

The Keld Project

Report to the Northern Synod Spring 2021

A resource for Christian Mission: a place for those whose ears, eyes and hearts are prepared to penetrate the background noise of a secular world.

1. The mission project at Keld is shared by the URC Northern Synod (our lead mission partner) with the adjacent Synods, ecumenical partners in the Anglican and Methodist Church and the Tees Swale Mission Pastorate.
2. Like all churches - and every other public resource - the Keld Project, including the Upper Room conference facility, the Keld Visitor Centre and the Manse, have been closed on account of the coronavirus epidemic. This has been at a significant cost in terms of lost income and the disappointment of being obliged to delay our plans to restore and develop the old School.
3. Nevertheless, recent contributions in the visitors' book during the limited opening times are encouraging and give us encouragement for the future these include:
 - *Visitors from South Devon: 'Praise God for the amazing beauty of his creation, especially this wonderful place at Keld and its surroundings, and this Resource Centre. God bless this place, and all involved!'*
 - *From Northamptonshire: 'Back in Keld after 12 years, if only for a flying visit. Wonderful to see the Resource Centre with all the history of the place. Last visit it was still a derelict building.'*
 - *From Skipton: 'Great walk, lovely centre, thank you!'*
 - *From Toronto: 'What a lovely walk! Hope it doesn't take too long to get back to Muker though, hopefully before it gets dark.'*
 - *From New York: 'With so many thanks for a fabulous place - our New Year's Eve walk. Welcome, 2021!'*



Figure 1: Volunteers at Muker Show 2019. The show was cancelled in 2020 due to COVID-19 but we hope to be back in 2021.



Figure 2: The Visitor Centre is a huge success. We now plan to extend this offer including interpretation on the role of the churches in Swaledale in a new discovery room.

4. With enterprising plans for the old School finalised, and the pandemic hopefully receding we are now actively seeking funding for this last stage of the development and are confident that the work on the first phase of it will be able to go ahead in 2021/22. This phase involves stabilising the building, unused for twenty years, installing heating, and creating what we call a 'Muddy Boots' facility. A discovery room will welcome walkers and school parties as well as visitors in general. It will be simply furnished, display information about the village along with a new display on the history of the Churches and Christianity in the Dale, and will also act as a 'base camp' for our volunteers.



Figure 3: The upper room in the Literary Institute provides excellent facilities. We have excellent broadband but are still waiting for 1G let alone 5G mobile.

5. When eventually all the restoration phases are complete this will mark the completion of our long period of reinstating Keld's historic buildings - first begun by the Keld minister James Wilkinson in the mid 19th Century, reimagined by the creation of the Keld Project in the early 1970's and refocused in the time of Julie Martin, Keld minister between 2008 and 2013.
6. We hope that at least the Muddy Boots Centre phase (one of three phases) can be completed in 2021/2022 and would welcome an expression of encouragement from the Synod for the next phase.



Figure 4: Keld Resource Centre is an ideal location for small group work such as awaydays and training

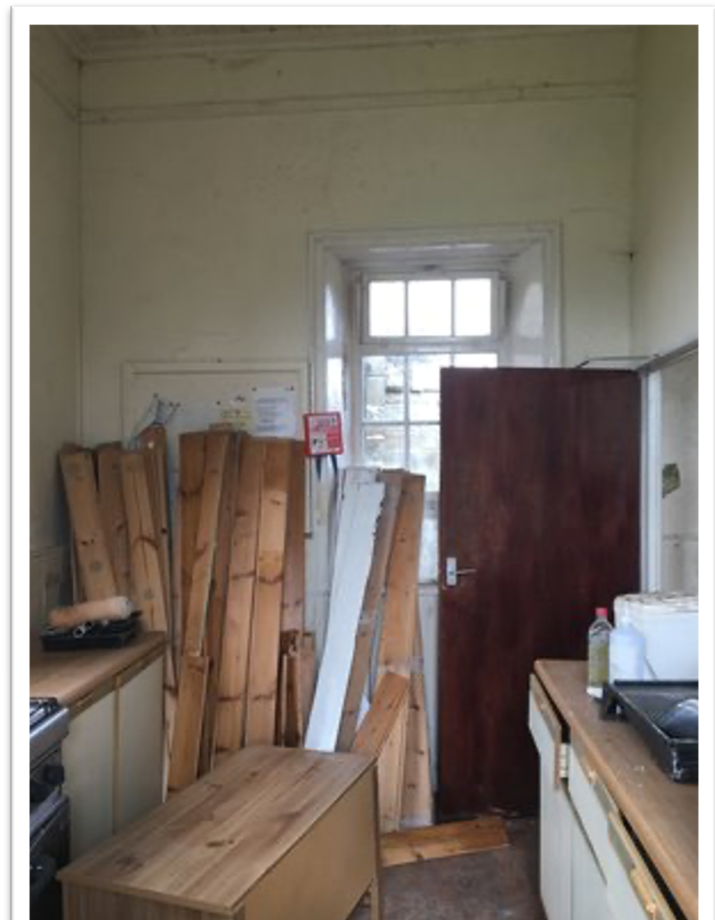


Figure 5: All the buildings surrounding Keld Chapel are owned by the United Reformed Church. Over the last 10 years they have been restored and are lovingly cared for by Keld Resource Centre (a special purpose company and charity set up in 2009/10). The school is the remaining restoration project. For the past 20 years it has been used mainly for storage and whilst externally maintained needs to be consolidated and repurposed. Phase 1 of the new facility is called 'muddy boots' and will include a discovery room with interpretation of the history of the churches in Swaledale.

7. With the retirement of the TSMP minister, Stephen Collinson in October 2020, the minister in residence steering group has been reorganized and has already met three times to make plans for 2020 and 2021. In addition to fixing dates and ministers in residence the group is also looking at a new idea called n'Counters at Keld. Also in preparation is a booklet on the first 10 years of 'minister in residence'.



Figure 6: Keld Manse offers excellent accommodation for ministers in residence and is available as a holiday let at other times.

8. The Keld project has also produced a short profile to assist the Tees Swale Mission Pastorate and the two interim moderators in the call for a new minister. We look forward to the new minister joining the board of management and that the new minister will join a team of enthusiastic people committed to the Mission Project and be invited to offer appropriate leadership particularly in connection with the church arm of the project



Figure 7: Henry Vasey, minister of Keld, with a group of the Cooperative Holiday Association, early visitors to Keld, pictured in 1900. Our roots go back a long way.

For more information see: www.keld.org.uk

David Figures and Clive Davies

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