



A History of The Wingham Charities (1663 – 2023)

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1. Introduction

The “Wingham Charities” comprise 3 charities: the John Rushbeecher Charity (1663), the Jonathan Foulke-Rutter Charity (1865) and the Wingham Fire Brigade Fund (1977). This is a history of these three charities over the past 360 years, how they originated and how a set of common objectives evolved to be administered by 5 Trustees. Unlike other charities in Wingham, these three charities do not actively seek to raise funds. Instead the resources bequeathed by the benefactors of the three charities are now invested and it is the interest from these investments which is pooled and distributed to qualifying Wingham residents.

British History Online (www.british-history.ac.uk) has a chapter on Wingham and a sub-chapter on Charities. The data is taken from *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent, Volume 9*, published by W. Bristow, Canterbury, 1800. In the Charities sub-chapter, John Rushbeecher charity (note the different spelling) is identified, annually distributing to 10 poor parishioners. The annual value (in 1800) was 4l (probably meaning 4 librae, i.e. £4).

In 1896, Arthur Hussey published his “Chronicles of Wingham”, which contains a history of the Rushbeecher and the Foulke-Rutter Charities up until that date. In 2011, the then Trustee & Secretary Jim Greatorex submitted a short article on the 3 charities, originally written by Trustee Bob Cox, which was published in Wingham Community News, March 2011 (Issue 152). More recently, from September 2020, Bettina Braun published, in the Wingham Parish Magazine, some extracts from the “Chronicles” including those relating to the above charities. This following history of both the Rushbeecher Charity and the Jonathan Foulke-Rutter Charity is not intended to repeat the entries in the “Chronicles”, but to give an overview up to 1896. If readers are intrigued by the details, it is recommended that they read the “Chronicles of Wingham”, Chapter VI “The Church”. The history after 1896 is extracted from the charity records handed down through the years, which includes surviving Minute books, together with some personal research by the Trustees.

In 1894, the Local Government Act was passed by Parliament, effectively relieving the Church of England of all but purely ecclesiastical responsibilities. Up until then the Church was deeply involved in administering local affairs, including the Wingham Charities. Arising from the Act, our Parish Council was born. A parish meeting was held on 4th December 1894 to elect the 9 Parish Councillors who, in turn, would oversee the appointment of the Trustees of the then two Charities and later of the third.

The Rushbeechee Charity began even before the Black Death revisited London in 1665. Arrangements for the care of the elderly, poor, ill and destitute have been improved since 1663 through various laws to alleviate suffering. However, eradicating need has never been possible and hence the importance of charities to supplement official arrangements. At the start of Rushbeechee's Charity the 1601 Act of Settlement was in force and it wasn't until 1834 that further amendments to the Poor Laws were made. The State Pension Act of 1908 was implemented on 1st January 1909. The next big change was the introduction of the National Health Service in 1948. A sudden rise in the cost of living or unexpected events causes hardship for many families and individuals who, for various reasons, do not have the reserves to weather the prevailing circumstances.

In 1995 the EU issued a Directive 95/46/EU on Data Protection and in 2016 the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) were introduced in the UK. These regulations have made it more difficult for our Charities to identify the qualifying Wingham residents and especially those in specific need. In the past our Vicar and a District Nurse, who were appointed Trustees, were useful in identifying need as a result of their daily work. Now Trustees rely on their local knowledge and feedback from residents, friends and neighbours regarding potential recipients. A list of known Trustees is appended.

2. John Rushbeechee Charity (1663-1971)

John Rushbeechee, Yeoman of Wingham, bequeathed in his will (14th October 1663) a parcel of land of about 5 acres in Woodnesborough Parish, the rent from which was to be administered by his friends Thomas Denne and Stephen Beane and their heirs, "for the use, benefit and behoofe (benefit or advantage) of ten of the meaner (poorer) sort of people of Wingham aforesaid not receiving alms from the said Parish of Wingham, for ever, at the discretion of the said Thomas Denne and Stephen Beane and their heirs for ever." John Rushbeechee died soon after making his will. Rent on the land appeared to have been collected and distributed, as willed, up to about 1801, by which time the two Trustees had become the 2 Churchwardens and the 2 Overseers of the Parish. The "Chronicles" has a listing of the Churchwardens (1720-1860) and Overseers (1705-1860). Then in 1801 the then tenant John Bean illegally assumed ownership of the land and bequeathed it in his will of July 1801, to David Anderson, who sold it on to another, who in turn sold or willed it to others (see the "Chronicles" for the details of succession).

Quite how the Charity lost control of the land is not understood, but in 1835 Revd Montague Oxenden, Vicar of Wingham, with the solicitor William Lee, began a law suit in the High Court of Chancery to recover the charity land, which was brought to a successful conclusion in December 1841. The unfortunate defendants (who were probably unaware of John Bean's illegal action) were ordered to pay the costs. In January 1844, Churchwardens John Dadds and Edward Pyner and the Parish Overseers John Elgar and John Beal were appointed Trustees of the Charity.

However, William Lee had incurred additional costs of £296-14s- 9d (£296-74), which he was unable to recover through the courts. In March 1846, a settlement was reached between The Trustees and William Lee that from the annual land rent, £5 would be distributed as per the original Charity and any remainder (about £10) was to be paid to William Lee to liquidate his debt. That continued until 1853 when the debt was £205-4s-9d (£205-24). In 1853, William Lee sold his debt to James Elgar and Richard Elgar of Wingham who then received the charity money to liquidate the debt, which was paid off in 1879. In May 1877, in anticipation of the debt nearing liquidation, the Charity Commissioners drew up a scheme for the charity rent money "for the use and benefit of 10 or more of the poor parishioners" and lists how the money could be used: "1. Supplies that could be provided, 2. Money for urgent temporary relief, 3. Prize money for children, 4. Maintenance of a library, 5. Provision of lectures for scholars." The "Chronicles" do not identify what was actually distributed.

The 1894 Local Government Act, led to the newly formed Wingham Parish Council, which in 1895, appointed the following 4 Trustees to manage the Rushbeecheer Charity: Edward J. Elgar, Henry Goodban, William J. Meek and John Wrake. The latter 3 were also Parish Councillors. Their first meeting as Trustees took place on 12th August 1895. The surviving Minute book is a ruled, sextodecimo, hardback book, gold-titled "RUSHBEECHER CHARITY WINGHAM" and dates from 1895. It contains a hand written preface of the foregoing history which is reproduced in "Chronicles of Wingham", virtually verbatim. It is not known whether or not the wording was borrowed from Arthur Hussey or vice-versa. The surviving Rutter Charity Minute book, dating from 1891 (see Chapter 3), also has a preface of its pre-1891 history in more detail than described in Arthur Hussey's "Chronicles of Wingham", so it may be that Hussey borrowed these histories from the Trustees.

In 1895 the existing tenant of the Rushbeecheer Charity land was Henry Cryer. The Trustees began enquiries to determine whether it was possible to sell the land and purchase land nearer to Wingham, but nothing suitable was available.

Stephen and Thomas Joiner (brothers) formally became new tenants of the land from Michaelmas 1896 at an annual rent of £17-10s-0d (£17-50). The outgoing tenant was paid £26-1s-6d (£26-07½) for the fruit trees and bushes left on the land, but the Parish Council requested the Trustees to write to the Charity Commissioners to explain the circumstances and seek retrospective approval for this payment. The Trustees prepared and submitted a suitable statement and the Charity Commissioners replied indicating that the matter was within the discretion of the Trustees and did not require confirmation by the Charity Commissioners. A copy of this reply was given to the Parish Council.

In October 1898, the tenants asked the Trustees to pay for steam cultivation of the land (by steam traction machinery, probably to break up the roots of the fruit trees and bushes), to which the Trustees agreed, provided the tenants agreed to "well clean the land afterwards and thoroughly work it", which one of the tenants, present at the meeting, agreed to do.

The gifting decided in December 1899 was for 14 persons each to receive 5/- (25p) and 23 persons each to receive 5 cwt (254 kg) of coal. The following year, in view of the high price of coal, it was agreed only to distribute money gifts. That year 38 persons each received 5/- and 1 person received £1 because of prolonged illness. All subsequent gifting has been only made with money, except the gifts to Oakfield House, Wingham.

In August 1901, the Trustees agreed that Henry Joiner be tenant of the land at an annual rent of £15, payable half yearly on 6th April and 11th October, for a term of 14 years, reviewable at 5, 7 & 10 years by either side giving notice of 1 year in writing. The agreement was signed on 25th September 1901.

In January 1902, the Trustees agreed to the tenant's request "to build a lodge for the tenant and instructed the Secretary to purchase materials and employ labour and proceed with it at once."

In October 1905, Trustee Mr Meek resigned through ill health and Mr Wilson was appointed as a Trustee. Henry Joiner and his brother were requested to attend the Trustees on 18th October, when it was agreed that Henry Joiner would forfeit his lease and his brother be accepted as tenant until 11th October 1906 whereupon further consideration would be given to granting a further term.

In February 1906, the Trustees consented to the erection of a lodge by the tenant at his own expense on condition that it be offered to the Trustees at the end of the tenancy at a fair valuation. There is no record of the outcome of the decision of the Trustees to build a lodge in January 1902, so presumably that never went ahead and the reason was not minuted.

In October 1906, the Trustees agreed to let the land to Charles Joiner for £15 per annum, for 7 years, payable half yearly on 6th April and 11th October and that the tenant be allowed to plant 50 trees on the land. (Note: The land had been steam cultivated in 1898 to remove fruit trees.)

In May 1907, the Trustees agreed to pay for the trees planted by Charles Joiner. The cost was later identified as 30/- (£1-50) for 60 trees to be deducted from his next rent payment. On 28th May 1907, the lease to Charles Joiner was signed. At a second meeting that month, it transpired that only one half of the Tithe had been paid in 1906 with 13/ ½d (65p) outstanding to be paid. The history of the Tithe¹ goes back to pre-10th century, when it was a voluntary payment as part of a religious duty. Originally, 1/10th of the produce of the land was provided for the benefit of the poor, pilgrims and churches. By the 10th century it had become compulsory for the maintenance of the church and clergy with heavy penalties for default. Later, when lords built churches on their land, the tithe were apportioned to the church, clergy and the lord. With the growth of protestant non-conformity in the 17th century, the payment of tithe became contentious, leading to innumerable lawsuits and was a factor in the Swing riot of 1830 and Rebecca riots (in South Wales) of 1842-3. The Tithe Commutation Act of 1836 made all tithes commuted to rent-charges. Further Acts of 1918 and 1925 led to the full, compulsory redemption of rent charges. The 1936 Tithe Act replaced the rent charges with redemption annuities with the crown issuing redemption stock to tithe owners with the final extinction of the annuities after 60 years in 1996. The capital loss to the church by this act was estimated to be about £17.7 million.

On 30th September 1907, the Trustees agreed to seek permission from the Charity Commission to grant a mining lease to the South Eastern Coalfield Extension Limited. The Charity Commissioners replied with a list of questions (not identified). All this was eventually resolved and the agreement was signed by The Trustees in January 1912 with effect from 7th October 1911 for 60 years. The rent was: 5/- (25p) per acre in year 1, 10/- (50p) per acre in year 2, £1 per acre in year 3 and £2 per acre for all remaining years and payable half yearly on 1st January and 1st July each year. The Charity Commission stipulated that the mining lease rent was to be invested in Consols (Government consolidated stock) instead of being used for direct charitable giving.

On 9th September 1909, the Trustees considered the request from the tenant, Charles Joiner, to have a water supply to the charity land. The Trustees agreed to pay for the connection, if a water main was already laid past the property and if the tenant paid for the cost of making and afterwards filling the required trench, as promised to Trustee Mr Fagg. On 6th December 1910, the tenant Charles Joiner attended the meeting of the Trustees to explain the difficulties about water supply during the summer months and suggested a force pump be installed (cost around £5). The Trustees agreed to examine a neighbouring pump and to examine the condition of the charity land. On 11th April 1911, the Trustees read a letter from the tenant Charles Joiner, again asking for a water supply on the charity land. It was agreed that the probable cost was to be determined and that the Charity Commissioners were to be asked about the Trustees' responsibilities for supplying water. On 10th May 1911, the Trustees read a letter from the Charity Commissioners requesting the estimated cost to supply water, whether the tenant was prepared for an increased rent and if so, how much. The Trustees replied that the estimated cost was £10 and that the tenant was prepared to pay an extra £1 per annum for 10 years. The Trustees had received estimates from Messrs. Brierley Bros. of £9-16s-3d (£9-81) and Mr F H Hadaway of £7-7s-0d (£7-35). It was agreed to ask Mr Hadaway to undertake the work and for Trustees Hadlow and Fagg to meet Mr Hadaway at the charity land at 9:15 am on 16th May 1911, for tenant Charles Joiner to be available for the meeting and for the tenant to confirm in writing his willingness to pay the above extra rent.

¹ *The Oxford Companion to British History*, Edit. John Cannon, OUP (1997)

On 26th May 1911, the Trustees agreed to purchase a pump for 15/- (75p) and Mr Hadaway was to be instructed to cover the well with an oak plank with an access trap door. On 30th June 1911, the Trustees received Mr Hadaway's account of £11-4s-2d (£11-21) and explanatory note and agreed for Trustees Hadlow and Fagg to inspect the work and if satisfied arrange to settle the account. On 18th July 1911, the Trustees received letters from Mr Hadaway and the tenant Charles Joiner, requesting deepening of the well. The Trustees agreed for the work to be done and to pay Mr Hadaway's account for £2-16s-0d (£2-80) for deepening the well.

On 4th September 1912, the Trustees agreed for the lease, to the tenant Charles Joiner, to be submitted to Mr C J Elgar for examination and advice and that the "shed" on the charity land be insured for £50.

On 3rd December 1912, Trustee/ Clerk Mr A H Taylor asked to be relieved of his duties owing to pressure of other work and Trustee Mr Hadlow agreed to take on those duties up to Apr.1913.

On 31st October 1919, the Trustees noted that Mr Joiner's lease had expired in October and the Trustees wrote to the tenant offering to grant an extension to the lease for 7 years at a rent of £20 per annum, to include the 6 months of outstanding charge for water supply. On 18th January 1921, Mr Joiner responded to the Trustees' offer that the proposed rent was too high and counter offered £18 per annum, which the Trustees accepted and instructed Mr C J Elgar to draw up the lease effective from 11.Oct.1919. By 27th September 1921, the new lease had been signed by Mr Joiner.

On 24th March 1923, a letter from Messrs. Kingsfords, Canterbury, enclosed a draft mining lease, which was reviewed. This proposed new mining lease between Messrs. Pearson & Dorman Long Ltd and the Trustees was accepted and instructions given to Messrs. Kingsfords to execute. On 18th February 1927, a letter from Messrs. Kingsfords, Arrowsmith & Wightwick, solicitors, concerning the surrender of the lease to the South Eastern Coalfields Extension Ltd was reviewed and accepted, providing that the South Eastern Coalfields Extension Ltd discharged all of their liabilities incurred in connection with the negotiations leading up to the proposed lease with Messrs. Pearson & Dorman Long Ltd.

In 1939, the tenant Charles Joiner asked for a reduction in the land rent, which was referred to the Parish Council. It was agreed to reduce the rent to £15 per annum effective from Michaelmas (29th September) 1939.

Before 1966, the lists of recipients just identified the surnames and titles and in some cases a forename initial, but from 1966, the lists of recipients includes their addresses.

On 8th December 1967, the Trustees agreed to ask if the Parish Council thought it possible to increase the rent on **the land at Barnsole Farm (Staple) in the tenancy of Mr Charles Joiner**. This is the first mention of the location of the Charity Land. But at a Trustee meeting a year later on 6th December 1968, **the death of the tenant Mr Charles Joiner** was noted. He had been a loyal tenant since the end of 1905. The Parish Council had issued a notice to quit to the executors, effective 11th October 1969, which the Trustees endorsed.

On 7th November 1969, the Trustees noted that the Chairman of the Parish Council had sent them a letter, dated 4th July 1969, advising that the charity land should be offered for sale by public auction by Messrs. John Hogbin & Son, auctioneers at Sandwich. A valuation by Messrs. John Hogbin & Son had been made, advised to the Trustees and the Chairman of the Parish Council, who had all agreed to the sale and its reserve price. The Official Custodian of Charities had also been advised and

approved the sale by order 2193/69, dated 8th September 1969. **The auction was held at the Fleur-de-Lis Hotel Sandwich on 17th September 1969 and realised £2550.**

On 27th November 1969 Mr Downes (solicitor) attended a Trustee meeting and produced the conveyance for the sale, which was signed by the Trustees present. Mr Downes also produced an account of the associated costs totalling £138 (the Minute book has a breakdown of the costs), which it was agreed to be paid from the proceeds of the sale. Mr Downes stated he would not charge for his services and the Trustees thanked him for his kindness. Mr Downes advised that the proceeds of the sale should be invested in the Charities Official Investment Fund (COIF) which would yield about 5½ %. In addition, the sale of the Consols and War Stock was agreed and the capital combined with the land sale proceeds and invested. Mr Downes agreed to advise the Official Custodian of Charities of this decision. It was also agreed that a bank deposit account should be opened to receive the investment interest automatically.

On 14th August 1970, Mr Woodroffe FCIS, Charity Review Officer attended the meeting and briefly explained that the Charities Act 1969, s.11 gave wider scope for giving relief to the needy. After discussion, the following was agreed:

1. That the Rushbeecheer & Rutter Charities should be amalgamated
2. To discontinue the regular Xmas doles as pensioners died or left the village
3. To apply for a new scheme to enable income to be used for relief of need, at such times and in such ways as the Trustees determine (*sic*)

An Application Form S.T.1 was signed by all the Trustees and sent to Mr Woodroffe to forward it to the Charity Officer. The net proceeds of the land sales were £2409-11-0d (£2409-55) and had been sent to the Charity Commission with instructions to invest in the Charities Official Investment Fund (COIF). An advice Note had been received from the Official Custodian of Charities showing the proceeds of sales and re-invested values after deductions: 2½ % Consols £3-9-3d (£3-46) £0-19-1d (£0-96) was re-invested; 3½ % War Stock £7-11-10d (£7-59) £2-19-0d (£2-95) was re-invested; land sale £2409-11-0d (£2409-55) £2367-3-3d (£2367-16) was re-invested. Total re-invested: £2371-1-4d (£2371-07). A cheque for £30-13-11d (£30-69) was received from Mr Downes, representing interest on the deposit of the land sale money, which was paid into the bank account.

On 15th December 1970, a draft of the new scheme from the Charity Office was reviewed by the Trustees, agreed and the Charity Office advised accordingly.

The first Trustee meeting of the combined Rushbeecheer and Rutter Charities was held on 6th August 1971 (see Chapter 4).

3. Jonathan Foulke-Rutter Charity (1865-1971)

Jonathan Foulke Rutter was baptised on 18th January 1786 in Morden, Surrey. His parents were Robert & Elizabeth Rutter. Jonathan married Harriet Hanger on 14th April 1810 at St. James, Piccadilly, St. James Westminster, Middx. Harriet was of the parish, whilst Jonathan was of Allhallows, Barking, London. Witnesses to the marriage were John Brown and Mary Eleanor Thompson. The 1841 census records Jonathan & Harriot (*sic*) living at Watling Street, St. Mary Bredin, Canterbury. The 1851 census records them still living in the above street and possibly at No. 23 (the hand writing is difficult to decipher). Jonathan is identified as a land proprietor, born in Morden Surrey, whilst Harriet was born in Norfolk. Harriet died in April 1857 aged 70 and was buried on 1st May 1857 in Wingham churchyard. The 1861 census records Jonathan, widower, living at 34 Watling Street, Canterbury, aged 75. Jonathan died on 19th September 1865 (death registration details: 1865, quarter 3 (July – September), District Canterbury, volume 2a, page 395) and was buried

in Wingham on 26th September 1865, and like Harriet, the actual location of his grave is as yet not known to us.

In Jonathan's will (dated 1st March 1864) he bequeathed £3 for the maintenance (painted every 3 years and surrounding grass to be neatly kept) of his wife's tomb (*sic*) in Wingham churchyard and any balance to be given to the widows of the parish in sums of 5/- (25p) at the discretion of the minister and churchwardens. He also bequeathed "one hundred 3% reduced annuities" to Charlotte Hayward, which on her death would then be used to benefit the widows of the parish of Wingham, as above. Quite why Harriet was buried in Wingham and residents of the parish should benefit from Jonathan's bequest remains a mystery, as the foregoing shows no evidence of a Wingham connection for either Jonathan or Harriet. Sadly, over the years the location of Harriet's grave has been lost. The fact that his will indicated the arrangement for "repainting" his wife's "tomb" implies that it may have had a wooden "headstone", which has since rotted and disappeared.

Nearly 25 years after the bequest was activated and despite Charlotte Hayward (now Young) still being alive, the Minister and Churchwardens were interested in obtaining the residue of the estate as quickly as possible, without financially penalising her. This initiative resulted in a Court Order (July 1889), providing the Charity with £110 New Consols (investment of Government consolidated stock) and £72 money on deposit and £3-19s-4d (£3-96) cash, total £185-19s-4d (£185-96). After duty was paid, of £28-12s-3d (£28-61), the balance was transferred to the Official Trustees of Charitable Funds. The Trustees invested a further £40 in New Consols.

Before 1891 records of this Charity were probably held by Wingham church (St Mary the Virgin) and it appears that at least some records² are now in Canterbury Cathedral Archives. The surviving "minute" book dates from 1891, which also contains a preface similar to, but more detailed than the entry in the "Chronicles of Wingham". See Chapter 2 regarding the comments on the preface in the Rushbeecheer minute book, in relation to the "Chronicles of Wingham". The 1891 Rutter "minute" book is a cash-ruled, duo-decimo, hardback, notebook. It simply records each year, the audited cash drawn from the bank, the list of recipients and the gift amounts. In addition there are notes of submissions to and periodically received pasted-in receipts of accounts data from the Charity Commission. It does not contain any records of meetings held. The records continue up to June 1971, when the Charity was amalgamated with the John Rushbeecheer Charity (see Chapter 4).

There is no record of any change arising from the Local Government Act of 1894, nor of the Trustees appointed, but from this time one presumes it was the same Trustees as the Rushbeecheer Charity. Because the incumbent of St Mary's Wingham was involved as an original Trustee of the Rutter Charity, that practice continued up until 2006, when the Revd Mark Griffin was the last vicar of Wingham to serve as a Trustee.

Before the Rutter Charity and the Rushbeecheer Charity were combined, the final Rutter Charity distribution took place in 1970, when 15 widows each received 5/- (25p). Note: this was the same amount of money as issued in 1865, but inflation had reduced its value over the years. In 1865 it would have been worth nearly 8.5 times as much (over £2) or conversely 5/- in 1865 was worth about 7d (3p) in 1970. One unfortunate widow only received 4/6d (22½p) in 1916 and another widow in 1919 received 4/11d (24p). One assumes that the dividend received in those years did not allow the full 5/- and it was better to gift the residue than not to gift at all.

² Alt Ref No: CCA-U3/269/25/A/2 "Documents relating to 2 Wingham Charities: the Jonathan Foulke Rutter and the Rushbeecheer Charities.

The Rushbeecheer Charity was also issuing 5/- (25p) gifts and it was not until 1961 that the amount began to be increased. On 1st January 1909, the Government introduced the first state pension of coincidentally also 5/- (25p) but per week to those aged 70 and over of "good character". 5/- in 1909 would have the purchasing power of about £25-40 in 2022, whereas the current basic weekly new state pension is £203-85, showing how pensions have improved over inflation since 1909. In 1909 the 2 charities recorded 62 recipients and in 2022 the 3 charities recorded 89 recipients.

As originally indicated the Charities did not seek to raise funds and were only able to dispense from the money received from either the charity land rent or investment interest. The leasing of mining rights by the Rushbeecheer Charity had been a stroke of genius, with the rent from the lease, as stipulated by the Charity Commission, having been invested rather than being used directly for charitable gifting.

The first known female Trustee appointed was Mrs Parsons who served from 1949 to 1952 and was Chair in 1949 and 1950. Mrs Goodhew served as a Trustee from 1958 to 1967 and was also in the Chair in 1966 and 1967. Miss Conway served as a Trustee from 1968 to 1972 and continued as a Trustee in the amalgamated Rushbeecheer & Rutter Charities scheme.

4. The Rushbeecheer & Rutter Charity (1971-2020)

In June 1971 the John Rushbeecheer and Jonathan Foulke-Rutter charities' investments were combined and a new **Rushbeecheer & Rutter Charity** scheme was drawn up by the Charity Commissioners (later online Registered Charity Number: 212510). Most of the combined resources were invested in the Charities Official Investment Fund (COIF). The quarterly interest is transferred to the charity's bank account. At the amalgamation, the Rushbeecheer still had some 150 2½ % Consols, which were converted into COIF in 1989 and realised £32-08. From the bank account, money is drawn as required to benefit Wingham parishioners as specified in the Charities' Criteria, as determined from time to time by the Trustees. The Trustees are not remunerated for their work and the only expenses claimable are those to manage the charity, e.g. stationery and postage.

The 1st Meeting was held on 6th August 1971. Trustees: J. Hogben, Revd H. Voller, A.D. Reader, C.E. Conway & R.E. Miles. Hand written minutes and lists of recipients continued in the Rushbeecheer Minute book up until December 1990. Then from 1991 until 2006 the minutes were hand written with the list of recipients typed and pasted into the minute book. From 2007 up to 2020, both the minutes and lists of recipients were typed and pasted into the minute book. Fearing further damage to the minute book spine with the pasted-in typed data, the Trustees agreed henceforth to have the minutes word-processed on A4 paper, held in A4 plastic punched pockets and retained in a 4-ring binder. At some future date, sets of minutes could be bound. The old minute book was retained with a hand-written explanation of the foregoing, a cross reference to the dates of ongoing Trustee meetings and the signed declarations of Trustees' willingness to act as Trustees for both this registered Charity and the later Wingham Fire Brigade Fund (from 1977, see Chapter 5).

In 1971 the Trustees closed the separate bank accounts in the names of the Rushbeecheer and Rutter charities and opened a bank account in the name of the Rushbeecheer & Rutter Charity. The Post Office Saving Bank ordinary account in the name of the Rushbeecheer Charity was changed into the name of Rushbeecheer & Rutter Charity, but in 1973 the Trustees agreed to close this account and transfer the small balance to the charity's bank account.

In 1977, Wingham held a Silver Jubilee celebration in honour of Queen Elizabeth II and the Jubilee Committee donated the surplus funds of £37-53 to the Trustees to dispose of at their discretion. The surplus funds were allocated for distribution to parishioners. Also in 1977, the redundant former Wingham Fire Brigade building located in Canterbury Road between the Red Lion and The Forge was

bequeathed by Wingham Parish Council to The Trustees, which initiated the **Wingham Fire Brigade Fund** (see Chapter 5)

In 1983, the Trustees were approached with a request to subsidise the “Meals on Wheels” service, but after discussion, the Trustees decided against subsidising the service.

At the 1989 meeting, the Secretary (Trustee Mr J Hogben) reported that an article in the summer issue of the Charity Newsletter recommended selling any 2½% Consols held and re-investing the proceeds. After discussion, the Trustees agreed to instruct the Charity Commission to sell the 150 Consols held and re-invest in the Charities Official Investment Fund. Also at that meeting, Mr Miles expressed his desire to retire, to which the other Trustees agreed. Mr Miles had been a Trustee of the charities since 1970 and was succeeded by his daughter Mrs Elizabeth Mayne in 1990.

For the meeting held on 3rd December 1991, whilst the minutes were still hand written, the list of 78 recipients was the first to be typed and pasted into the minute book. The list also included a letter code against each recipient to identify which Trustee was assigned to deliver the gift. That practice continues.

In 1992, the Trustee Mr J Hogben indicated that he had been the Secretary since 1968 and enquired whether someone else was willing to take on the role. Trustee/ Chairman the Revd Peter Brownbridge persuaded Trustee Hogben to continue for another year. In 1993, Trustee Hogben indicated his intention to resign and suggested that it might be possible to amalgamate the Rushbeecheer & Rutter Charities with the Wingham Fire Brigade Fund. The minutes of the 1994 meeting appear to be in the hand of Trustee/ Chairman Revd Peter Brownbridge. The Chairman had agreed to pursue the merger of the Charities and had taken on the duties of Secretary for one year before Trustee Mr Len Trussell would take on the duties of “correspondent” next year.

At the December 1994 meeting, Trustee/ Chairman Revd Peter Brownbridge reported on the correspondence with the Charity Commission and undertook to pursue the merger, but the following year the Trustees decided there was no need to merge the Charities.

At the November 1999 meeting, the Trustees expressed their sorrow at the death of Trustee Len Trussell (Trustee since 1994).

At the November 2000 meeting, Revd Mark Griffin replaced Revd Peter Brownbridge as Trustee/ Chairman.

At the December 2004 meeting, the Trustees assigned gifts to Oakfield House (care home) and Toomer House (care home) for the first time.

Following the minutes of the December 2006 meeting, a typed statement of the revised criteria for the distribution of gifts, effective from 1st January 2007, was pasted into the minute books of both the Rushbeecheer & Rutter Charities and the Wingham Fire Brigade Fund, recognising a common set of criteria. The criteria included the cessation of gifts to couples. However, from the records, the gifting to couples appears in practice to have ceased from December 1994.

The vicar of Wingham would be enrolled as a Trustee and, with some exceptions (1987 – 1989) elected as Chairman by the other Trustees. That arrangement ceased in 2007 after the Revd. Mark Griffin left the Parish. Mrs Elizabeth Mayne was elected Acting Chairlady initially and later elected Chairlady.

In addition to the typed and pasted in lists of recipients, all subsequent meeting minutes from 2007 up to and including 2020, were also typed or word-processed and pasted into the minute book.

In 2007 the criteria were amended to incorporate the minimum of a 2 years' residency rule for the receipt of gifts. 2007 was the last year a gift was given to Toomer House as it ceased to be a care home, but gifts to Oakfield House continued.

In 2008, the Trustees requested Trustee/ Secretary Jim Greatorex to investigate (again) if it was time to merge with the Wingham Fire Brigade Fund. Trustee/ Secretary Greatorex reported the following year and explained that it was more difficult than previously thought and after discussion, the Trustees decided not to pursue the merger. The 2009 common list of recipients was pasted into the Wingham Fire Brigade Fund minute book instead.

In 2013, the Trustees held a minute's silence in respect of the death of Trustee Jack Jolly (Trustee since 2001).

In 2014, the criteria for the distribution of gifts were amended, changing "of pension age" to age 65, because the pension age was increasing and becoming variable according to one's date of birth. The amended criteria document was typed and pasted into the minute book and also kept as a typed A4 sheet and separately filed. On this occasion a duplicate copy was not pasted into the minute book of the Wingham Fire Brigade Fund.

At the 2019 meeting, the Trustees held a minute's silence in respect of the death of Trustee Bob Cox earlier that year. Bob had been a Trustee since 1979 with this Charity and a founding Trustee of the Wingham Fire Brigade Fund in 1977 and thus had given a record 42 years of valued service to these Charities.

For the 2020 meeting, the pandemic lockdown was in force so the proceedings were conducted via several telephone conversations with all the Trustees during November and December to determine the list of recipients and other business. Trustee/ Chairlady Elizabeth Mayne confirmed her intention to resign (Trustee since 1990) and Trustee Jackie Baldwin was unanimously elected as Chairlady. Trustee/ Secretary Jim Greatorex also confirmed his intention to resign as Secretary (Trustee & Secretary since 2007) but continued as a Trustee, finally resigning in early 2022. Trustee Norman Baldwin was unanimously elected as Secretary. The Trustees expressed their sincere thanks to both Elizabeth and Jim for their service to the Charities.

In 2021, Trustee Pat Douthwaite resigned having served the Charities for 39 years. Again, the Trustees thanked her for her long and valuable service. That same year, the Trustees recognised that pasting minutes into the minute books were straining the bindings of the now fragile over 125 year-old minute books. That duplicating the minutes for the Wingham Fire Brigade Fund was unnecessary. That from 2007 there had been a common list of recipients. That space constraint had probably prevented a more representative set of minutes. That word-processing minutes on A4 was more practical. In addition, a spring meeting was proposed from 2022 to formally record the previous year's list of recipients (to reflect the inevitable last minute changes that take place) and to present an internally audited set of accounts for the previous year; both of which were appended to the spring meeting minutes. The Trustees agreed:

1. A joint set of minutes word-processed on A4 and maintained in a ring binder with the potential to have sets of minutes subsequently bound.
2. The signature declarations of willingness to act as Trustees for all the Charities be maintained in the Rushbeecheer & Rutter minute book.

3. An index of meeting numbers, their respective dates and any relevant notes be hand-written in the respective minute book
4. Hand-written notes in both minute books identifying the above be made.

A minute in the meeting of 4th December 2008 identified that the Parish Council did not require the Trustees to submit a report at the Parish Council's Annual General Meeting (now the Annual Parish Assembly), unless a specific issue had arisen. At the meeting on 28th March 2022, the Trustees noted that the Clerk of Wingham Parish Council had written an article in Wingham Community News (March 2022, Issue 260) inviting village organisations to contribute to that year's Annual Parish Assembly, by explaining what they do and their future plans. The Trustees thought it was an excellent opportunity to promote awareness of these Charities. Trustee/ Secretary Norman Baldwin provided a draft from which Trustees Bryan Curtis and Helen Farbrace prepared and made the presentation. The Trustees also took the opportunity to design a logo to be launched with the presentation at the Annual Parish Assembly on 20th April 2022. Also that year, a member of the village, who made greetings cards, generously offered to make cards for the benefit of the charities. An arrangement was made with Wingham Newsagents for the sale of these cards and the charities gratefully receive a portion of the sale proceeds. In the spring meeting of 2023, the Trustees held a minute's silence in respect of the death of former Trustee Margaret Richards who had retired in 2018 through ill health.

5. The Wingham Fire Brigade Fund (1977 – 2023)

In the past the responsibility for dealing with fires rested on residents and volunteers. From the late 17th and early 18th century it was possible to insure premises against fire. The insurance companies would organise fire fighters to act, but only on those premises insured with them. The scheme of showing an applicable insurance company badge on the premises insured was operated and some of those badges may still be seen in Wingham.

In 1875 a voluntary Wingham Fire Brigade was established. In February 1876 a parcel of land of about 0.006 acres was purchased (probably by local voluntary donations) in Canon Row, Canterbury Road near the Red Lion, to act as a Fire Station to house equipment, initially horse drawn, for the voluntary Wingham Fire Brigade, whilst the horses were stabled at the rear of the Red Lion.

Probably as a result of the Local Government Act of 1894, Wingham Parish Council took over responsibility for the voluntary Wingham Fire Brigade until the Kent Fire Brigade was formed on 1st April 1948. However, whilst the activities of Wingham Fire Brigade then came under the control of the Kent Fire Brigade, the ownership of the premises remained with Wingham Parish Council.

In 1975, a new fire station was built in Staple Road and occupied the following year. The Canterbury Road premises then became redundant and Wingham Parish Council bequeathed the premises to the Trustees of the Rushbeechee & Rutter Charities either to rent it out or sell it and invest the proceeds, with the rent or investment interest to be used in a similar way to the Rushbeechee & Rutter Charities.

In May 1977, the Charity Commissioners drew up a similar scheme to the Rushbeechee & Rutter Charities for the administration of the property (later online Registered Charity Number 274064). The redundant Rutter "minute" book was then used (from July 1977) to record the meeting minutes of the Wingham Fire Brigade Fund.

At the first meeting of the Trustees on 18th July 1977, the new scheme was reviewed and a general discussion was held on the future use of the former Fire Brigade building. Suggestions included a village museum, letting it as a store, letting to the cubs/scouts as a store for their equipment.

However, it was felt that maintenance of the building might be a problem, so it was agreed that subject to obtaining further information it would be best to sell the building and invest the proceeds with the Charity Official Investment Fund. Dover District Council was asked to indicate what they would allow the building to be used for. It was noted the adjacent building was being sold by Kent County Council and it was agreed that KCC was to be asked to advise when the property was sold and to whom. After the meeting, held at 41 High Street, the Trustees inspected the former Fire Brigade building. At the second meeting of the Trustees on 27th April 1978, DDC Planning Department had provided some suggestions for use (not identified in the meeting minutes) and KCC had been unable to advise the name of the purchaser of the adjacent building (presumably because the sale had not yet taken place).

At the 3rd meeting (9th November 1978) an enquiry to purchase the charity property was received from Mr S Hartley of Silvester Antiques, Wingham. The Trustees had previously agreed to seek approval from the Charity Commission to sell the property and had since received 2 forms; one to complete and the other guidance notes for completion. Previously Mr D C Elgar had been asked to value the property, which he had (£850). Another enquiry to purchase the property had come from Mr Cook of Westgate who was interested in the building as an art studio. The Trustees agreed to instruct Mr David Downes (solicitor) to act for the Trustees and for him to approach both potential buyers offering them the property for £1,000 and in due course to publicise the sale in the press and to keep the Trustees informed of developments.

In September 1980, the Trustees, mindful of the problems in finding and managing tenants and maintaining the property, sold the freehold property to Simon & Madeline Hartley for £1775. In common with the Rushbeecheer & Rutter Charity the proceeds of the sale were invested in The Charities Official Investment Fund (COIF) with quarterly interest transferred to an account in the name of the Wingham Fire Brigade Fund from which money is drawn, as required, to benefit qualifying Wingham parishioners.

Trustee/ Secretary Hogben recorded in the minute book an annual account from 1980 to 1993 inclusive until he retired. Sadly, the annual account was not continued after 1993, although the list of annual recipients, the level of gifting and periodic bank balances were all minuted. 1981 was the first year that gifting was provided from the investment interest. In 1989, no gifts to couples were given, but the practice continued in successive years. 1991 was the first year a typed list of recipients was recorded and included a code to signify which Trustee was allocated to deliver each gift. The typed lists were pasted into the minute book.

From 2007 the minutes were also typed or word-processed and pasted into the minute book until a general agreement was reached in 2021 to generate a common set of minutes for both charities, word-processed and printed on A4 and retained in a ring binder (see Chapter 4 for further details). From 2007, the Trustees devised a common list of recipients which were typed and pasted into the Rushbeecheer & Rutter minute book, except in 2009, when the common list was pasted into the Wingham Fire Brigade Fund minute book.

2020 was the last year in which a separate minute was generated for the Wingham Fire Brigade Fund and pasted into the Wingham Fire Brigade Fund minute book, though a list of meeting numbers and dates thereafter were hand written in the Wingham Fire Brigade Fund minute book. In 2023 the Trustees considered combining the Charities for the third time. This time 2 options were available and explored namely either a merger or a linking. However, on investigation, neither option was considered to provide any significant benefit over our current arrangement.
