

Newsletter and website Feature: National Churches Trust grant success

As Slingsby's residents, visitors and web-friends will be aware, for the past two years the Church and the PCC (the parochial church council) has been raising funds to restore the Church Tower. This iconic feature of Slingsby's skyline has been under threat of closure since large cracks and rusting ironwork was discovered by the church's fabric advisor, Margaret Mackinder and architect Andrew Boyce (Ferrey and Mennim) two years ago. Fortunately, the church secured the support of English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund, who awarded the church a grant of £55,000 in 2010. This left nearly £45,000 to raise in less than a year...no mean feat for a small village like Slingsby!

However, undaunted the village has really pulled together in supporting fundraising efforts like the car boot sales, concerts, coffee mornings, Gardener's Question Time and Local History weekend. The latter raised over £800 towards the appeal and we were delighted that the parish council recently voted to help fund the digitisation of the Wormald Collection of historic postcards and photographs of Slingsby, which we hope to make available in the future through the web site..watch this space! Groups such as the Sports and Social Club, the Village Hall, the School and the newly-formed Allotment Association have been fantastic supporters of our events. Individuals have also made extremely generous donations, all in very tough times. We are extremely grateful for everyone's support.

One of the factors which has really contributed to us nearly reaching our target has also been the generosity of charitable organisations. In August 2010, we made over 120 applications to a range of charities identified by our English heritage contact, Dav Smith, PCC Treasurer Maurag Carmichael and helpfully assembled into a database by Joy Fisher. To our surprise and delight, several of these, including The Yorkshire Historic Churches Trust, The All Churches Trust, The Earl Fitzwilliam Charitable Trust, The George Martin Trust, the Shepherd Charitable Trust and The Garfield Weston Foundation have given us extremely generous grants and donations towards the Appeal.

The largest grant however, came from the National Churches Trust, one of the leading national independent bodies concerned with the welfare and protection of Christian places of worship throughout the UK. The Trust helps faith communities maintain and enhance the buildings in their care in practical and innovative ways. It tries to ensure that churches, chapels and meeting houses survive and flourish at the heart of their communities. Rising costs and the practicalities of fundraising are only some of the challenges faced by the volunteers managing these unique and special places. The Trust strives to raise public awareness about the challenges that local communities like our own are facing.

Since its foundation in 1953, the National Churches Trust has granted over £27 million in grants and loans raised entirely from voluntary donations and legacies. Now is therefore a particularly good time for anyone who is passionate about churches, chapels and meeting houses to join the NCT or to think about making a donation to it. The Trust receives no financial aid from government or church authorities. You can help by joining as a Friend from as little as £20 per year. The Friends' Scheme is currently being developed. The more people who join, the stronger their voice will be. The NCT is also developing a volunteers programme. If you are interested in giving some time to help them, please contact them directly.

You can make a donation online at the NCT website using your credit card and the 'Give Now' secure facilities provided by the Charities Aid Foundation, which enables you to increase the value of your gift at no extra cost to yourself, if you are a UK taxpayer. If you would like to consider the NCT in your will, you can contact them to ask about legacies or find more details on their website. For more details and to join the NCT, please take a look at their website: www.nationalchurchestrust.org or contact them on 020 7600 6090 or email: info@nationalchurchestrust.org

Slingsby has also been delighted to receive a grant of £3,000 from the Yorkshire Historic Churches Trust (<http://www.yhct.org.uk/>). The YHCT is one of the most active supporters of local church restoration in the area and will be familiar to many through its annual September fundraising church bike ride. As churchwarden Ann Wilson noted, 'For many years cyclists have been welcomed with refreshments at All Saints, and the parish is now extremely grateful to receive the support of the YHCT towards the church tower restoration'.

The generosity of Slingsby supporters means that we have now almost reached our target. As the Rector, Beryl Bowes commented, 'We can hardly believe that we are nearly there. The support of charities like the National Churches Trust has not only helped us to achieve this but has given us fresh confidence and inspiration in our fundraising efforts. Moreover, it has helped us put the church building back at the heart of village life and events. This is perhaps the most important legacy in securing the future of All Saints' Slingsby.'

More details about Slingsby's fundraising can be obtained from the PCC Secretary, Dr Kate Giles on 01653 628 739 (kate.giles@york.ac.uk).

Articles about the restoration work will be published regularly in the Village Newsletter 'The Triangle' and on the new village website: www.slingsbyvillage.co.uk