

Saint Andrew's Church Medstead.

Notes from the Churchwarden's pew

Churchwarden – Anne Lofthouse



Greetings,

I thought an update on what has been going on this year at St Andrew's, our beautiful and ancient inheritance, might be of interest, as well as informative.

Once restrictions were eased, we were able to get on with some of the work in progress before lockdown. Last year we had been planning a reorganisation scheme for the church interior, when our attention was drawn to the fact that our oil tank was corroding away, and was an environmental disaster waiting to happen. We were told that our old oil central heating boiler, was only 50% efficient and energy wasteful. Whilst getting an Asbestos Certificate, required by our insurers, asbestos was discovered in the flue outlet.

This had to be removed and added weight to the case that we needed to replace the boiler. We thought that instead of replacing like with like, thinking of the future, we should seek a more environmentally friendly source of heating. We researched all the options,- solar panels, air source, ground source, electric, gas, wind, and took advice from the Diocese. In the end, David Hayward, guided us through all of this, and we came to the conclusion that the only affordable, least environmentally damaging route open to us, was natural gas. Solar panels not allowed on listed buildings, electricity too expensive. Consequently investigations began into making the

change. The old boiler and the oil tank had to be removed first, and the former, checked again for asbestos. This was done, there was no further asbestos, and the workmen left the area very much improved. Then the boiler room and the doors outside needed attention. Ian Jurd made new doors and repaired the brickwork and pointing of the walls in the boiler room. He put in a platform and proper steps down into the inside, instead of a dodgy ladder. Carl, the electrician came and sorted out the electrics, new cabling, switches, light, fuse box. We had booked SGN to come and connect us to mains gas in the road at the east end of the church. We had a company booked to dig the channel for the pipe across the churchyard to the boiler room, they used a mole actually and we found no bones. The meter could not be installed immediately, so that gave us time to get the boiler people to come and install the new boiler. The boiler is a Viessmann and the company supplying it is VitoEnergy.

It was not easy to get a boiler which would connect into our present chimney, and that ruled out many firms. The boiler room is amazing to see, very much improved, with gleaming new boiler and bright, shining pipe work. We were hoping to have an open day to allow folks to see this, but felt Covid restrictions made it too difficult. The new meter was put in on October 15th, (and the hours of discussion to find the best solution to that problem took for ever) and then VitoEnergy return to connect up and commission the new system, followed, we hope, by heat in the church for the funeral and wedding that week. As you can see this has been a mammoth task for which we cannot thank David Hayward enough, for the hours he has spent coordinating this. We also owe thanks to Logan Colbeck, who supported and helped David through this. We will miss his kindness and support. The system is designed to work with the old radiators in church, so apart from the removal of the old header tank, the interior looks little different. The whole project will cost over £20,000, which has come from church funds, regular giving and money raising events. Our excellent treasurer has spread the cost over two years and we are grateful for her expertise in overseeing this.

Two other problems which have been sorted by our Mr Fixer, have been, taking on Castle Water, who were charging us, for some years, for waste water, which as you will appreciate was somewhat strange, since we only have an outside tap in the church yard. After lengthy phone calls and e-mails involving Thames Water, who deal with waste water, we have got a refund. There is now the question of a new Church Hall water meter, since ours has been smashed, and is not reliable.

Then we had problems with our energy contracts. We were going to change from N.Power via Love Energy. Unfortunately it all went wrong and we found ourselves with EDF, not British Gas, which was where we hoped to

be. Trying to deal with major energy companies is very difficult, getting to speak to someone is well nigh impossible. We had sought help from the Diocese, who thought they had sorted it, but had not. They did advise going with Parish Buying in the future, which gets the best deal they can for churches. However after many hours of messages and phone calls and help from Head of Complaints at Love Energy, we are finally with Total Gas and Power, organised by Parish Buying. For which we are very grateful,

We took the opportunity to remove the dilapidated plastic from the West Window inside church. Stephen Blackshaw devised a handy tool which meant we could cut it away without need for ladders. It came away easily and we were able to clean this rather beautiful window which has clear and pale green glass, which means you can see the trees outside.

During lockdown we had reports that the clock was doing strange things. We got in touch with the clock firm, Smith of Derby who did the change over work four years ago. St Andrew's clock needed winding every week, which meant putting a ladder up to the Bell Tower, climbing it and opening a trap door into the chamber above. For health and safety reasons this had to be discontinued and a sophisticated electronic system, was put in, which cost £7,000. A specialist job. Unfortunately we omitted to arrange for a yearly service contract. Which could be why we are having problems now, and it could be expensive to put right. The firm is coming on November 3rd, which could mean that we might have the clock working again soon.

We are hoping to restart The Friends of St Andrew's Committee again, FOSAC, with Bill Dawson as its Chairman. This organisation was formed so that those who did not want to worship at St Andrew's, but who wished to preserve the church for future generations could raise money to help maintain the church fabric, which is always needed. (See above) If you are interested in this you could speak to the Vicar or Churchwarden.

During Lockdown we had a collection point in the church porch for Alton Food Bank, and generous collections were made from the village

When our neighbour at the Church Hall advised us that she was going to have her roof repaired, we knew that, where her house joined the Hall, needed attention. We thought we should take the opportunity to have some of our repairs done at the same time. The roofers got replacement tiles for our badly corroded ones, and we still have more to replace.

We are hoping to upgrade the toilets at the Hall any time now. We have been promising to do this for years, and have the money set aside. Watch this space.

Our Church Hall Bookings Administrator, Pat Mitchell retired in the

summer after many years of service, for which we are very grateful. Aloma James offered to take on the role and she has been responsible for, and working hard, to make the preparations necessary for making it safe to open the Hall again. Many thanks to Aloma.

We are now delighted to have church services again at St Andrew's, though masked and distanced, and no coffee afterwards. We tried it at Bentworth first to test out operations, and from November 1st we will be having regular services in Medstead. We measured out distances and found that we can get in approximately 25 people. We are operating a booking system, which means ringing Ingrid Owen Jones, the Parish Administrator on 01420446467. The next service will be on November 1st at 11.00am, then Nov. 15th. There will be an outside Service for Remembrance Sunday at 10.30am. What we may be able to do at Christmas is being planned. The On Line Services have been very successful and we thank Ed for all his work on those.

As you see, it has been a busy time. Although the church has been closed, we have been moving forward gradually, and hope to continue to do so, Covid permitting. Stay well. If you need assistance, get in touch. We will do our best.

Best wishes from Anne Lofthouse and St Andrew's.