

The Slingsby Website and Newsletter Group AGM

Webmaster's Report: November 2020

General information

The Slingsby website went live online on March 1st 2011 and has received over 382,501 page views since the launch. Total visitor numbers since launch comes to 139,528 (121,700 - 2019).

The viewing figures for the website this year have remained very consistent since the start of the lockdown. October saw over 5000 page views that helped the website comfortably pass its 2019 total of 31,000 page views. The ongoing COVID pandemic and the public's hunger for locally relevant news does appear to have focused more attention on the website either directly or via social media especially Facebook.

The second half of the year saw the website design altered with the site textured background image replaced with a simple white background and fonts altered to the cleaner Arial font set. The nearly ten year old header image has been removed with two new randomly alternating images of the village replacing it. The site identifier (the little icon on the browser tab and also used in the popular post and pages section at the bottom of the website) has been redesigned to freshen the site identity up. This is the start of a site redesign process that will continue in 2021.

WordPress

A PHP/MySQL powered, open source content management system (CMS) called WordPress continues to power the website and performs exceptionally well.

The website continues to receive important technical upgrades to the WordPress and server software adding new and improved functionality to the website. It is currently running WordPress 5.5.3. WordPress 5.6 is due for release on December 8th.

The Slingsby Village website currently uses 40 plugins (Nov 2019 – 40 plugins) that power the recent posts, events calendar, comments, security, link checking and other systems. A number of plugins are reaching the end of their working life and will be replaced when the website starts using a new theme in Spring 2021.

The website currently has 1657 posts and 80 pages. (Nov 2019 - 1450 posts and 74 pages). Website comments currently number 134 (121: 2019)

Website Usage Stats

The website has had over 382,501 page views (21/11/20) since the launch in March 2011. The average number of daily page views is currently 119. (Total 2019: 90)
Current figure for 2020 usage is around 38,611 page views (2019 total – 31,073)
Estimated end usage for 2020 is approximately 43,000, a figure similar to 2014 and 2018. The highest ever yearly total remains 2015 with 46,421.

The record high number of page views in a day remains 1008 on April 30th 2017 (previous record - 870: May 2015) . The highest month was October this year with 5278 (2019 high point was May - 4755. The monthly page view figure hover around 3000-4000 from March through to November. Peak viewing is usually May and August where figures can go nearer 5000 however this year, due to the COVID pandemic, viewing figures have

remained consistent throughout.

Website Email subscribers: 83 (74: 2019) | Slingsby Website RSS feed subscribers: 75*

- this figure depends on active RSS feed subscribers logging into their feed reader and downloading the feed so the numbers fluctuate and can be higher than 100. Highest recorded is 103.

Visitors to the website continue to be mainly UK based but the site received views from 79 countries. The United States, Australia, China, Netherlands, Canada, France, New Zealand and Ireland are in the top ten countries for non-UK based visitors to the site.

Website Hosting

The website continues to be hosted with 1&1 IONOS. The website's server is located in Berlin. No issues encountered with the server during 2020. Up time is 99.99%.

The servers continue to be maintained to a high standard with regular software updates to the PHP engine. Next year will see the website switch to PHP8 on the server that will provide significant performance and security benefits.

Bandwidth remains unlimited. Server load has been significantly reduced (average remains around 36% since Jan 2020) using Cloudflare data centres to deliver cached static files such as PDFs, images etc.

Search Engines and Links

The website ranks high on the major search engines and is firmly established online.

The website continues to benefit from being mentioned and linked locally on several websites including:- *northyorkmoors.org.uk*, *howardianhills.org.uk*, *ryedale.co.uk*, *visitthirsk.org.uk*

Additional websites

Alongside slingsbyvillage.co.uk there are three other main social media websites:-

twitter.com/slingsbyvillage - the Twitter page launched on **30th November 2010** and continues to provide an excellent resource for local news information as well as providing a promotional and distribution network for the website. The current number of followers comes to 1091 (1063 - 2019). Current number of tweets: 10,124 (November 2019: 9282).

Facebook.com/slingsbyvillage – The village Facebook page launched in March 2013, currently has 437 total follows (392 – 2019) and provides news from the linked main website as well as other news updates, photos and links. The Facebook page has grown steadily over this year driven largely by the regular local COVID news and event update information starting with lockdown in March.

instagram.com/slingsbyvillage – The village Instagram page has existed for a year or two but was never used until this year. During the COVID lockdown images were kindly added by David Critchley. Currently the Instagram page has 20 images with 155 followers.

Email Systems

The Googlemail (Gmail) E-mail system continues to function well, providing village website e-mail communication access to all website team members.

Technical Report

THE BLOCK EDITOR

The default block editor in WordPress became part of core (built into the software with the old editor removed) in December 2018 after two years of development. The editor is now well established and will continue to be developed further extending the block editor into other areas of website content management such as sidebars, theme layouts etc.

The website's pages were converted over to using blocks including the homepage during the Summer. This has improved page speed (less code) and made it significantly easier to edit information on website pages. Creating and adjusting page layouts is also far easier. Further improvements to the block editor will be made next year.

TRAINING

The WordPress.com based admin training/support website continues to be an excellent asset for support, testing and training. A number of functions on the village website are directly powered by the training site account via the Jetpack plugin. Many aspects of the website are powered by Jetpack including the website stats, visitor comments, login security, image loading optimizations and social media sharing.

A second testing website (thetestflight.co.uk) was established in April 2018 to run Gutenberg dev builds, beta versions of upcoming WordPress releases and also provide a platform to test posting layouts, plugins etc before they are applied to the village website.

SECURITY AND DISTRIBUTION

The website continues to repel attackers regularly and security is monitored constantly. October saw the largest scale of attacks with over 18 million attacks made on WordPress websites per hour. The attack was so huge that the security systems just blocked all traffic with a Russian IP address. The village website came through totally unscathed even though a variety of attacks were made. Oddly enough most of the bad traffic we usually encountered is either from the USA or Europe.



These attacks target all WordPress powered websites (due to its huge user base) and are not aimed specifically at the Slingsby website.

The web site remains under the protective umbrella of Cloudflare. The village website first started using the Cloudflare security and CDN service in 2012. Each year Cloudflare adds new features to improve security and website performance.

With over 200 data centres located in more than 100 countries around the world, Cloudflare places the village website in a content distribution network (CDN) delivering the website to the viewer from local servers rather than directly from the main server located in Berlin. This provides a big boost in delivery speeds - especially for image files and PDFs - to viewers wherever they live.

Richard Flint – Webmaster
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