

BEWDLEY MUSEUM MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
REGISTERED NUMBER 527511
ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31ST MARCH 2007

Wyre Forest District Council became Trustee of The Bewdley Museum in May 1975, and operates the Museum as a local service under powers contained in the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

Bewdley Museum Management Committee is purely of an advisory status with no powers to expend money or set admission fees and is composed of Wyre Forest District Council Councillors, together with representatives of the Friends of Bewdley Museum. Non voting advisory members of the Management Committee are also appointed by Worcestershire County Council, Bewdley Town Council and The Museums, Libraries and Archives (MLA) Council, West Midlands are occasionally represented as required.

The Trustee makes acknowledgement to Wyre Forest District Council for the resources provided in operating the Museum from public funds. Since becoming Trustee in 1975, the Council has provided, from public funds, capital finance to the entire complex in the sum of £116,130 for initial work; renovation, repair and setting up the Brass Foundry purchased to enhance the objectives of the Trust with assistance from the Guild of St George; purchase of land and exhibits for a woodyard (which is not part of the Trust); replacement of paving in the old Shambles areas; and the relocation of Bewdley Tourist Information Centre in the foyer/reception area of Bewdley Museum completed in 1996/1997.

The Museum continues to support the revival of traditional and contemporary craft practices with a changing programme of courses and workshops each year.

Currently there are six resident craftspeople with studios on site, including a textile artist, a furniture maker, a fine artist, a wood turner and a ceramist/potter. All Craft Licenses were reviewed in March just prior to the opening. A French Polisher and a Contemporary Stained Glass maker have now taken up residency.

During the winter closedown period The Old Brass Foundry has undergone major internal refurbishment to the first floor funded by the Licensee, (a two year renovation programme). The workshop was opened to the public with a display of community art work, now provides further exhibition space for displaying art and media/creativity centre.

The clearing of the Air Raid Shelter and surrounding area has commenced, a Project group will now be formed to undertake research and development, due for completion early 2008.

All of the scheduled projects during the winter closedown period were completed on time to include the creation of the Wheelwright exhibition in the Shambles area, the Trow Rope interactive in the Ropewalk area, Jigsaw, Oral

History Project, Stocks and the Jail refurbishment and exhibition in partnership with the Friends of Bewdley Museum.

The upgrading of the electrics to the whole site, the roof repairs to The Old Forge and the installation of the new track lighting was all completed by mid March.

The sound boxes for the oral history project were changed for CD players with head phones to improve the sound quality.

Admissions have continued to rise. The free visitor admission provided an overwhelming total of 73,252 visitors during the season compared to 37,880 last year (an increase of 93 %).

The final Education Service figures for the season showed an increase of 28% over the previous season with 17 new enquiries from a variety of areas and Local Education Authorities (LEA's). 31% of visits came from schools and groups in the Wyre Forest area.

This continuing increase in visiting schools and groups can mainly be attributed to the re-introduction of the SVR linked programme Blitz & Evacuation, World War II evacuee activity. The majority of schools participating came in 40's style costume and were delighted with the free gas mask boxes etc. which have been included as part of the package. The other two new partnership activities with the railway – 'Town Trail' and 'River and Rail' also proved very popular with schools from as far away as Gloucester.

With the introduction of another two new Living History sessions, 'Medieval Realms' and 'Commonwealth or Country – the English Civil Wars', the time period covered for Key Stage (KS)2 History now runs from the Romans right through to the World War II, with the exception of the 18th Century Georgian period.

KS1 programmes 'Skip and Play-toys' and 'Grandma's Attic' were still popular with younger audiences. Both offer the unique chance to work with the museums' collections.

Visiting adult interest groups throughout the season included The Workers Education Association, a Railway Interest group from Redditch and the Bewdley Stroke Association group. A return outreach visit was made to this last group was made by the Education Officer who gave a short Audio Visual talk on Bewdley's history. An outreach session was also made to Cookley First School to deliver a morning assembly session once again using the museum's collection of toys.

The school loan boxes – 'Compare and Contrast', were lent out again to the local Wyre Forest Lickhill Lodge First School who were very pleased with them.

The Education Service also continued to be a recognised work experience venue for students from the local Wyre forest High schools. A Student from King Charles High School spent a varied week with the museum staff with on

site duties, educational visit observation and office duties all being included in her week. The staff received a delightfully enthusiastic 'thank you' letter from her, as a result of her experiences. Children's holiday workshops at Easter as well as those in August gained a 94% occupancy rating with an extra pottery workshop added to the advertised programme. Drop in additional brass rubbing sessions also continued to be very popular. Resident textile artist Roslyn Zalin also offered extra drop in children's lino printing sessions in her studio over those four weeks.

The Tea Shop was licensed to a local catering provider on a seasonal agreement commencing March 2006 to 31st October 2006 and also let to the same provider for the season March to October 2007. This has proved to be extremely successful and popular with Museum visitors and local people. They offer a range of freshly made sandwiches, savouries, home made cakes and cream teas and have extended their opening hours to meet our requirements. Regular meetings and reviews have taken place throughout the open season.

The Friends of Bewdley Museum have once again been very active and enthusiastic and continued to offer support in many different ways in the day to day running of the Museum. The major project for the 2006 close down period being the Jail Project whereby the Friends took an active role in the research, creation and opening of the Jail refurbishment and interpretation.

August 2005 Cabinet gave approval for the Friends of Bewdley Museum would collect the visitor donations commencing March 2006; this money would be used to fund museum projects as agreed. The Friends sponsored the first outdoor concert on the Green Theatre in July adding to the ever popular Music in the Garden programme. All concerts were very enjoyable and the Friends collected at these events to raise additional funds for the Museum.

Several donation boxes have been added to the site and designed to be interactive and with some having novelty value for the children and adults alike.

Funding of £33,500 was obtained from The Heritage Lottery Fund to carry out planning work in preparation for a further bid to HLF in mid 2007 for a development project of approximately £500,000. Match funding of £96,000 has been allocated by Wyre Forest District Council towards the project, subject to a successful HLF application.

External funding was received throughout the year; £1,000 from the Festival towards improved lighting in the Wyre Forest Gallery, £900 from The Friends of Bewdley Museum, also towards the lighting, the annual events bulletin and additional display cabinets, and £1,000 from Worcestershire Museums Association. The Friends of Bewdley Museum and Kidderminster Educational Foundation agreed to provide grants of £1,000 and £3,000 respectively, towards employing an external consultant to draw up an "Interpretative Proposal" for the development project.

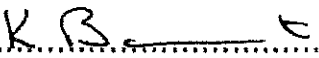
The Museum was fortunate to have the services of a volunteer for a period of 6 months between June and December 2006 as part of a New Deal initiative. WFDC applied for a New Deal Placement which carries a subsidy in return for a minimum 6 month temporary contract of employment. Stephen Knowles joined us as Assistant Technician in February 2007 for a minimum 6 month period. This additional member of the team has been invaluable offering assistance to the Museum Technician with exhibition display work and general repairs and maintenance on site. In return the post holder will learn new skills, experience and confidence to further his career.

The opening of the 2007 Season was once again brought forward to support the second discover Bewdley Weekend on 24th/25th March which was an outstanding success. Over 3,000 visitors enjoyed the new displays and exhibitions.

During the year, the Bewdley Museum Management Committee met five times to consider reports on the running of the Museum.

The Museum and Brass Foundry is now insured jointly with the Guildhall at a total value of £2.5 Million. The Exhibits and Displays are insured to a total value of £104,000.

There was no income or expenditure accruing to the Trust.

Signed: 
Keith Bannister, Head of Financial Services

Date: 26/07/07

Signed: 
Andrew Dickens, Head of Cultural, Leisure and Commercial Services

Date: 26/07/07