
THE PIT WHISTLE

The Newsletter of the Red Rose Steam Society

& The Lancashire Mining Museum

END OF YEAR REPORT - July 2018

As we reach the end of a successful year down at the museum as Site Co-Ordinator I have produced an end of year report, which I hope will give you a flavour of how the site and the society have developed over the past 18 months since it was rebranded as The Lancashire Mining Museum.

In the Pit Whistle of Spring 2017 the secretary had this to say regarding the future of the society:

Several long term members are unable to continue active participation due to health problems and some have sadly died. There are few new members joining, particularly young members. This situation is not unique to RRSS as many groups in the preservation world are seeing similar trends.

The lease on the museum site expires in 5 years' time, and a recent housing development proposal threatens to surround the museum and take some of the museum land. Grant funding bodies are reluctant to provide funding for organisations with short term occupancy of their site.

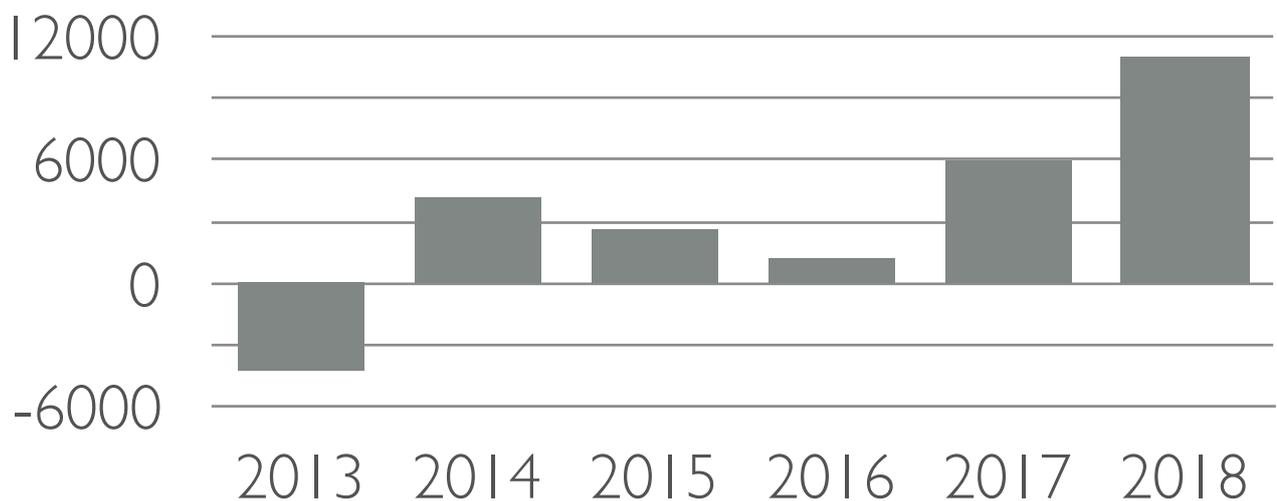
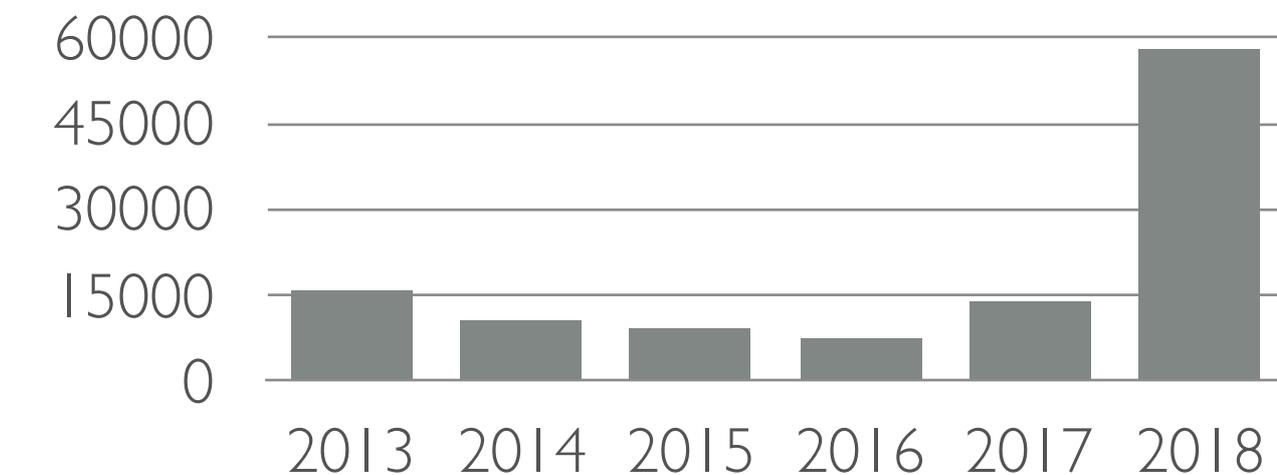
The state of the headgear is now of great concern but we do not seem to be able to attract funding for its preservation. If it was lost it would be a tragedy for the mining heritage and it would severely diminish the status of the museum

Finally, over the last 10 years the mining museums at Salford, Snibston (Leicester), Chatterley Whitfield (Stoke), and Haigh (Whitehaven) have closed. All of these had paid staff and were supported financially by local authorities and could not continue when the funding was withdrawn. It could be concluded that a coal mining museum cannot attract sufficient funding from visitors to be viable if they have paid staff. In contrast we have no paid staff and have no financial funding from the council. The downside is that progress is very slow.

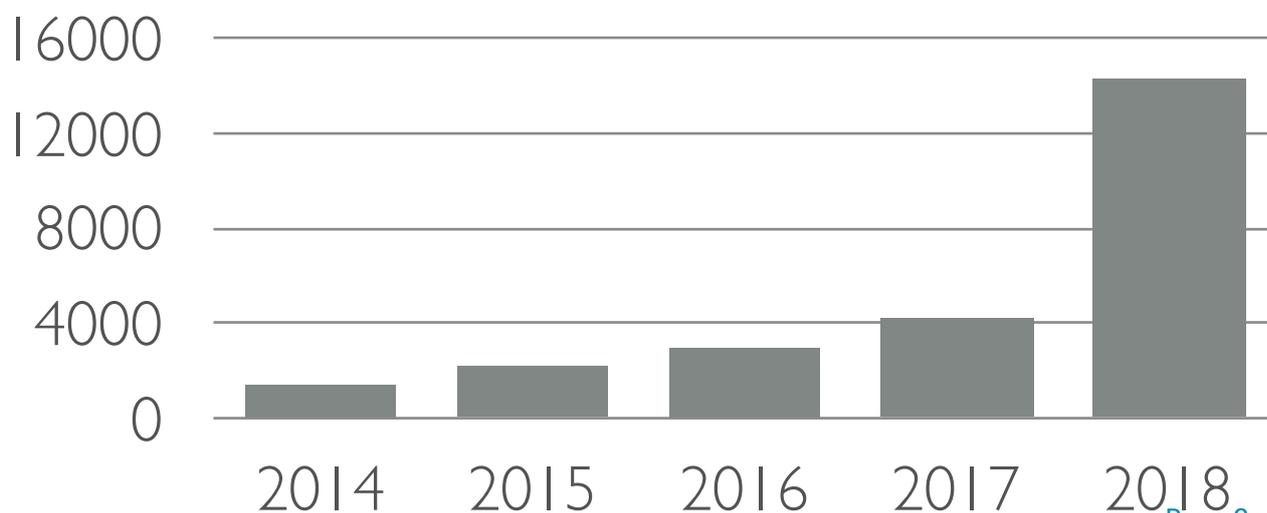
These tasks will still need more volunteers than we have at present. Even with all the restoration of all the collection finished and presented, I think that the site needs to expand and incorporate complimentary features, but not necessarily directly associated with coal mining, to be sustainable.

If we summarise the society development over the past few years, in graphical form, it is obvious the work done on site in the past 12 months and with the development of social media, all this has helped the society and museum turn the corner with regards to many of the concerns raised above.

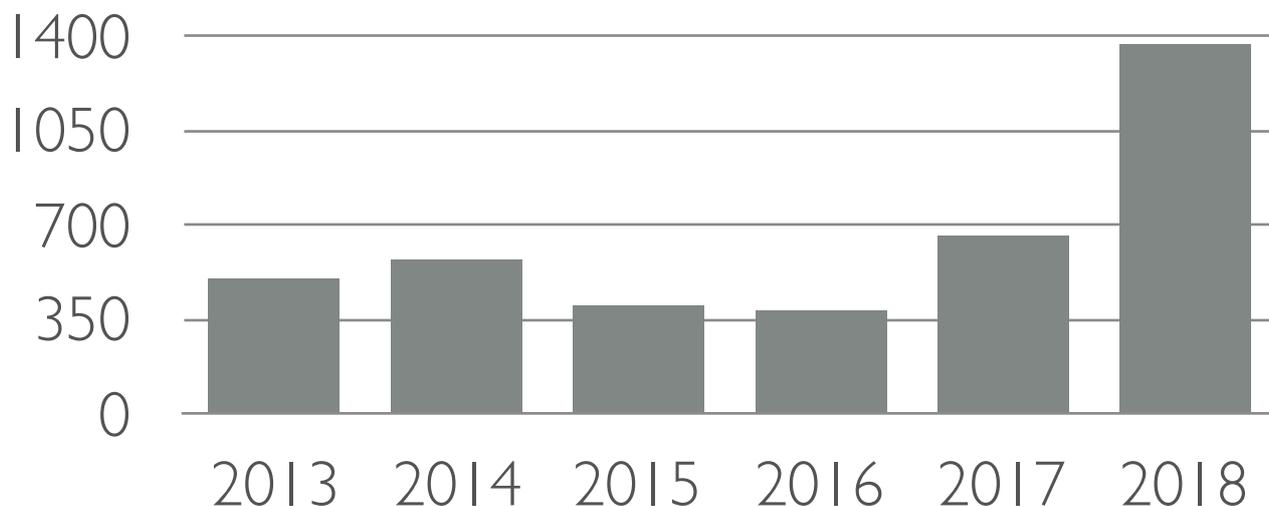
TURNOVER & PROFIT



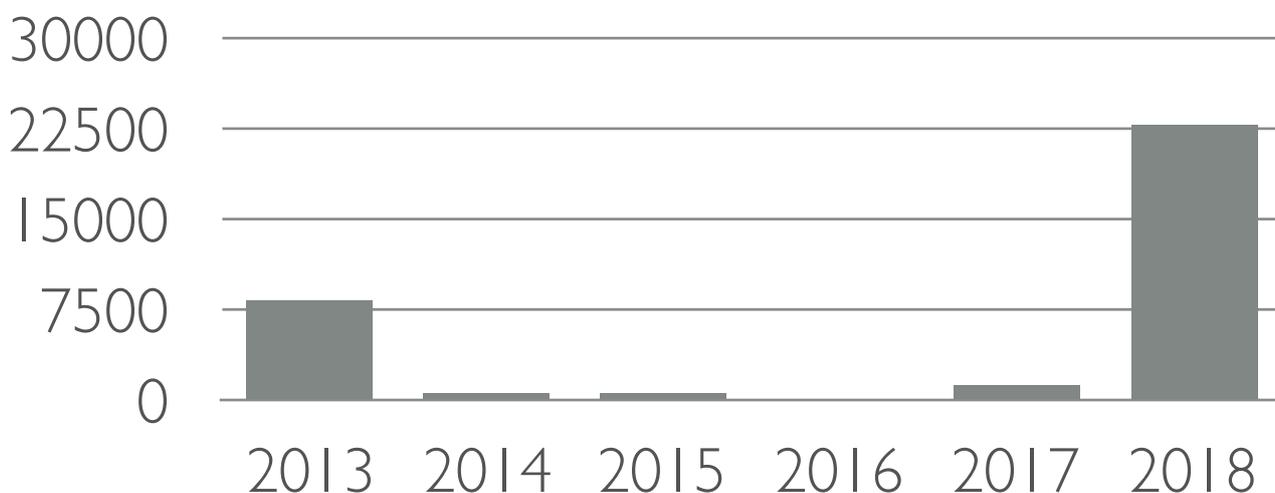
DONATIONS



MEMBERSHIP In £



GRANTS OBTAINED AND CROWDFUNDING



All the measures are showing considerable growth from previous years. Membership of the society and donations have both grown by over 400% since 2016. Grants have grown from 0 in 2016 to over 22,000 last year. Turnover has increased in the past two years from £ 6000 to over £ 58,000 and even with all the developments and expenses of over £45,000 paid this year, the overall profit has risen from £ 1,000 to over £ 10,000.

SOCIAL MEDIA GROWTH

Our social media presence on Facebook has grown from just over 100 in January 2017 to 5250 (20th August 2018) Our new website which was launched in January 2017 has now attracted over 125,00 views from nearly 26,000 visitors.



All-time posts, views, and visitors

- Posts** 19
- Views** 125,797
- Visitors** 25,983
- Best Views Ever**
January 2, 2018

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS DURING THE YEAR



Historic England have approved a grant of £10,000 to carry out a structural survey of the headgear. We have now appointed Blackett Ord to carry out this survey, which should be completed by the end of October. We will then know what requires doing to save the headgear and hopefully an approx cost to allow us to follow up with a repair grant to ensure the long term survival of the structure. This is likely to be a hefty sum which the society will be unable to fund but hopefully the work done on site over the past 12 months will give funding bodies some sort of guarantee the society and museum have a long term future. We have to thank Howard Beaver and Ian James our new volunteers who have been working on this project for the past 9 months and lead it to a successful conclusion.

The lease on the site from Wigan MBC is due to run out in 3 years time but hopefully we can now convince the council to renew the lease for a further 25 years, as we are beginning to clearly show the site can be beneficial to the whole community and be self-funding in the future. A new 25 year lease from the council will also show the funding bodies that any grants will be put into a site, with a viable long term future.

The museum accreditation had been allowed to lapse with very little chance of it being renewed. The Arts Council kindly gave us an extension, as long as we could complete the accreditation documentation by this August. Neil Kinsella has worked hard and has finally submitted the documents to the Arts Council for re-accreditation of the museum. We will hear by October if we have been successful but we have no reason to believe we will lose our accreditation as a fully recognised museum. Again we must thank our curatorial volunteers who have assisted Neil to get this major project hopefully to a successful conclusion.

We have also been successful in obtaining a grant of £10,000 this year to help develop the woodland around the site. A feasibility study has been completed by Manchester City of Trees and a bio-diversity study by Becci Wilson and Graham Workman who work for 'Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles.' Come autumn we can begin to hopefully put some of the plans in place to develop this woodland for the benefit of the whole community. We have already begun to develop a couple of acres of land on site for picnic areas etc.

The railway has developed beyond recognition in the past 8 months. Derek, Dave, Eric and Dave along with various other volunteers have put an incredible amount of time in, getting this ready, including building the required platform, cleaning and greasing the line, clearing invasive undergrowth and preparing the documentation required by the railway inspectorate to allow passenger carrying. They are currently working on a run round loop at the far end of the line at Whitehead Lane and we are hopeful we can get this line up and running for passengers by the end of this year, or most certainly by Spring 2019. Eric Lancaster can be seen greasing the fishplates to allow the correct expansion and contraction of the rails.



Alan Shaw and his team have built us a new feature on site, a complete reproduction miners cottage which has been located in the old museum building. As well as this he has built us a new vintage tea rooms which opened for special events in May of this year. We have also opened a pop up tea room for visitors on site during normal opening days and these 2 ventures have returned a turnover of over £5300 since opening in early May. We have been inspected by the Environmental Health Dept. of Wigan MBC and we have been informed we should be getting a 5 star rating for our Food Hygiene standards. McLaughlins Kitchens of Leigh also provided the kitchen and fittings for our new tea rooms with no direct cost to the society. With the development of the old museum we have had to put some temporary displays in the engine room. In the next 12 months we will be looking to develop the display of the museums collection of small artefacts in secure displays to allow all visitors to enjoy the collection and avoid the need to lock them away from general sight.

A grant from Wigan Community Investment Fund allowed us to purchase new multiple Male and Female toilets on site, to replace the one toilet we used to have in the old GoCab, which

was well past the end of its useful life. Redwaters Construction also, completely free of charge, installed a brand new disabled toilet and baby changing facilities in the new tea rooms.

Wi-Fi has been installed across the main areas of the site for the societies use and visitors use.

A new visitors centre has been located on site, to allow us to better track visitor numbers and sell a small range of merchandise. So far this has accounted for £1900 pounds of income. We have also installed a computer RFID card system to track volunteer hours, which we can use in grant applications, as our contribution when matched funding is required. The training room has had an interactive touch screen projector installed to help with group visits and help improve the general visitor experience.

The site has run two very successful events over the past 10 months. The village bonfire attracted over 2000 people and the week-end steam rally we ran, in conjunction with the Lancashire Traction Engine Club, accounted for over 2500 visitors to the site. Both events made significant contribution to the societies funds. We also got funding from Maxilead Metals to light the headgear with new LED lighting for the Christmas period.



The accreditation process for the museum has also led us to carry out a complete security review of the site and collection. David Case has led this project and provided a complete security review for our use. The first part will be to ensure that the workshops and lodge are fitted with the latest state of the art security system. This will be completed in the next two months and will eventually, when funds allow, be extended to all areas of the site.

We have also made two important acquisitions to the site in the past few months. The headgear Fred Dibnah built in his back yard for the mine, which he was constructing just before his death, has been acquired by the museum. This was originally sold in auction and was due to go to a private collector in Cumbria. James Palmer another of our new volunteers persuaded the purchaser to sell it back to a local benefactor and it is now at the museum awaiting renovation.

We were also approached by Nottingham museum services as they had an original 1840's horse gin which they wished to dispose of. Other museums were interested in parts of it but as we were prepared to accept it as a whole and it will shortly be coming to the museum. Both of these acquisitions require a good deal of restoration and we will shortly be putting out a request for new volunteers to help in their restoration. We believe this method of project lead tasks gives volunteers the ability to own the work they do on site,



as they can clearly see the difference they are making to the sites development, Hopefully we can now attract another group of working volunteers able to take the site even further forward over the next 12 months.

The committee has also approved the purchase of a new building on site to make a Heritage Skills Centre, which will be used for development and

training of heritage skills, which again will also lead to income for the museum in the coming years.



The jewel of the museum collection must be our magnificent Yates & Thom winding engine which has been lovingly restored over the past 30 years by the volunteers, many who are no longer with us, but their memory lives on in the magnificent job they did restoring this unique engine. Now running on compressed air one of the problems we have is our old compressor is water cooled and means we can only run the engine for a limited time. Once the water cooling gets too hot we have to wait for it to cool down before we can run it again. The society have now been offered three air cooled compressors from the old Burtons Biscuits site on the Wirral, which is being closed. This is a magnificent acquisition which will allow us, once installed, to run the engine for longer and more often.

One of the main areas we need to look at in the near future, is disabled access around the site. We have no facility to allow disabled people to access certain areas of the site, including our engine house to view the engine. This must be a priority and hopefully we can attract some funding to allow us to improve our facilities for disabled people to enjoy the site fully in the future.

We have also received two grants from WiganMBC Brighter Borough funds, from the allocation of each of our local elected members, for projects within the areas they represent.

We must also thank our corporate sponsors who have helped so much this past year in helping us complete specialist jobs and providing new facilities for the museum, with no direct costs to the society. An estimate, which is possibly far too conservative, is that they have provided us with at least £ 25,000 of work, fixtures, furniture and equipment, which we would not have had, but for their generosity.

FITFIELD
Mc LAUGHLINS KITCHENS
ASTLEY HIRE
CURTAINS MADE
GTS ELECTRICAL
HEMSLEYS FLOORING
REDWATERS CONSTRUCTION
COMPASSION IN ACTION
JP LOCK AND SAFE
EXPRESS IT
MAXILEAD METALS
ASTLEY CARPETS
HODSONS JOINERY
WIGAN MBC COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP
ALAN SHAW
CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY

We must also thank the various local corporate and voluntary bodies who have provided volunteer days to us over the past 12 months to help us improve the site visually.

BALFOUR BEATTY TWICE
THE CO_OPERATIVE SOCIETY
WIGAN MBC -THE DEAL - TWO SEPARATE EVENTS
THE PRINCES TRUST
THE CHALLENGE - PART OF NCS ORGANISATION
COMPASSION IN ACTION

Last but not least, we must thank our teams of amazing working volunteers who have made such a massive difference to the presentation of the site over the past 15 months, since it was rebranded. The railway has been developed to a point it is nearly ready for passenger carrying, many static exhibits have been repainted, a 110 year old floor has been restored to its former glory. Electrical installations on site has been extended and made safe, cobbled setts have been uncovered and weeded , a massive amount of overgrown areas of brambles have been removed, help has been given in a new art installation on site, by Mary Griffiths, which represents the diameter of our shaft. Buildings and stairways have been repainted and windows repaired and replaced. Work is continuing on repointing the brickwork collars on both shafts and should be completed within the next 12 months. The hours manning the new and pop up tea rooms, meeting and greeting our visitors and helping make a visit to the museum pleasurable and friendly for all our visitors. Without their hours and hours of unpaid volunteering, in all weathers, none of this would have been possible.

There is still much to do, as we are only 15 months into the project, but thanks to your continued support, I am sure you will agree the site has made massive strides in turning the corner from where it was last year. We still need new volunteers to help us develop the plans we have for the site and there are projects available for all ages, skills and genders. The society is run for its members, visitors and the community as a whole and we are now moving forward positively towards saving the last remaining headgear in the whole of the Lancashire Coalfield.



NOTE :

**THE AGM OF THE SOCIETY FOR
2018 WILL BE HELD IN THE
TRAINING ROOM OF THE
COLLIERY ON
WEDNESDAY
3rd OCTOBER
At 7PM**

Stephen Eckersley 25th August 2018