator from 19 June 2023
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20			

Names of the trustees for the charity, if any, (for example, any custodian trustees)

Name	Dates acted if not for whole year

Names and addresses of advisers (Optional information)

Type of adviser	Name	Address
Museum Mentor	Heather Lomas	

Name of chief executive or names of senior staff members (Optional information)

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Section B Structure, governance and management

Description of the charity's trusts

Type of governing document (eg. trust deed, constitution)	Constitution
How the charity is constituted (eg. trust, association, company)	Trust CIO - Foundation
Trustee selection methods (eg. appointed by, elected by)	Appointed by other members of the Trust

Additional governance issues (Optional information)

You **may choose** to include additional information, where relevant, about:

- policies and procedures adopted for the induction and training of trustees;
- the charity's organisational structure and any wider network with which the charity works;
- relationship with any related parties;
- trustees' consideration of major risks and the system and procedures to manage them.

The Charity has a formal Constitution which governs how the Trust is managed. The Charity is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), accepted by the Charity Commission.

The Trustees are responsible for the strategic direction of the Trust. Day to day management is in the hands of a curator who also has the task of caring for the collection. A group of volunteers assists the curator with these tasks and where possible the volunteers will have attended suitable training as provided by SHARE Museums East.

The Museum is located in a building owned by the Townlands Charity which lets space in the building to the Museum. The Townlands Charity retains responsibility for the building and its upkeep. A member of the Townlands Charity Board (the Feoffees) is invited to attend Museum Trustee Board meetings and chooses whether to be a trustee. The current representative is James Hartley.

Beccles Town Council may nominate a representative who attends Trustee meetings and who may choose to be a trustee. In 2023/4 the representative was Cllr Philippa Drew.

The Museum is a member of the Association of Independent Museums (AIM) and the Association for Suffolk Museums (AfSM). AfSM provides assistance and advice; and our membership also

provides emergency help from Harwell Drying.

The Museum is an Arts Council Accredited Museum and as such has to meet professional standards in its policies and operating procedures covering all aspects of its management. These documents are audited as part of our accreditation application. We achieved Full Accreditation in May 2018.

The Museum has a Museum Professional Mentor, Heather Lomas, who attends Trustee meetings and provides support, help and guidance as requested.

CCTV helps keep secure the Museum's collections.

Annual training is provided for stewards to help them keep visitors and themselves safe and to make the experience of visitors as good as possible.

Copies of the Friends' Newsletter, which contains informative articles mainly related to the Museum's collections, are given to all our volunteers (as well as members of the Town Council) to keep them informed about the Museum's operation and plans for the future.

Section C Objectives and activities

Summary of the objects of the charity set out in its governing document

The Museum's objectives are to provide and maintain a collection relevant to Beccles and district for the purpose of educating and entertaining the local community in all aspects of the history and natural history of the area.

Summary of the main activities undertaken for the public benefit in relation to these objects (include within this section the statutory declaration that trustees have had

We have continued to provide help and advice on the history of the area and its people to enquirers. Typically, we receive and answer enquiries on family and local history and support other organisations, such as the Town Council and local history groups with their activities.

regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit)

The Museum has supplied images and information from its collections for local projects, including at St Michael's Church, the Broads Charity Hub at Beccles Quay and the Public Hall.

Photographs and information from the Museum's collection have been used in the media, such as in articles about special exhibitions.

Several Museum volunteers have taken part in The Helping Hands history and ghost walks which have brought nearly two hundred visitors.

Year 7 pupils at Sir John Leman High School have visited the Museum (one class per visit). Work experience students from the school have been accommodated.

In the 2023 season we provided three temporary exhibitions, which we now call 'special exhibitions'.

In 2023/4 we continued to provide material for the 'Community Museum' display cabinet in Beccles Library.

Additional details of objectives and activities (Optional information)

You **may choose** to include

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The Museum opened for the 2023 season on Saturday 1st April

further statements, where relevant, about:

- policy on grantmaking;
- policy programme related investment;
- contribution made by volunteers.

(Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday afternoons). The season ended on Tuesday 31st October

The Museum is completely run by volunteers. Stewards open the Museum to the public and assist with visitors' questions. A team of trained volunteers looks after all aspects of the Museum's day-to-day operations under the direction of the curator, including care of the collections, setting up exhibitions, managing group visits, giving talks to outside bodies, answering enquiries from the public and supporting visiting researchers.

Several new volunteers have been recruited to assist with stewarding. We are pleased to give opportunities to young people as volunteers.

We have been very pleased to welcome back as curator Alan Wheeler, who has served two terms as curator previously.

The Museum does not make grants to other organisations.

Section D

Achievements and performance

Summary of the main achievements of the charity during the year

The Museum was open for the full season. The total of visitors for the year during normal opening times was: 1284 (adults 1130, children 154). School visits comprised 209 children and 19 teachers and group visits 176 adults and 21 children. Total visitors amounted to 1709 (1325 adults and 384 children), compared with 1294 in 2022. The main increase was in the number of adult visitors during normal opening hours (up from 738 to 1130).

The museum joined other local history and heritage organisations in shaping the Town Council's History and Heritage Development Plan.

The Museum has continued to strive to safeguard the town and district's historical heritage and increase access to historical records. The Museum has received a number of donations of historic material relating to Beccles and our villages, including Brampton.

The Museum is keen that new material is made available to the public: so, for example, some of the new material relating to Elliott and Garrod featured in one of the 2023 special exhibitions.

Some updating of permanent displays has been undertaken. The Content Management System (CMS) has been updated; and storage facilities have been improved.

The curator has successfully tackled the backlog of material waiting to be accessioned. He has also photographed digitally a collection of newspapers and other material, making them more accessible. He has produced searchable indexes for names and headlines in the newspapers.

Our Museum Facebook page has been updated regularly, increasing interest in the Museum and bringing a good number of new stewards.

The Friends of the Museum subscriptions and the 100 Club income have also contributed to the Museum's solvent financial position. But we keep a close eye on expenditure and continue looking at ways to increase our income.

To increase visitor numbers, the Museum continues to look for ways to grow its public profile via talks, newspaper items and other media.

The Museum was represented at the town's annual carnival, two volunteers being dressed as Romans to publicise one of the museum's special exhibitions.

The Safeguarding Policy has been updated; and safeguarding has

been included in stewards' annual training.

In November the curator (with the help of the secretary and treasurer) completed SHARE Museums East's Organisational Health Check. The Museum has received helpful feedback and advice.

There has been a redressing of the Wash Day display in the Schoolroom. The School display cabinet has also been tidied and a few minor issues addressed. The removal of a lot of unwanted items from the loft, Curator's Office and Copier and Document rooms has taken place, creating a much tidier working environment.

We are up to date with the accessioning of items and the Collection Management System (CMS) has been tweaked in a number of areas to improve usability. Regular backups continue to be carried out. Training sessions have been run for stewards and volunteers to promote the CMS

Three special exhibitions were provided in 2023 and proved attractive to visitors. Three are planned for 2024. We supported a two-day Hospital exhibition at the Memorial Hospital. The Museum contribution and the items provided by the Friends of the Hospital will be returned to the museum and provide the focus of our 2024 season opening special exhibition. This activity has provided us with the opportunity to repaint the Medical display board in the School Room.

We were pleased that Silver Owl badges for twenty-five years of voluntary service were presented to David and Penny Lindley last autumn.

Acid-free sleeves and storage boxes have been purchased for the storage of newly accessioned material, partly funded by a grant from the Association for Suffolk Museums (AfSM). We hosted the AfSM Museums' Leaflet Exchange in March in the Town Hall. Afterwards representatives of the museums taking part in the exchange visited

the Museum.

The Museum has been pleased to work with a number of local organisations, such as the Saturday Bell Tower Team whose treasure hunt ended at the Museum. Our assistant curator produced a leaflet about the history of the Common in response to a request from a local business.

The 'Upstairs Team' of volunteers has produced research in the form of data and photographs for enquirers, such as about our straw embroidery exhibit for a textile school and details of Dr Joseph Arnold for Sydney University, Australia. Some family history information has been provided, including to visitors from abroad. The 'Upstairs Team' has also checked that a number of collections are in good order.

We have provided work experience for a group of Sir John Leman High School students who were helped to research the history of shops and industries in Beccles and to compare with the present businesses in the town.

Brief statement of the charity's policy on reserves

The Museum aims to keep reserves of two years' operating costs and we have maintained that in 2023/24.

Details of any funds materially in deficit

Further financial review details (Optional information)

You **may choose** to include additional information, where relevant about:

- the charity's principal sources of funds (including any fundraising);
- how expenditure has supported the key objectives of the charity;
- investment policy and objectives including any ethical investment policy adopted.

The Townlands Charity continues to be a major donor to the Museum, effectively covering the Museum's rent.

The Museum shop makes a useful contribution to income, including through the sale of books and booklets, many of which have drawn on the museum's collections. In 2023/24 some online sales have also been made. Historic walks and talks for various organisations have raised funds.

The Museum continues to make no admission fee in order to make the collections and its facilities as widely available as possible.

Expenditure on the presentation of displays and exhibitions and on maintaining a safe and attractive environment has supported the Museum's aim to provide a relevant and accessible collection and to educate and entertain the local community in all aspects of the area's history.

Section F Other optional information

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Section G Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature(s)	<i>B. Darch</i>	
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Full name(s)	Barry Darch	
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Position (eg Secretary, Chair, etc)	Chairman of Trustees until 19 June 2023 and Trustee thereafter	
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19 July 2024
