

The Friends of St Nicholas' Chapel, King's Lynn

Minutes of the Sixteenth Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday 6th June 2018, at 7pm in the Chapel.

The meeting began with a talk by Peter Godden on the history and mechanics of the church organ, and a demonstration of the chapel's own newly refurbished instrument, and how Bach's Toccata & Fugue in D minor existed as a test piece.

Present at the meeting: Adrian Parker, Kate Parker, Elizabeth Pye, Nick Balaam, John Baines, Fran Baines, Gwen Sevrin, Paul Rose, Richard Jarvis, Leanne Bailey, Malcolm Bailey, Alison Croose, Richard Morley, Jill Price, Brian Chase, Pat Knights, Peter Godden, Mary and Ray Wearden, Babs and Mike Carter-Rowlands, Derek Oldfield, Heather Bolt, Robert Fayers (and guest, Peter Back).

1. **Apologies** were received from John Martin, Paul Richards, Anne Hyde, Sid Verber, Mike and Diana Brindle, and Jon Higgins [Friends and other Chapel stewards had been invited].
2. **Minutes** of the AGM of 2017 had previously circulated; their acceptance as a true record was proposed by Brian Chase, seconded by Malcolm Bailey, and agreed.

3. **Treasurer's Report.** The Treasurer presented his report, the accounts had been previously circulated. He pointed out that this financial year had seen the completion of education element of the bells restoration, and the final payment of HLF towards that project. Following complaints about the organ to the Site Manager, and there being no funds available from the CCT to effect any repairs, the Friends had raised money and commissioned a thorough cleaning and servicing of it, which had been completed at the beginning of May 2018. Peter Godden had demonstrated that the organ was now in splendid playing order, and a pleasure to hear. Efforts to restore the paintings on the reredos had met with several delays. An initial report on the applied painted surfaces had indicated that no work should be attempted without stabilisation of the stonework. Several attempts had been made to achieve the services of a stone conservator, and a report had finally been commissioned but not yet received. Interim comment from the conservator had indicated that the problem was not insurmountable, and could be rectified long term with relative ease. It was hoped that this would be reflected in the ensuing quotation. The total costs were conjectured to be circa. £30,000, for which funding would be raised. In that regard, the apparent good state of the Friends' reserves was essential to convince any would-be funders that the Friends had the wherewithal to commit seriously to our various undertakings.

The Treasurer went on to discuss the financial standing of the CCT, its ongoing shortfall in provision for historic pension commitments, and its increasing portfolio of churches to maintain. He pointed out the very modest remuneration of its staff, at all levels, and it was possible that the whole organisation would sooner or later be made part of Historic England. In the meantime, the CCT was hungry for whatever funds might be raised in the few churches in its portfolio which might generate income. Consequently, it was incumbent on the Friends' to raise whatever monies were required for local projects in St Nicholas' Chapel, and not to anticipate any further assistance from a severely cash-strapped CCT. This will include making good the failures of the original contractors to stabilise

the walls in the ringing chamber, and redoing electrical work which is both unusable and a constituting an ongoing health and safety issue.

The Treasurer was thanked for his work, his report, and for the assistance of John Baines as the Independent Examiner. The report was adopted, proposed by Jill Price and seconded by Heather Bolt and agreed.

4 & 5. Chairman's Report.

The Chairman spoke to his report, already circulated. He welcomed Kirsty Gauntley, the freelance Site Manager, who was working 20 hrs p.w. plus evenings. He hoped the CCT would advertise for a permanent post, as they had agreed in principle that such a role was necessary. He spoke of his joy at the greatly increased use of the Chapel by the public, and at his pleasure that St Nicholas' Chapel has been mentioned as one of the best things about West Norfolk in the local press's 'Love West Norfolk' campaign. He congratulated the Welcome Team for helping generate and maintain this affection for the Chapel. He thanked John Martin in running the Bar with unstinting help from Richard and Jan Jarvis and many others. This was the main fund raiser for the Friends throughout the year, raising a profit of £100-£200 each time. The money raised has been spent on the organ restoration (overwhelmingly paid for by an anonymous donor), and commissioning reports to assess the state of the Reredos, and to obtain assessments and estimates for the necessary remedial work. Deterioration there had occurred in the past few years, since the major restoration work had been completed. It probably related to changing temperatures in the chapel and rising damp, but needed immediate attention before irreparable damage was sustained. The Chairman thanked his committee, and gave particular thanks to Brian Chase and Roger Edwards, two founding members of the committee in 2002 who were now standing down. A small gift picture of the Chapel was given to each from the Committee.

A question was raised as to the future educational work within the chapel. The Chairman said that it was hoped CCT would fund a joint educational staff member with True's Yard. There had been attempts to provide a Town-wide post, but the Museum Service/Stories of Lynn were not interested. The CCT has a regional education officer, based in Cambridge, who will undertake interim work at the Chapel.

In May last year the Friends' committee presented a draft Church Plan with assessment and priorities for the next 3 years; there has been no direct response at all.

The need for more nominations to the Friends' committee was underlined, as was the need for more Welcome Team members during July and August when several were on holiday. The shortage of volunteers was an ongoing problem.

Adoption of the Report was proposed by Leanne Bailey, seconded by Heather Bolt and agreed by all.

6. Election of Officers. Those of the committee still willing to stand were: Adrian Parker, Chairman, Richard Jarvis, Treasurer, John Martin, 'Housekeeper', Malcolm Bailey, Paul Richards, Nick Balaam, Elizabeth Pye, Kate Parker. It was proposed by Brian Chase, seconded by John Baines, that they be re-elected en bloc; there being no other nominations, this was agreed nem.con; there are 2 vacancies.

7. The Proposal to buy and reinstate the Font Cover.

The Chairman invited Heather Bolt to introduce the subject. The Font Cover and Canopy, currently owned by Westland Antiques in London, was on offer by them to the Friends' at cost, i.e. £3,000 plus 15% VAT. Dismantling, transport to Lynn and reassembly would have to be done by specialist

carriers, one of whom Westland had nominated. Although precise costs were not available, it was envisaged the sum required would be c.£5,500. A £500 donation had already been offered.

Comments were invited from the floor amongst which were :-

- that the Font Cover would provide an enhanced visitor attraction, and that after so much had been taken from the Chapel, it would be good to see it back as some indication of other lost work formerly in the building;

- that the present open and light feeling of the west end without the large, dark and dirty cover was an advantage; that it could be a free-standing object, not impinging on the view of the font;

- other people were insistent that if it came back to the chapel it should be re-fixed to the font, as intended. Fr Robert Fayers thought he had seen it as a free-standing object at some time in the 1960s; he himself had been baptised under it.

- Nick and Liz Balaam, who had been to see it in London, commented on the fine workmanship and impressive quality of the structure, and its fine restoration by Westland.

- the insurance liability was mentioned, and it was considered that this would be added to the CCT's public liability insurance, and as the structure would be bolted into the font step, this would not be an issue. Other permissions, such as a Faculty or planning considerations did not apply as it was an item of 'furniture', and not an alteration to the fabric of the building itself.

- the question of ongoing maintenance was raised, but this was not considered a problem; it was pointed out that the organ case was of similar age and probably came from the same (Rattee & Kett) workshop, and did not receive any maintenance at all.

The matter was put to the vote, and it was agreed by 12 votes to 1, with 3 (officers) abstentions, to ask the CCT to agree to the Friends' purchase of the font cover and canopy, and its reinstatement in the Chapel. It was further agreed that there should be a public appeal to raise funds for this purchase, and that the sums within the Friends' account, which were sufficient, should be used minimally for this purpose but saved for the work on the Reredos.

The chairman invited members to contact him about any matters.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 8.44 pm.