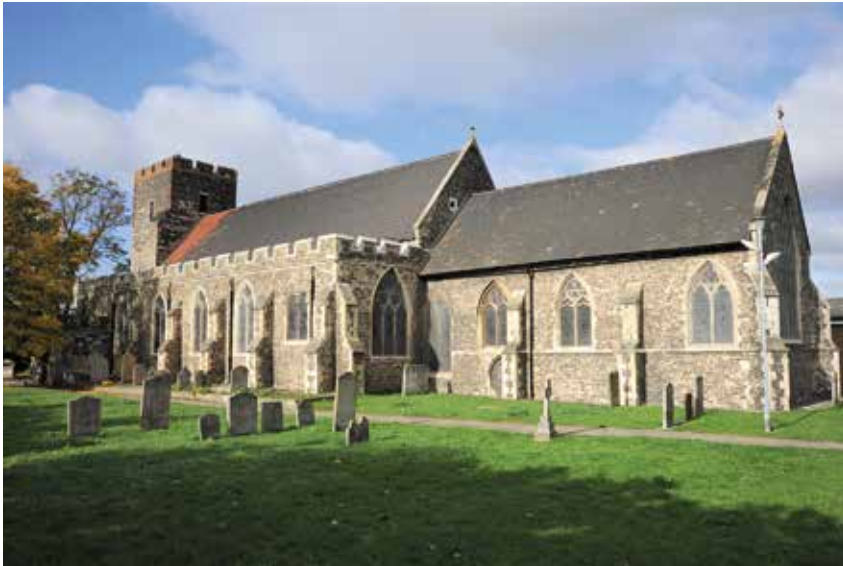


FRIENDS of KENT CHURCHES



Annual Report 2021
AGM: Saturday 14th May 2022



St Botolph, Northfleet



Holy Trinity, Queenborough
Front cover: St Mary the Virgin, Stone

FRIENDS OF KENT CHURCHES

**A visit to St Mary the Virgin, Stone DA9 9BE and
St Botolph, Northfleet DA11 9EU**

**71st ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Saturday 14th May 2022**

We meet at 2.00pm at St Mary the Virgin, Stone for the AGM. Parking in Lower Church Hill is very limited, so it will be best to park in Chalice Way (a turning off Stone Place Road) or in Cooper Close beyond it. The AGM will be followed by a talk on the church which is a magnificent 13th century building, one of the finest parish churches of its date in England.

We then move to St Botolph, Northfleet where we will have a talk and tea. The church is a fine 14th century building with good fittings and monuments. You can park in the car park in front of the church and in the surrounding roads.

AGM AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence.
2. To approve the Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting.
3. To receive the Chairman's Report.
4. To receive and, if thought fit, adopt the Treasurer's Report and Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2021 and to appoint an auditor for 2022.
5. Under Rule 5a to re-elect Deb Sutch as Honorary Secretary and Jane Bird as Honorary Treasurer.
6. Under Rule 10 to re-elect the following to the Executive Committee:
Mary Gibbins Sue Platts
7. To agree that the following amendment should be made to the Friends' Constitution:
Rule 2 should read: "The objects of the Association are to promote the preservation of Churches in use in the County of Kent (pre-1965 boundaries) and to contribute to keeping in good order their fabric and fixtures of special importance and to provide the facilities necessary to keep them in use."
8. Any other business notified to the Secretary in advance.

Explanatory note

Summary accounts and a balance sheet for 2021 are shown on pages 4 and 5 of this report.

The proposed change in Rule 2 of the Constitution would widen the objects of the Friends to cover all churches in use in Kent, not just those of architectural merit or historic interest. The Executive Committee proposes this change because most of the Friends' income derives from Ride & Stride but a sizeable minority of churches which support Ride & Stride, especially those of the non-conformist denominations, do not meet the test of 'architectural merit or historic interest' and therefore cannot benefit from our grants. This seems unreasonable and in the long term may reduce support for Ride & Stride and thus our ability to help all churches in the county. We understand that our members may be chiefly interested in supporting churches of architectural merit or historic interest and we propose, therefore, to amend our grant rules to provide that, if resources are limited, priority must be given to such churches.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to report that after a late start because of Covid restrictions, we were able to stage almost a full programme of events for members in 2021 and all of these events were well supported, if not quite at pre-Covid levels. The Executive Committee met as usual, initially by Zoom and later in person. Ride & Stride again raised a near-record sum, for which we are most grateful to all those who give their time to organise and take part in it. This year we intend to be back to normal.

As you will see from Peter Lock's report later in this annual report, our grants programme operated normally in 2021 and there was some recovery in the number of applications compared with the low-point in 2020. The programme of grants for roof alarms to combat lead theft which we had run for several years was wound up in 2021 and we repaid to the Allchurches Trust the bulk of the money which they had given us to fund the programme. Although we had publicised the scheme and made a handful of grants, churches were, in truth, not much interested in installing alarms, perhaps put off by the long-term costs of maintaining them.

A more successful initiative has been our growing relationship with the Churches Conservation Trust, a church/state charity which owns 17 closed churches in Kent and maintains them as monuments for public enjoyment. Some of its buildings are very good indeed. In the past the Friends have taken the view that these buildings are not eligible for our grants but we have changed our minds about this. These churches still host occasional services, most are open every day to visitors and they seem to us to be worthy of support. We offered a repair

grant for St Mary, Higham in January. The CCT hopes to encourage some of its own Friends groups to participate in Ride & Stride.

What of the wider churches landscape? While the long-term impact of Covid remains unclear, there is a lot of anecdotal evidence that it has, indeed, had an impact. Church attendance seems not to have fully recovered and the financial position of most churches has been eroded; many church buildings are no longer kept open (though fewer in Kent than in some other parts of the country); and the pandemic has stimulated debate about the future of the Church of England and its parish system, some in the Church wishing to shift resources away from parishes to be used in other ways.

Last autumn the Church Commissioners consulted on possible changes to the Pastoral Measure which regulates the parish structure, proposing amongst other things that the process for closing churches should be speeded up and the scope for public debate about parish reorganisation and church closures be curtailed. This consultation produced a large response, much of it hostile. The Friends, as a secular group, can have no view on how the Church organises itself but we are bound to be concerned about the impact of any changes on the future of the buildings which we admire and try to support. It is not clear what changes to the Pastoral Measure the Church Commissioners will now bring forward for the General Synod's approval. Those who care about our church buildings need to be alive to this issue and to make our voices heard if the Commissioners do not take proper account of the response to their earlier proposals.

The agenda for our AGM in May includes a proposed change to our Constitution (explained in the notes to the agenda above) to widen the range of buildings which we support. The Executive Committee thinks that we need to do this to be fair to the many churches and chapels which raise money for the Friends through Ride & Stride but cannot at present benefit from our support because their buildings are not of architectural or historic interest. However, I can assure members that if this change is approved at the AGM, there would be no major change in the distribution of our grants: the great majority would still go to our historic churches, though we would have the opportunity to help some needy congregations of other churches which are at present beyond our reach.

Paul Britton

WEBSITE

Our website has just been rebuilt. It had been unchanged for years, was very out-of-date and looked rather old fashioned. The new site is, we think, very modern and attractive and contains much new material, including a guide to Kent's finest churches and many new photographs. We hope that you will take a look at: www.friendsofkentchurches.co.uk. Our thanks go to Ray Hart, Margaret Williams, Paul Wallace and Matthew Millen for work on this project.

THE FRIENDS OF KENT CHURCHES
SUMMARISED FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR 2021

| | Unrestricted Fund £ | Restricted Funds * £ | Total 2021 £ | Total 2120 £ |
|---|---------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| INCOME FROM: | | | | |
| Investment Income | 9,197 | - | 9,197 | 12,176 |
| Donations and Grants | 7,645 | (32,456) | (24,811) | 8,079 |
| Legacies and Funeral Collections | 14,658 | - | 14,658 | - |
| Sponsored Cycle Ride & Gift Aid | 134,542 | - | 134,542 | 132,233 |
| Membership & Outings, Lectures | 9,417 | - | 9,417 | 5,627 |
| TOTAL INCOME | 175,459 | (32,456) | 143,003 | 158,115 |
| EXPENDITURE ON: | | | | |
| Charitable Activities | | | | |
| Grants to Churches - Approved | 123,971 | 1,927 | 125,898 | 114,006 |
| - Lapsed/Declined | (20,500) | - | (20,500) | (2,000) |
| | 103,471 | 1,927 | 105,398 | 112,006 |
| Sponsored Cycle Ride - Distribution to Churches | 56,566 | - | 56,566 | 54,442 |
| John Briggs memorial lecture | - | - | - | - |
| Members' Outings and Lectures | 2,411 | - | 2,411 | 395 |
| Administration | | | | |
| - Independent Examination | 1,224 | - | 1,224 | 1,212 |
| - Investment Management | 4,800 | - | 4,800 | 1,818 |
| - Sponsored Cycle Ride Expenses | - | - | - | 4,587 |
| - Other (including printing, postage, etc) | 6,442 | - | 6,442 | 3,477 |
| TOTAL EXPENDITURE | 174,914 | 1,927 | 176,841 | 177,937 |
| Revaluation of Investments | 25,103 | - | 25,103 | 26,738 |
| Realised Gains/Losses on Sales of Investments | 377 | - | 377 | (86,871) |
| NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS | 26,025 | (34,383) | (8,358) | (79,955) |
| Total funds brought forward | 555,209 | 34,383 | 589,592 | 669,547 |
| TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD | 581,234 | - | 581,234 | 589,592 |

* These funds are being administered by the Charity on behalf of the Allchurches Trust to fund the installation of roof alarms.

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 2021

| | Unrestricted Funds £ | Restricted Funds * £ | Total 2021 £ | Total 2020 £ |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| FIXED ASSETS | | | | |
| Tangible Fixed Assets | - | - | - | - |
| Investments | 402,529 | - | 402,529 | 380,994 |
| TOTAL FIXED ASSETS | 402,529 | - | 402,529 | 380,994 |
| CURRENT ASSETS | | | | |
| Loans to Churches | - | - | - | - |
| Other Debtors | 1,250 | - | 1,250 | 2,675 |
| Cash at Bank | 302,475 | 2,500 | 247,297 | 366,195 |
| TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS | 303,725 | 2,500 | 306,225 | 368,870 |
| LIABILITIES | | | | |
| Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year | | | | |
| Grants approved but unpaid | 122,800 | 2,500 | 125,300 | 159,072 |
| Creditors | 2,220 | - | 2,220 | 1,200 |
| | 125,020 | 2,500 | 127,520 | 160,272 |
| TOTAL NET ASSETS | 581,234 | - | 581,234 | 589,592 |
| THE FUNDS OF THE FRIENDS: | | | | |
| Unrestricted | 581,234 | - | 581,234 | 555,209 |
| Restricted | - | - | - | 34,383 |
| | 581,234 | - | 581,234 | 589,592 |

* These funds are being administered by the Charity on behalf of the Allchurches Trust to fund the installation of roof alarms.

TRUSTEES' STATEMENT

It is not practicable to include in this document the full accounts of The Friends of Kent Churches as required by the Charities Act 2005 due to their length. We therefore present summarised accounts as permitted by the legislation. These may not contain sufficient information to allow for a full understanding of the financial affairs of the Charity.

For further information the full annual accounts and the reports of the Trustees should be consulted. Copies of these can be obtained from the Chairman.

Paul Britton
Chairman and Trustee
April 2022

MEMBERSHIP

Our membership has remained fairly stable through the pandemic, which is perhaps surprising given that the main source of new individual members is our membership leaflet normally on display in many Kent churches, most of which have been put away because of Covid. We have just printed a new leaflet which we shall be distributing to churches and a copy is enclosed with this report which we hope that you will give to a friend to encourage them to join.

We have welcomed the following the new members for 2021:

| | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Anthony Butler | Janet Loveless and Jonathan Groves |
| Graham and Marina Collins | Jean Middleton |
| Mike Fitzgerald | Dr and Mrs Shaw |
| Robert Hudson | June Slaughter |
| Roger Lee | Judith and Michael Steward |

The following churches joined the Friends during the year:

Capel United Church
Greenhithe, St Mary
Leeds and Broomfield, St Nicholas
Ridley, St Peter
Westgate on Sea, Christchurch URC
Willesborough, Christchurch Free Church

SPONSORED RIDE & STRIDE

Ride & Stride 2021



The sponsorship and donations received from the annual Ride & Stride event have again formed a major part of The Friends of Kent Churches income which is reflected in the financial support that can be passed on to churches in grants. The 2021 Kent Ride & Stride took place on another beautiful day for riding and striding, although COVID 19 did continue to limit the involvement of a number of churches. However, a few more sponsored participants took part than in 2020 and a magnificent £115,00 has been raised with gift aid still to be added to that sum.

The church raising the most money this year was St Bartholomew, Otford - a magnificent £2,190. The most visited church was again St George, Ivychurch with St Peter, Newchurch on its heels and other Romney Marsh churches followed on. This year over 100 more visits were recorded to our churches

than last year but this still falls short of the 2019 numbers. Nigel Matcham and Darren Blundell again win the prize for visiting the most churches. Kent still sits third in the County fundraising league. Although there have been fewer participants in the last two years, those who have participated have raised considerably more funds on an individual basis.

There were some wonderful achievements and stories from participants with some exquisitely planned routes. St Michael, Sittingbourne's supporters found they were sharing the streets with Komodo Circus and one of the street entertainers pitched outside the church on a unicycle for a while to welcome the riders and a the local paper featured the event with a caption "Wheely good way to raise church cash!". Heather Mills raised money for Christ Church, Willesborough with her Nordic Walking and produced a tweet of her church-by-church journey.



Heather Mills' kit for her Nordic walk



St Paul, Rusthall tandem riders



St Paul, Rusthall taking a break



St Paul, Rusthall on the move

A tandem headed up the efforts of St Paul, Rusthall and they have sent in some great photos. Organising the day involves a huge effort by the committee and area and local organisers. The Friends are most grateful to them and the many participants and sponsors. Half the money raised by each participant goes to their own church if they so wish, the remainder coming to the Friends of Kent Churches to finance the grants programme.

County Organiser

Lucy O'Flaherty stood in and did a great job as County Organiser for 2021. Rosemary Dymond, one of the most intrepid cyclists (visited over 60 churches in 2021) has now taken on the role. This is in addition to her being our representative on the National Ride and Stride Committee – well done Rosemary!

Ride & Stride Saturday 10th September 2022

The next Ride & Stride day is on Saturday 10th September 2022. Let us pray for good weather for a fourth year running and that this tremendous collective effort to support the churches of Kent continues to flourish.

Susan Hooper

THE REVEREND ELIZABETH TOY

We were grateful to be remembered by Elizabeth Toy when she planned her funeral, directing that any donations be divided between the Friends and Tonbridge Children's Workshop. She was a woman who touched many people's lives through social work and her ministry, witnessed by the full church at her funeral despite Covid. We are honoured that she remembered us.

A long-time member of the Friends, her connection went back to its foundation in 1949 when her father became our first Secretary and later Chairman in 1967, finally retiring in 1982. A part of our history indeed.



GRANTS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2021

This year we were able to meet as a committee as well as make individual visits to those churches we were considering for grants. Helpful as it was during Covid to email and have Zoom meetings it was never quite the same as seeing projects and meeting those committed to raising the funds. It soon became clear that many if not all churches had suffered financially as well as socially due to closure during the epidemic. Fund-raising events just had not happened. It was proving difficult also for churches to get quotes for work to be done as either builders were having problems getting supplies or were inundated with work.

So, although there was some increase in the number of applications compared with the Covid-affected year of 2020, the numbers were still below pre-Covid levels. We made offers totalling £131,971 to 28 churches and chapels. Of these 15 were in the Canterbury diocese, 11 were in Rochester and two were non-conformist churches.

Although this strays into 2022, rather than the accounting year strictly covered by this annual report, I must mention one particularly notable award which we made in January. This was our offer of a £25,000 grant to All Saints, Maidstone, Kent's largest parish church and one of the largest medieval parish churches in south-east England. All Saints, a church with few resources, needs major roof repairs costing well over £1m. Luckily it has received a grant of £352,000 from the Heritage Stimulus Fund (part of the Government's Covid response) but it needs to raise £125,000 from other sources to finance this first phase. We were pleased to be able to help with one of our largest ever grants.

One area of concern has been the number of Ride and Stride churches to whom we are most grateful for their contribution and enthusiasm but who nevertheless might fall outside our remit for grants. These tend to be the non-conformist churches whose buildings are not medieval nor deemed to be of architectural or historic interest and so appear to be outside our terms of reference. We raised this anomaly with the Executive Committee who agreed and so are putting a proposal to the AGM as to how we might address the problem.

Peter Lock, Chairman, Grants Committee

FRIENDS OF KENT CHURCHES GRANTS PAID IN 2021

The lists below are the proposed grants which were recommended by the Grants Committee and approved by the Executive Committee in 2021 and which will be paid when a project is finished and the right documentation is supplied:

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| Ashford, St Mary | £1,550 |
| Bexleyheath, Christ Church | £5,000 |
| Chevening, St Botolph | £5,000 |
| Crayford, St Paulinus | £10,000 |
| Denton, St Mary Magdalene | £1,250 |
| Ditton, St Peter ad Vincula | £8,000 |
| Eythorne, SS Peter & Paul | £500 |
| Five Oak Green, URC | £1,500 |
| Foots Cray, All Saints | £2,000 |
| Frittenden, St Mary | £10,000 |
| Hawkhurst, St Lawrence | £328 |
| Headcorn, SS Peter & Paul | £7,000 |
| Hoo, St Werbergh | £2,000 |
| Ivychurch, St George | £478 |
| Kennington, St Mary | £10,000 |
| Maidstone, All Saints | £6,000 |
| Milton Regis, Holy Trinity | £6,500 |
| Northfleet, St Botolph | £8,000 |
| Ridley, St Peter | £6,000 |
| Sandhurst, St Nicholas | £865 |
| Smallhythe, St John the Baptist | £1,000 |
| Sole Street, St Mary | £10,000 |
| Tunbridge Wells, St Barnabas | £1,000 |
| Tunstall, St John Baptist | £12,500 |
| Westgate-on-Sea URC | £7,500 |
| Willesborough, Christ Church | £4,000 |
| Woodchurch, All Saints | £3,000 |
| Wrotham, St George | £1,000 |
| Total | £131,971 |

HOW OUR GRANTS ARE USED

The grant of £25,000 which we have offered to All Saints, Maidstone, mentioned in Peter Lock's report, is exceptional for the Friends. With a grants budget of about £150,000 a year, a grant of that size is bound to be rare. Much more typical are relatively modest grants to enable churches to carry out much needed repair works and two recent examples are illustrated below.



In 2020 we offered £2,000 to St Michael, Hernhill for window repairs. These included the re-leading of the west window of the south aisle, shown here, which had buckled under wind pressure. The glass was designed and made by Thomas Baillie & Co and was installed in 1869. It shows the Entombment and the Ascension of Christ. The re-leading was carried out by John Corley of Deal.

Also in 2020, we offered £850 to All Saints, Biddenden to enable them to repair plasterwork in the south chancel chapel. Damp had caused the render at the base of the walls of the chapel to disintegrate: the effect was very disfiguring. The photographs show the south wall of the chapel before and after re-plastering. The east wall of the chapel was also extensively replastered.



PLANNED EVENTS IN 2022

Visits

Three church tours are planned, including an all-day tour to the Isle of Sheppey. The afternoon tours to east Kent in June and to south Kent in September start at 2.00pm; that to Sheppey in July starts at 11am. In each case timings for the rest of the tour and details of where to park will be given at the first church.

There are two ways of applying for tickets. If paying by bank transfer, please make payment to Friends of Kent Churches, CAF Bank Sort code 40-52-40, Account number 00022279 and let Jill Rutland know (jill.rutland@hotmail.co.uk /01732 843248) which visits you are paying for so you can be added to the list. Please pay by bank transfer if possible and use the word 'Events' as a reference. If paying by cheque, please use the enclosed application form which is also available on the website. A written confirmation will be given if you include a stamped addressed envelope, otherwise acknowledgement will be by email or telephone.

Thursday 9 June: a visit to churches east of Canterbury arranged by John Lumley tel 01233 756249. Tea will be provided at Ash.

We meet at St James, Staple CT3 1LN at 2pm. St James is a long, mainly 14th century building, with earlier – possibly Saxon – remains. There are good monuments and an unusual 17th century lychgate. You can park in The Street outside the church.

St Mary the Blessed Virgin, Woodnesborough CT13 0NW has a medieval tower with a very pretty 18th century top, like a hunting-stand or belvedere. The body of the church is late 12th century, with arcades influenced by contemporary work at Canterbury Cathedral. There is good Victorian and modern glass.

St Nicholas, Ash CT3 2EN is a cruciform 13th century church, restored by Butterfield in the 1840s. It has good furnishings, much stained glass by Ward & Hughes and the best series of medieval effigies of any parish church in Kent.

Wednesday 13 July: a visit to four churches on the Isle of Sheppey arranged by Amicia Oldfield tel 01795 886155/07791 183067. Refreshments will not be provided on this tour: the ticket price is to fund a donation to each church visited. Please indicate on the form if you want lunch at the Ferry House Inn, Harty (which can accommodate up to 30 people – the first 30 to book will be reserved places and a menu will be sent to you shortly before the visit, inviting you to let the pub know your choice of food). Alternatively, you may wish to bring a picnic. In the afternoon coffee or tea can be bought at Bosun's in Queenborough, which is opposite the church.

We meet at All Saints, Eastchurch ME12 4BN at 11am. The church is a large, symmetrical mid-15th century building erected by Boxley Abbey. Its fine, panelled roofs are more Cheshire than Kent. It has a 17th century pulpit, a splendid rood screen and good stained glass by Karl Parsons. Parking is on the street in the village.

St Thomas the Apostle, Harty ME12 4BQ must be the most remote church in Kent on a wonderful site overlooking the Swale estuary. It is a small building of great charm with an early Norman nave. There is a 14th century rood screen and a remarkable Flemish 'kist' or chest, carved with a jousting scene.

St Mary & St Sexburga, Minster in Sheppey ME12 2HE is a venerable foundation of 664 by St Sexburga, Jutish Queen of Kent. She became the first abbess of a nunnery here. The present church consists of the later Saxon nave of the nunnery church alongside a 13th century parochial nave and chancel. There are fine medieval monuments. The monastic gatehouse survives west of the church.

Holy Trinity, Queenborough ME11 5EP was founded very late - in 1366 when Edward III founded borough and castle as a defence against French raids – and is a modest building of that date. There are some good fittings, especially the font decorated with a relief of the long-vanished castle (see the photograph on the inside front cover of this report), and an extraordinary painted ceiling on which putti disport themselves amongst clouds.

Tuesday 13 September: a visit to churches east of Tonbridge organised by Paul Britton tel 01732 365794. Tea will be provided at Marden.

We meet at 2pm at St Luke, Matfield TN12 7LH. St Luke is a charming proto-Arts-and-Crafts church designed by Basil Champneys and opened in 1876. The interior is small but beautiful: Champneys was responsible for all the furnishings and the stained glass is by CE Kempe. You can park on Maidstone Road or in Sophurst Lane behind the church.

All Saints, Brenchley TN12 7NJ. The church is a handsome 13th and 14th century building in a very handsome village. It has a splendid nave roof with a ceillure and good furnishings, glass and monuments, including a pretty one of 1652 to a couple who are endearingly depicted with touching hands (illustrated inside the back cover of this report). The churchyard is full of good headstones.

St Michael & All Angels. Marden TN12 9DR. The most startling feature of St Michael is the powerful east window of 1963 by Patrick Reyntiens (see the back cover photograph). But there is much else to see in this largely 14th century church, including a 17th century font cover of the kind which has doors.

Briggs Event

The Briggs Event is sponsored each year by the Friends to help the host church raise funds. The Friends contribute to the cost of a lecturer and other associated costs of staging the event. There have been no sponsored events during the pandemic and no church has arranged an event yet for 2022: any church interested in doing so should get in touch with me on 01732 365794 or at pauljbritton@live.co.uk.

Autumn Events

There will be a visit to Canterbury Cathedral on **Wednesday 5th October**, including an opportunity to see the current restoration work from the scaffolding sheathing the west front. There will also be an autumn lecture later in the month. Details of both events and how to book will be given in the Newsletter later in the year.

ACTIVITIES DURING THE LAST YEAR

In May we held the AGM at Sandhurst and also visited Hawkhurst. In July we visited three churches east of Maidstone – Boughton Malherbe, Egerton and Pluckley; and in September three more – Offham, Wrotham and Ightham. All of these churches illustrated Kent's rich inheritance of fittings, glass and monuments. October saw a tour of Rochester Cathedral led by John Bailey, including an ascent to the roof for a small group, seen in this photograph.



Our autumn lecture was given by Joe Elders, Head of Buildings Strategy at the Church Buildings Council of the Church of England, who described some of the problems facing churches and the measures being taken by the church nationally to help them. Joe has been heavily involved in the current project to give All Saints, Maidstone a more secure future. A spirited discussion about the faculty system and its attendant delays followed! These events were all well attended, if not quite at pre-pandemic levels.

NEW GUIDE BOOK

The Friends of Ulcombe Church have published (2020, 52pp. £5) an extended revision of the 1983 edition of *A History of All Saints Parish Church, Ulcombe*, with text by Molly Poulter, design by Alexandra Hawes and colour photographs by Christopher Rigby. The first third gives a history of the site from the pre-Christian period up to the establishment of the college of priests in the early 13th century. A very clear dated plan of the church then leads into a tour of the building, described under 24 succinct but informative headings. There is so much of interest within this impressive church with its fine views over the Weald, and this guide will greatly enhance the visitors' experience. Highly recommended. Copies can be obtained from Molly Poulter, The Old Dairy, Street Farm, Ulcombe, Kent ME17 1DP (tel: 01622 842988). The price is £6.00, including postage. Cheques payable to 'Friends of Ulcombe Church'.

KENT'S COLLEGIATE CHURCHES

There were seven medieval collegiate churches in the county. These are listed below in chronological order of their foundation, with the name of the founder and the size and composition of the community.

Ulcombe, founded c. 1215-1220, by Ralph St Leger (an archpriest, 2 canons, a deacon and a clerk); **Wingham**, 1287, by Archbishop Peckham (a provost, 2 priests, 2 deacons, 2 sub-deacons); **Cobham**, 1362, by Sir Reginald Cobham (a master, 4 chaplains, increased to 10 in 1398); **Bredgar**, 1392, by Robert de Bredgare (a chaplain master and 2 clerk scholars); **Maidstone**, 1396, by Archbishop Courtenay (a master, 12 chaplains, 12 clerks); **Wye**, 1432, by Archbishop, later Cardinal, Kemp (a provost, 2 fellows, a parochial chaplain, 7 choristers, a clerk and a master of grammar); **Ashford**, 1467, by Sir John Fogg (a master, 2 chaplains, 2 clerks).

Apart from Bredgar, which was set up to train two scholars for the priesthood, they were all chantry colleges, a sort of super chantry chapel, where the main function was to pray, in the form of masses, for the soul of the founder/benefactor, and so speed his or her journey through the tortures of Purgatory to the final heavenly destination. Many *Doom* wall paintings depict the perceived terrors of Purgatory; fragments of a wall painting in Ulcombe show St Michael and a demon 'weighing souls' to determine their ultimate fate.

Chantry chapels were far less expensive to fund than a college of priests, which required a considerable endowment (the three larger establishments have Archbishops' involvement) and could be 'in perpetuity'. The Reformation and the suppression of religious institutions meant that all were dissolved by 1540. Only



Cobham retains its original form, having been refounded in 1598 as New College, an almshouse for 20 poor persons. Five of the seven retain some of their stalls: Wye's were destroyed when the tower collapsed in 1686, and in Bredgar, only the domestic accommodation, The Chantry, remains.

The stalls at Ulcombe are particularly interesting and are some of the earliest in England, dating from c.1215-1220, and therefore coeval with those in Exeter Cathedral. Below a Decorated screen there are five stalls, three with carved misericords, presumably for the archpriest and the two canons, and one plain at each end for the deacon and clerk.

The stalls are separated by divisions which do not have elbows on which to rest the hands, but do have shoulders which are decorated with rather crudely carved human faces, somewhat reminiscent of those on English, and indeed European, Romanesque stone fonts. It seems likely that the single design (the two photographs on this page) was for the archpriest, while the canons rested their posteriors on the two versions of a very different creature.



Although this animal looks like a heraldic lion passant guardant, it isn't, and we need to look elsewhere for the likely source of the design. This would almost certainly have been a medieval bestiary, and one in Aberdeen University Library (see illustration to the right) has the most likely contender, the pard. The manuscript text tells us that:



The pard is a species which has a mottled skin, is extremely swift and thirsts for blood; for it kills at a single bound. The leopard is the product of the adultery of a lioness with a pard; their mating produces a third species. As Pliny says in his Natural History: the lion mates with the pard, or the pard with the lioness, and from both degenerate offspring are created, such as the mule and the burdon [a mule born of a horse and a she-ass].



(Photographs of Ulcombe courtesy of Christopher Rigby)

One source suggests that because of this sterility, the pard was a suitable symbol for an abbot or abbess, so also for an archpriest?

I have found no parallels for the beasts on the other misericords. A two headed beast is an amphisbaena, usually described as a snake or a lizard. What did it look like? It is described in the Aberdeen Bestiary thus: *The anphivena is so called because it has two heads, one where its head should be, the other on its tail; it moves quickly in the direction of either of its head, with its body forming a circle. Alone among snakes it faces the cold and is the first to come out of hibernation. Its eyes glow like lamps.*

That does not match the misericords, which look more like sea creatures, or the image overleaf, from a manuscript in the British Library. Other manuscripts have illustrations which emphasise the idea of a circle with heads close together. The manuscript limners were no doubt as confused as the carvers.

Leslie Smith

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