

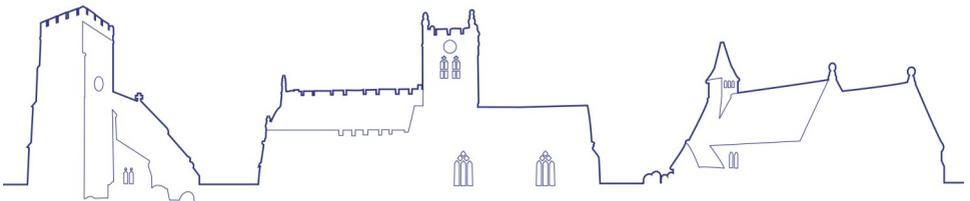


THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND



CLAVERDON,
PRESTON BAGOT
AND WOOTTON WAWEN

CHURCH REPORTS
2016



Dates for the
Annual Parochial Church Meetings

Claverdon

Monday, 10th April at 7.30pm

Church Centre, Claverdon

Preston Bagot

Monday, 24th April at 7.30pm

The Old Rectory, Preston Bagot

Wootton Wawen

Wednesday, 26th April at 7.30pm

St Peter's Church

All are welcome to attend

Please note only those on the Church Electoral Roll

may vote during the meeting if needed.

ANNUAL REPORT

CHURCHES OF ARDEN

2016

INTRODUCTION

Dear Friends,

Just over a year ago my family and I moved and joined you. The induction service was truly wonderful, full of God in a way that is beyond description. We worshipped and Bishop John preached God's word. My introduction to worship in this benefice set the bar high!

For me, the last year has been about taking the time to get to know as many of you as possible. A slow year in some respects that has been about 'being' rather than 'doing'. It takes time to understand the nuances of a parish and to learn the history in a manner that informs the present.

What I've found is wonderful, three parishes where the church is a significant part of community life. Each parish different and each church having a different approach to its communal life and worship. The variety is enriching and something to be celebrated. We have much to learn from each other but there is an underlying unity in our faith in Jesus Christ.

I've also noticed that a gift of generosity flows through all three church communities. Having served the church in Holy Orders for more than a decade and been privileged to be part of many churches, I can honestly say that my family and I have never experienced so much generosity. It's very special and something for which we give thanks to God.

You will have noticed that I'm not a Vicar who likes to micromanage or needs to feel 'in charge' of everything. Indeed I tend to lead 'from the centre' rather than the front. It's been a privilege to encourage many of you in your ministries over the last year and to share in God's work with you. Over the last twelve months I've tried hard to watch, listen and understand each church and its parish setting. I've not rushed to offer new ideas but sought, in as far as I've been able, to join in with what God is already doing here.



I don't claim that I've now got all the answers; far from it. There is still much to learn. What I have found is that we are blessed with many talented people who are living out their calling to serve our Lord. I've seen God at work in each of our communities and that is truly wonderful.

Over this coming year, I hope to offer some ideas. I'm keen that we look to continue your established tradition of pilgrimages. This is something that will take careful planning and I will look to form a planning group soon.

I'm also hoping to offer opportunities for deeper Christian teaching and by the time this is published I trust we will have enjoyed a Lent lecture using a DVD resource to enable us to gain from the wisdom and insight of one of this country's foremost Christian teachers.

I'm also keen that there is the opportunity for a group to attend a



Christian festival this year. To this end, I will be announcing details soon about how we might attend the Greenbelt festival in Northamptonshire over the August bank holiday. As I'm sure some of you know, Greenbelt is a Northamptonshire-based Christian Arts Festival. It's a real mixture that encompasses worship and teaching, inspiration

and encouragement to live out our faith in the world around us. There will be arts performances in many genres. The festival is known for its (basic) camping facilities but many who attend stay offsite in local accommodation, either provided by Greenbelt or found on the private market. Unlike, perhaps, other summer festivals, Greenbelt is enjoyed by people of all ages.

As this year draws to a close, I want to thank each of you for the part you play in the life of the churches. I also want to thank you for your friendship and support. My prayer in all of this is that God will take each of us deeper into His heart that we will serve him with ever greater freedom.

Wishing you every blessing,

Andy

Revd Andy Larkin

Vicar

CLAVERDON

With the interregnum now firmly behind us, this has been the opportunity to open a new chapter in our history. It has been wonderful to welcome Andy and his family into our churches and to see them settle into their new lives here. It is truly a blessing to have the vibrancy of youth come to the vicarage and we pray that it will continue to inspire our mission to families.

This has been a year when we have settled into the rhythm of post-interregnum worship but are also looking forward with renewed energy to new challenges. We are reflecting on what God intends for this church and how we need to respond and how to look outwardly to our community.

There has been much to give thanks about. July we attended the Cathedral to witness the Ordination of James Holden as a Deacon. A time of great joy and blessing. We have welcomed Linda Walters as the new parish secretary. She is doing a wonderful job stepping into the huge shoes of Sue Holt and we are also very indebted to Norrie for all the work



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she is doing in support. We are also blessed by the arrival of Leah, our second youth worker who is making a huge contribution to Church life alongside Chelsi who has stayed with us for a second year.



Our wide range of house groups continues to flourish and some opportunities for deeper communal study are being developed and due to start shortly.

Numerous events and activities have continued throughout the year. There was a trip to Spring Harvest, an Easter workshop and the October light party to name but a few. The men's ministry has continued strongly combining reflection with breakfasts, curry nights, and a treasure hunt.

Christmas and Eastertide are always moments when the life of the church comes into stark contrast with that of the secular and commercial world. This year many of our congregation enjoyed the very special atmosphere of the Advent service at the Cathedral as well as a wide variety of worship opportunities in Claverdon itself.

Christmas Messy Church, Christingle and Crib service were all well attended, as were the more traditional services. The Christmas Day lunch was very well received, with increasing numbers of people coming from the village and beyond to celebrate together. This event is hugely valued. The Easter workshop was also very well supported and attracted large numbers of children.

Several of our community have felt called to establish a prayer and fellowship time, reaching out to the community and so quietly but steadily Open Church is becoming a reality and growing. There is a team who meet several mornings a week in church to pray and to offer prayer, a chat or just a cup of coffee to anyone who wants to drop in and experience Christian fellowship.

The Alpha course was very successful with a good number of people attending but even more excitingly has led to a further course for those that wished to continue their spiritual journey.

Ministry to families and young people has been a focus of effort for some time and this continues. Chelsi and Leah bring great enthusiasm and joy to their work and have proved very inspirational to our young people. They have led worship and started several initiatives including running new Lent services for families on Sunday evenings. Please pray for their work.



On a practical note the Youth Room in the Church Centre is now refurbished and in great demand and the Youth Club meets regularly. Messy Church continues to grow and is popular with many families who do not regularly attend other forms of worship. Our other groups such as Awesome, Noah's Story Book and Open the Book continue to flourish and we maintain good links with Stepping stones and Claverdon School.

We joined with the wider village to celebrate the Queen's 90th birthday...a flower event in church, the fun of the scarecrow trail, a barn dance with paella, a Songs of Praise service in the Dorothea Mitchell Hall and, of course, not forgetting the campanologists ringing out at the Queen's request ...something for everyone.

We continue to support Christian charitable work at home and abroad. Among others we donate to Christian outreach work in Malawi, Burma, South Africa and locally to The Well, A'Rocha, and the Addington Trust. This is not an exhaustive list but gives a flavour of the diversity of our giving. Many of our community give their time in many different ways, examples being bereavement ministry, hospital chaplaincy and going into school.

The fabric of our buildings remain in good condition. Sadly, in response to multiple thefts, we have had to install security systems on the roof of the church to protect the lead flashing. We are also about to install an automatic locking system on the church door to relieve the dedicated team who have for years overseen the opening and closing of the Church each day. This system has operated successfully at Preston Bagot for some time and should be equally efficient in Claverdon. Thank you so much to all those who have dutifully ensured over all these years that our church has been accessible to anyone who wanted to enter whenever they needed. An unsung but vital job.

The lack of adequate office space for our expanded team means that we are just beginning a review of the facilities of the Church Centre and to ensure that it continues to serve the needs of our church and community over the coming years. An exciting prospect for the year ahead.

It is impossible to mention and thank all of those who give their time and effort in keeping the church running practically and spiritually. Some jobs are high profile and some get less of the recognition that they deserve, but we all serve God in caring for His church, spiritual and temporal. The leadership team thanks you all for that you do. It is valued.

Special thanks is given to Reg Lilly and Brian Ollis who have both stepped down from their respective roles after many years of service. Also thank you to John Knightbridge who completes his tenure as Church Warden and to Anthony Archer who is stepping down from the leadership team. They have both been incredibly generous with their time and effort over the last few years.

We look back on an eventful but productive year and forward to exploring Gods purpose for us together.

WOOTTON WAWEN

In February this year, 2017, we celebrated the first anniversary of when Andy, Jo and their three children moved into the vicarage after a 16-month interregnum. We hope by now they are beginning to 'see the wood for the trees' as it must take time to get to know three lots of congregations and villagers and to remember who and where they each come from. Then in June we welcomed Linda Walters to the role of Benefice Secretary. Linda has settled in well with us and coping with the various demands of individuals and volunteers. Lay Reader Norrie Moore has been on hand to fend off problems and is continuing to manage the office work for the weddings.

During the last two years, Government guidelines on the legalities for weddings have been amended and for ourselves has resulted in an 18-page marriage pack for couples to complete and take notice of. After a bumper year for weddings in 2016 and following our popular wedding preparation morning in February, we look to be having a quieter 2017 but still are the favourite venue for many couples from Birmingham and Solihull.

It is a privilege for us to be much involved and Wendy Hollands of our Flower Guild tells us that their four teams of talented flower arrangers had great pleasure in working with ten couples and their families to contribute to their special day. Any profits are ploughed back to the church; recently paying for replacement figures for the Nativity set and also supporting gardening work along the church path. The best of weddings also makes full use of our Choir and Tower Bells. Choir leader, Hilary Thomas, in her report all the way from holidaying with her new granddaughter and family in Australia, tells us the choir is going strong under the guidance of organist Stuart Beare. Rehearsing every Tuesday for just an hour is very worthwhile. The congregation and visiting preachers fully appreciate that we have a choir which, as Hilary says, is quite rare in village churches and she commends the commitment of the current membership while always hoping for offers from more men to join to keep a balanced sound and allow for more adventurous music to be tackled.

Bell Tower Captain, Keith Davies, comments that the numerous weddings in 2016 helped to enrich the bell fund and along with monies raised by Julie and Norman Tame's garden party allowed them to make a

generous allowance towards the Turret Clock repairs. They were also able to contribute towards the installation of a peal of bells for the English Church of St. George, in Ypres, Belgium. We have to say, 'very well done', to Ethan Paine, the latest recruit to the bell ringing team who has achieved his Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award using bell ringing as one of his skills. Keith acknowledges and appreciates the support of his loyal band and, if you would like to join them, they practice on Monday evenings.

Wearing his other hat as chief Clock-winder, Keith explains that the winding drum of the clock failed during the year, leaving the heavy weights suspended at the top. "Experts" from the diocese forbade us tackling the problem ourselves on Health & Safety grounds, resulting in a very expensive repair. Keith and Churchwarden Steve Wiseman were on hand to fully assist in the work of replacement. Many individuals and groups, including the Wagen Trust contributed to the cost of these repairs and the PCC and churchwardens are very grateful indeed as the cost of repairs was covered by their generosity.

Amanda Elliott, our Social Committee organiser, explains that our Lent Lunch in 2016 was in aid of the Honey Pot Children's charity and we enjoyed a wonderful selection of homemade soups whilst hearing about the work the charity undertakes. Easter followed on when much fun was had at the Easter Eggstravaganza. A large Easter bunny was seen on the main Stratford Road enticing visitors but the poor weather conditions kept numbers down. Celebrations for Queen Elizabeth's 90th birthday were everywhere and as Amanda says, our Exhibition was a truly wonderful display attracting much interest with each decade of the Queen's life being celebrated. Numerous visitors came to view over the Birthday week. This gave a wonderful send-off for the Wagen Trust's bi-annual Music Festival beginning that same weekend with a memorable Concert from 'Tarantara'. We had an Elizabethan Tea Party with strawberries and light organ music played by Guy Pardo. Then it was a pleasure to welcome back 'Armonico Consort' this time with wine connoisseur Oz Clarke recounting anecdotes connecting music and wine through the ages. On the final evening, we were presented with 'Modern Jazz Classics' which was greeted with much enthusiasm and audience participation. We thank the Wagen Trust and their team of helpers for all their hard work and for the great enjoyment and pleasure received.

This is an opportunity to thank Derek Hill for all his work in the churchyard and more, as he tells us that the very cold spell in Spring 2016 inhibited growth of the grass at that time. This was followed by a very wet June which made it hard to keep on top of the mowing, despite that the new mower, bought in 2015, was used for approximately 150 hours! The end



of September saw the annual churchyard clear up organised by Hilary Thomas who also provided the refreshments of rolls and cider for the 14 villagers who pitched in to help. A great deal of strimming and pruning was carried out by the workforce whose names could fill the page. All the debris and dead wood were consigned to the bonfire. Special mention of David Gilbert and Barry Hewitt who painted the Ladies and Disabled Toilets to a very high standard, not sparing the spiders. David also repaired the Car Park signs and both he and Linda keep a watching brief on their regular walks with Tommy.

In all of this activity we do not forget the pastoral care and worship at St. Peter's. We especially thank Norrie Moore for the vast amount of work she does in having taken on so many of our Church Services over the last couple of years. We appreciate the contributions from James Holden and Phil Hanson in assisting Vicar Andy. Our small Pastoral Team continues to offer support to those who are unable to attend church for whatever reason. We feel it is important that the bereaved, the lonely, the housebound and those without transport, can continue to feel part of the church family. Sometimes people can be shy about admitting a problem. However, any member of the congregation of St. Peter's is welcome to contact the Pastoral Team if they know someone who would like an occasional or regular visit, someone who would value our prayers for their health/well-being, or someone struggling to access St. Peter's for regular services. Home communion is available. The Pastoral Team never pushes themselves but please note that a round-the-clock prayer cycle is maintained for all those on our hearts and minds.

Our house groups are healthy and continue to meet fortnightly for bible study, fellowship and afternoon tea. As usual, we covered three study courses during the year and enjoyed a joint social event before Christmas with the off shoot of the 'all men's Saturday group'. Newcomers are

welcome to come and join us.

Our Harvest Supper was a success with around £900 being available for the two charities, Farm Africa and the Stratford Hospital Community Fund. Amanda reminds us that the hot supper was mouth-watering and contributed to diners generously bidding at the auction. We thank Amanda and her team, Derek as auctioneer and Janet and friends who prepared the excitingly-wrapped boxes of food, much that was given by the school children at their Harvest Service in church.

Our stalwart Sunday refreshment team of regulars, Janet, Beatrice, Judith and Ann unstintingly provide not only tea and coffee but sometimes enticing and freshly made specialities all to go with the 'after church'

opportunity to meet with friends for a chat.

What one person describes as, 'greatly improved ambience and community spirit'.

This was particularly important following the Ecumenical Carol Service with St. Benedict's congregation where we shared seasonal mince pies and stollen and had time to chat with Father Damian and Father Pat and other friends.



An important part of promoting St. Peter's to other people and recognising our responsibility as an interesting Grade I historic church is to encourage visits from other groups and organisations, but this can only be done if we have suitable guides to lead them around the church. Having lost Terry Mason to pastures new and the deaths of David Daymond and recently Don Graham, we are now dependant on Shirley Davies's good offices for this service. Shirley writes, 'It is a privilege to meet people who choose to visit the church for a guided tour. They are always complimentary, responsive, appreciative and amazed. The usual remark being, "I have driven past this church many times and promised I would call in". They are never disappointed. Within the group there will be a common link between them, the church or village. They say that they will come back again and they mean it. Sadly, with the recent death of Don Graham, who carried so much knowledge from years of dedicated research in and around St. Peter's, I am now the only person able to offer this tour. During 2016, there was a determined effort to persuade others to come along to build a

team but this floundered. It is not too late to try once more. It is a most valuable source of communication helping to promote St. Peter's." If you feel you could help with this worthwhile and infrequent activity please be in touch, lots of help and guidance are available.

Our Village Magazine has always been a good read and over the past years has developed into a glossy, colourful well-presented local news letter that we should be very proud of. As the current Editor, Helen Holt says, '2016 was a good – and colourful – year.' A move to new printers meant we were able to launch full colour 'glossy' covers for each of the ten issues, along with improved print and paper quality. This was made possible by increased advertising revenue, the generosity of our readers – and a favourable price structure from our new printers. There was more good news when we won a Magazine Awards 2016. However, the future may not be as bright, given the imminent retirement of Helen and the team is actively seeking a successor to ensure the magazine can continue its role in reflecting life across all communities in the Village.

If you would like to respond to any of the activities mentioned here please see the phone list of contacts in the Magazine.

PRESTON BAGOT

The words from the poem by Doris Bateman sums up the essence of Preston Bagot,

“There it stands, high on the hill
The little Church, so quiet and still
Been so for years – and always will
The Church at Preston Bagot”

And so, our worship continues at Preston Bagot as it has down the years with the traditional pattern of worship using the Book of Common Prayer with two Holy Communion services and two of Morning Prayer.

The start of 2016 saw the beginning of a new chapter for the Churches of Arden with the arrival of the Revd Dr Andy Larkin and his

family from Derbyshire. The Licencing Service kindly hosted by Wootton Wawen and led by Bishop John was an occasion for celebration and thanksgiving. We are also very appreciative of Norrie's continuing ministry plus the Revd James Holden, now taking a regular part in our worship and his use of the Prayer Books!

In July, we joined Claverdon and Wootton Wawen at Coventry Cathedral to witness James Holden become a Deacon and we give thanks to God for his ministry and work in our parishes.

In March, we were very sorry to say goodbye to Sue Holt, our excellent church secretary, as she moved on to pastures new at Holy Trinity in Stratford On Avon. Sue had been a tower of strength before and during the interregnum and it wasn't until she left that we realised just how much she had done in keeping the three parishes running so smoothly, thank you Sue. At the end of July, we were very pleased to welcome Linda Walters to take over the role and she is doing a splendid job in learning all the rules and regulations of the Church of England!

The venue for this year's Lent lunch was at Kite Winders the home of Stephen and Anne Perrin to whom we give our grateful thanks for their hospitality. We welcomed speaker Rob Halligan from the Jesus Centre, with his talk raising our awareness of the plight of the homeless and disadvantaged we collected £270.00 to help their cause. Thanks also to Anne who together with Joy Cater continue to represent Preston Bagot on the Pastoral Care team.

The response to our support for the Jesus Centre has been magnificent and Claverdon and Wootton Wawen have been more than generous with their donations to this organisation, a very big thank you to both parishes.

On Good Friday Andy led a service of reflection at All Saints, in August we hosted a Compline Service led by St Philip's Church, Dorridge and later in the month the ladies from Claverdon's Friday Lunchtime Group visited All Saints to give prayers for the community. At the beginning of October, we held our Harvest Festival and at the end of the month Andy and James led a rousing service with all three parishes coming together to celebrate All Saints Day. The year was rounded off by a traditional carol service with atmospheric candles lighting the church both inside and out

and our thanks to Hugh and Helen who served mulled wine and mince pies after the service. It was wonderful to see the church filled to capacity on Christmas Day partly due to Hugh and Helen Carslake's ever-expanding family!

Her Majesty the Queen celebrated her 90th birthday in April and in recognition during one weekend in June, All Saints decorated the church with red, white and blue flowers and offered coffee, tea, cake and biscuits to all who came. Unfortunately, the weather was anything but seasonable and we endured high winds and rain, undeterred Jenny Farrell put up a gazebo to protect her from the elements only to witness it a few moments later airborne and landing unceremoniously in among the gravestones. After that everything was moved into the church. We were very grateful to a group of about 20 walkers who took advantage of our hospitality and in doing so helped us to raise £500.00 for the Stratford Hospital. On the Sunday evening, we rounded off the weekend with a service of Evening Prayer led by Hugh Carslake.

We celebrated five weddings during the year, three of whom had grown up in Preston Bagot. Anne and Stephen Perrin's daughter Susie married Richard Adamson at the end of May and the air was filled with sound of bagpipes from Richard's regiment as the guests were serenaded along the lane to the reception. In July, the daughter of Tom and Jenny Madden, Claire, exchanged vows with Paul Dalbeck and they too were greeted by pipers as they left the church. In August, the marriage took place of Max Tubbs and Kerry Ford, this was a truly country wedding with the bride walking through the field from the Old Rectory and the church filled with flowers from the local countryside. Daniel Kesterton and Josephine Hall were married in July and the last wedding for the year took place in September, that of Thomas Franklin and Samantha Edmunds.



The only funeral this year was that of Michael Farrell, beloved husband of Jenny, who sadly passed away at the beginning of November. He was a great supporter of all the fundraising which Jenny undertakes and will be sorely missed by all.

We have been very grateful for our organists, Guy Pardo and Jonathan Lucas, and give thanks for their talent and the range of music they

play for us and a special mention goes to the magnificent playing and singing of William Carslake who very kindly agreed to play for us on Christmas Day. A big thank you goes to Pam Clark for her dedication in organising the flowers and to her team of helpers plus the extra effort she puts in to ensure the church always looks at its best, also Valerie Rooke for the assistance of her gardeners in the churchyard. We also thank Sheila Goudge, Mary Herbert and Tony Belcher for assisting with the chalice and to all the other people whose care and support is very much appreciated.

During the year, we had to replace some of the fencing between the churchyard and the car park the funds for which were met by the church and donations from parishioners. A few small items of maintenance are needed one of which is the valerian growing out of the chimney, despite liberally dousing the plant with Round Up it unfortunately continues to flourish and in doing so causes the roof to leak!

Finally, we would like to thank God for providing us with such a beautiful and unique setting in which to conduct our worship and for the parishioners and visitors alike who continue to discover God's goodness and grace that hasn't changed in all the centuries there has been "a little church on the hill".

Open the Book

The Open the Book team celebrates 10 years of action-packed performances at Claverdon Primary School and at Wootton Wawen Church of England School.

The Open the Book team visit Claverdon and Wootton Wawen Primary Schools about three times a term, performing Bible stories and using Bob Hartman's 'Lion Storyteller Bible' as a basis for the scripts. The group includes Joy Cater (scripts), Gayle Farr from Wootton (photographer) Penny Hanson (costumes), Tricia Hardy (signs), Chris Thompson (prop-maker extraordinaire); Laura Holden from Claverdon, Liz Rayner and Jonathan Lucas from Wootton, and recently Chelsi and Leah, Claverdon's youth leaders, have joined us. We're very short of male actors, but the following join in occasionally: Don Hanson, David Markham, and Derek Hill from Wootton Wawen.

Children always take part too, usually throwing themselves into the action with great gusto (who will ever forget Joshua's troops massing outside Jericho, shouting and blowing their trumpets to bring down the walls (stacked shoe boxes), or Daniel in the lions' den being surrounded by little 7-yr olds in lion costumes, snarling and growling; Jonah being swallowed by the whale – a monstrous creation made from a shiny black plastic tent with perfect jaw-shaped entrance! At both schools a Year 6 boy played David, brave lad with his sling, facing the mighty Goliath, imposing in his armour



(thank goodness for Velcro), brandishing his broom handle with cardboard spearhead attached. His blood curdling battle cry and dramatic death will long be remembered!

In the quieter, more solemn stories, portraying the gentle humility and wisdom of Jesus, we have a talented performer in Jonathan Lucas, who also enjoys the Old Testament roles. If there's no man available, then of course the women have to play the male characters.

Most of our captive audience pay rapt attention to what's happening 'on stage', then they're asked for their thoughts about the play they've just seen and how that particular story could relate to their own young lives, with a rousing song (or quiet hymn if it has been a serious topic), to finish the whole extremely enjoyable experience.

CONTACT DETAILS

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