



The information newsletter of the
Friends of Gissing Church

Newsletter No.4

NEWSLETTER NO.4 : DECEMBER 2015

As 2016 looms ever closer, we thought you would like to know what has been going on since our AGM earlier this year, especially as we were unable to bring you the usual newsletter in spring.

Our Heritage Lottery Bid

THE last year has been dominated by seeking to obtain funds in order to carry out urgent repairs on the church. As you know, the Gissing Parochial Church Council (PCC)/Friends bid for Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) was unsuccessful at its first attempt, so in February of this year a second bid was submitted. We were very pleased to hear

in June that we had been successful and secured funds to enable us to produce further detailed specifications and plans and to carry out specific surveys.

The timing was very propitious as Richard Bacon, MP for South Norfolk, attended the Saturday night 'Summer Songbook' concert at the Gissing Festival of Flowers and Music, and was able to announce the award of a Development Grant of £30,500 to the audience at the concert. The cheese and wine refreshments which followed the concert helped everyone to celebrate this good news.

The HLF Development Phase runs from June 2015 until June 2016, and it is in those 12 months that detailed analyses and plans are formulated to identify exactly what is needed for the proposed programme of works. Just as a reminder, the bid to the HLF is to ultimately secure funds for urgent structural repairs to the church, not least to prevent the vestry wall from collapsing. Given that the church is on the English Heritage 'At Risk' register the urgency of the work has become even more apparent.

Besides the vestry wall, there is other urgent repair and conservation work required and in addition

we will be seeking funding:

- to upgrade the electricity supply
- to install an efficient and effective heating system
- to plan and organise activities to promote the heritage of the building to attract an increased number of visitors and enable the use of the building for more community events.

A year may seem sufficient time to prepare a submission for the main 'Delivery' grant but as anyone who is a member of the project team will tell you, there is more in the planning than meets the eye! Underlying the development of the repair plans are the services of a whole host of people who include the church architects, an archaeologist, historian, conservator (monuments), asbestos surveyor, quantity surveyor, bat person – but sadly no Robin!, structural engineer, and a principle designer, as well as UK Power Networks, and heating and lighting experts.

All proposals need the approval of Gissing PCC, and the Diocese and must meet many statutory regulations. A good job we have a year to do all of this!

The activity plans are also a key aspect of the bid. Whilst recognising that work is needed to save the Grade I listed church from



From left to right: Fiona Turton, Eddie Scoggins, Richard Bacon, MP, and George Hammond at the announcement of the 1st stage award of a development grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The magnificent 15th century double hammerbeam roof with angels and apostles.

further structural decline, the HLF expect to see greater efforts put into promoting the church as a place to attract visitors, and as a venue for broader community events, other than weekly services. There are plans to promote the church via the website www.fogchurch.org.uk and to develop leaflets and guides, storyboards, a series of talks on the history of the church and the village, and opportunities for adults and children to learn about the history and symbolism contained within the monuments, and features within the church, not least the amazing angel roof.

The Diocese is interested in developing a guide to Angel Roof Churches of Norfolk – prompted by our contact with them in order to promote the very unusual double hammerbeam angel roof in Gissing. In late summer a new book entitled *Angel Roofs of East Anglia* appeared and in it Gissing's roof is featured. The church was described as a 'Fabergé Egg' of a church and the rarity of the roof was mentioned, it being one of only four in the region and 32 in the whole country. The Friends have invited the author – Michael Rimmer – to give a talk on the subject of angel roofs and Gissing's roof in particular, to the village next spring, when we will use the church for the event.

There is a very interesting website at www.angelroofs.com which has a section about Gissing with photos of the angels. Watch this space for further details.



Even if we are successful and receive a Delivery Phase (Stage 2) grant next year, there will still be a shortfall, (the difference between the estimated final costs and the grant we may be awarded). We will have to make up this difference from other sources. We have already been fortunate in securing a grant from Norfolk Churches Trust to help plug that gap and will be approaching other funders over the next six months to seek further financial support for the project.

We have not lost sight of the longer term ambition contained in the 'Vision' document which sets out imaginative plans to provide such things as a mains water supply, toilet and

kitchenette, all of which would enable the church to be used for a far greater range of community activities, during the whole year and not just the summer months. However, the focus in this round of bidding to HLF has to be on dealing with the urgent repairs, securing a better electricity supply/heating, and being more effective in promoting the undoubted heritage in the building.

We will keep you informed as we move through the development phase but should you have any questions about particular aspects of the bid do please get in touch with a member of the HLF project team listed at the end of the newsletter.

Spring/Summer events

AGAINST the backdrop of the HLF bid, the Friends continue to stage village events and undertake fund raising to meet the routine running costs of the church and to build the HLF contingency fund.

April saw the annual 'Gorgeous Gissing Litter Pick'. This is not a fund raiser but designed to be a community event. A record haul of litter and recyclable goods was recovered from the lanes, footpaths and hedgerows this year and although we did not win the £200 prize draw, everyone seemed to get pleasure from the satisfaction of cleaning up the area as well as the scrumptious tea provided by Moira Walters and Dave Smith.

In June, the Friends hosted the Gissing Festival of Flowers and Music Weekend in the church. The festival had a summer wedding theme and many ladies from the village kindly loaned their wedding dresses for the displays. Flower arrangers from the village and beyond provided a wonderful display of summer blooms...

The flower display on the font and the dresses and gentleman's morning suit which greeted visitors at the church during the flower festival in June.



people posted up their wedding photos on the 'memories board' and the whole weekend was well supported. Many people made and served refreshments, acted as stewards, sold raffle tickets and provided prizes. Local businesses also supported the festival with 'grand' prizes, and much needed funds were secured for the HLF contingency fund. The Gissing Singers performed a selection of songs on the Saturday night in the church, which was followed by cheese and wine, and much conversation. With Richard Bacon's announcement of the successful HLF bid, it was indeed a wonderful village evening.



One of the very attractive flower displays gathered around the pew 'poppy heads' in the nave.

To the many people who kindly gave their support, in so many ways, we would like to repeat our huge thanks for all they did to help the Festival to be successful, raising over £1,100 for the Friends.

In the week following the Festival, Janet Sleep held a Plant Heritage Coffee Morning, supported by Howard Dyke, John and Milla Nash, which also added over £356 to the Friends coffers which was much appreciated.

In July, Heart of Gissing held a Table Top Sale in Diss, at which the Friends had a stall selling secondhand clothes, which raised further funds of £40 for the Friends, thanks to the support of Veronica Manly and Sandra Worthington.

On 1 August a Bar-B-Q was held at Keeper's Cottage by kind invitation of Tony and Heidi Baxter, who worked hard and made this a really enjoyable evening for all who attended. They created an ambience at which guests were obviously very generous in their donations. Ed and Denise Scoggins did much to help Tony and Heidi with the preparations for the party and the clearing up afterwards. Ellie Jennings and Clive Homer managed a very busy bar all evening and Alex



Stylish pottery made by Pat Cattell was a great success at the Fete.

supported the Friends through the purchase of pottery products which were made, and donated for sale by, Pat Cattell, with Pat and members of her family running the stall for the afternoon. Our thanks to Pat and the wider Cattell family! This raised £100.

Autumn and Winter events

ON November 17th the PCC/Friends held an open Village Meeting at the Old School to inform those interested about the progress of the HLF bid and to give attendees an opportunity to comment on, and ask questions about, the proposals. The evening was very useful for the HLF project team and we hope that it was equally useful to those who came along to understand the issues and what is proposed by way of saving the church building from further deterioration and promoting its wider use.

Christmas cards went on sale in mid-November and Julie and Kevin at the Gissing Crown advertised these and the note-cards on the pub notice board. If you would like any note-cards or Christmas cards for next year, then please do contact Fiona – contact



Membership renewal

The Friends have now been established for four years and we hope they are able to count on your continuing membership in 2016. Some people will find in their Christmas card a membership renewal form (for those who are not on standing orders) which we would ask them to please complete, sign and return to Denise Scoggins if they wish to continue in membership. Also for those who have not yet updated their gift aid mandate (which needs to be updated every now and then) there will be a form to complete in order for us to be able to continue to claim gift aid, only of course if you have indicated you are willing to do this. I know Denise will appreciate your co-operation in this necessary exercise. Any queries about membership and gift aid should be through Denise.

It really is the case that without the

support of Friends members and those who donate, it would simply be impossible to keep paying the bills to maintain the church and its grounds. The events and membership donations also help to raise awareness of the plight of St Mary's and the continuing efforts to keep the church open to all for use as a venue for community and village events as well as a place of worship.

If you are able to help in other ways, or can encourage others to join us, then we will be that much nearer to being able to achieve these things for the benefit of the entire village, so do spread the word that we are always looking for, and welcome, new members. Please be assured that your generosity is very much appreciated.

How your continuing support is making the difference

There are three immediate ways that your support is being used to assist the church.

- The Friends are able to cover the annual costs of the church insurance and churchyard maintenance bills from a regular income, as well as covering the annual servicing of the church organ.
- We are also building a contingency fund to cover those unexpected day-to-day repairs that are bound to occur and for which one cannot plan.
- Finally, we are developing a fund to help demonstrate to the HLF that the village and its wider community are willing to contribute resources towards the major repairs of the church, should we be fortunate in being awarded a delivery grant next year. The grant body expects the PCC/Friends to provide 5% of the funding at each stage of this major project so the importance of your help cannot be overestimated.

details are overleaf. The St Nicholas Fayre, also a Heart of Gissing organised event, was held on Saturday, 5 December in the church and the Old School. The ever popular 'Spice Boys' (and Girls) produced, cooked, bottled or baked items for sale in aid of the Friends. All the produce and products were donated free by the Friends steering group members to maximise proceeds towards fund-raising. The Friends also ran a Bottle Tombola and sold Christmas cards. The Christmas Fayre represents a considerable effort in terms of time, resources, and culinary skills which is very much appreciated, judging by the sales figures! The two stalls raised between them much needed funds for the Friends.



YOUR CONTRIBUTION COUNTS

All contributions go towards maintaining the church fabric and grounds for the continued use and enjoyment of all, whatever the event being attended. The running and marketing costs of the 'Friends' is covered almost exclusively by the Friends of Gissing Church Steering Group themselves.

Current membership of the Friends' Steering Group

1. Heidi Baxter
2. Tony Baxter
3. Judith Miller
4. Joe Cromley
5. Howard Dyke
6. George Hammond
7. John Nash
8. Milla Nash
9. Eddie Scoggins (Secretary)
10. Denise Scoggins (Treasurer)
11. Janet Sleep
12. Michael Tarry
13. Fiona Turton (Chair)
14. Moira Walters
15. Clive Willett

HLF Project Team

1. Joe Cromley
2. Howard Dyke
3. George Hammond
4. John Nash
5. Eddie Scoggins
6. Denise Scoggins
7. Fiona Turton
8. Clive Willett
9. Paul Wright

Looking ahead

If you are in Gissing on New Year's Eve, the Friends will as usual be ringing the church bells at midnight to say goodbye to 2015 and to welcome in the New Year. You are sure to get a glass of whisky to keep out the cold!! Do come and join us.

Cleaning the church

A new rota is being developed for 2016, along the same lines of the one so well supported in 2015. If you think you could help please do get in touch with Fiona.

I know the PCC join with us to thank all those people who have been so willing to undertake church cleaning sessions – this is a real help to the congregation and makes sure that the church is kept clean and looks welcoming for visitors.

Wishing you and your family a very Merry Christmas and sending all good wishes for 2016. With many thanks:

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