Annual Charity Report

Charity Number: 1201620
Charity Registered: 17th January 2023
Period Covered: 1st February 2025 – 31st January 2026

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1. STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

1.1 Charity Trustees

The Museum is governed by a Board of Trustees who give their time voluntarily. Trustees during the period were:

- **Paul Hedges** - Chair and Secretary
- **Vic Morgan** - Trustee
- **James Spencer** - Trustee and Treasurer
- **Stephen Mytton** - Trustee
- **Sharon LeMaitre** - Trustee
- **Dick Mattick** - Trustee
- **Stephen Trowbridge** - Trustee
- **Andy Cossens** – Trustee

1.2 Nature of Charity

Swindon Town Football Club Museum is a registered charity established to preserve, document, and promote the rich sporting heritage of Swindon Town Football Club. The Museum serves as both a custodian of the club's history and an educational resource for the wider community.

1.3 Objectives and Strategy

The charity's mission is to create a world-class museum that:

- Preserves the tangible and intangible heritage of Swindon Town Football Club
- Tells the club's unique story through interactive exhibits, rare artefacts, and memorabilia
- Provides visitors (fans, researchers, and the general public) with an engaging and inspirational experience
- Establishes educational programmes aligned with curriculum standards
- Recognises and celebrates the contributions of club legends and former players
- Achieves national recognition through accreditation and partnerships

2. REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES

2.1 Achievements

Major Projects Completed

The 1969 League Cup Project

The Museum's flagship project continued to deliver substantial outcomes throughout 2026:

- Produced the documentary "Against All Odds: The Story of the 1969 League Cup", featuring interviews, archive footage, and rare photography
- Released 23 short-form videos across social media platforms, each tracing the journey to the final
- Achieved tens of thousands of views on social media, significantly raising the profile of the Museum and the club's heritage
- Organised a filmed return to Wembley and VIP tour for three members of the 1969 winning team
- Purchased a replica 1969 League Cup trophy, now used for displays and supporter photo opportunities
- Sourced and professionally digitised 34 previously unseen colour photographs from the Langton Archive taken at Wembley in March 1969
- Secured 10-year usage rights for all archival photographs
- Acquired 15 commemorative badges from the 1969 League Cup Final for professional mounting and display

The project has strengthened relationships with former players, enhanced the Museum's digital presence, and created a model for future heritage projects. The documentary and accompanying materials serve as both an archival resource and a fundraising tool.

Rev. William Pitt Grave Restoration

In August 2025, the Museum Trustees became aware that the grave of Swindon Town founder Rev. William Pitt in Liddington was in poor condition. This represented a significant historical loss, given Rev. Pitt's foundational role in establishing the club in 1879.

The Museum unanimously agreed to fund and commission urgent restoration work, which was completed in January 2026. This project not only preserved an important piece of the club's origins but also demonstrated the Museum's commitment to heritage preservation.

Collections and Cataloguing

- Catalogued and inventoried approximately 10,500 artefacts, representing one of the most comprehensive collections of Swindon Town memorabilia
- Cleaned, restored, and professionally labelled trophy cabinet items
- Organised and catalogued Board Minute Books from the 1950s and 1960s, creating a valuable administrative archive
- Acquired and professionally mounted the Harold Fleming medal collection with authenticated portrait display
- Acquired David Hockaday's 1985–86 Division Four winners' medal and signed letter of authenticity
- Sourced and restored a rare 130-year-old Victorian tobacco tin (1895–96 Head Quarters Box) featuring early club legends

The Legends Lounge Development

With written agreement from the club, the Legends Lounge at the County Ground has been established as the Museum's interim home. Significant enhancements were made during 2025:

- Installed a digital touchscreen kiosk showcasing historical facts, images, and videos as a proof-of-concept for future digital experiences
- Funded the creation and installation of 23 framed photographs of Town legends around the bar area
- Installed a comprehensive Historical Timeline feature wall
- Replicated the full Hall of Fame board listings in the Lounge, making them accessible to all supporters

Community Engagement

Stadium Tours

- Conducted 25+ guided tours of the stadium and museum space
- Hosted over 500 visitors, incl. individual supporters, family groups, and organised parties
- Surveys showed outstanding satisfaction ratings:
    - Booking experience: 4.9/5
    - Welcome on arrival: 4.5/5
    - Tour guide quality: 4.7/5
    - Tour coverage: 4.5/5
    - Overall satisfaction: 4.7/5

Visitor Feedback Highlights

"Dick and John Trollope were very welcoming. The experience was excellent with both of them talking about the history and their own stories. Thank you both."

"An excellent, welcoming tour of the club we all love."

"Went with my two children, they loved it."

Former Players and Staff Association (FPSA)

- Launched the FPSA with an initial contact list of approximately 150 former club members
- Hosted the first former players' event in 2025; further gatherings planned to strengthen relationships with past players
- Committed to keeping players of previous generations connected to the club and ensuring their contributions remain celebrated

Community Outreach

- Delivered talks to local history groups and area representatives, focusing on the club's broader heritage and local connections
- Supported research requests from fans investigating family links and individual stories
- Developed partnerships with historians and cultural organisations

Accreditation Progress

- Commenced formal working relationship with Museum Development South West
- Undergone comprehensive assessment against museum accreditation standards
- Started to develop documentation, security measures, and visitor management protocols
- Started developing formal collection care policies aligned with Spectrum-compliant inventory processes
- Established environmental monitoring and conservation standards

This process, while rigorous, has provided the Museum with gold-standard professional guidance and this will help to elevate the quality of operations significantly.

Digital Archive and Innovation

- Supported the digitisation of Cecil Green's 100+ pages of handwritten memoirs
- Purchased an interactive digital kiosk to provide real-time access to historical information
- Created social media content strategy generating significant engagement

2.2 Objectives for Future Years

The Museum has identified the following strategic priorities:

Phase 1: Legends Lounge Consolidation (Current)

- Further enhance the Legends Lounge as the Museum's home
- Install initial kiosk and then additional interactive digital kiosks around the County Ground to enrich matchday and tour experiences
- Establish regular set opening hours for supporters
- Develop membership programmes to provide sustainable funding

Phase 2: Major Projects Pipeline

The Museum is developing major research projects centred on key periods in club history:

- **The 1879 Project:** Explore Swindon Town's formative years from Rev. William Pitt's foundation through early triumphs and challenges
- **The Pre-War Heroes Project:** Document Harold Fleming, Sam Allen, and other successful FA Cup-era players, including the Dubonnet Cup and Tour of Argentina/Uruguay
- **The 1970 Anglo-Italian Cup Project:** Research this exciting tournament in depth, seeking materials and perspectives from fans and former participants
- **The Wembley Wins Project:** Comprehensive coverage of the club's three national stadium successes (1969, 1990, 1993), told from the fan perspective
- **The Legends Project:** Recognition of the club's greatest players throughout history
- **The Nigel Eady Project:** Document the story of Nigel Eady and his transformational impact on Foundation Park and the training centre development

Phase 3: Physical Museum Development

- Secure a dedicated permanent museum space with regular opening hours
- Develop a comprehensive exhibition suite covering all eras of club history
- Create interactive displays incorporating video screens, touchscreen exhibits, and immersive experiences
- Establish climate-controlled storage and conservation facilities

Phase 4: Educational and Digital Innovation

- Produce curriculum-aligned educational resources for local schools
- Develop virtual-museum experiences and interactive online exhibitions
- Create video documentaries and oral history projects
- Establish partnerships with educational institutions and heritage organisations
- Introduce emerging technologies (AR, VR) for enhanced visitor engagement

Phase 5: Sustainability and Growth

- Expand the paid membership base to provide long-term financial security
- Develop merchandise lines and heritage-themed products
- Pursue grant funding and sponsorship opportunities
- Create revenue streams through tours, events, and educational programmes

3. REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES AND PERFORMANCE

3.1 Artefacts and Collections

The Museum has successfully accumulated and catalogued one of the most significant collections of Swindon Town memorabilia in existence, with over 10,500 items now systematically recorded. Collections include:

- Historical shirts, kits, and player memorabilia
- Medals, trophies, and awards
- Photographs and documentary materials
- Manuscripts, letters, and administrative records
- Programmes, tickets, and ephemera
- Video and audio recordings
- Banners, scarves, and fan memorabilia

All items are stored in accordance with museum conservation standards and Spectrum-compliant cataloguing procedures.

3.2 Visitor Engagement

Through guided stadium tours and museum visits, the charity has directly engaged over 500 individuals during 2025. Feedback demonstrates high satisfaction and meaningful engagement with the club's heritage. Tours are led by knowledgeable volunteers including former players, creating authentic connections between visitors and the club's history.

3.3 Digital and Media Output

The Museum has established a significant digital presence through:

- YouTube documentary series and short-form videos
- Social media engagement (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter)
- Digital kiosk exhibits
- Ongoing content creation

This has significantly expanded the Museum's reach beyond the stadium to a national and international audience.

3.4 Volunteer and Staff Contributions

The Museum operates entirely through volunteer effort. Key contributors include:

- Dick Mattick and John Trollope MBE – lead tour guides
- Museum Trustee Team – governance, fundraising, and strategic direction
- Community volunteers – collection management, cataloguing, and event support

The value of volunteer time invested during 2025 significantly exceeds any paid staffing equivalent.

5. PLANS FOR FUTURE YEARS

5.1 Immediate Priorities (2026–2027)

1. **Legends Lounge Enhancement:** Install digital display and expand operating hours
2. **Accreditation:** Work with Museum Development SW to attain accreditation
3. **Membership Launch:** Actively promote the tiered membership structure
4. **1879 Project Initiation:** Create new materials around the club's formative years
5. **Educational Partnerships:** Develop resources and programmes for local schools

5.2 Medium-Term Goals (2027–2029)

1. **Major Exhibition Development:** Complete comprehensive exhibition covering all eras of club history
2. **Project Execution:** Deliver The Pre-War Heroes and Anglo-Italian Cup projects
3. **Digital Innovation:** Implement advanced technologies for enhanced visitor experiences
4. **National Recognition:** Achieve formal museum accreditation and establish partnerships with national heritage bodies

5.3 Long-Term Vision (2029+)

- Establish Swindon Town Football Club Museum as a nationally recognised destination for sports heritage
- Create a world-class facility serving fans, researchers, and the wider community
- Become a model for club museums throughout the football league
- Develop sustainable financial model supporting ongoing operations and growth
- Preserve the complete history of Swindon Town for future generations