

Friends of St Peter's Annual General Meeting minutes

16 October 2016

Held at St Peter's church

Committee present: Hazel Tapsell, Heather Coleman, Sue Shepherd, Caroline Bell, Linda Ayling, Andy Bain-Smith, Jan Green

Approximately 10 people attended

Apologies: Chris Tredgold, Nick White, Jennifer Goldie

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed

Chairman's report

Caroline gave an update on recent developments in our work to restore the chancel. Following communications with the Churches Conservation Trust, we decided to apply for a Heritage Lottery Bid. The CCT gave us contact details of professional conservators approved by the Trust in order to provide estimates. We met with three different agencies. They all conducted site visits and produced estimates for the cost of their work. All three firms felt confident that, given their examination of the chancel, their quotes should not include hidden costs.

It wasn't easy to distinguish which was the best estimate. Each had different numbers of people conducting the work, different lengths of time allocated; some provided scaffolding, some didn't – and they all had to guesstimate costs for transport with, if needed, accommodation for staff. We reviewed all these elements, together with our impression of which conservator seemed most positive – especially about aspects that would be an important part of a Heritage Lottery Bid such as providing educational opportunities.

We chose the conservators Hare and Humpreys, their website is www.hare-humpreys.co.uk. Their past conservation works looks impressive.

We met recently with Simon Wiles who heads fundraising community for the south east at the CCT. He clarified that the CCT are prepared to offer advice and support but made it clear that St Peter's committee would be the ones to apply for the bid. So the next step is to submit an application to the HLF. Hopefully we'll have support from someone we know that has HLF experience – the application is a big enterprise. Once we get this application in we will know more, but we plan to have a formal launch of the campaign to restore the chancel. Recently Hazel and Sue met with staff at Preston Manor: it was agreed that the Manor would provide loos and a water supply for the conservators and would promote the conservation work when it takes place.

In other business, here are some of the things that have happened during the past year:

We held our regular and hugely popular **Carol Concert** in December, featuring Sussex Harmony.

There was a **steel pan concert** in the church in May. In that month we also had a theatre group performing **Romeo and Juliet**. They were touring with this performance in CCT churches across the south east. The Trust contacted us to ask us to support the group with things like local advertising as the Trust is trying to build relationships with these sorts of groups. The group only perform in CCT churches and a portion of their takings goes to the Trust.

In June we held our **Midsummer Tea Party** which celebrated the Queen's 90th birthday. And we also hosted our popular **Summer Sale**: this year more people attended than ever before, helped by the rain that drove everyone from neighbouring, outside attractions, inside the church – they quickly bought all the cakes!

In July Sue conducted a **Churchyard Tour**. She finds new and interesting information each time. More than 30 people attended. Next year we intend to have a talk on local archaeology by a local expert.

For our **Heritage Days** in September Hazel and Linda conducted research for and presented an Exhibition of Brighton and St Peter's in 1916. They visited The Keep and found information about those soldiers from Preston who had fought at the Somme.

In September John Vigar, who stepped down over a year ago from his work with The Churches Conservation Trust, gave a talk on '**Murder, Sex and Mayhem in English Churches**'. John is extraordinarily well-informed about the history and architecture of English churches and delivered a gripping illustrated presentation. About 40 people came, around a third of which were new to the church.

Hazel mentioned a few points that the Churchyard Volunteers want to make:

The gardeners now have permission from the tennis club to plant and maintain the area bordering the courts and the churchyard,

There has been no new illicit deposits of weedkiller in the churchyard since notices were erected.

A considered decision has been made to keep the churchyard a mixture of manicured areas – especially around graves which are still visited – and 'wild' areas. The wild areas are carefully managed, and often planted with wild flowers, in order to attract wildlife.

Treasurer's report

It has been a year of steady consolidation of funds now standing at £8,814. We have had no major purchases, and the income from our usual events was as good, or better than, the previous year. The May sale was very rewarding (over £1,100), partly due to large numbers of visitors coming for the Preston Park open day, and partly as a result of torrential rain on that day. St Peter's offered a welcome shelter from the storms! We have also had more donations than in previous years, for which we are very grateful.

Membership secretary's report – year ending September 2016

We now have 91 households on our Membership list. The system of organising renewals once a year in October is working well. We are able to take subscriptions using Standing Orders now so will offer this as a convenient way to renew, in good time for next year.

There are many members who live far away from St Peter's but who are very committed to keeping their connection with a church that is a n important part of their family history. One such family visited St Peter's in August from North Yorkshire to mark their parents' wedding day which had been celebrated 40 years ago. Their mother had died in January and three generations of the family travelled down to be close to the church where their story began.

The meeting ended with a discussion about how best to deal with vagrants in the church. It was decided that if more people pop in for a moment it will act as a deterrent, and we will contact the local police to ask for their patrols to include the church.

Thank you to all who attended and we look forward to an equally productive and enjoyable 2017.