

St. Peter's Church Merton
Report to be presented to Merton Parish Council
At the AGM on 4th May 2021

Herewith is a brief summary from the PCC at St. Peter's Church, Merton.

Life at Merton Church during 2020 was challenging and for the most part non-existent. As indeed due to the onset of the COVID-19 virus pandemic 'Lockdown' it was for everyone in the country.

The major Nave roof repairs and other building works at the church were halted and finally completed by the Eastern Foundry Lead Company, appointed to undertake the work, in late summer 2020.

These urgent Roof repairs and associated other works in the church were only possible due to a National Heritage Lottery Fund Grant award to Merton Church.

National Heritage Lottery Fund Grant Award
Progress Report

National Heritage Lottery Fund Grant Award Outline:

In January 2019, after much hard work by the PCC and Project Team, a grant application was submitted to the National Heritage Lottery Fund (NHLF). The application, a creative and detailed plan, was for a three-stage project to:-

1. Repair Church Roof; 2. Install Kitchenette; 3. Facilitate Community Activities.

In March 2019, the NHLF informed the PCC and Project Team that they had decided to award a grant of up to £100,000 (68% of the total eligible project cost).

Heritage Project Summary:

St Peter's Church, Merton, is a Grade 1 listed, round-towered flint church containing many features of historical and architectural interest. The church and its artefacts were at risk from water damage following the theft of lead from the Nave roof and a temporary roof covering was in place for three years. A new Nave roof was a priority.

Funds were needed to fix the roof permanently and to also repair the North Porch roof which was showing signs of decay. After consultation with our Architect, a Structural Engineer, the Diocese of Norwich Advisory Committee and Heritage England, the PCC decided that a Turn-coated Zinc metal roof covering be used. Key factors being that the Zinc roofing has a similar appearance to lead but has the advantage it is unattractive to theft.

The PCC wish to extend the use of the church both as a local meeting place and as an attraction for visitors from further afield, taking into account its unique location near Peddars Way (Norfolk's only National Trail) and National Cycle Route 13. To facilitate this, we plan to install mains water and a small kitchenette at the back of the church.

A program of concerts, seminars and workshops has been drawn up, and development of a new website, heritage display material and booklets are planned to promote the church, its history and activities bringing them to a wider audience.

Need and Opportunity Which Our Project Will Address:

The first need of the project was the restoration of the Nave roof.

Secondly, the project is an opportunity to make this historical church also a functional place for people to gather, a meeting place for villagers and local groups and to fundraise. Merton lacks a village hall or any other community building that addresses that need. With a kitchenette in place this would vastly improve the catering facilities and afford an opportunity to attract a wider range of visitors to Merton's unique location. The third focus: the project plan has been developed to offer a range of seminars, workshops and concerts both for adults and children (including those with special needs) and will be delivered by history and music specialists.

An Open Day is planned to celebrate the restoration of the church, using new historical display panels produced as part of this project to illustrate the rich heritage of the Merton Church, the village and estate, from the Norman Conquest to the present day.

Heritage Project Progress:

Urgent work and repair of the Nave roof has been carried out and the new Zinc roof covering is in place, funded by the NHLF. Unfortunately, during the works to the roof, it was discovered that urgent repairs were also necessary to some of the roof timbers as well as cracks above the Chancel Arch. The PCC successfully secured additional grants for these urgent repairs. The Norfolk Churches Trust, Round Tower Churches, Paul Bassam Charitable Trust, and the Geoffrey Watling Charity kindly assisted by offering funding to cover these additional costs.

Subsequently, because of the Covid-19 pandemic and restrictions it has been impossible for the project to move forward as planned. However, the PCC are hoping in June 2021, subject to the Government's road map, work can be resumed in respect of the kitchenette.

Our project community activities are heavily reliant on community involvement, school children and volunteers, etc., Currently, COVID-19 has put these elements of the project and outcome at risk.

Given the extent of the challenge's schools are facing, it will not be possible to arrange face to face/physical 'History & Music Workshops', at St Peter's Church or Seminars, Art Experience, a Concert, Open Day for the scheduled dates at present. Therefore, alternative ideas to replace the community activities are in the process of being planned. A new website for St. Peter's Merton will be launched shortly providing information about the NHLF project and activities for the local and wider communities.

Carole Y Haggett, NHLF Project Team Manager

28th April 2021

Throughout the whole of 2020 it was not possible for any normal services to take place. Funerals were permitted but conducted just in the Churchyard. The exception being that of Lady Walsingham who very sadly passed away in late October and will be missed by so many. That funeral did take place in the church because the COVID-19 restrictions were eased at that time but with limited numbers present.

In conclusion to this report the PCC hope that services will once again take place on a regular basis when, as always, anyone is welcome to attend. Notification will be published in The Waylander magazine, and also on the Merton Church website as soon as it is up and running.

Carole Y Haggett (Secretary PCC St. Peter's Merton)

28th April 2021
