

The Wye Rural Museum Trust

Reg.Charity No: 1055879

Report of the Trustees for the period 1 March 2023 to 29 February 2024

Contents

<i>Purpose and Governance of the Trust</i>	2
<i>Current role of the Trust: Public Benefit reporting</i>	2
<i>Outline of the Period</i>	3
<i>Thanks and Acknowledgements</i>	5
<i>Historical Background</i>	6
<i>Summary of results and reserves policy</i>	7
<i>Independent Examiner's Report</i>	8
<i>Receipts and Payments</i>	9
<i>Statements of assets and liabilities</i>	10
<i>Notes to the Accounts</i>	10

Purpose and Governance of the Trust

The Trust was established in 1996 and is Registered Charitable Trust No.1055879.

The objects of the Trust, taken from the Deed, are as follows:

1. General charitable purposes.
2. In particular within the County of Kent:
 - a) The provision of one or more historic, economic and social museums of agriculture and rural life.
 - b) For the benefit of the public generally
 - i) The preservation, maintenance and improvement of any building of beauty or historical or architectural interest.
 - ii) The conservation of natural features of the landscape ecology and character of the area.
 - iii) The furtherance of general educational religious and social amenities.
 - iv) The stimulation of public interest in the history character beauty and wildlife of the area.

The names of Trustees in post during the year were as follows:

Nominated: *Sir George Jessel DL* (Canterbury Farmers' Club); *Prof John Nightingale*, Chair of Trustees (Cromarty Trust); *Dr Sheila Sweetinburgh* (Kent Archaeological Society)

Co-opted: *Mr Tim Betts*, Vice-chair of Trustees; *Dr. John Bulaitis*; *Dr. Jeremy Clarke*; *Mrs Caroline Knight*; *Mr Francis Huntington* (retired 19 February 2024); *Ms Julie Martin* (appointed 11 September 2023); *The Rt Hon Sir John Mummery DL*; *Mr John Tomkins*; *Prof Paul Webster*; *Mr Mike West*.

Trustees are chosen for the appropriate range of skills they bring to the Trust and their readiness to contribute to its day to day activities. An induction process is now in place. Three meetings of the Trustees were held during the year, with additional bi-monthly meetings of a lottery steering group of five trustees from September 2022 onwards. The Trust has a range of policies in place in keeping with its status as an accredited museum and these include safeguarding, data protection, collection accessibility, conservation and collections care. No reportable incidents occurred during the year.

Current role of the Trust: Public Benefit reporting

The Trust's main work is associated with the ownership, conservation and running of Brook Rural Museum. The museum's buildings consist of a Grade I listed 14th century manorial barn, one of the best preserved medieval barns in South East England and a building of national importance, a Grade II listed early 19th century oast house and some

associated buildings which include one containing a fully equipped education room and toilet facilities.

The Trustees have agreed the following statement of purpose for the Museum:

- To preserve, interpret and improve access to the museum site including the fourteenth-century manorial barn, nineteenth-century oast house and stable block.
- To collect, preserve, interpret and present the agricultural and rural history of Brook and East Kent.
- To secure the long-term future of the museum, its buildings and collections, and to ensure the widest possible public access to the site and its heritage assets.

Outline of the Period

2023/24 saw an exciting step change in the Trust's activities. The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) £80,000 Project, 'Securing the future of Brook Museum' had commenced in the previous year but it was in the last eight months of the project that it really came into its own both in terms of public engagement and the successful delivery of its other planned outcomes. Following the successful completion of this project in October 2023 and with a view to building on the progress already made, the Trust made an application to the Association of Independent Museums for a £15,000 project, 'Local Stories: Memories of Hopping around Brook and Wye Kent', and one to NLHF for a new £105,000 project, 'Reaching out into our communities'. They were delighted to hear both had been successful shortly before the year end.

The NLHF funded project had made it possible for the Museum to take on paid staff for the first time: Dr Philippa Mesiano as the Engagement Manager working 2 days a week, Tom Kennet as the Collections Officer working one day a week, and Fran Penberthy providing additional help with the recruitment and organisation of volunteers. They are to be congratulated on successfully delivering the lottery project, including a full audit of the museum's collection of 1,363 different items with the aid of volunteers; consultations with the local community and other stakeholders; reviewing the Museum's statement of purpose, its name(s) and branding; preparing a social media strategy, a fundraising strategy and an Interpretation Plan; developing a learning programme for every pupil in Brook primary school to visit the museum during British Science week in March 2023; arranging a series of talks and delivering a programme of themed events from April through to September 2023, including a Medieval Fayre and a Hop Festival.

The 50 page evaluation report prepared at the end of the project provides a comprehensive account of what was achieved but here one might simply note that its executive summary commends the project for exceeding a number of key targets by delivering,

- 6 themed events, 3 talks, outreach events and school visits.
- Engaging with 1,807 people, 181% of the target.
- Increasing the Museum's Facebook followers by 253% from 80 to 203 and developing an Instagram following of 159 people.
- Increasing the Museum's social media reach with one post receiving over 5,000 hits.
- Engaging with a much broader audience, with significant numbers of people under 45 and children. Social media followers include people from overseas.

- Developing more partnerships than expected.

Volunteer recruitment, one of the key aims of the project, was successful with 13 new volunteers, and both new and existing volunteers acquired new knowledge, skills and confidence. Two young people from Christ Church Canterbury University spent 40 hours each at the Museum developing collections management skills and one elected to continue as a volunteer after the end of the project.

In the light of the consultation and review carried out by the staff, the Trustees agreed that the Museum should be renamed the Brook Rural Museum (replacing several different names variously used on the website, social media and letterheads) and the new name was formally launched with a distinctive new logo depicting both barn and oast after the year end in April 2023.

Following on from this an attractive new website was launched later in the year and right at the very end of the lottery project arrangements were made for it to host (through a specially designed subsidiary site) a fully searchable digital catalogue of the museum's collection. Cataloguing to the highest modern standards is slow and painstaking work and it will take many months of additional work to complete but by the year end 200 items had been loaded, allowing all to see what a valuable resource this will become.

Another key stand of the project was to commission architects to prepare an Options Appraisal for the museum. Dow Jones architects, who have done award winning projects for a number of small museums, were appointed to undertake this work. With the benefit of measured surveys, detailed QS costings, and consultation with Historic England and the local planning authority, they presented three potential options for improving the visitor experience – interpretation, the visitor journey through the museum, access and facilities for groups and general visitors. The Trustees broadly embraced the broad vision of the proposals but recognised that more time and work was required to test the proposals and further build up the Trust's resilience before it could embark on a major capital project.

Taking account of this and a more general determination not to lose momentum after having achieved so much over the previous 15 months, the Trustees submitted a further NLHF bid in November 2023 for an £88,000 grant towards a £105,000 project titled 'Reaching out into our communities'. The project was planned to run for 18 months from March 2024 to October 2025, covering two summer seasons, and would employ a Community Engagement Officer for 3 days a week through the full eighteen month period and a Collections and Conservation Manager for 12 months. The project was designed to focus in particular on building relations with schools, care homes and other organisations in Ashford, taking account of its proximity to the museum and the relative lack of cultural offerings provided for its growing population. The good news that NLHF had approved the application came through just before the financial year end and this, combined with two welcome match funding grants from the Cromarty Trust and the Sir Charles Jessel Charitable Trust meant all was in place to embark on this exciting next chapter at the year end. That the Trust's application was successful in the face of intense competition for funding was further testimony to the confidence its recent track record is beginning to instill.

In parallel with this application the Trust also submitted a successful application to the Association for Independent Museums for a smaller £15,000 Oral History Project, 'Local Stories: Memories of Hopping around Brook and Wye Kent'. This project will be run by Dr Philippa Mesiano on a consultancy basis and will run through summer 2024 and culminate with an exhibition at the Templeman Library, University of Kent in October 2024.

The prime challenges for the coming year will be to follow through with the successful delivery of the lottery project, and following a full evaluation of its results in September 2023 to prepare to build on it, with the possibility of a follow-on application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Thanks and Acknowledgements

The Trustees thank the Cromarty Trust and Sir Charles Jessel Charitable Trust (chaired respectively by John Nightingale and Sir George Jessel) for grants towards the matching funds required for the Trust's new National Lottery Heritage Fund project, and for further match-funding grants for the AIM oral history project from the Oxus Foundation (of which Sheila Sweetinburgh is a trustee) and the discretionary fund of Brook's Ashford Borough Councillor, Simon Betty.

Thanks are due for the support given to the Trust over the terms of his tenure by Mr Francis Huntington who retired as a Trustee on 21 February 2024. The museum benefitted greatly from Francis's life-long experience in agriculture at a senior managerial level, his work in establishing and running the Wye Heritage Centre and not least his infectious enthusiasm for the work of the museum. Although his support and advice as a Trustee will be much missed, the museum looks forward to working closely with him in his continuing role at the Wye Heritage Centre.

Ms Julie Martin was appointed as a Trustee on 11 September 2023. She lives in Brabourne and recently retired from Canterbury Archaeological Trust where she was a Project Officer running excavations in Kent. Her involvement with historical reenactment groups was a great help when it came to organising the Museum's Medieval Fayre in Summer 2023.

As in previous years, the Museum relied on volunteers who staffed it during weekend openings throughout the summer and also who helped out on specific tasks relating to the reordering of exhibits in the museum. The Trustees gratefully thank them all for this vital work on which the Museum depended and look forward to working with them again. The Trustees are also very grateful to its two co-treasurers, Mr Andrew Scarfe and Mr Mike Mooney. Andrew in particular should be thanked for undertaking the detailed work processing the large number of invoices relating to the lottery project and compiling detailed financial reports required by NLHF. Paul Rodway, the Village Caretaker has undertaken the mowing of the grass area behind the barn and the Museum and the mowing of the grass in the front of the Museum.

The Trustees warmly thank Rebecca Nash, the Director of the Royal Engineers Museum in Gillingham for providing advice and attending Trust meetings in her renewed role as the museum's accreditation adviser.

Historical Background

The Trust was formed primarily to take over the Agricultural Museum at Brook from Wye College (University of London), and in 1997 purchased the great aisled barn of about 1380 (Grade I listed) and associated complex of Oast (Grade II listed) and other farm buildings at Court Lodge, Brook from the College for £75,000. At the same time the College donated the Museum's important collection of agricultural implements, wagons, carts, tools and other artefacts to the Trust at no charge.

At this time the Trust also received as a gift two parcels of land at Hollingbourne, Kent, on condition that they should never be developed. These comprise a 13-acre field known locally as Church Meadow and a small paddock beside the church in the centre of the village. The former is let to a local farmer and the paddock is let to the owners of an adjacent house. The rent from these properties forms part of the annual income of the Trust.

The Trustees set themselves an initial target of raising £200,000 in order to cover the acquisition costs, to undertake a programme of repairs and renovations and to provide an initial Endowment of £65,000. This was achieved thanks to generous support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Ashford Borough Council, the Bernard Sunley Charitable Trust, the Canterbury Farmers' Club, the Cromarty Trust, the Esmee Fairbairn Charitable Trust, Godinton Charitable Trust, the Rochester Bridge Trust, the Pilgrim Trust and a number of other charities, organisations and individuals. The repairs and renovations included the complete replacement of the lathe and plaster interior of the kiln of the Oast, repair and restoration of some of the timberwork of the Barn and the Oast, installation of fire and intruder alarm networks and conversion of the Stable Block to provide a shop, an office and modern toilet facilities, including disabled access. These works were completed under the supervision of the architects Sell Wade Postins.

Since that time there have been many changes and developments which are reported annually by the Trustees. On the repair and renovation front these have included re-tiling the roof of the roundel on the oast house and the repair of the wind-vane above this; the conversion of a workshop/storage area into a well-equipped education room which is available to outside organisations as well as the Museum itself, and the provision of a legally compliant ramp giving easy access to the education room and toilets. Other activities have included the re-labelling of the entire Museum collection, and the production of three booklets on local aspects of rural crafts with the aid of funding from the Local Heritage Initiative. The museum has cooperated closely with other Kent Museums through the Kent Museums Group, the Ashford Museums group and many training events organised through the Kent Museums Development Service.

Of particular note was the receipt of a legacy consisting of some 30 paintings by the Kent artist Clifford Nickson which formed part of the estate of Ursula Ridgewell. The Museum has arranged with the County Council for these to be hung in the Chairman's Corridor in

Sessions House, Maidstone following two or three years of display in Library Galleries around the county. A significant sum of money accompanied the paintings in the bequest as an endowment for the general benefit of the Trust and this has been invested so that the interest earned can be used for the general purposes of the Trust and, if required, the maintenance of the collection of paintings.

Summary of results and reserves policy

The financial statements for the Trust separate income and expenditure on the lottery project from general income and expenditure. General unrestricted income of £21,738 (2022/23: £17,379) and expenditure of £20,884 (2022/23: £18,591) resulted in a surplus of £854 (2022/23: deficit of £1,212); the expenditure included an internal transfer of £5,000 from general unrestricted funding to restricted funding in order to provide the required match funding for the Trust's 'Securing the Future' NLHF project. During the year £108,814 was received in restricted funds, including i) the final balance payment of £37,843 in respect of the above project, ii) £44,147 from NLHF representing the first instalment of its 'Reaching New Audiences' project which commenced in 2024, iii) £10,000 from the Cromarty Trust and Sir Charles Jessel Charitable Trust as match funding for the above project; iv) £11,074 from the Association of Independent Museums for the museum's oral history project, and v) £750 match funding from Ashford Bourough Council for the same project. £62,120 was spent on completing the first lottery project (almost exactly meeting the project budget) and £2,007 on commencing the AIM oral history project. The restricted balances of £64,025 were carried forward against expenditure on the NLHF and AIM projects in the next financial year.

The year end value of the Trust's endowment funds was £299,758 (2023: £295,185) and the surplus on operating funds, excluding the lottery project grant, was £35,458 (2023: £34,604).

Although the Trustees' standard policy is to maintain free unrestricted reserves at a level which equates to approximately six months of total expenditure by the Trust, they are currently seeking to retain the reserve to a higher level in order to help with the current lottery project and other new initiatives that may emerge from this.

The Trust held all of its endowment funds and £22,132 of its operating `surplus in the form of investments in a CCLA's Charities Official Investment Fund, M&G Charifund and the Charities Property Fund. The combined market value of the investments at 29 February 2024 was £321,890 (2023: £317,317).

Signed on behalf of the Trustees

John Nightingale

Chair of Trustees

3 December 2024

The Wye Rural Museum Trust Independent Examiner's Report

I report on the accounts of the trust for the year ended 29th February 2024, which are attached to this document.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- Examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- To follow procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) and of the 2011 Act; and
- To state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

- (1) Which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act; and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the 2011 Act

have not been met; or

- (2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Mark Minus BA(Hons) FCA
1-2 Rhodium Point
Spindle Close
Hawkinge
Folkestone,
Kent CT 18 7TQ

3 December 2024

Statements of assets and liabilities

		29th February 2024 £	28th February 2023 £
Land & buildings at Brook, at cost		75,000.00	75,000.00
Meadow land at Hollingbourne, at cost		0.00	0.00
Value of Investments	<i>£/unit</i>		
6,848.25 CCLA COIF income units	20.27	138,798.28	127,429.50
8,231.75 M&G Charifund income units	14.00	115,242.87	117,714.00
57,208.16 Charities Property Fund income units	1.19	67,848.87	72,173.81
		321,890.02	317,317.31
Current accounts			
Lloyds Bank plc Original A/C 00964515		13,576.01	12,472.25
Lloyds Bank plc Lottery A/c 83921460		63,773.71	19,335.73
		77,349.72	31,807.98
		474,239.74	424,125.29
Representing:			
Museum Fund (Land & Buildings)		75,000.00	75,000.00
Endowment			
Initial Endowment Fund		65,000.00	65,000.00
Ridgewell Bequest		124,868.00	124,868.00
Inc or Dec in Value of Investments over Cost		109,890.02	105,317.31
		299,758.02	295,185.31
Surplus (Deficit) on Unrestricted Funds		35,458.01	34,604.25
Surplus (Deficit) on Restricted Funds		64,023.71	19,335.73
		474,239.74	424,125.29
Investments at cost			
CCLA COIF invest fund income units		60,000.00	60,000.00
M&G Charifund income units		97,000.00	97,000.00
Charities Property Fund income units		55,000.00	55,000.00
		212,000.00	212,000.00

John Nightingale, Trustee

Andrew Scarfe, Treasurer

3rd December 2024

Notes to the Accounts

- 1) The museum collection of some 1,300 agricultural implements and the Ridgwell Bequest of some 30 paintings by Clifford Nickson which were donated to the Trust are not shown on the Balance Sheet.
- 2) The value of investments is 'as at the latest valuation date'.
- 3) Unrestricted grants for the year comprise a grant of £2,000 from the Cromarty Trust, a donation of £46 from Brook Parochial Council and £95 from the Museum's donation Box
- 4) Grants of £5,000 from the Cromarty Trust and £5,000 from the Sir Charles Jessell Trust were made during the year to provide match funding for the NLHF "Reaching New Audiences" project
- 5) Grants of £500 from the Oxus Foundation and £250 from Ashford Borough Council were made during the year to provide match funding for the AIM oral history project
- 6) During the year £5,000 was transferred from Unrestricted to Restricted funds to provide the balance of the required match funding for the NLHF "Securing the Future" project
- 7) Expenditure on the NLHF "Securing the future of Brook Museum" project during the year was as follows:

	£	£
Staff Wages, including PAYE & Pension Costs		20,160.91
Digital Catalogue and website	6,324.90	
Architectural Options Appraisal	13,350.00	
Fundraising Strategy	2,000.00	
Other Professional Fees	711.66	
Consultancy/Evaluation	5,000.00	
Event Costs	4,267.16	
Publicity and Promotion	1,459.28	
Volunteer Expenses	1,404.55	
Recruitment Costs	24.00	
Staff Travel	106.47	
Subscriptions	68.00	
Equipment	1,373.61	
Repairs and Conservation	748.16	
VAT	5,121.06	

	-	41,958.85

		-
		62,119.76