

REMEMBER A CHARITY
IN YOUR WILL
Help the work live on...

REMEMBER A CHARITY

In this supplement from Remember A Charity find out how to pass on something wonderful by including a charity in your will



Pages 2-3

Stars of the '80s share how they are helping good causes today and for tomorrow

Pages 10-11

Read how Disability Sports Coach could use gifts in wills to help more disabled people access sports

Pages 12-13

Actress Pam St Clement explains how international charity Brooke protects working animals

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Image: Secchi Smith

Clockwise from left: Southwark Charities has unveiled a proposed new development on London's Blackfriars Road, a mixed-use scheme of 62 almshouses and 22,500sq m of workspace; enjoying a cuppa at Tiverton Almshouses; founded in 1182 by Bishop Henry of Blois, The Hospital of St Cross and Almshouse of Noble Poverty is one of the oldest almshouses; art historian and BBC presenter Dan Cruickshank is an ambassador of The Almshouse Association

The Almshouse Association

Pass it on

One of the earliest forms of bequest, almshouses are as relevant today as they have been throughout the ages, but who will be the next generation of philanthropists, asks **Dan Cruickshank**



We tend to think of social housing as part of our modern welfare system, a safety net for people in need, yet almshouses have been protecting the most vulnerable in society since the 10th century. Often distinguishable as historic buildings in rural towns and villages, almshouses are just as likely to be found in city centres, with new properties still being built today.

Founded in 1946, The Almshouse Association represents more than 1,600 independent almshouse charities which provide 30,000 affordable homes for 36,000 people. Celebrating its 75th anniversary in 2021, art historian and BBC presenter Dan Cruickshank is an ambassador for the organisation.

"Almost every town has a splendid collection of almshouses, many of which

are amazing buildings," he says. "We tend to think of almshouses as places such as The Royal Hospital Chelsea, home of the Chelsea Pensioners, which care for older people and this is the enduring spirit of almshouses."

"In my work as an art historian I often find myself in almshouses writing about the beauty of these buildings. When I first got involved with The Almshouse Association I was reminded of the relevance of almshouses to today's society and the current housing crisis. The oldest almshouse foundation is thought to be The Hospital of St Oswald which was founded around 990 by the Bishop of Worcester as a place to 'minister the sick, bury the dead, relieve the poor and give shelter to travellers'."

"We are working on a programme about the

endowments made by many incredible characters throughout history, particularly during the 17th and 18th centuries. One of these was Lady Margaret Hungerford who purchased a plot of land in Horsham in 1665 to build almshouses and a schoolroom as part of the medieval Roman Catholic tradition of funding good works for the good of the soul – ultimately an act of charity."

The Almshouse Association's chief executive Nick Phillips says that while almshouses begin with compassion, they go on to create companionship and community. "Almshouses come from the activism of people seeing those in need and doing something about it," he says. "More almshouses are being built now than at any time since the Industrial Revolution. In the Victorian age, it was

“ Almshouses are a constant reminder that legacy works, and a gift in a will can help support generations to come ”

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very common for almshouses to be established by individuals and industry to provide a legacy of ongoing support. It's lovely to see a person making a home in a 17th-century building which is the result of someone's legacy, as they wouldn't have a place without that individual's generosity. The pandemic has created new pressures on an already buckling housing system and highlighted the importance of friends and neighbours to our wellbeing."

Mandy, 26, has been living in an almshouse for just over six months after bouncing between friends and family following a failed relationship which left her without a roof over her head. Suffering from mental-health issues, she explains the difference her new home has made.

"I would not be here now and I don't know what would have happened without it," she says. "I now have a job and a home, and the other

residents here feel like my aunts."

"Living in a beautiful building is good for you," says Dan. "We tend to take almshouses for granted, but to ensure they continue to be here for the future we need the next generation of philanthropists to step forward. In London, Southwark Charities has been granted planning permission to build 62 new, sustainable almshouses as part of a mixed-use scheme to replace outdated properties built in 1973. Affordable workspace will help to create jobs and generate income to support the scheme.

"Almshouses are a constant reminder that legacy works, and a gift in a will can help support generations to come." •

To find out more and see how you can help, visit almshouses.org

Time to reflect

The events of the past 18 months have led more people to think about leaving a gift in their will, says Rob Cope, director of Remember A Charity

For many charities, the pandemic had an immediate effect on their fundraising efforts, but it also created a moment of reflection with more people choosing to leave a gift in their will. "I think Covid-19 made people more aware of their own mortality, the importance of future life planning and the need to put their affairs in order," says Rob Cope, director of Remember A Charity which represents more than 200 charities. "More people are thinking about what's important to them, and charities have seen a surge in interest from supporters in their will-writing schemes.

"People have realised the challenges that charities, particularly smaller organisations, face and if they don't support causes that matter to them, there is a danger they could lose them. Most fundraising events had to stop overnight and many are only just coming back, so charities have had to think hard about how they receive support. At the same time, demand for services is at an all-time high and many are struggling to do more with fewer resources, so a gift in a will is more important than ever.

"Quite rightly, people want to protect their nearest and dearest, but leaving just a small amount – even one or two per cent of your estate – to charity makes a huge difference. Currently, only six per cent of people leave a gift in their will, but if this is increased to ten per cent it would generate an extra £1bn for charities. People are put off by thinking they haven't got a lot to leave, but if everyone gifted a small amount it would help so many good causes to continue their vital work for generations to come." •

To find out more about leaving a gift in your will to charity, visit rememberacharity.org.uk

Gifts in Wills fund a third of our research



Laura, Research Nurse



Jutla, Pledger

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