

All Saints Church, Milton Keynes Village - Churchwardens Report 2023- 2024

Over the year we have been encouraged by the growth and diversity in church attendance and are responding with increased sharing of ministry skills to enable more opportunities for time to grow our faith and love of God.

The Coronation of King Charles III on Saturday 6th May 2023 was marked with a special Commemoration Service in Church the following day 7th May and cream teas at Wavendon Rectory in the afternoon.

During the year births, deaths and marriages have been marked by appropriate life services and have included the funerals of church member Cynthia Kelly in July and more recently former churchwarden Kathy Peters who passed away on 1st January 2024.

We have continued to provide holy communion by means of individual plates and cups. Whilst this creates additional work in preparing and clearing away, feedback from the congregation suggests this method is preferable to a return to sharing a common cup.

Sharing Churchwarden duties between Barny and Pat strongly supported by Sylvia and other church members enables the weekly pattern of services and other meetings to run smoothly. This report predominantly covers the main areas of maintenance and practical developments in the church building and churchyard for the year and challenges for future projects. As last year managing the most cost effective and efficient use of the heating in church perhaps remains one of our most immediate financial challenges. A careful blend of use of storage heaters and high-level radiant heaters to ensure the building is as warm as possible for services and other occasions is the main focus requiring planning and timing combined with weather predictions.

Projects underway last year now successfully accomplished.

- **Step free access through the south porch 2023**



The contractor Mick Bunning of Totternhoe Stone Restoration Ltd started work 21st September and completed the works to the entrance porch and floor levels on 10th October, removing porch flooring and reducing depth to give level access to church nave. Electrics were neatly laid under floor level and internal flooring re tiled. The porch floor has been laid with sawn York stone to the outer threshold with an Aco channel installed to the outside of the porch threshold and connected to the existing rainwater drainage. A new oak bottom rail the same width as the door was fixed to the base of the existing door and stained to match. A brush seal was added to the inner face. The porch gates have been re hung. The work was completed carefully and with precision, good communication throughout and in a timely manner. The church remained open for Sunday services with access to church via the side gate and cloakroom door

on the north of the church, the area being carefully supervised for access. Overall, this is an excellent outcome to the project, improving access to church and gratefully received by the congregation and visitors.

- **Yew tree maintenance on church main access path, application granted and work carried out**

Following a series of communications with MK Council permission was granted to cut back the yew trees on the church main path in line with the edge of the path. This was successfully completed 1st May 2023 and the shape of the trees will be maintained by annual trimming. The cut edge adjacent to the path is slowly greening over and the space recovered is a great improvement for access to the church.



- **Second Garden of Rest, NE corner of churchyard, in use and bench sited.**



The base for the bench was laid in May 2023 and the bench once treated fixed in position shortly afterwards. It is now ready for additional maintenance work to protect the finish.

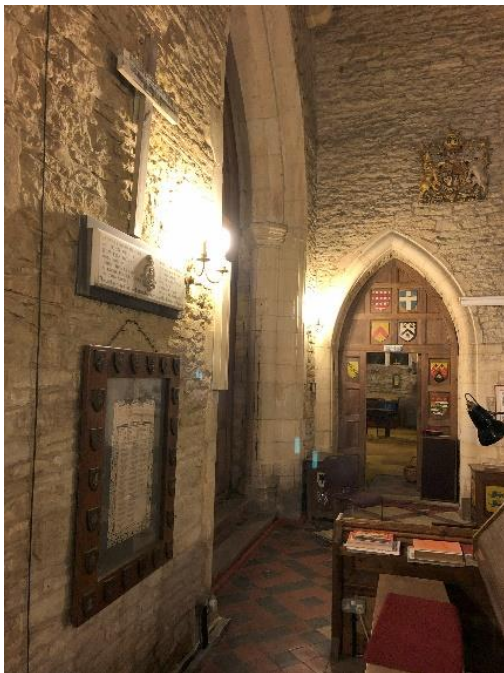


- **Maintenance of gutters, downpipes and drains.**

In February 2023 the gutters and gulleys were thoroughly cleared, cleaned and downpipes checked. As determined previously all were flowing well with the exception of the one to the West of the main porch, which continued to flood. As part of the work to lower the porch floor and ensure adequate drainage the drain west of the porch was further investigated. The drain running to the soakaway was entirely blocked with tree roots from the yew tree by the west churchyard wall. **A new soakaway** has now been installed with fresh pipework from the drain adjacent to the church porch and is working well. Missing and broken Porch roof tiles were also replaced repairing the areas that had failed.



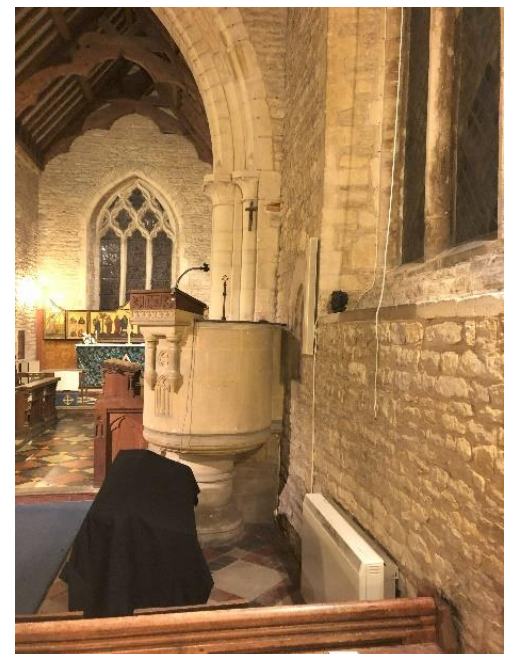
- **Church sound system**



The church audio system is around 25 years old and has deteriorated over its life. We are receiving more requests for recorded music, particularly at weddings and funerals and occasionally need to provide recorded accompaniment on Sundays when none of our team of dedicated and talented musicians is available. The original system was not designed for this purpose. Due to the cost of a full replacement, the upgrade will be undertaken in phases.

In February 2024, we completed the first phase, to replace the speakers, which have suffered from the cold and damp. Two unobtrusive speakers at the front of the church have replaced four units that were in the window recesses. Advances in audio technology mean that the new "line-array" speakers can cover the whole church from just these two positions. Feedback from multiple members of the congregation shows that the upgrade has noticeably improved the sound quality. We are grateful to Broughton Trust for matching the contribution from church funds and covering half of the cost.

Two further phases costing around £4,000 each will be required to replace the mixer and the wireless microphones and will be undertaken as funds allow. In the event of a complete failure of the system, we would have to bring this forward.



Other works:

- **Routine maintenance and improvements**

We have replaced the spotlights in the chancel with low energy versions which provide a more pleasant and even light over this beautiful part of our church.

- **New stand for advent candles from upcycled lectern**



For many years, our advent wreath has been supported on a thin candle stand. It was inherently unstable and was a safety concern, particularly when we welcome members of our children's church to light the candles. The candles themselves did not fit properly in the sconces and frequently fell out and broke.



Using the base of the former lectern, we have made a new advent candle and wreath holder, which as well as being much more stable, has new, wider brass sconces which support thicker candles which last longer and are less prone to dripping.

- **Maintenance inside and outside the church**

Maintenance has continued with the dedicated work of stewards and mowing team to ensure the building and churchyard are in good order. Thanks to Wayne, Paul and Barny for their work with the maintenance of the church building including a team for high level cleaning 17th August. Brian has effectively continued to coordinate the churchyard mowing rota. We extend thanks to John Fry as he takes a break from mowing due to health reasons and **encourage new volunteers to join the team this year**. Thanks also to David Monk for his help with the weekly refuse arrangements of wheelie bin collections now enhanced by the new refuse and recycling bins from MK Council. The Saturday Churchyard working group in September 2023 and additional time from folk on weekdays has focussed on essential clearing of ivy, weeds and overgrown graves ensuring the churchyard is an inviting area for rest and reflection. Maintaining a weed free accessible 1.5metre wide church path requires labour intensive attention! **The path edges need redefining and the gravel replenishing. A project for the Spring.**

- **Welcoming and supporting**

Welcoming NHS walking groups for refreshments mid-week is a regular part of supporting our community. A team of volunteers in church supply hot drinks, cake and biscuits to 40-60 walking visitors as they end their exercise session. The donations received are a valuable assistance to church running costs and improvements contributing over £1000 in the last two years.



Our Dorcas group continues to meet fortnightly knitting blankets for the Ukrainian appeal and victims of conflicts in the middle east. New participants always welcome.

Huge thanks to Sylvia for all her support with welcoming before services, arranging refreshments after services and at other times and for co-ordinating Dorcas.

- **We are looking to improve the facilities for the provision of refreshments in church.**

A simple servery at the back of the church providing heating for water, washing up facilities and storage will make the preparation, serving and clearing of refreshments much safer, more accessible, simpler and easier to manage. Costings to be further assessed.

- **Concrete Calves Wind Band**

Concrete Calves meet each week in church as a not-for-profit community group. They are a place for beginner woodwind players to come together and share in the joy of making music as part of a group. Their rehearsals culminate in concerts throughout Milton Keynes to raise funds for selected charities. Summer and Christmas concerts have successfully performed this year in Church and are a welcome part of our community involvement.

- **Annual health and safety requirements** have been addressed through the year:

Lightning conductor inspection and test completed November 2023; NB annual test date varies to enable testing in varying climatic conditions as seasons affect readings. Annual fire equipment check and portable appliance testing completed February 2024. The 5-year fixed wire electrical inspection certificate January 2020 is valid until 2025.

For reassurance and legislative compliance there is confirmation of the maintenance of the formal areas required recorded in the documents below:

- the terrier – a list of land belonging to the church
- the inventory – a list of all the items belonging to the church, a recent survey focussing on a few items to be published this year.
- the logbook – a detailed record of all the alterations, additions and repairs carried out in relation to the church, its land and its contents.

These have all been maintained to ensure the day to day functioning of the Church and are available as hard copies in the church.

We continue to pray for guidance and energy to build on the new life in and around church and to extend our pastoral work. We give thanks for the leadership from Matt and our expanding church team in this ever-growing parish.

Patricia Sawyer

Barny Daley

Churchwardens

March 2024