

## **National Trust – Lavenham Guildhall Local Committee Chair's report for 2024/2025**

The Guildhall Committee has met on 4 occasions over the last year in June, September, December and March.

In June we welcomed the new rector, Simon Pitcher, on to the committee. Unfortunately, no member of Lavenham Parish Council has attended any of our 4 meetings. These 2 representatives being the only permanent members of the committee

Our focus this year has been on trying to review the relevance of the committee as we approach almost 75 years of National trust ownership of the Lavenham Guildhall. Much of the discussion has revolved around updating the Terms of Reference particularly the Responsibility and Scope of the committee. It has been generally agreed that we now play very little part in the day to day running of the Guildhall but hope that the Committee still provides a valuable input on behalf of the people of Lavenham in accordance with the wishes of Sir Cuthbert Quilter.

Thanks to the hard work and effort of the Museum Committee, who have met on several occasions over the year, the new exhibition "Lavenham in the 1600s" was unveiled in March. Future exhibition to include in 2026 – 75 years of National Trust ownership of the Guildhall and in 2029 will be a celebration of the Guildhall's 900-year anniversary.

During the year Lavenham Guildhall welcomed over 26,000 visitors, 1300 more than in the previous year. The visitors that come to the Guildhall continue to really enjoy their visits with the knowledge and help from the Volunteers. The Friday "guided tours "of Lavenham again provided by local Volunteers have been much appreciated,

The second-hand bookshop income continues to grow. The total for the year is close to £10,000. The Committee are still baffled by the complexities of the NT accounting system.

The Tea Room is now controlled directly by the 'Whole Trust' rather than the property but has had another very successful year. The installation of a new counter and furniture has added to the experience. It ended the year with a financial performance much better than predicted.

So, thanks to the Operation Manager, her team, and all the volunteers and committee members who have strived to keep the Guildhall functioning throughout the last 12 months.

I hope that more residents of Lavenham will become members of the Local Committee and/or the Museum committee, so that the people of Lavenham are more actively involved in the "ownership" of the Guildhall as was Sir Cuthbert Quilter's wish.

David Jones  
May 2025