 **NEWSLETTER and ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20**

**Our Annual General Meeting is normally** **held about the end of May, when the Committee report to members of the Friends; clearly we cannot do that this year. This newsletter includes the papers normally sent out for the AGM, with the ‘draft’ Accounts (which only await an Independent Examination). The Charity Commission is still demanding that we find some occasion to hold a public meeting for adoption of the accounts (by the end of December), even though companies are permitted to do so by email and video.**

**CHAIRMAN’S REPORT**

There are four aspects that I shall focus on – the busy level of activities in the Chapel until Christmas 2019; the change in operational management since then; and the Friends’ work on repairs we are funding, and the reredos conservation project.

1. The summer 2019 was a very busy tourist visiting season, in King’s Lynn and at the Chapel. In the visitors book it takes up 47 pages, with praises for the Welcome team and interest in the building, as well as recording all the events that took place. I fear that no-one has added up the numbers yet, as it is usually an April job! At New Year the diary for 2020 already listed 50 occasions when the Chapel was to be in use, for fee-paid events, concerts and music rehearsals, bell ringing, school visits and special events, four art and craft exhibitions: all stopped by Coronavirus just after the Gin Festival in early March.

2. Meanwhile the day to day management of the Chapel has changed after Christmas. Kirsty Gauntley has been the site manager for CCT in succession to Vicky Etheridge since mid-2018. Her contract was not renewed after February 2020 as CCT revealed that their financing for the Chapel had a yawning hole due to a huge electricity bill that had been presented, and the site income from hiring does not exceed the staffing costs by their desired margin. These have been problems ever since the Chapel reopened in 2015. A part-time manager was fully occupied by supervising volunteers who keep the site open, and by bookings and attending the events as duty manager; the roles and her time paid for was always out of kilter with the tasks to be achieved. Kirsty is now retained as an off-site agent for hirings, but site management is yet to be clarified after this shut-down as Kate Roma, the CCT Local Communities Officer, covers 28 other Norfolk churches already. The Friends committee did not offer to be site operational managers again as we were until 2014 – we are all somewhat older!

The huge electricity bill is a product of failings by two supposedly specialist brokers or agencies, who had been used by CCT to register the solar panels tariff, not taking proper readings on site, or dealing with the balance between local use and generation for the Grid. The volunteers voiced their concerns at a full February meeting with CCT regional staff, and await the promised further information.

3. During 2019 the Friends’ committee had some success in getting several maintenance tasks done. Anyone who had come to evening events in the Chapel will have noticed the lighting level drop as more and more of the architect-specified 2015 light bulbs gave up the ghost. Replacing them with the same was impossible, and Ray Wearden scoured the market for a comparable shape and lux, eventually finding one obtainable from Screwfix, acceptable to CCT, and vastly cheaper. Several dozen bulbs have been replaced out of Kirsty’s tiny budget. Another overlooked job was to alter the brass plug covers of a prominent floor circuit at the West end (and to get it working); these covers had not been cut into the stone flags back in 2015, and were trip hazards that the Friends have paid £700 to rectify. Meanwhile, in the belfry the south side louvres blew out in a March 2019 storm; John Martin secured the bird screens again but getting a steeplejack to inspect and price, and then an insurance claim, has taken CCT until now. The works are awaiting the end of the lock-down, and we shall contribute a small £640 cost that Insurers would not cover. Our involvement in getting these jobs done is but a harbinger of the new CCT strategy to get local communities to re-adopt the running costs of their redundant churches.

4. The reredos has not changed appearance in the past year, but we are much closer to getting work done. The conservator is cutting the reredos stonework free from cement-rich wall and floor screeds, which have allowed damp to rise. By the end of this month there will be a discreet trench behind the altar and wall channels on each side; measurements of reduced damp and salts were very positive last year. The paintings were faced with tissue to stop paint loss last year, and options for their conservation have been discussed by Elizabeth Pye. The assembly of grant money to pay for a remedial scheme has almost been achieved by Richard Jarvis our Treasurer – the Audrey Stratford, Paul Bassham and Geoffrey Watling Trusts, the Town Guides, and we hope for a St Margaret’s & St Nicholas’ Parish Trust contribution.

5. I wish to thank all the Committee members for all sorts of jobs done, whether smaller or larger and already mentioned, that they have carried out during this year. There is no avoiding the fact that the CCT is financially weak, and is intending to rely ever more on what we can be encouraged to do locally. For the future of the Friends we need new committee members with new ideas and skills to join us. Please talk with any of the committee and see how you could help.

6. Please may I remind all members of the Friends that our book of wonderful photographs of the Angels in the roof was published on Heritage Open Day in September last year, and is available to Friends at a discount for £5.00. The first 100 were speedily sold, and now we have more. Contact me and we’ll work out how to get it to you ([aparker33@btinternet.com](mailto:aparker33@btinternet.com) or phone).

Similarly if you have any questions or comments.

*Adrian Parker Chairman : 6 May 2020*

***AGENDA ATTACHMENTS:-***

**ACCOUNTS 2019-20** (draft, not yet Examined) in the Charity Commission form

**OFFICERS & COMMITTEE 2019-20**

Chairman - Adrian Parker Treasurer - Richard Jarvis

Committee - Nick Balaam, Malcolm Bailey, Dr John Martin, Dr Kate Parker, Prof. Liz Pye

*The Committee members are willing to serve a further year*