

Tiny gallery with a view on hill-farming life

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IN THE PICTURE: Photographer John Bentley at the Gallery on the Green, a former phone box in Settle, which is hosting his exhibition about hill farmers.

VISITORS TO what is believed to be the world's smallest art gallery in Settle, will get a taste of life as a hill farmer through its new exhibition.

Photographer John Bentley has documented A Year in Hill Farming, which will run in the Gallery on the Green, located in a former phone box, until March 12.

Mr Bentley, who is based in Settle, said the project, which features farming communities in the uplands of Yorkshire and Cumbria, was six years in the making.

“To me it is very important to document the industry as it stands and I am very respectful of the history and traditions of sheep farming and its social and economic importance to the Dales and the rural north of England.

Now retired with 40 years of photography experience, Mr Bentley said when he moved to Settle, his farming photo project largely centred around agricultural shows, livestock markets and sheepdog trials.

“Becoming an ‘ addict’ of sorts, I was drawn into photographing the world of hill sheep farming,” he said.

“There is still so much to photograph in the realm of sheep, but in the meantime in this exhibition I’ve tried to paint a picture of how the farming year pans out.

“There are economic and environmental pressures on the industry and this past year has, of course, also seen the impact of Covid- 19, meaning that the gatherings for the traditional shows and sales, as depicted in many of the photographs, could no longer take place in the usual way.”

The tiny Gallery on the Green is one of the few art galleries that can remain open despite coronavirus restrictions, which organisers said is mainly because, being a former phone box, it is impossible to lock the door.

They encouraging local people to call in to the gallery as part of their daily exercise but are asking visitors to ensure they follow coronavirus guidelines.