

THE FRIENDS OF ST. PETER'S
SIBTON

NEWSLETTER – Autumn 2024



Dear Friend of St. Peter's Church, Sibton

The year 2023 ended on a very upbeat note. The 'Christmas Celebration' was held in Sibton Church supported by the Friends on December 10th; a great start to the Christmas season. The Christmas readings this year were accompanied not only by carols but by a puppet play telling the story of the visit of the angel to the shepherds, and of course Father Christmas burst in and took over. Mulled wine and mince pies completed a cheerful afternoon. This year's date is already fixed: December 8th, so do come along if you can!

We have a magnificent new website, as well as our Facebook page (see the URLs at the end of this letter). It means that though we shall still be sending out an annual newsletter, you are now able to keep up with all our news as it breaks.

The programme of events for this year has been a real success, and the amount raised has shown an increase on previous years. However, with rising prices influencing our spending capabilities we find ourselves at the end of the year with a funding balance considerably reduced in comparison to recent years.

We are always grateful for the support that we get from our membership and the surrounding community, and we hope to be able to extend the opportunity for you all to be able to contribute if you are able to. 'Revenue funding' is difficult to come by. We have to pay for utilities and paying the annual insurance premium is an annual headache. Consultants' fees are additional costs that are rarely if ever granted by funding bodies. Maintaining the churchyard is the other important but increasing revenue cost. The cutting regime recommended by Suffolk Wildlife Trust is benefitting wildflower populations, which are increasing as a result. Such areas of ancient grassland are becoming rare, but they make a valuable contribution by supporting wildlife.

As well as a means of sending messages and requests for further information to the committee, there is a donations button on our website. However, a more predictable additional source of income could come from a members' subscription, which could go a long way towards covering rapidly increasing costs. The contribution of a modest annual subscription would be a much appreciated gesture towards investing in the future of Sibton's wonderful church building. We hope to be able to send details of planned giving in the very near future.

Last September we invited all those who volunteered to help at our events during the year to 'Celebrate the Achievements'. In coming years it is intended that this will become an annual end of season event for the whole membership - a social gathering with drinks and nibbles. It will be a chance to thank you, as a member of the Friends of Sibton, for the financial contribution you make towards the future of a very beautiful and much-loved building.

Promoting the Community & its Heritage

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Secretary: Andrew Campbell
Treasurer: Rodney Baker-Bates

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As far as continuing repairs to Sibton church are concerned we have achieved a long-held aim of eradicating damp from the walls of the church, at least for the time being. During the summer of 2023 local builders Jonathan Alexander and Neil Ridgeon, both skilled in repairs to ancient buildings, completed work to the southeast corner of the nave, and this year they have covered the work needed for the repair of the remaining parapets and abutments.

This work completed, we are in a good position to turn our attention at last to the problem of stabilising the nave roof and we are including repairs to the chancel roof. Repairs to some of the church's walls are needed as well as to the floor of the belfry. The vestry and porch roofs will be re-laid at the same time. The cost of these repairs, excluding revenue costs which add approximately 20% to the total bill, is likely to be in the region of £400,000. We are beginning the process of applying for a National Heritage Lottery Fund grant to be able to be sure of covering that kind of figure.

An important factor for the National Heritage Lottery Fund in deciding whether to make a grant will be the level of community support that we can demonstrate towards maintaining the church building. The high level of support for Friends' events is one way in which we can demonstrate that the continuing existence of the church building in Sibton is important. Interest in heritage is also an important aspect as far as the National Heritage Lottery Fund is concerned. Sibton church has the great advantage of having a very rich heritage particularly through its links with Sibton Abbey.

Sibton Abbey will feature in a permanent exhibition at the church displaying and demonstrating the heritage and history of Sibton church together with the former abbey from which, using recycled stonework, almost a third of the church was built some four hundred years ago. We are indebted to Nicholas Levett-Scrivener for allowing information on the abbey's heritage to be a part of this venture. We are very grateful for the invitation to hold an annual event involving the Sibton Abbey Ruins. Following the Medieval Pageant of 2022 and the Heritage Exhibition of last summer, this year the event was 'Art in Ruins' involving an exhibition of Art and Craft at the church with local art groups and well-known Suffolk artists and crafts people exhibiting and demonstrating techniques. It also provided the opportunity to visit the abbey to draw, paint and photograph which proved a very popular part of the two days. Next year's plans may well prove to be equally ambitious and popular.

Thank you for taking time to read about this year's happenings. None of it could have happened without your support, which has done so much to continue to promote our fundraising over past years. Do keep in touch via our website and future publicity in the local media to find out what is afoot next year. The Summer of 2025 promises a very upbeat note!

Please visit our website at:

Friends of St Peter's Sibton

<https://www.sibtonstpeter.com/>

Also like us on Facebook:

Friends of St. Peter's Sibton:

<https://www.facebook.com/stpeterssibton>

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