

# 2021-2022 Lt Blakenham Parochial Church Council Annual Report for Lt Blakenham Parish Council APCM from Churchwarden Michele Kenningale

Firstly, I would like to thank the Parish Clerk and council members for inviting me to talk at this meeting regarding the PCC's achievements over the last year.

The Covid pandemic and being in vacancy from September 2019 until April 2021 has had a major impact on our church and our ability to serve the community, pay our parish share, fundraise and perform maintenance and urgent restoration work.

As you may or not be, St Mary's Church is a Grade I listed building which has served the village in excess of 700 years. The last major refurbishment was by Rev. John Jackson in 1868. Since this time it appears that little attention to maintaining its fabric has happened and it is now time for urgent maintenance and possible major intervention to the East Wall if the church is to survive for future generations.

The PCC is actively reviewing the churches profile to the village and keen for the community to use the church outside of religious services. Therefore, we are looking at opportunities for the church's use to raise much needed revenue to support the continued maintenance and urgent restoration work needed.

## **Church Services**

Services resumed on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2021 with Morning Worship which is held the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday in the month at 08.30am

Sunday Worship resumed on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2021 and held on the fourth Sunday in the month at 11am alongside all the festival services in the year.

## **Church Opening**

We use a sandwich Board to advertise when the church is open and welcome everybody and are grateful for any donations, there is also a visitors book inside for feedback.

We do however struggle for volunteers to open and lock the church and presently the Vicar and churchwarden manage this.

## **Churchyard**

Our churchyard remains 'open' and welcomes everyone to visit or to just sit and reflect.

Our churchyards have escaped the intensification of agricultural development and are important places for the survival of flora and fauna. Churchyards are the very few remaining areas that have not been affected by farming practices, the use of pesticides, reseeding or fertilising and so are often rich in wildflowers that are scarce elsewhere, it is therefore important that our churchyard is managed correctly.

Maintaining the churchyard is an ongoing challenge due to its large size for such a small parish and lack of volunteers to help after the probation service withdrew their services. A single individual took on the role of cutting but after 2 years decided to look at other ways to manage the area whilst adhering to the Churchyard Rules.



In 2021 the PCC Secretary, following research and advice on both the Norfolk and Suffolk Wildlife Trust website developed a zoned maintenance plan which adhered to both promoting biodiversity and to the churchyard rules.

This plan was passed by the PCC and following discussion with Rev Eric Falla the PCC Secretary, approached the PC to ask for assistance in the form of labour and submitted the agreed management plan. This plan required two full cuts a year, at the end of July and October. The PC agreed to perform three cuts a year and the first full cut was performed at the beginning of November

2021.

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On Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2022 Suffolk Wildlife Trust came and visited the churchyard, to view/assess/advise and find out more about the zoned maintenance plan. The churchwarden received a full report on 12<sup>th</sup> May which gave general advice and recommendations, overall Suffolk Wildlife Trust are extremely pleased with the way the churchyard is managed presently.

The Churchyard is registered with 'Caring for God's Acre' and the flora and fauna contained within it. This is regularly uploaded onto the site, which is then also transferred onto the National Biodiversity Network Atlas and Church Heritage Record data systems.

The churchwarden is also presently working on behalf of the PCC with 'Burial Grounds to Inspire' to produce a webpage on their site.

### **PCC Community Events 2021/2022**

#### **Carol Singing** 17<sup>th</sup> December 2021

Rev Eric Falla, some members of the PCC and some residents reintroduced Carol Singing around the The Beeches. We met at the Village Hall and although a cold winters night and spitting with rain, the event was received well by residents, some doors opening to listen, and two residents joined us on the way round.

There was chance to chat back at the village hall where Linda Keen had ensured there was some very welcomed warm mulled wine and mince pies on our return.

#### **Christmas Bazaar** 27<sup>th</sup> November 2021

This event was held in the church to promote the beauty it contains particularly at this time of year. As in 2019, prior to the Covid pandemic, we witnessed an amazing amount of support from helpers, to donations, and from residents and visitors.

#### **Blakenham Woodland Garden Snowdrop Festival** 12<sup>th</sup> January 2022

Both parishes of Little Blakenham and Nettlestead were kindly invited by Marcia Blakenham to organise and bake the refreshments for this event. This was the first time that both the parishes had worked in partnership on this event, and it was a truly wonderful day with us all pulling together and getting to know each other.

Marcia very generously, donated all the proceeds of the event between the two churches. We give many thanks to Marcia and others who independently also made donations to us.

#### **Monthly Coffee Mornings** - 10-12noon

The PCC decided to trial coffee mornings to meet our community and find out what they would like the church building to be used for outside of religious worship, alongside supporting the PC by using the village hall. So far we have held two on March 12<sup>th</sup>, April 16<sup>th</sup> and the third will be on May 21<sup>st</sup>. Attendance has been slow, but it is early days and the PCC discuss and review at each PCC meeting.

#### **Jumble Sale** - Saturday April 30<sup>th</sup> 2022

This was held 2pm until 4pm in the Village Hall, thanks go to everyone involved who helped set up, attended, and cleared up.

It was a bright sunny day, the Hall was full of items and we witnessed wonderful support from the community and beyond.

#### **Next Event - 'A Night with Roy Tricker'** June 10<sup>th</sup> 2022

Roy Tricker will perform a historical talk about our church and has invited Michele Kenningale, to support him with a short talk follow on talk about some previous Vicars from times past. Tickets will include refreshments at The Old Rectory. You will be guaranteed a thought provoking and humorous evening.

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## **Social media platforms used: Church**

A Church Near You (ACNY),  
Eric posts each month in the 'In Touch' magazine  
St Mary's Nextdoor App,  
Little Blakenham Next door App  
Benefice Facebook page and the  
Little Blakenham Facebook Page  
We also have a dedicated page on the 'British Express' Tourism website to St Mary's Church.

## **Churchyard**

'Caring for God's Acre'  
National Biodiversity Network Atlas  
Church Heritage Record data systems.  
Coming soon - 'Burial Grounds to Inspire'

## **Village Magazine**

Councillor Linda Keen for the PC and Michele Kenningale for the PCC presented in July 2021 the idea of a Parish Magazine. This would be a joint venture between the PCC and PC to raise both council's profiles in the village and try to engage with the community.  
The newsletter was delivered bi-monthly to 120 homes over 6 months as agreed at the meeting, feedback and engagement was disappointing.  
With the personal cost of paper and printing, this has sadly now stopped due to lack of interest. However, it may be reintroduced at a later date.

## **Roadside Nature Reserve 119 Valley Road**

14<sup>th</sup> May 2021 - Michele Kenningale liaised direct with the Natural Environment Team at Suffolk County Council regarding the rotten RNR posts on Valley Road and the risk of traffic mounting the verge and damaging the endangered 'Man Orchids'.  
On 26<sup>th</sup> May, Holly Emmens Ecologist Suffolk Council visited the site and found we have 27 plants in 3 separate area. In August the new RNR posts were erected and on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2022 Suffolk Wildlife visited and have suggested gaining the green hay when cut and try to introduce the plants to the churchyard as the site is so near.

## **The Suffolk Local History Council**

Finally, I would like to inform the council members that I have been accepted as the Local History recorder for Little Blakenham, by The Suffolk Local History Council.  
I will be required to produce an annual report regarding all activities in the village which will then be deposited at 'The Hold', Suffolk Archives as a historical account of the village.  
I am hoping that the parish council will support me in this role and would like to ask if I can be informed of any events, new building projects or any demolition to any building in the village, particularly listed buildings so that the original may be recorded before any adjustments or demolition occurs.

Thank you for your time  
Michele Kenningale.