

Lymm Heritage Information Centre Trustees Annual Report for the Year ending 31st December 2025

Reg Charity 1164961



TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT 2025 – CONTENTS

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

ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 2025

Receipts and Payments account

Statement of Assets & Liabilities

1. Introduction

The trustees present their report for the year ended 31st December 2025.

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 2025 the Centre had welcomed 44,563 visitors on public open days. Visitor numbers for 2025 totalled 5,300. These figures do not include visiting groups and education sessions with schools. These visitor numbers compare to 4,882 in 2024 and 6,130 in 2023. High visitor numbers in February and March for the Breach! Exhibition were partly offset by very low numbers in early autumn.

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 deficit of £669. The Centre continues to hold very strong reserves. 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

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 - Patrick Knowles/Chris Wakefield
 ICT lead - Carol Sparkes
 Retail - Alan Williams/Patrick Knowles
 Room Hire - Patrick Knowles/Alan Williams
 Group visits - Alan Williams
 Displays - Colin & Janet Grimes
 Walks lead – Patrick Knowles
 Lymm Memories Facebook group admin - Diane Kerfoot

4. Financial report

During the year ended 31 December 2025 the charity had income of £23,069 and made payments of £23,738 resulting in a net deficit of £669. This compares to a small surplus of £166 in 2024. 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 very small net total deficit of only c. £500 in the past two years is pleasing.

Income increased by some £600 compared to 2024 and payments grew by c. £1,400. Total donations grew by over £600; room hire by c. £500 and interest income increased by c. £1,300 reflecting higher interest rates. Retail sales reduced considerably by 35% but the reduction was more than offset by the increases in other income sources.

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:

	2025 £	2024 £
Public donations	2,484	1,909
Friends of Lymm Heritage Centre	2,181	2,463
Lymm Historic Transport Day	3,000	3,000
Other donors	504	160
Total	8,169	7,532

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 £1,993 included a book scanner to facilitate book scanning for the digital archive and additional exhibition display panels for the newly opened exhibition space at the Centre.

Cash

At the end of 2025 the charity had cash at bank and in hand balances totalling £109,403 – a decrease of £669 from £110,072 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.

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 2025, the charity's unrestricted reserves amounted to £106,321 (cash £109,403 plus debtors £2,477 less creditors/accruals £484 less provision for dilapidations on ultimate closure of the Centre £5,075). At the end of 2024, reserves on the same calculation basis were £107,545.

£106,321 compares to a long-term policy **maximum** of approximately £100,000 to £110,000.

5. Exhibitions



Following the catastrophic breach and subsequent closure of the Bridgewater Canal at

Dunham on New Year's Day 2025, the Centre mounted a temporary exhibition about the breach and its historic context in the light of previous breaches and the original construction of the canal. Almost 1,150 people visited the Centre during the first two months of the exhibition – some 400 above the same period in the previous year. Many of the visitors had not visited the Centre before and the exhibition generated record donation income.



The second major temporary exhibition of the year, entitled “Lymm in Living Memory”, opened on 1ST November and told the story of post war Lymm via photographs, reminiscences and an interactive map.

A small window display was mounted to recognise the 80th anniversary of VE Day and honour Lymm’s only civilian fatality of World War 2 – ARP warden Mr Alexander Grice.

All temporary exhibitions and front window displays were installed by Colin and Janet Grimes. In addition, they also designed our annual Remembrance and Christmas windows to their usual high creative standard.

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.

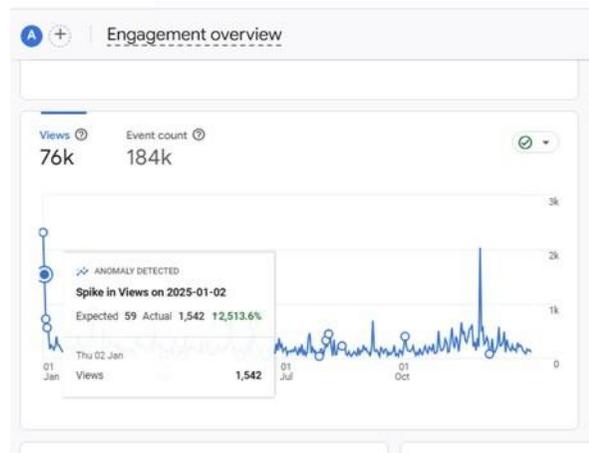
Income from education activities was £1,040 – down by £474 compared to the previous year. The reduction was principally due to the curtailment of the activity noted below – owing to the late arrival of the historic flyboat Saturn due to a temporary canal closure.

In addition to the sessions run by the main team, three days of education activity were scheduled to run during June 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. Four class groups from various schools in the area were due to learn about many aspects of life on a working canal boat. Unfortunately, the late arrival of Saturn, because of a stoppage on the canal, meant that only one-half day session could take place.

7. The Lymm Archive

Analysis from Google analytics continues to illustrate the remarkable merit of The Lymm Archive, and not only from those who visit to the Centre, but also to our now thousands of social media followers across the world. Visitors from Australia, New Zealand, France, Germany, Ireland and the USA just to name but a few!

A comparison of the Archive’s usage in 2025 versus 2024 showed that the site had had 16,535 active users - which was a huge and unexpected 153 % increase from the previous 6,544 users in 2024. However, this unusual spike of events as can be seen, was generated by the massive increase of search requests relating to the canal breach that had occurred on New Year’s Day – see below.



Moreover, community engagement and liaison with other local photographers namely Alan Edwards and Kenneth Fisher subsequently ensued - where they too had also captured a 'similar moment in time' from the previous canal breach in 1971. From this and combined with images from The Bill Todd Collection and the Centre's lead photographer Alan Taylor, led to yet another and very informative exhibition at the Centre. Exceptional work from both Alan Taylor and Carol Sparkes continues to maintain and oversee every aspect of our digitisation processes. This, plus the combined expertise and experience from our software supplier, Townsweb Archiving has proven invaluable. They are always on hand in providing flexible and innovative solutions, seamlessly matched to our needs.

This overview of the Archive's achievements over 2025 however, would not be complete without acknowledgement and huge thanks to the Lymm Historic Transport Day Committee and volunteers whose generous donation enabled the Centre to purchase a professional book and document scanner. This will now enable the Archive to further improve its efficiency within digitisation with both advanced optical scanning recognition (OCR) through our Book Explorer 3D technology - whilst paired with our 'Handwritten Text' recognition. All new major steps in our commitment in sharing and preserving Lymm's heritage for many generations to come.

8. IT team

2025 saw a year of consolidation activities by the ITC team, bringing stability to the technical infrastructure, a continued focus on usability and business as usual operations by the team.

The new document scanner is now fully set up and training sessions held. After a few software issues, the "quality" flat-bed scanner has been re-set up to operate with a good level of automation for print scanning and again, training sessions held.

One value-added activity this year has been the introduction of a pictorial version of the technical Inventory, making it much easier to identify items which form part of the technical infrastructure.

The team has also persevered with the off-site back-up solution offered by Warrington Museum, despite their continued inability to provide the networked facility offered. We are now just depositing a periodic hard copy back-up with the museum, in the absence of their networked solution.

Following the end of support for Windows 10 by Microsoft, the team has been successful in obtaining a one-year extension of security updates from Microsoft at no extra charge. This has afforded the team time to establish a project to review dependencies on Windows 10 across the Heritage Centre's technical portfolio, review the levels of risk and identify hardware and software requirements where replacement of equipment is required to move to Windows 11. The project will continue into 2026 and it has already been established that the Centre's main PC and its software plus part of its back-up solution will have to be replaced. This is in accordance with the strategy reported in last year's ICT Report.

Another project that the ICT Team has just started to support is a joint-endeavour with a local third party which will require supplementing the local platform arrangements (PC and Google Drive plus working and back-up practices) to enable the Lymm Archive to accommodate a possible substantial number of new incoming images, and to provide traceability for the third-party. This project is currently in a pilot and design stage and may continue beyond 2026.

Thanks are due to ICT volunteers Carol Sparkes, 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.



A well-attended volunteers' social event was held for volunteers in December. It was also attended by the High Sheriff of Cheshire, Joelle Warren. Part of her role is to promote and support the voluntary sector in the county and give encouragement to voluntary organisations.

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.

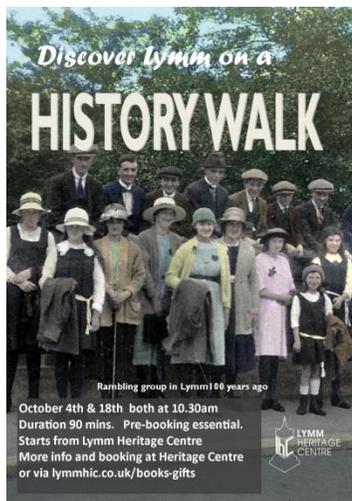
10. Friends and Sponsors

Income from our Friends scheme this year generated £2,508, compared to £2,716 in 2024. The small number of new Friends recruited in the year were insufficient to offset those who sadly passed away or decided not to renew. Membership remains at £12 per individual and £20 per couple/family.

In late 2023 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 saves 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



History walks, led by Patrick Knowles and Carol Kerry, were the Centre's contribution to Lymm Festival this year and so popular were they that several more followed. The plan is to expand the walks programme in 2026. A walk of a different kind was a feature of our contribution to Heritage Open Days in partnership with St Mary's Church, specifically a tour of the graveyard to learn about the remarkable lives of some of its occupants.

At the request of Lymm Parish Council, a film about Lymm in wartime was made for VE day 80th anniversary commemorations, shown both at a village hall event and in the Centre.

In the run up to Christmas, the Centre not only displayed "A Christmas Carol" themed tree at the St Mary's Christmas Tree festival but provided a 25-minute film of Lymm in Winter for the new AV display facility at the church.

Occasional talks were given to outside groups such as neighbouring history societies and WI groups.

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



12. Marketing & Promotion

A look back through previous annual reports will show that we constantly underspend and underachieve in this area. The low and below budget spend would at first appear to help us achieve

break-even or close to on an annual basis, but a well-co-ordinated marketing programme has the potential to generate awareness, footfall, donation and spend, generally contributing to the growth and prosperity of the Centre. It's an area where many try to make their living and so finding professional quality resource prepared to work on a voluntary basis will likely remain a challenge.

Marketing and promotion rely on Facebook posts, local noticeboard posters and the occasional advert in Lymm Life.

13. On-line presence

Facebook is our main area of interaction. The Heritage Centre page grew by 3.6% over the year to end the year with 3,182 followers. Concerted effort in conjunction with marketing could probably raise this number more quickly. Facebook continues to be a zero-cost way of accessing a focused audience. Posting though was somewhat sporadic through the year and was focused more on promoting events than in history story sharing. The Community page, Lymm Memories, is administered on our behalf by Diane Kerfoot. It was invaluable in 2025 as a resource for encouraging reminiscences that were fed into the Lymm in Living Memory exhibition.

The website is comprehensive but has received little attention in 2025 other than maintenance and would benefit from a design review where the current trend appears to be – “simplify”.

Our online presence is another area where more specialist expertise has the potential to give more impact. For example, we have an archive rich in imagery yet do not have an active Instagram account.

14. Retail

Retail again had a difficult year with total sales down by 35% from £5,482 to £3,561.

For the first time in many years, there was no new book published.

Book sales featuring varied aspects of Lymm history have long generated a significant proportion of overall sales. Over 5,000 books have been sold since 2017. It is perhaps inevitable, given a degree of market saturation, that the current and future market for such books will be a lot lower than the past.

Sales included old photos ordered as part of the refurbishment of The Bulls Head pub, and Lymm Parish Council contributed towards the production of a short film remembering Lymm during World War 2 as part of the 80th anniversary celebrations of VE Day.

15. The Year ahead

We have a realistic prospect of significant progress in several areas in the coming year thanks to enthusiastic support from a group of volunteers, some established, one new.

- Aim to consolidate three disparate systems for recording our relatively small collection of documents and artefacts with a view to publishing it for public access.
- Develop family friendly activities with a view to possible designated family days particularly during school holiday period.
- Develop at least one temporary exhibition to take advantage of the new exhibition space.
- Develop and expand our programme of walks and talks

- Produce at least one new publication – possibly based on the Lymm in Living Memory exhibition.

Other long-term aims are carried over without specific resource allocated to progress them:

- A coherent, focused marketing campaign aimed at increasing visitor numbers.
- Some new initiatives to “freshen” the core exhibition with new features.
- Recruitment of new Friends.

Contact Alan Williams – Chair of Trustees 07540 096282 lymmheritagecentre@gmail.com

TRUSTEES REPORT APPROVED 16th February 2026

Alan Williams, Chair of Trustees



Patrick Knowles, Treasurer



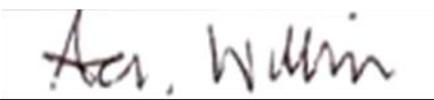
LYMM HERITAGE INFORMATION CENTRE
RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2025

	2025	2024
	£	£
A1 RECEIPTS		
Donations	8,169	7,532
Sale of goods	3,561	5,482
Education income	1,040	1,514
Walks and talks	631	299
Room hire	4,224	3,715
Interest income	4,381	3,060
Gift Aid receipts	1,063	861
TOTAL RECEIPTS	<u>23,069</u>	<u>22,463</u>
A3 PAYMENTS		
Purchases of goods	750	1,269
Rent	12,000	12,000
Utilities and broadband	2,508	2,483
Insurance	1,074	1,009
Minor capital items	139	356
Software licences and support	1,942	1,880
Exhibition costs	1,681	666
Education costs	100	489
Publicity	150	410
Refreshments	51	26
Cleaning	91	100
Printing, postage & stationery	173	106
Subscriptions	91	-
Sundry expenses	824	559
Repairs and renewals	-	11
Retail goods selling costs	171	93
Sub total	<u>21,745</u>	<u>21,457</u>
A4 ASSET & INVESTMENT PURCHASES		
Other fixtures, fittings and equipment	1,993	840
Sub total	<u>1,993</u>	<u>840</u>
TOTAL PAYMENTS	<u>23,738</u>	<u>22,297</u>
NET (PAYMENTS)/RECEIPTS	(669)	166
Cash funds at 31 December 2024	<u>110,072</u>	<u>109,906</u>
Cash funds at 31 December 2025	<u>109,403</u>	<u>110,072</u>

LYMM HERITAGE INFORMATION CENTRE
STATEMENT OF ASSETS & LIABILITIES AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2025

	31/12/2025	31/12/2024
	£	£
B1 CASH FUNDS		
Cash in hand	96	385
Cash at bank	109,307	109,687
	<u>109,403</u>	<u>110,072</u>
B2 OTHER MONETARY ASSETS		
Gift Aid debtor	817	834
Trade debtors		
Accrued interest receivable	1,660	1,688
	<u>2,477</u>	<u>2,522</u>
B4 ASSETS RETAINED FOR THE CHARITY'S OWN USE		
Retail stock	3,039	3,528
Exhibition blocks/display cases	9,960	8,616
Carpet	2,900	2,900
IT and electrical equipment	11,814	11,165
Exhibition models	3,383	3,383
Other fixtures, fittings and equipment	7,968	7,968
	<u>39,064</u>	<u>37,560</u>
B5 LIABILITIES		
Trade creditors	199	85
Accruals	285	414
Provision for dilapidations	5,075	4,550
	<u>5,559</u>	<u>5,049</u>

Signed by two trustees on behalf of all the trustees on 16th February 2026

Alan Williams, Chair of Trustees 

Patrick Knowles, Treasurer 