



## **Report to Hockwold cum Wilton Parish Council on developments at St Peters Church, Hockwold cum Wilton (30/05/21)**

Megan Mitchell from the Churches Conservation Trust (CCT) met with councillors Lesley Randall, Alison Marsden, Stephen Monsey-Cribb, and volunteers Mark Farnham and Sarah Greaney. We met at St Peters to raise questions and ask some clarification on several issues. Megan is covering Norfolk and Suffolk in place of Kata Roma who is of sick following her fall at St Peters.

The church is acceptable to open from a risk and Covid19 perspective, with social distancing in place if opened before 21 June 2021 (the date when remaining Covid19 restriction are planned to be removed). We plan to have our first opening on 04 July, intentionally to coincide with Hockwold Hall Summer Fayre.

Volunteers – we currently have 11 “active” volunteers who are doing the churchyard ‘make-over’ and church cleaning. There are a further 6 people who have expressed an interest to help in some way.

The CCT understands that volunteers are currently working on the understanding their contribution is done at the own personal risk until such time as they are registered with the CCT. I now have the volunteer registration forms and will be circulating them this week. The registration will cover personal accident and public liability insurance cover.

At the moment volunteers have been undertaking churchyard tidying and church cleaning. However, we also require volunteers for essential ‘back rooms’ roles, such as, cooks/bakers, social media, publicity etc.

The Friends of St Peters (FoSP) – The CCT recommend that a Friends group be formed to support the work of the CCT, raise funds specifically for St Peters, coordinate work and volunteers and have a formal structure for being the local focal point. Friends also become volunteers, and therefore are registered. A committee of chair, secretary, treasurer and at least three others is formed. The CCT advice that in the initial stages these posts are taken by “any willing volunteers” in discussion with all registered volunteers.

Some volunteers have expressed an interest in being committee members, and we need to progress this to the committee being formed.

The Churchyard – The CCT has very few churchyards they are responsible for. They are responsible for St Peters. For the majority of CCT churches, the Parish Council is responsible for the churchyard. Current CCT guidance is being revised, and St Peters will be part of that consultation. Volunteers have made a very significant impact on tidying and transforming the churchyard, with the support of the CCT. We have mapped out the churchyard showing current and future work. This will be added to the Land Registry plan of the churchyard.

Our work so far has included:

- ✓ Pathways and access to gravestones cleared and is ongoing as there are a lot of nettles and brambles!
- ✓ Creation of a wildflower area (seeds donated)
- ✓ Identification of a “bug village” area, following advice from RSPB Lakenheath (we hope that the village school with RSPB Lakenheath can work on this, yet to be discussed with both parties)
- ✓ A “Wall of Gratitude” – an area where donated plants, shrubs etc will be planted
- ✓ A wall and area identified to retain ivy for wildlife conservation

We support the CCT guidance on the balance of wildlife conservation, being as biodiverse as possible, while allowing access to the church and churchyard. We will strive to keep this balance in all our work.

A strimmer has been purchased, with new safety helmet, fuel additive and strimmer wire. The cost will be reimbursed when finances allow. It was purchased at a bargain price, reduced as it was for St Peters. The seller also offered to service it free in one years’ time. It will not be used until the CCT risk assess its use. In the meantime, Hockwold Hall have offered the use of their gardening team to trim cut.

The issue of Hockwold Halls overhanging trees still needs discussing with them but we feel this should wait considering birds are nesting now. We would also like to discuss with them removing our gardening rubbish.

Open Day 04 July 2021 – The church and churchyard will be open 1000-1600hrs with volunteers available to talk to visitors.

CCT do not provide hand sanitiser, wipes etc, but we have a supply donated. The Open Day will get people in to see the beautiful building, an opportunity to recruit volunteers, and publicise our work, ideas, etc. We have some tabletop information boards which will explain the CCT, our work, Friends group, appeals for items we need etc.

The Open Day will be publicised with posters around the village (which we will remove afterwards), featured in the village magazines of Hockwold, Feltwell, Weeting, Methwold, Lakenheath, Brandon Life, and the Brandon & Thetford Times. We will also post onto the Parish Council and In Hockwold Facebook pages.

Fund Raising – Currently we have no money. We will be looking working with the CCT to identify any sources of income and the guidelines around fund raising. Once guidelines have been confirmed, we can then look to organising some events. Some current ideas include;

- Summer Fayre – stalls, games, refreshments etc
- Afternoon Tea party
- Church of Stalls – ‘payment pews’
- ‘Champing’ – camping in CCT churches (to be explored further, but may be a method of getting a compostable toilet?)

Key Access and Church Opening – Anna Rowe has diligently held the key for many years now, for which we are very grateful to her. We are now sharing the key role with a few volunteers. Megan has asked the CCT key cutters for a replacement key quote. The CCT estates officer has deemed it is unwise to have a key safe fitted due to the delicate nature of the masonry.

The CCT would like the church to be open as much as possible, with or without church-sitters. Between us we can arrange this. Megan Mitchell is seeing if there is a church open A-board available. If not, we are able to make one.

The CCT has St Nicholas church, Hythe Road, Feltwell. Sarah Greaney visited it recently and met the volunteer who opens it every day. They have no church-sitters and have had no vandalism or theft. Since re-opening

two weeks ago, twenty people have signed the visitor's book. We find this quite surprising and encouraging for us.

Church wall and gate -The rubble from the Station Road wall has been collected and is in our car port. Megan is aware and she will inform the CCT Estates Officer to arrange its repair and the repair of the entrance gate.

- ❖ I would like to thank the hard work, dedication and amazing enthusiasm of the volunteers in getting this project underway. Also, to say thank you to the support of the Parish Council for their continued support.

Stephen Monsey-Cribb