



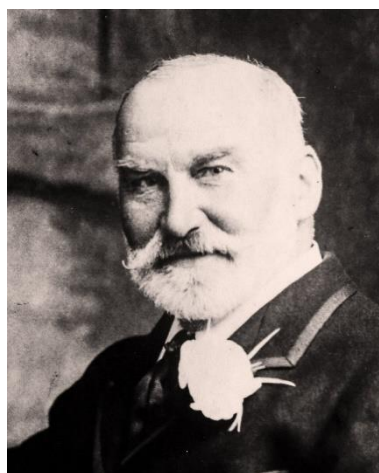
**Open for All
At the Heart of Reepham**



Annual Report 2023

Introduction

In 1919 Samuel Bircham (1841-1923), a local resident and landowner, of Reepham gave the building to the town to be held in trust for the people of Reepham for use as a reading room and community meeting place. Since that time the Centre has been the hub of community life in Reepham. It currently houses a wide variety of social activities and voluntary services, including the town library, charity and pre-loved book shop, the local archives in addition to space for counselling and well-being services along with numerous local community groups, clubs and societies and a weekly country market. The building is grade II listed and fronts onto the historic marketplace at Reepham. Parts of the building date back to the Jacobean period.



The Centre is managed by a committee of up to twelve trustees, whose responsibility is to ensure that the original purpose is upheld in line with the constitution. The use of the building by the community is seen as the primary purpose of the charity. In order to achieve this, trustees are responsible for generating sufficient funds to ensure the preservation of historical building.

The trustees usually meet monthly for formal meetings and provide advice and support between meetings. During 2023 the trustees met on ten occasions, which included the Annual General Meeting in May 2023.

Legal Status and Constitution

The name of the charity is 'The Bircham Centre'. It is a charity founded by Trust Deed dated 15 August 1919. It is registered by the Charity Commission of England with the registration number 242536.

The Registered Office is The Market Place, Reepham, Norfolk NR10 4JJ.

The charity's main professional contacts and staff

Audit and Accountancy – Boldero & Co

Bankers – HSBC & COIF (Charities Investment Fund)

Insurance – Grout Insurance Brokers

The Trustees employ the following part time staff:

Centre Manager Polly Brockis (16 hours per week)

Caretaker Robert Taylor (8 hours per week) taking a medical sabbatical from November 2023 for 12 months.

Cleaning services (total of 15 hours per week)

The charity is dependent on groups of volunteers, supporters and helpers to assist with the operation of the centre. The trustees are responsible for their direction, recruitment and training. It is recognised that such assistance and volunteering is absolutely key to the operation and future of the charity.

Trustees

Les West	Chairman	2019 - present
Ian Kenvyn	Vice Chairman	2022 - present
Ian McGilvray	Maintenance Committee lead	2020 - present
Clare Kenvyn	Link for Reepham Archives	2022 - present
Carl Lamb		2020 - present
Gill Long		2020 - present
Roisin Howard		2020 – present
Emma Rossetti		2023
Sam Garnham	Chairman of Reepham Bowls Club	2019 – until September 2023

Chairman's Report

I am pleased to give this report on the activities of the Bircham Centre for 2023 and to look ahead to our plans for 2024.

I thank all the trustees for what they do to support the work of the Centre in so many different ways. On behalf of the trustees, I also thank Polly for all that she does as Centre Manager supporting the staff and users of the Centre, often going far beyond her contractual duties. Many people have a lot to thank Polly for in the way she cares and supports the different community groups and individuals.

We are blessed with a number of faithful volunteers who work in the shop, book room, garden, archives and support our Centre Manager with the charity's finances. Our particular thanks to Brenda, the shop manager, and her deputy, Judy, for the large number of hours they put in every week in the shop and others who receive and sort donations on Tuesday mornings. Also, to John and Linda in the book room and Jane and all at Eves Hill Veg Co. who lead the dedicated team of volunteer gardeners. Along with Jo and Joy who support Polly with the finance work. Without these dedicated helpers the Centre would struggle to undertake all that it does.

2023 was another busy year at the Bircham Centre and this report details what was achieved in all aspects of the Centre's work. The main project during the year was the repair of the roof and attics. This was a major undertaking both operationally and financially, but one that was successful in all respects. The project was completed on time and within budget and has secured the building for the current and future generations to enjoy and benefit from the services it provides. My thanks for the 'Pride in Place' grant and to all the people who supported the project by sponsoring a tile under the 'Raise the Roof' fundraising campaign. The local community truly got behind the project, which proves that the Bircham Centre means a lot to many people. I also wish to thank all the hirers and users of the Centre who were accommodating whilst the work was being carried out and King & Co. for working with us to limit the disruption.

Together we look forward to the many things planned for the Centre in 2024.

Administration

Personnel

Hayley Buckland, one of our cleaners, left us in September 2023 after completing course work to obtain her desired role as a teaching assistant. We were thrilled for her but sorry to see her leave. Robert Taylor our caretaker faced a cancer diagnosis, many people stepped in to help support him at the outset of cancer treatment, and we wish to thank them all. Robert is responding well to treatment but requested a sabbatical until October 2024. We now have Richard Howard covering maintenance duties on a temporary contract.

Communication and Marketing

With funds from the revenue element of the Pride in Place roof repairs grant we were able to employ Brenda Gostling (Marketing Consultant) and streamline our communications and social media. Brenda worked with Alec Moss, Business Webpage Ltd to provide us with a new website. We are very grateful to them both. Their work has made an enormous difference to our on-line presence. It has been agreed that the communication service, which supports the Centre Manager role, will continue.

Hires and Events

The centre had 74 named hirers on the books through 2023, these range from local groups and organisations who use the centre to meet, to individuals who rent a room by the hour for a wide range of services, such as counselling services, a photo shoot, a hot desk and an interview space. Some groups are based here, some come to use the rooms and garden facility as and when required. We remain the site for local elections and offer support services to the local council where possible e.g housing the condolence book for HRH Queen Elizabeth II.

As well as providing temporary space and hospitality we permanently house the Reepham Library and Reepham Archive, essential services for our community. The Bircham Centre supports many local events and works in partnership whenever possible. In 2023, for the first time, we took a stall out to the Reepham Music Festival to publicize our Raise the Roof Campaign but also to widen the knowledge of what the Bircham Centre is and does. Through 2023 we assisted our local artists and makers (RAMs) in the attainment of a small grant and helped them organise a series of free workshops in the centre and garden, we worked with the Reepham LIONS to host a free family Norfolk Day celebration. Supported RAMs in an exhibition of their artistic talents. We took a stall out to the Forgotten Fabric Sale, held a Vintage Sale, initiated monthly Jumble Sales, organised another series of Walled Garden Talks, hosted numerous AGMs and social gatherings for local organisations and hosted our first wedding in the garden. Through partnership working with Eves Hill Veg Company, we hosted a series of planting and propagation workshops. Weekly we facilitated volunteer gardening activities and monthly open Archive days. The Bircham Centre participated in the Reepham Christmas Tree Festival held in the church, decorating two trees, one jointly with the Reepham Library. We also supported the Car Festival, Festival of Light and Reepham Food Festival

From November 2022 the Centre opened its doors for Mental Health Awareness Day offering a place for people to meet within a warm space. We were later the grateful recipients of a grant which allowed us to continue to provide this service to the community on Monday mornings, staffed by volunteers. This initiative was clearly appreciated by the community. Although the initiative officially finished at the end of March 2023, the trustees decided to continue providing this service to the community for the rest of the year.

In November 2023 we received a further grant from the 'Surviving Winter Fund' to cover the period until the end of March 2024. Again, the trustees decided to continue with this community provision until the end of June, when there will be a break during the summer and restart again in October.

We have changed the name of this initiative to 'Community Together'. This, we feel, better describes the service we are providing for the community. A place for people to meet together.

Charity Shop

2023 has been a good year for the shop. Tuesday donation day has seen many good quality items coming in and a big thank you to Gill, Keven, Julie, and Paul for all their support and hard work in sorting items.

The shop has seen many new customers as a result of Bread Source opening in the Dial House and of course our regular customers who love coming to the shop, sometimes just for a chat. Our monthly jumble sale is proving very popular.

The events in the Market Place during the year helped boost our profits, especially the Food Fair, Festival of Light, Vintage Car Festival and the Music Festival.

I would like to thank Julie Smith who organised the Vintage Fair for us and for also selling items on E-Bay and the Vintage Fairs she attends.

A big thank you also to all our wonderful volunteers who give their time and support in helping the shop being the success that it is. So, thank you Judy, Judith, Rosie, Tamara, Beth, Lynda and Linda.

Also, a big thank you to Robert, our caretaker, who built the shelving units in the bookstore, which has given us extra space for shop storage. Also thank you to Milo for helping Robert. We all wish Robert a speedy recovery and hope to see him return soon.

A very big thank you to Polly for her support and help during the year. She had stalls at the Music Festival and the Material Sale at Whitwell Station, which made more money for the shop and also for her ideas and help during the year. Also a big thank you to her family for their help and support, especially Kodi or 'toy expert'.

Brenda Green – Shop Manager

Aims and Objectives for 2024

In 2021, the Trustees of the Bircham Centre produced and agreed a strategic document which outlined the aims and objectives of the charity for the period 2021 – 2026. The document explained the nature of the activities that the centre undertakes, its history, management structure, and financial position. The aim of the document was to state and consolidate Bircham Centre values and to demonstrate the economic management of those values.

The document restates the primary purpose of the Charity; to provide services that benefit the community and to ensure the preservation of the grade II listed building for present and future generations.

For each year of the five-year period, the Trustees will develop and agree a working plan in line with the overall aims and objectives contained in the strategic document. This document outlines the work plan for 2024 under the following five categories.

<u>Community</u>	<u>Building</u>	<u>Funding</u>	<u>Well-Being</u>	<u>Environment</u>
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Community

Achieved in 2022/2023

- The Centre continued to provide a programme and involvement with community events, including celebration of Norfolk Day, Festival of Light, Reepham Car Festival and Music Festival, working in partnership with other local groups.
- The Centre took an active part in the celebrations for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and the Coronation of Charles III within the town.
- A 'Warm Space' community meeting place was established at the Bircham Centre on Monday mornings.
- Formed links with the Reepham Artist Makers supporting a grant application and hosting workshops and exhibition for local artists.
- The Centre engaged a Marketing and Communication Manager, to increase its communication and engagement with the local community and beyond.
- A new website was designed and launched.
- An information leaflet was produced informing people about the Centre and advertising the services it offers.
- A community event was held to celebrate the completion of the roof repairs and to thank those who gave to the funding campaign.
- Walled Garden talks took place again during early summer.
- The Centre had a stall at the Forgotten Fabric Sale and the Reepham Music Festival to widen our exposure and support these local initiatives.
- The Centre decorated trees at the Reepham Christmas Tree Festival.

Plans for 2024

- To increase the number of trustees and volunteers, to provide additional support for the work of the charity.
- The Centre will continue to provide a programme of community events, working in partnership with other local groups.
- The Centre will look for opportunities to widen the use of the Centre to new ventures and events.
- The Centre will continue to support existing groups who use the Centre and look to increase the number of new groups and individuals using the Centre.
- The Trustees will market the Centre and the activities carried out, wider than the local community.
- The Centre will take part in a school liaison day with Reepham High School.

Building

Achieved in 2022/2023

- Redecorated the hallway to provide a more welcoming entrance to the building.
- Renewed the notice boards to share community information in a more attractive way.
- As part of the refurbishment of the hallway, we were proud to have twinned our two toilets, one with a latrine in Zambia and the other with a latrine in Malawi. This was another example of the Reepham local community reaching out to people in need in developing countries.
- Created a potting area to propagate plants locally for use in the garden.
- Created a new working space for counselling and therapy services in Room 12 'The Study' which increased the income from hirers.
- Moved the Centre Administration Office upstairs to Room 11.
- Increased the storage space for the shop and books.
- Removed the dying holly tree from the front of the building.
- Completed major repairs to the roof and attics.
- Maintaining bat access and adding swift boxes to support local wildlife.

Plans for 2024

- To undertake the first phase to resolve the drainage problem at the front of the building.
- To redesign and improve the appearance of the front gardens.
- To carry out repairs to the windows.
- To improve the decoration and appearance of The Front Room (Room 7) to make it more attractive for hire.
- To carpet the main stairs.
- To investigate options for improved access to the garden.

Funding

Achieved in 2022/2023

- A new lease was negotiated for Room 10.
- Increased rent was successfully negotiated with the County Library Services.
- The charity registered for Gift Aid and put a process in place to claim gift aid on donations.
- Registered with paypal and began receiving donations through this portal.
- Obtained a number of grants to support the work of the Centre and garden development.
- The charity received a major grant from the 'Pride in Place' scheme to support the cost of repairs to the roof and attics.
- The Centre launched a successful funding campaign 'Raise the Roof' and a Just Giving' page to raise funds for repairs to the roof.

Plans for 2024

- To agree a balanced budget for 2024.
- To increase the income from the shop, books and hiring of rooms.
- To consider other ways of increasing the income of the Centre.
- To reduce operating costs where possible.
- To identify funding opportunities and make applications to support the maintenance repairs to the building and core operating costs.
- To promote legacy giving.

Well-Being

Achieved in 2022/2023

- The Centre supported staff, volunteers, and users of the Centre as needs were identified.
- Building on the success of the garden talks the Centre offered a further programme in 2022 and 2023 to help people to come together and learn about ways of nurturing themselves, our community, and our environment.

Plans for 2024

- To continue to support staff, volunteers, and users of the Centre to ensure that their well-being is considered as far as resources allow.
- To arrange a further programme of gardens talks during the summer, bring people together to learn about different ways of being part of the community and forging links with other organisations.

Environment

Achieved in 2022/2023

- As part of the repairs to the roof, insulation was installed to improve the efficiency of the building and reduce costs.
- Access for bats were created and boxes for swifts installed.
- Our Volunteer Gardeners worked with the councils “Master Composters” to arrange a morning workshop on seed swapping, seed sowing and composting.
- Gardening workshops with Eves Hill Veg Co initiated.

Plans for 2024

- Continue to improve our environment commitment of the organisation from procurement and activities and embed it in our core and strategic values.
- To monitor and attempt to reduce energy consumption.
- Provide a pollinator bed in the garden.
- With support of the ‘Greening Our Community’ grant and assistance from the Reepham Scouts and King & Co we intend to install a series of compost bays.

Maintenance of the Building

A building of this age needs continued maintenance. In 2021, the Trustees commissioned a quinquennial inspection of the building. This detailed the work required to the building, over the following five years, in order to keep it in good repair and available for the current community and future generations to benefit from the services it provides.

We prioritised the work required and produced an action plan for each year. During 2023 we carried out major repair works to the roof and attics in order to address the water ingress and damp problems. This work costed £42,000 and has now been completed on time and within budget.

The Centre was successful in obtaining a grant of £23,000 from the ‘Pride in Place’ initiative managed by Broadland and South Norfolk District Councils towards this work. (£20,500 capital and £2,500 revenue costs).





This required us to find match funding for the project. The trustees therefore launched a fund-raising campaign 'Raise the Roof' on 31 March 2023 and challenged the local community to raise £10,000 by sponsoring a tile. A Just Giving page was set up to help people to donate to the fund-raising campaign.

The revenue fund was used to support the management and the communication strategy for the fund-raising campaign. Also to produce a new information leaflet explaining the purpose of the Bircham Centre and the facilities it provides. Along with funding to provide a community event to celebrate the completion of the work.

As there were signs of bat activity in the attic spaces before work could start a bat survey was required in order to gain a license. This was undertaken and it was found that only one bat had made it's home at the Bircham Centre. Following a completion, the bat was named 'Atticus' and a picture of Atticus was produced by Alfie B aged 7 following a further completion for young people.

The work on the roof was carried out by King & Co. and. completed on time and within budget. A community event was held on 17 November 2023 to celebrate the completion of this major project and to thank all those who supported the project financially.



During the year a number of changes were made to the use of rooms within the Centre. The counselling space was moved into room 12 and redecorated. This allowed the administration office to move upstairs to room 11. In turn this freed up space for additional storage for the shop and books on the ground floor. Our thanks to Robert Taylor for designing and building the new shelving for the bookstore. The trustees agreed to name each of the rooms, so that users of the Centre could identify them easier.

The trustees received permission from the Planning Department to remove the holly tree at the front of the building as it was dying. It is planned to tidy up this area and an ornamental tree in a large pot was provided in memory of Brenda Palmer, a great supporter of the Bircham Centre, funded by a donation given by her husband, John.

Financial Position

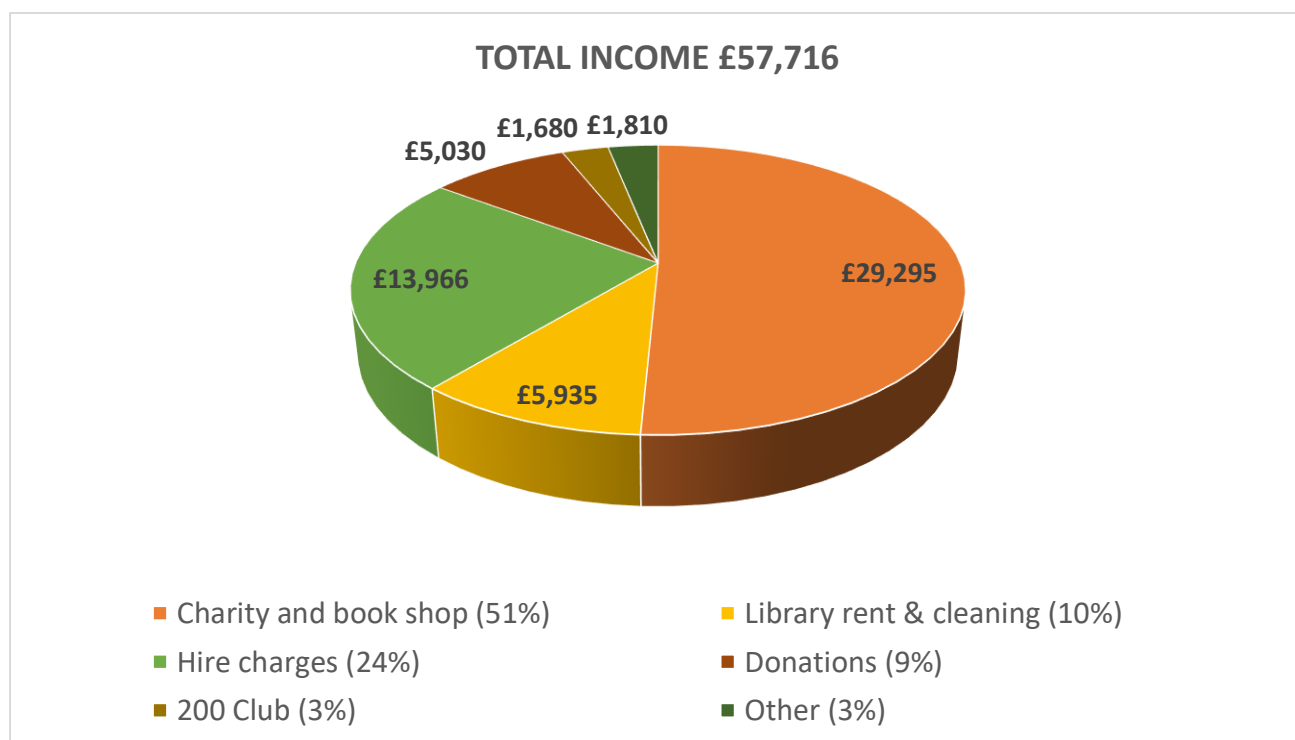
Sadly, no legacy was left to maintain the building and garden, so it relies heavily on the hard work of its volunteers and on donations. The major income comes from the charity and pre-loved book shop along with rent and hire charges from the various groups and individuals who use the building.

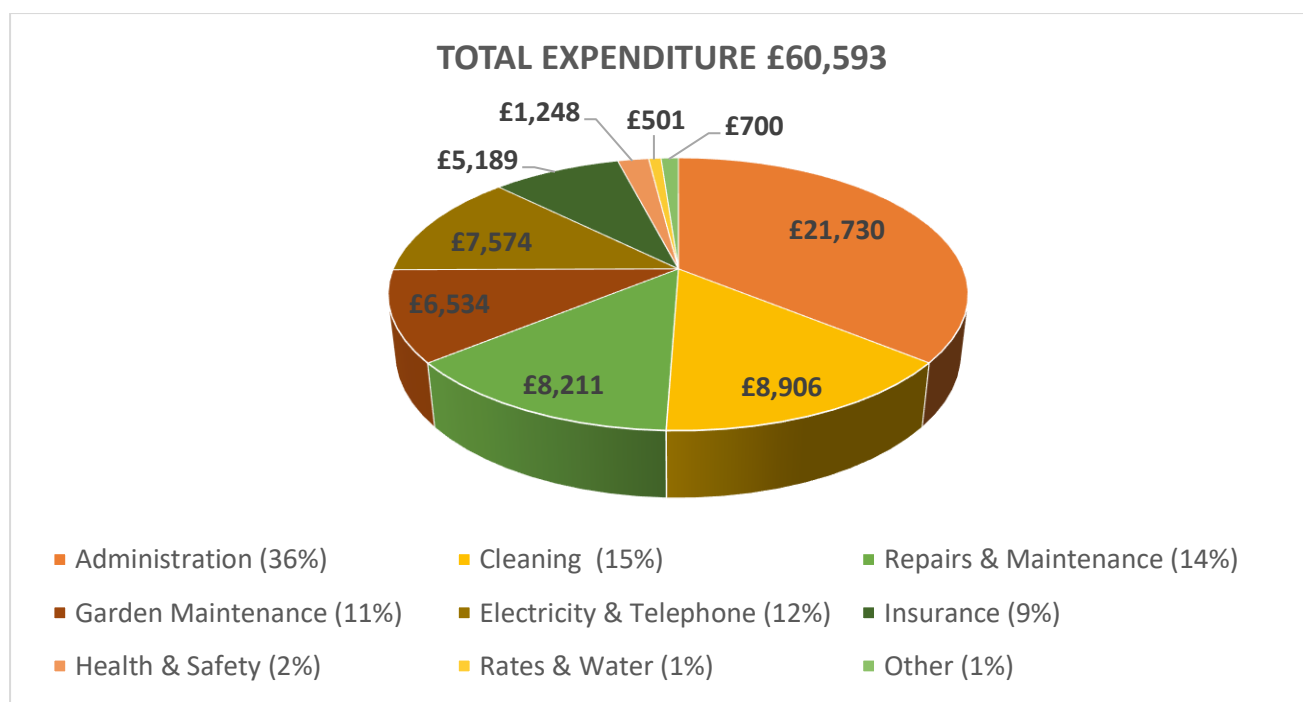
In 2023 the total income was £57,716 (£46,849 in 2022).

The total expenditure for 2023 was £60,592 (£54,668 in 2022)

Once the designated and grant income and expenditure was taken into account the result was a deficit for the year of £12,978, compared with a surplus of £6,536 in 2022. This was due mainly to the major work undertaken to the roof and the way that expenditure from grants achieved in 2022 were accounted for in 2023.

The total funds available at the end of 2023 was £43,464 compared with £56,443 the previous year.





The accounts for 2023 have been audited by Boldero & Co. and can be found at Appendix A. We wish to thank Ian and Nicola for their support with the accounts and payroll and propose that we engage them for 2024.

The Centre is a not-for-profit charitable organisation and with careful management, it just about breaks even each year, but this does not allow for major repairs to the building, which have to be funded by grants.

During 2023, the charity was pleased to receive grants from the following organisations and grant making bodies:

Pride in Place Community Grant – Broadland & South Norfolk District Councils

Barratt Family Charitable Trust

The Lady Hind Trust

Norfolk Community Foundation

Reepham Festival

Reepham WI

Reepham Rotary

Reepham Life

Blackmore Foundation (SPAR)

The Co-Op

Reepham Town Council

In addition to the grants, the Centre received donations during the year from individuals which the Trustees were very thankful for. Also, to the many members of the 200 Club who continue to support the Centre financially.

Reserve Policy

The Trustees aim to obtain sufficient funds each year so that the maintenance of the building and the work of the charity can continue and develop.

The Trustees aim to keep a reserve of at least 50% of annual expenditure.

Safeguarding

During 2023 there were no safeguarding matters brought to the attention of the trustees.

The trustees reviewed and updated its safeguarding policy in March 2023, which is available on the website.

Health and Safety

During 2023 there were no reportable Health and Safety incidents reported to the trustees. The trustees monitor the Health and Safety of its employees, volunteers and users of the Centre on a continuous basis, which is a standing item of the trustees' agenda. Health and Safety is led by the trustees one of whom, namely Carl Lamb, has ultimate responsibility in this area.

The trustees reviewed and updated its Health and Safety policy in March 2023, which is available on the website. Within this Policy Statement the trustees recognise their duties and obligations in ensuring the health, safety, and welfare of its employees, volunteers and all those who use the Centre including visitors and contractors.

Reepham Archives

The Bircham Centre and the Reepham Society amalgamated their respective archives in 2014 to establish a publicly available collection of documents, photographs, and artefacts relevant to the history and development of Reepham and the surrounding area. In 2019. When the Reepham Society ceased to exist, its assets and funds were transferred to the Bircham Centre charity. A Memorandum of Understanding has been agreed between the Bircham Centre and the Archive group.

The purpose of the Reepham Archives is to nurture public and professional interest and understanding of the heritage of Reepham and the local area.

The Trustees of the Bircham Centre have overall financial and administrative responsibility for the management of the Reepham Archives. The Trustees delegate the day-to-day management and operation of the archive to a committee of archive volunteers for the storage, preservation, recording, acquisition and disposal of items and interface with archival organisations and the general public.

The Reepham Archive Committee has the right to appoint one archive volunteer or member of the Archive Committee to the Board of Trustees of the BC, who should give a report to the Board at each meeting. If the Archive Committee does not take up this right, the Board of Trustees will nominate a designated Trustee as a formal representative and act as the link to the Trustee Board. This Trustee has the right to attend Archive Committee meetings. Clare Kenvyn is currently the link Trustee.

It has been another productive year for the team of volunteers working in the Reepham Archive, which is open to the public on the first Wednesday and Saturday of each month, 10am-12noon. A wide range of materials, including photographs, documents and maps have been added. These provide the basis for regular articles that are published locally online as well as material for the calendar which is produced annually in partnership with Reepham Life. In addition, this year the team have begun to work on the creation of a Town Trail (it is proposed that there will be both an Adult and a Children's version) focused around the Market Square, Churches and Back Street. It may be extended and expanded in the future. The Archive is also looking forward to welcoming Year 7 pupils from Reepham High School next month as part of their visit to the Bircham Centre and hopes that this marks the beginning of a closer connection with the school.

Reepham Bowling Club

Until 2020, The Reepham Town Bowling Green was the responsibility of the Reepham Society. When the society was disbanded, ownership and responsibility was transferred to the Bircham Centre charity. A Memorandum of Understanding has been agreed between the Bircham Centre and the Bowling Club.

The Bircham Centre owns the freehold of the bowling green along with the associated buildings, the title of which was transferred to the trustees of the Bircham Centre, under title number NK428204 by the Land Registry Office.

The trustees of the Bircham Centre have agreed a twenty-five-year lease to the Reepham Town Bowling Club for the green and associated buildings, including the club house, at an agreed annual rent as outlined in the lease.

The Reepham Town Bowling Club is managed by a committee of members which reports to the trustees of the Bircham Centre. The committee is responsible for keeping the ground and buildings in a good state of housekeeping and repair, and for the security of the site.

The committee has the right to appoint one member of the committee to the Board of Trustees of the Bircham Centre, who reports to the Board at each meeting. Sam Garnham fulfilled this role until he resigned as a trustee in September 2023. Paul Brock took over this role when he became a trustee in January 2024.

The committee keep their own finances and provide a copy of the inspected accounts to the Board on an annual basis. The Bowling Green was added as an asset to the Bircham Centre insurance documentation in 2020. The trustees of the Bircham Centre do not accept any financial liability for the Reepham Town Bowling Club.

Paul Brock reports that 2023 was a good season for the club. They played in three leagues, finishing second in the Age UK afternoon league, fourth in the Dereham league and third in the Elmham league. Members of the club maintain the green and the garden areas, which are looking good. Liability insurance is in place. The new season will start with an opening day on Saturday 13th April at 2 30pm.

All members of the club would like to thank the the Bircham Centre for their continued support.

