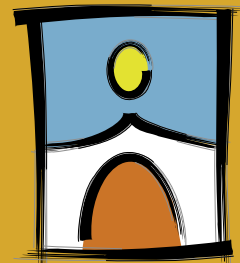


# SKCV

## CHILDREN'S TRUST

April 2007



# SKCV

Street Kids' Community Villages

## SPRING OPENING FOR GIRLS' VILLAGE

Aptly named 'Amodini', meaning happy girls, SKCV's most ambitious project since it opened the boys' village 15 years ago is nearing completion. The girls' village will offer excellent accommodation and education on one large site.



Jack Kelsey arrives at Amodini.

Inaugurated in January this year by UK Trustee Jack Kelsey and his family, whose steadfast support and generosity to the charity has spanned more than a dozen years, the village will be modelled on the principles of Prema Vihar. There will be



Right to left: Manihara, Jack, Darina and Peter Kelsey on the dais.

land to cultivate vegetables, cows to provide milk and even, in the fullness of time, a small swimming pool to compensate for the lack of nearby river, greatly enjoyed by the boys.

SKCV owes a great debt of gratitude to three generous donors. Selfridges initiated the funding of the project, followed by St James's Place Foundation - both gave similar amounts for the building and have contributed significantly to the running

costs. A donor who wishes to remain anonymous funded the building of the girls' school on the site. Dr A Mohan Rao, an SKCV trustee in India, kindly donated the land at Kaza Village in the Guntur district.

SKCV extends an open invitation to all concerned to visit Amodini as honoured guests to see for themselves the joy and happiness their kindness has made possible. See page 7 for more details.

## WELCOMING UK TRUSTEES

Most of SKCV UK's Trustees have visited the projects in India in recent months. All have returned refreshed and renewed by the warmth of the welcome they received from the children and staff of this remarkable charity, which is a beacon of hope for so many thousands of unwanted children.

SKCV UK Chairman Richard May and his wife Lynn, also a Trustee, visited in February, staying in the boys' village for an unforgettable six days, the many highlights of which have formed the basis of this special edition of SKCV's newsletter.

The Mays were delighted to be joined on the occasion of the children's collective birthday by fellow UK Trustee Dr Chitrapa Bose and his wife, Vasantha. Dr Bose, a GP in Newcastle under Lyme, comes from Vijayawada and makes frequent visits to SKCV on his trips back home to see his extended family.

As detailed in our main story on this page, Jack Kelsey and his family were special guests in January at the inauguration of the girls' village.

Tricia Norton, Matthew's mother and SKCV UK's Secretary; Judith Wainwright,

SKCV UK's Treasurer and fellow Trustees, Diane Nice, Peter Janvier and Kath Forde-Johnston have all visited in the last two years.

SKCV India now looks forward to extending the same warm welcome to Richard Hogben, the latest Trustee to join the UK branch of the charity.

Some of these visits have been made possible by the generosity of British Airways, who have provided two return flights to India each year as part of their Community Relations Programme. This is wonderful support that really helps the UK keep in touch with the children and staff at SKCV.

Our London representative, Andrew Forde-Johnston attended the British Airways Charities Day in December and we would like to thank BA for the opportunity to spread the word about SKCV at such a well-attended event.

All the BA staff were very enthusiastic and some expressed the hope that they could visit, if BA starts flights to Hyderabad. They would be most welcome, as would any other supporters visiting India.



Happy birthday to you...all! Many of SKCV's children have no idea when they were born - a poignant problem neatly solved by holding one giant birthday party on the same day for everyone. Turn to page 8 for more pictures from this year's exuberant celebrations.



SKCV has been a vegetarian charity since its formation in 1984 when Matthew – more usually known by his Indian name of Manihara – set up his first night shelter for destitute children in Poona, near Mumbai.

But the sanctity of animal life is only one of SKCV's founding principles. Long before climate change and concern for the environment became one of the top preoccupations for the leaders of the developed world, Manihara set about ensuring the 'green' credentials of his own little corner of India – with the much needed bonus of vital cost savings on everything from fuel for cooking to compost for the vegetable plots that supply the kitchens.

On these pages we give a glimpse of some of the initiatives that are helping SKCV to reduce its 'carbon footprint', ensure the sustainability of its resources wherever possible and operate as cost effectively as possible.

## HOW GREEN IS YOUR GARDEN?

Feeding more than 400 hungry children every day, even at Indian prices, is no mean feat for a small organisation like SKCV so its largely organic gardens play a crucial role in the economy of the charity.

Every boy in Prema Vihar is urged to play his part in growing the vegetables on which the charity's kitchens depend. No-one is forced to undertake gardening duties but the vast majority enjoy tending vegetables, some because they like the fresh air and exercise but others because of the incentive provided by a few rupees in pocket money, half of which they are strongly encouraged to save. A similar 'incentive scheme' will be put in place in the girls' village when that opens in the Spring.

SKCV's ultimate aim is to become totally self sufficient in vegetables but to do that it needs to buy more land. It has its eye on a waste patch on the approach to Prema Vihar but land, of course, costs money.

## SKCV WORMERY

Indians are famous for recycling but this is taken to new heights at SKCV. In addition to repairing anything that breaks down, nothing that can be safely returned to the earth goes to waste. Thousands of ever hungry worms see to that in the charity's own state-of-the-art wormery, lovingly tended by unsqueamish boys.

Using worms donated by a kind benefactor, the wormery was established to deal with all the waste matter from the kitchens mixed in with coconut and leaf matter and carefully watered in, morning and night. This produces a 'deliciously' rich, organic fertiliser for the vegetable plots in a perfect, harmonious cycle. In fact, so much is produced that there is enough left over to sell to plant nurseries for five rupees per kilo. Not a bad source of income to swell the charity's coffers.



## MILK ON TAP

Cows and buffalo are important to SKCV for a host of reasons and not the least of which is the milk produced for the children, some of which is turned into yoghurt and curd, staples of the Indian diet. There are currently 30 cows, calves and buffalo plus two bulls, which are used for breeding and ploughing.

The cows are fed on cut grass and waste husks donated by the owner of the nearby paddy field. When mixed with water, and supplemented by wheat, this provides a nutritious diet for the animals.

Integral to the keeping of cows is the training of boys in skills that will provide them with a living when they leave SKCV.

## BIOGAS PLANT

Most of the gas needed for the steam boilers in the kitchens is provided by the biogas plant. This is powered by slurry courtesy of the cows who also produce enough dung to contribute to the nutrients needed for the wormery.



## CONSERVING WATER

Water, a precious resource particularly in India, is conserved and recycled wherever possible. The boys' village is on the banks of River Krishna and the girls' village has its own bore well for human consumption. Water used to wash rice is recycled and given to the cows or used to water the gardens.



## SOLAR SYSTEMS

A new and important initiative that SKCV wants to get underway if funding can be secured is the use of solar systems for lighting and heating wherever possible.

Quite apart from the environmental benefits of reducing reliance on conventional power sources, the savings in running costs for SKCV would be significant over time and result in a more sustainable approach to its energy needs.

A priority is for the installation of solar systems for all external lighting, which is kept on all night for security purposes at all of SKCV's projects. Incorporating solar lighting and heating systems in the new girls' building at construction stage would also make a great deal of sense.

These external lights cost £435 each and Tata BP Solar has quoted a total of £6525 for 15 units.



**Please turn to the back page if you are interested in making a donation to further SKCV's green agenda while at the same time helping it to run as cheaply as possible.**

It was always Manihara's intention that SKCV should be a charity run by street kids for street kids. He also wanted to ensure its long term future so he set out actively to develop leaders among those older boys who showed an interest and aptitude in management and who were committed to staying with SKCV. Over the past 10 years, during much of which he has been dogged by ill health, Manihara has focused on passing on his knowledge and experience to enable the older boys to take over the running of the organisation.

In 1994 he established a Management Committee made up of senior boys, each of whom had successfully completed a suitability test and was responsible for running a department of the charity. With his continuing support and guidance they gradually gained in confidence and skills, which were to stand them in good stead when in 1997

Manihara was diagnosed with TB and spent many months in hospital. Guided by Bhakti and Dr Shankar, their loyal friend who is also a trustee of SKCV India, the members of the Management Committee successfully took over the day to day running of the boys' village, girls' rescue centre and boys' night shelter during Manihara's illness and lengthy recuperation.

The seriousness of Manihara's condition was to have a lasting impact on these senior boys. Not only was he their much-loved 'pitaji' (father) he was the rock on which SKCV was built and on which the lives of so many children depended. With a maturity that belied their years they set about ensuring through the creation of the Future Group that the work of the charity could continue according to the principles and values that Manihara and Bhakti had instilled in them from childhood.

## Growing up

The Future Group gave way in November 2006 to the Sevak Group. Sevak, which means to give service, was a natural development in the growth of a remarkable charity that provides a home, education and healthcare to more than 400 children at any one time through its residential village and rescue centre while supporting many thousands more through its night shelters and outreach work.

The commitment of members of the 12-member strong Sevak Group to SKCV is as admirable as it is humbling. Now in their late 20s or early 30s many of them have one, even two degrees, but all work for modest salaries which are significantly less than they could command in the world beyond the charity's gates. Yet all share a fierce determination continuously to improve themselves not for personal gain, but for the good of the charity they serve and to which they feel they owe their lives.

**"One of the aims of the Sevak Group is to make SKCV self supporting as much as possible. We don't want to have to rely solely on donations so we spend a lot of time thinking of ways to make money."** Keshava

# GIVING BACK

## INTRODUCING MEMBERS OF THE SEVAK GROUP

### SUDHAMA SKCV MANAGER

Like KP, Sudhama, who has a degree in administration, is a lynchpin of SKCV and one of the first children to call Prema Vihar his home. It was his idea to set up the Future Group, in discussion with Manihara.

Following the death of his mother Sudhama was thrown onto the streets by his stepmother when he was eight years old. He boarded a train and ended up in Vijayawada where he earned what he could carrying bags and stealing from shops. Sick with hepatitis he was rescued from the railway station by Manihara and spent the next three months recovering in the charity's hospital.

"I want to do so much more for these children," he says. "In the Sevak Group we explain to them what we're trying to do and the hope for the future that lies ahead for them if they work hard."

Sudhama has been married for three years to Pavani to whom congratulations are due – she learned in February that she had passed her technology degree.



### KRISHNA PRASAD PROJECT COORDINATOR

Krishna Prasad, known to all as KP, has run SKCV's boys' night shelter, Santosh Bavan, for the past four years and oversees much of the charity's administrative work, preparing proposals and budgets for funding.

A sociology graduate with a Masters degree in applied psychology, KP is one of the most senior members of the team. He has long nurtured an ambition to be a counsellor and, following a period of training, has pioneered an education programme to raise children's awareness of personal health and safety issues. This work is part of Elton John's HIV/Aids programme and is a new development for SKCV.

He is also regularly consulted for his advice by social work degree students who come to learn how to put theory into practice and acts as a consultant to the Railway Children charity.

KP came to SKCV more than a decade ago when Manihara found him, a young runaway collapsed with a broken chin on the railway station in Vijayawada, which for a year had been his only home. In 1998 KP married Suvarna, a nurse who ably runs the SKCV hospital at the night shelter. The couple have two young children and live above the night shelter.



## KESHAVA VICE PRINCIPAL, VIDYAVIHAR NON FORMAL SCHOOL

Keshava's father died when he was three years old. As one of four children born to a poor family he was sent away by his mother to a children's home in Vijayawada where he was regularly beaten.



He was rescued by Manihara in 1988 and is in no doubt that without SKCV he would have had no future. Thanks to SKCV he was able to realise his ambition to become a teacher, rising to the trusted position of Vice Principal in the charity's non formal school, where Manihara's wife Bhakti is the Principal.

In addition to overseeing the teaching staff his role involves enrolling new boys to the school, mentoring them and solving any problems they may have with their studies. "It was always my ambition to be a teacher. It is important to me to give the boys an education or a trade, to help them to develop themselves," he says.

## VIJAY PREMA VIHAR PROJECT MANAGER

A graduate in commerce and with plans to study for his MBA, Vijay took over as Project Manager of the boys' village, which is currently caring for 147 boys, in 2001.

He, like his colleagues, is ambitious and bursting with ideas for the development of the charity, which plucked him from the platform of Vijayawada's railway station where, as a young child, he was frequently beaten by older boys and by the police.

He had by then spent two hard years on the streets, washing plates and cleaning tables, having run away from home following the separation of his parents. Struggling to raise three children alone, his mother beat her children to the point where he and his brother could take no more.

"Life on the streets was very hard," he remembers. "You would try to hide what little you had but it would always be stolen. Then I remember KP coming one day and talking to us about SKCV. I was afraid that he was like other men who came to persuade us to donate a kidney for money but what made me listen to him was the fact that he too had been a street child."

Vijay is still in contact with his mother and reports, quietly, that "she is very proud of me."



## NARAYAN CHIEF ACCOUNTANT

Originally from Mumbai, Narayan lost both parents when he was very young. He and his brother and sister were brought up by grandparents. At the age of five he was run over by a lorry, nearly losing his leg, and is still unable to bend it fully. He and his brother Dilip were the first two boys to be cared for by Manihara in 1985.



Today he is the proud possessor of a BA and a Masters degree in commerce and finds time to combine his role as Chief Accountant with overall responsibility for the multi-faith Prayer Hall, based at Prema Vihar.

Narayan returns once a year to visit his family in Mumbai but like his fellow Sevak Group members, has chosen to dedicate his life to SKCV for the foreseeable future.

## CHANDRA HEAD OF COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY AND ART TEACHER

Chandra is haunted still by the memories of the men who used to come to his childhood village to blind and cripple children deliberately to make them more effective beggars.

Life for him was little better - his parents' constant fighting was punctuated for him by regular beatings, which drove him at the age of 10 to run away. After two years cleaning train carriages in Vijayawada, Manihara eventually persuaded him to be cared for by SKCV.

Chandra has never looked back. He now holds a key post teaching art and design as well as computer technology and vocational training.

Married to Durga, who also works for SKCV, in 2003, he now has two children aged four and one.



## MASTAN HEAD OF STORES

Beaten by his father for his failure to study, it is a tribute to Mastan that he is now hoping to take a degree - in administration.

The ninth child in a very poor family he ran away from home to a life on the streets where he lost half his foot in a terrible accident and was hospitalised for eight months.

"I would not be here if it were not for SKCV," he says. "It was the best day of my life when I saw the love that Manihara and Bhakti have for the children."

Mastan combines his role as Head of Stores with secretarial work in SKCV's office, earning a small salary with which he aims to fund his degree. His dream is to become a social worker.



## JANAKI HEAD OF MAINTENANCE

Janaki performs a vital role, keeping everything from the plumbing to the wiring at SKCV in good working order.

His life is a far cry from his early years. His childhood home was a hut by the canal on which he turned his back at the age of six for a life on the streets, sweeping and begging - and being beaten by bigger boys.

He says of Prema Vihar: "I had never seen anything like it. It was excellent and I felt safe. Now I like helping the children in the way that I was helped when I was a boy."



These young men, all of whom once lived a dangerous life on the streets, were helped by SKCV thanks to donations from our supporters. They now provide the management skills and the organisation that makes SKCV operate so efficiently day in, day out - please help them in their job by setting up a standing order or making another donation. See back page for details of how to donate.

# THE FINANCIAL PICTURE

The SEVAK Group and the staff at SKCV in Vijayawada have invested a great deal of time and effort in the last year into improving the accuracy and the timeliness of management information. Budgeting for the centres has always proved difficult, due to the nature of the activity and the unexpected crises or expenses that can arise. Now, however, the team has published detailed budgets for the new financial year based on the new reliable information it has available.

We have been fortunate in recent years to receive financial support to enable us to build new facilities and upgrade others. Finding donations to cover the running costs is of course a never ending task and on this page, we have laid out the costs for each of SKCV's activities.



## SANTOSH BHAVAN

*Street Child Drop-in Centre and Night Shelter.*

This centre provides services to 100 boys and is the first point of contact for many street kids wishing to leave the street life behind. We are very fortunate that The Railway Children provide the funding for this centre.



## SKCV HOSPITAL

This 24hour charitable hospital, exclusively for the use of street children, is based in the Santosh Bhavan building and costs £2,500 per annum to run. Its low costs are at least partly due to the volunteer doctors that provide services. Dr Shankar, a trustee of SKCV India, runs regular clinics and attends any boys that the staff feel need urgent attention. As well as physical injuries, the hospital deals with cases of typhoid, malaria and other dangerous diseases.



## SKCV VOCATIONAL WORKSHOPS

Also based at Santosh Bhavan, £4,000 a year provides children with valuable skills to enable them to earn their own living. Computer skills and printing are two popular areas of instruction.



## AMODINI

*Girls' Residential Village*

At the moment, the girls are based in a house in Vijayawada, but later this year they will move into their own purpose built village (see story on page 7). The budget of £26,500 is based on running Amodini with 75 girls in residence.



## VIDYAVIHAR GIRLS' SCHOOL

The non-formal school on the same site as the Amodini residential centre will provide education for all of the girls living there. Employing a similar curriculum to the one developed for the boys' school and using all of the knowledge acquired there over several years, the girls' school is expected to cost £11,000 a year to run.

## PREMA VIHAR

*Boys' Residential Village*

First established on the banks of the River Krishna 15 years ago, the village was rebuilt nine years ago after the original timber and thatch buildings were eaten by white ants and termites and washed away in the floods. The village now is solidly constructed and has reduced its running costs by following environmentally sound principles. Nevertheless, providing this vital centre for 150 boys will cost £40,000 in the coming year.

## VIDYAVIHAR BOYS' SCHOOL

Situated within the Prema Vihar village, the school was completely rebuilt in 2006 thanks to the generosity of Aktion Deutschland Hilft and the Lions Club Altlandsberg in Germany. Manihara's wife Bhakti has developed the school's curriculum to suit a wide range of needs and abilities and now boasts a very high percentage of boys who pass their 10th year exams (similar to our GCSEs). The new facilities have greatly improved the environment in which the boys learn and will cost £12,500 per annum to operate.



## SKCV CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

Keeping such a large organisation running efficiently is a small team of administrators, accountants and fundraisers in Vijayawada at a modest annual cost of £7,500.

**In total, the operating costs for the projects will be around £130,500 in the coming year. The UK arm of the charity employs no staff and has very low running costs - mainly limited to postage and telephone bills.**



# AMODINI TAKES SHAPE



The awe-inspiring sight of two towering buildings not far from completion on a two-acre plot of land five miles outside the Southern Indian town of Vijayawada, marks the realisation of a long-held dream for Manihara and Bhakti.

Building work is expected to be finished this Spring on the residential block and non-formal school funded by staff of the store giants Selfridges, without

space to live, play and grow as one big, happy family in total safety and security.

It is already possible to see beyond the organised chaos of building work and imagine the haven of peace and serenity that will be Amodini.

whose continuing generosity the entire project would not have been possible.

Designed in an unusual 'S' shape to add interest, the buildings will be capable of housing more than 100 abandoned or destitute girls, the first 85 of whom will come from SKCV's existing girls' rescue centre, Bala Prema.

The excitement among the girls and staff at their impending move is barely containable – and no wonder. For Amodini will offer the girls similar facilities already enjoyed by our boys - their own permanent home with



## REACHING OUT TO DESTITUTE CHILDREN

It is almost 20 years since Manihara and Bhakti arrived in Vijayawada, a typical Indian town with thousands of destitute children condemned to eeking out a miserable existence on the busy town's streets or at the railway station, which is a major transit point between North and South.

Earning a meagre living rag picking, collecting plastic cups for recycling, washing up, carrying luggage or serving tea to passengers, these unkempt, often starving and sick children were destined to be despised and reviled by virtually everyone except the most enlightened pillars of society such as the town's mayor.

Frequent beatings of street children by the police were common and many children, some as young as five or six, were hauled off to juvenile 'instruction centres' where life, unimaginably, was even harder.

The revolution that has taken place in society's attitudes towards street children in Vijayawada over the past 10 years is little short of a miracle and due in no small part to the pioneering work of Manihara, Bhakti and SKCV.

In 1997 Mayor T. Venkateswara Rao was instrumental in setting up the Forum for Child Rights, Vijayawada, a coalition comprising the local municipal corporation, the railway police, non government organisations, autorickshaw drivers, rag pickers' association, charities and local philanthropists.

As a founding member of the Forum, SKCV plays an integral role in developing policies and initiatives to ensure the creation of a child-friendly society in which children's rights are respected and fostered.

## CHILDLINE COMES TO INDIA

In recognition of SKCV's pioneering role with street children, India's first Childline service was established in Vijayawada in 2000 by the Forum for Child Rights.

A free, 24/7 advice line, it is operated from a booth, which is deliberately sited next to the police station. Sponsored by the Railway Children charity, it is operated round the clock by SKCV staff who take 70 calls a day from desperate children. Another 10 arrive in person each day. In addition, a Childline booth was set up on Vijayawada's railway station, also sponsored by Railway Children.

Vijay, the main SKCV point of contact for Childline, says: "The main reason children come here is because they are forced to work, which is now illegal under the age of 14, or because they have been abused by their relatives. Sometimes children get lost when their families come to Vijayawada for festivals or fairs. Careful records are kept on missing children and great efforts are made to reunite as many as possible with their families."

SKCV also supports the Child Rescue Centre, funded by the Telegu Association of North America and set up in Vijayawada in 2003, daily supplying the children referred there by Childline with food from Prema Vihar village and delivered by SKCV's own rickshaw.

Children can stay up to seven days at the centre and those who are not returned to their own families will always find a welcoming home and surrogate family at SKCV.



Childline booth at Vijayawada's station.

# BIRTH RIGHT

In a recent, and hugely important development, all SKCV children are poised to receive birth certificates, a vital passport to so many aspects of life such as employment.

SKCV has worked hard to persuade the government that street children, most of whom do not possess a birth certificate precisely because they do not know when they were born, should be issued with this crucial documentation.

In a mark of respect and recognition for SKCV it has agreed that the charity may use its own records and whatever other evidence of birth is available to it to progress certificates for all its children. This is in marked contrast to the previous system in which a report would have been required from a doctor who would 'age' children by the stages of development of their bones and teeth. This was a humiliating and lengthy process, which thankfully will soon be a thing of the past. As a result, the children will also be able to apply for a passport.

## HAPPY BIRTHDAYS!

Each year, all of the children at SKCV celebrate their birthday on the same day, as so many don't know their true birth date. This year the celebrations took place on February 10, to coincide with the visit of Richard and Lynn May and Dr Bose Chitrapu, UK trustees.

The whole day was taken up with games of musical chairs, races, cricket and swimming in the river. In the evening, the children put on a wonderful dance display preceded by fire eaters.

At the end of the evening's dance display, the UK trustees cut enormous birthday cakes and officially opened the Prema Vihar shop – a venture being run by a small group of boys selling sweets, small toys and drinks. This reduces the need to walk into town for these supplies, which is safer for the small boys, as well as providing first hand experience of commerce.



## REUNITING FAMILIES

SKCV aims, wherever possible, to repatriate lost children with their families and a great deal of work is done to achieve this with the result that more and more children are eventually being returned home. Between April and January 2006 144 children were reunited with their families – and in the same period 518 new children were registered with the charity.

Says Sudhama: "If a child wants to go back to his or her family we will do a home visit and talk to neighbours as well as to their relatives before we return with the child. We will then do a follow up visit to check that the child is settling in and is happy to stay."

**Naturally, returning children to their families is a lengthy and time consuming process and SKCV needs to find funding for two staff who are dedicated to this crucial aspect of its work.**

## DONATIONS, GIFTS AND CONTACT DETAILS

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SKCV Children's Trust is a registered charity (1038063)

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## HOW TO DONATE

Donations can be sent by post to the Treasurer or can be paid directly into our bank account at Barclays in Sale. Sort code 20-01-96, account number 80 32 68 95 (SKCV Children's Trust). Online banking makes such payments very straightforward, but please let us know if you do this as otherwise we cannot acknowledge your donation or offer our thanks!

- Gift Aid allows us to reclaim tax paid and so increase the value of your donation. Standing Orders are a valuable source of income as they allow us to plan ahead – please ask for a gift aid and standing order form.
- Our web site at [www.skcv.org](http://www.skcv.org) has a selection of gifts that you can buy on behalf of a friend or relative, such as food for a child for a month at only £12. Please take a look – you can buy a gift that gives great pleasure and directly benefits a deserving child.
- If there are any projects in this newsletter that you would like to support, or if you would like to help us feed the children every day, please get in touch and we'll be pleased to discuss ways in which you can help.
- Finally, it is not a subject we generally like to think about, but please consider leaving SKCV a legacy in your will. Our treasurer can provide any details that your solicitor may need.