

Chairman's Report for the year ending 30 April 2021.

On behalf of the Trustees, it is my pleasure to report to Members of The Marlow Museum Centre Project that the museum is in good health after a very difficult year. It was immediately before the start of the museum year that the Pandemic struck the UK and things changed immediately. The museum closed from mid-March and did not reopen until 5 September 2020. That meant no income from visitors, no fund-raising events such as the Walk to the Trenches or a Bridge Evening, and no opportunity for a Street Collection. However the Government and the local Council had put in place a number of grant aid schemes which we applied for and achieved.

We reopened in September for three months, then faced closure again. All most frustrating but understandable in the Coronavirus circumstances. When we were open, we followed the rules for receiving visitors and protecting staff. During that time we were able to recruit a number of new museum Stewards who immediately proved to be useful and enabled us to remain open. We are most appreciative of the time all volunteers give to the museum and hope to have a 'thank you' tea party in the Summer.

The Marlow Museum has reached a turning point, an important and interesting period in its lifetime. On 10 February 2020 we received the news that our application to form a CIO had been accepted by the Charity Commission and the CIO had been given the Registered Charity Number 1187853. Since then we have been organising the transition between the original charity and the new CIO, which will become operational at the beginning of May 2021. In addition we decided to try to become an Accredited Museum, with a view to 'upgrading' our status in the museum world, as well as enabling us to borrow from other museums and benefit from certain grants. We applied to the Arts Council for Working Towards Accreditation status and were awarded this on 23 February 2021, with three years to complete the work necessary to apply for full Accreditation. Both these exercises are ongoing into next year and require a great deal of administrative effort.

Nevertheless the museum retains its objectives of collecting and preserving artefacts related to Marlow and District, as well as interpreting and displaying them to the public. We continue to serve not only Marlow Town but Marlow Bottom, Great Marlow, Little Marlow, Medmenham and Bisham. We also have expanded our work to reach schools and premises such as care homes. Outdoor events and attendance at local community events will resume as soon as rules and opportunities allow.

Finally, as the museum year was ending, we were kindly offered by SORBON Estates the use of 6 Liston Court for six weeks as a 'shop window' for the museum. We have temporarily installed displays which have already attracted public attention and brought visitors to the museum at Court Garden.

The next AGM will be the first of the CIO and must be held within 18 months of its Registration, on 5th August 2021. We retain the Museum's original name and its Trustees which, together with its assets, monies, artefacts and so on, we transferred to the CIO on 1st May 2021. A new and exciting year is beginning for the Marlow Museum. Cheers!

Michael Hyde, Chairman, May 2021