

Friends of St. Peter's, Meavy

Providing a focus of support for all who value this ancient church

Newsletter 2

March 2011

Welcome

Welcome to the second edition of the Friends of St Peter's Church Meavy Newsletter. Our members attending the AGM at St Peter's on 18th September agreed that we had a successful first year. Following the AGM Rev Anthony Good gave us an interesting insight the stewardship and conflict arising in the maintaining of our lovely churches.

At the AGM the committee was elected. Denis Walker, a resident of Meavy and lifetime supporter of the church, stood down due to ill health. We thank him for his great efforts in getting the Friends established and wish him a speedy recovery back to good health. The committee elected is: Sarah Gordon, Douglas Henderson, Catherine Leather and Michael Parle. At the first meeting of the new committee Michael Parle was elected as Chairman. Sarah continues as Secretary and Douglas as Treasurer.

The committee meets regularly to plan action and future fundraising events. The Friends has a website set managed by Michael Parle, www.meavy.org.uk/fsp. This year we produced our first Christmas card, which sold well with a few packs remaining.

We have also produced a full colour leaflet and an application form which is available in the church and on the website.

“Churches”

A shortened form of the talk given by Rev Anthony Good at the AGM

Why do we have all these church buildings?

The Church of England has around 16,000 churches and cathedrals around the country, most of which are listed buildings.

Every parish has its own building some of which date from Saxon or Norman times. The Victorians built, often badly, in an effort to satisfy the needs of the great expansion of the population and the movement of them after the industrial revolution. The vast sums needed to maintain them are difficult to find.

Why do we not get rid of them?

There has been a considerable demise of regular churchgoing and Christian belief but the church buildings are considered Holy Places and important even for those who stay away.

They are significant because they provide a link with the past. They are storehouses of local history in church records and churchyards. They stand as a visible witness to the local community of a Vision of Life and living that is more than simply one of making money, going off to work and paying off the mortgage. They are constant reminders that there are higher values to which at some time or other we all ascribe. They are usually the most architecturally and artistically significant buildings in the community.

Even those people who are not church goers want their church to be there for the rites of passage, Christian baptism, marriage and burial. And because we are a state church, every person living within the parish boundaries have this legal right to these services.

Apart from all these factors we cannot simply wish our buildings away. There is a long and careful legal procedure to go through before a church is made redundant or can be demolished. And this is rightly so. One generation with a bee in its bonnet cannot sell the parish's birthright simply because it cannot be bothered to maintain its church or because it has some crazy idea that it is no longer necessary.

Millions of people each year stop their car to look into and pray in a church or cathedral which is on their route. For many it can be a moving, uplifting or even visionary experience. In the quietness and dignity of a holy place in which prayer has been offered to God for many centuries, people are brought, perhaps for the first time in their lives to a realisation that life has significance, meaning and hope. They come quietly to make confession, to give thanks for a particular blessing, to ask God's help perhaps for themselves or someone they love, to ask for God's grace to help them over a particular difficulty.

We deplore ever having to lock the churches because of possible arson or vandalism. This has only occurred in our generation and perhaps will soon pass.

Every village, however small, still wishes to have at least one service on a Sunday in the building which has grown and developed and means a great deal to them. Many are now having one a month!

But they are a financial burden. Old churches like old houses need continual loving care and maintenance. We are stewards of these buildings, we have a responsibility to give them loving care and pass them on to the next generation. They are not just 'buildings' like other buildings, they are the places where people can come and be apart from the strains and stresses of the world, and find themselves again and be found by God.

Too many buildings? Which ones shall we get rid of? And who is far sighted enough and wise enough to make the decision? Can we continue to support them all?

The Churchwarden's Perspective

Philip Helby

Last spring I wrote about the quinquennial inspection process and the work which was required as a result of our last quinquennial inspection in 2007. I mentioned the repointing of the top third of the tower which is complete, and the repairs to the so-called rainwater goods which we have commissioned and which I had hoped would be completed before the winter. Unfortunately, the builder was unable to start the work during the season when he could reasonably expect to complete it without having to come back and redo some of it because of the effects of the weather. Therefore this work is now programmed for this spring.

During the summer the window expert came and replaced the heavily corroded saddle bars in the west window and in the south window of the Drake Chapel. The iron swells as it rusts, damaging the stone mullions, potentially leading to expensive repairs.

To avoid this problem in the future, the new saddle bars are of stainless steel. He also made and fitted replacement hopper windows in the vestry and for the south window of the Drake Chapel, both of which can now be opened to allow ventilation. Finally he replaced the corroded and broken protective wire meshes outside the east window and the more easterly window in the north wall of the nave. At the very least the new stainless steel meshes will not corrode and stain the stonework as had been the case. (*see back page*)

As a result of money very kindly donated for the purpose from the collection at Bill Williams' funeral we were able to have the clock inspected and refurbished. It received a clean bill of health which is a testament to the care which Bill had lavished on it for so long. While we can afford it we will continue with an annual maintenance contract to ensure that the clock remains in good health.

We are starting the preliminary work to construct the package to put to the Diocesan Advisory Committee (known as the DAC and from whom we need permission to undertake significant items of work) for the repairs to the east window and the reredos and the suggested removal of one or both of the altar steps to which I referred in my previous report. (*see photos, back page*) Both the window and the reredos have been examined by the relevant technical experts and the architect has drawn up plans for the steps. The next stage is to prepare the submission to the DAC.

Before we finally receive the go ahead there are a number of hurdles to overcome and a variety of outside bodies will become involved, most notably English Heritage because the church is a listed building, and the Victorian Society because of the period of the current arrangements in the sanctuary. All these different organisations have to be in agreement before we are given approval, so the path will be time consuming and tortuous. However, the benefit of that is that what is eventually undertaken will have been thoroughly thought out and locally we have time for fund-raising.

I would like to conclude by thanking the Friends of St. Peter's for their efforts so far in terms of money raised and promised for work to the windows and the rainwater goods and the prospect of further assistance for the work to the east window and perhaps the reredos. I would also like to add my personal thanks for the very high class of events that have been run by the Friends which I and I believe many others have thoroughly enjoyed.

If you have supported the Friends, thank you; if you have yet to do so, please consider it. It is only if each succeeding generation actively commits itself to the ongoing preservation of our rich heritage that it will remain with us for our children and our children's children to enjoy.



Work is needed to protect the church from the elements, an example of which being the snow we had last December.

A Christmas Carol - What the Dickens!

A most enjoyable evening was held on Friday 10th December when members of the Meavy Amateur Dramatic Society (MAD) presented the story of a Christmas Carol as a radio play in St Peter's Church.

The audience was treated to Ebenezer Scrooge, Jacob Marley, the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Future and all the other well known characters in the story introduced by a series of different narrators and interspersed with musical offerings by the Meavy handbell group, Ron Keates, Brian Wills and Paul Stoker, and Pauline Hamilton-Leggett. Wine and mince pies were served during the interval.

Over £300 was raised for the Friends of St Peters and grateful thanks go to all members of MAD and accompanying musicians.

Treasurer's Report

Douglas Henderson, Hon. Treasurer

The Friends have had a very successful first year raising £3,367 in the financial year to 30th June 2010. As we are recognised as a charity for tax purposes we were able to claim £320 in Gift Aid. Of the amount raised £1,500 has been donated to Meavy PCC towards the cost of window repairs and £1,800 has been allocated towards the cost of repairs to the roof, guttering and downpipes. The vital importance of this work was well illustrated in our first newsletter. It is hoped that this work will be carried out in the Spring of 2011.

The new financial year started with a most generous donation of £400 from the Meavy Oak Fair committee. A Christmas Carol (see above) raised £386. The committee is most grateful for all the support given to our fundraising events and activities.



We need permission from DAC to undertake repairs to the east window and the reredos.



We also need permission for the suggested removal of one or both of the altar steps.



The new stainless steel mesh on the east window will not corrode and stain the stonework.

Join Us

Membership of the Friends of St. Peter's Church, Meavy is open to all who support the aims of the Friends. Should you wish to join please complete the Membership Application Form (see our web site at www.meavy.org.uk/fsp) and send it to our Treasurer, Mr Douglas Henderson (to the address on the form).