



# Guild of St Benedict Wymondham Abbey

Report April 2023

## Minutes of Guild Team Leaders' meeting on Thursday 27 April 2023

### Present:

Robert Culyer (*Chairing*), Fr Christopher, Ruth Brett, Gill Curtis, Kay Dorling, Chris Grant, Jim Hartley, Margaret Hartley, John Herne, Hilary Hunter, Anne Johnson, Fiona Prentice, Brian Randall, Joyce Reynolds, Sarah Sayer, Doris Waymark, Barbara Randall (*taking notes*)

### 1 Welcome and Prayer

Jim commenced the meeting with Prayer

Robert Culyer welcomed everyone attending. Fr Christopher thanked all the volunteers for the hard work in restoring the life of the abbey in the last few months.

Thanks were given for a delicious lunch.

### 2 Apologies: Hayden Charles, Lorna Goodrich, Diana Grant, Morwenna Thomas,

### 3 Updates from Team Leaders

Individual team reports had been circulated before the meeting.

Leaders summarised their reports, additional comments were made by team leaders and others.

These have now been noted in the main report and are at the end of this document.

### 4 Suggestions for Guild Activities included:

- Saturday lunchtime bring and share volunteers' lunch
- Summer BBQ
- flower arranging session with afternoon tea
- a volunteers' outing. Suggestions included: guided tour of Norwich Cathedral, Castle Rising, Leighton Bromswold (links with George Herbert) and Denny Abbey

### 5 Safeguarding

No issues to report.

### 6 AOB

Frequency of meetings was discussed briefly. Every three months should be sufficient.

Blocking of parking spaces at the Abbey Hall by non-Abbey users was an issue that needed to be addressed but the first step was for volunteers to supply their car registration numbers.

### 7 Date of next meeting would be in July – date to be confirmed



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## Team Leader reports (additional comments from the meeting have been added in blue )

### Abbey Archive

The archivist continues to respond to e-mail and personal enquiries from researchers.

The more fragile parish documents are being put into archive quality envelopes and boxes.

Work on a basic catalogue to be put on the Abbey Website should begin around the end of June and will be a gradual process taking probably two years to complete.

The 1440 Market and Fairs charter has been re-mounted to the highest archival standard.

Talks have recently been given in Wymondham and Fornsett about the parish records held in the Abbey Archive.

For the Coronation, there will be a small display in the display case under the west tower, of previous Wymondham Coronation celebrations. After that, the 1440 charter will be displayed there.

For Wymondham Vintage Day on 17 September, there will be a display in the north aisle, of interesting documents from the Abbey Archive.

*John Herne, Hon. Archivist*

### Baby and Toddler Group

Wymondham Abbey Baby and Toddler group is proving to be extremely popular and our sessions are always busy. There are now well over 200 children on our register. We have decided to trial the use of a booking system to help control numbers and to ensure we can safely accommodate everyone. We have initially set the maximum capacity at 50 children and we have been fully booked at sessions so far. I am very grateful to Hayley for all her help in setting up the booking system. *We need to find a way to cancel bookings to maximise numbers able to attend. The group has been an amazing success due to the hard work of Lorna and her team, and additional help with a lot of chair-moving!*

We now have a core group of four volunteers who help out at our session each week. Ideally, we would like to have a few more volunteers so if you feel you, or someone you know, might like to get involved, we'd love to hear from you.

*Lorna Goodrich*

### Bellringing

Visiting ringers, members of the Suffolk Guild will attempt a full peal Saturday 29 April, starting around 9.45. If successful this will take just over 3 hours.

On Saturday 6 May Abbey ringers will mark the Coronation, with ringing from 9.45-10.30 ahead of the ceremony itself at 11.00 am.

Monday 8 May, Abbey ringers will attempt a Quarter peal to mark the Coronation, starting 10.15, ringing for around an hour.

Maintenance work on the bells is being put in hand with Matthew Higby and Co Ltd, Bell Hangers. We hope to arrange for the work to take place in a window between the beginning of August and mid-September, to work around weddings which have requested bells. For a period during the work we will not be able to ring because the clappers will be removed from all of the bells to go away for refurbishment. The precise timing has yet to be agreed.

*Hayden Charles*

### Café Report

The Warm in Wymondham soup on Friday lunchtime finished on Good Friday and since then (just two Fridays) we have continued to provide similar hospitality in the form of simple Ploughman's Lunch, namely bread and cheese.

The recent change in the food offered has meant less work for the small volunteer team but at more cost. This is because the soup was entirely donated by the cooks. The ingredients for the Ploughman's Lunches have been purchased and the cost refunded from the donations cash box.



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Consequently for the last two weeks the café has struggled to produce the same income as the months of winter soup where there was the council's supplementary grant.

The work for the small team of volunteers is now much less as no cooking involved and much less time has to be spent in the café reheating the soup.

However, if the Friday lunches barely break even it's because the philosophy continues 'there is no price list but donate if you would like to'.

We have not kept a record of number of meals served but it has been mostly the same four or five regulars and the volunteers around at the time so donations have been modest.

So the feasibility of the café on Friday needs to be supplemented by the other days and times when other visitors and the congregation contribute a larger income. I think this is in line with the hospitality of St Benedict. Our Treasurer tells me that we have a good income overall although the exact figures have not been calculated for this report.

The core team of five volunteers has been consistently working through the winter and a couple of new ones have shown interest in joining us.

The intention is to continue with the Friday lunchtimes and possibly add another day when the team hopefully expands. This depends on the right volunteers coming forward which we are actively encouraging and I believe will happen in the fullness of time. [It was noted that Sue Naylor does a stock check each week and orders as required.](#)

*Diana Grant*

## Choir report

The Abbey choir was reconvened in September 2022 for special services. Fortunately, we were able to recruit additional singers to help us on these occasions.

Since Ash Wednesday the Abbey Choir has sung regularly for the Sunday Eucharist supporting the congregational singing of hymns and introducing David Thorne's Mass of St Thomas setting of the Sanctus, Benedictus and Agnus Dei. We prepared special choir pieces for four Passiontide services as well as the regular Sunday Eucharists. The choir is indebted to Peter O'Connor and Ruth Brett for their skilled musicianship, support and encouragement.

We look forward to the appointment of a new Director of Music / Organist whose role will be to develop music as a central part of the life of the church. In the meantime, we are growing in confidence and learning to adapt using the resources we have. New singers always welcomed!

*Barbara Randall*

## Churchyard report

The Abbey Churchyard Team (ACT) met on 21 March. Future events were discussed:

1. Dr Joy's talk on '**Stones, Bones and Herbs**' at 3pm on 28 May – herbs will be for sale
2. **Love Your Burial Ground Week/Count on Nature.** Event on Sunday 11 June. Anne Edwards (Wyng) will be '**Looking at Lichens**' at 2 p.m. John Becket will bring his collection of animal bones and skeletons. Fiona will lead a craft session with the children. Herb sales. Refreshments to be arranged.

ACT would like a small compost bin in the servery and also for us to use recyclable tea bags.

Herbs and roses are selling well to fund work in the churchyard. Herb garden has been kept weeded and paths, spiral and Garden of Remembrance kept mown. Rogue mower mowed down half of the wildflower area and swathes of areas round the outside. Notices will be put up, [although it was noticed that they had later been displaced.](#)

Some of the team members attended a Climate Change Talk in the Abbey Hall on Monday 24 April. The Talk included stressing the importance of restoring tall grasses, wildflowers, fruit trees and nut trees.

[The PCC on 13 March agreed to having crab apple and hazel trees in the conservation area. Andrew Naylor has since received a faculty for this. We already have an offer of £50 donation for a tree. More donations would be appreciated.](#)

*Hilary Hunter*

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## Flower arrangers

We had a six week break from flowers in Lent, apart from making the posies for Mothering Sunday, so it was good to decorate the Abbey with the white flowers of Easter. They were much appreciated. The next challenge will be to arrange some patriotic flowers for the Coronation. Red and white are easy to find, blue not so much! Doris explained there would be special arrangements in the porch, at the font, statue of Mary, near bell tower, in Lady Chapel etc.

Anne Johnson

## Godly Play

Every week the Sunday service uses the Godly play approach to storytelling after the gospel with people called into the centre to see & hear. The Godly Play approach to storytelling means we are not just telling a story but rather encouraging the children to think and wonder about God in their own way

Father Christopher has asked for the story to correspond with the gospel reading and be crafted to 5-7 minutes. Afterwards the children are invited to a creative space laid out for them in the Lady Chapel to carry out activities for the rest of the service. Parents have appreciated the free flow between them and the craft area and to be able to see their children from the nave. We also leave out materials for any children who may visit during the week. Margaret kindly stocks up the supplies and each week leaves photocopies of worksheets which follow the lectionary.

There is a team of nine storytellers and children's activity leaders on a rota. Anyone is welcome to join us. Whilst storytelling is not difficult, it helps to see how a lesson is presented by experienced storytellers. We plan to hold a taster session on the morning of Wednesday 17 May for anyone who is interested. There will be a further introductory/ mini-training day on Saturday 17 June in the abbey. Please contact Fiona Prentice, Margaret Hartley, or Kay Dorling for further information.

The abbey has a very large collection of storytelling objects and all the books holding the scripts of the Old Testament stories, the New Testament stories, and several other others, for example, the stories of some of the saints, the stories of Baptism and the Eucharist, and following church seasons like Holy week or Trinity Sunday, or Remembrance Sunday. They are stored in St Benedict's Chapel and need cataloguing.

Our last team meeting was in February and we plan to meet again on June 17th. Please contact me if you have any queries,

Comments were made about amplification which wasn't always adequate and using a clip-on or headset mic would probably be better. It was agreed that for adults hearing the story clearly was the most important aspect. A suggestion to provide one or more video screens was discounted.

Fiona Prentice and Kay Dorling

## Parish Lunches

Since 2000 a three-course meal has been served to 60 people on the first Sunday of each month in the Abbey Hall at 12.30pm. Tickets are currently priced at £12.50 and can be purchased after the 10.30am service or from Joyce on 01953 604904. All meals are prepared, cooked and served by a team of volunteers on a rota basis. If you feel enthused to join one of our lunch teams, please get in touch.

Due to the ongoing delay with fitting a new cooker the meal on Sunday 7 May will be a cold meal.

Joyce Reynolds

## Shop

The shop is running very well, the volunteers are reliable and communication between the team members is good assisted by *What's App*.

We still need a few more volunteers, I have posted advertisements for the shop and desk on the Voluntary Norfolk website but no response yet. We asked Hayley to produce a poster with tear off slips for prospective volunteers which she has now done. Although quite a few slips have been taken no new volunteers have resulted from this initiative yet.



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Some of the shop volunteers have asked if we can have a get together/training refresher/celebration of shop being restored session so I will be organising that soon.

The shop now has an Instagram page that is going well attracting new 'likes' and 'followers' daily. The aim of this is to publicise the shop and raise its profile in the town and beyond. [It could be used to share other items of Abbey news.](#)

*Sarah Sayer*

## Wedding admin team

Any couples enquiring about a wedding at the abbey are referred to me and I take them through a series of questions and data collection as well as informing them of what the abbey offers and what the Church of England requires. I then follow through with the admin for those couples wanting to go ahead with having their wedding at the abbey.

Last year we had 11 weddings, one renewal of vows, ten couples resident in this parish who needed banns of marriage reading as they were marrying in other parishes and 30 enquiries. This year we have five weddings planned, one blessing and only one external banns read (at this point) and six bookings and four enquiries for 2024, but nothing for 2025 yet.

I have had this role since 2021. It sometimes takes over 12 hours a week at other times just one or two. It is a joy to be part of this ministry! [It was agreed that there needed to be better information about weddings in church on the abbey website.](#)

*Fiona Prentice*

## Welcomers

The reopening of the Abbey was greeted with huge delight locally and resulted in people coming forward to volunteer. By the fifth week we were able to tell Fr. Christopher that the Welcome Desk would be fully manned. Since then, we have had some ups and downs – we are very grateful to Churchwardens and others who have filled in some gaps for us – and we could still do with about six more volunteers to fill in and cover summer weekend opening.

Visitor numbers have been good and tours successful. We have some lovely comments in the Visitors' Book from people as far away as China and New Zealand.

In January our Visitor numbers amounted to 982, February 1163 and March 1597. That does not include the New Parents' session on Mondays or Playgroup on Thursdays. These numbers are not completely accurate as Sunday afternoon numbers are not always recorded.

No two days are ever the same but, generally speaking, Saturdays and Sunday afternoons are busy if, of course, the weather is reasonable. There is often a falling off during lunchtime, though.

Lastly, we would like to emphasise how annoying – and upsetting – it is for volunteers (and other visitors) to be unable to park at Abbey Hall. [Parking issues at the Hall has been a concern for some time and the CWs are trying to sort this. Before 'stickered' cars, which shouldn't be there, it is important that the number plates of all volunteers are known so that they don't get 'stickered' in error.](#)

Over the Vintage Day weekend on Sat 26 and Sun 17 September there will be hourly mini tours, bell tower tours for the fit and able and we need a pop-up café on both days. Gill also mentioned that they wanted to organise introductory tours for all the volunteers.

*Gill Curtis and Carol Bolderstone*