

The Friends of St Mary's, Netherbury



Registered Charity No. 1147441

April 16th, 2020

Dear Friends,

Annual Letter

I usually send this letter a little advance of our AGM which we traditionally hold in May. Obviously, this year a meeting during May will not be possible, so this report will have to suffice until such time we are able to get together again.

The Work of the Friends in 2019/20

2019/20 has been somewhat quieter than the previous year when we had the tree removal, roof leaks, the break-in and internal lighting to fund. However, we were not resting on our laurels – the broken Merlon was removed, a new stone quarried from Ham Hill, worked by Richard Green and re-installed by Rob Male. The Friends paid for the installation of new, eco- friendly LED spot lights which use less than 15% of the power the previous spots required. They were installed just before Christmas and they certainly light up the Church most effectively – the reduced running cost allowing them to be on during the evenings, which also helps improve safety and security.

We also have had a small number of relatively minor roof leaks to deal with. The incessant rain between September and early March, with the wind arriving from all sorts of directions, found a few areas requiring attention. These have all been fixed, however, we continue be vulnerable to the elements and an aging roof. The one area we cannot afford to have a leak is above the organ – the repairs to the organ, which were covered by insurance came to more than £15,000. We will be installing some additional protection above the organ after the lockdown is lifted. This means that if the roof does leak again, any water will drain away from the organ itself.

Lastly, the Friends have funded the churchyard maintenance with the grass and hedges looking neat and tidy throughout the summer. In addition, thanks go to the volunteers who have helped with gardening and church cleaning and more particularly to Morag and Rob Curtis who have continued with their sterling work on the monuments and also the relocation of the compost area to the north boundary wall.

Events and Fund-Raising Activities

Cream teas were hosted in the Church in September and was well attended. The ever-popular village breakfast attracted close to 60 hungry villagers while we had an excellent turnout for the wonderful Parnham Voices Christmas Concert which was really appreciated by all who attended. These three events raised £645 and thanks to everyone involved in participating, helping and attending.

At this point we will be having the Village Breakfast in November and a Christmas concert by Cantamus in December. We still hope to be able to have a BBQ in the churchyard during August (??) and a fun wine tasting quiz which we will have to reschedule to the autumn.

Financial Reports

Funds in the bank currently stand at a little over £19,000. Year to date this represents a surplus of approximately £1,500. This goes some way to offsetting last year's deficit of £2,735. This variation in annual spend is reflective of the nature of maintaining a Grade 1 listed building. It is difficult to always predict when repairs are required and the age of the church means that any repairs needed will usually be expensive. For this reason, we have a reserve fund of £5,000 to cover any emergency expenditures that might be required such as boiler replacement or temporary roof repair, broken windows etc.

Outlook for 2020/21

2019 saw the issuance of the Quinquennial Report which is generated by the church architect (every 5 years) to outline those areas requiring attention. On first read they are always quite alarming – as a general comment, the architect indicated that it is well-loved, clean and tidy and generally in a good condition. Thereafter, many recommendations for work with various degrees of imperative are included. If all these were followed we would need to raise well over £100,000. We are addressing the urgent issues raised. The boundary wall adjacent to Tower Hill Road is leaning as it reportedly has been for many years – a suggestion to engage a structural engineer has been replaced initially by a monthly inspection to see if there has been any further movement. So far, in spite of the deluge of rainfall we experienced this winter the wall hasn't moved a millimetre. If it does start leaning we will seek advice but with inspections costing anything from £1,000 and a rebuild cost of over £30,000 we have to look at all suggestions very carefully.

Similarly, with the roof – the vast majority of the leadwork is in very good condition. Any leaks can be repaired quickly and easily – the only location where much damage can be caused is above the organ – hence the decision to install the additional protection mentioned earlier. Those items aside, we will continue to have the ongoing maintenance of the churchyard to fund and will also look to repairing some patches of discolouration to the interior walls.

Membership

Membership remains in the mid 70's and income generated thus far from membership fees this year is slightly over £2,000. Membership reminders letters have not been delivered for obvious reasons and hopefully this will serve as a reminder if you have not yet re-joined.

If you are not a member and would be interested in joining, please e-mail Glen Bishop on gvs.ca.bishop@gmail.com and he will send you a Membership Form and the bank details if you would like to set up a standing order. The Covid 19 pandemic and lockdown has, as with everything made life more challenging for us all– the church is no exception – the loss of service collections and cancellations of weddings will have a significant impact on church revenues. The weathering of our lovely church will continue regardless!

Thanking you once again for your generous help and support and hoping that and your families keep safe.

Yours sincerely,

Jacky Bush - Chair - Friends of St Mary's Church



- 1) Some internal discolouration of internal plasterwork requiring addressing.
- 2) The now visible monuments thanks to Morag and Rob.
- 3) Flashing that was loose above the vicar board.
- 4) The merlon replacement