



**Keith Phillips and Rodney Fowler**  
**Churchwardens of St. Oswald's Church, Lower Peover.**

**2021 AGM CHURCHWARDENS REPORT**  
**for the year April 2020-April 2021**

**30<sup>th</sup> April 2021**

Dear Parishioners,

April 2020 started as pandemically challenging as March 2020 ended, with church doors throughout the UK remaining bolted shut for the first time in over 800 years. They were eventually allowed to open for private individual prayer in June, and for public worship in July. The first of two national lockdowns in 2020 ran from 23<sup>rd</sup> March to 13<sup>th</sup> May, and the second from 5<sup>th</sup> November to 2<sup>nd</sup> December. A third (and hopefully final) national lockdown ran from 5<sup>th</sup> January to 29<sup>th</sup> March of this year.

During the year we have been subjected to ever-changing regulations about how, when and with what restrictions we are able to open our doors. Thank you to all those who have helped with creating one-way systems, supplying sanitiser, face masks, various pieces of signage, duct tape, and with keeping a record of every person coming into the church.

Our period of Interregnum which started 7<sup>th</sup> July 2019, Zoomed to an end on 16<sup>th</sup> July with the installation of Fr Murray Aldridge-Collins. Huge sighs of relief from Ann Barlow who had held the fort so magnificently during this period, and to who we all owe a huge debt of thanks for her leadership and guidance.

April 2020 found us not only with a new vicar-in-waiting, but with a dilapidated vicarage requiring major improvements and decoration before his arrival in the summer. More of this later, but it should be noted that despite what appeared as every effort by the Diocese to make a complete hash of the project, we rose to the challenge and worked hard to get the building back to a habitable and much improved condition. It was also a timely reminder that the PCC's of St. Oswald's and St. Lawrence's are responsible for regular decorating and maintenance of the property.

Losses/Security

Inside the church there have been no known losses of church property during the period covered by this report. All our property, including artefacts held inside the church and all metal items outside, are marked with Smartwater® and registered with the relevant authorities (see later).

Insurance Claims

None.

Faculties in Progress:

The Variation to Faculty Order concerning the relocation of the two removed pews expired on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2021 without action. A new application will be required once agreement of the placement of the pews has been agreed.

Grants:

Headley Trust: £6,000 funds remain earmarked in restoration account pending work expected Spring 2021.

Clutterbuck Trust: Applied July 2019. Granted £1,000 April 2020 as a contribution towards new carpet runners.

Insurance

In June 2019 we agreed a 3-yr Long-Term Undertaking & Rate Stability Agreement with Ecclesiastical Insurance. This will be effective until 31<sup>st</sup> May 2022. We remain insured for £8.4m of building and contents cover, £5,000 cash (held inside or outside the church) and £10m public liability. The premium is paid in monthly instalments of £242.35 (previously £239.19 pm).

Electrical Inspection

The five-yearly electrical inspection was successfully completed on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2020 by AT Moores Electrical Contractors Ltd. There are no ongoing works required.

### Lightning Conductor

The Lightning Protection System inspection was completed in August 2017 by Omega Red Group Ltd. Ecclesiastical Insurance now require an annual visual inspection (by a PCC member) and a certified inspection every four years. We have requested the latter from Omega Red Group and are awaiting their inspection scheduled for 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

### Fire Risk Assessment

Our last full Fire Risk Assessment was completed on 17<sup>th</sup> August 2015. New guidelines have been issued by Ecclesiastical Insurance and a review has been scheduled for 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021 to be completed by the churchwardens and our safety officer, Brian Drye.

### Fire Extinguishers

5 x 6 litre foam and 1 x 2kg CO2 extinguishers were replaced August 2020. 1 x 2kg CO2 extinguisher in Bell Tower inspected and certified (this had been previously replaced and is still in date). Extinguishers require replacing every 10 years or before if used or pressure has reduced.

### Contents

As reported last year, the church silver remains in a secure place, fully insured to its value of £41,000. We are still looking into the installation of a further safe at The Vicarage to house these items. Insurance would not be compromised.

### Boiler

The boiler was last serviced by Mellor Mottram Heating Ltd. in November 2019 following the installation of the new radiators as part of the Pew Removal project.

### Clock

Last serviced 14<sup>th</sup> September 2020 by Smiths of Derby as part of the pre-paid 3-year contract agreed in March 2019. The cost was £601.20 for the three years. Next service due September 2021.

### Organ

The organ has had little use over the last year, but still throws up occasional problems. These are usually covered in the regular servicing/voicing. The last service and repair (including voicing) was 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020 by Cartwright & Cartwright of Newcastle Under Lyme. The servicing cost is £190 (inclusive of VAT), and this occurs twice a year.

### Archdeacon's Triennial Inspection

We were last satisfactorily 'inspected' on 12<sup>th</sup> August 2019 by Ian Bishop. Regular weekly contact from the Diocese was promised to all churchwardens throughout the pandemic, although none materialised.

### Quinquennial Inspection

This took place on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2021. Mark Pearce of Kepczyk Pearce Sanderson was the architect attending. The cost of the Quinquennial Inspection is borne by the Diocese. Initial indications are that he is satisfied with the fabric and general condition of the church. There are internal and external repairs and decorating tasks that, due to the pandemic, we have been unable to complete and will certainly be prioritised. We await his report.

### Ecclesiastical Insurers Inspection

Our next inspection by our insurers is due in 2022.

### Churchyard

The large copper beech tree in the north-west corner of the churchyard was professionally trimmed and reduced in size in August by 10%/15% as recommended in the 2016 Quinquennial Inspection, at a cost of £840. Norman Withenshaw and Terrence Rathbone kindly replaced the outside lighting adjacent to the south elevation which had been left in an un-operative (and dangerous) condition by the sub-contractors used for the toilet project. The same persons were also responsible for arranging the remedial work on the boiler house drain which has now been cleared, and for the installation of an automatic pump to help deal with future flooding in the boiler house. This was a complex and difficult operation. We are grateful for the enormous amount of work that Norman and Terrence put into the maintenance and upkeep of the Churchyard throughout the year. Mostly unseen and unannounced, it is very much appreciated. Thank you.

### Vicarage

A huge amount of work was completed by parishioners of St. Oswald's in the redecorating and gardening work required to get the vicarage back into a reasonable condition. The PCC is responsible for the ongoing upkeep as far as internal

decoration of the building is concerned. It would be unwise to allow it to fall back into the condition in which it was left in July 2019. A Quinquennial inspection of the vicarage was completed by Neil Cummings MRICS of Fisher German Ltd on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2020, part-way through the Interregnum repairs/improvements. In a similar vein to the church Quinquennial Inspection, essential work was prioritised into immediate, within 12 months and within five years categories. Further works are listed as those advisable within five years, and those requiring further investigation.

The scope of this report does not allow sufficient space to outline the amount of work that was completed by a dedicated team of parishioners from St. Oswald's. Much work was concentrated into two weekends in July 2020, but painting, cleaning and gardening was pretty much continuous for several weeks. Special thanks to George and Noreen Dutton who worked tirelessly for far longer than the recorded 228 hours suggest.

The Diocese was responsible for the major building alterations including new windows throughout, a new kitchen, electrical work, new water supply, new carpets (albeit the wrong colour), new ensuite to the master bedroom and new patio doors from the lounge. It is a shame that despite several requests there is still no disabled access to the vicarage, and the external pathways and patio remain untouched. Hopefully, these matters will be resolved in due course.

#### Smartwater®

Previously applied in April 2016. Applications have a maximum 5-year effective usage period, although the bottle solution before application is only effective for 2 years. New Smartwater (£81) was delivered March 2021 and is awaiting application. Ref. No. CHU012/25785.

#### Toilet

This is being serviced on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021 by G&G Pumps (Sandbach) Ltd. The annual service cost is £150.

#### Churchwardens/Archdeacons Visitation Service

The 2020 service was held virtually via Zoom. This year's (2021) has already been cancelled in pessimistic anticipation of further disruption caused by the pandemic. Dispensation has been given that Incumbents can swear their own churchwardens into office following their election at their respective APCM's.

#### Death of HRH Prince Philip

The death of HRH The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh was announced at midday on Friday, 9<sup>th</sup> April 2021. Operation Forth Bridge was triggered. We presented a Book of Condolence and a single, official photograph of the late Prince Philip on a table, accompanied with the Paschal Candle and a small flower arrangement. The book was signed by 54 persons. A photographic record was made, and the book will be archived. We are appropriately prepared for the death of other senior members of the Royal Family.

#### Churchwardens

Please accept this as an advance notice that Rodney Fowler will not be renewing his nomination for churchwarden after this year. Therefore, a new churchwarden will need to be found/volunteered/press-ganged for the year beginning April 2022. Any takers?

#### In Closing

Yet another strange year. This time one third of it without a vicar, much of it with a church closed for anything other than private prayer, and all of it punctuated with lockdowns of varying severity. "The Lost Year". We owe sincere gratitude and thanks to all those who have helped keep the church functioning spiritually, practically and financially during this incredibly difficult year.

It has been wonderful as well to welcome Fr Murray to the fray – what a year to arrive (!) – and sense that we have an enthusiastic, kind and genuine leader taking the helm. It looks like being a very busy year with a backlog of weddings and baptisms to be completed, as well as new bookings starting to be made. So, let us pray for a fair wind and calm seas ahead.

And finally, the wardens wish to thank Ann Barlow for the encouragement and support she gave to both of us during the past twelve months. Thank you, Ann.

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