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Welcome to our TENTH ANNIVERSARY NEWSLETTER



“Without the efforts of the Friends of the Church, this work would not have got off the ground.”

Martin Govas, HKPCC Treasurer.

Recent major works

Early in 2020, soon after a Sunday 10 o'clock service, a section of plaster fell from the nave ceiling. Although many people were still in the church, happily none were hit. But this was the second such fall in about six years, so the reluctant conclusion was reached that the ceiling was not safe; the church was closed.

Inspection proved that only the nave ceiling was affected, so the area beneath it was roped off and the church opened again. The Inspecting Architect devised a new method of repair that meant coating every ceiling section with layers of lime plaster that sandwich a synthetic mesh. The aisle had to be filled with scaffolding and a false ceiling erected from which to work.



Storm damage also reminded us that the spire needed attention. At first we hoped that our insurers would cover the cost of replacing lost shingles. But further checks revealed that there were years of wear and tear to repair. The quote from A E Hughes Ltd was the most competitive by far, but they were late to come; we were well into winter, with its threat of yet more damage, before they could begin.

In the event, their presence became a blessing to us all. We were not only dazzled by their daring and skill in the heights and the wind, and charmed by their courtesy, but we were enriched by witnessing at first hand their traditional skills, with their ladders, ropes and pulleys, their flying decks and bosun's chairs.

Moreover, charmed themselves by the beauty and elegance of our tower and spire, they provided us with more than they charged us for, including the precious knowledge that the lead-covered oak boss below the weather vane contains a wooden nail (treenail) signed by the carpenter, *Paul Quinell*, and dated 1454.

The day when their leader, 86-year-old Peter Harknett, climbed up to restore the weather vane (newly re-gilded in memory of Susie Ford) was celebratory — a day to remember, witnessed by the entire school and many other villagers.



The importance of FOHKC

We, the Friends, did not pay all the costs of these two major works. We could not have done so; it would have taken all the money we've raised for the church and churchyard in these our first ten years.

Villagers have asked where the funds for this work have come from. Was there a diocesan or central church grant? Did we have help from English Heritage (or Historic England)? Diocesan funds, however, do not (and cannot) support church buildings in this way. There was some insurance payment for each repair, and some VAT was recoverable. But more than £30,000 (or around one third of the total cost to the parish) came from The Friends. The rest was from funds built up by the church congregation and from some very generous private donations.

FOHKC channels support from the wider community, many of whom, though not active members of the church, both use it and feel a strong attachment to this fine building at the heart of village life.

We also hope to have an educational role, making the history and preservation of our church better known by hosting many interesting and informed speakers, notably at our Annual Meetings. We are not a religious organisation. The church and churchyard are our business because they are beautiful and historic and deserve protection. They are precious and well-used village assets, at different times most useful to and close to the hearts of many of the families who live in the village.

Many of our members make contributions in addition to fundraising. Some, for example, are regular cleaners of the church. Some get involved in spring cleaning. Some join the regular churchyard working parties. This is something we are very pleased to encourage.

FOHKC work in 2020

Our only fundraising event in 2020 was the Plant Sale, which would otherwise have been part of the Open Gardens Day (cancelled because of the pandemic). It was spread over four different sites (to encourage social distancing) and each stall was unmanned. We relied on honesty boxes, people paying either by cash or by internet transfer. It was one of the first village events for a while, and was very well supported by donations of plants (it had been a glorious spring) and by purchasers of plants (there was nothing much to do but garden). Delighted as we were to make £686, it was a fraction of our usual annual fund-raising tally.



Auction of Promises

In 2017, under the chairmanship of Loz Allan, we held our second Auction of Promises. We had the usual generous and imaginative range of promises which display the great kindness and resourcefulness of the people of this village. Some promised to cook meals for six diners, or to drive holiday makers to Gatwick Airport, to bake scones or to supply allotment-grown vegetables, sparkling wine, or an afternoon ride in a Rolls. There was even a helicopter ride across London, and the promise of a JCB and its driver for a day.

The generosity of the donors was matched by that of the bidders. Large sums were offered; competition was hot. By the end of the evening we had raised £5,000.

Restoration of the church windows

In our 2017 five-yearly inspection, it had once more been suggested that the church windows could do with cleaning and repair — non-essential work that it is always easy to postpone for lack of funds. But a team from Knowles Stained Glass spent a week in church cleaning all the windows, replacing a few cracked clear panes and then painting the metal frames, all with very pleasing results. The Friends paid the full cost of this; it exactly matched our Auction profit. So a significant improvement in the church was achieved by many acts of generosity, some small and some very considerable. And that autumn we celebrated by engaging Adrian Barlow to come and address our Annual Meeting. Mr Barlow is a noted expert on the stained glass of Charles Kempe, the great Victorian window artist and manufacturer, whose firm (then based in Lindfield) was responsible for five of our stained glass windows – some would say our best. It was a most interesting and informative evening, as well as an apt celebration.



Musicals in the church

Perhaps it was because we have a tradition of organising “Variety Nights” (we have another planned for 12th and 13th November this year) that our Deputy Chairman, Kay MacNaughton, was inspired to stage



Joseph and his Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat in November 2018.

Kay acted as impresario, producer, co-director (with Alison Coulson) and general inspiration. She recruited Nicki Hickey, an inspired musical director who gave tuition to all solo singers and recruited some fine fellow

instrumentalists as well as her excellent supporting choir. Kay also recruited stage flat makers, marvellous costumiers, very professional stage work and magical sound and lighting provision. Above all we had a large cast of singers, dancers and performers, varying in age from seven-year-olds to octogenarians, many of them very fine soloists, and all of them adapting beautifully and merrily to the variety of styles of music the show demands. It was delightful to have the show staged in the church itself – altogether a wonderful village event.

Some seemed to suffer from performance withdrawal symptoms when the show was over, and there was pressure for another musical. For 2019 Kay chose *Oliver!* There were strong choruses and a wonderful cast of very able soloists, some of primary school age, some in retirement, and every age in between. This time there was spoken dialogue to remember as well as the songs and dances, and a huge range of emotions to convey over the course of a very complex plot. Although ambitious, it was a marvellous success and a great delight. Moreover, both shows were very successful in raising funds; we expect to be putting on more of them.



Projects we've supported

From the start we have been keen for money raised *to be spent*. It has not been our purpose to bank money for the sake of it.

Church building

- Tackling mould and damp in the church porch
- Dealing with the leaks in the south chancel roof
- Repairing the lead in the 'valleys' in the roof
- Repairing the pointing on the bell tower
- Making repairs to the Horsham slab roof
- Repairing and re-pointing stonework high in the south transept
- Removal of cementacious mortar in the chancel walls
- Re-pointing, re-plastering and redecorating at high level the west window in the north aisle
- Repairing the crack over the Norman north door
- Re-pointing the head of the north window in the chancel
- High-level work by lime plaster specialist Vicky Clay
- Ten-yearly service of the organ
- Repair of the chancel roof and vestry stonework
- Nave ceiling work
- Repair of the spire

Churchyard Some of the most noticeable improvements we have financed (or helped to finance) are in the churchyard. We feel this is most apt, the Friends being so much a community organisation, and so much of our village community walking through the churchyard regularly – especially to and from the school. And, of course, it is not simply a churchyard, it's the burial ground for all who live in the parish.

- Screening off the bin and shed area
- Stage-by-stage restoration of the memorial path
- Chest tomb restoration
- Annual provision of bedding plants
- Creation of brick path towards the eastern churchyard
- Construction of a new memorial path
- Battle against the blackthorn in the so far unused burial area
- The renewing of the path from the church porch to the school
- Annual contributions to churchyard maintenance

Fund-raising events

In ten years we have raised almost £90,000 for work on the church and churchyard. Of this, more than half is from direct giving and Gift Aid reclaimed. More than £40,000 has come from our fund-raising events. We have organised a variety of different activities, some old village favourites and some events new to the village, some repeated regularly and some one-off.

- Open Gardens Day (2012, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2021)
- Roving Supper (2012, 2013, 2014)
- Burns Night Supper (2013, 2015, 2017, 2019)
- Auction of Promises (2013, 2017)
- Open Studios Day (2013, 2015, 2017)
- Village Triathlon (2013, 2014 - Duathlon in 2016)
- Concerts in church (Launch night 2011, Spring 2014)
- Variety Night (2016, 2018, 2021)
- High Weald Dairy Cheese Festival (2019)
- Musicals (2018, 2019)



Our first Chairman,
and Variety Night
supremo, Tim
Westlake

Join the Friends

It is most welcome that many of our members make regular contributions, perhaps monthly or quarterly. For some it may amount to about £1 per week per member, but with Gift Aid, the income tax reclaimed raises it to more than £60 per year. Similarly a gift of £10 monthly will yield £150 per year. We have enough regular donors to have received a total income of more than £6,000 last year. But our expenditure at this needy time was almost three times that much.

Some who signed up to be regular donors have sadly died or moved away; we hope, in this our tenth anniversary year, to recruit new members.

Please join and help us continue our work.

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