

FRIENDS OF THE CHURCH OF ST MARY MAGDALENE HUNTSHAW

THE MARY MAG

e-Newsletter

Issue 1: April 2018

We are delighted to introduce this first edition of The Mary Mag, the Friends e-newsletter. We intend to make it a regular publication to keep you in touch with news



and developments relating to the Church of St Mary Magdalene Huntshaw. The

future of rural churches is under threat due to dwindling congregations and financial constraints and our church, along with the church at Alverdiscott, came under the spotlight towards the end of last year. There were discussions around whether the churches were viable as places of worship and whether they were sustainable in the

long term. This produced an immediate response and local people (with a few from further afield) came together to pledge vigorous support for keeping the churches open. Out of this wave of people power a Friends group was formed. It is recognized that things must change in order to make the church more welcoming and accessible. So, in addition to new-style services, there is a plan to open up the church as a community resource in which a range of events will “pull people in” throughout the year. In this first edition of The Mary Mag, we shall be introducing you to the Friends group, updating you on plans to carry out essential repairs and highlighting the fascinating history of the church. A key feature will be on a new book “Huntshaw Through the Ages” written by local boy Richard Sears.

There are challenges ahead and we cannot do this alone. We are very grateful for ongoing help and guidance from the Parochial Church Council (PCC) and representatives from the Diocese. We would also like to thank the village hall committee who hosted the inaugural Friends meeting and who have given us a key that will allow us to use the hall facilities during services and events. A big thankyou goes out to Richard who has dedicated the last few months to researching and writing a book about Huntshaw. Finally, we would like to thank all of you who have pledged support and for those of you who will be supporting us in the future.



FRIENDS OF THE CHURCH OF ST MARY MAGDALENE HUNTSHAW

THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY MAGDALENE HUNTSHAW

The Church of St Mary Magdalene is the parish church of Huntshaw serving and united with our community. We hope that it will be a place to meet God in his love and grace, and for growth in our discipleship of Jesus Christ.



The church is part of the Two Rivers Mission Community of 11 Anglican parishes situated between two rivers, the Taw and the Torridge. All 11 churches host regular worship for their individual congregations, but as a Mission Community it shares one vision, based closely on Bishop Robert Atwell's vision for the Diocese of Exeter. Leading the overall Mission is Rev Mike Clarke, and he has responsibility for 6 of the parishes in the eastern half while Rev Paul Bysouth looks after 5 of the parishes (including Huntshaw) that are more to the West. Also part of the team is Rev Tracey Doyle, an Associate Minister working throughout the community, as do also 3 Lay Readers: Jacque Ward, Carol Wyatt and David Halpin.

Currently the team, plus the Parochial Church Councils and the congregations are engaged on reviewing the 'Mission Strategy,' objectives and action plan for next 3 years (until 2020) and so far priorities established are:-

Growing in Prayer – and living a life close to God

Making new disciples – and Having Jesus as a companion and guide

Serving the people of Devon with Joy

In a video on the Exeter Diocese web site Bishop Robert sets out in more detail this Vision and Strategy. He says that the Church of England "stands or falls on the life of our churches, in living out the Gospel with integrity and joy" and that the Gospel is "Good News," but new ways are needed of telling the story and explaining our Christian faith. Many churches in the diocese are now taking positive action to reach out into the community and to plan and grow for the future, and especially with children. There has been a church building in Huntshaw for at least 750 years, and with this new enthusiasm to "pray, grow and serve with joy," with events planned in 2018, we look forward to the next 750 years.

For details of church services and these events visit:
www.tworiversmissioncommunity.org See also: www.exeter.anglican.org

FRIENDS OF THE CHURCH OF ST MARY MAGDALENE HUNTSHAW

ABOUT THE FRIENDS

The Friends of the Church of St Mary Magdalene Huntshaw was established on 16th February 2018. Our aims are to raise funds for the maintenance and preservation of the church and to encourage enjoyment and appreciation of the Church and its use by the people of Huntshaw and the wider community. Specifically, the Friends have been tasked with maintaining the church as a place of worship and to oversee essential repairs. A committee of local people was elected, and we have been working with the PCC, the Diocese at Exeter and local people to take things forward.

Probably our most important achievement to date has been to help secure the continuation of both All Age services and Communion services in the church. Since January there have been six services all of which have seen an increase in congregation numbers. There is now a feeling of optimism for the future of the church.

Despite being a new group, the Friends have made considerable progress in establishing what repairs are required, potential costs and importantly how the work may be funded. We now know the scope of necessary repairs and the approximate amount of money needed to fund it. The church needs a new roof and the tower requires work to make it safe and free of damp. External masonry, rainwater goods and drainage all require urgent attention. The repairs will cost around £60,000 plus the cost of a new roof. Our next steps are to work with the church architect in producing a report of work specifications. We will then obtain estimates for the work and begin the process of applying for grants to cover costs. It is unlikely that any significant work will begin until 2019. Regular updates will be placed on our website.

The PCC and the Friends have discussed the sustainability of the church and its use and concluded that there is a need to adapt the building to allow greater community use. To this end we have planned a series of events for the year in which the church will open its doors and welcome both local people and those from further afield. We aim to provide something for everyone and the programme starts today with an Open Day. Our next big event will be a Flower Festival on 2nd and 3rd June and we are looking for help in putting on displays. See our Events Page at the end of this newsletter for a programme of what is planned to date. Our events programme is an evolving and dynamic process and more information will be available on plans in due course.

We have attained our primary goal which was to keep the church open as a place of worship. But we cannot be complacent as these are difficult times and things can change. So, its onward and upward from now!

Further information:

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FRIENDS OF THE CHURCH OF ST MARY MAGDALENE HUNTSHAW

OUR WEBSITE

The Church of St Magdalene Huntshaw is reinventing itself in a bid to stay on top of the game in the 21st century. In this modern era people look for information on the internet so in order for you to be able to keep up to date 24/7 we are developing our own website. Not only will we be able to keep local residents informed but we will reach out to a global community. So, whatever is going on in the church will be visible around the world. There maybe people who have concerns about this however we believe that it is necessary to utilise all available resources in a bid to modernise and prove our credibility.

The web address will be announced shortly.

Please be aware that the website is a work in progress so there are areas that are currently under development. We would love to have feedback on the site and welcome new ideas and suggestions to enhance it.

GRAVEYARD SURVEY

The graveyard has never been systematically recorded and we plan to rectify this as soon as possible. We will use archaeological methods developed by The Historic Graveyard Project team to produce a Graveyard Folder that will be kept in the church. This will involve numbering each headstone, recording its inscription and photographing it. We will also draw a relative location sketch plan of all numbered memorials. On completion of the project, our work will be published on the Historic Graveyard Project Website where people researching their family history and other historians will be able to make use of it. Volunteers are needed to help with this project.

CAN YOU SPARE AN OCCASIONAL HOUR OR TWO?

We need help to prepare our church for a busy year ahead. Dusting, cleaning those hidden nooks and crannies, sweeping the tower steps, cutting back ivy, pruning bushes, pressure washing the path, clearing drainage channels, painting easy-to-reach boards, varnishing doors and lots more Or if you would prefer something less physical then just come along and offer moral support (making the tea?) and show that you care about your church.

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The Ringing of the Bells of - “Huntshaw through the Ages”

Little did I know 50 years or more ago when ringing the bell for church services at Huntshaw and handing out the small green English Hymnal to the congregation that I'd be writing a booklet on the history to raise funds. (entitled - “Huntshaw Through the Ages”)

Even then there weren't many attending. My father - Tom Sears, along with Ron Easterbrook was Church Warden and to help at age 12 and 14 etc. I would toll the bell. In those days there was only one rope hanging down as the other two were hooked up to the side and out of action for some reason. I always remember an old dusty sign leaning on the tower wall saying “The Bells are Up!” (which they weren't), and asking my Dad what on Earth that meant – I think he probably told me, but at the time it went in one ear and out the other!

The church dates from at least 1277, when the first Rector was instituted. When first built it was much smaller than today and consisted only of the Chancel and probably a thatched roof. Most likely it would have had a bell – or bells, but it wasn't until 1439 that it was enlarged to its current size under the instruction of Edmund Lacy to have a Tower of 3 bells and the Nave and North Aisle.

Edmund Lacy was the Bishop of Exeter from 1420 until his death in 1455, and before that, being a Canon of St Georges Chapel in Windsor Castle was with Henry V at the battle of Agincourt in 1415. As Bishop he promoted the building of new churches in Devon and Cornwall, and we know from his daily register that on 7th July 1439 he instructed the enlargement of Huntshaw Church. From the 1440's there were 3 bells, and so for well over 500 years they were rung as a peal of three for services, weddings and muffled for funerals.



Two of the three bells up in the tower aren't the originals. Being made of bronze and heavily used they do often crack and need either renewing or recasting from the same bell. Of the two smaller bells it is recorded that one was recast down in Exeter in 1634 and the other in 1665. The third one, weighing close on half a ton, (the weight of a small car!) could be original, although it is believed that it was made in Bristol at the Thomas Gefferies Foundry in the 1500's. (With very early English bells, being so heavy they were often cast on site in a pit

beneath where the tower was later to be built – whether this happened at Huntshaw we'll never know without digging up the floor, and this is probably not a good idea as people are buried beneath!)

In 1750 the tower was completely rebuilt and the same bells rehung. The total cost was £41. 6s. 10d and its interesting to see that lime was bought in 'bushalls' and sand and gravel in 'seems.' On close inspection of the bells there are several inscriptions: “SOLI DEO DETUR GLORIA” on the 1634 one (Alone be Glory given to God) and “SANCTA ANNA ORA PRO NOBIS” on the tenor bell (St Anne, pray for us). Also on two are given various initials of people and Church Wardens of the time, as shown on the photo below of “RICHARD NILL – CHVRCHWARDEN on the 1665 bell.

FRIENDS OF THE CHURCH OF ST MARY MAGDALENE HUNTSHAW



In centuries past the individual churches had great wealth in the property they owned. This was the usual way in which the clergy gained revenue through tithes. Huntshaw church back in the 1400's, at the time of its reconstruction in 1439, used several of its houses (eg on New Street in Torrington, and Lower Ford: the Smithy at Huntshaw Water, to create "Feoffments." Dating from feudal times these can be likened to modern day leases, profits from which were designed to go to "maintenance of the North Aisle, Tower and Bells." The modern word "fee" comes from "feoffe," and "Feoffees would change hands every 20 or 30 years.

Looking in the church records it's clear to see the various people's initials on the bells who were obviously the quite wealthy Yeoman or Gentlemen of the parish. (Richard Nill (or Knill) was one, as was the Saltren and Townsend families who have memorials to them on the walls of the N Aisle.

As can be seen in the top photo the bell frames are very old and of oak, and almost certainly being original and reused in 1750 are nearly 600 years old! Unfortunately although the frames are mainly sound the wheels on which the ropes hang are falling to bits and need attention. The last useable bell was rung until about 2010 and it's a far cry from the North Devon Journal's report of July 1874 on the wedding of *"the youngest daughter of the late Mr Roland Hooper, of Hill Farm, Huntshaw. The music of the church bells ushered in the day, and by repeated peals proclaimed the festive event, which took place in the parish church."*

Almost certainly the conservationists would want a big say if the bells and frames were restored, but it would be a wonderful thing to hear them ring out again.

The booklet is for sale as from **Sat 21st April** when there will be a 'book launch' of **"Huntshaw Through the Ages"** at the **Open Day** at Huntshaw Church from 2pm to 4pm organised by the newly formed Friends Group. Buy a copy for £5 to help boost much needed funds for repairs to the roof and maintenance works.

Richard Sears

Join the Friends and keep the story of the church of St Mary Magdalene Huntshaw alive

Play your part in giving the church a future by joining us today. Membership fees: £10 per person or £16 per couple. Free to children aged 16 or under. Or simply make a donation.

By supporting us, you are repairing medieval masonry, putting on a new roof and making the 700-year old tower safe and dry. And in the longer term you will be helping us to get those bells ringing for all to enjoy.

**FRIENDS OF THE CHURCH OF
ST MARY MAGDALENE HUNTSHAW**

To Join contact any member of the committee

**PROGRAMME OF EVENTS 2018
FLOWER FESTIVAL**

“Reflections on War and Peace”

Commemorating 100 years since the end of the First World War

Saturday and Sunday, 2nd & 3rd June 11 - 4 pm each day

Everyone living in Huntshaw would have been touched by the Great War and two young men from the village died between 1914-18. Displays will include Remembering the Fallen, Women in War, The Trenches, Farming and Animals, Health Care on the Western Front and many more. ALSO: Poetry and Music from WW1, Make Your Own Peace Dove, activities for children, refreshments.

The festival will be a place for reflection, taking us from the horror of war to the hope of peace as we remember those who died in conflicts over the years and those still today affected by war

**Would you like to
put on a display?
Then get in touch.
We want every bit of
the church filled
with flowers.**

Early July a **QUIZ EVENING** Details to follow

TRADITIONAL CHURCH FETE Saturday, 25th August Details to follow

HARVEST FESTIVAL Date to be confirmed

REMEMBRANCE DAY EVENT followed by a service. Sunday, 11th November Details to follow

Saturday, 1st - 23rd December **CHRISTMAS TREE FESTIVAL** Details to follow

ALSO in December there will be a **CHRISTMAS PARTY** and we are hoping to have a **CAROL'S BY CANDLELIGHT** service on Sunday, 23rd December

**GET IN TOUCH IF YOU WOULD YOU LIKE TO
PUT ON AN EVENT**

FRIENDS OF THE CHURCH OF ST MARY MAGDALENE HUNTSHAW

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Joint Chairs:

Lorraine Hooper lorrainehooper489@btinternet.com Mob: 07912503992
and Audrey Alimo audreyalimo@yahoo.co.uk Mob: 07952028013

Secretary: Jacqui Banfield jacqui.banfield26@gmail.com

Treasurer: Lesley Wall

Committee members:

Emma Barrow

Michael Barrow

Robert Chugg

Rachel Chugg

Mark Hooper

Robert, Lorraine and Mark have also joined the Parochial Church Council

