

Annual General Meeting

Hereford Churches Tourism Group

Tuesday 15th March 2016

St Francis Xavier Church, Hereford.

We all gathered for Coffee before the proceedings



Apologies: The Right Rev'd Bishop of Hereford; The Abbot- Belmont Abbey; Archdeacon Paddy Benson; .Sue Cooper, CGA; Liz Hill, Rural Concierge; Daphne Smith, Dixton, Monmouth; Robert Chitham, Yarpole; .John Neville, Hardwicke; Jenny Sparkes, Whitchurch; Pam Brown, Moccas; Ruth Griffiths, Madley; Verity Look, How Caple; Jane Simons, Brinsop; Richard Miller, Hampton Bishop; Rachel Pritchard, St Margarets; Tina Lively, Stoke Lacy.

Present 21: Members.

Chairman, Wendy Coombey; welcomed us all to St Francis Xavier Annexe, and thanked them for their hospitality.

Minutes of the AGM 2015 Thursday 16th April were confirmed as a correct record of events

Proposed by Janet Butler, Seconded by Jenny Beard..

Chairman's Report.

It is lovely to see so many of you at our AGM and I hope you will enjoy what is to come once the AGM business is finished. Firstly we have our new brochure – I always find the AGM with the new brochure very exciting. Our thanks go to Jenny Beard who once again has worked tirelessly to pull it together. We will continue to distribute the brochure on your behalf to all the local TIC's and to those tourism businesses that find the brochure an attractive addition to their visitor offer.

We now have 91 individual member churches; we have lost some members but have also gained new members and I am really pleased with this. So we are still a self-sustaining, self-funding organisation and we should be proud of the fact that we have been able to not only keep delivery of our core activities, but we have continued to grow.

So, what have we been up to – firstly we jointly ran the Festival of Churches Training days, which took the form of two bus trips – one in Herefordshire which included a visit to Berington Hall and a fascinating talk by Tony Berry, Visitor Experience Director for the National Trust and we were gratified to hear that he talked about the importance of telling stories and how the National Trust has really focussed on that. In the past we have also tried to communicate the importance of telling the stories of our buildings and more importantly, the people connected to them and Tony certainly reinforced that message.

The one to Shropshire included a trip to Anna Brennan, the CEO of Ironbridge Gorge Museum, who talked about the importance of marketing your venue or attraction. Included in both trips were visits to open and closed churches, including CCT churches to see how they promote tourism. They were attended by 60 people and we would like to run them again.

Jenny has been busy working on the strategic picture of tourism in Herefordshire and she will be saying a few words on this after lunch, and we have both been working with the LEADER programme, which is European Funding, and helping to develop the culture and heritage strand and the tourism strand.

Some of the committee attended the Church Tourism and Visitor Association National Symposium in Shrewsbury. I'm sorry to say it was not the best organised event and I found some of the presentations a trifle old fashioned. However, there were two very good sessions from Christine Tinker the Chair of the Shropshire Churches Tourism Group and from Tim King the Shropshire Council Tourism Officer. So not a terribly busy year – but we would like to run more bus trips next year and possibly half day training events.

Finally, as Chair, I am well supported by an active committee, made up of member representatives and organisations –Herefordshire Historic churches Trust, Belmont Abbey, the Cathedral, and Jenny and myself representing member churches. Jenny Davis is an extremely efficient and conscientious secretary, Jenny Beard has been a fantastic treasurer and as I have already said plays a key role in pulling the brochure

together and in managing the website, Brother Bernard offers us hospitality and a warm welcome for our meetings and we have been joined by Jane Rigler this year who has agreed to take over as membership secretary. Every member of the committee has something to contribute and I thank each and every one of them for their support and hard work over the past year. Thanks go to our web master Jon Tromans who has done a good job for us again this year and my thanks to Joanne Gibbon, my assistant who also deals with many of the queries that come through from the web site.

If anyone has any questions, I am happy to take them now- if not I will hand over to Jenny Beard for the Treasurers' report.

Treasurer's Report.

Attached: Accounts for 2014/15

Income and Expenditure Account presented

At the AGM last time we agreed that the accounting year be changed to 1st January to 31st December.

Closing Balance for the year was £3,400.69.

At 29th February £4,088.38 in bank.

Internet banking has been arranged with a top of £40 for payments

Adoption of the Accounts:-

Proposed by .Ruth Hewison, Seconded by .Hilary ?? All in favour.

Many thanks to Jenny Beard.

Election of Officers

Chair: Wendy Coombey

Vice-Chair.

Treasurer: Jenny Beard

Minute Secretary: Jenny Davis

Membership Secretary: Jane Rigler

James Devereux

Brother Bernard

All officers are willing to stand for another year. Jane Rigler has taken over as Membership Secretary.

Committee elected en-masse.

Proposed by Gwen Moore, Seconded by Margaret Hughes

All in favour

Any Other Business

Important to distribute brochures to all outlets that attract visitors as well as the church members.

Jenny Beard talked to us on tourism in Herefordshire

There have been big changes in the delivery of Tourism for the county. Hereford Council devolved time limited funds for the responsibility of delivering the tourism infrastructure for Herefordshire to an external organisation Visit Herefordshire. The organisation still exists and from June 2015 is now working in partnership with Hereford and Worcester Chamber of Commerce. With no long term Destination Plan in place the county tourism/visitor offer is becoming somewhat fragmented. Within the Marches LEP European RDPE tourism priority; funding (through a competitive bidding process) is available for the development of a 5 year Destination Plan for Herefordshire. A partnership (Herefordshire Sustainable Food and Tourism Partnership, Visit Herefordshire and The Bulmer Foundation) an Outline Application has been made for this funding. The full application process is likely to be lengthy.

Statistics for 2011 Visitor numbers

Accommodation B&Bs etc not so many

Self Catering – up

Food and Drink – Biggest gain

Day Visitors – Enormous gain.

Bobby Heavens said we were lucky to have Jenny battling for Herefordshire, thanks Bobby.

Wendy said we had come a long way

BREAK FOR OUR PACKED LUNCH

The new brochure was available for those who wished to take them. We hope to be able to distribute the remainder to all churches as soon as possible.

Church Buildings Review - Wendy Coombey

There are 16,000 church buildings in the country.

There were 5 sections highlighted-

Things to Celebrate – the great majority remain well cared for, small congregations pull their weight, local communities still want churches open, spiritual hubs of our rural communities.

Issues – 85% listed, falling congregations, older congregations struggle, high capital costs for buildings, not unique to the Church of England

The Review says – Spiritual and liturgical importance of buildings cannot be underestimated, need of change, innovative use of underused buildings, legislation needs simplification. (Diocese should plan strategically).

Recommendations – Endorsing and using the category of Festival Churches where the buildings are used for 'Festivals' but mothballed most of the time, innovative additional use of underused buildings, welcoming and developing wider community support, finding new management structures when the PCC cannot deliver the care which the church requires, buildings should remain open for worship wherever possible, local ownership to be preferred to other options, flexible legislation for governance, not all churches should be saved at all costs.

The Archbishop of Canterbury at the General Synod said 40% of church buildings should close!

Strategy for the Diocese – In the process of carrying out its Mission Action Planning, Tim Bridges and Wendy Coombey have been charged with developing a strategy to support parishes in the long term care of their buildings, as part of this process we wanted to ask you to participate in finding a way forward, and what you need to see in a strategy.

A lively discussion took place within three groups to discuss the implications of this report; and how we thought we could contribute to the solving of the problems it poses.

Festivals to Celebrate the Queen's 90th Birthday

Wendy told the members briefly about plans for the Queen's 90th Birthday celebrations, there is a logo and other interesting information to be found on two websites –

www.churchcare.co.uk and queensbirthday@churchofengland.co.uk.

Please have a look at them.

The meeting closed at . approximately. 2.00pm

About 20 members then proceeded into the church and had an interesting chat and viewing of St Francis Xavier by one of the volunteers, which was most enjoyable, we will have to return after Lent when the purple dressing will be removed from the saints