



Chipping Norton Local History Society and Museum

Annual Report to the Trustees for 2025



Introduction

This report is written using the format of the Charity Commission's "annual report to the trustees of a charitable incorporated organisation", which we became in 2024. The content of the report is, effectively, a chairman's report, a curator's report and a treasurer's report all rolled into one.

Section A Reference and Administration Details

Charity name: Chipping Norton Local History Society CIO

Registered charity number: 1205796

Charity's principal address: Chipping Norton Museum, 4 High Street, Chipping Norton, OX7 5AD

Names of the charity trustees who manage the charity:

NAME	POSITION
Martin Jarratt	Chairman
Pauline Watkins	Curator
Janice Cliffe	Secretary
John Graves	Treasurer
Janis Paxton	Committee Member
Angela Gaydon	Committee Member
Kate Bartholomew	Committee Member

Names of the trustees for the charity:

There are no "trustees for the charity".

{NB A "trustee for the charity" is any trustee holding the title to property belonging to the charity.}

Names and addresses of advisers:

Type of adviser	Name	Address
Independent Examiner of Accounts	Erika Satre	c/o "The Branch", 16 Market St, Chipping Norton OX7 5NA

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Section B Structure, governance and management

Description of the charity's trusts

Type of governing document:	Constitution – dated 9th November 2023
How the charity is constituted:	Association
Trustee selection methods:	Appointment by the members at the AGM or at an EGM

Additional governance information

Trustee Election:

Trustees are elected at the AGM. Only members of the Chipping Norton Local History Society shall be eligible to serve as trustees.

The officers of the Chipping Norton Local History Society shall hold office until the conclusion of the Annual General Meeting next after their election but shall be eligible for re-election.

Section C Objectives and activities

Summary of the objects of the charity set out in its governing document

The Chipping Norton Local History Society's primary charitable object is to help preserve the heritage of Chipping Norton and the surrounding district and to inform and educate the public about the history of Chipping Norton. We do this by running the Museum and through a series of lectures on topics of local history, both of which are open to the general public. We actively encourage the greater use of the Museum by the local community, particularly families and education groups and have kept our admission price low to facilitate this.

The Museum collects and preserves artefacts, archives and photographs relating to Chipping Norton and the surrounding area and presents these in series of displays and collections. We constantly strive to improve the care of our collections through better storage and ongoing remedial conservation.

An important part of the heritage of Chipping Norton is its archaeological heritage. The Chipping Norton Archaeological Group (CHARG) formed a few years ago is fully incorporated into the Local History Society. This provides an added dimension to our activities through additional expertise and resources to help preserve the archaeological heritage of Chipping Norton

Summary of the main activities undertaken for the public benefit in relation to these objects

The trustees have complied with our duty to have due regard to the guidance on public benefit published by the Charity Commission in exercising our powers and/or duties.

Operation of the Chipping Norton Museum of Local History

The primary activity of the Society is the management and operation of the Chipping Norton Museum. The Museum is open from Easter until October for two hours every day except Sunday. In

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2025 we were open 181 days with an average attendance of 4.5 people. All sessions are staffed by volunteers.

The Local History Society and Museum's collection of artefacts and archives of local and family history are available to the community for their personal research and knowledge locally, without needing to travel. Furthermore, the Local History Society's members and Museum volunteers are readily available to assist those needing help with their researches either in the Museum or through e-mail/phone contact.

Monthly Talks on Local History

To complement the Museum's operation the Society organises and holds monthly talks on topics of local interest. These talks are held during the period that the Museum is closed. The talks are becoming more popular and attract, on average, 35 people including members and visitors.

Talks are well publicised and visitors are encouraged to attend.

Outreach activities

Local groups and organisations call on the Museum's collections and expertise to assist them with information, photographs and artefacts to include in, and inform, their projects.

Out-of-hours visits to the Museum were arranged for the **local schools and youth groups** as part of their studies. A class from St Mary's Primary School visited the Museum in conjunction with their topic work on the "Victorians". A student from the Park School, located at Southcombe, visited to research their interest in local WW2 airfields. A party of girls from the Kingham Guides came for a visit as part of their History badge.

Liaison with other local museums, societies and organisations takes place to mutual benefit. For instance, we are coordinating our talks programmes with the Chipping Norton Railway Club and to see if we could hold joint talks plus a display of artefacts. Burford Museum will be 'accredited' soon and have offered to help us in our path to accreditation.

Visiting the **local care homes** to give talks and display artefacts to their residents to both entertain them and stimulate their memories. Care Homes visited included Penhurst and Beechhaven. The Oddfellows suggested a possible social event at The Willows.

We also host **special visits** from members of the public or other organisations who are researching various topics. For example, a member of the Bliss family from Huddersfield visited to research Bliss mills and a member of the Choral Society researched the Choral Society's history by searching our newspaper archive. Unfortunately, we couldn't accommodate a request to hold an overnight stay to discover any 'paranormal' activity in the Museum.

A reporter from **Radio Oxford** visited and recorded an interview with Museum staff on local characters and industry. They were especially interested in the history of baseball played in Chipping Norton.

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Support of Local Events

We supported the Town's celebrations for the "Christmas Lights Switch-on", "Town Festival" and "VE Day Celebrations" by opening of the Museum with free entry at these events.

At the Town Council's invitation, we gave a presentation at the annual town meeting on the activities of the Local History Society and Museum.

We have also helped the Chipping Norton School with their fund-raising "Easter Egg Trail" and "Stranger in the Window" events.

Section D Achievements and performance

Summary of the main achievements of the charity during the year

Society and Museum Administration and Management

We continued the process of preparation for accreditation as a museum with the Arts Council of England. This is at least a three-year process and involves extensive work in creating and updating policies and procedures in line with recommend practice. For example, to date we have produced, agreed and been trained in "Health & Safety" procedures and policies for data protection and data security, safeguarding, lone working, finances have been adopted; others will follow. We also completed and agreed a risk register for the Society and Museum. The important aspects of this exercise were to reaffirm with the committee the 'existential' risks to the Society and Museum of three major risks with limited opportunity for remediation. These are "lease renewal at a manageable cost", "recruitment of trustees and committee members" and "recruitment of volunteers" to staff the museum.

The Museum's lease with the Co-op ran out on 25th March 2025. Unfortunately, despite our best efforts, we hadn't been able to engage with Coop Properties to negotiate a new lease prior to this date. To compound the problem, we learnt that the Coop had put the entire block up for sale and so we would have a new landlord. As a sitting tenant we have the right to a new lease but not at the existing rent. We got agreement to continue paying the lease at current rates until a new lease is agreed. Technically, we are now occupying the premises on a month-by-month basis. The sales documentation for the site gave an indicative rent for the space the Museum currently occupies of £16,500 per year (i.e. 3 times our current rent). This is, obviously, unaffordable and will have to negotiate hard with the new landlord to achieve a realistic rent. However, it must be assumed that our rent will be close to double its current cost.

Society and Museum Operation

We continued to grow the number of attendees at the Museum. In 2025 the Museum attendance was 828 (including 63 children). This compares to 661, 639 and 536 for 2024, 2023 and 2022 respectively.

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The LHS membership also grew in numbers in 2025. At the end of December 2025 membership stood at 68. This compares to 69 in December 2024.

The Society held a series of 9 monthly talks in the year. These proved very successful with average attendance around 35 people per talk. Cost of speakers and venue hire increased by 32% from 2024.

Space remains a premium in the Museum and we constantly look to ways of improving the display of artefacts. We had to vacate the additional storage space we had leased from the Coop in September so exacerbating the pressures on suitable storage space for our current items held in store. The QD shop came to our rescue and allowed us to move the less vulnerable items to a safe space in their storage area.

Both the LHS & CHARG produced separate newsletters in spring and autumn to keep our members and others informed of our activities and plans.

Museum Archives, Collections and Displays

We are offered a large number of items by the general public for acceptance in the Museum. Our lack of display and storage space means we have to be selective in what's accepted. The range of items we accepted during the year is wide, for example, from a six-foot pit saw to a 1971 Crown & Cushion menu signed by Keith Moon. A significant donation received was the war-time items and documents belonging to Father Frank Hull (the last Jesuit priest in Chipping Norton) who served in the Royal Marines and accepted the formal surrender of the U-boats in Kiel Canal (North Germany) in 1945. These documents and details of his military career will be carefully curated and displayed in 2026. Unfortunately, many items must be refused, as either not relevant or too large for us to keep and display.

The Museum's **archives** provide an extensive record of local history that are used to meet requests from both local people and those living further abroad for information on the town and its inhabitants. We undertook a major restructuring of the indexing of these archives to provide quicker and better access to their contents. This included a revamp of the computer-based indexing and resources to facilitate ease-of-access by volunteers and visitors alike.

The Museum holds much information on **local family history** and we have members who are able to assist visitors with their research. The scope of this research work is wide-ranging and includes, for example, researching the background to some Indian medals belonging to a resident's ancestor.

We provided the CN Town Council with information on prominent local people whose names could be considered as potential street-names for new developments in the town.

There seems to have been many **Anniversaries** in 2025 and more coming up in the near future. The Museum has been asked to provide information on the history of the organisation and if there were any artefacts that could be loaned for exhibition. Information has been requested by, and provided to, the Probus Club's 50th Anniversary in 2027, the Chipping Norton School's 100th Anniversary in 2028, the Lido's 21st Anniversary of its rescue from closure and the library's 70th Anniversary. St. Mary's Primary school asked to borrow the school desk and history of school for its upcoming anniversary. Of course, the Museum itself celebrates its 40th Anniversary on 26th March 2026.

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The **Cashmore Collection** represents a significant resource of coins, pottery and other artefacts that had been collected over decades from field walking and metal detecting by a local resident – Graham Cashmore. To improve the display and visitors' access to this collection we are improving the storage of this collection. In addition, we have provided on-line access to those items from the collection added to the British Museum's "Portable Antiquities Scheme". This gives visitors both a view of enlarged images of the artefact and its full description by an expert archaeologist.

We have a number of **requests for information on houses and buildings in the area** by new residents who are interested in finding out about the history of their properties. Our expert staff provided copies of all the documentation and photos we hold relating to their property.

The **Romano-British nucleated settlement in Chipping Norton** is a Historic Monument that deserves better presentation and understanding. Therefore, to inform visitors to the Museum of the size, scope and type of settlement we have commissioned an artist to produce an illustration of the settlement. We are fortunate to have professionally-qualified archaeologists in CHARG who have briefed the artist. The illustration will also be used to mount special exhibitions in the Museum and will also be available to provide 'travelling' presentations to schools and other organisations. Although display space is at a premium in the Museum there has been additional display space allocated to local archaeology findings.

The Museum's **graphical information system (GIS)** provides an interactive display of the artefacts in their geographic context. The GIS is available for viewing in the Museum and is under continual development. It has reached a stage where its content can provide valuable input for 'desk-based archaeology' studies to identify potential test-pit and field-walking sites for exploration.

The members of the "Test Pit" group of the **Chipping Norton Archaeological Research Group (CHARG)** undertook field-walks in the spring that found many objects of interest. Significant finds selected from this set have been added to the "Portable Antiquities Scheme" and, so, will be subsequently included in the GIS. The group also undertook 'desk-based archaeology' to identify potential sites for test pit sites and field-walks in 2026. Magnetometry is now part of the group's toolset to further expedite the location of potential test pit sites.

Specific Projects

In addition to the direct benefits arising to the citizens of, and visitors to, Chipping Norton from the activities cited in Section C and above, the following specific projects were undertaken in 2025.

The **Museum's window display** draws a lot of attention. We regularly change the display to depict themes relating to events in history and the town (e.g. the 80th anniversary of VJ day, as many men from Chipping Norton were involved in the Far East conflict). In addition, we accommodated a request from a local resident who wished to display "Performance Art" memorabilia of a publisher based in Chipping Norton.

We held the annual **"Finds Day"** where we open the Museum so that Oxfordshire County Council's "Finds Liaison Officer" is available to identify artefacts brought in by the general public. The event was well attended and several of the 'significant' finds were recorded and added to The British

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Museum's "Portable Antiquities Scheme" database. This information is then available to the Museum to include in our graphical information system (GIS) for subsequent interactive display to the Museum's visitors.

To improve the **conservation** of the artefacts held in the Museum we took advantage of a member's specialist conservation knowledge who undertook a review of the artefacts and their storage and display. This report will enable us to improve our storage and conservation of the artefacts held in the Museum.

Fundraising

Our 'routine' fundraising is through membership subscriptions to the Society and attendance charges, donations and sales of books and goods in the Museum. To support these sales, members produce items relating to Bliss Mill (e.g. cushions, scarves and cards with a sample of Bliss Tweed).

In addition to these 'routine' fundraising activities we also last year provided refreshments (tea and cake) for visitors to Chastleton House on six occasions through the summer.

The Museum also raises funds from the sale of books in our shop and so Jan Cliffe's latest book "*The Diaries of Cecil Sydney Pearse Tufnell*" was a welcome addition to those available for sale in the museum.

Section E Financial review

Brief statement of the charity's policy on reserves

The agreed financial policy of the Society sets the level of reserves at three times the annual expenditure. The reason for this level of reserves is that the trustees are very aware of the precarious nature of fund raising and the significant annual cost of running the Museum.

Details of any funds materially in deficit

None

Financial review comments

Our financial year is the calendar year.

Our source of funds in 2025 was the Society's membership subscriptions, grants, donations and fundraising activities (see Section D above and this section).

All our expenditure has supported the key objectives of the charity. The charity's major cost is running the Chipping Norton Museum. The Museum first opened in March 1986 and we believe it is a great asset to the town.

Our annual routine expenditure is around £10,000. More than half of this is the cost of leasing the space for the Museum from the Co-op. The operational costs of running the Museum comprise the lease and maintenance charge for the building, utility costs, public liability insurance and costs

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related to fundraising activities. To improve the preservation of the artefacts held in the Museum we have taken advantage of a member's specialist conservation knowledge to undertake a review of the artefacts and their accommodation. When the recommendations are received it's anticipated that this will require additional expenditure on equipment and storage.

The lease of the Museum space from the Coop expired on 25th March 2025. When the sale of the property is complete, we will be looking to negotiate a twenty-year lease with the new landlord. We have no information on when this will be so have budgeted for a 'worst-case' increase of 50% of the lease cost starting part-way through the 2026 financial year.

We were only charged 10p for business rates in 2025. However, as a rates review was undertaken by the rating authority in 2025 we could be liable for an increase in rates sometime in 2026.

Now that we are a CIO, we are technically liable for Corporation Tax. It is customary for charities that this is a formality and only involves submitting an annual report to HMRC. It's hoped that this continues!

Unlike some other local museums, we don't have the benefit of free/low-cost premises. We are very grateful for the grant from the Chipping Norton Town Council to help with our costs but we need to raise the lion's share of our annual expenditure through our own fund-raising activities. This need for fund-raising has been accentuated by the assumed large increase in lease costs sometime in 2026.

Trustees did not claim any 'out-of-pocket' expenses incurred in acting as a trustee.

For information, a summarised account for 2025 is shown on the following page. The 'surplus' for 2025 follows a surplus for 2024. We must avoid complacency, as we had an equivalent-sized 'loss' in 2022, which could happen again.

These accounts have been submitted for examination by the Independent Examiner of Accounts.

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SUMMARISED ACCOUNTS FOR 2025

INCOME		2025	2024	EXPENDITURE		2025	2024
		£	£			£	£
Interest Received:	All sources	338.67	1,270.87	Museum Operational:			
				Coop Lease & Mgmt fee	5,566.30	5,785.92	
Subscriptions:		1,109.75	1,033.50	Businee Rates	0.10	0.00	
				Utilities	1,115.63	953.23	
Gift Aid:		367.96	310.67	Insurance (Public Liability+)	290.87	282.97	
				Fire Extinguishers	49.20	43.20	
Donations:	All sources	531.45	1,507.10	Computer - devices & software	153.49	1,123.78	
				New equipment & furniture	450.00	0.00	
Grants:	CNTC	3,500.00	5,000.00	Miscellaneous	223.94	91.02	
				Sub-total	7,849.53	8,280.12	
Museum Takings:		2,132.28	1,932.07	Shop Purchases:	276.00	546.55	
				CHARG Operational:	164.50	101.38	
Family History:		179.99	179.99				
				Family History:	179.99	179.99	
Visitors to LHS Talks:		294.84	362.00				
				LHS Talks:			
				Room Hire	324.00	224.00	
				Speakers' fees	445.00	330.00	
				Sub-total	769.00	554.00	
Fund Raising Activity Surpluses:							
Chastleton Teas		3,162.44	2,757.85	Donations Made:			
Others		91.23	143.50	Methodist Church Hall	100.00	0.00	
Sub-total		3,253.67	2,901.35	Organisation Subs:			
				OMC & OLHA	113.00	113.00	
TOTAL INCOME		11,708.61	14,497.55	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	9,452.02	9,775.04	
NETT SURPLUS/(LOSS)		2,256.59	4,722.51				
STATEMENT OF CASH ASSETS							
			31/12/25	31/12/24			
Barclays Current Account (LHS)			873.16	354.21			
Barclays Current Account (CHARG)			550.02	709.52			
Unbanked cash at 31st December			128.02	126.75			
2025 Gift Aid (to be claimed in 2026)			367.77	310.57			
All Savings Accounts			43,847.13	42,008.46			
			Total Cash Asset	45,766.10	43,509.51		
NOTES TO ACCOUNTS:							
CN TOWN COUNCIL	1 We are fortunate to have 'core funding' status from the Town Council. This needs to be renewed in 2026.						
INCOME	2 Interest payment from Coop accrued at assumed rate as interest for 2025 is credited at end of January 2026						
EXPENDITURE	3 Reduction in lease costs due to MK2 taking over from Rapleys and charging lower fees.						
	4 Increase in utilities cost due increased energy costs.						
	5 2025 shop purchase figure is mainly the cost of printing books written by members for sale in the museum.						
GENERAL	6 We have reserved £2,000 for expected legal fees to be incurred in renegotiating the Coop lease in 2026						
	7 We have reserved £30,000 for assumed cost increase of the Coop lease in 2026 up to the break clause time limit of 3 years						
Prepared by:				In process of review by:			
John Graves				Erika Satre			
Treasurer, Chipping Norton Local History Society				Independent Examiner			

Section F Future Plans

Museum

2026 marks the **40th anniversary of the formation of the Museum in Chipping Norton**. We will hold an Open Day on 28th March to celebrate this anniversary and the annual opening of the Museum. All will be welcome to join us for the commemoration of this significant event in our history.

The **“Finds Day”** for this year will take place on 17th October 2026. Its format will follow those of previous years.

To do justice to the archives and artefacts held by the Museum **further development of displays**, both physical and digital, are planned for the Museum. This will require further investment in computer technology, display equipment and specialised furniture.

Joint Activities

We will join the Railway Club for their talk on Thomas Bliss a Victorian railway engineer related to William Bliss of Chipping Norton.

Romano-British Settlement

The illustration of the site will be delivered and displayed in the Museum. Permission will be sought from Historic England and the landowner of the site to allow field-walking to collect any artefacts unearthed on this site by weather or animal activity.

CHARG's Test Pit Group

The analysis work undertaken by the group to identify several potential sites in and around Chipping Norton will be used for a programme of magnetometry studies, test pits and field-walks.

Section G Declaration

The Chairman, Curator and Treasurer presented this report of the activities and achievements of the CN Local History Society in 2025 to the trustees and the trustees declared that they have approved the above report to the trustees. The report will be presented to the members of the Chipping Norton Local History Society at their 2026 AGM.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees:

Signature(s)		
Name	Martin Jarratt	Pauline Watkins
Position	Chairman	Curator

Date: