

# Case study



**Framework**  
400 YEARS  
OF CRAFT  
& GRAFT **Knitters** MUSEUM

## Ruddington Framework Knitters Museum

Ruddington Framework Knitters Museum is a living history museum and unique surviving example of a 19th century framework knitters' yard. It tells the story of an important, contentious, and dangerous industry from its role in the Industrial Revolution to the birth to the Nottingham lace industry.

See what they had to say

“If there had not been any input from MDEM some elements would have happened, and Ian (The Chair) would have corralled some of the external trustees but it would have taken much longer and we would have missed an opportunity.”

**Jim Grevatte,**  
Trustee and former Museum Manager



# 01. Summary

**For many years Ruddington Framework Knitters Museum has taken part in and benefited from MDEM initiatives. The support provided by MDEM has enabled the museum and its board to become more audience-focused, resilient, and professional.**

From 2021 they took part in the Organisational Health and 21st Century Visitor Attractions programmes. These initiatives were timely in helping the museum through a period of significant transition.

They have also received small grants which have enabled a transformation of the entrance area and café. This support alongside participation in training have helped the museum to become more inclusive and embedded within the local community.



# 02. Organisational Health

**In 2021 the museum took part in the Organisational Health Programme (OHP) which was led by Heather Lomas. This support came at a time when there was a lot of change.**

In addition to the pandemic, the Museum Manager was leaving, there was a turnover of board members, including the Chair and the museum was closed for capital works.

There was recognition amongst the trustees and outgoing Manager that this period of transition provided an opportunity. They could establish new ways of working as a board and articulate a refreshed vision and purpose for the museum.

The OHP programme helped new trustees, especially those who were new to museums gain an understanding of what is involved with running a museum. Heather worked with trustees and the Manager to redesign the staff structure and build in a process for succession planning. She also helped the board in identifying the strategic areas which needed attention and with the planning of budgets and finances.

“Heather Lomas has made a significant contribution through the organisational health programme, helping us through trustee master planning and business planning. She was our main link to MDEM, and she made us aware of various grants. Through that knowledge we received £5,000 through a reset and recovery grant scheme which has made a massive difference to the museum.”

**Graham Shuttleworth, Trustee**



Alongside this the museum participated in 21st Century Visitor Attractions, a flagship audience development programme led by Arts Marketing Association. Participation in this provided the museum with an opportunity to review its vision and purpose.

As a result of participating in 21st Century Visitor Attractions an updated business plan was developed.

“It helped us think about who was visiting and not visiting and how to better articulate what was on offer”

**Jim Grevatte,**  
Trustee and former Museum  
Manager

## 03. Small Grants

**In 2022 the museum was successful in securing £5,000 from MDEM for the refurbishment of a new shop area and route to the café.**

The shop and entrance were originally designed with a very large table for reception. The museum recognised the need to upgrade the area and established a target of £7,000 for the works. The £5,000 grant from MDEM was supported by £2,000 from the Friends of the museum which enabled the works to happen.

The project completely transformed the entrance space of the museum, creating an attractive shop area, counter for volunteers to greet people and a more inviting route into the café. The café has become increasingly popular, and it is now the go to place to have a coffee in Ruddington. It is particularly popular with young mums. Visitor numbers overall to the museum have increased significantly since 2021.

The museum has also received £1,500 which supported the professional fees of an architect and project manager for a MEND project.







## 04. Impact

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### **As a result of MDEM support the museum has professionalised its board and become a mission driven organisation.**

There are an increased number of women on the board and an open recruitment process for trustees is now in place. The board are also reflecting on ways to further diversify the board.

The shop and café have had a ripple effect on the community, and it has become central to things in Ruddington. Hosting Father Christmas in 2022 brought in about 1,000 people.

This rise in visitor numbers is maintained by publicity. There is a new trustee who is a dedicated information officer, they send newsletters and regular updates to mail lists.

Alongside this the volunteers play a significant role in the visitor experience as they accompany visitors and tell the story of the framework knitting, they bring the history to life.

### **Feedback from the visitor books and online reviews highlights the impact of the volunteers.**

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“An outstanding museum, excellently presented with enthusiastic and knowledgeable volunteers and craftspeople. The shop has a range of knitted products at very reasonable prices.”

“We had a fabulous visit to this amazing museum today. It is a real piece of living history set out in such an interesting and informative way. The experience was made extra special by the brilliant volunteers and staff who showed us round and told us about the lives of the framework knitters. The knowledge of the volunteers and staff was superb and we learnt so much. All of them were very friendly and very open to answering any questions we had.”

“What a hidden gem. We never expected it to be so good. We would recommend this for any age or gender, the history was so interesting, being able to walk around the cottages and workshops with a very knowledgeable volunteer who spent time to explain and share there knowledge. Amazing.”



## 06. The future

The board recognise that they have made considerable steps forward, but they still have some way to go to get optimal use out of buildings and encourage more people in, especially schools and volunteers.

At present only two of the three cottages are being used and some of the buildings have greater untapped potential. This includes a library in the Chapel which is currently not being used. There are plans being developed which would see greater access being enabled.

There are also plans to take the museum to schools and develop activities offered to school groups on site which would enhance their visiting experience. In addition, the museum will be investigating the role of slavery in framework knitting and aiming to drawing parallels and awareness of modern day slavery.



Read more: [frameworkknittersmuseum.org.uk](http://frameworkknittersmuseum.org.uk)



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