

St Andrew's Church, Ombersley Churchwardens' Report for the year 2009-10 Presented at the AGM on Wednesday 30th April 2010

Fabric report

Tower Stonework – The major concern regarding the fabric of the church this year has been the condition of the badly weathered West Tower stonework. The ashlar facings and decorative mouldings are spalling, and towards the end of 2009 a significant fall of stone from the south-west pinnacle necessitated the taping off of an area around the south-west corner until remedial works could be carried out.

The cost of the repair works is estimated by our architect, Nick Joyce, at £230,000. Under his guidance we applied to English Heritage for a grant towards these repairs under their "Repair Grants for Places of Worship in England" scheme and received an "in principle" grant offer of £106,000 for two stages of the project. The first part of the grant for Stage 1 amounts to £23,000 (of which we have been paid £11,500 so far). This covers investigative work and obtaining tenders for the main contracts. The grant for the second stage amounts to £83,000 and will be confirmed on satisfactory completion of Stage 1.

When we take into account the sums already raised to cover church repairs and PCC reserves, we face an estimated shortfall of around £52,000 and the PCC needs to raise this sum over the next two years.

The detailed survey of the tower, including investigative work and production of a report, will be carried out by Sally Strachey Conservation Limited, and will start in April. As a part of this work the PCC commissioned scale elevation drawings of the church, which have been completed at a cost of £1250 + £219 VAT. We are very grateful to Nick Joyce for his help in all these matters.

Repair and Maintenance – The maintenance of the **Lychgate** has been addressed through the generosity of the Ombersley Conservation Trust and Basil Lamb, now, thankfully, restored to health, is back in action maintaining the churchyard and keeping a weather 'maintenance eye' on the structure, furnishings and fixtures.

Items repaired include: the **storage heater** at the south end of the Narthex which required a new element.

Security – following a theft of keys from the choir vestry during vestry hour locks on the north door, clergy vestry, and belfry doors were replaced and upgraded at a cost of £345 (our insurance company was notified but the amount was less than our insurance excess)

Insurance – We had a visit from a representative of our insurers Ecclesiastical Insurance. He was, in the main, happy with our arrangements for the care of the church but suggested a number of points we ought to address. These included more precautions around the boiler room access, carrying out a fire risk assessment, and looking at our lettings policy arrangements for groups using our premises. A revised renewal premium is being considered by the PCC.

Health and Safety – Robert Thornton (Churchwarden) has compiled a Health and Safety Policy which has been adopted by the PCC (available to view on the website). Using this policy as guidance, he, with Andrew Horn and Basil Lamb have undertaken a H&S survey of the church (including a Fire Risk Assessment). This has usefully highlighted several matters we must attend to, and these will be brought to the PCC for consideration. The policy covers the carrying out of general Risk Assessments. Liz Hooper and Robert Thornton completed one such assessment in advance of an evening concert in the building, and this was a helpful exercise.

Parish Share – Historically the Parish Share has been paid jointly to the Diocese by St Mary's Doverdale and St Andrew's in the ratio 2/7 : 5/7 respectively, (more recently 2/5 : 3/5) reflecting the division of incoming and outgoing resources. Doverdale considered that this was becoming disadvantageous to them and had requested to be assessed separately. Following discussions with St Andrew's churchwardens it was agreed by the PCC that the split was of little relevance any more and so both churches would henceforward be assessed separately. In the event, this year the amount set to be paid by St Andrew's went down whereas St Mary's rose slightly.

Treasurer – Having lost one excellent Brian (Brian Gale) as treasurer when he moved from the area last year we have gained another in Brian Ellis who has taken on the mantle with skill and good humour in the face of Church of England bureaucracy!

Services and Celebrations

Second and Fourth Sundays have continued to be lay-led.

The **Second Sunday** Service has attracted some new families who enjoy the less formal, more-children-friendly style of service, although it is not to the taste of all. One success has been in the invitation of baptism families to this service for their 'official welcome' into the church. Many have said how much they

enjoyed the services and some have returned. Similarly, the practice of inviting recently-baptised children and their families to the **Candlemas** Service in February has generated a core of 'regular if not frequent' Second Sunday attendees. (Thanks to Jenny Batelen for her work in co-ordinating the Baptism Liaison). The institution of a **Music Group** (expertly lead by Louise Robinson on piano) to provide accompaniment for the hymns and songs used on this Sunday has been a huge success with a number of new, young instrumentalists joining and a core of enthusiastic young singers beginning to emerge.

The format of **Fourth Sunday** services is now just about established as Common Worship Morning Prayer with two members of the congregation sharing the lead and we are fortunate that Rev Jim Brown (URC Worcester) has agreed to swap his regular 1st Sunday attendance to 4th Sundays so that he can preach. We are grateful to those who have agreed to take services this year as the format was being tested and also to Howard Robinson and Michael Griffiths for leading an instructional address on the Canticles which are an important part of the Morning Prayer service. A rota of volunteers to lead the service has now been drawn up and we hope that many will support these members of the congregation by continuing to attend the service.

The **8am BCP Eucharist** which used to be held on a 2nd Sunday has, recently, been moved to the 4th Sunday which is more convenient for Peter because of his commitments elsewhere but it has meant that those who attend early on a 4th Sunday do not now come to Morning Prayer as they used to.

June saw the **180th Anniversary** of the building of St Andrew's and the occasion was marked by two special services. On June 21st there was an "**Ombersley Songs of Praise**" devised by Louise and Howard Robinson featuring hymns (including the 'Ombersley Hymn') representing the 180-year history. On 28th a special **celebratory Sunday service**, at which the Dean of Worcester preached, was followed by 'Fizzy & Cake' refreshments with a magnificent cake depicting St Andrew's very generously made by Angela Mercer for the occasion, and a glorious, glittery "180 years" window decoration provided by the younger members of the congregation.

The **Harvest Festival** was a special, community occasion once again (coinciding with 'Back to Church Sunday' and certainly attracting more than usual to attend), as was the 'by invitation' **All Souls Service** (thanks here to Diana Lamb for contacting the many bereaved families), and, as always, the **Remembrance Day** Service and Parade was a very moving occasion.

Christmas Services this year were well supported with very favourable comments being returned, especially about the new-style **Carol Service**. Village carol singing, one week with the Brownies and the next with 'the rest' was very well-received, the Hamptons residents being particularly welcoming to the Brownies. We missed Peter's presence at the Christmas festivities (especially the carol singing!) owing to his absence on sick leave, but we were fortunate to be able to call on our very good-hearted retired clergy, John Gathercole and John Mushen, and on Bishop Jonathan Ruhumuliza, whose efforts were all much appreciated at the various festival and school services.

The Seven Churches – On March 21st at a service for "the Seven Churches" the Bishop of Dudley licensed Peter Kerr as Priest-in-Charge of the "Four-Square" Parishes (Elmley Lovett, Hampton Lovett, Rushock and Elmbridge) in addition to his duties and P-I-C of Ombersley, Doverdale and Hartlebury. Rev Sue Barrett was licensed as his Associate Priest for "the Seven Churches" to work alongside him in all the parishes but mainly in the Four-square. The joint service was a very convivial occasion with members from all the churches meeting and enjoying 'conversation and cakes' on a lovely sunny Spring afternoon in the very picturesque surroundings of Elmley Lovett church. It bodes well for a mutually supportive and friendly alliance of "The Seven Churches" under Peter's care.

Events

The Church Fete this year raised £5332, only £30 down on last year's record profit. 5% of the profit was donated to local guides and brownies and 5% to St Richard's Hospice. As always this brilliant occasion is a master-feat of organisation by Judy Baer and her team and a credit to the village in its ability to attract all sections of the parish both as contributors and visitors.

The **Harvest Supper** raised around £576 with £115 from the raffle going to the DEC (Disasters Emergency Committee) and, despite being slightly disoriented by the ongoing refurbishments at the Memorial Hall, proved to be a very convivial evening with lots of splendid food contributed by participants and some jollity provided by a topical and apparently 'very difficult' music and picture quiz devised by a desperate churchwarden with no other entertainment available!

The **Christmas Coffee Morning** organised jointly with St Mary's was again a success with a craft stall featuring the works of the **Active Coffee Group** raising more than £200 towards the total of nearly £395.

The Historic Churches Trust Annual Cycle Ride was gallantly undertaken on our behalf by Charles Hill from which we received a payment of £82-50.

The Pattern of Life concert staged in March in memory of Howard and Louise Robinson's nephew featured songs by their singing group *Serenata* and the considerable oratorical skills of members of our congregation readings poems and prose highlighting the ups and downs of life. The concert was very well attended and much praised for its style and content. A substantial amount was raised in support of MacMillan Cancer Support and St Richard's Hospice.

Other Matters

'Community Service' – our **'Monday Morning Mums'** mother and toddler group continues to flourish and the **Active Coffee** group, following the success of its Christmas craft stall, is busy crafting for next year.

Children in Church – unfortunately our God Club (Tuesday Sunday School) has not regenerated (mainly due to competition from after school clubs), but a very successful children's Activity Week was run in the summer holidays and one-off craft sessions are being held to produce craft decorations for festivals. More children are being welcomed to the Second Sunday Services and the music group is attracting new participants.

Seven Churches Admin Centre – during the year discussions have taken place between 'The Seven Parishes' in the Deanery (The Foursquare Parishes, Hartlebury, Doverdale and Ombersley) towards establishing an administrative centre with a waged administrator for use by all the parishes to help with administrative work of the Churchwardens as well as with organisation of weddings, funerals, christenings, rotas, printing parish magazines etc. To this end a suitable premises has been found and set up in Cutnall Green and an administrator is about to be appointed. An agreement has been arrived at between the parishes regarding the costs of the venture and initial funding support from the Diocese will aid the setting up of the scheme. It will cost St Andrew's a substantial amount (estimated at £560 in the first year rising to £709 in the second and £943 in the third year). However, we hope that it will, as envisaged, benefit both Clergy and Church Officers alike. We are grateful to Andrew Horn for agreeing to represent St Andrew's on the management committee of the Centre.

Website : www.omersleyparishchurch.org.uk The website is averaging **20** 'hits' per day with more towards the end of the week, possibly indicating that it is proving a useful information source for those wishing to find out service times etc. Sally Rees has been very efficient in keeping it up to date and adding photographs (courtesy of Robert Thornton) and poster adverts for special events. The site has proved useful as a repository for our policy documents which need to be available for public scrutiny and for advertising, as we are bound by terms of contract to do, the funding given by English Heritage and other bodies.

'Statistics for Mission' as provided to the Diocese — This year there have been: 7 baptisms; 10 weddings and 0 marriage blessings; 4 funerals (5 at crematorium). There were 132 attending church on Easter Sunday, and 300 on Christmas Eve/Day. The average attendance on a Sunday (in October) is 41.25 with an average of 4.75 children.

More Thanks

As designated 'senior churchwarden' my very heartfelt personal thanks must go to Robert Thornton my newly-appointed co-warden who has taken on so willingly and efficiently many of the organisational aspects of wardening this year. Brian Ellis, too, has been very supportive in his capacity as Treasurer, liaising very effectively with Robert on aspects of finance, insurance and English Heritage grants. Thanks too to Louise Robinson and Jenny Batelen for their inspiration and skills and to Evelyn Ellis for regular support of the Music Group and Second Sunday Services (Jenny also for Baptism Liaison). Jeannette Horn and Lynne Hunter are still efficiently managing the sidesman and lecturing rotas, the bellringers and choir enhance every service, Lucinda Kenny has been keeping an eye on our Monday Morning Mums, and Fiona Davies and Jane Hill are very pro-active and committed in their organisation and support of our 'community outreach' Active Coffee Group and in their support (by providing children!) of the new Music Group and Second Sundays. They all, with others of the congregation on whom we regularly rely for help with coffee, food provision, church cleaning, decoration, service participation and general 'helping when asked' are the backbone of the congregation without whom St Andrew's would not be such a convivial and forward-looking church. In so many of these activities we rely on Basil and Diana Lamb for organisational and practical support, so to them, as always, very heartfelt thanks – Robert and my churchwardening roles would certainly be very much more arduous without their skills. We have a wonderful leader and guide in Peter Kerr who is supportive and encouraging of so many aspects of church life and whom we have missed tremendously during his absence from the 'Vicars seat' on sick leave from November to March. Even though we are now sharing him with more parishes than we ever thought possible, it is good to know that he is back 'in charge' and we appreciate even more the occasions when we do have him in our pulpit.

Liz Hooper & Robert Thornton