

The Wye Rural Museum Trust

Reg.Charity No: 1055879

Report of the Trustees for the period 1 March 2024 to 28 February 2025

Contents

Purpose and Governance of the Trust	1
Current role of the Trust: Public Benefit reporting	2
Outline of the Period	3
Thanks and Acknowledgements	5
Historical background	5
Summary of results and reserves policy	7
Independent Examiner’s Report	8
Receipts and Payments Account	9
Balance Sheet	10
Notes to Accounts	11

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*; *Ms Julie Martin*; *Mr Robert Masters* (appointed 24 June 2024); *The Rt Hon Sir John Mummery DL*; *Ms Rebecca Nash* (appointed 23 April 2024); *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 meetings of smaller groups of nominated trustees meeting regularly to undertake specific tasks such as serving on appointment panels. The Trust has a range of policies in place in keeping with its status as an accredited museum and these include safeguarding, health and safety, 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

2024/25 saw the Trust continuing to build on the momentum established in the previous two years as a result of the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) £80,000 Project, 'Securing the future of Brook Museum' which was completed in September 2023. In November 2023 the Trustees submitted a further NLHF bid for an £88,000 grant towards a £105,000 project titled 'Reaching out into our communities' which would run for 18 months from March 2024 to October 2025, covering two summer seasons, and would allow for the employment of a Community Engagement and Project Manager for three days a week and a Collections and Conservation Officer for two days a week. The new 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 start of the financial year and this, combined with two welcome match funding grants from the Cromarty Trust and the Sir Charles Jessel Charitable Trust meant the Trust was able to embark on this exciting project from April 2024. That the Trust's application was successful in the face of intense competition for funding testifies to the confidence its recent track record is beginning to instill.

Dr Philippa Messiano, who had delivered the previous NLHF project with such success, again took up the reins as Community Engagement and Project Manager, and Tom Kennett continued his work in creating a digitalised catalogue of the museum's collection of artefacts. An experienced conservation professional, Claire McQuillen, was recruited to take on the role of Conservation Officer. It was also agreed that the project should take on a long standing volunteer as a paid intern to help with cataloguing while she completed her MSt in Museum Studies – her interest in the latter having resulted from her initial experience of volunteering for the museum while a student at Christ Church Canterbury University.

The project will continue until October 2025 but a few figures give a sense of just how much has been achieved in the first year of the project:

- 1,500 people engaged with the museum over the course of the year (compared with figures of around 200 per annum before the first lottery project), including 825 people who attended themed events such as the Medieval Fayre in July and Harvest Festival in October; 163 people visited the museum through 9 group visits; more than 200 school children took part in visits from three school visits and a workshop

held for a fourth; 289 people were engaged through a range of outreach events at Wye Market, off-site talks, and care homes; Philippa's visits to care homes have proved a very successful development with requests for repeat visits.

- Work placements with Christ Church Canterbury University have begun, and placements and talks have also been organised with Ashford College
- 405 objects from the museum's collection are now accessible on the fully searchable digital catalogue of the museum's collection. The task of cataloguing the collection to the highest modern standards has past the half way mark with over 720 of the museum's collection of 1,363 items being meticulously catalogued by the year end.
- The Conservation Officer recruited ten conservation volunteers who meet with her twice a week. Initially they concentrated on cleaning the Barn and Oast House but in recent months they have begun work on specific artefacts, cleaning and treating leather items, removing rust and painting many of the ploughs and other large items displayed outside in the farm courtyard. This combined with the removal of one wagon and a couple of other large items from the Barn to offsite storage is having a transformational effect – both in creating the space required to display artefacts properly and in making the museum an exciting hive of activity when the conservation team are on site. But inevitably it has also highlighted how much more needs to be done, as areas of wet rot, wood worm and deathwatch beetle infestation have been identified.
- Other key outputs included a total of over 1,000 volunteer hours being contributed to the museum over the course of the year and a continuing increase in the reach of its website and social media with those signed up to its facebook page increasing by 29% since May 2024.

In parallel with the 'Reaching out into our Communities' NLHF project 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.' Run through the Spring and Summer of 2024 it involved the training of students to help with the collection of oral memories from a number of individuals involved with hop-growing and hop-picking and the creation of a memory box which was taken to a number of care homes. It culminated with a very successful exhibition at the Templeman Library, University of Kent in October 2024 and the outputs of the project have provided a rich set of resources for the reinterpretation of the Oast House.

The museum has been on a remarkable journey over the last three years. It now has a team of dedicated professional staff, a large group of enthusiastic volunteers and a highly experienced board of trustees. One of the key outputs for the coming financial year will be the preparation of a business plan prepared by Alix Slater Consultancy as one of the final strands of the current NLHF project. This will focus on how best to ensure that the museum can deliver its vision for the benefit of the wider community, recognising that the retention of experienced professional staff is likely to be an essential component. In the light of its analysis and recommendations the Trustees will decide whether to embark on one of the ambitious options for the development of the museum which were mapped out by the award-winning Dow Jones architects in 2023. These focussed on improving the visitor experience with regards to interpretation, the visitor journey through the museum, access and facilities for groups and general visitors. The architects' proposals were welcomed by Historic England and the Trustees

broadly embraced the vision 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. The current NLHF project was designed to do both these things and although it still has a number of months to run it is already clear that both the museum and the Trust are now more resilient and are much better placed to take on a major project of this kind which is likely to involve up to five years of intense work before it can be fully delivered.

Thanks and Acknowledgements

The Trustees thank the Agricola Club Memorial Fund, Charles Course, the Cromarty Trust, Hatch Park LLP, the Godinton Charitable Trust, the William and Edith Oldham Charitable Trust, and the discretionary fund of Brook's Ashford Borough Councillor, Simon Betty for match funding grants for the Trust's current and future projects. Without this support it would not have been possible to secure the NLHF and AIM grant funding and undertake the work at the museum made possible by these projects.

Two new Trustees joined the trustee board during the year. Ms Rebecca Nash who already knew the museum well in her capacity as its adviser on museum accreditation, brings a wealth of relevant experience from her role as the director of the Royal Engineers Museum in Gillingham. Mr Robert Masters, a former headmaster of the Judd School in Kent, who now lives in Brook, similarly brings hugely valuable experience to the board in areas such as safeguarding and fundraising. The Board has already benefited greatly from their input.

In December 2024 Fran Penberthy stepped down from the role of the Museum's administrator and volunteer coordinator which she had filled to such good effect since 2022. Although her shoes were not easy to fill, the Trustees were delighted to appoint Angela Boyle to fill a similar role from just after the year end.

The Trustees remain hugely grateful to the work Andrew Scarfe has continued to do in his role as the Trust's honorary treasurer. Accounting for lottery projects requires a lot of detailed paperwork and Andrew has done this with great skill and patience.

As in previous years, the Museum relied on volunteers who staffed it during weekend openings throughout the summer and who also helped out on specific tasks relating to the reordering of exhibits in the museum, and from this year extensive cleaning and conservation work, as noted above. The Trustees gratefully thank them all for this vital work on which the Museum depended and look forward to working with them again.

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. These have included 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 production of three booklets on local aspects of rural crafts with the aid of funding from the Local Heritage Initiative.

Of particular note was the receipt of a legacy of some 30 paintings by the Kent artist Clifford Nickson which formed part of the estate of Ursula Ridgewell. The Museum 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.

In 2022 the Trust secured a £75,000 grant from the NLHF for a twelve month project titled 'Securing the future of Brook Museum'. This allowed it to employ paid employees for the first time, namely a part-time Community Engagement Officer and a part-time Collections Officer. Outputs over the eighteen month project included a new website, an options appraisal undertaken by Dow Jones Architects, and a fund-raising strategy. A new catalogue of the museum's collections with searchable digital images was commenced, the museum was renamed the Brook Rural Museum and the first steps were taken to build up a wider audience for the Museum.

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 income of £20,749 (2023/4: £21,738) and expenditure of £18,895 (2023/24: £20,885) resulted in a surplus of £1,853 (2023/24: surplus of £854). During the year £16,500 of restricted grants and donations was received as match funding to support the Trust's NLHF, AIM and future projects. £46,120 was spent on delivering the NLHF project, 'Reaching out to our communities' and £12,912 on the AIM 'Memories of Hopping' project, in both cases drawing on the restricted funds provided for these purposes by NLHF and AIM in the previous year.

The year end value of the Trust's endowment funds was £312,739 (2024: £299,758) and the surplus on operating funds, excluding the lottery project grant, was £37,311 (2024: £35,458). The surplus on the NLHF project grant at the year end was £21,491 and this sum will be carried over for NLHF lottery project expenditure in the next financial year.

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 at 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 28 February 2025 was £334,871 (2024: £321,890).

Signed on behalf of the Trustees

John Nightingale

Chair of Trustees

17 December 2025

The Wye Rural Museum Trust Independent Examiner's Report

I report on the accounts of the trust for the year ended 28th February 2025, 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

Mark Minus BA(Hons) FCA

1-2 Rhodium Point

Spindle Close,

Hawkinge,

Folkestone,

Kent CT 18 7TQ

17 December 2025

THE WYE RURAL MUSEUM TRUST

<u>Income & Expenditure</u>	<u>Notes</u>	<u>Unrestricted</u>	<u>Restricted</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Total</u>
		<u>1.3.24 to 28.02.25</u>	<u>1.3.24 to 28.02.25</u>	<u>1.3.24 to 28.02.25</u>	<u>1.3.23 to 29.02.24</u>
		<u>£</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>£</u>
INCOME					
Investment Income		15,442.92	0.00	15,442.92	14,281.17
Hollingbourne Rents (Church Meadow & Green)		1,923.00	0.00	1,923.00	1,923.00
Events		2,246.00	0.00	2,246.00	1,846.09
Visitors		833.88	0.00	833.88	663.85
Hire of Thomas Hill Room		0.00	0.00	0.00	58.00
Nightingale Lecture Income		0.00	0.00	0.00	85.00
Hire of facilities		0.00	0.00	0.00	740.00
Interest received from savings account		302.70	0.00	302.70	0.00
Grants and Donations:					
Unrestricted		0.00	0.00	0.00	2,141.15
Restricted	3	0.00	16,500.00	16,500.00	0.00
NLHF: "Securing future" project		0.00	0.00	0.00	37,843.00
NLHF: "Reaching out" project		0.00	0.00	0.00	44,147.00
Matching grants for "Reaching out"		0.00	0.00	0.00	10,000.00
AIM "Memories of Hopping" project		0.00	0.00	0.00	11,074.00
Matching Funds for AIM Project		0.00	0.00	0.00	750.00
Transfer from unrestricted to restricted funds		0.00	0.00	0.00	5,000.00
	Total Receipts	20,748.50	16,500.00	37,248.50	130,552.26
EXPENDITURE					
Mowing & cleaning costs		1,214.76	0.00	1,214.76	1,224.11
Insurance		3,505.85	0.00	3,505.85	3,249.42
Alarm maintenance		1,652.40	0.00	1,652.40	2,220.40
Electricity, water, telephone & rates		1,690.54	0.00	1,690.54	1,296.37
Website Maintenance		778.77	0.00	778.77	308.80
Subscriptions		201.00	0.00	201.00	232.00
General maintenance work		5,600.60	0.00	5,600.60	1,986.57
Staff Salary		3,177.10	0.00	3,177.10	1,362.40
Volunteers Conservation Training & Meal etc		950.67	0.00	950.67	1,461.02
Consultancy fees		0.00	0.00	0.00	2,400.00
Sundry		123.70	0.00	123.70	143.41
NLHF projects: staff salaries	4	0.00	25,481.48	25,481.48	20,160.91
NLHF projects: other expenditure	4	0.00	20,638.96	20,638.96	41,958.85
AIM Memories of Hopping Project expenditure	5	0.00	12,911.89	12,911.89	2,006.66
Transfer from unrestricted to restricted funds		0.00	0.00	0.00	5,000.00
	Total Payments	18,895.39	59,032.33	77,927.72	85,010.92
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR		1,853.11	(42,532.33)	(40,679.22)	45,541.74
Balance of Funds brought forward		35,458.01	64,023.71	99,481.72	53,939.98
Balance of Funds carried to Balance Sheet		37,311.12	21,491.38	58,802.50	99,481.72

THE WYE RURAL MUSEUM TRUST

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES	28th February 2025 £	29th February 2024 £
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 at 28 February (note 2)	<i>£/unit</i>	
6,848.25 CCLA COIF income units	20.54 140,663.74	138,798.28
8,231.75 M&G Charifund income units	15.30 125,986.13	115,242.87
57,208.16 Charities Property Fund income units	1.19 68,220.73	67,848.87
	334,870.59	321,890.02
Current accounts		
Lloyds Bank plc Original A/C 00964515	22,471.42	13,576.01
Lloyds Bank plc Grants A/C 83921460	199.08	63,773.71
Lloyds Bank plc Lottery Savings A/C 14009063	14,000.00	0.00
	36,670.50	77,349.72
	446,541.09	474,239.74
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	122,870.59	109,890.02
	312,738.59	299,758.02
Surplus (Deficit) on Unrestricted Funds	37,311.12	35,458.01
Surplus (Deficit) on Restricted Funds	21,491.38	64,023.71
	446,541.09	474,239.74
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

17 December 2025

THE WYE RURAL MUSEUM TRUST

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) The following restricted grants were received during the year to support the current NLHF project and to match fund future grant applications
- | | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------|--|
| Ashford Borough Council | 500.00 | |
| Charles Course | 1,000.00 | |
| The Cromarty Trust | 5,000.00 | |
| Hatch Park LLP | 1,000.00 | |
| The Godinton Charitable Trust | 2,000.00 | |
| William and Edith Charitable Trust | 5,000.00 | |
| Agricola Club Memorial Fund | 2,000.00 | |
| | ----- | |
| | 16,500.00 | |
- 4) Expenditure on the NLHF "Reaching out into our communities" project during the year was as follows:
- | | £ | £ |
|---|----------|-----------|
| Staff Wages, including PAYE & Pension Costs | | 25,481.48 |
| Professional Fees | 6,101.76 | |
| Recruitment | 0.00 | |
| Digital outputs | 340.00 | |
| Volunteer Expenses | 695.79 | |
| Volunteer Travel | 101.70 | |
| Volunteer Training | 606.00 | |
| Repair & Conservation | 1,243.00 | |
| Equipment & Materials inc. learning | 2,807.30 | |
| Staff Expenses | 11.40 | |
| Staff Travel | 271.61 | |
| Staff Training | 280.00 | |
| Evaluation | 2,550.00 | |
| Event Costs | 3,641.50 | |
| Other/Sundry | 0.00 | |
| Publicity and Promotion | 637.12 | |
| Contingency | 0.00 | |
| Vat | 1,351.78 | |
| | ----- | |
| | | 20,638.96 |
| | | ----- |
| | | 46,120.44 |
- 5) Expenditure on the AIM "Memories of Hopping" project during the year was as follows:
- | | | |
|--|----------|-----------|
| Consultancy for management and delivery of project | 8,250.00 | |
| Oral History Training | 577.69 | |
| Equipment | 172.83 | |
| Volunteer expenses | 155.28 | |
| Events | 144.60 | |
| Interpretation | 3,546.49 | |
| Advertising & promotion | 65.00 | |
| | ----- | |
| | | 12,911.89 |