**FRIENDS OF HOLY TRINITY, BLYTHBURGH**

**Chair of Trustee’s Report for 2023 (date of report 14 May 2024)**

The aims of the Friends of Holy Trinity are to sustain a broad membership in order to support the fabric and thereby the ministry of Holy Trinity, and to spread information and increase interest in our historic church.

**Trustees**

Our Trustees at the date of this report, 14 May 2024, are: Sue Powell (Chair and Secretary), Sue Gerrard (Membership & Treasurer), Meryl Doney (Newsletter Editor), Roselyn Crane, and Terry Goss.

**Funds**

On 31 December 2023 the funds held on behalf of the Friends of Holy Trinity Blythburgh recorded a balance of £85,250.63, of which £70,210 was invested in an interest-bearing account.

**Membership**

At the same date those who support the Friends by contributions numbered 77, several of whom have partners who are also counted as Friends. Our Honorary Friends are now Roy Tricker (notable author of many books on Suffolk churches and our Open Afternoon speaker in 2019), Rev. Canon Simon Pitcher (Rector of the Sole Bay team until 2023 and now Vicar of Lavenham with Preston), Charles Morris (architect/designer and member of Holy Trinity PCC), and Dr Alan Mackley (Blythburgh resident and scholar of Suffolk history). (We welcomed our new Rector, Rev. Russell Gant, and his family at the induction service in St Edmund’s Church, Southwold, on 21 November.)

**Friends Open Afternoon**

The Open Afternoon 2023 took place in church on Saturday 20 May 2023 and, apart from the usual tea and cakes, consisted of an illustrated talk by Alan Mackley on his ongoing research into the life and writings of Janet Becker, daughter of the artist Harry Becker, commemorated in our church and buried with her family in our churchyard. Janet Becker was prominent in local and national conservation affairs (to the extent of restoring church monuments) and published, among other works, *Blythburgh. An Essay on the Village and its Church*. Dr Mackley’s title was ‘A Life of Discovery: Remembering Janet Becker’ and featured her charming, hand-written journal of the 450-mile motor tour of Suffolk churches which she undertook with a friend in 1922, as well as providing details of her amusing diary of wartime Suffolk. His soon-to-be-published book will be sold in church.

**Initiatives**

1.The Friends’ offer of a substantial grant towards the reglazing of the east window of the church still stands, although PCC discussions have reached a pause, partly because of a need to concentrate on the project to install toilets and a small kitchen in the tower space. Funds have been invested towards any future glazing. The Church continues to accept offers of new glazing for the nave windows and has so far received six donations, to which the Friends normally contributed for stonework restoration. Donors are acknowledged by small moveable brass plaques on oak.

2. At the request of the PCC the Friends have agreed to finance the larger part of a new nave altar, designed by Charles Morris and approved by the DAC. The donor of the oak was Sir John White of Salle Park, Norfolk, and of the bog oak Philip Baldwin, cabinet maker, and the workmanship is being undertaken by Shaun Featherstone at a cost of £3,875 (incl. VAT), of which £1,000 will be paid by a Friend, John O’Brien, in memory of a family friend, Richard Parish.

3. Charles Morris was also the designer of our 2023 Christmas cards showing a delightful bird’s-eye view of the church and village. We sold 105 of 200 commissioned packs (5 in a pack at £5 a pack) as well as selling out of our 2022 Jeffrey Fisher card.

4. There is a Friends display board in church, and Be an Angel cards are left at the end of each pew. Newsletters are sent to Friends in spring and autumn of each year.

**Thank you**

As Chair I would like, as always, to thank ourenergetic team of Trustees, who work together to raise the profile of, and raise funds for, Holy Trinity Blythburgh through both special events and regular communication with our Friends in church and by email.

Sue Powell 14 May 2024