



The Friends of
**ST. EDMUND'S
CHURCH**
SEDFIELD, COUNTY DURHAM

SEASONAL NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER
2023

2023 sees a big step forward with many completed projects

After patiently waiting for the availability of specialist craftsmen, we are proud to announce the completion of many of our works in progress.

“At long last, we are delighted to be able to proceed with these essential projects” said Friends’ Chairman Dr Alistair Irvine.

His relief was shared by Emeritus Warden Brian Mutch who has special responsibility for the fabric of all five churches in the Parish of the Upper Skerne and is also Membership Secretary of the Friends.

He commented: “We are pleased that these projects are now completed but we have a long road ahead with many projects still in progress as outlined in this newsletter”.



We are hugely grateful to the membership for their continued support without which the on-going programme of refurbishing our beautiful church could not continue.



Before restoration

Lych-gate

As reported in the last newsletter we are proposing to refurbish the lych-gate at our earliest convenience. It has taken some time but finally permission has been granted for the works to proceed, so hopefully this will take place in the Spring.

Clock restoration

During the summer months, this project was finally completed, and the two clockfaces look superb, painted in a traditional royal blue and gilded with 24 carat gold, it is hoped that this should last for a least thirty years.

To complete the project the clock company recently returned and installed the new striking mechanism so after at least seven years the clock now strikes the correct time and quarter, half and three quarter periods.



Mechanism under reconstruction



After refurbishment

Church bells



At the same time that the clock was being refurbished, the bell frame company finally came to remove the rotten bellframe beam, this was then taken away back to Oxfordshire to use as a template for the new beam.

Three weeks later the new beam was delivered and installed with all the bells fittings refurbished and they are now fully working.

Flagpole

On the same day that the clock faces were being worked on, we had a crane at the church for the installation of a



new flagpole. This turned out to be an interesting few hours.

The plan was to erect the crane in Rectory Row at 8 a.m, but upon arrival it was found to be too large in the narrow street. Fortunately the crane company had another plan.

After quite a few hours it was decided to erect the crane in the high street, with two banksmen controlling the traffic and the lift and installation took place.

Future Works

• New Oak external porch doors

This project has been brought about to try and help with the church of England's plan for all churches to be eco friendly if they can. It has been proven that this will be a large task with old buildings and especially Grade One Listed buildings.

As you can see by the photographs, our contribution towards helping would be to eliminate the large gaps around the stonework by



manufacturing a hardwood doorframe complete with a new set of hardwood doors, thereby cutting down on the draughts, which will help retain the ambient temperature within the church.

• New Oak internal porch doors

In addition to the external doors and after very long discussions with Heritage England and the church authorities, due to the unique style of the existing doors, that these would also give a great deal of benefit to the church's ambience.

These doors would also benefit with the introduction of a doorframe complete with a pair of glazed doors.



• New external bin store

This is now essential so that the smelly bins can be placed outdoors instead of being kept indoors.

• Help with the creation of a Heritage Centre in the North Transept.

As part of the Dioceses' Inspired Futures project which we were asked to be part of in 2016 which was established to enable church buildings to be used to their full potential, we have agreed in principal to help the Sedgefield History Society with the conversion of the North Transept into a Heritage Centre. This will require four of the five pews to be repositioned within the church and create a space to be used to display the Society's many archive materials, along with computers, interactive and virtual reality materials



Current North Transept

• Additional toilets within the vestry

You may or may not know that the church has paid for the installation of a

stage system across the whole of the church crossing area.

This will enable the church and the Friends to hold many more concerts than before and enable any Sedgefield groups to perform and practice.

It has been brought to our attention that with more people coming into church to visit the Heritage centre and more concerts, our present toilet facilities are very inadequate, so we are proposing to reconfigure the vestry area to accommodate a further two toilets.

This will be achieved by reducing the present vestry area in size, (as it is not used to its full potential these days), by erecting a stud wall with doorway and installing two new toilets.



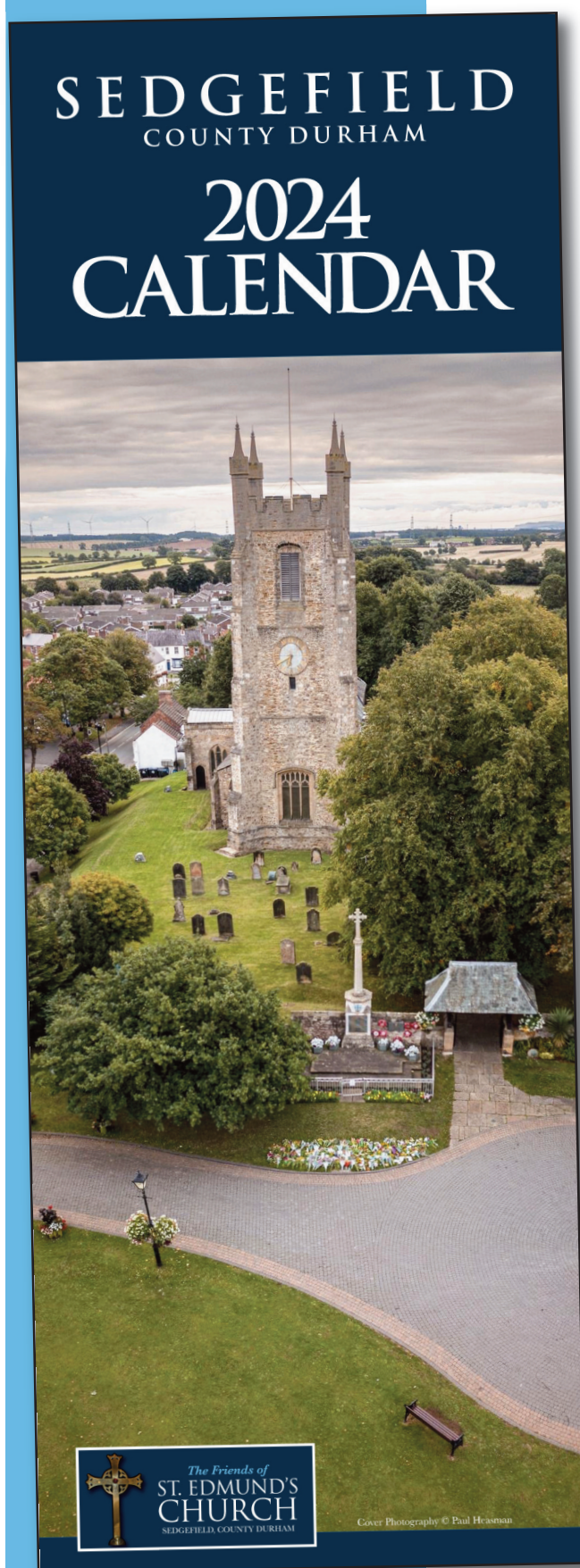
Artist's impression of the initial stage Heritage Centre



Crossing floor before



Crossing floor after



Friends' Calendar 2024 *is now on sale!*

Several local photographers have their work featured in the 2024 calendar produced by the Friends.

"We had multiple entries from a number of people this year and some of them were just too good to ignore", say judges.

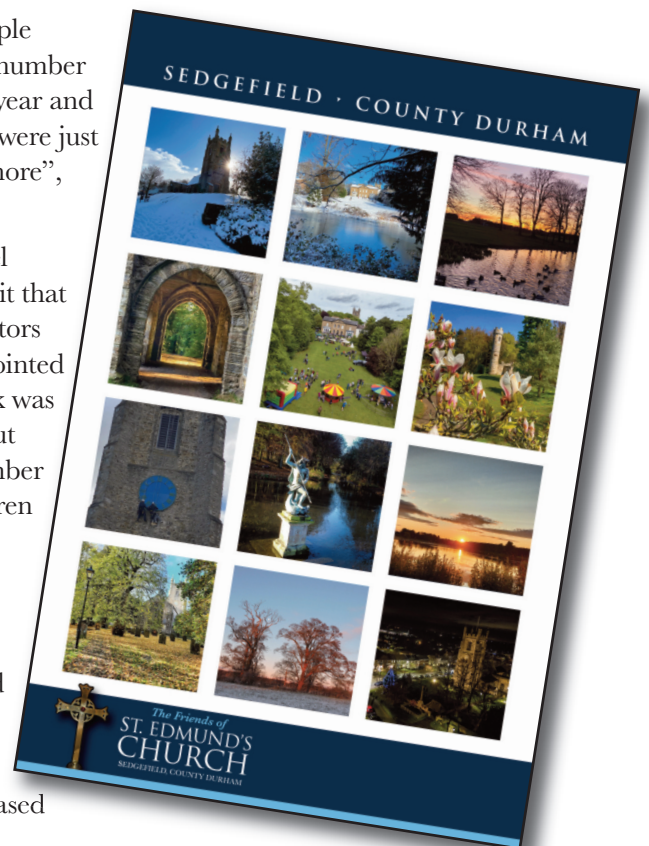
Selection panel members admit that some contributors will be disappointed that their work was not selected but say that a number featured children and it was not known if parental consent had been obtained to publish the images.

Despite increased materials and production costs, the price of the calendar will remain the same as in previous years - £8 plus 50p for anyone wanting a substantial protective envelope for safe posting.

Calendars can be ordered from any member of the Friends' committee or

from Friends' membership secretary Brian Mutch on 01740 622302, via b.mutch@btinternet.com or at 6 Hasledon Grove, Sedgefield.

For local people unable to purchase copies from traditional sources, Brian and his wife, Christine, will deliver the calendar to homes by arrangement and take payment via the group's hand-held card machine.



Officers for the coming year

There were no changes in the elected officers for the coming year.

Still in post are:

Chairman: Alistair Irvine

Secretary: Alison Hodgson

Treasurers: Nigel and Lynda Clegg

Membership Secretary: Brian Mutch

Website manager: Christine Mutch

Design consultant: Kevan Stevens

Committee: Robert Elders,

Kevan Stevens