



As we approach the close of 2014, we thought that you might like to know what has been going on at Gissing Church since you received our Annual Report in April.



Heritage Lottery Bid

When we last contacted you the Gissing Parochial Church Council (PCC), supported by the Friends, had just submitted an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to secure funds for urgent repairs to the church structure, not least the collapsing vestry wall (!), and we were awaiting the outcome of the bid.

Disappointingly in June we heard that we had not been successful in this first attempt. However HLF recognised that St Mary's had a very good case (and the English Heritage architect agreed) but our figures needed further work.

We have therefore been working to revise and resubmit a reworked bid in early 2015. We have learnt a lot from our 1st attempt and have also secured the help of a very experienced architect so fingers crossed all round!

The church has been placed on the English Heritage 'At Risk' register and although (at first glance!) this appears frightening it is actually a good thing as it underlines the urgency of the work.

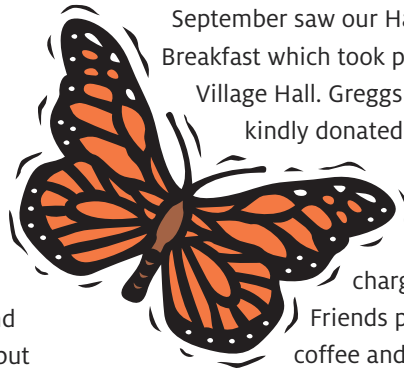
The summer has been busy with research to pinpoint where the first attempt faltered and to make sure that these issues are addressed next time. Other churches in Norfolk have kindly shared their experiences of securing funds, the Diocesan Heritage Lottery bid specialist is now on board and our new architect has a great track record in this field.

None of this guarantees success as the competition for funding is fierce and many bids do not succeed but we feel that we now have a better chance this time round through the help we have received so far.

We will keep you updated on HLF as the new year progresses and you will hear more in the Annual Report for April 2015.

Summer Fundraising

Once again the Friends supported the Gissing Summer Fete and sold note-cards and even some Christmas (!) cards, (well you can never start too early, can you?). Pat Gordon Cattell sold record amounts of her own lovely pottery, Ed and Denise Scoggins ran a very successful bottle tombola, (always a winner - can't think why!) and Fiona invited visitors to 'Split the Bucket' and have the chance to win half of the bucket's contents. Our stalls raised a very creditable £350.00.



September saw our Harvest Breakfast which took place in the Village Hall. Greggs in Diss kindly donated bread, croissants and buns free of charge, and Friends provided coffee and tea, juice, and accompaniments for a very enjoyable Saturday morning get together over the papers. Donations from the Breakfast raised over £180.00. Many thanks go to Judith and David Miller, and Milla Nash.

Autumn and Winter

Afternoon Tea in the Village Hall on Sunday, 19 October raised £117.00 from sales of teas, cakes and raffle tickets. A small number of craft stalls were available for people to browse. Raffle prizes were donated by the stallholders. The sterling efforts of Moira Walters and the stall holders made this another enjoyable (and profitable!) village event.

Christmas cards went on sale in November and Julie and Kevin at the Gissing Crown also continued to advertise 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 details are below.

The St Nicholas Fayre, which is organised by the Heart of Gissing, was held on Saturday, 6 December in the

church and old school. The ever popular 'Spice Boys' (and Girls) produced, cooked, bottled or baked items for sale in aid of the Friends. As ever all produce and products were donated free by the Friends committee members to maximise proceeds towards the Friends funds. The Friends also had a bottle tombola, sold cards and this year (thanks to the generosity of Janet Sleep) gave, as a festive thank you gift to all members of

the Friends, a Norfolk

Snowdrop to plant

in their garden –

a lovely harbinger of spring. The

Fayre represented

a considerable effort

in terms of time,

resources, and

culinary skills which was very

much appreciated, judging by the sales

figures! If you are a member of the

Friends and have not received your

snowdrop yet then please let me know.

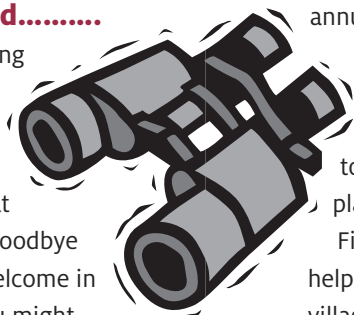
Your support is vital to maintain this historic building but it's not all about money and our sense of community is as strong as ever! We do hope you were able to join us for the Fayre, and some or all of the other events this year, which hopefully were fun ways of combining an enjoyable occasion with raising funds for the church.

The events also help to raise awareness of the plight of St Mary's and the continuing efforts needed if we are to keep the church open to all for use as a venue for community and village events as well as a place of worship.

Looking ahead.....

If you are in Gissing on New Year's Eve, the Friends will be ringing the church bells at midnight to say goodbye to 2014 and to welcome in the New Year. You might even get a glass of whisky to keep out the cold!!

During early 2015 the Friends will be working very hard to support the Heritage Lottery Fund bid. However we



have not lost sight of the much longer term ambition contained in the Friends 'Vision' document which sets out imaginative plans to raise additional funds to provide a mains water supply; install heating (essential especially as we all get older!) and build toilet and kitchenette facilities..... 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.

A date for your diary...

The Friends, kindly supported by the Heart of Gissing, will be putting on a Flower Festival and Music Weekend, from Friday, 12 June to Sunday 14 June 2015 in the church. The Gissing Singers have kindly agreed to perform on the Saturday night in the church and plans are in hand to secure another local group for a concert on the Friday. Whilst embryonic at the moment other ideas are being developed perhaps to include a Wedding Fair, and refreshments will be available throughout. Do join us for what we hope will be the first of many similar annual events.



How you are continuing to help....

There are 3 immediate ways that your generous support is being used to assist the church - The Friends are able to cover the annual costs of the church insurance and church yard maintenance bills from a regular income, as well as covering the annual servicing of the church organ.

We are also starting to build a contingency fund to cover those unexpected 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 repair of the church, should we be fortunate to be awarded a grant next year. The grant body will expect the Friends to provide 5% of the funding at

each stage of this major project so the importance of your help as a member of the Friends, and from others who are willing to give a donation every now and then, cannot be underestimated.

Membership renewal...

We are now in the third year of The Friends and are carrying out a renewed membership campaign. You will find in your Christmas card a renewal membership and standing order form which we would ask you to complete, sign and return to Denise Scoggins in order for us to be able to claim gift aid, if of course you indicated you were willing to do this.

We also would like to thank all those who will be renewing their membership during the 2014/2015 membership year - and to those new members who have recently joined - for all their support. It really is the case that without your support it would simply be impossible to keep paying the bills to maintain the church and its grounds, and so your generosity is very much appreciated.

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.

We wish you and your family a Merry Christmas and all good wishes for the New Year.

With many thanks,

Fiona Turton

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