

# THE CITY PAROCHIAL FOUNDATION —

## THE FIRST 100 YEARS

The City Parochial Foundation has its origin in the many charitable gifts and bequests made over some 400 years to the 112 parishes of the City of London. Their income was to be used for the benefit of the churches, or more often, the poor of those parishes. With the growth of the City as a world financial centre in the 19th century the income of these charities had greatly risen, whereas the number of poor beneficiaries was much reduced; indeed, some parishes had no residents at all.

Therefore in August 1878, a Royal Commission was appointed to investigate the parochial charities of the City of London. Its Report resulted in the City of London Parochial Charities Act, 1883. This Act provided that the largest five parishes (Cripplegate, Bishopsgate, St. Bride's, St. Andrew's Holborn and St. Botolph's Aldgate) should continue to manage their own charitable endowments, but that the remainder should be administered by a new corporate body, to be known as the Trustees of the London Parochial Charities, with perpetual succession and a Common Seal. The area of benefit was the City of London and the Metropolitan Police District of London, at that time the largest boundary for Greater London.

There were in fact two funds, a City Church Fund and a Central Fund. Together these constituted the City Parochial Foundation with the Trustees as the Central Governing Body. Of the two funds, the City Church Fund contained the endowments classified as ecclesiastical and most of the income of this Fund is at present passed to the Church Commissioners for the benefit of the Church of England in quote 'the more populous districts of the Metropolis'. The Central Fund received all the other charity property and, to this day, it is the main source of income for distribution for general charitable purposes.

The Central Governing Body consisted of 21 members, nominated by the Crown, the Corporation of the City of London, the London County Council, the Church Commissioners, the University of London, University College, London, and King's College, the Council of the City and Guilds Institute and the governing bodies of the Bishopsgate and Cripplegate Foundations, the last being two of the five original parishes left on their own in 1883. In 1986, when the Greater London Council was abolished, the Trustees were given authority to co-opt four members, replacing the nominations previously held by the GLC/LCC.

The original purposes of the Foundation were essentially to benefit, in Victorian terminology, 'the poorer classes of the Metropolis': by promoting education, in establishing libraries, museums and art collections, providing open spaces for recreation, promoting institutions for working men and

women, establishing convalescent hospitals, and by generally improving by any other means the 'physical, social and moral condition of the poorer inhabitants'.

From the start, the Foundation has been guided by two major principles:—

An awareness of, and a need to guard against, the tendency for benefactions intended for the very poor to fall into the hands of a somewhat higher income class.

And a concern not to finance schemes which could or should be financed by local or central government so that charitable funds are, in effect, used to subsidise the statutory authorities.

Many of the changes in the Foundation's policy since 1891 have been the practical implementation of these principles.

The history of the Foundation's grant giving shows an initial emphasis on education — institutions, polytechnics and open spaces, with relatively few grants going to miscellaneous organisations assisting the poor. For example, in its first 60 years, the Foundation made grants in excess of £2½m to assist polytechnics and such, as well as providing over 100 acres of playing fields (for those bodies). In the same period, £500,000 was spent on open spaces in London. The concept of open spaces was extended to include water and in 1899, the trusteeship of the Chelsea Physic Garden. This continued until 1984.

In the last twenty five years only occasional grants have been made for polytechnics and open spaces; and increasingly the disposable income of the Central Fund, now over £5m a year, is being given to organisations working directly to benefit the poor of London.

This changing pattern of grants has reflected the changing nature of the welfare and educational powers of local and central government. So, for example, libraries, hospitals, education, open spaces, are now all part of statutory provision and do not now make calls on charitable funding.

Grants are made by the Trustees in response to applications received. Mostly these come from voluntary organisations registered as charities with the Charity Commission — other bodies are not excluded if their purposes are charitable and accord with Trustees' policies.

In deciding how best to meet the needs of potential beneficiaries, the Trustees have since 1935 undertaken quinquennial reviews of the policies and grants. At first, funds were allocated to certain schemes or to certain categories of beneficiary, for example: disabled and handicapped people, those who are inadequate or delinquent, the old, the young, education and training, open spaces and recreation, and miscellaneous social services.

In 1977, however, this quinquennial allocation ceased in order to provide more flexibility, for there was no reason to suppose that the trustees could see into the future more clearly than anyone else. And now the categories reflect changed needs which are themselves reflected in the fact that 'miscellaneous social services' had become, by 1977, the largest category.

Applications are today considered under certain headings, though budgets are not allocated to them in advance:— physical and mental handicap, mental illness, addictions, penal matters, family and social welfare, youth, elderly, community work, education and training, arts, open spaces and recreation and still the ubiquitous, but small, miscellaneous group.

In considering applications the Foundation has, over the years, viewed voluntary organisations as having distinct advantages as pioneers and has therefore given priority to schemes which break new ground; recognising, however, that it is neither possible nor indeed desirable to concentrate on them exclusively.

A second function has been to assist applicants to complement the statutory services by identifying and making good deficiencies and, at the same time, by stimulating the authorities to extend or improve their services to meet the needs revealed. Thus charitable bodies can make a major contribution to the relief of hardship and suffering.

Thirdly, the Foundation has always recognised that well-established work may need to be expanded, reorganised or consolidated. Grants for such purposes can on occasions make a significant contribution to the unspectacular but necessary task of improving ground that has already been won.

In the most recent Policy Review (in 1986 for 1987-1991) the Trustees decided to ensure the accessibility of the Foundation to applicants and to increase still further, through internal monitoring, their own awareness of the impact of their grant-making. Of particular concern were the needs of ethnic minorities.

One major limitation on the powers of the Trustees has long been the express prohibition in the original Act (1883) of making grants to any denominational body as a means of assisting the poor. The Victorians were concerned that the poor should not be proselytized as a condition of receiving help or education. This denominational bar was eventually removed in 1987 for it was then clear that many church organisations were playing a major role in meeting the needs of the poor in London, not least the black-led churches. The restriction is now confined to the advancement of religion, for which grants cannot be given.

The finances of the Foundation derive almost entirely from the rental endowments which have been consolidated and modified over the years. Although most are derived from freeholds in the City of London, property has recently been bought in the expanding market in the home counties.

The income has always matched the rate of inflation and frequently exceeded it. The administration of the Foundation generally costs less than 7% of the income and the chief officer is the Clerk to the Trustees.

The Foundation publishes an annual list of grants made, and its Quinquennial Policy Review, and the minutes, can all be found in the Guildhall Library. A centennial history, looking at the inter-relationship between the Foundation and the social needs of London, is now being written with a view to publication next year.

Over 100 years, the Foundation has been discreet in its operations, seeking no publicity (it only published two reports in the first 40 years) and concerned to respond as positively as possible to the ideas put to it to benefit London's poor. It has never sought to define 'poorer', so retaining its flexibility. No institutions, buildings or programmes carry the Foundation's name. It has, however, often been a lead funder in London in supporting new experimental initiatives. In the early part of its history, its contribution to educational institutions, of which the poor were able to take advantage, was immense.

The Foundation has helped start many new ventures. It was instrumental in establishing the London Council of Social Service in 1936 and subsequently supported the establishment of voluntary councils of social service in all 32 London boroughs. For 25 years from 1951, the Foundation allocated about £250,000 to assist river based activities on the Thames. It provided the initial grants to enable Family Service Units to begin work in London with 'problem families' in 1948, and for Norman House to be established in 1953, the first ever after-care hostel for ex-prisoners. Both these organisations became major influences in their respective fields.

Over 400 applications are considered by the Trustees each year, a vast increase since the 30 applications considered annually in the very early years. The nature of poverty and need in London has changed, but the demands continue to increase.

In 1986, the Foundation became the Trustee of the new Trust for London, established at the request of Central Government following the abolition of the Greater London Council. The Government's endowment was £10 million producing an income of about £500,000. The purpose was to benefit voluntary organisations with charitable purposes in London. Though having the same Trustees as the Foundation, the Trust for London is quite distinct and separate in its mode and style of operation. Essentially it aims to provide small grants to small organisations, seeking out appropriate applications rather than solely responding to those received. It is thus developing another way for a Trust to help meet the needs of the poorer residents of London.

### **Who are the poor?**

The poor are very young or very old, often black, nearly all the immigrants

who still are drawn to the East End, the tragic bed and breakfast families, the carers etc. etc; but they are ever with us and the Foundation's work consequently ever more increasing. The good done is sometimes immeasurable and sometimes just a drop in the ocean — but all very worth while.

The Foundation's offices were firstly in Temple Gardens, subsequently moving to Fleet Street and now in our own property in Middle Street, Smithfield.

The first meeting of the Foundation's Trustees took place in 1891 in the Mansion House with the then Lord Mayor, Sir Joseph Savory, as Chairman. He remained Chairman until 1920. This historic meeting was on May 21st 1891 — so it is most fitting I think, that on May 21st 1991 a service of thanksgiving will be held in St. Lawrence Jewry followed by a modest reception in Guildhall Old Library.

The links with the City and the Corporation remain strong. Four trustees are still appointed by the Court of Common Council. I, myself, have been a trustee now for 7 years and I value and enjoy the experience. I trust that the next 100 years work will be reported to this Association by one of my successors.

R.H.