

HERITAGE OPEN DAYS 2023 – REPORT TO THE TOWN COUNCIL

The Town Council generously provided a grant of £2200 for Heritage Open Days 2023 and as requested here is our report on the event.

It was a great success (as evidenced by the attached message from the Mayor and her subsequent verbal report to the Town Council). There was a really positive feel around the town, even on the rather soggy Sunday. Feedback from visitors was excellent.

Approximate numbers attending our main venues were as follows:

- Abbey Buildings: Missal Exhibition – 478
- Unicorn Theatre – son et Lumiere 80 on Sunday, not counted on Saturday
- Roysse Room: Couldrey Exhibition, Quilts and Talks - 620
- Unit 24: Fab Ab Exhibition – 628
- Heritage Walks - 67

We also provided publicity for events organised by the Museum, St Helens Church and Christs Hospital and several other heritage buildings which were open on the Saturday. Visitor numbers for these were up to 500.

We underspent our budget by about £640. This was for 3 main reasons:

| | Budget | Actual | Comment |
|---|-------------|-------------|--|
| Venue hire | 500 | 209 | Reduced usage in Guildhall from 2 rooms to one. Another venue waived its charge. |
| Exhibition design, mounting and set-up costs: | 1115 | 611 | Printing costs were less than anticipated. Materials for AbFab exhibition were almost entirely donated by exhibitors and/or made using recycled exhibition boards. |
| Publicity (posters, leaflets, and magazine entries) | 400 | 693 | Additional cost for Abingdon Town Magazine entry |
| Miscellaneous/contingency | 185 | 47 | |
| Total | 2200 | 1560 | |

We will shortly be applying for a grant for this year's Heritage Open Days and would appreciate being able to retain the £640 and deduct it from the amount we are seeking.

Andrew Coker
HODs organizer

Hester Hand
Chair

Olga Senior
Treasurer

ANNEX

Letter received from the Mayor – 19 September 2023

Dear Andrew, organising team and volunteers

May I, on behalf of the Abingdon Town Council, thank you and all your team, as well as the wealth of enthusiastic volunteers and members of the local societies involved, for the tremendous Heritage Open Day weekend you organised and ran so efficiently this past weekend. I know it was greatly appreciated by all of us who live in this beautiful town, and by a fair number of visitors too. Abingdon has such a rich heritage in so many respects, and even though I was born and brought up here there is always something new to learn.

Apart from the major buildings such as the Museum, the Abbey buildings, St Helen's, Christ's hospital, the Guildhall and shop 24, whose own displays were superb, there was so much other interesting local history hidden away. So could you also please pass on my thanks to everyone in East St Helens Street who opened their homes and who also educated us all through the wealth of window displays and information they provided for individual houses. I found our first telephone exchange today. I would never have known where to look!

I thought everyone had done a magnificent job from the artists and quilters, the Missal display in the Abbey buildings, the flower arrangers, the Morris dancers, lace makers etc to those who made the notice boards and who organised and undertook the many educational walks and talks over the weekend. I was particularly pleased to see the various children's activities that you had also organised. I would have loved to have had a chance to colour in the beautiful illuminated medieval letters, and to have tried my hand at calligraphy too..maybe another time.

As I have already mentioned, there was such a wealth of knowledge, creativity and talent on display, all highlighting our wonderful town, that I would love to use some of the artefacts when we host our twin towns meeting here next year. We must also keep everything for posterity.

I look forward to hearing what the theme for next year's weekend is going to be but I am sure your volunteers will rise to the occasion once again.

So a huge thank you once again from myself, the councillors and all who work in our town council office and outside spaces

Cllr Gwyneth Lewis O.B.E.

*Mayor
Abingdon on Thames*