How are different machines, tools and objects, past and present, used in country life?
Create and play The Country Life Showdown game

MERL galleries

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1 Shaping the Land

Reception

Café

Earley Charity Learning Studio

Reading room

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Staircase Hall

ENTRANCE

GROUND FLOOR

FIRST FLOOR
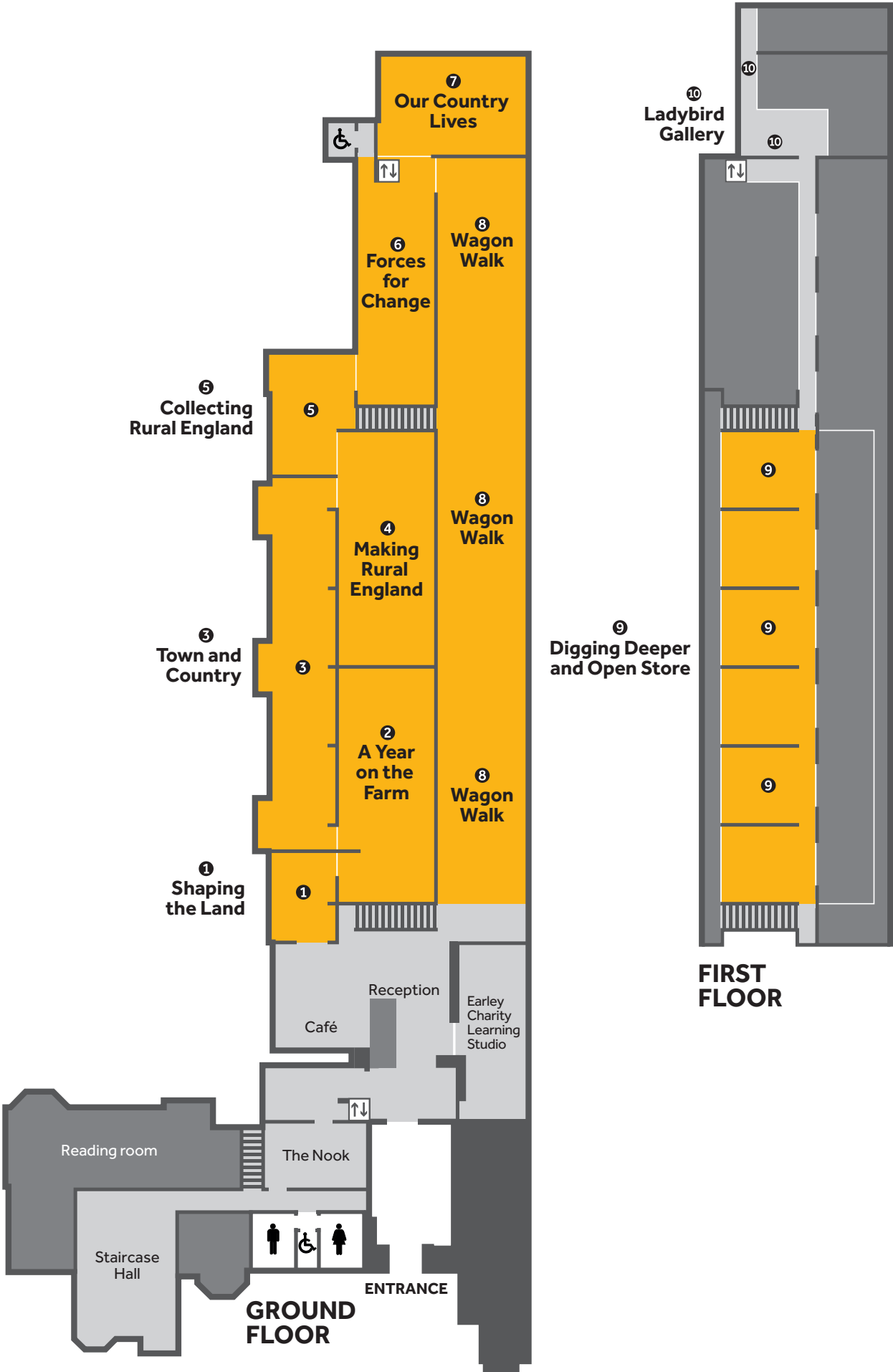
10 Ladybird Gallery

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FIRST FLOOR

The Museum of English Rural Life has many fascinating machines that have been used in farming, manufacturing and crafts in the countryside. The artefacts in this museum have transformed the way we grow and manufacture goods. Students will research and analyse different machines, objects and artefacts that have been used, in the past and present, in rural life 'top trumps'-style game, The Country Life Showdown.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this set of activities students will:

- understand how machines have transformed the way we live in the countryside and the way that objects reflect how manufacturing has developed
- research and discover how different machines and objects work. Use this information to decide how a machine could be rated using different criteria
- justify their decisions
- assess the impact different museum objects had on people's lives.

Before your visit

Introduce your students to the wide variety of machines, objects and artefacts that they will see at the Museum of English Rural Life. The website has many examples of the machines and artefacts from the countryside that can be used for this (see **https://merl.reading.ac.uk/research/using-collections/databases/**).

Students could be asked questions:

- Why do people living in the countryside need machines?
- How are these machines used?
- What differences have these machines make to people's lives?
- What differences have machines madke to the people living in rural and urban areas?
- What are the differences in the machines used in rural life in the past and now?

They should also be encouraged to think about objects that were once important, even though they now may seem insignificant. For example, baskets were widely used to carry produce from the farms to market before the invention of plastics.

Students can then be introduced to the activity. They will use the information at the museum to create some showdown cards (similar to 'top trump' cards) which they will then bring back to the class to use to play a game. They can look at the cards that they will be completing and the game can be explained.

During the visit to the museum the showdown cards need to be filled in. This can be done in a variety of ways:

- the class could be split into groups of four, each group being given a set of cards to complete or

- each student could be given one card to fill in, and then the results pooled back at school or

- the class could be split into two, and a leader hold the set of cards while students go round the museum to find the information.

Before the visit the students should become familiar with the showdown cards, understand what type of information they are gathering and how they are going to record it. They could begin compiling the information using the information using the website if there was time (see **https://merl.reading.ac.uk/research/using-collections/databases/**).

Ferguson tractor

Key information Write down key facts

Gallery Collecting Rural England

Circle the description that best fits
Size
① tiny ② small ③ medium ④ large ⑤ very large
Mobility
① stationary ② can be moved for use ③ moves under its own power
Complexity
① very simple ② simple ③ complicated ④ complex
Impact
① little impact ② some impact ③ transformative ④ life-changing
Cost to produce
① cheap ② moderately priced ③ costly ④ very expensive
Decade in popular use Write down from object label

Giant teapot

Key information This large teapot was seen at meetings of lots of people. It could hold 29.5 litres of tea, and is supported on an iron frame which allows it to be tipped and also manoeuvred thanks to small wheels its base.

Gallery Making Rural England

Circle the description that best fits
tiny ② small ③ medium ④ large ⑤ very large
stationary ② can be moved for use ③ moves under its own power
ery simple ② simple ③ complicated ④ complex
① little impact ② some impact ③ transformative ④ life-changing
Cost to produce
① cheap ② moderately priced ③ costly ④ very expensive
Decade in popular use Write down from object label

Salmon trap

formation Fisherman used to arrange dozens of these traps en sticks buried in the mud of the river, forming a wall. The would then simply swim into the traps, and the fishermen collect them.

A Year on the Farm

the description that best fits
ny ② small ③ medium ④ large ⑤ very large
tationary ② can be moved for use ③ moves under its own power
very simple ② simple ③ complicated ④ complex
ttle impact ② some impact ③ transformative ④ life-changing
cheap ② moderately priced ③ costly ④ very expensive
ade in popular use Write down from object label

Visiting the Museum of English Rural Life

Students should find the machines and artefacts on display in the museum to fill in the showdown cards.

Each showdown card has some completed sections and some sections that need to be filled in by the students, following research and discussion. Some of these require students to find out information about the artefact and then analyse and evaluate it with their peers to decide how they will rate the object. Some students will find this hard; they may need to decide on the criteria they are going to use to rate the object. There is not necessarily a right or wrong answer, it is important that students have discussed their thoughts and can justify their answer.

In each showdown card they have some of the following things to do or find out about their object:

- **Draw** a picture of the machine/artefact/object.
- **Size:** Students should discuss and judge whether it is tiny, small, medium, large, or very large.
- **Mobility:** Students should decide how this machine moves, whether it is stationary (for example, the bowl turning lathe), has to be moved into place to do its job (for example, a plough), or whether it can move under its own power (for example, a tractor).
- **Complexity:** Students should decide whether the machine/object/artefact is very simple (for example, a basket), simple, complicated, or very complex (for example the threshing machine). Students could use the number of moving parts, the design of the object or how many functions it has to decide on its complexity.
- **Impact:** Students should find out about the changes that the object had on day-to-day life for people in the countryside and then make a judgement about its impact rating. For example, whether it was life-changing, like the steam engine, transformative or actually had little impact.
- **Cost to produce:** Students should discuss and decide how expensive the object would have been to make at the time. They can consider the price of the materials that are needed to produce the object, the time taken to manufacture the product and the expertise required for the design.
- **A decade in popular use:** Note down, if known, any decade in which it was in popular use.

This activity lends itself well to differentiation in several ways. The cards containing the artefacts which require more understanding can be given to the higher attaining students. For example, the threshing machine is an unfamiliar machine that requires some research into harvesting and processing grain before it can be fully understood. However, the plough is a simple machine with a single function that can be more easily explained.

Some of the cards require students to write the key information following their research, this requires higher literacy skills than some of the other cards that require students to draw the artefact or rate the size.

Costume

We have various examples of occupational dress based on historic images that can be used as part of a visit. Please contact the museum if you would like to use these on the day.

What next?

The students should now play the game in groups.

Instructions for playing the game

1. In pairs deal out all the cards between the two players.
2. Each player should put their cards in a pile, face up, so that only they can see their top cards.
3. The first player should choose a category to play with, for example, "complexity".
4. Each player then reads out the value of their machine for that category.
5. The machine with the highest value for that category wins, if it is a tie then the player can choose another category to play with.
6. The winner takes both cards and puts them at the bottom of their pile.
7. That player then chooses the next category to play with.
8. The player with all the cards at the end, wins.

Student resource

Each card has some information to enable the students to find the object and some gaps for them to fill in using the information they find, or following a discussion about the machines purpose. Each card indicates the gallery that the object is found in.

Ferguson tractor Collecting Rural England	**Plough** Digging Deeper – Ploughs	**Salmon trap** A Year on the Farm
Steam plough Digging Deeper – Ploughs	**Hay press** Our Country Lives	**Bobbins** Town and Country
Portable steam engine Town and Country	**Wellies** Town and Country	**Reaper** A Year on the Farm
Miller's Wagon Wagon Walk	**Bowl turning lathe** Making Rural England	**Hand sheep shears** A Year on the Farm
Giant teapot Making Rural England	**Man trap** Making Rural England	**Basket** Making Rural England
Cheese press Forces for Change	**Harvest jug** A Year on the Farm	**Reaper-binder** Our Country Lives
Threshing machine Forces for Change	**Wainwright tools** Wagon Walk	
Seed drill Forces for Change	**Handle makers seat** Making Rural England	

Ferguson tractor

Key information Write down key facts

Gallery Collecting Rural England

Circle the description that best fits

Size
① tiny ② small ③ medium ④ large ⑤ very large

Mobility
① stationary ② can be moved for use ③ moves under its own power

Complexity
① very simple ② simple ③ complicated ④ complex

Impact
① little impact ② some impact ③ transformative ④ life-changing

Cost to produce
① cheap ② moderately priced ③ costly ④ very expensive

Decade in popular use Write down from object label

Steam plough

Key information John Fowler invented the steam plough. He set up a steam engine at each end of a field. These would then draw a plough across the field by a cable. Usually this was operated by a team who lived and travelled together in a van containing all the equipment.

Gallery Digging Deeper – Ploughs

Circle the description that best fits

Size
① tiny ② small ③ medium ④ large ⑤ very large

Mobility
① stationary ② can be moved for use ③ moves under its own power

Complexity
① very simple ② simple ③ complicated ④ (complex)

Impact
① little impact ② some impact ③ transformative ④ life-changing

Cost to produce
① cheap ② moderately priced ③ costly ④ very expensive

Decade in popular use Write down from object label

Portable steam engine

Key information Write down key facts

Gallery Town and Country

Circle the description that best fits

Size
① tiny ② small ③ medium ④ large ⑤ very large

Mobility
① stationary ② can be moved for use ③ moves under its own power

Complexity
① very simple ② simple ③ complicated ④ (complex)
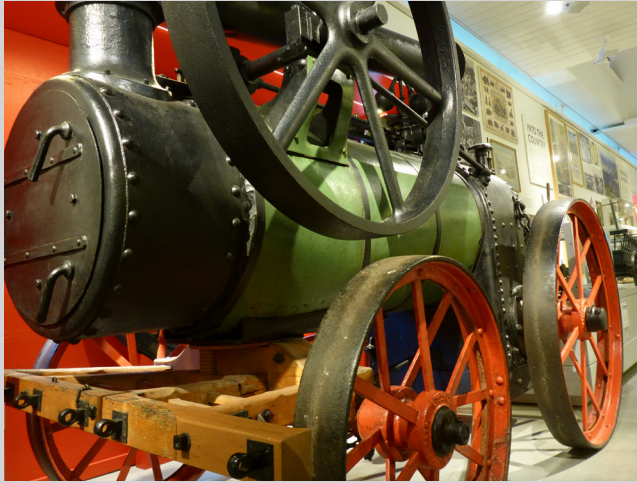
Impact
① little impact ② some impact ③ (transformative) ④ life-changing

Cost to produce
① cheap ② moderately priced ③ costly ④ very expensive

Decade in popular use Write down from object label

Miller's wagon

Key information Benjamin Cole owned Hyde Mill, which was located down the road from a railway. This meant he could export his flour to town and city centres using the railway. The road to the railway was steep and this wagon would often carry three tons of flour to the station to be transported to towns and cities using the railway.

Gallery Wagon Walk

Circle the description that best fits

Size
1 tiny 2 small 3 medium 4 large 5 very large

Mobility
1 stationary 2 can be moved for use 3 moves under its own power

Complexity
1 very simple 2 simple 3 complicated 4 complex

Impact
1 little impact 2 some impact 3 transformative 4 life-changing

Cost to produce
1 cheap 2 moderately priced 3 costly 4 very expensive

Decade in popular use Write down from object label

Giant teapot

Key information This large teapot was seen at meetings of lots of people. It could hold 29.5 litres of tea, and is supported on an iron frame which allows it to be tipped and also manoeuvred thanks to small wheels at its base.

Gallery Making Rural England

Circle the description that best fits

Size
1 tiny **2** small **3** medium **4** large **5** very large

Mobility
1 stationary **2** can be moved for use **3** moves under its own power

Complexity
1 very simple **2** simple **3** complicated **4** complex

Impact
1 little impact **2** some impact **3** transformative **4** life-changing

Cost to produce
1 cheap **2** moderately priced **3** costly **4** very expensive

Decade in popular use Write down from object label

Cheese press

Key information Write down key facts

Gallery Forces for Change

Circle the description that best fits

Size
1 tiny 2 small 3 medium 4 large 5 very large

Mobility
1 stationary 2 can be moved for use 3 moves under its own power

Complexity
1 very simple 2 simple 3 complicated 4 complex

Impact
1 little impact 2 some impact 3 transformative 4 life-changing

Cost to produce
1 cheap 2 moderately priced 3 costly 4 very expensive

Decade in popular use Write down from object label

Threshing machine

Key information Write down key facts

Gallery Forces for Change

Circle the description that best fits

Size
① tiny ② small ③ medium ④ large ⑤ very large

Mobility
① stationary ②(can be moved for use) ③ moves under its own power

Complexity
① very simple ② simple ③ complicated ④ complex
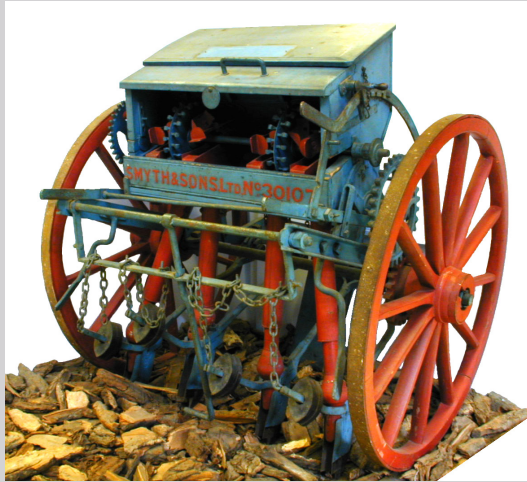
Impact
① little impact ② some impact ③ transformative ④ life-changing

Cost to produce
① cheap ② moderately priced ③ costly ④(very expensive)

Decade in popular use Write down from object label

Seed drill

Key information This seed drill would sow the seeds at the correct distance apart and at the correct depth in the soil. It was pulled by horse or machine across a ploughed field.

Gallery Forces for Change

Circle the description that best fits

Size
① tiny ② small ③ medium ④ large ⑤ very large

Mobility
① stationary ② can be moved for use ③ moves under its own power

Complexity
① very simple ② simple ③ complicated ④ complex

Impact
① little impact ② some impact ③ transformative ④ life-changing

Cost to produce
① cheap ② moderately priced ③ costly ④ very expensive

Decade in popular use Write down from object label

Plough

Key information This tool was used to turn the earth and make a furrow (dip) in the soil ready for planting.

Gallery Digging Deeper

Circle the description that best fits

Size
① tiny ② small ③ medium ④ large ⑤ very large

Mobility
① stationary ② can be moved for use ③ moves under its own power

Complexity
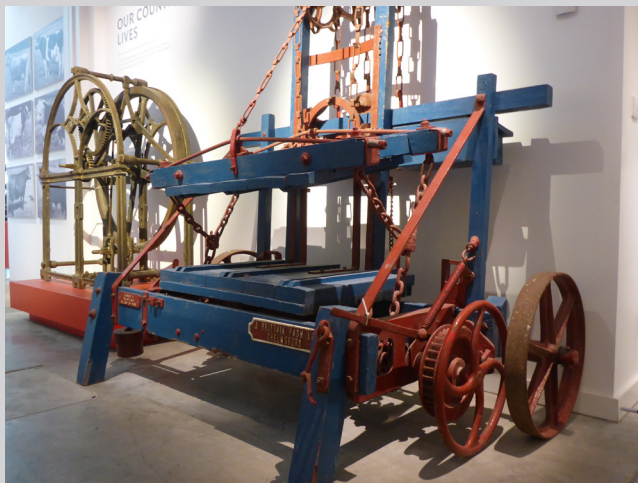① very simple ② simple ③ complicated ④ complex

Impact
① little impact ② some impact ③ transformative ④ life-changing

Cost to produce
① cheap ②(moderately priced)③ costly ④ very expensive

Decade in popular use Write down from object label

Hay press

Key information Write down key facts

Gallery Our Country Lives

Circle the description that best fits

Size
1 tiny **2** small **3** medium **4** large **5** very large

Mobility
1 stationary **2** can be moved for use **3** moves under its own power

Complexity
1 very simple **2** simple **3** complicated **4** complex

Impact
1 little impact **2** some impact **3** transformative **4** life-changing

Cost to produce
1 cheap **2** moderately priced **3** costly **4** very expensive

Decade in popular use Write down from object label

Wellies

Key information Wellies were designed for people who worked in the countryside to keep your feet dry and warm in rain, flood, hail or snow.

Gallery Town and Country

Circle the description that best fits

Size
① tiny ② small ③ medium ④ large ⑤ very large

Mobility
① stationary ② can be moved for use ③ moves under its own power

Complexity
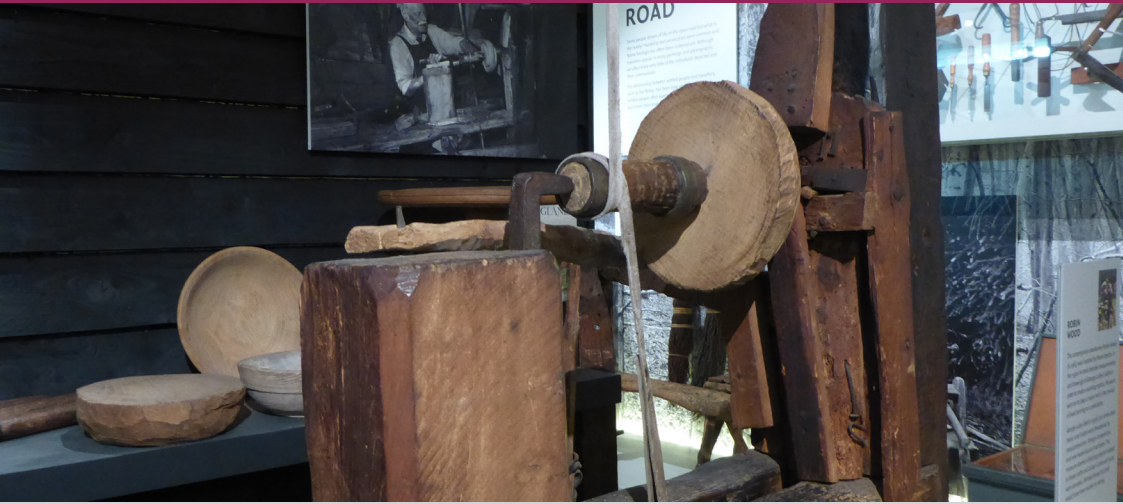① very simple ② simple ③ complicated ④ complex

Impact
① little impact ② some impact ③ transformative ④ life-changing

Cost to produce
① cheap ② moderately priced ③ costly ④ very expensive

Decade in popular use Write down from object label

Bowl turning lathe

Key information Write down key facts

Gallery Making Rural England

Circle the description that best fits

Size
① tiny ② small ③ medium ④ large ⑤ very large

Mobility
① stationary ② can be moved for use ③ moves under its own power

Complexity
① very simple ② simple ③ (complicated) ④ complex

Impact
① little impact ② some impact ③ transformative ④ life-changing

Cost to produce
① cheap ② moderately priced ③ costly ④ very expensive

Decade in popular use Write down from object label

Man trap

Key information This trap was designed to catch people trespassing on land. People trespassed for a variety of reasons; sometimes for poaching – the illegal killing of animals on private land – or sometimes simply for hunting and gathering food to feed their families. Man traps with teeth were made illegal in 1827.

Gallery Making Rural England

Circle the description that best fits

Size
① tiny ② small ③ medium ④ large ⑤ very large

Mobility
① stationary ② can be moved for use ③ moves under its own power

Complexity
① very simple ② simple ③ complicated ④ complex

Impact
① little impact ② some impact ③ transformative ④ life-changing

Cost to produce
① cheap ② moderately priced ③ costly ④ very expensive

Decade in popular use Write down from object label

Harvest jug

Key information This jug was made for the celebration which comes after a successful harvest. The baking sun sits smiling at the centre on one side and the different shades of orange and yellow are used to represent the soil and blazing skies of a hot summer's day.

Gallery A Year on the Farm

Circle the description that best fits

Size
1 tiny 2 small 3 medium 4 large 5 very large

Mobility
1 stationary 2 can be moved for use 3 moves under its own power

Complexity
1 very simple 2 simple 3 complicated 4 complex

Impact
1 little impact 2 some impact 3 transformative 4 life-changing

Cost to produce
1 cheap 2 moderately priced 3 costly 4 very expensive

Decade in popular use Write down from object label

Wainright tools

Find and draw a tool

Key information Wagons were made, and repaired, in a village workshop by one or two wainwrights. They used precision tools to cut, shape and join the wood to create a wagon.

Gallery Wagon Walk

Circle the description that best fits

Size
① tiny ② small ③ medium ④ large ⑤ very large

Mobility
① stationary ② can be moved for use ③ moves under its own power

Complexity
① very simple ②(simple)③ complicated ④ complex

Impact
① little impact ② some impact ③ transformative ④ life-changing

Cost to produce
① cheap ② moderately priced ③ costly ④ very expensive

Decade in popular use Write down from object label

Handle makers seat

Key information People often lived in the woods and used different tools to measure, cut and shape wood, this seat made it easier for the handle makers to work.

Gallery Making Rural England

Circle the description that best fits

Size
① tiny ② small ③ medium ④ large ⑤ very large

Mobility
① stationary ② can be moved for use ③ moves under its own power

Complexity
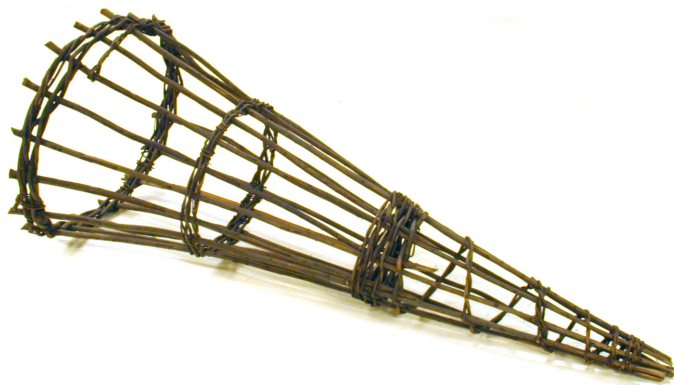① very simple ② simple ③ complicated ④ complex

Impact
① little impact ② some impact ③ transformative ④ life-changing

Cost to produce
① cheap ② moderately priced ③ costly ④ very expensive

Decade in popular use Write down from object label

Salmon trap

Key information Fisherman used to arrange dozens of these traps between sticks buried in the mud of the river, forming a wall. The salmon would then simply swim into the traps, and the fishermen would collect them.

Gallery A Year on the Farm

Circle the description that best fits

Size
1 tiny **2** small **3** medium **4** large **5** very large

Mobility
1 stationary **2** can be moved for use **3** moves under its own power

Complexity
1 very simple **2** simple **3** complicated **4** complex

Impact
1 little impact **2** some impact **3** transformative **4** life-changing

Cost to produce
1 cheap **2** moderately priced **3** costly **4** very expensive

Decade in popular use Write down from object label

Bobbins

Find and draw a bobbin

Key information Write down key facts

Gallery Town and Country

Circle the description that best fits

Size
1 tiny **2** small **3** medium **4** large **5** very large

Mobility
1 stationary **2** can be moved for use **3** moves under its own power

Complexity
1 very simple **2** (simple) **3** complicated **4** complex

Impact
1 little impact **2** some impact **3** transformative **4** life-changing

Cost to produce
1 cheap **2** (moderately priced) **3** costly **4** very expensive

Decade in popular use Write down from object label

Reaper

Key information This machine used to cut crops in the field using the rotating arms. People would follow this machine gathering, binding and threshing the crops.

Gallery A Year on the Farm

Circle the description that best fits

Size
1 tiny **2** small **3** medium **4** large **5** very large

Mobility
1 stationary **2** can be moved for use **3** moves under its own power

Complexity
1 very simple **2** simple **3** complicated **4** complex

Impact
1 little impact **2** some impact **3** transformative **4** life-changing

Cost to produce
1 cheap **2** moderately priced **3** costly **4** very expensive

Decade in popular use Write down from object label

Hand sheep shears

Find and draw shears

Key information Sheep are shorn of their winter fleeces before the weather warms. The sheep had to be held in place while hand shears were used for this job.

Gallery A Year on the Farm

Circle the description that best fits

Size
① tiny ② small ③ medium ④ large ⑤ very large

Mobility
① stationary ② can be moved for use ③ moves under its own power

Complexity
① very simple ② simple ③ complicated ④ complex

Impact
① little impact ② some impact ③ transformative ④ life-changing

Cost to produce
① cheap ② moderately priced ③ costly ④ very expensive

Decade in popular use Write down from object label

Basket

Key information Write down key facts

Gallery Making Rural England

Circle the description that best fits

Size
① tiny ② small ③ medium ④ large ⑤ very large

Mobility
① stationary ② can be moved for use ③ moves under its own power

Complexity
① very simple ②(simple)③ complicated ④ complex
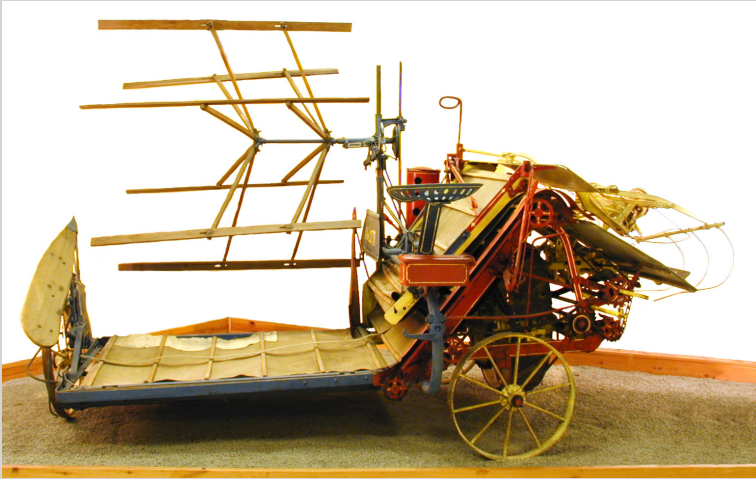
Impact
① little impact ② some impact ③ transformative ④ life-changing

Cost to produce
① cheap ②(moderately priced)③ costly ④ very expensive

Decade in popular use Write down from object label

Reaper-binder

Key information This harvesting machine used to cut crops and bind them into bunches as it travelled across a field.

Gallery Our Country Lives

Circle the description that best fits

Size
① tiny ② small ③ medium ④ large ⑤ very large

Mobility
① stationary ② can be moved for use ③ moves under its own power

Complexity
① very simple ② simple ③ (complicated) ④ complex

Impact
① little impact ② some impact ③ transformative ④ life-changing

Cost to produce
① cheap ② moderately priced ③ (costly) ④ very expensive

Decade in popular use Write down from object label