

GROUP NEWS

COMMUNITY FUND OF WEST LANCASHIRE - FREEMASONS ASSIST THE FAITH AND HERITAGE APPEAL - RIBCHESTER

On Wednesday 16 February 2005 the Community Fund Of West Lancashire Freemasons donated a cheque for £1,000 to the above appeal. The cheque was presented to Reverend John Francis, Rector of St Wilfrid with St Saviour, Stydd, by William R Seddon, P S G D, Assistant Provincial Grand Master, who was accompanied by Ian W Greenwood, Preston Group Chairman, D A Thompson, Local Care Officer and A L Davies, who instigated the suggestion that this cause was worthy of support.

Ribchester Church receives no financial help from the Government directly or indirectly. The congregation of this small country parish must itself raise all the money needed to pay the annual running costs of the church. At the same time they have the responsibility, unique in the Diocese, of maintaining two Grade I Listed mediaeval buildings: the Parish Church of St Wilfrid and the Chapel of St Saviour, Stydd. Such a task is obviously beyond their means.

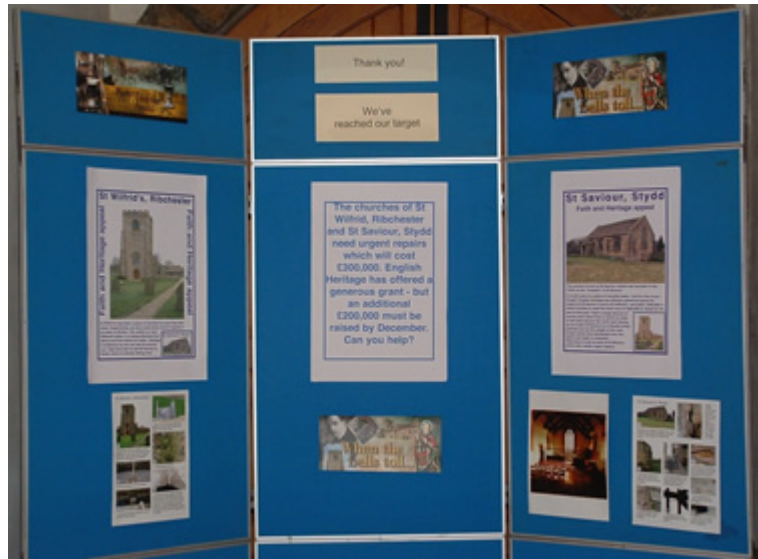
At St Wilfrid's water is penetrating the building in many places. Some of the damage is obvious even to the casual observer. The most insidious and dangerous water ingress is in the tower and through the roof. Most urgent action must be taken to prevent even more serious decay.

The work now necessary is of a quite different sort to that funded by the 800 appeal some twelve years ago.

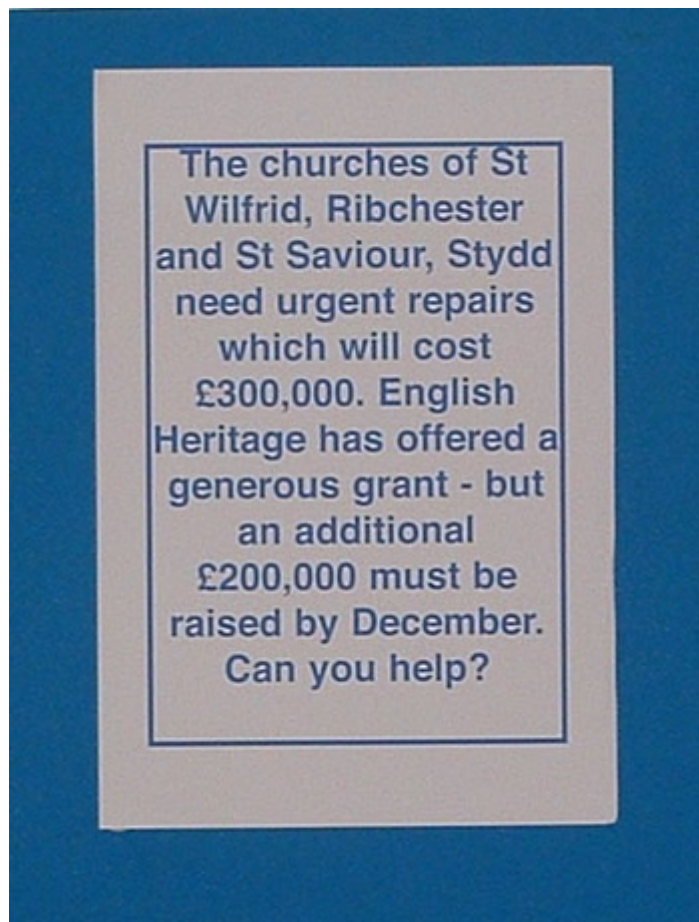
The last major works at St Saviour's, Stydd, were carried out eighty years ago. Today the North wall is slowly, but inexorably, collapsing. Large cracks can now be seen. As the wall moves outwards, the support for the roof is gradually being withdrawn. Unless action is taken, the building will simply fall down. The church is all that remains of an early monastic community founded here in the Twelfth Century. It was later owned by the Order of St John of Jerusalem.

Without the repairs now necessary, St Wilfrid's would no doubt limp into dilapidation and the church that has served the people of the village for over eight hundred years would be lost and could never be replaced.

So important is the work on both churches that English Heritage pledged one third of the estimated cost. However this pledge was conditional upon the church authorities finding the other two thirds. The total cost was estimated at £300,000, therefore another £200,000 had to be found from alternative sources. To meet their obligations they had to raise this money by pledge or donation not later than December 2004. Thanks to many generous donations, including that from the Community Fund of West Lancashire Freemasons, this target has been reached.



Display board in the church charting the appeal



Notice on the display board stating the terms of the English Heritage grant