

2023 MARKET HOUSE VISITORS REPORT

The 2023 visiting season started late, Saturday 1st July, as the Market House had been literally 'under wraps' having repairs to the render and a repaint. Due to a limited number of volunteer stewards (7), once again we could only open on Saturday afternoons.

However, stewards did open to visitors on five additional days as part of the nationwide Heritage Open Days history fortnight promoted by the National Trust. We attracted visitors on all of the extra days, so the total number of afternoons open to the public was 19.

The total number of visitors for the season was 215, an average of just over 11 per day. This compares favourably with the average in 2022. The stalwart stewards deserve appreciation for doing extra days, which do make a real difference to the number of people who get to enjoy and appreciate the Market House displays.

There was just one zero-attendance day this year, when it was extremely hot and humid and Newent town centre was empty. The highest day visitor count was 27 on 1st July.

All the stewards are to be heartily thanked for readily signing up and then getting on with their volunteering without having to be prompted. Attempted recruitment of new volunteer stewards is ongoing, and there was good publicity in Newent Focus on several occasions, but it is not easy to attract new volunteers. In the current circumstances, it may be impossible to open every Saturday next season (Easter to the end of September), which would be a shame.

Thanks, again, to SPAR for allowing us to store the A-frame "Market House Open" boards in their storage area, and to Seymour's newsagents for keeping the Market House keys safe. As chairman of the stewards, I would also like to thank the town council and staff for their continued help and support.

Though visiting the Market House is free, we do have a beautifully hand-made collecting box for donations towards upkeep. This year £6.60 was donated. This is a third of last year's donations, probably a reflection of many fewer open days and maybe the fact that many people don't carry cash these days.

22 visitors signed the Visitors Book, always with positive comments:

"Very informative. Good to see that local history is valued here." (Lydney)

"Lovely welcome and very enjoyable visit" (Aberystwyth)

"Lovely building and friendly staff" (Gloucester)

**Ginny James,
Chairman of Market House Stewards
November 2023**