

The Parish Church of St. John the Baptist, Wickhamford

PCC Secretary Annual Report for the year

1st January – 31st December, 2023

2023 was the first year for some time without Covid restrictions when services and fund raisers could take place without social distancing. The congregation at St Johns remained steady throughout the pandemic and we continued to welcome an average of 10/12 worshippers to every service. A reduction in the number of celebrants available to take services had already reduced the regular monthly services to twice per month, on the second and fourth Sundays at 9.15am. This is now accepted as the norm at St Johns.

Special services took place to celebrate Mothering Sunday, Easter, Harvest, Remembrance Day and Christmas. The Christmas Eve Carol Service once again proved very popular with the local community. We were delighted to welcome Shellie; Jo; Kevin; John and Chelle to lead worship and send special thanks to Alma Organ who travelled from Pershore to lead several services.

In 2023 we opened the church to visitors every Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holiday Monday and are thrilled to receive messages in the visitor book. Ideally the church would be open every day for worshippers or tourists to drop -in, but, St Johns is off the beaten track and does not attract the footfall of other churches in the benefice. The Churchyard always remains a tranquil oasis to welcome passers-by. Thanks to Ken and Lee who tend to the yard.

Fund-raising to repair the roof continued through 2023. Events included a well-attended and popular Skittles evening and a series of four Cream Teas in June, July, August and October. As always, thanks are due to the small team who organize these events, provide and prepare the food and welcome the guests. Thanks to Anne Poulter for baking quantities of fresh and delicious scones. The events are very well attended and prove popular as social gatherings for the local community. Information sheets to remind attendees why we are fund-raising are necessary. It remains difficult to get across the message that the upkeep of the ancient parish church is the sole responsibility of the parishioners and receives no funding from the Church of England.

Local Chartered Surveyor Anthony Rowland generously arranged for a drone survey of the roof to highlight the problems and this took place in the summer. Local builder Mark Underhill offered to undertake low-cost maintenance on the roof using a tower scaffold.

Mark has sourced replacement slates and will undertake repairs/replacements as and when he can.

The TMRO covering the netting of the chancel ceiling expires in May, 2024 and the PCC have been advised that, after appointing a new church architect, we must apply for a full faculty to continue netting the chancel.

Architect Mark Evans retired from Church work in 2023 and we are delighted to have secured the services of David Arnold. We are currently applying for a faculty.

The PCC met nine times in 2023. There were 7 members of the PCC, including the incumbent, up to May 2023. Chelle Young was co-opted to the PCC in May, making 8 members. The meetings were as follows:

Date	No of attendees	% attendance
30 th January	6	86%
16 th April	6	86%
16 th May APCM	7	88%
26 th June	6	75%
31 st July	6	75%
18 th September	6	75%
16 th October	7	88%
13 th November	7	88%
18 th December	6	75%

Thus, on average, there was 82% attendance at PCCs. The drop in attendance from the previous year is explained by long-term sick leave.

The PCC Secretary attended four meetings of the Worship/Rota committee in 2023.

Eight 'Coffee and Chat' mornings were held from March to October, including a Coronation, Cake, Coffee and Chat. Once again, the coffee mornings are very popular with locals, bringing them into church for a social event. The Spring and Christmas Fayres, held in the Memorial Hall were well attended. All these events are an excellent way of sharing 'Church News' with the community and raising money for church upkeep.

Special events in 2023 included an entertaining and informative Bat Watch in the churchyard. This event was advertised on Facebook and drew a large crowd from near and far. Monies raised were shared between Bat charities and the roof fund. Many

thanks to Chelle Young for organizing and presenting this event and for advertising services and events on Facebook.

The Harvest Supper, with quiz, and the Fish and Chip Supper, with quiz, were extremely popular, in fact, oversubscribed. St John's church is filling a definite need for putting on community events in the parish, providing social occasions for locals to get together.

The annual spring clean took place in June. Thanks to all who take part in the cleaning and flower rotas for continuing to present St Johns so well.

We received sad news in December 2023 that our long-serving church organist Linda Core had died, following a long period of poor health. Linda will be sadly missed by her friends at St John's. We miss her lovely musical accompaniment to our services.

2023 has been a year dominated by concerns over the future upkeep and maintenance of St John's church. However, despite all our concerns, we have continued to serve the local community by providing regular services throughout the year, offering a venue for significant life events and organizing social events for the locals to enjoy. Long may we continue.

Jackie Knight,

St. John the Baptist PCC Secretary