

Annual Reports 2019/2020

Bellringers Report

Our Tuesday evening practices are generally well attended, and we are grateful for visitors from other towers who help us improve and broaden the scope of methods we were able to ring. We have managed to ring for every Sunday service as well as for other church services and national events, albeit sometimes with only three or four ringers.

During 2019 2 full peals and 8 quarter peals have been rung at the church. We rang two quarter peals and a full peal to welcome Ruth. We also rang to commemorate the 75th anniversary of D-Day, the 80th anniversary of the start of WW2, the Armistice on 11 November, and heeded the call from Archbishop Justin to toll the bells in solidarity with the people of France following the fire at Notre Dame de Paris. We also rang to mark the passing of the mother of one of our ringers on the day of her funeral (Mrs Lily Levick, mother of Alison Gerrish).

During the break in at the church on 21/22 July 2019 the robbers smashed the glass panel in the belfry door to gain access to the ringing chamber. Unfortunately money left over from the wedding on 20 July was left in the ringing room cupboard for collection by the Tower Treasurer. This was stolen (£70) and the ringing room ransacked looking for further booty. Thankfully nothing else of value was taken and they ignored the bells and roof area, so all lead roofing was still intact.

Following the break in, the glass panel was replaced with wood and the key to the mortice lock on the door was found and this is now used as well as the digital lock to improve security. Extra keys for this lock have been cut and given to the church.

Most recently we rang to support the wedding event on 16 February 2020 and invited all prospective brides and grooms to visit to see the bells being rung. This was very well received and we had nearly 20 visitors come up to see us. Hopefully this will result in bells being required for more weddings in the coming year.

Terry Barnard (Acting Tower Captain)

Brassey Centre Management Committee

The year saw bookings to be similar to 2018. We lost a couple of regular hires and gained a few over the year.

How best to Advertise the Brassey Centre for Hire is under regular review, one consideration would be to have a suitably sized notice board mounted outside the Centre on the wall adjacent to the main entrance. The notice board would show the current availability during the week and weekends, it could also show activities / groups that currently use the Brassey Centre, with days and times shown for those viewing the notice board who might be interested in joining a particular group.

The Saturday Market continues to make donations to the church via the Brassey Centre Management.

Currently the Brassey Trust is having the inside of the Pill Box painted and appropriated lighting inside the Pill Box to be provided. When finished documents from the church office etc. will be moved and stored in the Pill Box plus items from the sheds at the rear of the Centre that are required to be kept. This will then allow the sheds to be replaced with the objective to gain more storage opportunities.

A deep clean of the Centre was organised by the Brassey Trust, with the cleaning company selected completing the task at the end of November/Beginning December 2019. Over the last 4/5 months a review of the cleaning and caretaking process has taken place. This has proved to be successful with all involved.

The Brassey Trust together with the Brassey Centre Management Committee are currently reviewing the best method of locking / Opening the Centre while ensuring it is secure.

New Boilers for the heating system within the Brassey Centre are currently being installed with suitable locks on the boiler cabinet doors to stop inappropriate tampering with the system.

The committee is aware that the monies brought in by letting Thorndyke Room etc. are not sufficient to cover the cost of renting the centre from the Brassey Trust. We endeavour to encourage new hirers but feel we should not increase our fees at present, as stated in previous reports. We must be able to compete with other halls in the area. However, hire of the Centre does provide us with a Church Office and venue for Church functions for which no fees are charged.

Bob Halliday

Choir Report

As noted in last year's report, the choir had a year of rather mixed fortunes in 2018, with the launch of the new Junior Choir as a growth area, balanced by a decline in adult numbers (for a variety of reasons).

2019 has been a steadier year, with the Junior Choir (under Paul Richards' leadership) continuing to grow in confidence: Numbers attending are fairly consistent. However, adult choir numbers continue to decline – the core group is now less than ten, boosted for special occasions by auxiliary singers from other choirs.

The Junior Choir continues to make a very active contribution to the third Sunday of the month service in term-time, and particularly to the carol service. We are now over half way through the 3-year funding provided by the Ouseley Trust.

Together with the young choirs of Mereworth and West Malling, the Junior Choir will be part of a Young People's Music Festival to be held in the church on Saturday 29/2/20 – it is hoped that attendance at the culmination of this event at 5pm will be well attended by people from Aylesford, to support not just our Junior Choir, but also to encourage all the youngsters who participating!

The year got off to a busy start with the induction service for Ruth, as our new Vicar, followed within weeks by the Good Friday performance of Stainer's "The Crucifixion", with Keith Viner and Brian White as soloists. The choir has been asked to sing at a number of funerals – more in fact than the number of weddings – and the usual round of monthly anthems has kept everyone busy. Once again, Junior and adult choirs came together for the carol service.

Whilst 2020 will doubtless provide a number of challenges, we are already embarking on rehearsals for the Good Friday performance of Fauré's "Requiem", and hope that this will be well supported.

Beyond the choir, we also continue to hold a small organ recital series, to raise funds for church maintenance. As noted in last year's report, attendance has been a little disappointing. Do consider attending these, as they provide a great afternoon's entertainment, right on our doorstep!

Helen's stalwart work as Assistant Organist continues, and I am very grateful for this. Paul's work with the Junior Choir continues to bear fruit, and we need to consider how this is to continue beyond mid-2021.

It remains clear that we need to recruit more adult choir members (particularly), as on occasion we do struggle to do what we would like to do, and what we have committed to do. This is not just the responsibility of the choir: We all need to provide the encouragement to others to join the church family in general, and perhaps to consider singing in the choir as an activity supporting that.

Finally, I convey my thanks for the support given to the choir and myself throughout the year by choir members, the PCC and wider congregation.

Michael Keays (Organist & Choirmaster)

Church Flower Arrangers Report.

This year has been a very lean year, with only a few weddings.

A very big thank you needs to go to the kind donations from the congregation, for flowers at Easter and Christmas; we really couldn't manage without them. One great thing was that we did the flowers for our new Vicar, Ruth, in February, and what a lovely evening it was.

Hopefully this next year we will have more weddings.
Thanking you.

Ann Game.

Handbell Ringers

We have continued to meet most Monday evenings in the Brassey Centre to develop our skills and repertoire. And we have continued to make progress in the range of music we can play. However, the main point is the enjoyment we get from the learning, from each other, and from the occasional performance. We like the stimulus of preparing to ring for public performance, but we don't take ourselves too seriously. As a group our musical experience is limited but we have found that with patience and good humour (and some cunning tricks to make it easier!) we can ring some surprisingly complex arrangements.

We rang at Charton Manor (a residential care home at Farningham) once again with a programme of Christmas and other music in January and were invited back for June but couldn't fulfil that because of illness amongst the band. However, we finally found a date to return but not until 2020! This illustrates a problem we have. We really need more to join us so we can be more flexible in dates we can offer (see below).

We were pleased to ring at church on Easter Sunday and also at the Family Christmas Celebration Service held at the Capel Morris Centre in December.

We do have more bells than we can ring at the moment and **would welcome some new ringers**. You don't have to have musical knowledge or experience. A willingness to have a go is all that is needed. We would be very pleased to see you. Please have a word if you would like to come along and see what it is all about.

My thanks to the band whose patience and persistence makes it all worthwhile:- Suzanne Burdon, Ann Butterworth, Christine Dunn, Lesley and Bob Greenway, Bob Halliday, Barbara Hunt, Liz Margerrison and Aline Ongley.

Gordon Hunt

Messy Church Report

Messy Church has been going now for just over 3 years.

The number of families has reduced, but we still get 7-15 children most months.

The children enjoy the activities and mealtime and the parents/carers like helping and joining in.

I would like to thank everyone for all their support and if anyone would like to come along to help and have fun learning with the families about God and Jesus, please talk to myself, Ruth, Barbara, Aline, Pam or Chris

Jane Roberts.

Pastoral report.

Home groups – There are three home groups meeting each month, evenings and afternoons. These are small, friendly groups providing a gentle way to explore the Bible and faith issues. One group discusses ethical and moral problems.

Home Communion – Our vicar Ruth and Janet will bring Communion to people in their own homes. Do ask one of us if you are unable to come to church.

Sheltered homes and Gavin Astor Nursing Home in the Royal British Legion Village. Janet holds a Communion service or Praise service in each of these five every month.

Numbers attending have fallen in Duchess of Kent and Charles Busby Courts.

I have been pleased to have help from Lenora during the Nursing Home service as many are in wheel chairs and need one to one help.

Heart of Kent Hospice service -Janet leads a Sunday afternoon service occasionally and our vicar Ruth leads a service often on a Sunday afternoon.

Friendship group – Numbers attending have fallen for 40 to 15. We have continued to meet monthly with the help from members of our congregation many of whom are over 80yrs old.

It is time to reconsider this group. I am not finding people who are alone at home who need company.

Walk of Witness- A large crowd walks to each church in West Malling to hear the Easter story, sing hymns and pray on Good Friday from 11am.

Prayers in church – There is a prayer book in the Lady Chapel for anyone to write a prayer request to be read in the Sunday and Wednesday service.

Memorial book in the Lady Chapel- **This** book has names and dates of people who have died and these names are remembered on the anniversary. Please give names and dates of birth and death to Ruth or Janet of someone you wish to be remembered then Doreen will add it to our book.

Janet Holdstock, (Pastoral)