

## **Wherwell Church Review of the Year 2017**

Five PCC meetings have been held throughout the year at Dancing Ledge and Field House by kind permission of Michael and Joyce Payne and Alice and Quentin Higham respectively, as well as the Annual Parochial Church Meeting at the Church. We have 11 members on the PCC, and are very pleased that Mr Nigel Waters has agreed to join the PCC and will take his place officially at the APCM in April 2017: this takes our complement to its maximum of 12 members.

2016 saw four weddings being conducted at the church. Wherwell remains a popular destination for young couples, and we are thrilled that young couples have chosen Wherwell Church for this very important occasion.

Apart from the traditional religious festivals of Easter and Christmas, there were several special services during the year: Mothering Sunday; a Patronal Service for Holy Cross Day to celebrate the dedication of the Church itself; a pet service; a celebration of Baptism; and the Harvest Festival which was followed by a delicious lunch in the village hall. In addition, the School makes good use of the Church: once again there were special Christingle, Remembrance and Carol services. Trinity Sunday was celebrated at Northwood Park, with Wherwell Parish providing the puddings. This year we celebrated All Saints' Day as an alternative to All Souls': this was seen as a more positive and joyful form of worship.

In November, a trial service of meditation was held on a Saturday evening. It is hoped that this would be a taster for a further series of meditations in 2017. The services are lay-led and comprise short reflections on the lives of 'saints and sinners', interspersed with passages from their works and beautiful music, the whole providing a useful focus for thoughts on the meaning and purpose of our daily lives.

In early December, we were very pleased to hold a service of dedication for the introduction of a box of Tower of London poppies to the church to commemorate the fallen from the great War. The poppies are fixed to the wall at the West End of the church with an accompanying notice explaining that the poppies and the box were financed by gifts from the Cotes-Preedy family, members of which were present to witness the event.

Family Services continue to be popular with a good number of young families attending each month. Regular refreshments are now available after these services and have proved a popular occasion for communication and neighbourly chat. One Family Service in the Autumn took the form of a pet service which was very popular with the children!

We would like to thank Dr Gordon Pack for hosting Evensong at his house during the winter months, providing a warm and comfortable setting for this monthly service.

Andover Food Bank continued to benefit from the generosity of Wherwell villagers via the collecting bin at the back of the Church. Deliveries of whole bin-fuls are made to the Food Bank on a regular basis.

Midday Mums for those with babies and toddlers has continued on a monthly basis, and provides a chance for pre-schoolers and their parents to meet and form friendships. Rev Dave Mapes introduced singing this year which was very entertaining. Midday Mums meets in Wherwell Village Hall, and is run by a team comprising: Susan Ansell, Lesley Kent, Di Wild and Joyce and Michael Payne.

2016 has proved to be financially successful, with the church ending the year in a much more comfortable situation. This has been achieved by the generosity of villagers following the planned giving drive, as well as several very profitable events.

### Activities

Our biennial Auction of Promises proved to be a very successful and enjoyable event in April, taking well over £7,000, and adding enormously to the church finances. The evening was organized by a team of volunteers under the leadership of Mrs Louisa Roberts-West, Mrs Alice Higham and Mrs Anna Lipa.

The Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday added an extra flavour to the annual summer fete in June with many stallholders dressed in red, white and blue, and the band playing traditional and royal themes. Stalls were arranged as usual in Church Street and some of the gardens, as well as behind the village hall. There were all the normal attractions, including Andover Town Band, a barbeque, afternoon teas and a Pimm's Tent. The significant sum of money raised at this annual event is a very important part of keeping the church alive. The fete was organized by Mrs Susanne Horne and Mrs Anna Lipa.

Our regular Christmas Fayre was held on Advent Sunday with many seasonal stalls and a visit from Father Christmas! This was followed by a candlelit Advent Carol Service as usual and was extremely well patronized by many young families. The Fayre was organized by Mrs Susanne Horne and Mrs Anna Lipa.

### Church Fabric and Goods

2016 has seen a number of small but important improvements:

- Rev Jax's names was added in gold lettering to the Rectors' name board at the back of the church.
- The Vestry was fitted with beautiful blue carpet on a damp-proof backing, and this has proved to be a lovely setting for children's play activity during Family services.
- New lighting has been introduced above the minister's chair under the pulpit.
- As mentioned above, a box containing 3 Tower of London poppies has been affixed to the West wall of the church, along with a notice describing the contents.
- A slipped roof tile was replaced by AEH building company which put on the new roof in 2011.

There is outstanding damage to the barge area of the Vestry roof which will be addressed when the weather improves in 2017.

### Churchyard Maintenance

In April, a devastating storm blew down a large tree from Wherwell Priory across the churchyard wall and into the churchyard itself, destroying a section of wall and damaging several gravestones. It transpired that the section of wall destroyed was partly owned by the Church and partly by Mr & Mrs Hogg at Wherwell Priory. This led to a very complicated insurance situation, and resulted in no action, other than clearance, being taken to fix the wall during 2016. Thanks to considerable efforts by Mr Etchells, matters are now resolved and the repairs will be made in April 2017. Mr Hogg decided to fell a couple of other dangerous looking trees in the same area to prevent any further damage. The PCC felled four ash trees elsewhere in the churchyard.

The church path from the lychgate to the porch was relaid in 2016 – twice! The first attempt by Enham Services was unsatisfactory as they appeared to have laid the wrong material. Eventually, after extensive negotiation and effort on the part of Mr David Etchells, the path was relaid. Mr Prince and Mr Wilson tidied and weed-killed the section of path from the porch to the miz-maze end of the churchyard.

Enham have continued to cut the grass and tidy the churchyard in a satisfactory manner.

Another new sign reading 'Dogs on leads please' has been made and fixed to the lychgate – the signs at each end of the churchyard now correspond!

### Music Team

Sung services have continued over the year three and sometimes four times a month, occasionally including congregations from Chilbolton or the whole Benefice. Duties at the organ are shared by Ray Blazdell and David Wright. We continue to use Ancient and Modern Revised hymn books, supported by Junior Praise to give more a modern flavour at Family Services. A&MR is one of the least used books in the church as a whole, but it suits us perfectly well.

The church bells should also be included in the church music scene – the Ellacombe system enables a soloist to ring peals, and has brightened Sunday mornings with chiming before services by a small team. It is however also possible to play simple tunes on the bells, meaning that at Christmas and Easter seasonal hymns can be rung over the village such as Ding Dong merrily on high, On Christmas night all Christians sing or Jesus Christ is risen today. Another favourite is Happy birthday to you, which has delighted many young and not so young villagers on their special day and earned funds at the Auction of Promises.

The highlights of the musical year of course are the summer and Christmas Concerts by the Wherwell Singers – not a church choir, but they use the church for months of rehearsals and fill the pews on the big nights. They are also in demand for Wherwell weddings.

### Liturgy Team

The team known as Matthew 28 has met on several occasions. It is seeking to look at the services conducted in each church with an idea to update and make best use of resources, shared and otherwise. This also includes the clergy and all who lead services. It also considers fresh ways of worship across the Benefice.

### Chiming Team

The chiming team of nine members continued to meet every second Tuesday evening for practice and rang at the Sunday morning and other special services during the year. There were a further five weddings in 2016 that requested the bells be rung in celebration. Since installing the Ellacombe Chiming Device in late 2011, we have rung at twenty seven weddings, with a further four weddings currently asking for the bells in 2017. There were no special outings or events this year other than ringing on the occasion of the Her Majesty's 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday.

### Parish Magazine

Last year the community magazine had a stable year, both in people and financial terms. The committee remained the same and two new volunteers joined the production teams. The principle of sharing the work of producing the magazine between a lot of people, with no-one having too much to do, continues and our total numbers are now up to twenty one - and that excludes the loyal band of circa twenty deliverers who post the magazine through letterboxes. In a new organisational departure for 2017-18, the responsibility for selling advertising space was split between six people – a job that was previously done by one. The magazine relies on advertising to fund its costs and ensure delivery free of charge to all 760 households in the two villages.

Finances are in good shape and were very kindly monitored again this year by Michael Payne of the Chilbolton PCC. The business model is designed to generate a small surplus each year, that being the difference between advertising revenue and the running costs, which include

printing, IT support for our website and a Christmas Party. The annual surplus for 2016-17 will be around £2000 and it is hoped to donate a figure close to this in May 2017 to the joint church fund. No other organisations are supported.

The party last Christmas was very well attended, with over fifty people enjoying an excellent buffet and drink again at the Abbot's Mitre.

From an editorial point of view the amount of content provided by our various contributors has remained pleasingly high and there are rarely problems filling the pages. However, there has been nothing this year to match last year's heightened interest generated by the sale of the Chilbolton Stores.

The magazine is run entirely by volunteers and the main challenge is finding new people to join the production teams when someone leaves. There are three or four different roles, each of which requires someone to spend two or three days, three times a year helping out with the magazine's production or, in the case of advertising, renewing the advertisers' subscriptions. If anyone is interested, please get in touch with Stephen Macdonald, email and telephone number both in the magazine.