

FRIENDS OF ST MARY'S, BLETSOE

Chair Report 2019

This year's AGM thankfully brings us to the near-completion of the chancel restoration. It's been a long road.

From 2013 to 2019 the Friends has managed the fundraising and spending of over £300,000, a huge amount for a small village. And that was not enough so the spending had to be reined in due to escalating costs once the work began due to weather and unknowns particularly underground.

So thanks must go to the architects involved - Michael Dales Partnership and Bruce Deacon who began the work completed by Mike Dales. The contractors may have taken 20 months rather than 20 weeks and are still finishing off but Underwood & Weston have stuck at it and while it has been a bit of a saga have largely delivered what we expected. Skillington's conservation work, still to be completed, has protected the building for future generations and Glasstec has delivered the magnificent glass screen which is precisely the installation that Edward Bean championed, now here in his memory thanks especially to Alison and family for their generosity to make it happen.

I'd like to thank specifically all those who have played special roles in this saga. The Friends Committee has had a huge impact on the preservation of St Mary's fabric since 1988 when it was formed. £100,000 raised and spent before this project and now £300,000 through the regular events as well as the special fundraising. The Plant Sale, Breakfast, Puddings, Haggis Nights plus the Village Quiz and the Gallery Quire concert all in the last year contribute to the life of Bletsoe as well as making money and, as with our now-regular Advent Windows, make the church building and the role of the Friends a key part of village life. It was a true celebration at Harvest Festival when the Bishop of Bedford rededicated the chancel in its new role for congregation and community.

Raising the restoration money was a fearsome challenge that required over 60 grant applications to achieve 25 successful grants and the donations by some 75 residents and friends of Bletsoe together with the Fete Committee which has, over the years of the project, contributed some £15,000. It is also no exaggeration to say that the project management of this restoration was probably underestimated in the early stages. It is to the credit of the Friends Committee that it saw the window of opportunity after the 2010 Quinquennial Inspection reported that the work done over the previous twenty years meant there were no urgent calls on funds so that the restoration could be considered. It is also probably true that throughout and before, some had cherished the idea that the chancel could be brought back to life but it needed the dedicated effort to make it happen, manage the project for the parish and to deliver what has become a large undertaking of community activity to meet the conditions for the major funder the National Heritage Lottery. This has involved villagers engaged in archaeology, hunting headstones, creating an

archive, producing a church guide, being part of a media project and spin-offs such as the time capsule and the splendid serendipitous unearthing of the 13th century grave marker. All of this relied on the time and very specific skills plus contacts at diocesan and national levels that no regular local would have had but David Baker does. He has given mightily of his time, skills and energy for the past years and without him this would have been a very different and much more difficult project to complete. It is a monument to his efforts, vision and commitment. Thank you David from all of us and from the PCC and the village. This has secured the building for many many years.

But this is only the beginning. It is for the PCC to lead the congregation into utilising this magnificent new resource and I look forward to it taking on a new role in village life in 2020. For the Friends, a well-earned break in the hard work, perhaps for the next year while we continue with the programme of events to go on fundraising (and, indeed, pay back outstanding debts on the completion), but there remain tasks either outstanding or not started. We have yet to complete the conservation work; the new heating for the while building was delayed as was a new entrance lobby, simply on the grounds of cost. The experience of using the new space may well bring up other issues.

It may be that these are in the future and for another generation of the Friends but I am quite sure that, health and energy permitting, we'll be attacking them as is possible. In the meantime thank you to all and let's enjoy what has been achieved so far. It has been splendid, has been welcomed by everyone and we can be justifiably pleased with the outcome. Now let's make the best use of it!

FRIENDS OF ST MARY'S, BLETSOE

Registered charity No 1,000,081

INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

For the year ending 30 September 2019

	2019	2018	2017		2019	2018	2017
Income				Expenditure			
Donations	35650.00	19897.25	25448.00	Restoration Work (see notes)	122205.38	75,699.38	2577.00
HMRC	30980.53	5200.22	3411.06	Professional Fees	6472.17	28,408.51	12689.56
Events (see notes)	4686.00	6038.80	6511.60	AGM Expenses	30.00	30.00	30.00
Interest on Capital	36.51	108.13	78.94	Subscription (BHHCT)	40.00	40.00	40.00
Grants	51360.00	51700.00	7669.00	Sundries	437.50	78.00	48.00
Sundries	51.00				129185.05	104,255.89	15384.56
	122764.04	82944.40	43118.60	SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	-6421.01	-21,311.49	27734.04
					122764.04	82,944.40	43118.60

BALANCE SHEET for year ending 30 September 2019

	2019	2018	2017		2019	2018	2017
ACCUMULATED FUND				FIXED ASSETS:			
Opening balance	46171.12	67482.61	39728.57	CURRENT ASSETS			
Surplus (Deficit)	-6421.01	-21311.49	27734.04	Current Account	39353.74	16714.31	38104.98
Debts written off				Deposit Account **	361.92	29325.41	29217.28
	39750.11	46171.12	67482.61	Cash in Hand	34.45	131.40	160.35
				Debtors			
CURRENT LIABILITIES					39750.11	46171.12	67482.61
Creditors							

** Charities Official Investment Fund, Deposit Account

AUDITOR'S REPORT

In my opinion the financial statements shown above give a true and fair view of the affairs of The Friends of St Mary's, Bletsoe at 30 September 2019

Signed *M Rowland*

Name *M.C. Rowland FMAAT*

Date *15th November 2019*

NOTES

Selected items of fund raising income and restoration expenditure

INCOME

EVENTS	2019	2018	2017
Plant Sale	1684.00	1396.80	1446.60
Bletsoe Fete		2250.00	1850.00
Breakfast	468.00	500.00	507.00
Puddings	475.00	490.00	
Quiz		871.00	860.00
Murder mystery	429.00		
Concerts		531.00	
Burns Night	1630.00		1418.00
Craft Day			390.00
Prayer breakfast			40.00
	4686.00	6038.80	6511.60

HMRC

Gift Aid refund	4781.36	4394.35	
VAT reclaim	26199.17	805.87	3411.06
	30980.53	5200.22	3411.06

GRANTS

Various			7669.00
HLF	21360.00	26700.00	
Beatrice Laing		5000.00	
Beds & Herts HCT		20000.00	
Archbishops Council	10000.00		
William Delafield Trust	5000.00		
Gale Family Trust	2000.00		
Mrs B L Robinson	3000.00		
BHHC	10000.00		
	51360.00	51700.00	7669.00

EXPENDITURE

RESTORATION WORK

	2019	2018	2017
Apex/DRG (Tree Surgeons)		50.00	
G J Kinns	300.00	417.00	2217.00
Lodge & Sons			360.00
Underwood & Weston	107299.84	75,232.38	
Parrott	6957.36		
Glasstec	7560.00		
G M Lawrence	88.18		
	122117.20	75,699.38	2577.00

PROFESSIONAL FEES

	2019	2018	2017
Bruce Deacon/Michael Dales	6472.17	15,155.11	9534.96
Beds BC/JHAL (Building Control)		624.50	
James Sweeham (heating eng)			480.60
Cherryfield/Vine (Bats)		400.00	2674.00
Albion Archeology		9,792.90	
Skillingtons		1,896.00	
EDP (Asbestos Survey)		540.00	
	6472.17	28,408.51	12689.56

SUNDRIES

	2019
Electric	225.00
Insurance	98.00
Rural Grunch	102.00
Headstones expenses	12.50
	437.50

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