

Chairman's Report Annual General Meeting 25th October 2018

It is difficult to think that RCHS has only been in existence for just over a year as an enormous amount of work has been done and monies raised, as the treasurer's report will explain later.

The PCC identified from the Quinquennial 2014 (the 5 yearly) inspection that the restoration of the tower was urgent. RCHS made this the first project for which funds would be raised.

Having set this as the priority the process began. Several questions needed to be answered - was the tower structurally sound, was it safe to ring the bells, did we have bats. A faculty was to be applied for, quotes obtained, and grant applications made. This was all to be under the control of the PCC and the process started in August 2017.

So why when all these plans were put in place are we still greeted with the ugly sight of the Heras fencing and the fear that the tower will continue to deteriorate?

It has been a steep, exhausting, and emotionally painful experience since the PCC started this process. I have learned that wheels grind slowly and we do not always get what we want, as quickly as we would like.

The state of the church tower is being monitored particularly as we are to face another winter. There is major concern due to the instability of one of the parapets, and an ancient lead roof. Although the structural survey reported the tower to be sound and consequently assured us that the bells would have no adverse effect if rung, issues could occur from the continued crumbling of the sandstone exterior. So as a precaution it was agreed with the bell captain, with the bell captain, that ringing would continue to be suspended.

Yes !! we do have bats.....but very few and therefore only a low Impact Class license would be required. No breeding was evident from the report.

The faculty to carry out work has been approved.

The level of our funds is a further stumbling block. The application for a grant from Heritage Lottery fund failed. I am told this is not uncommon first time round and the HLF committee (south west) have encouraged us to resubmit provided we can show further community involvement, and increased funding from elsewhere. So with amendments the application will be re-submitted in January when a new system of grant applications will be in place with HLF.

Gloucestershire Historic Churches Trust has committed to a grant in December.

The National Churches Trust refused our application on the grounds thatI quote "your application was short of 50% fundraising, which is a condition of eligibility for the programme.

Once you have this in place, please come back to us"

The Garfield Weston Trust replied in a similar vein.

The progress of restoration, I fear, still remains with being able to secure the HLF funding.

From the PCC's outcomes the target for the tower restoration was calculated to be £250,000. RCHS set fund raising wheels into motion, which included :

1. asking for pledges to be made towards the intended works,
2. the encouragement of the community to become members of the society and donate on a regular basis,
3. the formation of the Fortune Club (hear more about later)
4. and of course planning a programme of special events.
5. We have recently introduced greetings cards for sale, both all occasion and Christmas cards. RCHS is most grateful to Cynthia Fortnum for allowing us to use her charming water colour designs. These are available at all our events, including this evening, and from our display area in church where we operate an honesty box.
6. For many hundreds of years people have left money in their wills for the repair of their local parish church. So we have introduced information as to how someone could leave a legacy to RCHS if they so wished. Details are on the web site.

We have been pleased with our efforts to date although, as you will appreciate, we are still along way away from the target.

In forming RCHS, one of the first things we needed to have was a brochure to communicate the need for 'friends' and to invite membership of RCHS. Murray Thomson worked with us on its design and we thank him for his advice and support in producing these.

We are pleased that Arilda Messenger agreed to help with the artistic creation of a logo and we thank her very much for the design of the wheatsheaf which appears on most of our material, together with the slogan 'Heritage is our Future'.

In January it was agreed with the PCC that we could have a display and communication area in church and this has meant that since April, RCHS has been able to exhibit material of interest to the community together with up to date information with regards to events and fundraising progress.

We now have a page on the Village website, with thanks to Peter Condon, who has developed this facility. I would recommend you to view if you have not already done so... www.redmarley.org.uk & click on Church Heritage Society.

Another means of communicating to the community is through the bi- annual newsletter and for this we are indebted to Catherine Craig. This can be a very time consuming task and thanks must be expressed to Catherine for her commitment and professionalism in the production of the leaflet.

RCHS would also like to express their thanks to the editors of Leadon Life who are always more than willing to provide us with a feature page each month, and not only that, they are happy to plan the page for optimum appeal.

We are delighted to welcome Jonny Niblett as our Patron. He is the son of Rev'd Basil Niblett and great grandson of Rev'd Edward Niblett who was the last incumbent to have responsibility for the restoration and re-ordering of St. Bartholomew's Church, so it seemed highly appropriate.

Jonny was approached following the series of fascinating articles which he wrote for Leadon Life, 'Monks & Magicians. Initially he was somewhat reluctant due to distance, he lives in the northern highlands, and age, but Jonny has supported the work of RCHS and continues to show great interest.

Our fund raising events will continue to be advertised in several ways. Thank you to Anne Rogers for making sure that information is passed on to a variety of publications in the area and to local radio stations. Leaflet drops and poster distribution falls to members of the committee, thank you.

2019 is the 100th anniversary of 'The Sale of Redmarley Estates' The Moment Centenary Project is very active in marking this time, and the committee of RCHS are keen to plan events to commemorate this occasion.

And finally.....The RCHS would like to thank everyone for their support over the past 12 months or so and we look forward to another successful year.

Hilary Morton
25 October 2018