

Ashendon Annual Village Meeting 2022.

St Mary's report

Welcome to Gemma, and thanks to her, Jenny and Peter Johnson in leading the services in Ashendon. Also thanks to Peter Johnson and Imogen Holbrook for organising the weekly Compline service streamed live. Thanks also to Fiona Jacob and the Ashendon Voices who have sung to great effect during the Christmas Carol Service.

A look back.

Some 24 years ago Peter Smettem had a call from the Revd. Colin Jee. The gist of that conversation was that as he had just been made redundant from HSBC bank he would now have plenty of time on his hands so would he be Lay Chair for Ashendon PCC and also be Churchwarden. No wasn't going to be an answer he would accept. At that time the Church accounts were not healthy, a total of £7,600 in the bank against annual running costs of about £5,600, repairs looming and a method of heating the Church that seemed to date from the dark ages. We had numerous gas cylinders around the Church each powering a portable fire which as well as throwing out some heat poured water vapour into the Church. We also had a very old oil burner in the same place as the current stove.

All non-essential expenditure was stopped, and by 2001 we had £11,500 in the accounts.

Monies were then raised and works carried out to the Clerestory windows (sounds familiar?) and in 2004 a heating fund was set up following comments that the sermon was visible, as well as being heard, seen as a cloud of mist it was so cold and damp in the Church. In 2004/5 we installed Infrared wall heaters, changed the oil tank, to one that complied with regulations and didn't leak, and installed a modern oil-fired stove with about double the heat output of the old stove. All this was paid for by fundraising in the village and grants.

Then starting in 2011 three legacies were received. The last, was by far the most generous but all were very much appreciated. They totalled £213,000. They paid for the major refurbishment of the Church, now just completed, with monies left over for the inevitable future repairs. The Clerestory windows will soak up funds again in the next 10 years as they are a weak point in the Church building construction. The Nave roof is also nearing the end of its life.

Stripping out the legacies there would be £30,000 in the accounts, about 2.85 years cover of the annual running costs of the Church, which is just about right. The balance associated with the legacies (about £34,000) needs to be kept for future repairs.

Even after expenditure exceeding income in this last year by £661, over a five year period we increased our general funds (excluding the legacies and restoration costs) by £2,425.

Peter Johnson has kindly agreed to be Lay Chair for 2022. In 2023 Peter Smettem will have been Churchwarden for a quarter of a century, so he feels it is about time he stepped down from that role in 2023 as well as not seeking re-election to the PCC.

Peter Smettem will still be found messing around in the Churchyard and will be available to help out with fundraising or other initiatives if the PCC so wish.

In all a remarkable 24 years to date, four changes of Clergy leading the benefice, three Treasurers and three Secretaries and four fellow Churchwardens for Ashendon. Many thanks to everyone for their support and help during this time.

We are always impressed with the number of people who dedicate their time and effort in running St Mary's.

For Cleaning and Flowers Pam Rand, Shirley Rand, Sian Miller, Richard Lewin, Sue Lewin, Jan Pike, Geoff Pimm, Ruth Pimm, Margaret Lloyd, Carol Smith, Liz Johnson, Gill Walker, Claire Burton, Fiona Jacob, Vanessa Bates, Felicity Smettem, Katy Jamieson, Luke Jamieson, Vicky Ewers-Blue, Imogen Holbrook, Suzie Crwys-Williams,

Ginny de Lusingnan, Georgina Meadows-Smith, Richard Bates and Peter Smettem.

For Ashendon Voices Fiona Jacob, Shirley Rand, Mary Nash, Vanessa Bates, Jan Pike, Felicity Smettem, Imogen Holbrook, Luisa Pullin, Sue Paine, and Claire Burton.

For Opening and Locking the Church Imogen Holbrook, Felicity and Peter Smettem and Peter Johnson.

For organising the front Churchyard Mowing Peter Smettem and Richard Bates

For Organising the bottom Churchyard Mowing Paul Horwood

For Mowing the Churchyard Peter Johnson, Richard Phillips, Andy Howes, Peter Smettem, Martin Saunders, Paul de Lusignan, Julian Chester, Paul Horwood, Ashley Holbrook, Richard Lewin, and Gill Walker.

For Hedge Cutting Peter Smettem and Peter Johnson

For Weed Killing the Pathways Chris Paine

For Playing the organ over Christmas Tom Johnson

For collecting the Bernwode News annual subscription and delivering the Bernwode News Kevin and Mary Nash

For preparing for Holy Communion Imogen Holbrook, Felicity Smettem and Vanessa Bates.

For producing the Christingles Liz Johnson

For organising the Church Bazaar Pam and Shirley Rand

For helping with the church Bazaar Jan Pike, Vanessa Bates, Margaret Lloyd, Liv Crouchier, Suzie Crwys-Williams, Felicity and Peter Smettem

For Refreshments after the Services Imogen Holbrook and Felicity Smettem

For Administrative duties Kevin Nash as Treasurer, Peter Johnson as PCC Secretary and Gift Aid Secretary, Richard Bates as Churchwarden, Suzie-Crwys-Williams for auditing the accounts and Roger Pike for circulating service details.

Peter Smettem
April 2022