

GARDEMAU CHARITIES REPORT FOR CODDENHAM ANNUAL PARISH MEETING, TUESDAY 29TH APRIL 2025.

There are three Coddenham Gardemau charities: the Gardemau Church Charity (GCC), The Lady Catherine Gardemau Educational Foundation (LCGEF), and the Poor Charity. All were founded by the Rev Balthazar Gardemau and his wife Lady Catherine in the mid-18th century. All the charities have the same trustees, who are all local people. They claim no expenses for their work. More details on the origins and purpose of the charities can be found on the Community Website, coddenham-parish.uk (click on 'Links').

The GCC has the greatest resources of the three and is permitted to transfer funds to the other two charities. It also owns two small areas of land, in Gosbeck and Coddenham.

One of these plots is the Old Lock Up in School Road, and the patch of land behind it. In the past, this has been rented to adjacent properties for car parking and has generated a modest income. This arrangement ceased a couple of years ago and no further tenants have come forward. The land has thus become a liability to the charity, rather than an asset, as it incurs maintenance costs. Having taken professional advice, the GCC has focussed on obtaining Outline Planning Permission for a small house on the land, which would then be auctioned, thereby generating funds which can be invested in order to produce more disposable income for the charity and increase our ability to make grants. The house is intended to be suitable for a small, preferably local, family, thereby helping to address the need for affordable housing in the parish which was identified in the 2022 Village Survey and subsequent Plan.

Although none of the neighbouring property owners have objected, and the application is supported by the Parish Council and other CCRG members, the planning process has been an extremely slow and painful one, taking over two years so far and costing the charity many thousands of pounds. The process has not been helped by objections from a very small number of individuals, none of whom live close to the site in question. However, recent discussions with MSDC have been constructive and positive and we are hopeful the current revised application, which MSDC have acknowledged addresses all their previous concerns, will be successful.

The other key focus for the GCC has been supporting the current appeal for the restoration of our beautiful village church, St Mary's, which requires around £60,000 of urgent repairs. The GCC has given £10,000 outright to the appeal and another £10,000 in match funding. Fundraising by the church is progressing and the meeting will, no doubt, receive a more detailed update from the PCC.

It has been suggested that the GCC could pay for all the necessary repairs itself, thereby removing the need for fundraising by the church and contributions from villagers. It has also been suggested that the proceeds of the sale of the Lock Up plot could be used for this.

Unfortunately, this is not possible. Firstly, outright funding of the repairs would use up nearly all of the GCC's current disposable income. The proceeds of the land sale are (a) not yet available as it has not been sold and (b) would represent a capital asset, which the charity is not permitted to dispose of without specific permission from the Charity Commission. Secondly, the charity's legally-defined primary objective is 'the furtherance of the work of the Church of England in the Parish of Coddendam'. The maintenance of the church building is only a secondary purpose. It is extremely unlikely that the Charity Commission would give permission for the GCC to use a large part of its current disposable income, or that released by the sale of a capital asset, on what is only a secondary objective of the charity.

The GCC has also made a number of other grants this year both in Coddendam and in other villages in the Benefice.

The LCGEF, too, has had a busy year. It continues to financially support the brilliantly-successful Babies and Toddlers Group, run at The Coddendam Centre (TCC) by volunteers from the church. It pays the Group's rent and has provided additional equipment such as play tables.

Building on the success of its previous free First Aid courses at TCC, the charity will consider running a further course in late 2025 or early 2026. It continues to pay for information leaflets on the Coddendam Nature Trail and Historic Coddendam Buildings, which are available free to villagers and visitors, and has also provided substantial funding to Debenham High School for an environmental/retreat garden, as many Coddendam children attend DHS. It has also assisted village families in meeting various educational costs and contributed towards school trips and course equipment for local students.

Many of the Gardemau's grants are made in co-operation and co-ordination with other members of the CCRG, in order to make the most efficient use of available funds for the benefit of the village, avoiding missed opportunities or duplication. We see the CCRG as a valuable way of achieving this.

The Poor Charity is funded by money transferred from the other charities. For many years, it has paid a monthly sum to Families in Need, the award-winning Ipswich charity which, as its name implies, supports struggling families in a wide range of ways. We have now increased this payment to £500 a month.

Last year, our *ex officio* trustee, the Rev Philip Payne, Priest in Charge of Coddendam, retired. Philip was a trustee of all three charities for many years. His contributions to the work of the charities were thoughtful and constructive throughout and we miss him. Hopefully, the current recruitment process for a new Rector will bear fruit and we look forward to welcoming Philip's successor as a trustee.

If you would like to learn more about the history and work of the Gardemau charities, or to apply for a grant, please contact:

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