

# Annual Fabric Report 2024

## All Saints Church, Hethel



This year has been dominated by planning and preparing for work in the tower. Because it is like-for-like repair work, List B Approval has been sought and gained (rather than a full Faculty). A number of trusts have been approached for grant support, in the main successfully, and some individuals have made kind donations.

We were very sorry to learn of the death of former Churchwarden Irene Woodward in late spring. She joined the church after a number of years mowing the churchyard with the Wymondham Nature Group. The information board (for which Irene covered the cost) stands as an anonymous memorial to her love of Hethel Church and its wildlife.

Peter as de facto fabric officer initiated a discussion about succession planning given his and Cathy's declared intention to move to Norwich in the foreseeable future. As a result, others are taking some of the load, which is particularly helpful when it comes to initiating jobs that need to be done.

The PCC approved a Maintenance Plan to accompany a grant application; this will be a useful template for the church going forward.

Gratitude is due to David and Caleb Matthews, who performed high-level cleaning of the church with long handled brushes, a ladder and long vacuum cleaner hoses and to Emma and Will Stewart for clearing gutters and gulleys and helping with window cleaning. Emma and Will now regularly cut the curved 'swathe', strim round the benches and keep the rose beds tidy.

The air-source heat pumps continue to work reliably and effectively, requiring only an annual service - costly but necessary to protect the investment. This form of heating is relatively cheap, continues to make services more comfortable and to allow other winter activities.

No further quotes have been sought for restoring the plaques as this is an expensive low priority item. The Beevor family though informed have not responded.

The ledger stone restoration is not yet, in the PCC's opinion, complete. Skillingtons' view is that they have done what they quoted for. Specialist paint could now be used to pick out the lettering but this would be a time-consuming and so expensive job. A local friend of the church offered to take this on, but his health has deteriorated so the project is currently in limbo.

Paul Riches performed his usual good service in tidying the insides and tops of the hedges. The task of cutting back the east (far) side of the east hedge remains to be done when the ditch is dry.

The annual Wymondham Nature Group cut of the churchyard took place in early September (huge thanks as ever to Anne Edwards and her team, and to the Grays for dealing with the dragged-off herbage).

In June, the local council erected a finger post at the entrance to the church to indicate the Public Footpath that goes through the churchyard, the garden of King John's Thorn cottages and into the adjacent field. Although correct and shown on OS maps, this path has not been used by walkers for many years. Meanwhile, the path slightly farther west to the Hethel Thorn NWT Reserve is in daily use but does not have Public Footpath status. Given that the legal footpath passes over graves, intrusively through the reflective space of the churchyard and thence into a private garden, the Rector and PCC agreed to support an application to Norfolk CC properly to establish the footpath in use and to Extinguish the footpath on the map. This work progressed steadily and by the end of 2024 had received no objections at the informal consultation stage.

Memorial stones laid flat (principally for cremated remains) are already permitted under churchyard regulations but in a wildflower churchyard are likely to get overgrown and potentially lost. Accordingly, the PCC agreed to permit upright memorials for interment of ashes at the Rector's discretion.

This is essentially an enumeration of the headlines. The background context is a church in good order, well looked-after by a small team of daily 'church-checkers', cleaned thoroughly once a month and warmly appreciated by many visitors.

Peter Nicholls, 28.4.25  
de facto Fabric Officer