

ELSTOW ABBEY ANNUAL CHURCH REPORT - 2011

Elstow Mattins Group

The Mattins Group started on Sunday 16th May 2004, so we are now approaching our 8th year. We started during the interregnum when we wanted to provide a Mattins service for our regular attendees. When Jeremy arrived he encouraged us to continue with the services, as he himself liked Mattins.

Each month, we usually do one service or on occasion two. Within the group we have people who will prepare the talks and deliver them. Others in the group take it in turn to write prayers, read the lessons or lead the service. Tim Elliott is one of our speakers and also acts as cantor when Chris Knell is not available.

Since David Ewbank arrived at Elstow as our Music Director, he has given us superb support with the Mattins Group services. He does cantor when required and provides great leadership in the psalms. His singing is very much appreciated by everyone. David has just recently provided prayers for one of the Mattins Group Services and they were very well received by our congregation. We are very glad that he felt he could be a part of our Mattins Group and we look forward to future prayers by him.

The Mattins group would also like to extend their thanks for the support we have from Delphine Fordham, Tessa Wood, Peter Batiuk and David Ewbank for doing the Bible readings for us. Our thanks also are due to Stephen Stanford and his team for ringing the bells before Mattins on as many Sundays as possible. Not least we appreciate the loyal support of the core members of our congregation – Barbara Routledge, Jean Smith, Olive Norman and Josephine Corion.

We started this venture with a lot of hope and plenty of concerns that we could present a good Mattins service. We all just put our trust in the Lord and through prayer asked for God's help. With his help, love and encouragement, we have grown in confidence and steadily moved forward. Over the last year it has been my greatest wish to have as many different speakers as possible and I am glad to say that seven people have accepted our offer to come and do the address at Mattins.

We started to support the Mattins services as we felt the older and the not so old enjoy this type of service and would otherwise have missed an opportunity to come to worship at their usual time. The Group and those who attend have found great fellowship and their faith strengthened.

Everyone is welcome to the Group's Mattins services and to contribute to or get involved with any aspect of the work in providing this worship to God. Please speak to me if you have any ideas.

Current team members are Ann Knight, Miriam Clark, Tim Elliott, Eric Crossen, Chris Knell, and myself and I would like to think David feels very much part of the team now.

Mavis Crossen
26 April 2011

Elstow Bell Ringers

The Elstow band comprises just six ringers, but we are regularly well supported by ringers from St Peter's Bedford, Kempston, and Bromham.

The bells are rung regularly on Sundays, between the morning services, and for evensong; also on Friday nights for practice. Jeremy's request for us to resume Sunday morning ringing is just about feasible with the current normal service times, and has been well received by several villagers who are unable to attend church. We are often asked 'what happened the bells this morning?' when we are unable to ring! For this we are indebted to ringers from Kempston and Bromham, who ring at their own churches before coming to Elstow. It would not be possible without them. On a few special occasions, when service times have permitted, we also rang for services at Cardington. We are one of a very few churches where the bells are regularly rung for evensong, and this is mostly by our own ringers with occasional outside help.

Friday practice nights are generally well supported, sometimes with ten or more ringers. Unfortunately our two young learners from Haynes decided that boys were more interesting than bells, and so our focus has shifted from teaching basic change ringing to widening the repertoire of the band. Early in 2010 six members of the band rang their first quarter-peal of Norwich Surprise Minor, and during the last year we have been focussing on a method called Primrose Surprise Minor, which five of the ringers have now also rung to a quarter-peal. Two of our regular visitors are also taking their first steps in conducting. Our other Friday night activities are to wind and adjust the clock, a task that is mostly done by Don MacFarlane, and to visit the Red Lion!

In addition to the regular ringing we have rung for a number of weddings and funerals. Several bands from other areas have visited Elstow on ringing outings, and we hosted the Bedford District of the Bedfordshire Association in January for an afternoon ringing meeting. There have been two Peals and three Quarter-Peals rung.

On March 7th 2010, Don McFarlane, who has been a member of the band for many years, achieved his first ever quarter peal, ringing the tenor bell to Grandsire Doubles. On 26th June we concluded a series of six peals in which all 41 of the regular Surprise Minor methods were rung by the same band, most having close associations with Elstow. This peal was rung for Armed Forces Day and as a farewell to Tony and Margaret Barron. On 25th August we rang a half-muffled quarter peal in memory of Jim Routledge following his funeral service, and on 24th October a visiting band rung a peal of 14 Spliced Delight Minor. Finally, on 12th March, we rang the first of five quarter peals of Primrose that were rung in various Bedfordshire towers that day, enabling Ann Desics and four other ringers to achieve their first of Primrose.

It has been a rather sad year for the ringers. Barbara Routledge lost her husband Jim (also once a ringer) in August, and just recently Ann Desics also lost her husband Jim.

In response to the architect's quinquennial report in May 2010 I made a fairly extensive inspection of the tower and bells and provided some recommendations. These included repairs to the broken glass in the roundels and intermediate chamber openings to prevent further bird and weather penetration, and inspection of the bell chamber louver boards, some of which are in a fairly perilous state. Work is required to rub down and repaint the bell frame (last done 40 years ago) and to replace some of the wheel shrouds, which after more than 100 years have rotted. The ropes are also nearing the end of their useful life. Although the bell installation is in reasonable condition and none of this work is urgent, it would be unwise to postpone action and expenditure for too much longer.

Stephen Stanford (April 2011)

WEDNESDAY COFFEE & SOUP REPORT

We have been fortunate in keeping our soup morning going without a halt and holding it in the vestry. We thought people would lose interest, but not at all. We meet every Wednesday from 11.30am to about 12.30pm. The group is mainly people who are bereaved and living on their own.

We started in 2005 after a training session on bereavement and befriending the lonely. The thinking was that a coffee morning, followed by soup would be somewhere where people could meet for a chat and companionship. We started with eight people and now we have eighteen to twenty. At Christmas, we try and make it special and have a party; that is always well attended.

Some people are from our church congregation, others from Bunyan's Mead and others who have found us while attending the graves of their loved ones in the churchyard.

Sadly over the years we have had several members die including Dorothy Stamford, Norman Thompson, Penny Rigden and a few weeks ago, Charlie Goff – all special characters that are sadly missed.

We encourage people to come for companionship, a friendly chat and a cup of coffee and soup.

Barbara Routledge
April 2011

BENEFACTIVE BIBLE GROUP REPORT - 2011

Since our last report in 2009, we have worked our way through Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus and in a few weeks, we will have finished Numbers. There was surprise in some quarters, at our desire to study the Books of Moses, but we have found it to be a rewarding and enlightening experience.

The Apostle Paul relied heavily on the Old Testament Scriptures to expound the truths he had received "by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Writing about the experiences of the Israelites, Paul says: "These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfilment of the ages has come."

Jesus, in His Bible Study on the Emmaus road, began at Moses and the Prophets, and showed the two disciples what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. We have been studying those same Scriptures, we have found Jesus there, and we have learned so much more about God's great plan for the redemption of the world.

Our studies this year have included a visit to the British Museum where we saw how God's Word was recorded and preserved from earliest times. We then went on to an exhibition at the British Library, in connection with the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible. We came away in awe of the dedication and courage of John Wycliffe, William Tyndale and others who, against tremendous odds, gave us our English Bible.

The Bible Group meets every Wednesday at 8.00 pm at St Mary's Church, Cardington. We commence with fellowship over a cup of tea and a biscuit; the leader then prays for any in need, and then everyone joins in our special Bible Study prayer asking God to guide us. We finish around 9.30 pm. The meeting is led by Irene or myself, and there is

no pressure on anyone to contribute, but we find that they do. A warm welcome awaits anyone from the Benefice who would like to join us.

We are conscious that a simpler form of Bible Study is required for those who are young in the Christian Faith, or who simply want to brush up on their Bible knowledge. We suggest the new group could meet at 7.00 pm for one hour before the more advanced study at 8.00 pm. If anyone is interested in attending a beginners Bible Group, please contact Ann Knight on (01234) 854036, or Irene Mills on (01234) 741501.

Ann Knight
April 2011

Sunday School Report **Church for Children at Elstow**

It is a wonderful problem, but if all of our church family children all came to one service we would not be able to fit them all into Sunday school! When the Church hall was demolished we were concerned about the running of Sunday school, would the children be too noisy? Would we be able to use the smaller space? In practise the group has gone from strength to strength. We regularly have 15 – 20 children and could have 30 if all attended. Using the vestry makes us feel part of the church service and closer to be able to judge our return.

Beth and I continue to take turns in the preparation and planning of Sunday school activities each week. We now have a rota of helpers who support us enabling one of us to stay in church. It has been a great blessing to be able to take part in the worship on a regular basis.

The family service is an easy introduction to worship at Elstow, being less formal and easier to access and follow. Thank you to the band play month by month. We would love more people to take part in our services so that we can continue to learn from each other. It is our challenge to encourage the Sunday school children and their families to attend this service too.

The best bit (and most tiring part) of the year for me is the Holiday club. In 2010 we turned the hall into a big top and learnt about the “Greatest story ever told” over 80 children attended over the week with the biggest and most colourful holiday club yet. The most amazing part was the team of helpers who came forward and volunteered their time and talents – it was a great privilege to work with such a dedicated enthusiastic group.

This year the Elstow Holiday club is “Going Up, Up, Up and away”. Based on an aeroplane we will visit new and exciting places to learn about Jesus. This is going to be our biggest challenge yet as we have no hall, a lovely abbey church (so we can’t paint the walls) and 1 slightly wobbly toilet, but I hope lots of enthusiasm and energy. Please pray for the club, the leaders and especially the children. If you feel you could help us in any way we would love you to join us.

Youth work is exhausting, exhilarating and very rewarding. There is never enough time, always too much to do, and never enough helpers. Please prayerfully consider if you have skills, talents or time that you could spare to join us and to help build the church of the future.

Tracey Hinson
April 2011

Stewardship (Financial Aspects) - 2010 Report for Elstow Abbey PCC Annual General Meeting

The figures we produce for our tax claim and for our Annual Report are based on the Calendar Year. Each year, we designate one Sunday to encourage our congregations to review their commitment to Stewardship. This may take the form of examining how we can offer our talents to help with the smooth running of our church in Elstow or indeed in outreach to our local community. However, we also have a financial commitment to the church to ensure that its work can continue and it is able to pay for its running costs. It is with the financial aspects that Mavis and I have been concerned for many years. We invite members of the Church Family to examine their financial contributions by completing a Pledge Form each year. Because Stewardship Sunday could not be fitted into the Church calendar until 7 February, any increases in giving in 2010 were not in place until a little later.

We have presented the 2010 figures as an addition to the figures we gave last year, so that a comparison may be made over the three years. The figures are also shown in chart form overleaf.

The first table shows a slight decline in the total amounts donated over the three years and that the number of contributors has dropped as well. These trends are best seen by studying the charts.

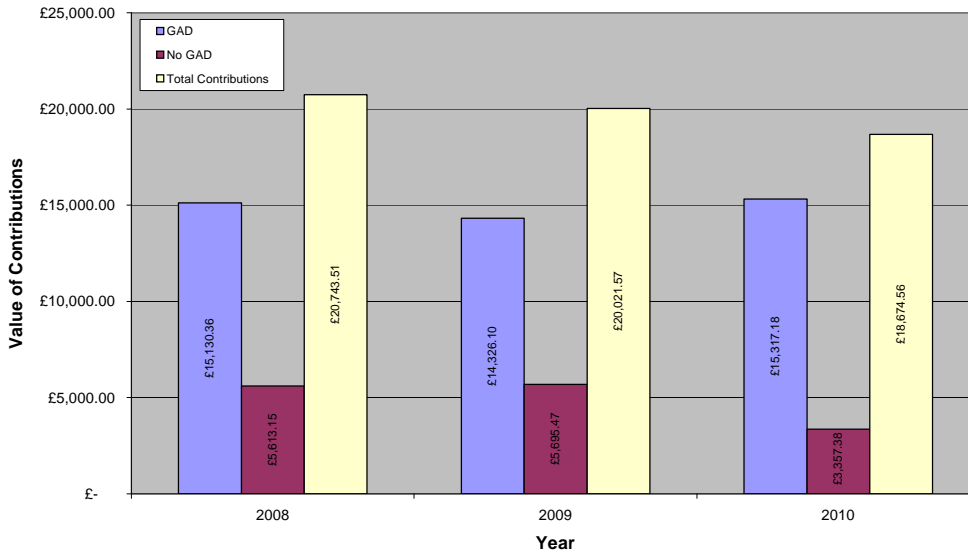
	Committed contributors			Visitors GAD	Overall Total
	With Gift Aid	Without Gift Aid	Combined		
2008	48	26	74	43	
	£15,130.36	£5,613.15	£20,743.51	£833.83	£21,577.34
2009	50	25	75	25	
	£14,326.10	£5,695.47	£20,021.57	£783.87	£20,805.44
2010	49	22	71	21	
	£15,317.18	£3,357.38	£18,674.56	£460.90	£19,135.46

The second table shows how much tax was recovered through Gift Aid over the three years

		Tax Reclaimed from HMRC			Total
		Basic amount	Interest	Top up Relief	
2008	Jan - Apr	£979.98	£0.00	£0.00	£979.98
	Apr- Dec	£3,122.43	£2.02	£400.31	£3,524.76
		£4,102.41	£2.02	£400.31	£4,504.74
2009	Jan - Dec	£3,777.49	£5.43	£484.30	£4,267.22
2010	Jan - Dec	£3,944.52	£4.31	£505.71	£4,454.54

To summarize, what our figures and charts show is that we are in a standstill position. If we are to increase our income, we need to increase our base of committed contributors, even more so than trying to encourage our existing contributors to give more.

**Pledged Contributions with and without Gift Aid
2008 to 2010**



THE FRIENDS OF ELSTOW ABBEY 2010-11 Report for Elstow APCC

The Friends of Elstow Abbey have had a fairly active year, but our outgoings far exceeded our income, as we donated £7,700 towards the refurbishment of the Church Wall in 2010, while our net income for 2010-11 was only £1,600, so our reserves are now quite depleted. However, we are delighted that the wall is now in a much better condition than before.

During the year we held 3 events, the first of which was a Visit to Southill Park, where Charles Whitbread, our Patron and his wife welcomed 50 members and friends to their historic home, gave us a personal guided tour and a delicious tea on a lovely sunny day. The Flitwick Singers paid a return visit to Elstow Abbey in September and performed well. Sadly the audience was quite small, so we only made a small profit. Finally, we had an excellent Christmas Concert in December 2010 with the Luton Male Voice Choir, Elstow Abbey Choir and a joint Abbey Middle/Elstow Lower School Choir.

Our AGM is on Sunday 15 May 2011. We are now organising our 2011/12 Programme, which will include an Organ Concert on 1st October 2011, a Christmas Concert on Monday 28 November 2011, and possible a Fundraising Dinner at St. Helena's in early 2012.

Lynne Faulkner

Chairman of Trustees The Friends of Elstow Abbey

April 2011

FACILITIES MANAGERS REPORT

We have been asked to give a brief summary of our first six months as Facilities Managers.

- 1) **Tied Cottage** – completely refurbished and decorated throughout including fitting a new kitchen and bathroom
- 2) **Outside** – to front of property hard standing area created for bins. Rear garden ponds relined and new pump and filter installed.
- 3) **Church** – interior spring cleaned and cobwebs removed from walls. Bulbs replaced in vestry. Vacuumed on a regular basis.
- 4) **Church yard** – Brought back to standard regularly cut and weed killed. Roses pruned and all paths swept
- 5) **Old Hall** – when standing, floor washed as required.
- 6) **New Hall** – meeting with British Heritage, archaeologists and builders, accompanied by Rev J. Crocker
- 7) **Missionary Work** – working well with neighbours who are seeing the church's point of view – chickens happy and laying well.

Bill & Joyce Willis

MUMS AND TODDERS REPORT

The Mums and Toddlers group continues to be a very well supported group. There were a lot of concerns about moving into the vestry and whether the group would be able to continue – we did even look at the possibility of holding the group on other premises. However, after an initial dip in numbers, the group is thriving again and we now utilise the back of the church as well. I am very grateful to all the time and help which Michelle Tuck has put into this group, since it was started in 2006. Michelle has recently had to stop running this group, due to work commitments. However, I am delighted that we have some new helpers – Susie and Angela, alongside Barbara and Teresa, who continue to support the group (even with a bad back!).

We have many regular Mums, grandmothers and even I am pleased to say Dads, and we are sad to lose Sarah after her fourth child has gone to school! But we don't have a problem attracting new members – we recently had our first Eastern European member and feel that there is a real need in Elstow for this sort of group.

Rev Jeremy Crocker
April 2011

Church Wardens report.
April 2011

This is my second annual report as churchwarden. I would like to say that the role has become much easier and that I am confident in carrying out all of the responsibilities that the job entails...however the longer I carry out the duties the more I find I don't know.

During the past 12 months we have been able to address some more of the items highlighted in the 2008 quinquennial report. The most urgent repair to the church was the re-bedding of the hip tiles on the vestry roof. The work was carried out during the early part of the year with the financial assistance of the Friends. The possibility of redecoration and re-gilding of the clock face was also investigated; however it was felt not to be necessary at this time.

Our major maintenance was the rebuilding and conservation of the churchyard wall (also mentioned in the 2008 report). The majority of this work was payed for using money given in memory of Sam Clarke, again with help from the Friends. A small portion of the wall was damaged when it was hit by a car. This was also rebuilt as part of an insurance claim.

2010 saw Bill and Joyce Willis installed into the role of facilities manager. Bill and Joyce share responsibility for the maintenance and care of the church and the church yard. They are overseeing and facilitating the contractors who are working on site and will ultimately manage the new community hall. Thank you Joyce and Bill for the work you have carried out already. The church yard looks.....I hope that you enjoy your new role within the community. Thanks must also go to the other volunteers who help to keep the church and churchyard clean and tidy, we send our thoughts and prayers to Joe, who works tirelessly in the church yard and wish him a speedy recovery.

The biggest change has been the removal of the old church hall. All activities have been maintained and the space within the vestry and church is now used to maximum capacity. The arrangements in place may not always be the easiest (and the toilet facilities are a little basic) or most convenient, but the sacrifices and effort will ultimately be rewarded with an amazing new facility. The next phase of work is the conservation and stabilisation of the Hillersden ruin, before the new build can begin. We continue to pray and work to raise the final amount of money needed to complete this exciting venture. (After all we do not want Jeremy to go down in the history books as the vicar who knocked down the hall and conserved the ruin!). We need to be firm in our faith and trust that we will be given whatever we need to complete the task.

I am very aware that whilst the Hall project is exciting it could become all consuming, we have a duty of care to our beautiful Abbey Church. We cannot just concentrate on the new project to detriment of the Church and church yard.

During the coming year we will continue to address the issues highlighted in 2008. We particularly have to look at the security of the church, particularly the external metal work. Many thefts from churches have resulted in a change to church insurance policies and we will need to use other deterrents such as smart water to obtain the same levels of cover. And so we must say a big Thank you to all who help to maintain and care for the Abbey in any way and to those who share in our Mission. I am personally all too aware of the time, commitment and effort that is needed to ensure that God's work in this place continues to move forward in His Name.

Tracey Hinson
Churchwarden

CHAIRMAN'S Report

A glimpse to the year just past....

- May – A wet, soggy, but enjoyable May Festival
Confirmation of Joanna, Maria and Sara
Choir joined the Royal School of Church Music
- June – Southill Park Friend's trip
Margaret and Tony leave the vergers cottage
- July - John Bunyan Upper school became an Academy, and as acting Chair tried to help steer the school through some choppy waters.
Shakespeare in the cloisters
Children's Holiday Club
- August – Isle of Wight
Green Belt weekend
- September – Hog Roast
Harvest Festival
- October – Launch of the Alpha Course
Discussion on Women in the Church
Re-launch of Youth Club on a Tuesday evening at Elstow
- November – Very good bonfire and firework evening
Remembrance Sunday with the Bishop of Bedford, and presented a painting of the Abbey to the Bugler to commemorate 50 years of playing at the service.
- December – Advent Quiet day
Bill and Joyce started as Facilities Managers
Friends Christmas Concert, which included the choir and local schools
Probably the best attended crib service we have ever had
Nine lessons and carols in the snow and we had the smallest 10'clock service ever in the choir pews
- January – Knocking down of the Church Hall
With support, all groups work well in the church and the vestry
New Youth Club at London Road
- February - Youth group involved in street art project in underpass to the Wixams
- March – Pantomime in a day
Lent course, including a Seder meal
Repair to the Ancient Monument started
- April - Very good Easter. More music this Easter, thanks to David, and I was able to share Easter with Gareth and Roger.
Easter Day was probably the best congregation I have had since I've been here, even though quite a few regulars were away.

A few future highlights :-

- I want to do a review on the whole Benefice on the welcome that people have as they come to each of the three churches.
- I would like to get the photo board up on display and I am grateful to John on putting back the lineage board back in the corner.
- John Hinson becoming a reader.
- I would like to consider developing music and for the congregation to learn a new communion setting and maybe sponsor a new hymn book, instead of Songs of Fellowship.
- I am trying to get more people involved in different functions, e.g. lots of helpers for the Sunday School. This has followed on from new helpers at Mums and Toddlers and before that, helpers at the Youth Club.
- After our discussion on welcome, I would like to set up an Elstow Welcome Team and I'll be looking at other areas of the church where members can be involved and tasks shared.

Some other major events coming up this year –

- May Festival on Saturday 14th May
- I am taking over the chair of the South Bed Council of Churches from May Scripture Union are doing a major project with the local schools in May and have 700 children signed up already
- A Salvation Army band concert on 16th June (part of Friends programme for the year)
- We have had many new schools visit the Abbey over the last year and I am happy to report that that pattern continues into the new year
- 26th June is an open church tourism day, where the church will be open all day and children of FIPO will be visiting between 12.30 and 1.30pm
- I'm planning a family day out on Saturday 2nd July to Stannick Lakes
- Monday 4th July Shakespeare's Much Ado about Nothing will be performed
- Wednesday 6th July a Woofyt day for local children
- End of July is the children's holiday club, based on an aeroplane (in the church)
- Isle of Wight holiday – many are signed up for this year's trip
- John Hinson to be licensed as a Reader.
- Harvest on 25th September we will share again with the Brownies and Elstow Christian Bunyan Fellowship
- 1st October an organ recital with our current and former Directors of Music

A few thank yous:-

1. Firstly to everyone's support and in the extra that many kindly do, that enhance the life of this Abbey Church.
2. To the wardens and standing committee members - thank you for all the time you give up and all the support that you give.
3. To Bill and Joyce, thank you for such a good beginning – the churchyard looks gorgeous.
4. To Sarah, my PA, for understanding me (!) and doing a very good job,
5. To the other ministers, including David who support me and the Benefice, especially over St Michael's transition and with Stephen's absence during the year
6. Finally, I think all the foundations are now in place and over the coming year I think the PCC have some work to do in making solid these foundations and how we grow and look after our people. I feel it is getting stronger and better, and we need to nurture the new shoots that we have got and keep growing together. My hope is to focus more on the spirituality and the care and development of God's people.

Rev Jeremy Crocker April 2011

Director of Music and Organist Report

Having served the Abbey and its congregation for a complete year; I feel that I am now getting to grips with the different services and I even know a few names!

Elstow Abbey (as well as St. Mary's Cardington) has become a member of the Royal School of Church Music. This has given us access to music resources as well as their awards.

The choir have been meeting regularly during term time on a Friday. The junior members are working towards the Royal School of Church Music Awards; hopefully the first of these awards will be presented after half term. This is an established scheme that helps the choristers develop their musical understanding as well as improving their singing skills

The choir have been working hard throughout the year and has expanded with 5 new members joining the choir. Two junior choristers served the traditional probationary period followed by them being admitted formally to full membership. This is a practise that I wish to formalise for future members.

The Carol service was a particular highlight; it is a shame that there were possibly more people in the choir than in the congregation but this was due to the heavy snow fall that affected many of the services during that period. As per previous years, additional singers joined the regular members of the choir. A challenging programme of music was chosen but the choir rose to the challenge and a high level of musicianship was delivered by all.

The choir have sung at several weddings throughout the year as well as taking part in the Friends of Elstow Abbey concert; future bookings have been made for later in this year. It is my intention to build up the repertoire for these occasions and to also reintroduce a communion anthem to the 10am service.

During the next Year I would like to introduce a new music setting for the main communion service; the choir will begin learning the Gloria this term and this will be introduced to the congregation later on. It is my intention to produce a laminated music sheet with all of the settings for the congregation; this will be of some help to visitors as well as regular attendees of the Abbey.

David Ewbank