

FRIENDS OF ST MARY'S CHURCH, POLSTEAD

NEWSLETTER March 2016

RESULTS FOR 2014 - 2015

The Friends draft accounts to 30 October 2015 confirm our continuing healthy financial position. Income for the year totalled £6,499.50. Expenditure was £3,408.87, resulting in a surplus for the year of £3,090.63 which took our total cash reserves at the end of the year to £40,820.82.

We had expected to fund several major projects being undertaken by the PCC, but these were delayed first, by the resignation of the church architect, Rod Shelton, for personal reasons, and secondly, by adverse weather in the autumn which prevented work going ahead on the church clock. As a result, the only conservation project that the Friends were asked to fund during the year was the rebuilding of part of the historic west wall of the churchyard by John Presley, who is a leading expert on flint and brickwork (and the main conservator of the medieval remains of Bury St Edmunds Abbey).

However, most of our funds remain earmarked for the series of major projects which the PCC has in mind over the next two years or so, including the works about to take place on the clock, possible work on the outside of the tower and, most significantly, repair work on the beams of the north and south side aisles.

The Polstead community continues to give us most generous support and our membership remains at over a hundred.

TRIP TO BAWDSEY RADAR AND THE RED HOUSE, ALDEBURGH

The Friends had a successful and much enjoyed trip in September to Bawdsey Radar and the Red House, Aldeburgh, pausing on the way for lunch at the King's Head, Orford. We had an extremely interesting tour of the surviving radar bunker at Bawdsey which houses the museum on the development of radar at Bawdsey Manor and at Orfordness. This development played a crucial part in the defence of Britain in 1940; and we have since been delighted to learn of the success of Bawdsey Radar in obtaining a major grant from the Lottery Fund for the full restoration and development of this unique facility and historic site.

The tour of the Red House and garden, and the associated permanent exhibition, at Aldeburgh was a further highlight. The exhibition really takes at least three hours to view in full detail, so this visit was by way of a brief overview and an introduction for those who would like to follow up later. The full range of Benjamin Britten's and Peter Pears' creative and artistic careers came across very well; and the venue was looking its best in the September sunshine.

2016 AGM AND SUPPER

The 2016 AGM will be held on **Friday 6 May at 7.00 pm for 7.30pm at Polstead Village Hall**. All members and others with an interest are welcome to attend. Papers for the AGM, including the Friends Annual Report, will be circulated to all members in advance of the meeting

The business meeting will be followed by a supper. **Tickets for the supper, including a glass of wine, are £7.50** and are available from **Bill Wigglesworth (01787 210029): cheques preferred – made payable to Friends of Polstead Church**

After supper Horrey Parsons, who was responsible for supervising the building of the Millenium Tower at Bury St Edmunds Cathedral and spoke at our AGM three years ago, with a most interesting account of that project, will be giving a further talk about recent works at the Cathedral, entitled “More stories from the Tower”. Horrey is an entertaining speaker and a consummate professional expert on conservation building projects (having spent many years with Sindalls, the leading building firm working on Cambridge college buildings).

CHURCH MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

Despite the delays encountered over the year all but one of the items listed for action in the last Quinquennial Report have been completed, with the help of funding from the Friends, before the next inspection which is due to be carried out by the new church architect, Mr Philip Orchard, in the summer. Mr Orchard is a member of the Whitworth Co-Partnership of Bury, has extensive experience as a church architect and is a member of the Diocese Advisory Committee which reviews all projects affecting the fabric of churches in the diocese. The recommendations in his report will help to determine the PCC’s priorities for repairs over the next five years.

Meanwhile the PCC is expecting to complete the electrification of the clock and the refurbishment and re-gilding of the clock face before the end of April. These two items are being funded from generous bequests from the estates of the late Mary Field Reid and the late Marie Parry-Crooke, for which we and the PCC are immensely grateful.

Preparations continue for the carrying out of repairs to the roof beams of the north and south side aisles, which it is hoped to undertake shortly. This will be one of the largest of the recent projects at St Mary’s and funding it is likely to involve drawing on the Friends’ major projects fund, which we have been regularly topping up in readiness for such a requirement.

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

We hope to arrange another trip, in the late summer of 2016. We are considering visiting the Shuttleworth Collection of historic aircraft at Old Warden in Bedfordshire and combining this with a visit to the famous Swiss Garden which is part of the estate. The Swiss Garden has recently been the recipient of substantial lottery funding and is now said to be in excellent condition. We will be able to discuss the arrangements and gauge the level of interest at the AGM in May.

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