



*Friends of*

**The Connection**  
at St Martin-in-the-Fields

**Annual Review**  
**2018-19**





# Highlights of the year

I am delighted to report on another successful year for the Friends, in which we were able again to increase our donations to support the work of The Connection to around £284,000, thanks once again to the very generous support of our many Friends and supporters. In reflecting on our experience, I see three clear themes emerging.

Firstly, while fundraising remains our primary purpose, much of what we do also contributes to the important task of raising awareness of the reality and complexity of homelessness, both amongst our own membership and in a wider public. So, our first, highly successful Spring Appeal both raised more than £25,000 to fully fund The Connection's laundry for the whole year, and also attracted 30,000 hits on social media, including 6,000 members of the public who viewed the informative videos our social media volunteers had made (see p9).

In the same way, our Connection with Choral Classics evening in November combined an informative discussion on the Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy with a sociable meal and concert in St Martin's, raising valuable funds in the process. In addition, our Speakers' Panel members spoke to 10 audiences, ranging from churches and a Faiths Forum, through sixth formers and a U3A group, to business people.

Secondly, so much of what we do rests on the individual and collective initiative of committed volunteers. Key to this are our Committee, who give unstintingly of their time and effort. They were further strengthened this year through the co-option of Graham Lawrence as Secretary, to take over from Nigel Thorpe who has served us for many years, and who will now focus on membership recruitment. Graham, as a professional Company Secretary and former staff member of St Martin's Social Care Unit, brings a wealth of experience to the position. We also welcomed to the Committee Olivia Wilson and Jess Rayner, both marketing professionals, who have already made an important contribution to design work on publicity materials and our increased social media presence.



Graham Lawrence





Much more widely, Mari Ajakainen organised, and sang for us at, a gig in Covent Garden to raise funds for the Laundry appeal. Nine Friends, some in partnership with local charities, ran Connection Coffee Mornings, for World Homeless Day. John and Wendy Ward held a charity walk and cream tea at their home. A number of Friends made and sold jelly, baked and sold cakes, collected donations for use of their parking place, or sang Christmas carols enthusiastically in Charing Cross Station. The collection at a Friend's funeral service raised a further £500. Twenty three cyclists raised over £28,800 on the 10th Anniversary Queen Eleanor Cycle Ride, once again with support all along the route from enthusiastic volunteers (see p8). Donations from all these various activities totalled about £38,000. If you have an idea for any kind of initiative, let us know how we can help you bring it into being.



Nigel Thorpe, Angela Protain, former Day Centre Manager, and Mari Ajakainen

Thirdly, so much of what we do depends on active collaboration with The Connection's own staff. Their statistics inform our speakers' presentations, their staff and Step up volunteers enhance our in-house events, and we seek to ensure that our fundraising programmes are distinct but complementary, working closely with The Connection's new Director of Fundraising, Elizabeth Charles, and her staff.

*Charles Woodd, Chair*



Local QECR supporters gather by Charing Cross during the 10th Anniversary Celebration





# The Connection

## 2018-19

2018/19 was a very packed year for the Connection. I am sure many of you have noticed the rise in rough sleeping over the past few years and this means our services have been busy. We saw 2137 people during the day and 731 people in our night time service. 777 people were supported with housing advice and recovery support, with 743 people accessing our enterprise and training team, with 95 people either getting a job or moving into volunteering.

Alongside providing our services, we have also been making a lot of changes based on our 5 year strategy. We restructured our delivery to be as effective as we can be. We are now offering a range of services which: engage people in crisis and who are hard to reach; support people to recover and move into secure, sustainable accommodation and, finally help people to get a job, volunteer or get new skills.

During the year we have also expanded our services to meet the growing needs of rough sleepers in Westminster. Our new day time Street Engagement Team has developed, helping over 300 people and we have almost doubled the capacity of our overnight emergency accommodation centre. We have also invested in training for our team in how they provide support consistently and in a way which reflects our intention to be “with” people rather than doing things “for” people.



We appointed our Enterprise Development Lead at the end of March and will be growing our trading and earned income. This will include work with the St Martins in the Field Trading company. We are planning some pilots in the Courtyard Cafe to complement our successful gardening project in 2018.





Our fundraising went well during the year and we have created a new strategy to help grow this work to meet the increasing demands on our services as a result of the rise in rough sleeping. We also put in place our Knowledge and Innovation Team to support service development and best practice.

We have also been busy creating a Communications and Advocacy Strategy for the charity. As a successful local charity with specific expertise in rough sleeping here in Westminster, we are keen to share what we know more widely with the general public, with businesses based locally and with policy makers.

Finally, we undertook trustee recruitment during the year, increasing our board with 6 new members with the skills we need to achieve our ambitious 5 year strategy. Alongside this, we invested in finance and HR IT to create greater efficiencies in our infrastructure. We also undertook a review of our volunteering and have plans to develop opportunities over the coming year. This includes building on our client volunteering programme “Step Up” which engaged 28 people last year in volunteer roles across the charity.



We are incredibly grateful for the support we get from The Friends of The Connection – we couldn't do it without you.

*Pam Orchard, Chief Executive*







# Four good reasons to be a Friend of the Connection

The Friends is a membership organisation and retaining and increasing our membership is essential to our ability to support the Connection. We have been losing members in recent years and so we looked again at what we offer our members and what our members gain from membership, as opposed to simply making a donation occasionally to the Connection. We thought there were four good reasons for being a member:

- A continuing **Commitment** to ending homelessness
- **Knowledge and Understanding** of the causes of homelessness and the work of the Connection, and the ability to spread this knowledge
- The chance to **Help Directly**, for example by being aware of how to report a homeless person through Streetlink
- The opportunity to **Meet like-minded People** through the events we hold including talks and concerts.

We have set out these ideas in full on our website and are promoting them through social media, as well as drawing them to the attention of our members through newsletters and emails. We are also working with the Connection, to ensure that the Connection's many individual supporters are aware of the Friends and what we offer.

Our goal is to halt the decline in membership and to begin again to recruit new members. We hope that existing members will help and be able themselves to bring new members to our ranks.

*Nigel Thorpe, Membership Secretary*



# The Value of Legacies

At last year's Friends' Day, we honoured the memory of a long-standing Friend of the Connection, with the posthumous tribute of the Guy Mason Award to Val Farbridge. Val was a professional market researcher, working for many years for National Opinion Poll, who became national Chairman of the Market Research Society in 1981.

For 20 years, in the 1970s and 1980s, Val volunteered on a weekly basis at the Social Care Unit (one of the precursors of The Connection at St Martin's). She used her professional skills to interview homeless people and dispense charitable funds with wisdom, enthusiasm and good judgment.

Despite retiring to Hythe in Kent, Val remained a lifelong Friend, and when she died in 2014, at the age of 84, she left a share of her estate to the Friends of the Connection, resulting in an amazingly generous gift of £373,000.

At the Friends, we are constantly aware of the generous commitment of both time and money that so many Friends make year in year out to support The Connection's vital work through the Friends. But what is also humbling is the value of those legacies that long-standing Friends such as Val Farbridge make as the final mark of their lifelong commitment to helping to tackle homelessness in central London.

If you would like further information about adding a legacy to your will in favour of the Friends, please contact the Friends' office, and we will be happy to talk to you about the options.



Val Farbridge





# The 10th Queen Eleanor Cycle Ride

This fabulous August Bank Holiday weekend must eclipse any other scheme whereby people sponsor you for doing what you enjoy.

We cycle on quiet roads, steeped in the history of Queen Eleanor's funereal journey from Lincolnshire to Westminster Abbey. We glamp in church halls where good ladies turn out their finest fare. We are treated to historical lectures, even organ recitals, and the whole is interspersed with cake laden coffee stops, lunch stops, tea stops and "This is an interesting place" stops.

Extraordinarily, everyone can do it, from young racers on featherweight carbon fibre with lycra polished saddles, to the more mature on veteran bikes, with saddles to be avoided. It is hard and long, but the frequent stops, interesting people and scenery distracts from the aches and pains. The event is perhaps redolent of a scout trip; indeed we have an "Entertainment" evening, which it sometimes is.

Lots of friends welcome us on the overnight stops. At Geddington we are escorted into the village by their Voluntary Fire Brigade, and everyone gathers to watch the newcomers who have been assured that it's easy to cycle through the ford. We are looked after. There is a van to carry our luggage between stops and safety cars; we have detailed maps and very thorough route briefings that are depressingly ineffectual – but the vehicles shepherd us back to righteousness.

Finally we sweep into Westminster Abbey and hold a short service at Eleanor's tomb, placing on it a little wooden cross, carried from Harby where she died. The 10th Anniversary Ride in 2018 raised a fantastic £28,800 to support the work of the Connection.



Eleanor's Tomb in  
Westminster Abbey

*Simon Cox, Cyclist*







# Let's Do the Laundry!



Last year we decided, for the first time, to launch a big appeal in the spring, to support a particular activity at the Connection. After much discussion among ourselves and with the Connection staff we decided to try to raise enough money to support the Connection's laundry service for a year, meaning we had to raise £25,000 to fund all the materials and running costs, including staff costs for 12 months.

We chose the laundry because it is heavily used by all those who come through the big red door on Adelaide Street. The laundry provides the chance for every such person to have clean clothes and a clean sleeping bag. While their clothes are being washed and dried people can take a shower, with bathrobes provided. It is an essential step to feeling better about oneself and ready to face the world.

We ran a campaign based on mailing our members and also on our website and social media channels. We interviewed clients and staff about the vital service of the laundry and created videos we used online to support the campaign. We launched it with our spring mailing and newsletter, and closed it on Friends' Day, 30 June 2018. We approached the campaign determined to use the technical tools available to us now, for instance offering regular updates on progress towards our target.

Our supporters were very generous and by Friends' Day we had not only met our target but surpassed it, raising £27,330 in total.

This March we launched a successor campaign, Let's Go! to fund clients' travel costs for a whole year.



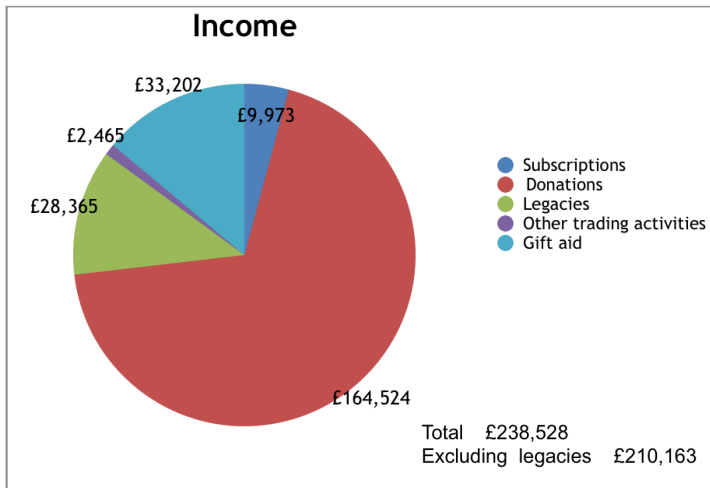
Nigel Thorpe hands the Laundry Appeal cheque to CEO Pam Orchard





# Accounts 2018-19

Our financial performance in 2018-19 was again very satisfactory. We were able to make grants to the Connection totalling nearly £284,000, over £7,000 more than in the previous year. In accounting terms we ran a deficit of about £68,000, reflecting the fact that a large payment of Gift Aid accounted for in previous years enabled us to pay over more than our income on this occasion. But despite this deficit our balance sheet remains strong, with net assets nearly of £82,000, including cash reserves of around £20,000 in line with our reserves policy.



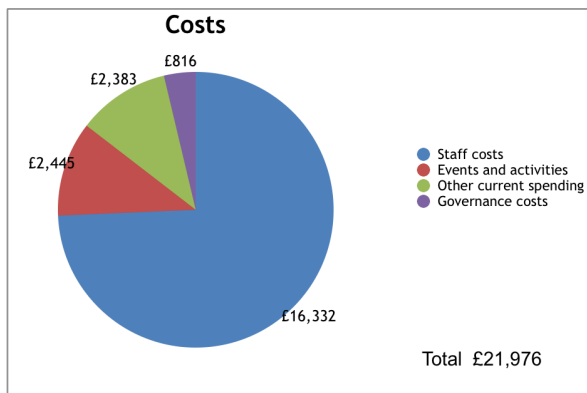
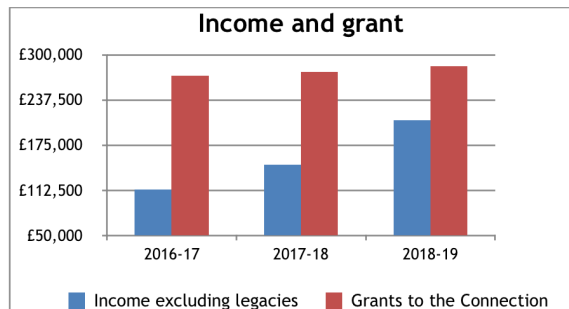
Our non-legacy income in 2018-19 was just over £210,000, up over £62,000 on the previous year. The breakdown is shown above. All categories of income were up, apart from a small fall in legacies which are by their nature volatile. There are a number of large legacies in the pipeline which we cannot formally account for until the details become more certain. The success of our first Spring Appeal contributed to a rise in donations of around £55,000 (excluding Gift Aid yet to be claimed); additional money raised from events and local fundraising activity contributed around £18,000 to that increase after the great success of the Queen Eleanor Cycle Ride, which more than doubled its contribution (to around £28,000) in its 10th anniversary year.





Our increasing financial contribution to the Connection, very necessary at a time of rising homelessness, has in the past relied a good deal on a continuing flow of income from legacies, and

we hope that these will pick up again after modest flows in the last two years. But as the chart above shows, the sharply increasing trend in our income excluding legacies has enabled us to continue increasing our contribution, encouraging us to hope that we can sustain the increasing trend in the years ahead. Our targets are to raise income excluding legacies to at least £200,000 again this year, and to make grants totalling £300,000.



2018-19 is the first full year in which we have had responsibility for funding our administrator, and as expected this has increased our costs by nearly £9,000 to £22,000, as the final chart illustrates. Nevertheless they remain a small fraction of the income we generate; in 2018-19 they were little over 10% of non-legacy income, 9% of total income. Although our costs are now over double the income we receive from subscriptions, about £10,000, we do not plan to increase the subscription rate this year.

*Chris Riley, Treasurer*





# Friends' events still to come in 2019

## **Food of Love - Saturday 13 July, 5 - 7 pm**

The Saint Martin Singers present an evening of music and readings on the theme of Love and Romance, in the Activities room at The Connection at St Martin's.

Tickets at £10 include interval refreshments. Book your tickets at [www.friendsoftheconnection.org.uk/upcoming-events/food-of-love](http://www.friendsoftheconnection.org.uk/upcoming-events/food-of-love) or contact the Friends' office.

## **Queen Eleanor Cycle Ride - Friday 23 to Monday 26 August**

There are still places for regular cyclists to join our annual 200-mile sponsored cycle ride following the Eleanor Crosses from Lincoln to London. It's a challenge, but it's fun! And all the proceeds go to the Friends. More details from: [queeneleanorcycl ride.org.uk](http://queeneleanorcycl ride.org.uk)

## **Carol Singing on Charing Cross Station - Tuesday 10 December**

Join us to sing carols at Charing Cross Station. More details from the Friends' office.

*If you would like to be kept up to date with Friends' events by email, make sure we have your email address and your consent. Email us at [friends@cstm.org.uk](mailto:friends@cstm.org.uk)*

## **Get in touch**

If you would like to make a donation, become a Friend, or find out more about the Friends, do visit our website [www.friendsoftheconnection.org.uk](http://www.friendsoftheconnection.org.uk) or contact the Friends' office - details below:

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