

ST GEORGE'S GARRISON CHURCH

Newsletter of Woolwich Garrison Church Trust
(Charity Commission Number 1168633)

Autumn / Winter 2018

Issue No. 5



The Roll of Honour Service, November 2018

Chairman's Message:

We are nearing the end of the Phase 2 works being carried out to the Church. The predicted completion date is now January 2019, at which time our Trust will assume responsibility for the Church under the terms of our lease with Heritage of London Trust Operations (Holtop). I am confident that when Friends and visitors see the quality and the extent of the works of restoration at the east end the Church, behind the hoardings which have obscured that part of the Church for the greater part of this year, they will be surprised and delighted by what has been achieved. I would pay tribute to the quality and professionalism of Skillingtons the conservation building practice which has carried out the work, and to Holtop which has procured funding for the Phase 2 works through the generosity of Historic England.

But this is a time to look forward with anticipation and excitement to what lies ahead. There are 4 projects on which the trustees hope to be able to report progress by the time of our next Newsletter in the summer of 2019. Firstly, with the support of Berkeley Homes we hope to replace the ugly concrete screed on the floor of the Chancel and the unsightly steps leading up from the garden to the Chancel with the old paving slabs from the Arsenal. This will have a transformative effect on the east end of the Church and it is work for which we have the necessary consents.

There are the wonderful possibilities opened up by the excavation of the crypt. This will be partially completed during the phase 2 works, but whether we extend the excavation further into the old boiler room (where the old Victorian boiler is still in place) and further on into the area under the Chancel, and, if so, what use we make of the area so exposed is for the Trust to decide.



Secondly, we have inherited an external septic tank in the north porch which is unsightly, and regularly overflows giving rise to a need to empty and clean at regular intervals. It often smells and takes up very valuable storage space. If, as we hope, we let out the Church for weddings and receptions and events of this type we cannot proceed with the present arrangements (a single WC and an inadequate septic tank). We are obtaining estimates as to the cost of re-positioning the septic tank to the land to the north of the Church and outside it. Again, it is our hope that we might obtain assistance with this task from the major contractors who are engaged in developments around our part of Woolwich.

Our third priority is to landscape the area around the Church and to create a memorial Garden to commemorate the war dead from the Commonwealth countries who gave their lives in both World Wars. With the scaffolding around the outside of the Church while the Phase 2 works are completed, this project is inevitably on hold for the time being. But we are obtaining costings and drawings from a local landscape architect as to what our proposals might achieve. And are confident that this would be a project which would attract grant funding and enjoy widespread local support.

You will see later on in this Newsletter a piece about the Friends of the Garrison Church and the event which we are planning in April 2019 to show off the Church to our supporters. I hope that as many of you as possible will attend that event and will also come to our initial AGM in February (for which once again you will see details in this Newsletter)

Tim Barnes

Blithe Spirit

The Changeling Theatre returned to the Church on Tuesday July 3rd for its production of Blithe Spirit. Although this clashed with the England v Columbia World Cup Match which affected the size of the audience the production was a delight for those of us fortunate to attend. As we were in the middle of the long hot summer, the evening could not have been better. Madam Arcati was brilliantly acted and drove the memory of Margaret Rutherford in that role many years ago firmly into the margins.



As the east end of the Church was segregated off by large hoardings the Company was restricted as to the use they could make of the space. But with resource and imagination they created a 1930 drawing room, a seance and the other scenes in a way that Noel Coward would have been proud of.



We look forward to welcoming them back in 2019 when the whole Church will be available for them to display their talents.

GLYPT Performance

On 28th July the Greenwich and Lewisham Young Peoples Theatre presented its summer showcase of talent at the Church. The event featured four acts. Reach Theatre is GLYPT's resident company of artists with learning difficulties. They put on a special piece designed for outdoor performance on which they had been working at the Tramshed Theatre.



A work in progress by Sprung Theatre, one of GLYPT's companies in residence, involved a piece called Take Your Fate and Build. This tries to make sense of change in London; what is being destroyed and what created, and how people can place themselves within it.



Moxie Brawl provided a guest performance based on the life of Jane Morris the wife of the famous textile designer and poet, William Morris. Jane grew up in a working class home but married into a higher class. She was intelligent, multi-lingual, a mother of two and a muse to many artists. The production is still evolving with feed-back from audiences.

Finally, Wayne Parsons and the Progression Company produced Stellafield, (Part1). The performance is a collaboration between choreographer Wayne Parsons and performers from GLYPT's Progression programme. The piece looked at the role celebrities play in popular culture to-day.



A beautiful afternoon and a varied and interesting programme combined to create a memorable event.

Remembrance Day Events, in this centenary year of the Armistice

On the morning of Monday 5th November 20 soldiers, in full dress uniform, attended the Church, together with some veteran Royal Artillery members, and a few local supporters. This was part of the nation-wide reading of the Roll of Honour in which the names of those who died In World War 1 were read at Services across the country as part of the observation of the Armistice.

The reading of the names began with the Commanding Officer of the Kings Troop, followed by some 20 soldiers of different ranks. In all some 2500 names were read, and the Service ended with prayers and a blessing from the Chaplain.

The scale of the sacrifice was brought home by the fact that the names read, only comprised a small part of those whose names began with C and D, and that by way of example we had names such as Herbert Albert Clark, Herbert Michael Clark and Herbert Simon Clark.



The Remembrance Day Service was held on Sunday 11th November, commencing at 10,45 to allow for the 2 minutes silence at 11am. It was conducted by Rev. (Major) Andrew White, Chaplain to the Woolwich Station and by Rev. Dr Adam Scott, Chaplain to NRHQ RA.



There was a good turn-out of local dignitaries as well as army cadets and soldiers from the barracks (although their number was diminished by the many demands on their time at Armistice Day Remembrance Day Services throughout London).



A reading was given by Lt Col Cross, Station Commander Woolwich, concerning one of the Royal Artillery VC winners, Robert Gorle who died almost 100 years ago on 1st October 1918, and an inspiring Thought for Remembrance Sunday was delivered by Adam Scott. We were fortunate to recruit at the keyboard Raphael Tettey, (who is keen to support the Trust at future Services), who helped the congregation with O God Our Help In Ages Past, Fight The Good Fight, Lead Us Heavenly Father Lead Us, and Jerusalem.



Wreaths were laid on behalf of our Trust (by Shane Gough), by our local MP Matthew Pennycook (who was in attendance), and on behalf of the Judges at Woolwich Crown Court, Woolwich Station, Royal Greenwich Council, the Army Cadet Force, the local police and Holtop.



The Commonwealth Memorial Garden

The trustees plan to transform the area outside the Church to create a memorial unique in South East England. At present the area needs attention, as shown below.



Friends of Garrison Church

Some of those who see this Newsletter are already Friends of the Garrison Church and we are extremely grateful for their support. Corporate membership costs £500 and we have 2 corporate members.

Life membership is £100 and covers 2 adults in the same household. We have 21 life members and are anxious to recruit more. As you will appreciate it is a bargain when you consider that annual membership is £25.

We signed up 24 annual members in 2017 but did not pursue them for their annual subscriptions in 2018. Now with 2019 approaching and a Treasurer who is keen to realise the Gift Aid potential of annual subscriptions, we will be contacting those who took out annual membership in the past, as well as actively pursuing new Friends. The trustees intend to keep subscription levels at their present levels until 2020.

What you may ask are the benefits of becoming a Friend? We would give 4 answers, Firstly, you will be supporting the continued upkeep and improvement of the Church and its surrounds. The trustees have ambitious plans both for the Church itself and the land around it, and subscriptions will go towards those improvements, as well as impressing upon grant givers the level of local support

Secondly, you will receive our twice yearly Newsletter which will keep you in touch with the Garrison Church and the events which we have organised and are planning.

Thirdly, it is the Trustees' hope and expectation to host a party on a Sunday afternoon which will be reserved for Friends. This year we hope to hold it in April and the date will be announced on our web-site as well as to Friends.

Finally we have a venue which we are confident will become more and more popular for receptions, parties and private events. We would propose that if Friends wanted to hire the Church it would be at 50% from the normal commercial rate.

So there are good reasons to become a Friend. If you are interested in becoming one contact Tim Barnes at tim@ttbarnes.com or Steve Offord on offords18@gmail.com or visit our website www.stgeorgeswoolwich.org

AGM

We are planning to hold our AGM on Wednesday 27th February 2019 at 12 noon. Jeremy James, one of our trustees and Director of the Greenwich and Lewisham Young Peoples Theatre (GLYPT) has agreed to host the event at The Tramshed Theatre. The event will be followed by light refreshments and then all present will be invited to walk up to the Garrison Church to see it in its restored state.

The Trustees Report and Financial Statements for the period ending 31st December 2017 have been lodged with the Charity Commission but need to be endorsed by our membership, as do the appointment of officers of the Trust. The Chairman and the Treasurer will produce their reports. Future plans will be discussed and questions will be taken from our members.

Any Friend who has paid a subscription is a member of the Trust and entitled to vote. If you are not already a member the forms will be available at the meeting to allow you to join up immediately.

The Trustees discussed the best time of day for the AGM. It is appreciated that a noon-time meeting will create difficulties for those in work, but an evening meeting (particularly in February,) would not be an attractive option, and the thought of combining the meeting with a visit to the Church would, we hope, result in reasonable numbers attending.

Other News

We were pleased to receive £1000 from the Tesco Bags of Help Scheme. This enabled us to purchase 80 new chairs, in place of the old chairs which had been discarded by the Salvation Army- a pretty good indication that they had reached the end of their useful life. The new chairs are light, stackable and comfortable and a great improvement.

The Caribbean Forum held its Annual Summer Party in the Church in August. This is becoming an annual fixture under Pamela Franklin's organisation. (Pamela is now a trustee of the Woolwich Garrison Church Trust). It is a wonderful event covering all ages and involving Jamaican food (and drink!) music, games and dancing. Long may it continue.

The gates which used to mark the entrance to the Church, and which became surplus to requirements as a result of the magnificent new gates unveiled by the Duke of Gloucester in April, have been removed. They have been found a new home in the Royal Artillery Memorial Cloister at Larkhill in Wiltshire.

By the time of this newsletter we hope to have in place the new railings and metal gates in the South porch. These have been created by Normandales, the metal work specialists responsible for the central gates. This area has been newly paved and will make an attractive entrance to the Church once all the huts and builders' material have been removed at the end of the Phase 2 works.

Trustees and volunteers have continued to keep the Memorial Garden inside the Church looking good despite the problems of a summer drought, and the inevitable damage caused by numbers of workmen walking back and forth to the East End of the Church where the bulk of the Phase 2 works have been concentrated. With assiduous watering our plants survived and our 2 vines produced grapes. During the winter months we will be carrying out further planting and the gardens should look fine by the Spring/Summer of next year.

Opening Hours

Winter: From now until April 2019 the Church will be open every Sunday between 10am and 1pm.

Summer: From April to October 2019 the Church will be open every Sunday between 10 am and 4 pm.

Contact

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(You can also become a Friend via our website www.stgeorgeswoolwich.org)

Photo Credits: Changeling Theatre, Chris Mansfield, Clive Lambert, GLYPT.