

St Denys Church Colmworth

Annual Report - 2019

Colmworth is a village situated nine miles north of Bedford. The Parish of St Denys, Colmworth extends for five miles and has 390 residents. It is included in the Benefice of Wilden with Colmworth and Ravensden, in the Sharnbrook Deanery of the Diocese of St Albans.

The Parochial Church Council is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of St Denys Church and churchyard. It is a corporate body established by the Church of England. It has a gross income under £100,000 and is not a registered charity. It operates under the Parochial Church Council Measure and is excepted, by order, from registering with the Charity Commission.

Our Mission Minister, Revd Madeleine Albert and Priest in Charge, Revd Tim Robb resigned in September ending our association with St Mary's Eaton Socon. The general consensus has been that project had not been a success. Following three months in interregnum, churchwardens were introduced to Revd Tim Wilson who had moved to Bedford with his wife, Catherine, who was licensed as vicar at St Mary's Bromham in November 2018. Following an informal interview process, Revd Tim was appointed interim Priest in Charge, to be licensed at St Nicholas Church, Wilden, in January 2019. While in interregnum we were grateful to Revd David Miller, Revd Christine Clark, Canon Robert Sibson and others for their support and help.

Aims and Objectives

Our primary object is the promotion of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the doctrines and practices of the Church of England. We co-operate with the incumbent of the Benefice of Wilden with Colmworth and Ravensden in promoting the mission of the church (pastoral, social and ecumenical) in the Benefice and in the ecclesiastical parish. The PCC is committed to enabling as many people as possible to join our parish community at St Denys and thereby belong to the Benefice community. Services are held in the Benefice at 9.00 (Holy Communion and Morning Prayer) and 10.30 (All Together service), with St Denys Church holding a Holy Communion service on the first Sunday of the month, Morning Prayer on the second Sunday and All Together service on the fourth Sunday. On a fifth Sunday the service is traditionally a combined Benefice service.

The Church Building

St Denys Church is a perpendicular church which was built in the 15th century and is Grade 1 listed. The church tower houses six bells which were restored in 1985 and are considered amongst the nicest in the area. The bell-ringers meet on alternate Thursdays with regular

teaching sessions, encouraging the participation of teenage children. Several times a year the bells attract visiting groups of ringers. In the chancel is a nationally famed monument commissioned by Lady Katherine Dyer in memory of her late husband, Sir William Dyer, who died in 1621. She wrote the poem inscribed behind the tomb and this is believed to be one of the earliest recorded poems written by a woman. Over the past decade both the village school and the post office have closed and, although fewer than one in ten villagers worship regularly in the church, the church building is an important focal point of the village and Friends of St Denys has considerable support from villagers to raise funds for church restoration.

During 2018 there were four funerals, but no baptisms or weddings in church. Apart from church services it is used for a variety of events: as a venue for concerts (Friends of St Denys Ensemble) and to hold an exhibition by the Aragon lace-makers. Activities included a Good Friday children's Easter Story trail and an Easter activities event for children which was held in the Country Park and organised with the Parish Council. A service – Hymns with Memories – was held in September and in October Harvest Festival was followed by Harvest Lunch. There was a Darkness to Light party organised at the end of October and December activities included an evening of carols with mince pies and a Messy Church morning to help decorate the church for Christmas. Fund-raising events organised by the PCC also included a Scrabble evening and a Hanging Basket workshop. Our main fund-raising event was a very successful Garden Party held at Manor Farm and we are very grateful to Bernie and Vivien Bulkin for letting us use their garden once again.

The nave is used monthly for community lunches and *Coffee-Stop*, both of which are organised by Heather Smith. The village Garden Club regularly makes use of facilities for refreshments. The church was open for Hike and Bike Sunday although the day was very wet and we didn't have many visiting cyclists. The church is now open daily during daylight hours allowing access to the local community and visitors to the Country Park. A significant number of people have signed the visitors' book over the past year.

We are still trying to determine the most critical issues for church restoration so that we can start applying for grants and expect to have a structural survey completed in 2019. In the meantime the nave roof has been patched several times during the year. Once we have the surveyor's report we will be guided on the most significant and urgent issues to be addressed, of which there are known to be many. It is expected to highlight further deterioration in the stonework supporting the windows and significant attention needed to both the chancel and nave roofs. A local resident, Fred Brown, has offered to fund flood-lighting the church and we have had an inspection by a bat ecologist. Following this, a further visit will be carried out in June 2019 to determine whether there's a bat maternity unit in church

The PCC fully supports the *Friends of St Denys* and we are very grateful to the team for all their sterling efforts to raise funds for church restoration and repair. Much of the churchyard maintenance is carried out by Pat Knight with help from Brian Smith and we are very grateful to them. We also appreciate the support and time given by the cleaners and flower arrangers who help inside the church.

Pastoral Care

The PCC is indebted to Heather Smith who organises most of the pastoral activities in the parish; the community lunches and *Coffee-Stop*, along with a walking group and a craft group.

Administrative Information

St Denys Church is situated in Church Road, Colmworth, Bedfordshire. The PCC met five times during the year as part of the Benefice PCC meeting and twice on our own.

PCC correspondence address: Neville Jephcote, Autumn Leaves, Little Staughton Road, Colmworth, Beds MK44 2LB. 01234-376277 or stillinthedarkages@gmail.com

PCC members (2018-19)

Rev Madeleine Albert – chairman (resigned Sept 2018)
Mrs Margaret Seabrook - Treasurer
Mrs Kathryn Abrahams (sole churchwarden)
Mrs Heather Smith (Deanery Synod rep)
Mrs Elizabeth Wootton
Mr Doug McWilliam
Mrs Lorraine Knight
Mr Neville Jephcote (secretary)

Independent auditor: Ensors Accountants LLP

Church Electoral Roll

All those who attend our services are encouraged to register on the Electoral Roll and stand for election to the PCC. At the end of 2017 there were 37 names on the Electoral Roll, of whom 16 were non-resident. Under the 6 year rule the Electoral Role was terminated at the end of 2018 and a new Roll was prepared at the beginning of 2019. XXX people have to date signed up and are eligible to vote at the 2019 APCM'

Bell-Ringing Report – 2019

Humphrey Chetwynd-Talbot

Much of the past year has been centred on bird debris. In 2017 we had an invasion of doves and pigeons, which managed to push past the existing chicken wire, all of which required reinforcing or replacing. At one stage 30 birds were seen in the Tower and the resultant mess was appalling. Thanks to the invaluable help of Ivor Seabrook we were presented with a large quantity of security netting and fixings. Two day's work by the ringers, with some outside help, completed the installation apart from some later painting of the bell-frame.

Ringling has continued throughout the year. Standards could be improved if we could muster enough ringers for practice. Unfortunately some of the ringers work too far from home to be able to make a practice session and our joint arrangements to practice with Renhold have also failed. Of more importance perhaps is our loss of ringers, with two regular ringers soon to be unavailable. We are therefore urgently in need of new recruits for ringing and anybody potentially interested would be most welcome.

Friends of St Denys Report – 2019

The Friends of St Denys have continued to work hard to raise funds for the urgent restoration work needed to St Denys Church, holding a variety of fund-raising activities. The most successful being the six " Cars and Bikes with Character " meetings held between April and September, with up to 200 people turning up with a huge variety of cars and bikes. The PCC were handed two cheques, one in Jan for £2400 and one in June for £3000, with another cheque for £3000 to be handed over in February 2019.

Other very successful events included an Ensemble in church, a Quiz Night with fish and chip supper and a Barn Dance with Auction of Promises.

A lot of work goes into organizing these events and the PCC is indebted to the Friends of St Denys Committee for all their hard work and the enjoyment they provide for the local community.

Financial Report – year end 31st December 2018

Margaret Seabrook

The accounts are presented as Receipts and Payments Accounts as in previous years. Ensors LLP will finalise the accounts as a Balance Sheet.

2018 was a very challenging year for St Denys financially despite this there were still some encouraging points. Planned giving stayed at a similar amount to last year which had shown a considerable increase on the previous year. Regular giving is very much appreciated and makes up the bulk of our income. The PCC continue to organise various fund raising events throughout the year. The garden party held with kind permission of Bernie and Vivien Bulkin, at Manor Farmhouse, is our best fundraiser making £1350.00. Community lunches run by Heather Smith have a big pastoral benefit but also contribute to our finances. Other events in 2018 included a light party, lace exhibition and a scrabble evening.

We are grateful to Ken and Thelma Fiddlers daughter for making a donation to cover the excess of our insurance policy after the break in. The repairs were completed in 2018 with the insurance money covering the work completed by Williams Antiques and Restoration. The quinquennial report necessitated holding repairs to the nave and chancel roof with

repairs to a spittle. These were all carried out in 2018. Colmworth Parish Council granted the PCC £300 to help with churchyard maintenance.

The Parish Share was too big a challenge for us in 2018. We paid a total of £8650 of the £14,422 requested. Whilst unable to pay the Parish Share in full we are unable to accumulate reserves.

The quinquennial report, although actioned in 2017, was invoiced at the beginning of 2018, this cost £759. Insurance with Ecclesiastical insurance was £1869, up only a tiny amount from 2017.

£5962.75 is held in reserve at the Central Board of Finance Investment fund. This would cover the running of the church for approximately one quarter of one financial year.

Trust Summary

The trusts are held within the Central Board of Finance Investment Fund. All three are for church and churchyard upkeep. Trust income received in 2018

Church Land Charity –£689.16

Infield Bequest – £68.47

Wynne Bequest - £78.27

The total investment interest from the trusts was £835.90 as shown in the receipts and payments account.

The Restoration Fund (restricted)

Friends of Denys very kindly donated £5400 in 2018 and they have already made a further contribution for 2019. This money is very much appreciated. Restricted restoration funds stand at £18967. The Bell fund at £1322 and the Timothy Matthew tomb fund at £50.