

The Friends of All Saints Pocklington

Annual Report & Newsletter February 2017

Once more thank you for your support during 2016 - we have again been able to contribute £3,000 towards the heating of the Church. This helps to keep the building in good order and is appreciated by all who use it.

I am pleased to report that you have now donated a total of more than £15,000 towards maintaining the building since the inception of the Friends.

I hope this year that the Friends will be able to provide a seat near the Memorial Garden, this will match other seats that are to be positioned within the churchyard. We are also looking at developing the area around the bicycle racks to include a seat there – this will involve a faculty and will take a little longer.

The talk and tour that Richard Myerscough gave last summer was most interesting – revealing the history of the building in a new light. It prompted further research by a U3A group into how the church developed, and a report on this follows later in the newsletter.

Phil Gilbank is giving a talk on February 24 in All Saints about Pocklington's Catholic heritage, which is a fundraiser for the Catholic School. It will feature several notable aspects and personalities within All Saints, and the Friends are supporting the event, again details appear below.

I would like to thank Phil for his contribution throughout the year, and for his article which follows on how All Saints' many visitors view the church and its community. He notes specifically how your help in heating the building gets praise from both groups and individuals who visit Pocklington from far and wide.

Many thanks for your on-going support

David Stanton

All Saints' appeal is global

A look back through the pages of the All Saints visitors' book on the table near the main door, reveals an intriguing picture of how people from across the globe call in for a look round our church.

The summer months of 2016 were particularly notable for American visitors. Between May and July, we welcomed families from Virginia, New Mexico, Kentucky, California, Massachusetts, Utah, New Jersey and Boston, some of them with links to the town, some just calling at Pocklington as part of a wider Yorkshire itinerary.

In addition to our American friends we had summer visitors from Canada, Holland, Australia and South Africa, all of them impressed by the beauty, peace and history of All Saints.

Some with family links are 'first generation Pocklingtonians', sometimes baptised and brought up in Pocklington, or even married in All Saints, before emigrating later in life – still retaining an East Riding accent but bringing with them children and grandchildren born across the pond who speak differently to the older generation.

However, some have Pocklington connections that go back centuries, and only uncovered thanks to recent family history research. One such was John Horsley, from Fairfax, Virginia, who found his forebears had left Pocklington in the 1833 to settle in Indiana and then Iowa. His research brought him, his wife and daughter, to Pocklington for the first time in May and they declared going up All Saints' tower was the highlight of their round the world trip.

The Horsleys were captivated to see the name of their ancestor and namesake, another John Horsley, inscribed on the 1722 church bell, and on a list on the wall of the ringing chamber. They later found the gravestones of more Horsley ancestors in the churchyard.

After returning home to Virginia, John Horsley wrote: "I was going over some of the pictures I took while visiting Pocklington. We have such wonderful memories of our trip, and our tour up the bell tower. What a beautiful area you live in and we are now proud to claim the East Riding as part of our heritage. "My next task is to write up what we saw and experienced and share that with our extended family in the USA."



The later months of the year also brought in more foreign callers from Texas and Ohio in the US, plus others from Canada, Norway, Spain and Australia.

Looking back through the book shows 2016 as fairly typical. In the past three years, All Saints have had visitors from every populated continent – numerous from USA and Canada, but also from Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Africa, Uganda, Germany, France, Holland, Spain, Portugal and Belgium, in addition to all corners of the British Isles.

In similar vein to our overseas callers, some British visitors have returned for notable occasions. Former All Saints chorister and now an international acclaimed soprano, Rachel Godsill, came back with her husband on the day of the 23rd anniversary of their All Saints' wedding; while David Savage from West Yorkshire was here on Remembrance Sunday paying respects to his grandfather, Herbert, the first man from Pocklington to be killed in World War I.

A plea. You can tell by reading this that I think the visitors' book is an important part of All Saints' fabric. It certainly could be extremely valuable if the church ever had to apply for central heritage funding – when visitor books and their contents are seen as key 'evidence of need'. Occasionally the book has periods of being unsigned when the pen is borrowed and not put back; so if you ever see the visitors' book without a pen or pencil alongside, please find one or bring it to someone's attention, one day we might need all the signatures we can get.

**'To see ourselves as others see us'
- more from the All Saints' visitors' book.**

In addition to the visitor book showing that the church attracts people from around the world, the 'Comments' section also reveals what our visitors think of the building and the people they meet.

The response to the church, its condition, the welcome and the town itself is invariably eulogistic and should make us proud of both All Saints the building, All Saints the community, and the quite small group that works so hard to maintain it. 'What a lovely church and town' is a quote that sums it all up.

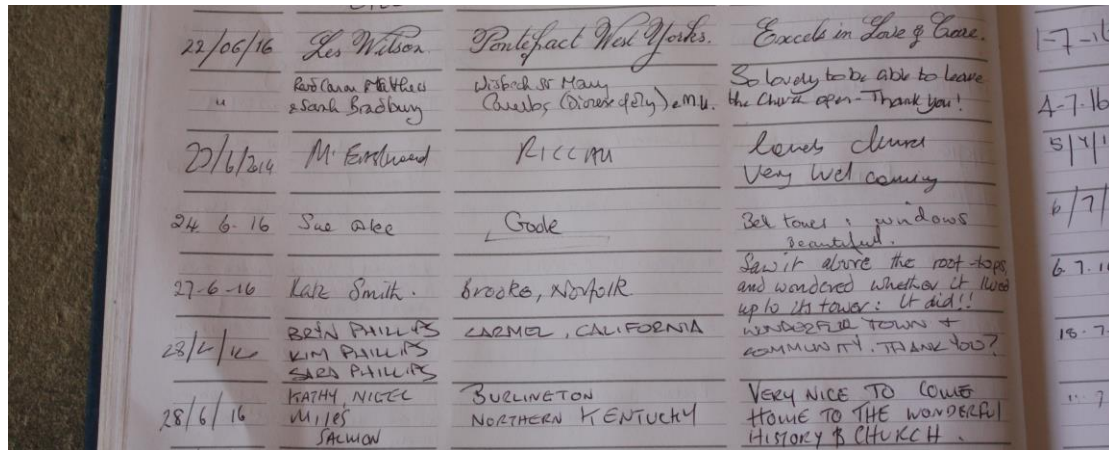
Keeping the church open every day is much appreciated - I know from travelling the East Riding that many important churches are often closed, Driffild and Hornsea included. All Saints' 'open door policy' draws the comments: 'lovely to see the church open for visitors' and 'so lovely to be able to leave the church open, thank you!'.

So many aspects of the church building receive acclaim from far and wide. Particular praise from several quarters goes to the stained glass; while the font, the tower, the tryptich, the stone carving, the Sotheby Cross and the family monuments are all individually complimented.

The atmosphere gets the most frequent praise, with 'peaceful' being the commonest comment. A couple from South Africa recording: 'Peaceful, so beautiful, awesome'; while a family from New Mexico wrote: 'surprises and quiet beauty everywhere'.

We also seem to have got the temperature right, one comment stating: 'Pleasantly warm on a cold day', and in a different season another noting: 'a beautiful, peaceful, cool oasis on a very hot day'. A January 2017 visitor wrote simply: 'welcoming and warm' – something the Friends of All Saints can take part credit for with its annual grant towards the church's heating costs. A group that studies churches across Yorkshire commented recently that Pocklington was the warmest they visited in 2016.

But atmosphere also depends on people, and the All Saints welcome and how well the church is looked after is much appreciated. 'Lovely church, very well kept but also welcoming and with a personal touch', and, 'A most interesting church to visit, and well maintained, and a friendly welcome' pay tribute.



Above is a page from the book which shows a brief selection of visitor entries. In addition to the welcome; the music and singing, the coffee on a Tuesday and the flowers all get honourable mentions somewhere within the comments section.

Of all the comments, only one was negative, a visitor from Cambridge noting: 'How sad the blue chairs have destroyed the interior of this wonderful church'. I know it strikes a chord with some of the All Saints congregation – perhaps new seating could be a future project for the Friends?

Friends support Pocklington's Catholic heritage

When Pocklington Roman Catholic school governor and Friends' member, Rowan Blake-James, asked Phil Gilbank if he would give a talk about the town's Catholic heritage as part of the school's fundraising campaign, he suggested holding it in All Saints.

Some of the church building goes back to the late 11th century; and within its walls are a number of iconic Medieval features that have a Catholic focus. Plus, there are several post-Reformation links to some notable local individuals which clearly enhance the history of both Pocklington Catholicism and All Saints.

Phil's suggestion was readily agreed to on both sides and the talk will take place in All Saints on Friday 24 February at 7.30 pm. The Friends of All Saints are supporting the event, which is sure to reveal more interesting information about the building's distant past.

Tickets are £5 including a glass of wine and refreshments, available from the All Saints' office or by emailing Phil on: gilbank@talktalk.net. You can also pay at the door, all are welcome.

All Saints' stone work continues to roll

Making sense of All Saints' history by studying the stone that it is built from, continues to produce new information and prompt further investigations.

The original analysis of All Saints' stone came after the Friends of All Saints joined with the Pocklington Local History Group to invited East Yorkshire church stone expert, Richard Myerscough, to inspect the building.

Richard's visit has sparked an initiative to develop the original findings by the Pocklington U3A Mediaeval Churches group, led by Chris Bond, to develop the original findings. The group has subsequently made a photographic study of All Saints, taking hundreds of pictures of the interior and exterior of the church.

From this the U3A group hopes to develop a new plan of the building detailing its various periods; and Chris is learning to use a computer programme that could hopefully create a 3-D diagram of All Saints' development from the initial Norman core church into the impressive edifice we know today.

The Pocklington U3A Mediaeval Churches group met recently in All Saints to discuss its findings so far.

The initial Richard Myerscough visit answered some questions about the church but created others. The small, white rectangular slabs dotted around the floor of All Saints have been identified as 'Hildenley Limestone', one of the rarest and most valuable building materials in the country. So how did quantities of Hildenley, usually reserved for top of the range monasteries, cathedrals and stately homes, come to be used for All Saints floor repairs?

The History Group's Andrew Sefton came up with a plausible theory that the stones had been reused from the Archbishop of York's summer residence at Bishop Wilton, via the village's former manor house.

The Bishop Wilton archbishop's palace is now believed to have been built by Walter de Gray in the 13th century. In addition to being Archbishop of York 1215-1255, he was also Chancellor of England and a key official of King John. But he also took a particular interest in the church at Pocklington; and his palace at Bishop Wilton would certainly have demanded the highest status building materials. When it fell into ruins in the 15th century some of its stone was used to build a manor house next to the church at Bishop Wilton, and this manor house was itself demolished around 1902 at the very time that All Saints was undergoing a major refurbishment, including having its old pews removed and the nave being re-floored. Recycling is clearly not a new phenomenon.

Chris Bond's detailed study of All Saints' architectural building and stone carving styles has led him to propose new theories on how the church evolved from the Norman into the Early English then Perpendicular periods.

Chris' most intriguing viewpoint is that All Saints never had a central tower, as has been put forward in the previous church histories of the 19th and 20th centuries. His work has led him to believe that the today's imposing Perpendicular tower is a 15th century extension or rebuild of an original Norman/Saxon tower that has always been at the west end of the church.

Further investigation and discussion is planned, with a suggestion that ground penetrating radar might reveal whether a footprint of older foundations lies within the current west end.

It is a really interesting project that is sure to further add to our understanding of how All Saints grew and evolved from a typical and simple rectangular Norman building, into something much more complex and impressive in the period circa 1180 – 1300. History is invariably a bottomless pit, and studying All Saints requires a mix of looking backwards and forwards, then trying to bring the two together, we will keep you informed of developments.