



## CONSERVATION & COLLECTIONS OFFICER BROOK RURAL MUSEUM

### APPLICATION PACK

Salary: £25,000 per annum pro rata (£10,200)

Hours: 14 hours per week (0.4 FTE) 12 month contract

Location: Brook Rural Museum, Brook, Ashford, TN25 5PE and opportunity for home working

Reporting to: Community Engagement Manager

Key relationships: Trustees, Volunteers

Annual leave: 20 days (pro rata)



## **Role Summary**

This is an exciting opportunity for a part time Conservation and Collections Officer to build on the recent audit and ongoing digital cataloguing of the Museum's rich collections of agricultural objects. Key activities will include undertaking a programme of conservation and cleaning, working alongside a Community Engagement Officer to develop participatory programmes for volunteers, and arranging loans of items to other organisations and businesses across Kent to raise the Museum's profile and improve circulation and display within the Museum. It will suit someone who enjoys working with volunteers and hands-on conservation and restoration work.

## **Brook Rural Museum**

The Wye Rural Museum Trust was established in 1996 to take ownership of, and operate the Brook Rural Museum, an agricultural museum. The museum is housed in a Grade I listed 14<sup>th</sup> century barn (No: 1233070) and Grade II listed oast house (No: 1232975). Historic England describe the barn as one "*of the finest medieval Kentish barns*" and the oast house has a rare inner circle kiln construction and drying and cooling floors. A third range of buildings house a community/education room and small office/ exhibition space. They surround a large area of grass, creating a courtyard, also cared for by the Trust.

Wye College established the collection at Brook in 1948 and then added to it over subsequent decades. It comprises old agricultural equipment and implements, some relating to hop production, and mainly of Kentish origin. The collection is currently housed in the Manorial Barn and Oast House in the village of Brook, which is 5 miles from Ashford, Kent. Further details can be found at <https://brookruralmuseum.org.uk/collections/>.

The Heritage Lottery Fund (as it was known at the time) supported the restoration of the barn and subsequent fit out of a community/ education room and toilet. In 2005 a Local Heritage Initiative grant paid for audio and video recordings of local craftspeople and the creation of a series of booklets about them. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Museum was attracting c. 400 independent and group visits per annum. In 2022 the Trustees secured a grant for a successful year-long project, '*Securing the future of The Brook Museum – engaging new audiences*'. The project's focus was resilience, re-building the audience and volunteer base, improving the visitor experience, developing a social media presence, new partnerships and improving collections management. A collections audit recorded 1,363 objects. Conservation and collections management policies were updated. Modes was purchased as a new CMS. A conservator was commissioned to clean and conserve a shoe patten which is now being stored in an acrylic case. A series of volunteer training sessions were organised. During the year 410 items from the oast house have been draft catalogued and digitised and 100 items fully catalogued. This work is on-going.

## **'Brook Rural Museum – reaching out into our communities'**

The Trustees are now seeking a Conservation & Collections Officer, 2 days per week for a year, to support a new project, '*Brook Rural Museum – reaching out into our communities*'. The

priority for the new project is to reach out– to organisations across Ashford, including new schools, care homes and charities supporting vulnerable people, to reach a broader range of people through outreach projects and a public programme. It will also focus on sustainability, maintaining what has been achieved and testing new streams of income generation.

The project aims are to:

- Raise awareness of Brook Rural Museum across the Ashford area
- Build new partnerships with schools, care homes, and charities in Ashford
- Improve the visitor experience and make the Oast House a more central part of the visit
- Develop and test a business model to strengthen organisational resilience
- Complete the digitisation and cataloguing of the collection to increase access on-site and virtually
- Undertake collections care, preventative and interventive conservation measures

Priority audiences are:

- The hyper-local community – Brook’s residents, staff and pupils in the village school
- Primary schools in Ashford, particularly those with eFSM above 26%
- Residents and workers in care homes in Ashford
- Residents of Ashford, including families and older people living in areas of deprivation and people from ethnic minority backgrounds.

We also expect to engage the local community, people living within 30 minutes of the museum, day trippers, students studying at Canterbury Christ Church University and virtual audiences.

Key outputs of the project will be:

- An 18 month 0.6 FTE Community Engagement role
- A 12 month 0.4 FTE Conservation & Collections Officer role
- Programme of artefact inspection, assessment and conservation cleaning
- A complete catalogue of the Museum’s collection, with enriched content
- Collections packed and stored appropriately
- Identify and make arrangements to deaccession or loan objects to other sites across Kent in order both to create more circulation space in the Museum and to promote it more widely
- Programme of environmental monitoring, pest management and records
- Mini-travelling exhibition and loans boxes
- Interpretation panels
- Public programme of events
- Resources to support off-site and on-site school visits
- New reminiscence sessions

- Formal and informal partnerships with Ashford based organisations
- New partnerships with schools, care homes and volunteer based organisations in Ashford
- New volunteer opportunities which promote wellbeing and include working on conservation and restoration of suitable items from the Museum collection
- A 5 year business plan based on a new business model
- Updated Forward Plan
- Plan for acknowledging the Heritage Fund's support

The project will deliver the following heritage outcomes:

- A wider range of people will be involved in heritage
- Brook Rural Museum will be more resilient
- People will have greater wellbeing
- The local economy will be boosted
- Brook Rural Museum's heritage will be in better condition
- Brook Rural Museum's heritage will be identified and better

## **Conservation & Collections Officer role description**

The purpose of the new role is to develop and deliver collections care, preventative and interventive conservation for the Museum's collection. The main duties and responsibilities are:

- Assess the condition of items in the collection and identify conservation needs (using the collections audit produced in 2023 as a guide)
- Implement preventative measures to mitigate deterioration of objects
- Carry out minor conservation treatments and commission external conservators for specialist conservation work
- Plan, arrange and supervise a conservation cleaning programme to ensure objects on display and in storage are inspected, assessed and where necessary, treated in-house, with aid of volunteers or by a specialist conservator
- Work with volunteers to safely move, store and display objects in accordance with best practices
- Identify and plan opportunities for participation by volunteers in conservation, hands-on restoration work, and cleaning activities, with support of specialist conservators where necessary, to assist with:
  - Organisation, cleaning, conservation, and restoration of objects
  - Environmental monitoring and pest management procedures, maintaining a log of recordings
- Support the Community Engagement Manager in sustaining current volunteering activities and in developing and delivering new "participatory" volunteering programmes

- Identify items which should be deaccessioned in line with the Museum's collections policy, seeking professional advice where required, and following through in accordance with approved procedures for deaccessions by accredited museums
- Research, arrange and manage the loan of items to organisations and businesses in Kent in order both to create more circulation space in the Museum and to help promote it more widely
- Make recommendations to the Trustees on insurance, environmental conditions and other collections management issues as a result of the above work
- Support the Trustees in preparing for Re-accreditation
- Support the Community Engagement Manager with public enquiries, activities and the development of resources to deliver outreach projects
- Attend relevant training courses and seek support through the Rural Museums Network and/or other networks as required

#### General

- Apply collections care and conservation policies, processes, procedures and professional standards
- Comply with Health & Safety legislation, including the storage of any materials and chemicals used in conservation work
- Support the Trustee's with data collection and complete monthly progress reports for the National Lottery Heritage Fund
- Use social media, the museum's website and local press to maintain the Museum's online presence and acknowledge the support of the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Lottery Players

#### Essential

- A relevant degree or equivalent experience
- Minimum of two year's experience in conservation and collections care activities (including volunteering roles)
- Demonstrable understanding and/or experience of using collections management systems including databases
- Ability to understand and accurately implement collections management policies, procedures and standards
- Knowledge of conservation practice and related ethical considerations
- Experience of analysing pest and environmental monitoring data and reporting findings
- Experience of supervising, training and working alongside volunteers
- Interest in the Brook Rural Museum's collections
- Ability to work systematically, quickly, efficiently and accurately
- Ability to communicate with individuals from a range of backgrounds
- Ability to prioritise tasks

## How to apply

- Please send a CV and covering letter outlining your interest in the post and relevant experience you would bring to the role.
- Email these to: John Nightingale, [enquiries@brookruralmuseum.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@brookruralmuseum.org.uk) with the subject line Job Application: Conservation and Collections Officer
- Deadline: 12 pm on 23 May 2024.
- Interview date: 3 June 2024 (tbc)

The candidates who appear from their application to best meet the essential criteria will be invited to interview. It is therefore essential your cover letter provides a full, but concise description of the nature, extent and level of experience and responsibility you have held.

END

28.4.2024