

## **Annual Report from All Saints Church**

### **Easton Annual Parish Meeting 20 April 2026**

Since our last report to the Parish Council, several memorable events have occurred involving the Church. Two of those have had a national reach; in March 2026 the Government changed the regulations concerning VAT and the Listed Places of Worship Scheme. Any building work which is carried out at a church is now subject to VAT. A letter from the House of Commons two weeks ago reveals that the Government is yet to confirm any details about a replacement scheme and criteria concerning eligibility, processing, timings, caps and whether unused allocation will be carried over is unknown.

On a less contentious note, our Church bells were selected to be heard on Radio 4 last February in the early 'Bells on Sunday' slot.

There have been other celebratory events in the past months. The marriage of William Lavergne and Charlotte Whyman attracted a full congregation as did two funeral services. The police guard of honour accompanying the late Brian Boon as his coffin processed up the church path was special.

The Primary School has visited en masse several times and their Candlelit Concert in January was particularly enjoyable. Likewise, the visit of the Jubilate Singers for a traditional Evensong service in February. At the end of March the stalwart walkers from the south carried their Pilgrim Cross through the south porch before enjoying a few minutes of respite during their journey to north

Norfolk. On the Friday of Easter week, more visitors presented themselves in the form of bell ringers - a motley crew of campanologists from different parts of the country.

Three more weddings are scheduled during the next few months; the first of these will include some forty visitors from America. The bridegroom will be married in the Chancel of All Saints Church beneath which are entombed his ancestors from the sixteenth century.

Following Trevor Gill's excellent work in the churchyard last summer, East Suffolk Grounds department agreed to clear all the cuttings and foliage and has increased its schedule of mowing

and strimming to four times per annum. Additional management will enable residents, workers and visitors to enjoy the space. Currently there is no available seating and I will try to add some in the near future.

I did obtain a quotation for the upgrading of the path on the north edge of the larger green outside the Old Rectory's south boundary wall; it was over £4,000

and in my opinion, too expensive.

We will explore more simple solutions.

The Church receives no central

funding from the Diocese or the Government and our annual running costs are approximately £14,000. Securing grants is a lengthy and uncertain process and the Church is currently exploring the possibility of installing an on-site kitchen and loo.

Last November a Quinquennial inspection report of the Church was completed and certain recommendations for structural works and general repairs were highlighted. The Grade 1 Listed building is over 800 years old in parts and will benefit from some specific improvements.

The PCC is regularly seeking to make the correct choices around stones and souls, flint and folk, churchyard and community.

There is currently a paucity of parishioners who regularly attend services; only one or two families with children at the Primary School participate in some services. I often wonder what our residents and visitors want from the Church and what it can realistically provide. You will hear separately about the Sunday Café and the May Fair and on a final positive note I can report that a few months ago a request was made to the church on behalf of a local needy family. Within a couple of hours, the church had authorised a donation of funds which enabled the family to have sufficient food and supplies for a fortnight. For this ancient village church, the needs of our community are important.

**Peter Bennett-King**

**Churchwarden**

**20 April 2026**