

Friends of St.Andrew's, Bemerton

2009 Annual Report



One of the unexpected outcomes of merging the St.John's and St.Michael's congregations (because of the heating troubles of St.John's) is that St.Andrews is flourishing as the sole church of the lower village. More people at the Sunday morning and Friday services, and a new Sunday Evensong (which started in Jan 2010), as well as the chance to bump into a neighbour our friend in our always open heart of this community.

Fabric

Another busy year of building repair and maintenance, and some planning for the future. Outside, the churchyard wall was mended in February, but it doesn't take long for a lorry to have another go at it. As the council are responsible for its maintenance we mustn't be too precious about it, but be glad that the burden falls to them, and maybe their expenses sheet will force them to think about redirecting the traffic from Churchfields industrial estate. Meanwhile we had the flints repointed and are in some discussion of the best way to maintain or improve the outside drainage ditch. Some experts are saying it should be pointed (or sealed) but this would turn it into a moat as the water has no where to drain to, so its back to the drawing board. Its always amusing to re-invent things in a building that has been working for 700 years!

Inside, the North Alcove (where the Rector's Board is) has now finally been re-plastered and looks much better, must get my name put on it soon! Our electrics have all been tested and won't need doing for another 5 years. Our lights are now all low voltage energy saving ones.



An enquiry prompted my trip up the bell tower - its surprisingly roomy up there - but I found no inscription or marking for a date. Some hasty photos and internet research revealed that dates were put on bells from the late 17th and 18th century. These marks show it to be 15th or 16th century, and therefore almost definitely the one mentioned in the history books - cast in Reading c1540 - 1550.



As the parish church, and with monthly Evensong and Christmas carols, it was found that the old organ really wasn't reliable enough to do the job, and not really the right instrument. Barry Ferguson suggested we find a piano, and sure enough one of the three we had at St.Johns was a good quality instrument, and we wheeled it down the newly resurfaced road (and nobody stopped us or asked what we were doing!). The organ now lives at Bob

Paine's house, where he can practice as long and loud as he likes. Wonderfully Peter Webster also donated a new stool to go with the piano, so if music be the food of love, then play on.

The church inspecting architect produced his official Quinquennial report this year, and we were very happy to be on top of all the major work.

George Herbert promotion

The year started extremely well, with a Radio 4 Broadcast of Sunday Morning Worship. Led by Rev Judy Rees, and featuring Vikram Seth, Ronald Blythe, Philippe Honore, the Farrant Singers, Barry Ferguson, and the regular and augmented morning congregation. Quite an event. Especially when we were told afterwards that there were 1.8 million listeners!



How wonderful to have a website in those days, and we went from a hundred "visitors" to the site, to have more than five hundred the next month. The website continues to be popular with more than four hundred visitors on an average month, so we must be serving a need. The site has all the latest services, summer events and talks, as well as commentary on poetry. There is a new picture walk from the Cathedral to St. Andrews being added in time for the Salisbury Festival walk in the summer of 2010. The website has not generated as much income as we had at first imagined, but it has paid its way, and it is certainly working and effective.

George Herbert Day was celebrated slightly later than usual, on Sunday March 1st, to allow as many visitors as possible to come. We had Brother Patrick, from Sarum College to preach, and Barry Ferguson came and taught us some new hymns, from Another Music.

In centralising our stock of cards and gifts, we realised we had rather a lot of "Bemerton in the Snow" cards, so our entrepreneurial secretary undertook selling them door to door round the village, and did a fantastic job at selling them all!

Our list of friends currently stands at just over one hundred and twenty, with just a quarter of those receiving information by email. If you now have an email address we would be delighted to save the cost of a stamp and send you information electronically. Do let us know.

For the future

This year, 2010, we hope to be tackling the heating, as this year it was just five degrees Celsius at some services, which is too cold to ask people to sit on benches for half an hour. We are also hoping to improve the storage at the back of the church - upgrading the cupboard and matching it on the other side, finally replacing the green curtain. We will also be renewing the guides to the church and are continuing to look at how the information and cards and such are presented and laid out.

I am amazed by all that happens in this little place, and am mostly delighted that so little of it comes from me, but is naturally generated by the life going on here. To God be the glory.

*Rev Simon Woodley
46th Rector of Bemerton.*

22nd March 2010

