



Friends of Droxford Church

www.friendsofdroxfordchurch.org.uk

Registered Charity No 284744

Droxford Community Hub and Heritage Centre

Chairman's Report 2019-20

Last year I reported on the successful completion of the Community Annex, the outcome of a seven year project to restore and enhance the Church in Droxford, providing the toilet and kitchen facilities essential to sustaining the future of this Grade-1 listed Norman Church. In December 2019 we opened the Heritage Centre in the North Aisle of the church, and in January 2020 we were delighted to open Wilfrid's, our volunteer-run community Café. From March 2020 onwards we were subject to the Coronavirus pandemic restrictions and the Café was closed – opening briefly when permitted during the lockdowns.

Droxford Community Hub CIC

The Community Café was a key part of the overall project business plan and a key deliverable for our two major funders, the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Hampshire County Council. In order for the Café to trade efficiently and to deliver the quality and range of activities we anticipated, a Community Interest Company, Droxford Community Hub CIC, was set up closely coupled to the Friends' Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). The operation of the Community Hub and Wilfrid's Café is licensed for 25 years from the PCC according terms set out in the Licence to FODC and signed in December 2019.

Wilfrid's café opened on 6th January 2020, and traded profitably for three months despite the adverse season and difficult weather conditions, before the Coronavirus pandemic forced the national lockdown. The opening reception to which our many friends and donors were invited had to be cancelled. As I write this report in June 2021, the Covid restrictions are gradually easing, and Wilfrid's Café has opened again at the earliest opportunity.

Heritage Centre

The Heritage Centre displaying the history of Droxford's Church and community from Saxon times to the 20th Century, was installed in the North Aisle in December 2019, and is open when the church is open. The Centre was designed and created by a team directed by Michael Chandler (trustee) and funded by South Downs National

Park, and National Lottery Heritage Fund. Highlights include John of Droekensford, Chancellor of England in the early 14th Century, and Churchill's visit to Droxford Railway Station before D-Day in 1944. An Archive section has been added to the Friends website to complement the displays and will continue to be developed.

AGM – The Friends AGM was held in May 2020 by Zoom meeting owing to the pandemic. The meeting endorsed a change to our constitution by the addition of a new object to support the local community.

Country Fair

No Country Fair was held in 2020 owing to the pandemic restrictions.

Management and Finance

At the beginning of 2020 we were able to complete the heritage displays which were delivered on budget. In addition the Friends contributed to the start-up costs of the café for which generous donations enabled the funding of essential equipment and fitting out. Given the short trading period of the café and the restrictions on other fund-raising activities due to the Coronavirus restrictions it has not been possible raise significant new funds in the year ended in September 2020. Consequently the FODC continues to operate with very low reserves and we are grateful for careful husbanding of our resources by our Treasurer.

Current Status and Strategic 5-yr Plan

The Trustees recognize that the completion of the Annex and the commencement of Community Hub operations, particularly Wilfrid's Café, mark an opportunity to review the priorities and renew the focus of the Friends for the next five year period. In May 2021 the Trustees therefore agreed to develop a five-year strategic plan which they aim to publish in the autumn of 2021.

More information

As usual more information is available on our website
www.FriendsofDroxfordChurch.org.uk.

John Symes
Chairman, FODC
July 2021