



Start in sight for church conservation projects

'We're on the move' says Chairman Alistair

Work is about to start on the first of several long-awaited restoration projects designed to safeguard the future of St Edmund's Church in Sedgfield for the benefit of both the local community and the anticipated increase in visitors to the town now that Coronavirus restrictions have been eased.

The Friends of St Edmund's have confirmed that, weather permitting, a start will be made shortly on the second stage of essential repairs to various sections of external stonework and that this work will be quickly followed by the installation of bronze safety bars around the roof of the church tower.

As well as improving safety on the roof, the bars will permit the resumption of sightseeing trips up the tower, the second highest in County Durham, which provides panoramic views of the surrounding countryside.

When completed, and subject to the necessary approvals, three other projects will be put into the conservation pipeline – repairs to the church clock, the vandalised church lych-gate, and the ancient tower bell frame.

Dr Alistair Irvine, Chairman of the Friends (pictured), commented this week: "We have been struggling to make any kind of progress since the outbreak of the Coronavirus, the need to secure administrative and church authority approvals, and to obtain estimates from specialist companies and craftsmen qualified to work on a Grade I listed building. However, we



now feel that we're once again on the move.

"Two further pieces of good news are that sales of Christmas merchandise went extremely well with over £5,000 worth of merchandise having been sold and that membership of the Friends has increased considerably since our leaflet appeal via Sedgfield News.

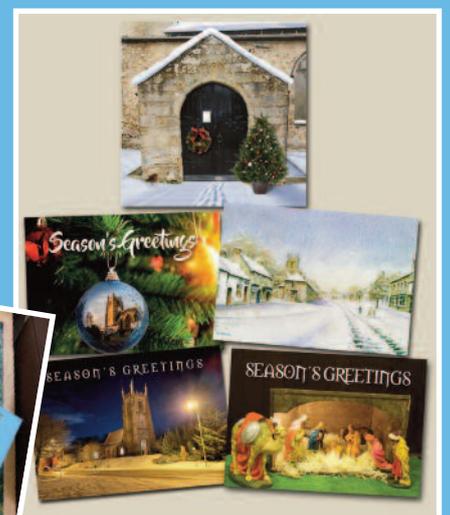
"The future certainly looks much brighter for all of those people throughout the country who value St Edmund's Church and have helped us to raise the necessary finance to enable essential repairs. We are most grateful to all members of the Friends and our supporters for their generosity."

Christmas merchandise sales

The 2022 calendar featuring the work of local photographers was, as expected, a resounding success. Every one of the 200 ordered sold quickly. The decision to add a unique 1000-piece jigsaw puzzle to our merchandise stock also proved a great hit. As this newsletter goes to press, only 12 of the 125 puzzles we commissioned are still available.

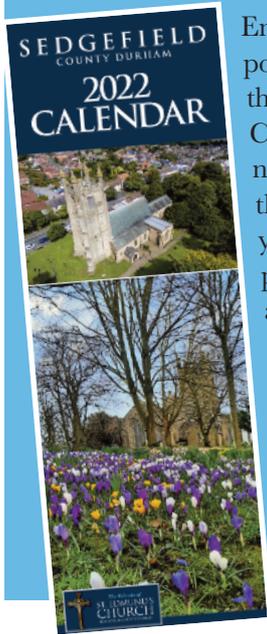
The committee is most grateful to photographer Jonathan Clegg for his

eye-catching drone shot of St Edmund's and to our design consultant, Kev Stevens, for his work on the puzzle box. Christmas card sales again helped boost funds. At the latest count, 261 packs had been sold.



Calendar 2023

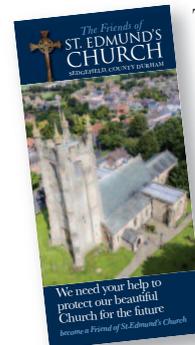
June deadline for photographs



Entries for possible use in the 2023 Calendar will be needed earlier than usual this year and local photographers are being urged to submit them for consideration as soon as possible. Deadline will be the end of

June so that the calendars can be on sale at this year's Sedgefield Show in August where they have proved extremely popular on the Friends' display and information stall in the past. Entries can be in monochrome or colour and must be copyright-free. This year's theme is '**Local People and Places**' which gives plenty of scope to be creative. Images can be e-mailed to Brian Mutch on www.friendsofstedmunds.org Alternatively, prints can be delivered to his home at 6 Hasledon Grove, Sedgefield, TS21 2JW.

Membership boost after leaflet campaign



The leaflet-drop in Sedgefield News produced 19 new members which, says membership secretary Brian Mutch, is "fabulous news". It brings the current membership to 116, the highest number

for several years.

Brian would be happy to provide further details about the Friends and proposed social activities once current corona virus restrictions are lifted, at 6 Hasledon Grove, Sedgefield, TS21 2JW, tel.01740 622302 or via the website: www.friendsofstedmunds.org

Putting back the smile on the clock faces

A priority for the Friends has always been to give the two faces of the church clock a facelift as well as a long-overdue mechanical overhaul. The faded and rather grubby blue paintwork needs to be re-painted and the fingers re-gilded with gold leaf. At the same time, the striking mechanism will have to be removed, stripped down and re-calibrated. The total cost of this work including scaffolding, is now

£31,000. The good news is that we now have the money to carry out the work. The not-so-good news is that we require a faculty from the church authorities before we can make a start and experience tells us that this may take some time.

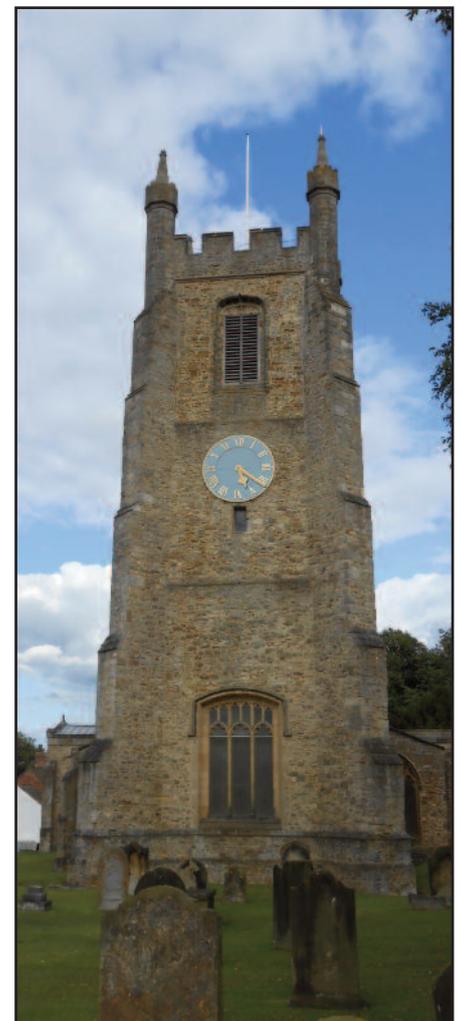
The artist's impression below and right by Kev Stevens illustrates how the refurbished clock faces will appear.



The current clock face



How the clock face will look after refurbishment



Tower bell frame shock

During October, an inspection was carried out on the church bells which have not been rung for the past two years owing to the current restrictions. At the same time, the wooden oak bell frame was also checked and one beam and a support were found to be rotting. Brian, himself a bellringer, admits that he was not really surprised since the frame was installed in 1707! There is now only one company in the country capable of carrying out

repairs to the standard demanded and it is based in Oxfordshire. Specialists from the firm have already been to St Edmund's to inspect the bell frame, take measurements and provide an estimate for replacing the decaying timber with a length of oak over 17ft long, 9 inches deep and 7 inches wide. Demand for the company's services means they will not be able to carry out work at St Edmund's for at least 18 months.



Lych-gate repairs - a change of plan

Negotiations are now taking place with Heritage England and the church authorities for approval to repair the roof of the lych-gate damaged by lead thieves in 2017. Originally, it was thought possible to

replace the lead hips and only those tiles damaged in the raid. On closer inspection, however, it was considered more economical to re-slate the whole roof.

Brian reports: "We had hoped to move quickly on this part of the conservation plan but the lych-gate is Grade I listed and so we have to secure the right approvals before work can begin."

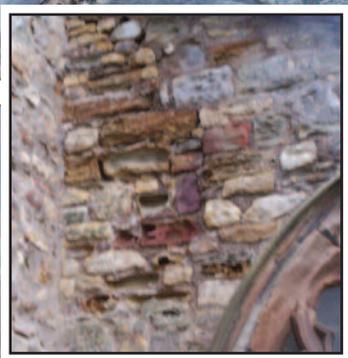


Stonework: phase 1 complete. Now for phase 2!

Keeping St Edmund's watertight is an ongoing struggle. Some stonework is now almost 800 years old and the lime mortar holding the stones together has eroded in various places after several centuries of exposure to the elements. Areas around the windows are particularly in need of attention.

Membership secretary Brian, who is also emeritus warden in the parish of

the Upper Skerne and has special responsibility for the fabric of St Edmund's, says that phase one of the conservation action plan, repairing the water tableting on the East Chancel gable, has now been completed and that phase two has recently been given an Archdeacon's certificate to permit resumption of remedial work on other parts of the church. Work could begin in March.



How to join the Friends of St. Edmund's Church

You can become a Friend at any time of the year by sending a cheque made payable to "The Friends of St Edmunds" to membership secretary Brian Mutch, 6 Hasledon Grove, Sedgefield TS21 2JW

Please contact our Membership Secretary or Treasurer for a Membership Form which includes the Friends' bank details and an opportunity to make a Gift Aid Declaration. These can also be downloaded from the Friends website at:

www.friendsofstedmunds.org and completed on a computer. Standing Order Mandate forms are also available.

Membership fees are:

Annual Membership (individual)
£25.00

Annual Membership (family)
£35.00

Annual Membership (corporate)
£50.00

We would encourage everyone who is a taxpayer, to complete the Gift aid form.

You can also donate at
justgiving.com/fo-stedmundschurch

Thank you.