

Annual Report to Ashendon Parish Council

Many thanks to Priscilla, Jenny and Peter Johnson for leading the services and particularly welcome is the family friendly feel of the services with colouring books provided for the children and involving both young and not so young in the talks. Also we had a wonderful confirmation service for both Jessica Holbrook and Grace Debanks, led by Bishop Alan.

It is now over a year since we purchased the hymnal which has been an unqualified success. It has been used both for music within the Church and within the village providing backing music at the Hundred for the Christmas carols and auction. We also use it for playing the Last Post across the Churchyard at the Remembrance Service. Many thanks go to those who set up the hymnal, including the children – thanks Freddie. We hope to include more children in this aspect of the services.

Building and maintenance works carried out in the year, included the renovation and moving of the bench from the bottom of the Graveyard to outside the Church South door (the bench was donated about 25 years ago by Anna Manasse in memory of her husband Otto Manasse) Other work included clearing out 6 years of debris from the North section of the Graveyard. The quinquennial report suggested that the beams in the South Isle be investigated and on investigation it was found that the beam at the East end needed strengthening. Dymott builders installed two strengthening plates to rectify that problem. No other work was carried out to either the inside or outside of the Church building in the last year.

Peter Johnson has done a great job as Secretary, and thank you for agreeing to stand again, albeit that we are asking for volunteers as a permanent Secretary. Similarly thanks to Kevin as Treasurer and Imogen and Peter Smettem as Churchwardens.

The PCC has five members and we would like to recruit more. If anyone would like to be involved please have a chat with Imogen or Peter Smettem. We are also looking for a permanent Secretary to the PCC.

The service pattern is now established with three services each month. These are two with Holy Communion and one an All Age Service without Communion. The normal services over the year show an average attendance of twelve. This doesn't count the increased attendance at special services, such as Mothering Sunday, Easter, Remembrance, the Carol Service and Christmas Day.

For all services the Churchwardens need to ensure the church is ready for the vicar to deliver the service (either on Sunday, or for any other event, eg funeral, wedding etc). The service needs to be advertised in a timely fashion around the village, the church heating needs to go on (sometimes days in advance during the winter months), service sheets needs to be handed out and if it is a Communion Service, all the appropriate Communion items need to be laid out with candles lit and the music for the service needs to be uploaded, set up and tested before the service begins. Ideally, refreshments should be offered after the service, which, in a church with no hot water or many facilities, can be quite a feat of preparation and delegation! We are very lucky to have many willing helpers and we must thank Molly Boughton for her years of excellent service in diligently setting up communion for the parishioners and training up her replacement cover, as she only retired from this responsibility last December, her expert eye is missed!

We endeavor to offer the whole congregation a warm welcome as they enter the church and to make new comers feel involved and pleased that they made the effort to attend and want to return.

We always look at the visitors' book and, apart from comments of how peaceful and tranquil the Church is, nearly all thank us for keeping the Church open.

Kevin confirms that our finances are in good health and that receipts have exceeded payments. This has been the case for at least the last ten years but the excess of income at £1,389 is the lowest in that time. Nevertheless, with £26,479 in our general fund and £12,531 in our restoration fund we should have sufficient to manage unforeseen calls upon our resources.

There has been a decline in church collections since 2009 from a high of £2,716 to £1,474 this year (notably, last year the total was £2,280). Donations are at their second lowest level in the same period although payments by standing order have risen slightly. Tax recovered on Gift Aided donations has fallen although some of this can be accounted for in lower income tax rates. In summary, monies donated to us and the tax recovered on them (£4,917) are at their lowest since 2005. We are very grateful to all those who have contributed in any way.

Expenditure has been managed prudently. Our main liabilities each year are our parish share and our insurance. These have both been paid and there are no outstanding liabilities. During the year we spent £296 on structural repairs.

As always, many thanks to the people who dedicate their time and efforts to keeping our Church open and maintained in 2015.

- **For cleaning and flowers** Pam Rand, Shirley Rand, Gill Walker, Margaret Lloyd, Eloise Hepple, Carol Smith, Vanessa Bates, Jan Pike, Liz Johnson, Felicity Smettem, Susan and Michael Rand, Kym Rabone, Suzie Crwys-Williams, Geoff and Ruth Pimm, Imogen Holbrook, Peggy Binfield, Emma Debanks, Sian Miller, Vicky Blue, Luke and Katy Jamieson, Peter Smettem and Richard Bates.
- **For opening and locking the Church.** Roz Boughton, Imogen Holbrook, Felicity and Peter Smettem
- **For organising the front churchyard mowing** Peter Smettem.
- **For organising the bottom churchyard mowing** Paul Horwood
- **For mowing the Churchyard** Robert Smith, Peter Smettem, Paul Horwood, Peter Johnson, David Crwys-Williams, Richard Bates, Ashley Holbrook, Geoff Pimm, Joe Miller-Howes, Andy Howes, Richard Lewin, Kelvin White, Luke Jamieson, Richard Phillips and Gill Walker.
- **For installing strengthening plates to the South Aisle roof** Nik Dymott
- **For Hedge Cutting** Richard Bates and Peter Smettem
- **For storing the Churchyard mower** Molly Boughton.
- **For compiling the Bernwode News notes** Richard Lewin.
- **For collecting the Bernwode News annual subscription and delivering the Bernwode News** Kevin and Mary Nash.
- **For preparing the Altar for Holy Communion** Molly Boughton Imogen Holbrook and Felicity Smettem
- **For cleaning the brass** Peter Johnson and Felicity Smettem.
- **For producing the Christingles** Kym Rabone and family
- **For Organising the Church Bazaar** Pam and Shirley Rand
- **For organising, preparing, helping on the night for the Harvest Supper** Shirley Rand, Clare Cook, Sue Rand, Pam Rand, Felicity Smettem, Vanessa Bates, Imogen Holbrook, Vicky Blue, Suzie Crwys-Williams, Peter Smettem, Gill Walker, Peter Johnson, Tans Theobald, Sarah Chester, Kerry and Amber Yates, Lesley Whitehall, and Les Curtis.
- **For refreshments after Services** Imogen Holbrook, Felicity Smettem and Liz Johnson.
- **For Administrative duties** Kevin Nash as Treasurer, Peter Johnson as PCC Secretary, and Gift Aid Secretary and Imogen Holbrook as Churchwarden.

Many thanks to the Red Lion Social Club who unfailingly have donated a third of the auction proceeds each year.

Finally to **everyone** who has helped in fund raising.

Peter Smettem and Imogen Holbrook
Churchwardens