

Churchwardens Report

CHURCH FABRIC

The first five months of this calendar year have seen considerable work inside and outside the church. Most notable has been the re-plastering and redecorating work in the Sanctuary, the replacement of the Nave and the Chancel stone crosses, the maintenance work on the roof and some repair work to the boundary wall. This was followed by the professional cleaning of the inside of the church, the installation of the long-awaited CCTV and the installation of Audio-Visual livestreaming equipment. The vast majority of this work was paid for by a combination of grants (the two Culture Recovery Funds, the All Churches Trust, the Suffolk Historic Churches Trust and the Scarfe grant) insurance, and personal and organizational donations, with a much smaller contribution from SMLT. The next stage is to carry on looking for more grants to start working on essential maintenance work highlighted in the quinquennial report.

CHURCH TREASURES

The Church Treasures have been checked against the Inventory and are all present and correct.

CHURCH OPENING TIMES

Since the easing of Covid restrictions we have been able to open the church for longer periods and we aim to have it open most mornings during the week and at least some afternoons in the near future. OneLife, a Public Health funded organization has been using the church to provide health checks for the hard-to-reach communities on Mondays and a weight management support group on Friday mornings. As they only use the back of the church, the church can be open for visitors and private prayer at the same time. Our aim is still to have the church open for longer periods and although having the CCTV is a good deterrent of unsocial behaviour, we need someone here to welcome visitors and answer any queries. So, if you feel this is something you can do on a regular basis then please let one of us know.

TOWER HOUSE PROJECT

Sue Rudland, the Tower House Business Development Manager left her post at the end of May 2021 due to family reasons. Under Sue's management, Tower House operations and licensee bookings had much improved and stabilized and since the gradual lifting of the Covid restrictions Sue had initiated several new links with charities and public organisations whose aims are aligned with ours resulting in several new long-term bookings. Sue was also instrumental in helping to get the National Heritage Lottery Grant application completed on time. The recruitment process to replace Sue will start once we receive a definitive response to this application.

National Heritage Lottery Fund – a grant application for a Resilience Grant was submitted in May. This would help us to develop a detailed vision for a heritage project that has SMLT's choral tradition and community engagement at the heart of it. If successful, this grant will

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pay for a number of posts including a full-time Business Development Manager and a part-time Finance Director. This would lead to us applying for the full development grant to fund the restoration work. There are many hoops to go through but the final goal is hopefully worth the wait.

Tower House South Wing

Like many other buildings, Tower House was virtually out of use during the lockdown with only a handful of licensees using their offices. Since the restrictions have eased, there has been an increase in demand for services leading to a big demand for space. As a result, Tower House has suddenly become a hive of activity and we are now at a point where we are having to turn organisations away.

We have formed partnerships with some new organisations:

- Britten Pears Arts, a pioneering music, arts and heritage charity formed by the unification of Snape Maltings and the Britten-Pears Foundation. They have already run an online workshop at Tower House. It was run by Aga Serugo Lugo, a member of the English National Opera, and a clearly inspirational musician.
- Suffolk Mind have booked the Community Room on Tuesdays and Wednesdays to run mental wellbeing sessions for the next 6 months.

Current licensees:

- Got to Read – Teaching literacy to adults and providing support to students with learning difficulties.
- CACHSF – Health and wellbeing for the Afro Caribbean community – recently started running weekly exercise classes at Tower House and are soon to start English Language classes on Friday evenings – they are currently running a lunch club at another location but would like to move that to Tower House once and if catering facilities are available.
- BME SSF – Food bank, and support to BME families
- Oyster Print – use the ground floor of the North Wing to provide printing and art classes
- Waterfront Community Project – they hire an office and storage space at Tower House but their main purpose is to promote social wellbeing through providing arts and crafts workshops and a place to meet people.
- Rhoda Webb – a photographer / sculptor who has her studio at Tower House. Rhoda is known for her public art, her work with the elderly and her teaching. She recently exhibited her work at Tower House as part of the Suffolk Open Studios initiative.
- Youth Outreach – provide support to young people questioning their sexual identity
- Disability Advice Bureau – providing training and online access to people with disabilities
- Radius Computing – European Computer Driving Licence training

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Tower House North Wing

We have received the Quantity Surveyors' initial report for the first part of the restoration project which includes work on the Song School, a lift and creating space for a new kitchen on the ground floor. The current estimates are within budget and in line with the Bellamy legacy. The next stage is to seek tenders for the works.

CHURCH HOUSE

Again thanks to Sue Rudland's hard work, we have now also been able to let out the back room on the ground floor of Church House to a Christian charity called PHOEBE. PHOEBE supports Afro Caribbean women victims of domestic abuse and violence. As well as one-to-one meetings with their clients PHOEBE aims to run regular events to support women and their children to make them feel empowered and connected. They would like to use the church building and the church yard as a meeting place and after school gatherings where children can play and build new friendships. This move into Church House was a lot faster than we would have liked but the speed was dictated by the requirements of PHOEBE's grant funding.

This meant that the Music Team has had to move out of the back room at Church House and are now using the Lady Chapel as storage space for their cassocks, books etc. The music library has been moved to Tower House and the Music Team continue to use part of the front room in Church House. The church will continue to have access to toilets and kitchen at all times. We would like to thank the music department and the choir for putting up with the disruptions and the inconvenience this has caused. This situation is clearly a temporary arrangement until the building work on the Song School is complete. In the meantime, we will continue to work with the Music team and make changes as and when we can to improve the situation for all concerned.

Sonia Docherty and Jo Jones (Churchwardens)

Music Department Report (November 2020 - present)

It has been well documented that the choir at SMLT has proved remarkably resilient during the Covid-19 pandemic. We have lost a few choristers along the way who were not able to sustain their commitment during these difficult times. However, the choir has not contracted in size due to several new choral scholars and choristers joining our ranks. Indeed, one of the biggest challenges over the last 12 months has been finding the space to fit our young people into the chancel and sanctuary whilst remaining 'socially distanced.' A challenge worth having!

It should be noted that the successes of the choir over the past 12 months have been a team effort. There has been a need for courage (musical and otherwise) from the staff and singers, and from the parents too. Given the wild misinformation about singing, it would have been easy for families to perceive our choral activities as a 'super spreader' activity. Thankfully, our choir families have been eager for the kids to continue.

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November and December 2020 were particularly fraught given the various lockdown permutations. It would almost need a week-by-week analysis to accurately convey who was permitted to sing according to the current Government guidance.

November started with the choir (then divided into two) singing Duruflé's Requiem. Shortly after, our plans were curtailed as a second national lockdown was introduced. As Advent and Christmas came upon us, we were unsure as to which personnel would be allowed to sing. As it happened, we were able to field a team of young people with supporting adults for our Advent Vigil, which took place on the second Sunday of Advent, and Nine Lessons and Carol and Christmas Day.

The new year brought with it further restrictions as a third and severe national lockdown was introduced. It was clear from the outset that with the schools shut, there would be no young people allowed to sing in services. However, we were allowed to have a small group of socially distanced singers to adorn our livestreamed worship from church.

A great deal of deliberation went into whether we should continue at this juncture, given the strain the NHS was under and the 'stay at home' message from the government. Personally, I pushed very hard to keep something going. Thankfully, the consensus was that we should continue in this way. With Charles in the Lady Chapel, William in the organ loft, and the small ensemble spread apart at 3m in the nave, it was a very strange experience. I was convinced then and remain so now, that it was the right thing to do at that time.

Whereas restrictions slowly lifted from the end of March, not many of them applied to singing. Even by Easter Day, our services were still a consort of 10 or 11 – socially distanced – voices.

From the beginning late April onwards, our choir was allowed to return as it had done so in early September (2020). The singers were socially distanced, and the choir was split into three distinct groups; Boys & ATB; Girls & ATB and Adults. The term started with great promise until the government backtracked on their guidance, preventing our adult section from singing in groups of more than 6 voices. Given the depth of experience amongst our choral scholars, mercifully, our girl and boy chorister sections were not disrupted as a result. However, our adults have since been singing on rotation in a consort of 8, the extra two being allowed as they are members of staff.

From May 2021, with the help of a recovery grant, we were able to restart our Tuesday Lunchtime Recitals. The first two recitals were 'broadcast only' due to restrictions but since the audience has returned, we have been steadily growing in number and the concerts have been very well received.

My sincere thanks to all those who help get these concerts off the ground and in particular, William Baldry, who has shouldered so much of the administration this summer. A heartfelt thanks to our volunteers who set up, welcome, make refreshments and publicise the concerts.

As I write, the choir are in the process of preparing for a Christmas Carol recording which should take place after the social distancing restrictions are rescinded. Our preparation has

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been severely hampered by the recent change in guidance, preventing the adults from taking a full part in the recording. Thankfully, we have a strong team of choristers and choral scholars who carry the responsibility admirably. All being well, it should be a record of the very best of the choir of SMLT.

Despite the numerous hurdles to cross over the past 12 months, I have been delighted that we have been able to bring music relevant to the specific Sunday Gospel, service and indeed at times, the mood of the nation. It has been a frustrating time not only as (like so many) our activities have been so severely curtailed but also that the guidance has seemed contradictory to scientific studies, caused scaremongering and utterly uninterested in the needs of communal worship.

None of the Music Department's resilience would have been possible if it were not for the support I have received from Charles, the churchwardens, William, Matthew and Lis. Furthermore, as I have already mentioned, I am most grateful for the hard work, patience and perseverance of all our singers and chorister families.

Christopher Borrett, Director of Music

Social Media Report

The pandemic has provided a welcome impetus to improve our online presence, this is something we plan to grow and maintain, even as life (eventually!) returns to normal. The purchase of new live-streaming equipment means we have the hardware to grow our digital presence.

SURVEY 2020

The feedback from this was shared via the Parish eNews and has informed content since. To summarise briefly: -

- 1) The increased output on social media during lockdown was been greatly appreciated, with comments that it is now relevant, up to date and interesting.
- 2) The current website has been refreshed, having become cluttered by virtue of being continually added to, rather than updated. Plans for a completely new, more modern site are in the offing but there are numbers considerations such as secure multi-person access and it is essential to get this right.
- 3) More content on prayer and ministry has been provided, with an increase in engagement around this on social media.

PROGRESS ON THE WEBSITE

Stephen Cheek is our Webmaster and he has managed the website over the past year. Stephen is a pleasure to work with, full of good ideas and expertise! The church site will continue to be hosted with UK2 servers since the church have paid up front for two further years of hosting. The company had two major outages over the past year, due to "DDOS" attacks (distributed denial of service attack) which had nothing to do with our specific site.

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Any server is at risk from this, but the first was quite a prolonged outage and quite unprecedented. This needs future scrutiny before committing to future contracts with UK servers.

SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

The feedback over the past year has been very positive, with messages of appreciation and online interaction regarding focussed and targeted posting. I have used my blog “Viral Music” to add wider content on composers and choral music, history, and info on the church calendar to reference appropriately in line with our church activity, services and music department activity. More recently I have included theological essays which have been reproduced in the eNews.

Facebook

Our services have a steady following, although superficially stats can be misleading. Facebook metrics are updated each month, so views are not absolute, but recalibrated monthly. In addition, the need to avoid a permanent record of our musical output during a time with few rehearsal opportunities means videos are deleted after two weeks (at our Vicar and Music Director’s request) which reduces our statistics.

- 10.30am Sunday Eucharist:- Audience of approx. 60-100 with some comment engagement
- Choral Evensong:- 150+, if actively shared (e.g. amongst Choral Evensong groups) then regularly over 1000 in 24 hours with comment engagement.
- Special Services: - 300+ and if actively shared over 1000. Our live-streamed “Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols” attracted over 1.5k views and reached 3.5k people, the Choral Scholar Christmas Concert similar. Our Mass for All Souls (Durufié Requiem) had over 3000 views.

HOWEVER, as the statistics below demonstrate, “engagement” or “view” is NOT the same as virtual congregation members following our services. Some useful statistics for the last quarter (1st April to 23rd June 2021)

- 22% of our 22k views this quarters are from recommendations – ie others sharing our content on their pages. 70% is from our Followers
- On average people are watching for one minute – they are not watching the whole service.
- 69% of our viewers in the week of 23 May - 29 May returned from the previous week. That's the highest percentage of returning viewers that we've had in 5 weeks.
- We have +24 net followers this period. Our net followers are -11.1% from the previous (Christmas) period.
- 125 Complete views of videos, which is up 89.4% from previous 84 days
- We have had 9.2K total views and 34.2% of them make up our 15-second views.
- We have 3.1K 15-second views and 48% of them make up our 1-minute views.

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- Engagement this quarter is up 135% from the previous 84 days. (third lockdown)
- 17.7K people were reached during this quarter, up 215% from the previous quarter.

We can achieve a significant rise in engagement with careful targeting. For example we had over 5000 views of a post about a Choral Scholar recording. By tagging their schools, pupils and parents re-shared and engagement rose significantly. I have been able to answer questions on organ voluntaries, altar cloths, service times and church history within minutes of them being asked, keeping engagement current and “live”. What we need to do now, is to increase retention – to get people watching full services. This is only happening occasionally at present.

Chorister Recruitment Campaign

This ran the week after Easter, when children were on school holidays and after increased output during Holy Week. A full week of content was scheduled and delivered successfully. Paid adverts were carefully targeted with some limited success. No cost was sustained by the church for these. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to follow up on this campaign due to the Music Director’s unexpected two week leave of absence which followed. It has not been possible to visit schools this term either. Feedback is available on Facebook for each advert.

Instagram

It is especially important to connect online with our younger congregation and choir members, with the usual safeguarding caveats. We do not “follow-back” under 18s for example. Our Instagram account is primarily directed towards the choral scholar demographic and I would love to see content coming from older choristers and choral scholars.

Twitter

Twitter is where “real time” social media happens. After a year of hard work we are very much part of the online community now. We are networking with the Cathedral Music Trust, the RSCM, local composers, music directors and musicians, cathedrals and the Church of England. It’s always a work in progress as tweets are quickly subsumed under the usual traffic on anyone’s timeline!

Viral Music

This is my blog, a dynamic website with content aimed at those interested in choral music and anyone working for RSCM Gold Award. <https://viralsacredmusic.blogspot.com> I’ve shared it across the other platforms but am careful to contextualise it. I use “Sunday by Sunday” to find composers to write about or use upcoming music from our own music list. I hope this offers a further insight to the music at SMLT. I’ve had some lovely feedback, from the RSCM, from the (very active) Choral Evensong Appreciation Society on Facebook, from members of choir and congregation who have all said it’s lovely that the church is putting out content and engaging with people.

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CONCERT SERIES

I promote the concert series online, creating digital flyers and “tickets”. I have a “Buffer” account where I load up social media posts for all our accounts once a week, including any graphics I have created. This is quite time consuming; I take care to “tag” all the performers and vary content to give as much info as possible. Promoting others has a positive knock effect in that they promote us in return. Our online presence has benefitted significantly from this online interaction.

VIRTUAL CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL

This seems a long time ago now! It was very successful, with over 3k engagements, not dissimilar to our usual festival although these are obviously not all Ipswich based. The printed magazines were well received by our elderly congregation in early December. The Festival supported the CofE’s lockdown month of prayer and focused this on the SMLT community. It offered reflective articles on our music, belfry, social and support communities, Advent activities for children which would typically have been available via Sunday School, puzzles and activities such as recipes for older parishioners. The Mayor recorded a video for us also which was shared on the Festival site. It is still available to view <https://smltxmastreefestival.blogspot.com/p/welcome.html>

COSTS

I have chosen to donate all costs for the year on social media, for adverts and for associated software. These have totalled £205.64 by 8th April 2021. Whilst not all the software I choose to use is required to the job, it certainly makes life much easier! An extremely useful investment is a professional Buffer account, during the Christmas Tree Festival and Chorister Recruitment campaign I was able to “pre-load” over 80 posts, thus avoiding being glued to my computer all week! I pay \$15 (about £11) a month when I upgrade this account, usually for a specific month at a time.

Kate Thompson June 2021