

The Craven Trust: a short history

1994-1995 | The Beginnings

The Craven Trust was born out of a chance meeting at a welcome party for the new Archdeacon of Craven, held at the Bishop of Bradford's house in 1994. Three people found themselves talking about the possibility of setting up a local community trust, for local people to get small grants in the Archdeacon's diocese in the districts of the Craven and Keighley. Over a short space of time, they mobilised a number of keen representatives of the region to establish a trust.

The three initial founders were Peter Marshall OBE, Rt Rev. Malcolm Grundy and Caroline Schwaller. Peter was famous in the world of philanthropy for inspiring and establishing new foundations and trusts. He was an enormously influential character in the national movement and did much to move the Trust quickly into the public eye both nationally and locally. Malcolm Grundy, the Archdeacon, brought significant community development experience and the valuable church network. Caroline Schwaller, CEO of Keighley Voluntary Services, brought local knowledge of the Keighley area and the wider voluntary sector.

They were quickly joined by Dr Brian Fisher, a retired GP from Skipton; Colin Reeder, a solicitor in Skipton and John Sheard, retired Estate Manager of Bolton Abbey.

These became the first Trustees providing representation from multicultural Keighley, through Dales town Skipton to the rural communities of North Yorkshire, bringing helpful networks and insight. Brian Fisher was the Trust's first Chair.



On 21st March 1995, The Craven Trust was formally created and was publicly launched at East Riddlesden Hall on 15th June, with further launches at Giggleswick School, Upper Wharfedale Rugby Club in Threshfield and Gisburne Park Hospital to ensure coverage of the whole region.

From the very outset the objective of the Trust was *"local money for local needs"* which, with only minor modification, remains today.

1995-1999 | The Trust Grows and Develops

Colin Reeder became our first Treasurer, and the funds grew steadily over the initial years. We immediately established the criteria and processes for grant-making that broadly remain today: using the income from our investment portfolio to give grants to primarily small, locally based community organisations, with a simple process and full Trustee involvement in assessing applications. The grant making pattern of quarterly meetings and management also continues.

During the early years we raised funds and our profile with public events such as concerts, performances and social events, for example, the organist, Carlo Curley, at Bolton Priory in 1997; Collegium Regale (The Choral Scholars of King's College, Cambridge) in Holy Trinity Parish Church Skipton in 1999; a performance of *Midsummer Night's Dream* with kind permission of Mr and Mrs Bannister at Coniston Hall in 2000; all of which involved considerable energy, time and organising skills amongst the Trustees. After a while it was regrettably decided we could not sustain these events without a paid co-ordinator, but we preferred to keep our costs to the minimum and manage without.

We maintain the original philosophy of keeping costs to the minimum and are extremely grateful to those who have helped us to function so well with generosity and enthusiasm, especially our part-time administrators. Dee Pollitt, our first Administrator, witnessed the signatures of the first trustees to the 1995 Trust Deed and in 2018 joined us as a Trustee herself.

Trustees have come and gone over the years, but always with grateful thanks for their time, commitment, donations and contacts. Past Chairs, however, should be acknowledged for their tireless dedication: Brian Fisher (1995-1999), John Sheard (1999-2002) and Jeremy Mackrell (2002-2010) who were all instrumental throughout the first 20 years, and more recently, Mark Facer. All had strong ties to the rural areas of Craven, while Caroline Schwaller, the current Chair, maintains connection to the original ethos of creation and urban Keighley.

1999 | The Beamsley Trust

A significant boost to the Trust occurred in 1999 when we “absorbed” The Beamsley Trust by taking over the £264,000 fund and its administration. The Beamsley Trust in 1999 gave grants to individuals in need, hardship, or distress with a preference for those living in the Beamsley Parish. These funds were raised when the Trustees of the Beamsley Hospital decided to sell the hospital to the Landmark Trust in 1983. The Beamsley Trust remains an Endowed Fund within The Craven Trust with the area of benefit now extending to the whole of the Craven region. In line with Beamsley’s objectives to help individuals in need, we eventually devised a process involving referral agencies rather than dealing directly with applicants, which could prove problematic. Over the years we have developed strong partnership arrangements with a number of local charities who support vulnerable people and have to date supported hundreds of individuals with grants ranging from £50 for moving costs to £1,100 for secure garden fencing.

The Beamsley Trust and The Craven Trust remain two separate funds using the combined opportunities of each under the umbrella of The Craven Trust. The Beamsley Trust funds are endowed funds and only the interest earned can be used for the grants to individuals, whereas The Craven Trust is unrestricted. This means that Trustees can determine how much from interest and capital can be spent on grants to community projects.

2001-2003 | Foot and Mouth - The Dales Recovery Appeal - *“Craven’s £1 million Fightback”*

The full toll of suffering caused by the foot and mouth outbreak in the Yorkshire Dales and Lancashire’s Ribbles Valley in the summer of 2001 will probably never be known. To calculate the financial losses would be extremely difficult; to quantify the stress and sadness for hundreds, perhaps thousands of people would be virtually impossible. But one record will always remain that demonstrates the generosity and concern shown by people, organisations and charitable trusts throughout the Dales and the rest of the United Kingdom. In a little over six months, £1 million was donated to help individuals, small businesses and voluntary groups who faced potential financial disaster.

When the Trustees of The Craven Trust met in June 2001, with foot and mouth disease ravaging large parts of Northern England, we felt we must act quickly to help in any way we could. A small group of Trustees chaired by John Sheard set up an appeal to help farmers through the crisis. Unfortunately, John suffered an illness in the middle of the appeal, however, Brian Fisher took over the reins and a target of £500,000 was set. Much to our delight – and no little astonishment – we found within weeks that we had underestimated people’s generosity and their affection for the Dales. Within days, we had received a single anonymous donation of £100,000 from a private individual, followed by several of £25,000. Within weeks, sterling work by Peter Marshall was attracting grants of £10,000 and more from family trusts throughout the UK, many of whom also insisted on anonymity.

By August, just seven weeks after the launch of the appeal, £250,000 had been raised and the £1 million figure came over the New Year. We had begun distributing grants to worthy causes by then: some 250 awards had been made, hopefully making Christmas 2001 just a shade happier for people in deep distress.

Through the amazing efforts of everyone involved, the whole £1,084,040 raised had been distributed to 812 worthy causes within a year. The Craven Trust Trustees could never have managed this without the support of additional committee members, assessors, administrators, and dozens of volunteers who worked long hours, often under considerable pressure, for free – the success of the appeal giving us almost as much pleasure as the hundreds of people we had been able to help.

2002-2016 | Local Money for Local Needs

In 2001, recognising the need to focus on fundraising in other locations to ensure a balance of where money came from and where it goes, Richard Crabtree OBE was welcomed on a part-time consultancy basis as Funding Officer, replaced by Steve Crossley-Smith in 2003, who remained with the Trust until 2010. The Friends scheme was launched in 2002, and we have many of those who joined still donating, mainly from the rural communities. Unfortunately, it has always proved difficult to gain support from the urban areas, where the economic profile is considerably different.

During our 10th Anniversary year, we awarded a record total of 50 grants totalling £33,820. The total grants for the first 10 years amounted to £121,355

In 2005 we hosted concerts by Collegium Regale in Skipton, artistes from Opera North in Settle, and open gardens at Coulthurst Hall and Garden Cottage Waddington contributing to funds and raising our profile. We were very pleased to be The Devonshire Hotels and Restaurants Charity of the Year in 2007. Collegium Regale returned in 2008, as well as performances by The Mikron Theatre and Open Garden at Peter Marshall's Netherwood Hall. The Mikron Theatre performed for us again in 2010.

Steve Crossley-Smith, our Funding Administrator, retired in October 2010 after eight years of organising events and corresponding with our Friends.

2012 saw a few changes. However, the saddest was the sudden death in June of Peter Marshall, a founder member and a major driving force behind our identity, development, and sustainability, who rightly received his OBE for charitable services. As well as The Craven Trust and the major effort to respond to the foot and mouth crisis, Peter devoted his time and enormous energy running the Sir George Martin Trust (which had been set up by a member of his family), set up The UK Charitable Trusts Initiative as well as starting his own charitable trust in 1989. As his fellow Trustee, Brian Fisher, said, "Peter was a very special character: charming, thoughtful, entertaining but a true eccentric with enormous energy."

Linda Lee, our Administrator for many years, retired and we are hugely grateful for her dedication to the task and commitment to the trusts' work and the added bonus of her photographic skills. Lynn Leadbeatter ably filled her place for a short while and was replaced by Mary Hamilton.

Our first website was created in 2012 and updated in 2013 with the support of local young web designer, Ed Askew. Over the course of the next few years, Ed helped to modernise the trust with an electronic grant process.

In 2013, Nicola Chambers, who had been a trustee for 12 years, sadly died after a long illness and Jeremy Mackrell retired after 16 years. Coincidentally, Jeremy was awarded the MBE in recognition of his charity work. Both were committed to the Trust and brought their knowledge and expertise as

legal experts and rural champions. Three new trustees were welcomed: Michael Lovitt, Karen Leaver and Jenny Thistlethwaite, with Karen taking over the responsibilities of Treasurer from Mark Facer, who was appointed Chair.

Brian Fisher, who had been instrumental in starting the Trust, bringing the Beamsley Trust under our administration and integral in distributing the foot and mouth grant aid to the rural community, retired in 2015.

2016 | 21st Celebration



Trustees: Giles Bowring, Karen Leaver, Michael Lovitt, Caroline Schwaller (Chair), Mark Facer, Jenny Thistlethwaite

Over the first 21 years the Craven and Beamsley Trusts distributed over 650 grants totalling £406,775 and we celebrated our 21st birthday at Broughton Hall in great style, thanks to the kind support of Hilary Templar, who volunteered to take on the task of organising the event. We welcomed new faces and brought together past friends, donors, trustees, and volunteers to look forward to the future. In doing so we took the opportunity to re-design our branding and engaged the graphic design department at Craven College to bring fresh ideas. We launched the new logo at Broughton Hall, and we were particularly grateful to the Tempests of Broughton Hall for lending us a beautiful venue, to the sponsors of the event, and for the revitalised enthusiasm for the Trust which raised an unexpected extra £15,000 in donations.

2016 - to date | Local Giving for Local Needs

Robert Templar joined as a Trustee in 2016, and his financial expertise proved valuable as Karen Leaver, our Treasurer, retired from the Trust in 2017, moving out of the area, and Robert took on the role. Other changes in 2017 included the retirement of Mark Facer after more than 10 years and the appointment of Simon Robinson as a new trustee, bringing significant experience in grant applications and charity presentations. Simon's efforts, along with a design consultant he introduced us to, helped us re-vamp the annual report format, better showcasing the difference we make, and he also started to run regular articles in the local press about the Trust's activities.

We also saw a change in our Administrator when Mary Hamilton, who had looked after us with enormous care and commitment, retired and handed over to Rowena Garton in a seamless transition which enabled the Trust to continue operating without a pause.

In 2016 we put the management of the investment funds out to tender and after various interviews we appointed Brewin Dolphin. Many thanks go to Redmayne Bentley, our previous investment managers.

During 2017, The Beamsley Trust was pleased to have transferred to it the residual £9,314 fund from the Keighley Sick Poor Fund and the Emma Wright Endowment upon the closure of those charities.

The Beamsley Trust has always relied upon referrals from individuals' support organisations and in 2018 we held a successful open meeting with various referring agencies. It was well attended, and we saw an increase in the applications for individuals in need in our region. After many years of using donated space by Central Hall in Keighley, for which we extended our thanks, we determined, along with Rowena, that the operations of the Trust would be more efficiently managed via home-working and utilisation of a PO Box.

2018 also saw us welcome back to the Trust Dee Pollitt, this time as a Trustee. Dee was the Administrator for the first years of the Trust's life and brings a wealth of experience in the voluntary sector in Craven.

A small charity, The William Frankland Charity based in the parish next to the parish of Beamsley was being closed by its Trustees. It had similar aims and objectives to the Beamsley Trust and the £495 fund was transferred to us and amalgamated with the Beamsley Trust Endowment Fund in 2019.

The pandemic of 2020 impacted the Trust, along with all charities. Investment income only being down 10-20% reflected the sensible management by Brewin Dolphin. The demands on the Trust for community projects was lower, reflecting the lockdown and lack of infrastructure projects being undertaken, however, unsurprisingly, the demand from individuals in need remained the same. We launched an appeal for funds through The Craven Herald and Keighley News; however, this did not raise significant funds due to so many similar amazing efforts launched by various organisations to support groups during lockdown.

In the anticipation that as lockdown is relaxed, many groups and individuals will find themselves left outside the central and local government relief funds and will require support from small grant making organisations such as The Craven Trust, we approved a policy change to enable, where appropriate, increased funds for The Beamsley Trust's support for individuals in need.

During lockdown and the period afterwards, the Trustees effectively transitioned to virtual meetings, however, they all missed not just meeting face to face as Trustees but getting out and about in the wonderful Craven District to meet grant applicants and better understand the projects they are planning. In this period of greater virtual working and use of internet platforms, we recognised our website required modernising and commissioned a local web designer to update and re-design it to provide a more accessible resource for potential grant applicants to work with us. Keeping our application processes as simple as possible is key and the new layout facilitates this. The new site also better showcases the successful outcomes that our grant making enables.

2021 brought a couple of changes to the Trustees. Simon Robinson resigned as a Trustee. His integrity, wise counsel, and knowledge of raising charities' visibility will be very much missed. We were very pleased to welcome Melanie Hey as a Trustee in July 2021. Melanie stayed with the Trust until 2023 and brought a wealth of voluntary experience in Keighley and Skipton.

In March 2025, our Administrator of eight years, Rowena, accepted an exciting new full-time opportunity — a perfect next step in her career. While we were, of course, reluctant to see her go, we did so with our warmest congratulations and very best wishes. Rowena's diligence, professionalism, and deep commitment to improving our communities have left a lasting mark on the Trust, and she will be greatly missed. We were, however, very fortunate to welcome Heather Murdoch as our new Administrator in April 2025, who has taken on the role seamlessly and continues to build on Rowena's excellent work.

2025 has also brought a couple of changes to the Trustees. Giles Bowring resigned in July 2025 after 17 years with the Trust. Giles' deep knowledge of the wider Craven District has been truly invaluable to the Trust. His genuine passion for supporting community projects, both large and small, and his commitment to improving the lives of those in need have been clear to all the trustees. Under his thoughtful guidance, our investments have grown steadily, enabling the Trust to strengthen and expand its grant-making capacity. While Giles' move out of the district has prompted his resignation, we take comfort in knowing he's not far away. We're confident that his enthusiasm for and advocacy of the Trust will continue to bring benefit to our work and the communities we serve.

In October 2025, we were pleased to welcome Robert Bellfield as a Trustee. Robert's local knowledge and background in further education, especially through his leadership at Craven College prior to retiring, will be an asset to the Trust going forward.

In April 2026, we welcomed Dorota Plata as a Trustee. Dorota is also the Centre Director at The Good Shepherd Centre in Keighley and her local knowledge and experience in supporting diverse communities will be of great value to the Trust.

How we work today | Heritage and Evolution

Our original three founders envisaged an objective: fundraising from network of individuals. As they have left, we have less of a network, so until we find new sources we invest and spend wisely. We were involved with networking organisations and still are through the Yorkshire Funding Forum. Grant making has always been efficient, and we move with the times using technology to maintain ease. As always, we wish to engage with the community, visit projects and support our grantees.

The fundamental aim is to spread grants as fairly and as widely as possible between the needs and circumstances of urban and rural communities. Numbers of applications fluctuate accordingly, and we must work at reaching into the communities that do not seem to be aware of the Trust.

Trustees have continuously reflected on how to improve our understanding and our processes, making changes to guidance and policies as necessary, and using a standard assessment process for consistency.

Meanwhile The Craven Trust continues to focus primarily on small locally based organisations providing sports activities, festivals, therapeutic activities and so on. We are currently focusing largely but not exclusively for the first time on two main themes: young people and mental health.

Generally, Trustees aim to assess applications face to face, and for many years Trustees held their meetings in grantees' venues throughout the area. This provides welcome and important insight into the area of benefit and broadens everyone's understanding of the communities and challenges they face. We are also often donated meeting space at the Rendezvous Hotel in Skipton for which we thank their outgoing manager, Malcolm Weaving.

All but one of the original Trustees have retired and the makeup of the Trust has changed so we must rely less on individual donations and look at other means of maintaining and increasing our funds. Those early donations provided the solid base we still have today.

Trustees continually consider ways of using and increasing our funds and thus help more organisations and individuals; there have been significant donations from Friends and others during our history. The pandemic has slowed this down, understandably, but prudent management of the portfolio has put The Craven Trust in a stronger position than we might have expected.

In the earlier days there was much discussion about growing the Trust into a full-blown Community Foundation, and we were members of the Association of Charitable Foundations with more national contacts than we have now. We also considered “flow-through” money from the government, whereby we would administer public funds according to pre-ordained criteria. While enabling us to grow, there was some concern about deviating from our original commitment to stay local, give locally and be run almost entirely by volunteers. Such funds are now limited and largely related to post COVID-19 recovery and a strong emphasis on employment and economic regeneration, or health related care.

The Craven Herald and Keighley News have at times published articles to raise our profile and attract more donations and applications, and the Trust is once again looking at how to ensure more people know about it, while also attracting new Trustees.

What now | Looking to the Future

We will continue to reflect on how to do things better, how to build our portfolio and raise our profile, and increase the number of grants. We have seriously debated if we should merge with other organisations but, at this moment, we prefer to remain independent, knowing that partnership work is essential and that we are not alone. As members of the Yorkshire Grant Makers’ Forum, we have an extremely valuable source of information and support.

As always, we are grateful for any help people or organisations can give us; we are a modest but effective local grant making charity and know from experience and feedback how even a small amount of money can make such a difference. For everyone involved in the Trust it is a rewarding, eye-opening and interesting experience. If Peter Marshall were still alive, he would, I’m sure, be pleased to see we have stuck to our initial aims.

Appendix **List of Patrons, Chair, Treasurer, Trustees, Administrators**

TRUSTEES		PATRONS	
Peter Marshall MBE	1995-2011	Rt Rev David Smith, Bishop of Bradford	2000-2002
Rt Rev. Malcolm Grundy	1995-2005	Marchioness of Hartington	2000-2003
Caroline Schwaller	1995- to date	Rt Hon Lord Healey of Riddlesden	2000-2012
Brian Fisher	1995-2015	Rt Rev David James, Bishop of Bradford	2003-2010
John Sheard	1995-2010	Rt Rev Nick Baines, Bishop of Leeds	2011- to date
Colin Reeder	1995-2000	The Duchess of Devonshire DL	2003- to date
Jeremy Mackrell MBE	1997-2013		
Paul Robertshaw	1997-2004	CHAIR	
Philip Vaux	1999-2007	Brian Fisher	1995-1999
Noreen Akhtar	2001-2005	John Sheard	1999-2002
Nicola Chambers	2001-2013	Jeremy Mackrell	2002-2010
Gerald Tyler	2004-2007	Caroline Schwaller	2010-2013
Mark Facer	2005-2017	Mark Facer	2013-2015
Liz North	2005-2006	Caroline Schwaller	2015- to date
The Venerable Paul Slater	2005-2015		
Giles Bowring	2008-2025	TREASURER	
Carole Nelson	2008-2012	Colin Reeder	1995-1999
Alison Kaye	2011-2012	Philip Vaux	1999-2006
Michael Lovitt	2013- to date	Mark Facer	2006-2013
Karen Leaver	2013-2017	Karen Leaver	2013-2017
Jenny Thistlethwaite	2013- to date	Robert Templar	2017- to date
Robert Templar	2016- to date		
Simon Robinson	2017-2021	ADMINISTRATOR	
Dee Pollitt	2018- to date	Dee Pollitt	1995-99
Melanie Hey	2021-2023	Linda Lee	2000-2012
Robert Bellfield	2025- to date	Richard Crabtree (Funding)	2001-2003
Dorota Plata	2026- to date	Steve Crossley Smith (Funding)	2003-2010
		Lynn Leadbeatter	2012-2012
		Mary Hamilton	2012-2017
		Rowena Garton	2017-2025
		Heather Murdoch	2025- to date