

Report from 'Friends of St Edmund's' Secretary for Parish APCM - 2021

There were no meetings of the Trust in 2020 due to the Covid pandemic, nor did the annual St Edmund's Open Weekend take place.

Despite Covid lockdowns continuing into 2021, work on St Edmund's has continued, and the church was used for services once Church of England pandemic rules were eased.

Projects financed and completed at St Edmund's in 2021: The repair to exterior stonework was completed, as was the upgrading of the electrical system.

Fundraising: Due to the pandemic, fund raising efforts had to be put on hold until the 2021 Open Weekend. £614 was raised.

The carol evening at St Mark's raised £174. Our thanks go to Wight Sax who gave their time free of charge, and to David McCulloch and Lynn Peppitt who organised the event.

The Friends have raised nearly £800 from events, with more planned for 2022. Most members have made generous donations in addition to the basic membership fee of £5.

Sales of cards, calendars and misc items have continued and brought in further income.

The Open Weekend: Nearly 100 people attended over the 3 days. Volunteers were recruited to assist with hosting the Open Weekend. I would like to record my grateful thanks to those who assisted. Materials for display were contributed by the Hampshire & IOW Wildlife Trust and The People's Trust for Endangered Species. Local photographers Viv Loveless, Danny Watson made our pictures of local flora and fauna available. The church was beautifully decorated with flowers donated by members of the local community, arranged by Ann Joliffe, Mary Shaw and Elizabeth Tucker. Many complimentary comments have been made about the 2021 event; some saying it was the best display in the history of the event.

Friends' Annual Newsletter: This was printed in house; as many copies as possible were distributed by email, some were sent out by post, and others hand-delivered.

Membership: A new membership list has been created since the Open Weekend by Lynn Peppitt, Mary Shaw and myself, and is now in operation. Lynn Peppitt has been running the membership list since September 2021 with input from me. She will hand this over to Mary Shaw on 1st April 2022.

We can report that the Trust now has 77 members. We have email addresses for a large percentage of the members. It is hoped that before long we will have most of the membership on email, which will benefit the Trust by reducing costs and increasing efficiency. A monthly account spreadsheet is being used which shows the membership renewal payments and donations. The cash and cheques are banked monthly.

To comply with GDPR the membership records are kept on a password protected computer and a paper copy is kept in a locked filing cabinet. Those donations that are eligible for Gift Aid are passed to the Treasurer to enable him to claim additional money.

Trustees: The Trust welcomed 3 new Trustees i.e.

Lynn Peppitt, who is currently Administrator

Linda Pitcher, representing the Wootton Bridge Parish Council

Mike Broadsmith, representing the Parochial Church Council

The board of Trustees is now in full compliance with the Trust Deed, with 5 Trustees.

Doreen Gazey (Secretary)

I only need to make a short report this year. As with so much else, COVID and lockdown curtailed activities for most of 2020 and much of 2021. As the biggest impact was on our fund raising events (including the cancellation of the Open Weekend in 2020), our funds became depleted, and we are only now beginning to build back up to the level of reserves we need to support whatever maintenance work the PCC needs to put in hand. The successful Open Weekend in August 2021 was a very visible sign that the work of the Friends continues and will be further developed in future.

Fortunately, the life of St Edmund's has continued through most of the period of the pandemic. With a few changes (including the use of face coverings and hand sanitisers), worship now follows its customary pattern, even though we have been without a parish priest for over a year now. The church is still open every day for visitors and private prayer. So the intentions of the founding members, a quarter of a century ago, that St Edmund's should remain active and well used have been maintained in difficult times.

While little building maintenance has been done during the period, this is more due to the fact that relatively little needed to be done than to any problems due to the pandemic. Particular mention should be made of the work of refinishing the main church door - quite a major task - undertaken by Stephen Capps. Not only is the door now looking its best, but it gives a clear indication that the church is cared for, even before you enter the building.

The routine quinquennial inspection of the church building took place late in 2021. Nothing of immediate concern was identified in the Report, but there is now a list of jobs, large and small, to be done in the coming years. With the generosity of the Friends and visitors, we hope to be able to support as much as possible of this work as it progresses.

The Trust has recently taken the opportunity to strengthen the governance of the St Edmund's Church Building Trust (the charity of which the Friends of St Edmund's are part). Essentially this has involved going back to the principles of the Trust Deed (which remains unchanged), strengthening the Trustee body, and defining more clearly the formal relationship between the Trust and the Friends. From the point of view of our members, the main point is probably that we have now established that the Trust can support work in the churchyard as well as on the church building.

Finally, this report must, once again, record thanks to generous donors and all who have done so much to keep the work of the Trust alive during difficult times. Particular mention should be made of our Treasurer David Poore, and of our new Trustee Lynn Peppitt. And, of course, we must again pay tribute to the continuing indefatigable work of Doreen Gazey as Secretary, Organiser and Parish Archivist. With the support and kindness we continue to receive, we can continue to play our part in caring for the beautiful, holy and special place that is St Edmund's

David Bennison (Chairman)