**FRIENDS OF ST NICHOLAS’ CHAPEL CHAIRMAN’S REPORT FOR 2018-19**

I could simply say “Where has this year gone?”, and look baffled, but if we look at the West End of the Chapel there is now one item of furnishing which reminds us instantly of what our work this year has achieved.

The return of the font canopy – even if it is a 1903 reproduction of the original made late in the 17th century – was the relatively swift outcome of your decision to buy it back from the private antiques market. You debated this use of our effort and underwriting the purchase with our funds on 6th June, and by the 6th November I was here supervising the re-erection. In the meantime we had run a public appeal on Heritage Open Day which attracted a number of discreet private donations from local supporters and an award of £500 from the Town Guides, so that we could purchase at the end of September. This news was followed by an offer from the Cottam Will Trust to meet any outstanding expenses for re-erection following purchase, and which has amounted to some £1,250. The font canopy’s return unites the three things that churchwarden E.M. Beloe commissioned in 1902-03 – the replacement carved font itself (in Jacobean style), the font canopy, and the new organ case, all under the supervision of John Oldrid Scott, an architect son of the great Sir George Scott.

If there is a lesson to be learned again, it is that the King’s Lynn community has a strong commitment to the Chapel as a civic space, and if we have a good reason to spend and we go out and get media interest in an appeal, then individually and together they will support us. We shall need it, on the next part of the Chapel we want to repair and conserve – the reredos.

The Chapel management is now firmly in the hands of Kirsty Gauntley, who was confirmed in the post last autumn having stepped in as Vicky was leaving. Kirsty managed the Hanse House buildings in recent years, and at the Chapel she continues to attract new hirers and extend the activities and regular users. Given the CCT financial picture, they place a heavy emphasis on income generation here contributing to their costs elsewhere. Their good fortune in having Friends here who are committed, expert, and successful in our projects should not allow them to put very little back into this building, and we occasionally fight a little battle about who pays for what. For example, we declined to pay for a steeplejack’s survey of the tower exterior as a prelude to us paying towards the repair of the belfry louvres from inside – some of which were then blown out in a storm. We have declined to pay for recolouring the west door before the conservator is even challenged whether he actually used exterior paints. On the other hand for the past 18 months we have been offering to contribute, or pay outright, for CCT to fix the projecting plug covers and the dead circuit in the west end paving, get the hideous 2-phase electricity connection off the c.1400 pillar, and to replace the loo roll holders. Similarly, we have recently surveyed the Chapel woodwork after noting the extent of woodworm activity in the sanctuary; it is especially active in the altar table, under the altar cloths, and we are currently getting advice on the best treatment for us to undertake. Your committee are making personal commitments of time and expertise; we think it is interesting and worthwhile, it is not physically demanding, it seems an ideal set of tasks for far more of you – our member Friends – to join us in undertaking. We would welcome whatever time you can offer and on any task in which you can give us help.

On your behalf I thank all the committee members (and wives and partners!) for the time they give, to running this association and meeting every 2 months, and then doing things that raise funds for us to persistently conserve and improve the Chapel’s attractions and facilities; a big Thank You! also to Leanne Bailey who produces and circulates the Newsletter for me twice yearly.

*Adrian Parker*

*17 April 2019*