

Churchwarden's Report to

Ovington Parish Council April 2019

Heritage Lottery Fund

We had planned that the last part of the HLF project should include the repair and limewashing of the lower walls in the church to use up the remainder of the HLF grant. The cost of this exercise was greater than expected and the PCC decided that the cleaning and restoration of the reredos should be done instead.

This required a new faculty from the diocese and the selection of a DAC-approved conservator to do the work. On removing the reredos from the wall, it was apparent that the damp had crumbled the wall and damaged part of the rear of the reredos. An extensive repair and cleaning operation to the reredos ensued and the repair of the internal wall behind the altar involved several coats of plaster and limewashing to provide a suitable surface for new battens to support the reredos. These battens provide a space for air to circulate between the reredos and the wall. A generous financial contribution to this work was made by the Trustees of the R C Snelling Trust.

The conservation work established that part of the reredos was medieval (at the time it formed part of a chancel screen in the church) and some of it was skilfully restored in the Victorian era.

Replacing three pews with individual seats and then moving the font to the other side of the entrance door has created a more flexible space at the back of the church for after-service hospitality and as a space to hold meetings.

The vestry furniture was renewed to create better storage space for essential service needs.

Broadband internet connection in the church is now in-place – as is a hearing loop and projection and sound systems integrated with the organ. The addition of microphones has also helped.

A new professional history of the church was commissioned and together with a detailed report about the reredos and the story of the HLF restoration is being formed into a new A5 size booklet.

There were insufficient funds available to do the planned up-righting of the gravestones in the churchyard. However, the PCC might be able to secure funds for this from the Norfolk Churches Trust.

The church grounds and the adjacent field have been repaired to recover the churn left by the building works and vehicles and the grass re-seeded and mowed.

In summary, the following works formed part of the HLF project:

- The tower roof leaked – it has had new timbers and new slates installed;
- Originally the church had a weather vane that has been missing for decades, but it has a new one now in the form of a golden cockerel;
- The belfry floor has been replaced and strengthened;
- We have never had a lightning conductor - we now do.
- Masonry was falling from the tower walls – it does not now;
- Cement that had been used for re-pointing the walls and that held the damp in – has now been replaced with traditional mortar on the outside of the church;
- The rainwater goods (drainage and soakaways) were inadequate – they have all been replaced and renewed;
- A hearing loop and a new sound system have been installed in the church. The organ links to this;
- There is a new projection system and cctv system installed. It has an almost invisible fold-away screen;
- The main door now opens and closes automatically;
- We did not have water in the church for 900 years – we now have cold and hot water on demand. A sink and cupboards with lighting and power points have been added;
- The electrics were not boxed-in – they now are and a book case has been added;
- The internal and external cracks in the walls have been fixed;
- The old chimney stack in the vestry was removed;
- The tower stairway was repaired;
- Cracks in the West wall monument were repaired
- The internal windows have all been cleaned for the first time in years;
- Moving the font has created a bigger meeting space at the back of the church for after service refreshments and for holding small meetings.
- The heaters are now directly mounted to the walls – a DAC request;
- The lights have been changed to LEDs to reduce costs and improve the lighting.
- New chairs were added instead of the pews that were removed.
- A Time Capsule was put into the ground by the bishop containing appropriate documents to reflect the building work done and the schools project. A copy of the book produced by the children involved in the HLF schools programme will be included. It is planned that the time capsule will be opened in 2068.
- A montage of the work done by the children during the HLF project is now on display in the church around the font;
- There reredos has been professionally restored and cleaned. This was not in the original plan (because of HLF funding limits for this type of grant), but the

PCC decided to do this instead of uprighting the gravestones as the cost of doing them would have exceeded HLF approved budgets;

- The vestry furniture has been replaced;
- A broadband internet connection has been added to the church;
- A church website (framework) was developed and links to the village website. More work is required to complete this, but it does record much of the schools work and photographs of the building project – www.ovingtonchurch.co.uk;
- Village visits to see the builders in action were held to see materials being used (including horse hair) to put into the plaster to match the original plaster;
- A new History of the church has been commissioned;
- Some 700 children and about 35 volunteers from the village and outside contributed to the schools' project;
- A bat survey was conducted by Natural England;
- An Ecology report on the church grounds was prepared by Norfolk Wildlife Trust; and we took part in the Wayland 'Growing Together' project;
- An asbestos survey was done by East Coast Installations;
- The altar linen and backdrops were refreshed and gifted by a villager;
- A professional cleaning operation to the church interior followed the building works and this was supplemented by the huge dedication of the village cleaning team – to get the church back in use for the Christmas services in 2018.
- A time capsule was buried in the churchyard by the bishop of Lynn after a service of re-dedication, held in the church on 29 April 2018.

The things we have not been able to do include:

- Establish a Heritage Trail that links to Carbrooke and Watton;
- Restoration of the lower parts of the internal walls;
- A formal gilding course was not held, but the conservators worked in the church for over a week and several people had the opportunity to see this work in action.
- Limewashing of the whole of the inside of the church;
- Uprighting of the leaning gravestones in the churchyard.

We are also grateful to the HLF, the Diocesan Board of Finance, the DAC, the Archdeacon's office, the Architects and Builders, the seven cluster schools and village volunteers, and the many people who gave so generously of their time and money to help the project along.

We'd like to think that this has helped to preserve a unique village asset for the good of all. And, one that truly engaged 'Our Village with Our Church'.