

St Peter & St Paul's Church, Aylesford
Other Group Reports APCM 2021

Bellringers and Steeple Keepers Report

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to affect activities in the tower in the early part of 2021. However, the easing of restrictions and the ending of lockdown announced by the Government on 13 July allowed weekly bellringing practices to restart on 27 July. Initially this was restricted to 1 hour, between 8-9pm. All requirements regarding social distancing, use of hand sanitiser, and mask wearing have been observed. When those requirements were eased, we followed suit.

We have run successful weekly practices since then, with a number of visiting ringers attending. And have continued ringing for Sunday services, albeit with varying numbers of ringers in attendance. It has been as low as 2, though usually 4 or 5. We have two new recruits learning to ring and I undertake all the teaching duties.

We have rung for a number of weddings and funerals throughout the year. Again, we have had to rely on help from others to fulfil these commitments, especially the funerals which are during the working week and most of our existing band are working or at school.

Paul Bastow, our Steeple Keeper, continues to undertake periodic inspections of the fabric of the bells and tower, including the roof. He also ensures the flag is flown from the tower roof on appropriate occasions and assists greatly in ensuring the church clock is wound up.

Terry Barnard

Brassey Centre Report.

There is not much to report for 2021, as for some of the year we had to close. Towards the end of the year we stated to get some of our regulars back with a promise that they would return in the new year.

To give some idea of our loss, pre-pandemic our income was appropriately between £11,000 and £12,000.

In 2020 our income was £2,898 in 2021 it was £1605, but we still had high expenditure cleaning, gas, electricity and so on.

The Food Bank continues in the Brassey Room three times a week.

The good news is the Brassey Trust have had installed in the Thorndike Room acoustic panels which will help to improve the sound.

Alan Longmuir

Choir Report

In my APCM Choir Report last year, I aimed to avoid being totally negative; re-reading it now suggests that I was not entirely successful in that aim. A combination of an accelerating reduction in numbers of both regular choristers and 'auxiliaries', coupled with the Covid-19 pandemic, had created a very uncertain future, at least for the adult choir.

A year on, the picture is perhaps a little more encouraging, but only because of changes we have had to make based on the continuing difficulty in choir recruitment, a problem experienced in very many churches; sadly, for most churches, the days of a large choir do seem to be somewhat distant.

Until August 2021, government (and Church of England) restrictions meant that there was no choir-led singing in church (strictly of course, no singing at all). In the latter part of the year, as the pandemic started to get under control, the rules changed and we could once again meet as a choir. A newly established pattern of worship meant that the choir was regularly needed for the second and fifth Sundays of the month, leading the hymn singing of traditional services, as well as weddings (when required). Whilst choir members

enthusiastically came back, we had restricted our role to what we felt could be done, and done well – leading hymns, and perhaps singing the occasional anthem or psalm.

The seating arrangements for the choir needed to change in order to continue accommodating Zoom transmission of services; the current arrangement is not ideal for a number of reasons, but there are few alternatives: how this changes over the next year or so will of course be closely bound-up with how the services themselves develop as we return to some sort of ‘normality’.

Notwithstanding a high point was the annual carol service in December, with many appreciative comments received afterwards: The choir had missed singing and clearly the singing had been missed as well.

The Junior Choir (under Paul Richard’s direction) reformed as a Community Choir, although it has resumed singing in church once a month; discussions over future funding are on-going, but further monies have been sourced to continue this valuable work with youngsters and our partnership with the school.

As we move into 2022, the choir is likely to continue its current pattern of choral leadership. We look forward to singing at weddings again, absent for the last couple of years, and we are always looking to recruit new members, which may offer the opportunity to expand what we do once more.

Michael J Keays

Church flowers

Well, what can I say! One more year of COVID-19!, let’s hope 2022 will get back to normal. Thank you to all those who donated money for flowers in the year, and a big thank you to the volunteers who came into the church to do a solitary pillar.

We have a catch-up of weddings from the last two years so hopefully we will be able to do more arrangements

Thank you.

Ann Game

Food Bank & Community Hub Committee

The food bank, in the Brassey Centre, celebrated its first anniversary on 8th December 2021. Throughout the year it remained open 3 times a week, Tuesdays 5-7pm, Thursdays 2-4pm and Saturdays 10am-12pm.

During the year 366 food parcels were distributed, which fed 551 adults and 357 children.

Parcels were either collected in person or delivered, if the client had no means of transport.

Most of the parcels were given in response to self-referrals, but referrals from community wardens, social services, support workers, the mental health team and the probation service were also acted upon.

The food bank is staffed by a group of volunteers. It started with church members only, largely because of the pandemic conditions, but during the year two volunteers from the wider community were recruited. Aline Ongley is the Client Co-ordinator and Sharon Stigle is the Volunteer Co-ordinator. At every session a Safeguarding Supervisor is present.

Many generous donations of food have been received from individuals and local companies. Donations of money have also been received from individuals and grants from local government enabling the purchase of supplies as needed. Surplus food supplies from local supermarkets have also been regularly received. The Food Bank & Community Hub Committee is very grateful for such generosity. We are also grateful for the help from volunteer delivery drivers, particularly Andy and Kieran Stigle.

At the beginning of the year, we had no way of anticipating the need, but throughout the year, sadly, we have seen a steady increase in demand. We have also seen the need for more help to those in need, from simple social contact to need assessment, and signposting to appropriate agencies. With these things in mind, we look forward to developing a Community Hub alongside the food bank in 2022, to offer a flexible space for social gathering, supportive programs, and specialist advice.

Revd Ruth Peet

Handbell Ringers

Aylesford Handbells Ringers were finally able to resume meeting in July 2021 as Covid 19 restriction eased. We have continued to rehearse on most Monday evenings in the Brassey Centre. We advertised for new members and are very pleased that Joanna Howard-Buxton has joined the band. We were delighted that Bob Halliday has re-joined us after a short break.

Although we play from conventional music notation, no prior knowledge of music is required. There is enjoyment and satisfaction in working with others to make music and the social dimension is very important to us too. We are always ready to meet anyone with an interest in joining us; please speak to Gordon Hunt (01622 769634) if you would like to know more.

We were grateful to Ruth for allowing us to play some Christmas carols at the 10.00 Christingle service on 19th December. We are hoping we may be able to give other performances in church from time to time, and elsewhere now that Covid restrictions are being relaxed.

Gordon Hunt