



The Gatekeeper

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To Be a Pilgrim

There is some excellent work being done across the country to explore the notion of pilgrimage and not just in the obvious places. Canterbury, Walsingham, Iona and Lindisfarne are popular choices but the possibilities are endless. Ian Ball, a veteran organiser and participant in Pilgrimages, reports on his recent encounters in the Diocese of Coventry.

“This October a small group of two Brits and two Romanians travelled from Oxford to Birmingham, crossing, en route, the Diocese of Coventry. The level of hospitality on this pilgrimage outdid all previous walks with so many varied acts of generosity – all of which greatly assisted our progress.

“The walk proved to be a fascinating journey through a part of England that contains many styles and traditions. The paths were well marked throughout, beginning with the Oxford Canal and ending with the ‘Shires Country Park trail and Grand Union Canal in Birmingham. We had therefore a safe and largely traffic-free passage, which linked in to modern imaginative literature relating to journeys – Philip Pullman in Oxford and J.R.R Tolkien in Birmingham.

“This pilgrimage also had a purpose in exploring the possibility of creating pilgrim routes between centres that have no traditional pilgrimage association. For some, the choice of Birmingham, rather than Oxford, as a destination seemed curious. However part of what we are presently trying to explore is the manner in which ‘pilgrimage’ of this type, may serve a variety of new purposes. The destination matters, requires significance and needs to provide some level of internal stimulation – to ‘stir’ reflection, to ‘ask questions’ in some fashion, of ‘the spirit’.

“The linking of Oxford and Birmingham in the way we did, certainly produced that result, demonstrating that such pilgrimages can be concerned with personal development, social and cultural awareness and learning and, through their preparation and performance, become a work of art.

“The element of hospitality, which was so marked on this walk, adds another element to the action of the pilgrims. It both demonstrates that the pilgrim is not just an interloper. Maybe in some way, having received the hospitality of people and place, the pilgrim then carries them along to the destination.

“The impact of such hospitality on the interloping pilgrims is considerable - but there also seem to be benefits for those who provide it. As a result of a post-pilgrimage email conversation a warden at Ettington Parish Church, one of the places where the pilgrims were warmly welcomed, wrote:



“It seems to me ... that actually the measure of our success should be ... the love and kindness we offer to others, not only those we know and trust but also to those who happen upon our doorstep unexpectedly. The idea that the hospitality of others can become the focus of our journey and the difference between the journey being bearable or not, of course goes way beyond that of a group of people’s decision to take a pilgrimage from one destination to another, but speaks to me of each person’s life journey and if the success of that journey is dependent, at least in part, on the love and kindness of strangers then the church’s mission should be to offer that at all costs, and when we talk about measuring success, we should surely include that.”



Happy Christmas!

Many thanks to all of you who sent through details of your special events for Christmas.

Our website is now packed with lots of information about your Christmas fayres, nativity plays and carol concerts. But it’s not too late if you want to publicise an event - just send information through to [Amanda](#).

It’s fantastic that there is so much going on in our churches at this festive season, and we hope you all manage to have a bit of a rest during the holidays after all this activity. We’d like to wish you all a very happy Christmas and a peaceful 2011.

Helen & Amanda

CLAIRE'S COLUMN

Surely it can't be....? No, not December already?! Where has this year gone? And now it's snowing as well. I'm not sure I've got over the last year's yet! In view of the recent drop in temperature have a look at the section entitled 'Winter Maintenance Guide' – it's full of useful tips for looking after your church building at this time of the year. I've also included a section on heating your church – a topic too large to cover in detail here – but which should provide a useful starting point for those of you in freezing churches! All that is left for me to say is that I hope you all have a wonderful Christmas and New Year, and I'll see you again in 2011!



THE CHILL FACTOR

We all know how cold churches can be, especially at this time of the year. Unfortunately, there is no blueprint for improving the heating in your church. Each church needs to be considered individually. Traditional 'wet' systems can often be the most effective in large churches, whilst electric heating may be suitable in smaller churches with occasional use - otherwise this can be an expensive option. More and more churches are considering green energy schemes such as air source heat pumps and solar panels, which can be effective, although their longevity, and therefore their cost-effectiveness, is not yet fully established. Ultimately, it can be very frustrating wading through all the different options that are out there, so it is vital that PCC's get expert advice on this topic.

TOP HEATING TIPS!

1. Write down your needs, including details of how often the church is used and for what.
2. Ask the DAC Heating Adviser to come out to review your system and how it can be improved.
3. Consult with your architect – new heating schemes can have significant impact on the fabric of a church so your architect is a useful person to talk through this with!
4. Talk to other churches who have had new heating systems to see how effective they are.
5. Do what you can to ensure your current heating system is working to its full advantage – insulate pipes, check there are no leaks, repair broken windows to keep draughts out, and make sure your boilers and radiators are regularly serviced. All these little things can help enormously!

It is worth remembering however, that try as you might, heating a church to the temperature of your front room is never going to be possible. For the most part they are just too big and draughty. If you can keep your heating at an ambient temperature of about 11 ° C, the stone walls will act as radiators and store this heat, taking that nippy chill out of the air.

WINTER MAINTENANCE GUIDE

EIG have prepared a document for parishes giving tips aimed at preventing common winter problems that arise in churches. Burst water pipes, maintenance and heating are all included, so it is well worth a read. You can find it at <http://www.ecclesiastical.com/churchmatters/index.aspx> and click on 'Winter Risk Management Advice'.



FULL IMMERSION BAPTISTRIES

We get lots of interesting inquiries in the DAC office, and November has been no different. One researcher has been asking about fixed full immersion baptisteries in Anglican churches and is keen to know if any churches in the Coventry Diocese have them. If you do have one, please contact Edward Keene ekeene1286@hotmail.com. He would also be interested to know when it was installed, how often it is used. If you have a picture all the better!

DAC GUIDANCE NOTES

I am currently reviewing the Guidance Notes that the DAC has produced over the years. If you would really like to see a Guidance Note on a particular topic that we don't already have then please let me know. We want to ensure that the advice we give is useful for the parishes! Go to <http://www.coventry.anglican.org/admin/dac/advisory/> to see what we already have.

NEXT DAC MEETING

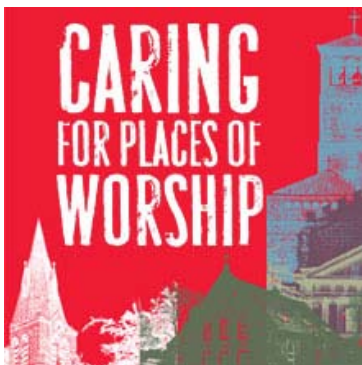
The next DAC meeting is on the 9th February 2011, and the cut off date for submitting information is the 12th January.

If you have any DAC queries in the meantime or just want to say hello, contact me in the DAC office on Claire.Strachan@CovLec.org or 02476 521327. The website for the Coventry DAC is <http://www.coventry.anglican.org/admin/dac/>

'Caring for Places of Worship'

You may remember back in July a Gatekeeper front page article about a new English Heritage publication 'Caring for Places Of Worship'. All parishes should have received a copy – it was sent to every PCC treasurer. It is however a resource designed for sharing and for using as a group. Could we urge you all to find out who is holding a copy of this on your behalf and actively share it amongst yourselves? It raises real issues about the future of our church buildings, particularly those who may be at risk through poor maintenance, decaying fabric, bad design or just old age. It serves to help volunteers to recognise the danger signs early and to find help in time to try to alleviate any problems.

The DVD is a good starting point and is designed to help volunteers see that there are thousands of people all facing the same issues under similar circumstances. You are not alone!



If you have not had sight of the pack, or need a copy, you can call 0870 333 1181. You can also access it on line at www.english-heritage.org.uk/powar - we also have a few here in the office.

EIG and VAT

From 4 January 2011, the rate of VAT will increase from 17.5% to 20%. This will have an impact on the sums insured for Church buildings, as repairs are subject to VAT, and current sums insured only include VAT at the current rate. In order to ease the strain on PCCs, EIG are proposing to increase the sums insured for all church buildings, currently in use for worship, to reflect the new level of VAT without making any increased charge. They hope that this will benefit parishes but stress that this action in no way sets a precedent should the Government make further increases in VAT or other taxes that impact upon church insurances.

Don't miss this deadline

Don't forget the deadline for recovering VAT on outstanding professional fees and for works to organs, bells, clocks and pews under the LPWGS. All claims must be in by the 31st December 2010. From the 4th January 2011 listed places of worship will not be able to recover VAT on these works but will still be able to recover it on the items that remain eligible. See www.lpwscheme.org.uk

Faith Guiding Certificate

This new course provides participants with the knowledge, understanding and skills required for guiding groups of people around a specific place of worship, as a means of developing respect and mutual understanding between people of all faiths and communities. Faith Guiding involves interpreting one's own faith in relation to the community, using the features of a building.

The course covers knowledge and understanding of the participant's own faith, guiding skills and understanding other faiths. It includes group visits to other places of worship to see good practice and would generally consist of a weekly 3 hour session over a 12 week period. A course will be starting in Coventry in January 2011. If you are interested please contact Ruth Tetlow on 0121 449 4892. A prospectus is available, which we can send you electronically on request.



Bombing in Whatcote

We often hear about the bombing of Coventry's Cathedral, but it's less well known that other churches in the area suffered bomb damage during the war.

On the morning of December 12th 1940 a number of bombs were dropped on the village of Whatcote after a raid on Birmingham. One hit St Peter's Church, causing substantial damage; another landed in a pond at Lower Farm, by the willow trees near the farmhouse, and one landed very close to Upper Farm. Fortunately, there were no human casualties. Tarpaulin was put over the gaping hole in the roof of the church and remained there until the restoration in 1947.



The community will be remembering the bombing at a special service on Sunday December 12th, exactly 70 years later, at 3.30pm and they would be particularly pleased to welcome anyone who may have witnessed the bombing or had relatives in the village at that time. There will be time to reminisce over a cup of tea afterwards.

Information on war graves

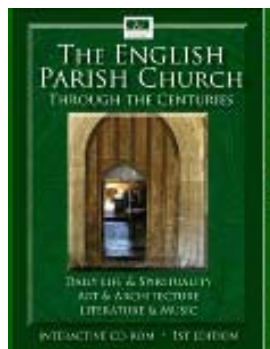


The Commonwealth War Graves Commission website allows you to search by name of cemetery and churchyard in order to obtain all the details of the war casualties in these sites. http://www.cwgc.org/debt_of_honour.asp?menuid=14&searchFor=cemetery.

If you have war graves in your churchyard – and there are many churches in our Diocese who do – you enter your churchyard name and the lists of those who are commemorated will be displayed. The cemetery reports summarise information about each of the casualties. This is a great resource for those who may be wanting to know more about the stories of local men who have perished in recent conflicts. If you would like a list of all war graves in cemeteries or churchyards in Warwickshire and Coventry just ask us and we will e-mail it out to you by return.

Stocking Filler

Having just returned from the Churches Tourism Association conference with a new interactive DVD 'The English Parish Church', Helen spent an hour browsing its contents. Be warned – it is highly addictive. If you want to ask Father Christmas for something absorbing this year you could do much worse than to put this on your list!



It explores every aspect of church life from its very beginnings to the present day and is a one stop shop – directory, library, picture gallery, case studies, time line – everything you need to understand your building better. Designed by the University of York, Christianity and Culture project led by Dr Dee Dyas, this is a must have piece of kit for anyone curious about what our church buildings mean and how they have evolved into the places we worship in and share today. One church in our Diocese has been so taken with this that they are already in negotiations with Dee and her team to develop some on-site resources. Find out more about it here www.york.ac.uk/hrc/research/projects/english-church/. You can order it for £18 (inc. P&P) from <http://www.stjohns-nottm.ac.uk/the-english-parish-church-through-the-centuries/>

Free toolkit on offer

We have several copies of the excellent book 'Tools for Regeneration – Practical Advice for Faith Communities' to give away. They normally retail at £12.95. It is a toolkit designed for those undertaking church based community development and regeneration where they are and covers topics like Social Enterprise, setting up a community organisation and working in partnership. Call if you would like a copy or e-mail Amanda.ross@divine-inspiration.org.uk First come first served!



Free Labour for community projects

Arthur Rank Training is a charity providing training for 14-19 year olds. They are offering free labour in exchange for being part of a meaningful project - preferably outdoors, working alongside others. They require supervision by an experienced member of staff.

If you need some extra pairs of hands, contact Martin Ellis at martin@arthurranktraining.org.uk

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DIVINE INSPIRATION
unlocking churches in coventry & warwickshire

and the Coventry Diocesan Board of Finance and our services are free of charge to all parishes in the Diocese of Coventry.

Through Divine Inspiration all parishes in the Diocese have the opportunity to develop their welcome, explore their churches history and share that story with all who make a visit to their building. Divine Inspiration works closely with other Diocesan Officers, especially DAC, to help parishes to make achievable plans as they undertake development work in their church buildings.

Our website www.divine-inspiration.org.uk offers every church a page on the web to market themselves effectively as places of interest for heritage, learning, tourism, culture and leisure.

You can contact us at any time to arrange a visit, to discuss any issues or to explore ways in which you might develop your welcome and research your church heritage in more detail.




ENGLISH HERITAGE

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