



THE YEAR IN THE LIFE OF THE PARISH 2023

The Parish of Bridport

Annual Parochial Church Meeting – 19 May 2024

The Year in the Life of the Parish of Bridport 2023

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Four areas of responsibility have been delegated by the PCC to the local sub - committees.

- *Day to day care of the church building and churchyard*
- *Facilitation and practical preparation for services and occasional offices*
- *Organisation and management of welcome groups and pastoral care at a local level*
- *Maintaining and developing the social aspect of the life of the church*

TEAM RECTOR'S REVIEW OF 2023



This has been a year of saying goodbyes, welcoming in and getting ready for what might be in store for the Parish of Bridport from our God who makes all things new.

In the year we said farewell to Pete and Anne Stone as they set out for a new post in Jersey after Pete served for over 8 years as Team Vicar here.

Pete's final service was in a packed St Mary's, Bridport on Palm Sunday. Two months later in June we said goodbye to our parish curate, Helen Stewart who took up her first incumbency in St Alban's Diocese with her new husband, Mike six months after they tied the knot at St Mary's, Bridport.

Outside the parish, many gathered for the funeral of Canon Nerissa Jones, who trained and mentored several priests in our clergy team, and then at Petertide, Rev'd Maggie Crosbie, who worshipped here and was an ordinand in this parish, was ordained as priest in Salisbury Cathedral.



We have welcomed Rev'd John Rees and Anne, newly retired from Canalside Benefice in Wiltshire. They have both thrown themselves into life here.

And we were delighted to announce at the end of the year the appointment of a new Pioneer Team Vicar. Rev'd Cally Burch and her husband, Rob will be moving to Bridport in 2024.

In this year we have really seen the fruits of worshipping together regularly as a parish on the first Sunday of the month. Some, admittedly, are still to be convinced, but it has been heartening to gather in congregations of 60 – 100 plus, working and praying together across the parish and deepening relationships. Highlights have been the Eco themed Eucharist at Bradpole when we were led by prominent botanist, Sir Ghillean Prance to reflect on the call to care for the earth as Christians; welcoming Rev'd Neil Robinson, Diocesan Chaplain to the Deaf Community to the parish service at St Swithun's in October and the Trinity Sunday parish service at Bothenhamton in June to mark Graham Purse's 40th anniversary as LLM. We also welcomed Bishop Stephen for his first visit to the parish on Advent Sunday at St Mary's, Bridport, where he was quizzed by some of our youngsters on how we should be making Jesus known.

We have made progress in working collaboratively on finance, fabric, pastoral and mission and communications. We are seeing more people across the parish signing up for parish Lent and Advent groups and we had a successful parish quiet day at Othona.

We joined in the Churches Together Epiphany Carol Service at the Roman Catholic Church, hosted an ecumenical Lenten Taizé service at St Swithun's and took part in a pulpit swap to mark the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity with the Team Rector preaching at St Catherine's and Monsignor Keith Mitchell preaching at St Mary's, Bridport.

James Craddock was commissioned as a Lay Worship Leader and has become involved in leading in services across the parish.

Sadly, because of lack of staff, we reluctantly had to stop Star Club at St Mary's School. However Wild and Messy Church, which runs monthly at St Swithun's and staffed by volunteers from across the parish, has welcomed many families, including some who had enjoyed Star Club.



We also ran a warm space café at St Swithun's from January to March and the parish hosted the final leg of a diocesan youth pilgrimage led by Ven. Antony MacRow-Wood in July, with the band of teenagers and staff camping out at St Swithun's and being well-fed by a team of cooks from across the parish.

We are in a period of experimentation in the re-ordering project at St Swithun's, with temporary permission granted to remove the cross pews. Feedback from the congregation on how this impacts worship and how we might create a more gathered worship space has been important in exploring the way forward.

Looking more widely, in this year the nation celebrated the Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla, and the parish held a civic service to mark this historic event.

Our work in the community through the schools, Churches Together in Bridport, partnering with the Town Council on hardship initiatives and the continuing support the churches offer to groups like Cupboard Love, the Community Fridge, the Glut Stall, the Clothes Bank, the Great Big Green Week to mention a few, is an important part of our calling. Eco Church in particular has forged many creative and valuable relationships in the town this year, which we hope will grow.

On a personal note, this year has been difficult because of ill health. I know this has added to the challenges of the parish in a time when we have been under-staffed. Yet, the commitment and kindness of this parish has taken my breath away.

I particularly want to thank our amazing Church Wardens, all church officers, our administrator, clergy team colleagues and everyone who works so hard in this parish community. You have done everything with grace and love. I think you could describe it as making Jesus known!

As we go forward together, we do so knowing there is nothing permanent except change and the love of God!

Canon Deb Smith, Team Rector

COMMUNICATION Sub-Committee

Towards the end of 2022 a proposal was put to the PPC for approval to create a new website to better reflect the Parish as a whole. This was agreed and we went ahead and employed Emma Garner-Jones, whose CV we already had, and who had previously set up the Melbury team website. We liked the format she had used for this site and so Emma set to work on creating one for us. The Communication Sub-Committee originally consisted of Paul Groom, Bridget Trump, Deb Smith and myself but we persuaded Olivia Daly, Editor of The Bridge, to assist us with the website, and this was to prove invaluable due to her experience.

Detailed information had to be obtained from all the churches and this was challenging but gradually it took shape. We used the services of Neil Barnes to take the photographs of all the churches, under the same weather conditions, with the assistance of his trusty drone Minnie. The photographs show all the churches as well as a lively one of Bridport on a sunny market day. Aware of costs we also had a photo session at St Swithun's hall, but we had not appreciated that although phone cameras are good, they do not have the necessary clarity for a website. I had not appreciated just how hard and time consuming it would be to find the right picture for the various sections of the website and at the same time avoiding often quite costly charges.

Emma wanted to make the site both easy to use and also easy to edit. This would go some way to ensuring that outdated information does not remain on the site. By the midway point in the year and after numerous meetings and many modifications and improvements the site was ready. At the request of the PCC, a viewing of the new website took place in St Mary's. Some people were really impressed, others uncertain, as in some cases current information did not appear on the new site. Keep it as simple as possible were the key words.

Although the site was ready, the next thing to tackle was setting up new email addresses and cloud storage. There were a couple of options available to us but in the end the choice was to go with Google Mail and Drive. This would allow us to change all the parish email addresses and then create the cloud storage on Google Drive. Paul Groom took the lead here but the task was not straightforward and is ongoing.

The work on the website seemed to progress slowly but we do need to remember that all those working on the site are volunteers, with the exception of Emma, and so it has taken longer than we might have anticipated. We are very grateful to all those who have given of their time to progress this area of our work.

The Communication Sub-Committee has now expanded to include Richard Mabb and Ginny Bowley with a view to embrace different methods of communication to further promote the Parish to those of all ages. Once the site is live, work will be focused on the range of options available and suitable for us all.

Sue Pollock

ECO CHURCH Sub-Committee

Slowly and gently our Eco Church journey progresses as we learn from others and review how we live our lives in our churches as well as in our homes and work spaces, our schools and the places where we meet.

There have been some significant milestones this year and exciting opportunities to show how we are changing the way we think and work together as 'Custodians of Creation'.

- In March we welcomed Sir Ghilleen Prance to our Parish Service at Holy Trinity, Bradpole. Sir Ghilleen, a lifelong Christian and naturalist spoke about God's creation and ways in which the Eco Church Project gives us a structure to follow in caring for our world. The Mayor of Bridport was also in attendance.
- St Mary's, Bridport celebrated gaining their Bronze Eco Church Award.
- Children of the parish helped with the Harvest Festival Service and spoke about the environment.
- We held a fundraising quiz evening raising money for Tear Fund in October. A big thank you to Janet and Paul for organising this and to Ian Bark, Deputy Mayor for chairing it.

- We have linked with Sustainable Bridport; Jane and Janet are now on their core team. Working collaboratively with them we are supporting other environmental projects in Bridport.
- We have twinned the dustbins at Holy Trinity, Bradpole and St Mary's, Bridport with charities who reclaim plastic in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
- Several churches took part in the A Rocha 'Count on Nature' project in June.
- We joined other environmental groups in Bridport to celebrate 'Great Big Green Day' in the Community Orchard.



- Hard work continues in several churchyards to plant bee friendly plants and to encourage biodiversity. Thank you to all those involved with this task.

Thank you to all those throughout the Parish who are working to support Eco Church and especially members of the Eco Church Sub-Committee.

We recognise that Eco Church is not only about awards, it is about how we daily live our lives, being kind to each other and enjoying being in nature whilst treading lightly on the earth.

We all need to take time to stop, watch, listen and hear... and give thanks for our beautiful world.

Janet Webster

FABRIC Sub-Committee

The Parish has acted in accordance with the Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction and Care of Churches Measure 2018. Where professional advice has been sought, any report's recommendations have been complied with.

In all the churches of the parish the log books and maintenance spread sheets are up to date and an awareness of, and compliance with, Health and Safety measures has increased. Throughout 2023 the Committee held regular bi-monthly meetings.

Holy Trinity, Bothenhampton

Three large vertical cracks inside the Church, noted at the last Quinquennial inspection, have been filled with lime mortar, as suggested, to monitor any further movement. Some low-level gaps to the church's exterior have also been filled. The lychgate's rotten oak seat and post have been replaced and a handrail has been fitted alongside the boiler room steps.

Holy Trinity, Bradpole

Weak gutters on the south side of the church were replaced by heavy duty plastic ones, and consequently the inside wall redecorated. The sound system was upgraded by the use of digital equipment improving both music and speech while enhancing auditory quality for those with hearing aids. A faculty application for repairs to a storm damaged stained glass window was submitted. The preparatory work for modernising the lighting to use LED bulbs thereby reducing electricity consumption and creating improved lighting within the church is complete and the work will be undertaken in the early part of 2024.

St. John's, West Bay

During 2023 the north elevation gutter partially collapsed and a faculty application was made for its entire replacement. The remaining gutters were cleared of debris in November with a gutter and flashing repaired on the south elevation. The five-year electrical inspection in November found that the entire church would have to be rewired. A new toilet window was installed at the beginning of December.

St. Mary's, Bridport

During the summer, work was undertaken to remove the vegetation and moss from the tiled section of the roof, the valley gutters were cleared, slipped tiles re-secured and the lead at the west end of the south aisle was dressed down. The church achieved a Bronze award in the Eco Church scheme and permission was sought for affixing a plaque by the church doors under a List B application. General maintenance of the alarms, CCTV and lightning conductor was carried out and in December a full energy audit of the building was completed. In the churchyard, a dry-stone wall on the west side of the boundary was repaired and a large Euonymus Japonicus shrub was removed.

St. Mary's, Walditch

Routine maintenance has been carried throughout the year. A graveyard inspection was carried out during August 2023. All headstones were subjected to a shove test and none posed any significant risk. The church yard is well maintained.

St. Swithun's, Allington

The St Swithun's Repair and Renewal Project progressed during 2023. A temporary licence from the Archdeacon to remove the choir pews and the Lady Chapel was granted.

With loaned chairs and an Erskine Muton Fund grant, the space has allowed experiment with different liturgical layouts. Choirs and orchestras warmly welcomed the flexibility.

An Estonia grand piano gifted in November on a six-month trial has been used in the liturgy, in concerts and by the public. Tendering document preparation began for the first phase of the major works covering external redecoration and re-rendering. In November a private charity grant of £188,000 was received.

James Craddock

FINANCE *Sub-Committee*

The Finance Sub-Committee oversees the finances of the parish. The members are the Rector, the Chair and the Parish Treasurer, together with the Treasurers or other representatives from each church, who are responsible for their own day to day running including the Diocesan Fairer Share Quota, insurance and utility bills. They also record and claim their own Gift Aid and VAT refunds where applicable. Most of the churches have restricted funds that have been given in the past for specific items like building maintenance.

In some churches the role of Treasurer is split over several folk so no one person is given too big a task. In other churches, the volume of data is smaller, and one person looks after the whole. Where skills are missing in a particular church, the FinCom team members often assist each other.

As well as the individual church finances, the Parish Treasurer, Janet Shaw, looks after the central costs of running the Parish. This includes paying the Parish Administrator, and paying central costs such as office supplies, website development, and various types of clergy expenses. These central monies are mostly funded by quarterly contributions from the six churches of the Parish. Janet is very grateful for the work that is done by Sue Wellman-Herold to administer the Parochial Fees for funerals and weddings and submit the detailed quarterly parish return to the Diocese.

The most important role of FinCom is to advise the PCC of the quarterly financial situation and also to consider the details of proposed major expenditure by any church and then make recommendations to the PCC. This is now controlled by an updated version of the expenditure request form that various folk are required to sign depending on the level of expenditure.

The group met regularly throughout the year to discuss the financial situation of each church as well as the central funds and reserve funds. Other topics covered during 2023 have included the following:

- Arrangements to close the separate Cupboard Love account and pay over the remaining funds to the new Bridport Food Bank charity
- Reviewing the organist's contract so that it can include Parish services in any of the churches
- Updating the FinCom terms of reference as part of a PCC exercise covering all the Sub-Committees

The Parish Treasurer leads the team of church Treasurers and guides them in producing the budgets for the year, quarterly returns and the final year figures. Janet then brings all the accounts together for the parish and presents them to the PCC and to the external accountants for final approval. This is no small task, and the Parish of Bridport are extremely grateful to the church treasurers, to all those who help them behind the scenes, and particularly to Janet for performing this mammoth exercise. The work and responsibility can be a bit daunting at times, but we know that the Lord is close at hand to help in this form of service for Him.

Graham Purse & Janet Shaw

MISSION AND FAITH *Sub-Committee*

This group was formerly called the Vision group. It had the remit to look at the issues and initiatives which came from the series of parish consultations which took place in 2022 and 2023. It was re-named Mission and Faith early in 2023 with the Terms of Reference stating that the aim of the group is to support the Parish in connecting our worship with our outward facing activities.

The final whole parish consultation took place early in 2023 and in the last session the following areas were identified as things that we could do together:

- Parish Services are now held each first Sunday at 10am, Services on the Fifth Sunday of the month are now held in separate churches. Thought needs to be given to helping people to get to other church buildings. When we worship together we need to continue to think of new ways to do things and seek to involve people from across the churches to take on roles.
- More opportunities for parish-wide study with cross-over in Sunday worship (Advent and Lent) and away days.
- Parish-wide representation – Church Wardens and others to work together across the parish in order to care for individual churches while collaborating as a parish.

During the year the Mission and Faith group has worked to consider issues of discipleship and mission across the parish and in response to the agreed intentions arising from the parish consultation:

- We have had increasingly successful parish-wide study groups, with more people signing up. A parish quiet day was well-supported and another two planned for 2024.
- New study course leaders have emerged and different ways of taking part in study have been offered (meeting in the pub, walking and talking groups, extra Saturday morning discussion groups).
- Bishop Stephen's leadership into Advent Sunday, which brought us together to focus on his call to address the vision of Making Jesus Known. We have been challenged to identify the existing links each church context has, and what this means for the parish too, for the five areas the Making Jesus Known highlights. We have also looked at what new things we can take on and we have engaged in discussions about creating Mission Action Plans.



This sub-committee has also been tasked by the PCC to discuss and make suggestions regarding the location and needs of a parish office for the future. Looking ahead the new Pioneer Team Vicar post will be important in embedding the work of this group.

Canon Deb Smith

PASTORAL Sub-Committee

The Pastoral Sub-Committee has met throughout the year as we try to offer support to the many aspects of pastoral care that take place in the parish. These include:

- Work with children and young people; Tots@Ten, Tots Time, Wild and Messy church, Walk and Talk times. The toddler groups provide safe and welcoming environments for toddlers and their parents/carers to spend time and play, interact and find mutual support.
- The bereavement group also known as “Lifeline” meets once a month at Bridport Hospital. An informal group created to support those who are grieving in a safe and confidential environment. The average numbers at each session are between four and eight, with some becoming regular attenders and others just coming for one or two sessions.
- Afternoon communion services with the elderly members of our churches particularly in mind. They are held at St Swithun’s, St Mary’s, Bridport and Holy Trinity, Bradpole. Each one is followed by tea and cakes and an opportunity to meet and chat with others. These are much appreciated by those who attend.
- Five of the care homes in Bridport are visited by clergy who take Holy Communion to the residents.
- Members of each church visit people from their congregation. This is currently an area where we hope to provide more help and support in the coming year, with a view to building a better picture of who is visiting whom and implementing an improved monitoring and support system.

Diana Wright

DUTY WARDENS’ GROUP

Those acting as Duty Wardens in the churches of the parish met together on three separate occasions during 2023. With the stated aims of the group as providing the opportunity to share good practice and support effective forward planning, we considered the following issues:

- The role of the Duty Warden in managing accidents in church
- The role of the Duty Warden in managing disturbances in church
- Procedures for recording accidents and incidents in church

Working with the PCC Health & Safety Officer, guidance documents were produced and Incident Books prepared for use in every church. We are continuing to monitor their use and seeking to develop our procedures to ensure that as Duty Wardens we reap the benefits of working together, whilst retaining aspects of our practice which are linked with the individual local church.

Lesley Hill

SAFEGUARDING

The PCC have established the place of a Safeguarding item on each meeting agenda and this has been updated through the year by the Parish Safeguarding Officer. Vigilance is a requirement of us all with regard to the safeguarding of young people and the vulnerable. Contact details of both the PSO and Canon Deb are publicly available in addition to the 24-hour cover set up by the diocese.

Training: Coral Hatton (PSO) was able to offer safeguarding training to local volunteers, usually in small groups with sessions being held on a monthly basis. During the year the parish administrator has kept the records for those involved, in addition to the required DBS clearance at the appropriate level in line with the diocesan DBS matrix. All volunteers currently active in our parish groups have been included.

Safer Recruitment: Tracking and securely recording the paperwork which underpins the appointment of volunteers is an ongoing challenge as we embed the recognised process. In addition, the introduction of a new Wild & Messy Church initiative has involved drafting role descriptions, recruiting volunteers and establishing the required monitoring timetable prior to it being given the go-ahead by the PCC, which happened in September 2023. Happily, a variety of people have put themselves forward from across the parish and they bring wider skills and experience.

Other projects and groups have been expanding their volunteer base, so role descriptions have been drafted and the process followed to welcome their offers as volunteers.

There is something of an overlap with the Parish Health & Safety Officer, who has provided assistance and joined the discussion on a number of occasions when situations have arisen which required input from both a safeguarding and safety point of view.

Bridget Trump

The Bridge Magazine

Ten printed issues of The Bridge were produced and delivered around the town during 2023. We produced about 6,100 copies of each issue, around 5,700 of which were delivered by our volunteers to residential addresses in the town centre plus Allington, Bradpole, Bothenhampton, Walditch and West Bay. Copies were also available for picking up in Waitrose, the Tourist Information Centre and the Spar in West Bay Road.

Our extensive reach means we must strive to appeal to as many people as possible, and to this end we aim for a reasonably even split between church and community content. This is challenging, although happily there is no shortage of charities and community groups asking to be featured in the magazine. Alongside the regular church news and information, we published articles about the Living Tree cancer support group; Home-Start, which supports parents of children under five; Bridport Bowling Club; United Diversity Bridport, an environmental community action group; the natural history of our area; the Burma Star Association in Bridport and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission; and, for our Christmas issue, local artist Grace Crabtree.

For our 'In the pod' Q&A slot, I interviewed then-mayor Ian Bark; environmentalist and naturalist Sir Ghillean Prance; the Revd Pete Stone, on the eve of his departure from the parish; musician and teacher Jane Silver-Corren; Melplash Show president Michael Fooks; incoming mayor Dave Bolwell; and the Revd Neil Robinson, the Salisbury Diocese's Chaplain to the Deaf Community. As part of the magazine's coverage of the Bridport Literary Festival in the October issue, I was thrilled to secure an email interview with journalist and author Patrick Barkham.

Our parish editors continue to work hard to keep their readers informed about news and events at their churches. We welcomed a new 'partner church', the Bridport Christian Fellowship, which joined Bridport United Church, the Roman Catholic Parish and the Beacon Church in having a regular column in the Parish Pages alongside the six Parish of Bridport churches. Our partner churches' financial contributions help us to maintain our high production values.

Advertising sales continued at a healthy level, allowing us to produce three 28-page issues and seven 24-page issues. For the fourth year running, the Bridport Literary Festival took extensive advertising in one issue, making a significant contribution to our advertising revenue.

In April our longtime local printer, Creeds, was forced to increase its prices and unfortunately this change meant we had to make a choice: change the magazine to a cheaper format or find a different printer. We chose the latter option, and the May to December/January magazines (seven issues) were handled by Advantage Digital Print (ADP) in Dorchester. This was purely a financial decision; we have always been very happy with Creeds' service and were more than satisfied with the quality of ADP's service, too, particularly that they were able to step in at fairly short notice. (We have since returned to Creeds.)

Olivia Daly Editor, The Bridge

St Swithun's, Allington

WORSHIP: The regular pattern of worship at St Swithuns has continued with a Sunday morning Sung Eucharist and a Thursday morning Said Mass, a fortnightly Centering Prayer group and a monthly Contemplative Church service.

Both of these latter meditative offerings attract people from other churches in the Parish and from outside the church family. Both are clearly appreciated as alternative ways of developing our spirituality. A new practice during Advent was a weekday Said Evensong (Franciscan Rite) which proved popular. St Swithuns hosted the Parish Service on Easter Eve and Harvest Festival (with breakfast). We held our Carol Service, working together with our local RC Church, as usual.



PASTORAL AND SOCIAL EVENTS: At the beginning of the year, we participated in the national Warm Spaces initiative which attracted a small but appreciative group of people who came on a Saturday afternoon for food, warmth, and companionship. St Swithuns is pleased to continue to act as host to a local Food Glut stall and a Clothes Bank. Both attract large numbers of people clearly in need. The long-established Community Coffee Morning started earlier to accommodate this group. Wild and Messy Church (a whole Parish event hosted by St Swithuns) met monthly. An increasing number of children and parents attend and we value being able to offer this to families.

Social events followed our usual pattern: two evening quizzes, attended by some 70+ people from our local community and a plant sale/car boot fayre in May which was as popular as ever. The sun shone for our Patronal Cream Tea in July and St Swithun's Band played. We added Christmas sales to our Community Coffee Mornings in November and December. In the Autumn we had a series of organ recitals showcasing our splendid organ which drew an audience from the community and local churches. Money was raised for church funds and for designated charities.

THE HALL: The hall is heavily used throughout the week by a wide variety of organisations – both regular classes and numerous support groups. The hall also hosts church and whole parish events and celebrations of all kinds.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH: Whilst the hall is widely used the church itself is also becoming a popular venue. We were delighted to host a magnificent production of Noyes Fludde performed by Symondsburry School. A variety of other performances have brought followers from afar and near: Canzona Brass from Bournemouth, Bridport Chamber Orchestra and the West Dorset Singers to name a few.



REPAIR & RENEWAL PROJECT: The R&R project is now in full flow. A temporary re-ordering licence, removing some pews and other furniture has facilitated exciting liturgical experiments bringing us closer together in worship.

We were the grateful recipients of a generous grant of £188,000 from the Friday Charitable Trust in memory of the venerable John Livingstone. But it's not just about the physical building - it is how the building aids our mission. Our new piano - also a gift - appeals to choirs, orchestras and individuals. Wild and Messy Church brings in a wider community. We want to be a lighthouse, not a clubhouse. Bricks and masonry are our physical witness but using the buildings sacramentally to 'Make Jesus Known' in Bridport is what it is all about.

We are grateful to all our hardworking volunteers who run events, provide catering, arrange flowers, set up for services and manage church and hall bookings. We could not achieve so much without these wonderful people.

Yvonne Welch

Holy Trinity, Bothenhampton

The services in Bothenhampton follow the pattern of the Parish Service once every six months then Morning Praise on the second Sunday, Communion on the third and Matins on the fourth Sunday. We currently have a vacancy for a permanent organist/choir master so during this interregnum the choir of five ladies and one man take turns in choosing the hymns, anthems and running choir practice. Some weeks we are unable to get an organist or pianist so the hymns are sung in an 'a cappella' mode.

The church has two areas of grounds to maintain, one being around the old church, where we still have an open graveyard, the other, called the Church Garden, surrounds the new church. The congregation pay for the grass to be cut at the graveyard and a bi-annual get together from folk in the village keep the paths, edges and areas around the graves tidy. The Church Garden is maintained by volunteers from the village and church who put in a sterling effort in keeping the grounds as we like them to be.



One area on the raised bank by the flag pole is treated as a wild garden and slow worms, insects, butterflies, and many wild flowers are found.

Highlights this year have been the monthly coffee mornings that raise enough money to cover the insurance, heating, and electricity bills. They are attended by up to seventy parishioners. The church folk work closely with the village hall committee and we share resources frequently. This was particularly evident in our shared celebration of the King's coronation in May.

In mid-May we celebrated Rogation Sunday with a sung procession through the old village with blessings at various points on route. This culminated with a blessing on all who use the sea – we turned to look at the sea which can be seen from the church garden. On 4th June, Graham, our LLM celebrated, with the rest of the parish, his 40th year in ministry. A wonderful service followed by bucks fizz and a celebratory cake.



The fete in July was well attended and the church BBQ was used. In August the stonemason, Pete Mason, did a lot of work inside and outside the church bringing it up to specification.

In October we celebrated harvest with a harvest lunch which was laid out at the back of the church. Again, it was well attended and the profits went towards the Christmas Hampers' appeal.

In November a major problem was found in the village hall. While this was being sorted out the local Brownies and Guides, and other village hall users, relocated to hold their activities in the nave of the church. This proved very popular, especially the Brownies Carol Service, and offering the church for use in this way brought many folk who have not experienced the beauty of an 'Arts and Crafts' church into the building.

Although our regular worshippers are small in number, the church remains, and stands out, as a place of prayer, worship and praise of our Lord in the local community. It is much loved by all.

Graham Purse

Holy Trinity, Bradpole

2023 was a busy and active year for the community at Holy Trinity, Bradpole.

On average we welcome sixteen children each week to our Tots @ Ten with their parents, grandparents, and child minders. Refreshments are offered to the adults, while the children play with the lovely toys available or enjoy the craft activities. At approximately 11am we draw everyone together with "Bubble Time". The children are offered a healthy fruit snack and then we have "Song Time."

Usually, we have a team of six helpers each week from the thirteen wonderful volunteers. They faithfully move the chairs and bring the larger toys down from the loft before each session begins.

It is our aim and prayer that we will be a blessing to all who walk through our church doors each Wednesday morning as they are welcomed in Jesus' name.

Other groups have met regularly at Holy Trinity during 2023. There is a craft group that meets twice monthly and also a prayer and fellowship group that meet monthly to offer one another prayer, support, and guidance. The Tuesday lunch club meets twice monthly at the Kings Head and 22-24 people from the church and community attend.



Rev Janis Moore, Harry Britton, and Helen Thomas, go to Bradpole Pre-School once a month for 30-45 minutes to share the Christian message. In July 2023 the Bradpole Pre-School Leavers Service was held at church, with sixteen children and their parents attending. The focus of the service was based on the Biblical story of Noah and the ark; this is also their school emblem. In December the Pre-School held an interactive Nativity Service in church.

The Bell Ringers have rung for all 'normal' services during 2023 as well as for the Coronation celebration and other special events. The bells are much in demand from local ringing associations and visiting bands. Training is often conducted with the use of 'tied' bells. Rung 'open,' they have attracted many compliments.

During the year Bradpole Brunch met in the Village Hall on the third Sunday of the month on seven occasions. The children and their families who attended had activities, bible stories, songs, and prayers all based on a bible theme each month. In June members of the Brunch team provided activities for children at the Bradpole Village Fete.



'The Friends of Holy Trinity Bradpole' continue to be an active and supportive group. Activities arranged have included coffee mornings and afternoon teas, which proved to be popular. During February an evening of "Desert Island Discs" heard about the musical favourites and family background and upbringing of Revd Janis Moore.

Intrepid walkers enjoyed a stroll around the village in April, followed by tea and cake back in the church. In May there was a well-attended concert performed by Parnham Voices. The AGM in June reported on the work of the Friends and elected the trustees for the following year. Following the business section of the meeting, a resident from Lodors spoke on local highway bridges and their origins.

In November, 30 members enjoyed an evening of skittles at Freshwater Holiday Park. The Friends also operate a “100 Club” and are always open to additional members.

Ginny Bowley

St Mary’s Bridport

‘Every church has its own story. A building as ancient and fine as St Mary’s, Bridport has a long and interesting one.’ So writes the Rev. John Gann in May 1989 who was Rector at that time. In looking back on the past year, we recognise that we are contributing to that story in new ways but also seeking to continue to serve the community in others that have been familiar over many, many years.

Celebration of a Coronation has not happened here for quite some time but will, of course, have had a precedent. However, being all new to most of us, we gave great energy to the happenings of the weekend on which King Charles III was crowned in Westminster Abbey. At St Mary’s we held a special Parish and Civic Service on Sunday 7th May, attended by the mayor and members of the town council.



The following day we joined in with the national ‘Big Help Out’ initiative.

We provided a team for the Bridport mass litter pick and feeling that we still had energy, a church spring clean was undertaken followed by a lunch with coronation quiche and prosecco!

As a church family, 2023 was a time of shifting focus as we more fully understood our role in being part of the Bridport Parish.

We hosted Parish services in April, when we said goodbye to Rev Pete and Anne Stone, and in December when Rt Revd Stephen Lake, Bishop of Salisbury led our worship for Advent Sunday.

St Mary’s was one of the venues for the parish weekly study groups which were held throughout Lent and Advent and midway through June we hosted Rev Helen’s goodbye picnic lunch.



Some of our most enjoyable activities were associated with our EcoChurch project and our monthly Midweek Communion teas. Participation in the Great Big Green Week, the Harvest Craft workshop and the churchyard Count on Nature activity all helped to ensure that we were worthy of our newly acquired EcoChurch Bronze Award status. Offering lifts to our more elderly parishioners increased the numbers who attended our midweek communion services, and the afternoon tea which followed, sometimes with added entertainment, brought joy to all involved.

Music was another key theme in the life of the church throughout 2023 and our hiring initiative brought concerts from the New Elizabethan Singers, The Ridgeway Singers, Cantamus Choir and Allington Strings to St Mary's. We continued to think about ways in which we could become a more welcoming church and our monthly Coffee and Cake events on a Saturday morning were specifically focussed on extending a welcome to visitors and tourists to our town. We held a coffee morning on every third Saturday of the month from April to October and raised over £1200.



St Mary's church continues to be inextricably linked with the lives of so many people in the town; 2023 saw weddings, funerals and baptisms take place as well as regular visits from the children of St Mary's School.

In 1989 Rev John Gann expressed the wish that the people of Bridport would continue to find St Mary's to be a place of prayer and peace, and that it would serve its original function as a place of worship of a living God.

We hope that this has been true throughout the days of this year.

Lesley Hill

St. Mary, Walditch

Services : St. Mary's Walditch has a small, but regular worshipping community, occasionally enhanced by visiting family or those who have second homes here.

The pattern of services has continued with three services a month of Morning Praise, this being held on a Thursday morning, and a once monthly Eucharist Service which is on the last Sunday of each month. Special services for Christmas, Easter and Harvest are also held.

Church : The Church continues to be well maintained by volunteers. Visitors really appreciate its peace and this is shown by comments in our visitors' book.



Churchyard : The Churchyard is also well maintained by volunteers and contains a number of wild areas looked after by the Walditch Gardening Club. There is an area of naturalised daffodils to the rear of the churchyard as well as snowdrop beds along the paths and near the cremation stones. Visitors love the beauty of this place and often sit on one of the benches for some quiet thought. Safe walkways are maintained so that those who are less agile can safely visit the graves of loved ones.



Events : During the year we held our annual Pancake Party, which is always popular, a Harvest Brunch which was well attended, and our annual Winter Tea. These events help to raise funds for the Church as well as being popular with the local community. We also had our annual 'Carols Round the Village' which raises funds for local charities. About 30 people took part and we started off with mulled wine and nibbles, kindly provided by one of our neighbours. We held 'Carols on the Green' on Christmas Eve which begins with a visit to The Hyde, our local care home. About fifty folk took part. Mulled wine and hot mince pies were kindly provided by the Village Hall after the event.

Volunteers : We have many volunteers who support our church and undertake many of the various tasks needed to keep things running smoothly. They include those involved in arranging flowers, those who prepare for services, opening and closing the church and delivering the Bridge Magazine.

Sue Wellman-Herold

St. John, West Bay

St John's, located overlooking the harbour at West Bay has a regular congregation of around fifteen people. Some visitors to the area during the summer months join the congregation for Sunday worship, or visit during the week, as St John's is open during the day.

Services at St John's consist of a Eucharist on the second Sunday of the month and Services of Morning Praise on the third and fourth Sundays. A Service of Morning Prayer is held every Monday at 10.00am and on the fourth Saturday of the month a Wholeness and Healing Service takes place at 6.00pm.

A Lent group met at St John's and at the end of April, Parnham Voices held a 'Come & Sing' event in the church. In July we welcomed back the West Dorset Community



Orchestra for their annual concert. Once again, St John's hosted the annual service of the Royal Air Force Association in September to mark the Battle of Britain, and the Royal Naval Association in October, to mark Trafalgar Day. A Sea Sunday Service was held outside on the green in July. Several other organisations have used St John's: West Cliff Residents' Association for their annual meeting, Brit Valley Rotary Book Stalls and RNLI for a safety talk.

The West Bay Christmas tree was erected on the green outside St John's and a carol service was held, followed by further carol singing and refreshments around the tree. The Boxing Day swim took place at the Bay, followed by the very popular community carol singing. At the beginning of November, the lights in St John's started tripping out and it was evident that there were electrical problems. An electrical inspection, carried out at the end of November, found that the building needed a complete rewire and for safety reasons, the electrics were turned off. Fortunately, arrangements were made to hold services in Harbour House and the Salt House and so we were able to continue to meet.



Rosemary Russell