

# **Lymm Heritage Information Centre**

## **Trustees Annual Report for the Year ending 31st December 2024**

Reg Charity 1164961



### **TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT 2024 – CONTENTS**

1.	Introduction	2
2.	Objectives	2
3.	Governance and Management	2
4.	Financial Report	3
5.	Exhibitions	5
6.	Learning	6
7.	The Lymm Archive	6
8.	IT Team	7
9.	Volunteers	7
10.	Friends & Sponsors	9
11.	Additional / Miscellaneous Activities	9
12.	Marketing & Promotion	10
13.	On-line presence	10
14.	Retail	11
15.	The Year Ahead	12

#### **ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31<sup>st</sup> DECEMBER 2024**

Receipts and Payments account

Statement of Assets & Liabilities

## 1. Introduction

The trustees present their report for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024.

Lymm Heritage Information Centre is a registered charity. It was originally formed and constituted as a volunteer group in January 2015 and became registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (Lymm Heritage information Centre No 1164961) on 22 December 2015. The address of the charity is Lymm Heritage Centre, 1 Legh Street, Lymm, WA13 0DA.

The Heritage Centre first opened its doors to the public as an exhibition centre on 22 June 2017 and by the end of 2024 the Centre had welcomed 39,263 visitors on public open days. Visitor numbers for 2024 totalled 4,882. This was the lowest number of annual visitors since opening apart from the covid closure affected years of 2020 and 2021. These figures do not include visiting groups and education sessions with schools. These visitor numbers compare to 6,130 in 2023 and 5,701 in 2022. The low public visitor numbers in 2024 are thought to be largely attributable to the lack of any temporary exhibition until August and very wet weather in the early months of the year

The Lymm Digital Archive (aka LyDiA) continued to thrive with over 6,000 images now on the archive.

Extensive use was made of social media to maintain contact with Facebook followers across the Lymm Heritage page and the Lymm Memories group.

Financially, the Centre recorded a small surplus – in contrast to 2022 and 2023 when expenditure exceeded income by an average of some £3,500. The Centre continues to hold very strong reserves but new initiatives may be needed if we are to ensure that the deficit does not recur and/or widen annually. More detail is contained in the Financial Report.

The Centre runs smoothly but this is only because a large part of the burden is carried by the trustees themselves. There is an ongoing need to spread workload whilst also bringing in new perspectives, insights, and more specialised skills.

## 2. Objectives

Our Registered Charity constitution states our overall objective as:

*“To advance the education of the public by providing and maintaining a heritage centre and museum for the exhibition to the public of objects, documents, photographs and other items connected with the history of Lymm, Cheshire and surrounding district.”*

## 3. Governance and Management

The Trustees are:

Alan Williams – Chair, Exhibitions Development and Publicity

Patrick Knowles – Treasurer

Glynis Allen – Lymm Archive Co-ordinator

Mark Linnell – Volunteer Co-ordinator

Peter Graham - Exhibitions and Building

Suzanne Kellett – Visitor Experience and Children’s Activities

As a very small charity the trustees effectively operate as the management team too but are backed up by several sub-groups led by or with key members as follows:

Object and artefact archiving – Vacant  
Centre volunteers - Mark Linnell  
Education - Sandra Surtees.  
Oral history (dormant) - Glynis Allen  
Premises – Peter Graham  
Finance - Patrick Knowles  
Exhibitions - Alan Williams  
Research - Roger Hannam  
Friends' Admin - Chris Wakefield/Patrick Knowles  
ICT lead - Carol Sparkes  
Retail - Alan Williams/ Patrick Knowles  
Room Hire - Alan Williams/ Patrick Knowles  
Group visits - Alan Williams  
Displays - Colin & Janet Grimes  
Lymm Memories Facebook group admin - Diane Kerfoot

## 4. Financial report

During the year ended 31 December 2024 the charity had income of £22,463 and made payments of £22,297 resulting in a net surplus of £166. This compares to net annual deficits averaging c. £3,500 in both 2023 and 2022. Full details are included in the accounts at the end of this report.

Generating sufficient income to cover costs has been a real challenge in recent years so producing a surplus, albeit a modest one, is especially pleasing.

The surplus was achieved by a c. £2,000 increase in income and a c.£2,000 decrease in payments. Education income grew by around £1,000 as more paying sessions were held for local primary children. Total donations grew by almost £500 and interest income increased by some £700 reflecting higher interest rates. Retail sales reduced by 4% but the reduction was more than offset by the increases in other income sources. Retail stocks were reduced by over £700.

The trustees are very grateful to all those individuals and bodies who have made donations during the year – especially Friends and Lymm Historic Transport Day. Donation income included:

	2024 £	2023 £
Public donations	1,909	1,656
Friends of Lymm Heritage Centre	2,463	2,239
Lymm Historic Transport Day	3,000	3,000
Other donors	160	190
Total	7,532	7,085

Turning to expenditure, the charity's most significant cost was the rent of £1,000 per month. It should be remembered however that the Centre's landlord gave the charity a very generous initial three- year rent free period to help the Centre get established.

Capital expenditure of £840 included an outside shed for additional storage capacity.

### Cash

At the end of 2024 the charity had cash at bank and in hand balances totalling £110,072 – an increase of £166 from £109,906 at the beginning of the year.

### The year ahead and longer term

Longer term our cash flow projection shows that the Centre is likely to incur annual operating costs, excluding new exhibition spend and capital expenditure, of around £22,000 at current prices. As ever, it will be a challenge to generate sufficient income to cover these costs as well as capital expenditure, new exhibition costs and repair and replacement costs as the Centre and assets age. We are fortunate to have substantial cash reserves to act as a buffer.

A substantial proportion of our annual costs will be fixed (60% to 75%) and this has been borne in mind when setting our reserves' policy – see below.



*Mr and Mrs De Meurs were visiting from Gloucestershire to carry out family research so were delighted to discover that they were our 35,000th visitors.*

### Reserves policy

The charity's policy is that unrestricted reserves represented by cash and liquid balances should not exceed, for an extended period, an amount equivalent to four years anticipated unrestricted

expenditure. This means that the charity could continue to operate for a significant period where income was considerably lower than forecast unrestricted expenditure and/or costs higher than expected.

At the end of 2024, the charity's unrestricted reserves amounted to £107,545 (cash £110,072 plus debtors £2,522 less creditors/accruals £499 less provision for dilapidations on ultimate closure of the Centre £4,550). At the end of 2023 reserves on the same calculation basis were £107,550.

£107,550 compares to a long-term policy **maximum** of approximately £100,000 to £110,000.

## 5. Exhibitions

Progress on extending the exhibition area into the office space was disappointingly slow in 2024 due to lack of resource. There was one temporary exhibition during 2024. "Memory Banks" charted the history of the site of the Barclays Bank building on the corner of Eagle Brow and Bridgewater Street. The display consisted of five illustrated storyboards supported by a short video. The exhibition did result in a spike in visitor numbers for several weeks.

### *Window Displays*

The Memory Banks temporary exhibition was supported by a window display assembled by Colin and Janet Grimes. In addition, they also designed and installed our annual Remembrance and Christmas windows to their usual high creative standard.



*This year's featured soldier from the Roll of Honour was Private Edward Johnson who was tragically killed on the first day of the Passchendaele offensive in WWI. His descendants came to visit the display and were proud and thrilled by what they saw. This material was also used at the High School- part of the beginning of a closer relationship with the school following the appointment of a new head of history.*

## **6. Learning.**

The education team was led throughout the year by Sandra Surtees, a retired Primary Head. Sandra was assisted by some eight volunteers – most of whom formerly worked in education.

A good number of sessions were run for local schools on a variety of topics.

Income from education activities was £1,514 – up almost £1,000 compared to the previous year.

In addition to the sessions run by the main team there were four days of education activity during June run in conjunction with the Ellesmere Port Boat Museum education team and the staff of the flyboat Saturn, an educational charity. The sessions were co-ordinated, as they have been from the outset, by Mary Trotter. Five class groups from various schools in the area learnt about many aspects of life on a working canal boat. The children were given other canal related build projects in the Centre during their half-day visits.

## **7. The Lymm Archive**

Active users of The Lymm Archive increased by nearly 1,000 during the year, up from 5,489 in 2023 to 6,433 by December 2024 - as registered by Google Analytics.

Notably, the investment in the 2023 software upgrade from our digital hosting partner, Townsweb Archiving, has almost certainly contributed and increased the possibilities in the way that we can present information. The website now has over 6,000 images, with the most viewed collection in 2024 being images of Warburton Village. Showcased within the archive's 'What's New' section, this fascinating compilation of pictures particularly stood out in that they were originally donated to the Centre as transparencies, and were carefully transformed by our lead photographer for the Archive, Alan Taylor.

Over the year, Lymm Photographic Society also worked collaboratively with the Archive. The Society captured '*a year in the life of a dairy farm*' at Agden Book Farm. Images here reflected people and activities, especially as Cheshire farm life undergoes major changes. For example, during the period of this project, the farm's dairy herd was sold at auction.

Moreover, the Archive Team continues to respond to increasing opportunities and continued access via our technology to produce 3D imagery led by Carol Sparkes. Knowledge and awareness is also broadened from attending meetings and presentations through Museums of Cheshire, Warrington Heritage Network and Culture Warrington.

The Lymm Archive continues with its strong commitment to reach new audiences and to expand the collections it holds, whilst making them accessible and meaningful both to the local community and the significant social media interest from around the world.

## **8. IT team.**

Over the last year the IT Team has stabilised with three volunteers, who have jelled well as a team, each with their own skills and interests.

The team was very grateful to have received a charitable donation of a Dell OptiPlex small PC from Warrington Gateway. This box has been configured specifically to facilitate an emergency hot-swap for the Heritage Centre's main PC, should its hard disk ever fail.

A source of frustration this year has been the fact that the Warrington Archives have been unable to fulfil their part of the back-up Agreement we negotiated with them in 2023, to store copies of LHIC key data on their network, as a resilience contingency should LHIC ever cease to operate. The issue lies with Warrington Museum and Library's IT resources; their IT Team has faced their own challenges over the last year. However, by way of mitigation a non-networked copy of LHIC data is held at Warrington Archive, updated periodically. The Centre's own onsite and offsite backups continue to run successfully.

The IT team attempts to keep a watching brief on Lymm Heritage Centre related information produced on volunteers' own devices, capturing copies of these wherever possible, periodically.

The inventory of technical hardware, software and services has again been brought up to date and is now being maintained real-time. As an innovation to that, photographs of hardware assets are now being recorded, to ease their identification. In the last year, the Centre's PC and associated equipment has been moved into a more easily accessible office and further work has been undertaken around the quality of internet provision. The IT Team continue to provide technical support, in various guises, to The Lymm Archive Team and in early 2025, the teams have installed a new book scanner, connected to the Centre's PC.

The Team lead would like to thank the IT volunteers Chris Norton and Pauline Hobin for their continued support and enthusiasm, and without whom the team would be unable to operate as effectively as it does.

## **9. Volunteers**

It takes a huge amount of volunteer effort to keep the Heritage Centre running efficiently and professionally. Stewarding, education, IT, archiving, research, display, retail, room hire, admin & finance and social media have all been covered to a high standard by members of the team albeit a disproportionate amount of responsibility tends to fall on a small core group.

Lymm Heritage Centre opens Thursday to Sunday afternoons (12 noon to 4pm) throughout the year, staffed by many of those volunteers. Inevitably there is some "churn" in that team as volunteers step down for various reasons, typically ill health. In all the Centre has approximately 30 volunteers who are actively involved at least once a month. This number has fallen slightly since 2022. The demographic is not surprisingly heavily biased towards retired people. Most volunteers join for the opportunity to do room stewarding. As always, there is scope for volunteers who would like to take a lead in key roles such as marketing and exhibition management.



The trustees wish to thank all volunteers for their efforts and contributions during the year, recognising that the Centre and supporting activities could not operate without their time and dedication.



**Volunteer (and Trustee) Peter Graham at work on the erection of a storage shed to the side of the Centre – April 2024.**



## 10. Friends and Sponsors

Income from our Friends scheme this year generated £2,716, compared to £2,671 in 2023. A small number of new Friends were recruited in the year helping to offset those who sadly passed away or decided not to renew. Membership remains at £12 per individual and £20 per couple/family.

During the year, on cost grounds, it was decided not to continue the contract with the company that provided the functionality via our website for Friends to pay by card or direct debit. This will save c. £400 per year. Now, as far as possible, we encourage membership payment by a recurring method such as standing order.

Some of our Friends go on to become volunteers or to support in other ways. We also have a business sponsor at £100 p.a. Friends and sponsors provide a vital, regular source of income. We are keen to grow this area as much as possible but need to introduce the scheme to visitors more proactively.

## 11. Additional / Miscellaneous Activities

The Centre hosted a small number of visiting groups as well as providing a couple of talks. During the year a page of *talk topics* was added to the website for reference for talks and visits.

Throughout the year the Centre responds to an ever-increasing number of online enquiries predominantly related to family history. We are frequently able to assist.

In November the Heritage Centre hosted the annual performance of the souling play by the Warburton Soulers. It was well attended with an audience of around 30.

The Centre also designed and wrote a board to mark the Peter Powell Memorial Garden in the Village centre.



*Peter Powell's grandson, who has inherited his role as town crier at the opening of the display board*

In December, the Centre participated in the St Mary's Christmas Tree Festival.

The Centre is a participating member of the Warrington Heritage Network, the Museums of Cheshire Group and AIM - the Association of Independent Museums.



*In December the Centre hosted a very successful social quiz and refreshments afternoon for friends and volunteers.*

## 12. Marketing & Promotion

Social media continues to be a significant point of access to our potential audiences. Local press outlets, Lymm Life and Warrington Guardian, continue to be supportive and we have advertised in the former to promote specific activities. Marketing is an area that could benefit greatly from additional focused resource but also appears to be one where it is particularly difficult to recruit suitably skilled and committed volunteers. For the third consecutive year the Centre significantly underspent its budget.

## 13. On-line presence

Our online reach is an important means of sharing heritage and also generating interest in visiting. The Heritage Centre is represented in four main ways online.

1. **The Centre website** [www.lymmhic.co.uk](http://www.lymmhic.co.uk) -had a major makeover during 2021 with the development of a more consistent and simplified style and presentation. The website had all-time high traffic in 2020 of 4,769 unique visitors for 6,702 site sessions, averaging over 13 minutes. This is very likely related to Covid and the general upsurge in online activity. The equivalent figures for 2021 were 2,576 unique visitors for 3,473 sessions. In 2022 this fell again to 1,912 sessions for 1,326 unique visitors. In 2023 the figures were very similar with 1,959 site sessions for 1,444 visitors.
2. **The Lymm Heritage Shop** – The Heritage shop was moved during 2023 to become part of the main Lymm Heritage Centre website. This was prompted by potential subscription cost

savings. Visitors to the previous site are automatically redirected to the main Heritage Centre site.

3. **The Lymm Digital Archive (aka LyDiA).** [www.thelymmarchive.co.uk](http://www.thelymmarchive.co.uk) The work of the archive team has been reported on more fully in Section 7.
4. **Heritage Centre Facebook group increased its followers from 2,778 in 2021 and 2,897 in 2022 to 3,048 in 2023.** That number again increased again to 3,125. During 2024 the page was used to promote the Lymm Archive but otherwise used predominantly to promote events and activities rather than sharing heritage material. It would be good to do more of the latter but would need a new volunteer resource to achieve this. The single most viewed post (9,035) was a short video promoting the “Memory Banks” exhibition.  
**Lymm Memories Facebook group-** This group grew from 2,675 (2021) and 2,740 (2022) to 2,821 by the end of 2023. This grew further in 2024 to approximately 2,900. Like the Heritage Centre site, as a niche group, further growth is likely be incremental. This is mainly a reminiscence group administered on our behalf by a lifelong resident of Lymm. Members also help with information for the archive and provide stories and information for publications.

In addition to the above, the Centre has a mailing list of approximately 400 who receive at least quarterly newsletters. The Centre also has an Instagram account which is still in its infancy. The Centre would benefit from additional specialist resource to help develop the online presence and impact.

The Centre can clearly see the ever- growing importance of social media as a means of keeping people informed, sharing heritage stories and promoting visits and activities. With that in mind the trustees remain keen to recruit a volunteer with specialist skills in this area.

## 14. Retail

Retail again had a difficult year. The reasons are probably:

- The general cost of living crisis. The kind of casual, impulse spend that characterises the Heritage Centre is understandably hit hard in the current economic climate.
- Market saturation. The first Lymm book published by authors Alan Williams and Alan Taylor back in 2013 sold over 500 copies in the first 4 weeks and eventually sold approximately 1,350. It had the advantage of novelty. There had never been a book of this amount and quality produced before. Since then, there have been eleven in total, some more niche than others. Some inevitably revisit similar material and use repeats of images.

The new publication for 2024 – “Oughtrington Hall and its People”, researched and written by Roger Hannam, proved popular and sold out 90% of its 200 copy print run within eight months.

It is perhaps inevitable after almost eight years that we may need to reset our expectations of retail sales volumes in future years unless there are new products that capture the visitors’ imagination.

## 15.The Year ahead

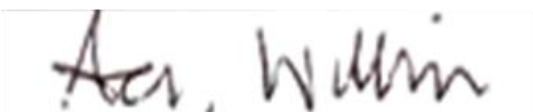
Looking back 2024 could be seen as a year of consolidation but with limited progress. The need for a small group of more pro-active volunteers with the skills and enthusiasm to deliver on new initiatives remains the key to further advancement. The need is made even more urgent by the more limited availability of the Chair due to family health reasons. This is likely to become even more the case in 2025. On the plus side it is gratifying to know that thanks to our strong financial position we have the potential to fund the right initiatives in relation to the following five key objectives.

- A coherent, focused marketing campaign aimed at increasing visitor numbers.
- A more attractive family offering aimed at reproducing some of our success in 2019.
- A pro-active campaign to encourage more group visits along with an expansion in the number of people equipped to host these visits.
- Some new initiatives to “freshen” the core exhibition with new features.
- Recruitment of new Friends.

**Contact Alan Williams—Chair of Trustee 07540—096282 lymmheritagecentre@gmail.com**

**TRUSTEES REPORT APPROVED 25th June 2025**

Alan Williams, Chair of Trustees



Patrick Knowles, Treasurer



**LYMM HERITAGE INFORMATION CENTRE**

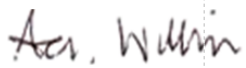
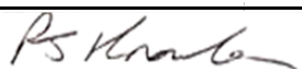
**RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024**

	2024	2023
	£	£
<b>A1 RECEIPTS</b>		
Donations	7,532	7,085
Sale of goods	5,482	5,726
Education income	1,514	524
Walks and talks	299	300
Room hire	3,715	3,592
Interest income	3,060	2,370
Gift Aid receipts	861	898
<b>TOTAL RECEIPTS</b>	<b>22,463</b>	<b>20,495</b>
<b>A3 PAYMENTS</b>		
Purchases of goods	1,269	2,459
Rent	12,000	12,000
Utilities and broadband	2,483	1,860
Insurance	1,009	964
Minor capital items	356	248
Software licences and support	1,880	2,693
Exhibition costs	666	744
Education costs	489	400
Publicity	410	646
Refreshments	26	35
Cleaning	100	99
Printing, postage & stationery	106	118
Subscriptions	0	88
Sundry expenses	559	770
Repairs and renewals	11	312
Retail goods selling costs	93	154
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>21,457</b>	<b>23,590</b>
<b>A4 ASSET &amp; INVESTMENT PURCHASES</b>		
Other fixtures, fittings, and equipment	840	785
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>840</b>	<b>785</b>
<b>TOTAL PAYMENTS</b>	<b>22,297</b>	<b>24,375</b>
<b>NET RECEIPTS/(PAYMENTS)</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>(3,880)</b>
Cash funds at 31 December 2023	109,906	113,786
Cash funds at 31 December 2024	110,072	109,906

**LYMM HERITAGE INFORMATION CENTRE**

**STATEMENT OF ASSETS & LIABILITIES AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2024**

	31/12/2024	31/12/2023
	£	£
<b>B1 CASH FUNDS</b>		
Cash in hand	385	204
Cash at bank	109,687	109,702
	<u>110,072</u>	<u>109,906</u>
<b>B2 OTHER MONETARY ASSETS</b>		
Gift Aid debtor	834	747
Trade debtors		3
Accrued interest receivable	1,688	1,122
	<u>2,522</u>	<u>1,872</u>
<b>B4 ASSETS RETAINED FOR THE CHARITY'S OWN USE</b>		
Retail stock	3,528	4,255
Exhibition blocks/display cases	8,616	8,616
Carpet	2,900	2,900
IT and electrical equipment	11,165	11,056
Exhibition models	3,383	3,383
Other fixtures, fittings, and equipment	7,968	7,237
	<u>37,560</u>	<u>37,447</u>
<b>B5 LIABILITIES</b>		
Trade creditors	85	45
Accruals	414	233
Provision for dilapidations	4,550	3,950
	<u>5,049</u>	<u>4,228</u>

Signed by two trustees on behalf of all the trustees:			
	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval
		ALAN WILLIAMS	25/06/25
		PATRICK KNOWLES	25/06/25