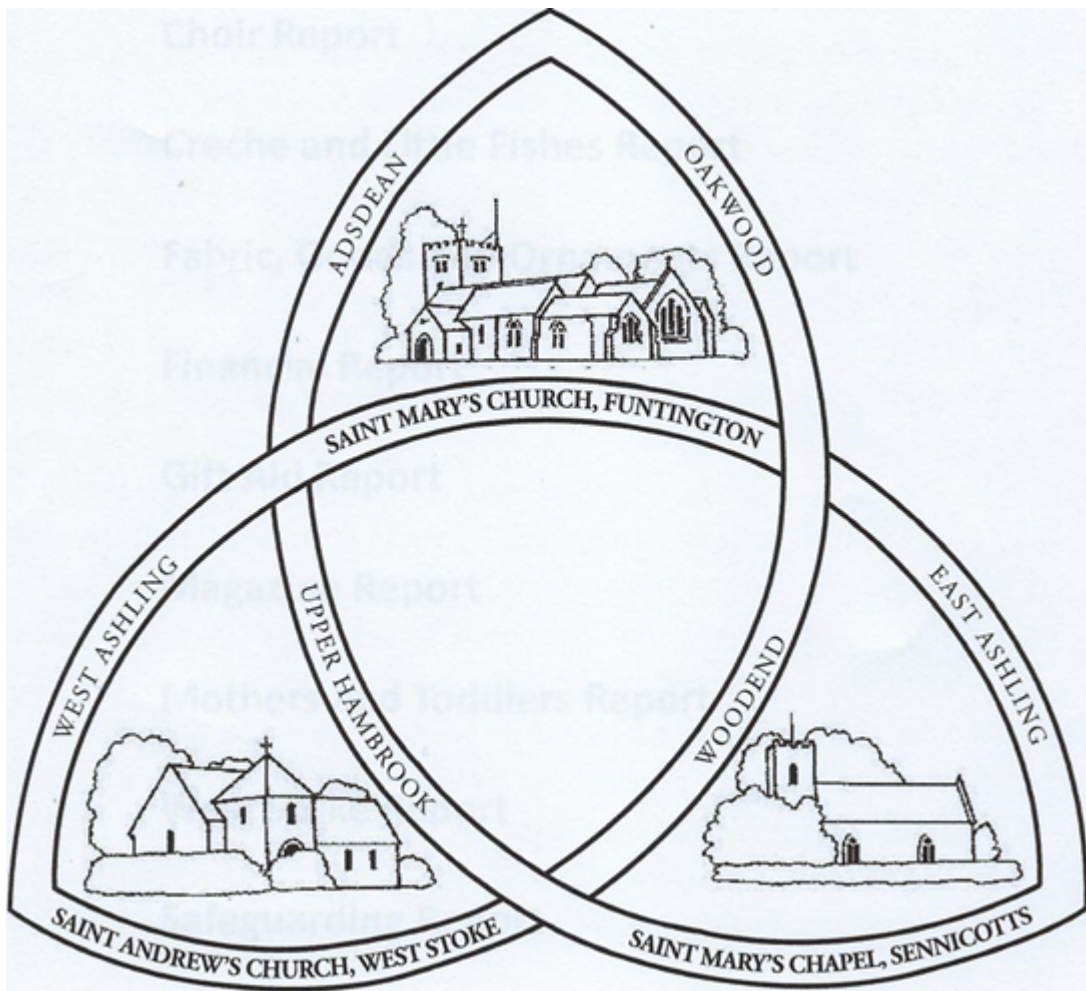


# BENEFICE OF FUNTINGTON & WEST STOKE WITH SENNICOTTS

## ANNUAL REVIEW 2024



# **Annual Review of our Churches' Activities 2024**

**St Mary's Funtington, St Andrew's West Stoke,**

**St Mary's Sennicotts.**

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## Parish Review 2024 – Church Wardens report

In 2024 we continued being in Interregnum, supported by Archdeacon Luke Irvine-Capel and Rural Dean Jessie Reid. During the year we have continued following the Interregnum pattern of services established in November 2023 and a weekly Eucharist provided every Sunday. We only had to replace one Family Service with a Songs of Praise, when our lay reader was on leave.

The PCC voted to continue this pattern of services as it enabled the church to provide a Eucharist every Sunday and it was a pattern that could be supported by one Clergy shared between Chidham and our parish in the future. We still have a joint midweek Eucharist at St Wilfrid's Nutbourne, and a joint parishes Eucharist on the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday and we take it in turns to share any extra services such as Ash Wednesday which was held in our parish this year .

So, the Interregnum pattern of services is:

**Week 1** :10 am Family Service 10 am - Funtington and 10 am Eucharist BCP- West Stoke

**Week 2:** 8 am Eucharist - Funtington

**Week 3:** 10 am Eucharist -Funtington and 10 am Morning Prayers West Stoke (this service stopped in September 2024 due to retirement of the Lay Reader).

**Week 4:** 9 am Eucharist BCP at Sennicotts.

**Week 5** :10 am Joint Parish Eucharist alternating with Chidham

The numbers attending our weekly services have remained at a similar level to last year. The family service continues to be well attended and The Eucharist services in all churches have broadly maintained their numbers. Services at Sennicotts and West Stoke were historically not as well attended but have improved with the current pattern and encouragement of people to move around. The 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday Joint service is well supported.

Other developments: Archdeacon Luke and Rural Dean Jessica Reid are supporting our Parish in the steps to recruit a Priest-in-charge. The negotiations between both Parishes continued during the first 6 months of the year until after numerous consultations, it was agreed by both PCCs to become " One Benefice with two Parishes and two PCCs"

The parish profile was written by a team from both Parishes and the post will be advertised in January 2025.

Finances: See Trustee's and Treasurer's reports. Expenditure for next year will include further work on internal masonry and Eastern Boundary fencing at St Mary's Funtington.

Smart Meter- this has not been actioned yet

Wi Fi – The PCC have agreed this needs to be obtained next year.

### Outreach:

The Church in the Community group have run two Bible study groups. The Parish Mission continues involving people who would not otherwise engage in the work of the church. This was seen at our D Day celebration in May, fireworks on Bonfire night and the Christmas Fair with Music in December. The domiciliary Lamoc team has been re-established to enable housebound parishioners to have communion if needed.

Children's ministry has still been a challenge as we do not have any leaders to take this forward. A few families with children attend each month and many others do come at Easter and Christmas. The Church wardens were approached by 3 families to support their applications to Bishop Luffa School in Chichester.

Funtington School: The school held their Harvest Festival and Christmas Service at Funtington, with children and parents attending. The school also visited the church in the year as part of their religious curriculum, having one lesson supported by a church warden. .

Oakwood School: There was a dedication service at Oakwood held at St Mary's chapel, Sennicotts in November 2024 and two Crib services were taken in December by the Rural Dean.

Churher's College Founders Dedication took place at Funtington again this year with representatives from the school laying a wreath. We have had an invitation to visit the school.

We have had a range of special services throughout the year which have all been well supported; joint Parishes services on the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday, joint Ash Wednesday service, Mothering Sunday, Harvest Thanksgiving and Remembrance.

Holy Week: Maundy Thursday service was held at St Wilfrid's during the day.

During the week the cross returned to St Mary's Funtington from Chidham, ready for our Walk of Witness. We started on Good Friday with Stations of the Cross in Funtington, before walking down to St Wilfrid's Nutbourne where we had soup and a roll and then a period of devotion before setting off with the cross to St Mary's Chidham for Veneration of The Cross and Communion. The cross was left in Chidham and will be returned on Good Friday 2025 for next year's Walk of Witness.

On Easter Morning the Pascal candle ceremony took place at Chidham and the candle was then brought up to St Mary's Church, Funtington, when we celebrated our Joint Church's Eucharist followed by Hot cross buns and an Easter egg Hunt for the children.

Christmas: This included the school service at Funtington, two Candlelit Carol services and we enjoyed the Village carol singing in the Pub again. The popular outside Nativity Service at Sennicotts was held again this year and Funtington hosted a Crib Service on Christmas Eve afternoon. In the evening, the now legendary Candlelit Carol Service at West Stoke took place to a "filled to capacity" church. The Christmas morning Service was celebrated at Funtington this year, with a significant increase in numbers over the previous year.

Music: This has been developing into a more important part of our worship, with the formation of an occasional choir from both parishes under the leadership of Paul Wren. None of our services could have taken place without sides people, readers, intercessors, flower and brass cleaning team, coffee makers etc. Equally, a further team produced highly successful, well organised and safe events for both church and community.

We couldn't have done it without each and every one of them and we are grateful for the time, skills and support they give to all three churches and to us the church wardens. We also need to thank the wonderful clergy who support the parish and encourage us all in our following of Christ and continuing Mission.

We the Church Wardens; Caroline Noble, Paul Wren and Pippa Kerr all agreed to be sworn in for another year. The PCC are very thankful to all 3 Churchwardens who served during 2024 for their hard work, dedication and support. We still have a vacancy for one Churchwarden.

The PCC had a number of new members this year after the APCM. They have had some very challenging times to deal with and important decisions about the future of our parish.

Ongoing projects: We have started the process of seeking permission, for a permanent fence on the eastern boundary from the lynch gate round to meet the southern boundary. This has been agreed but requires a faculty and planning permission to erect black metal estate fencing.

The PCC are also pursuing ownership of the eastern piece of land from the church carpark to the field. The declaration is being prepared.

Graveyard maintenance was reviewed and we decided to keep the contractors for another year. Applications have been successful in the placement of memorial plaques in the new Ashes plot.

There is still a lot of work to do in the graveyard and we will continue to work with the PCC and community working parties to maintain standards and compliance with the Directions of the Diocesan Chancellor.

Charitable giving: The PCC pledged a maximum of £5000 this year to charities, with a total of £4,500 having been reached and divided between three charities; CYE Christian Youth Enterprises, The 4 streets Project and the Sanctuary. A one-off payment was made to St Wilfrid's Hospice.

Over the year, in our parish there have been 1x Baptism, 10x funerals, 4 x burial of ashes, 3 x Weddings and 1x Marriage blessing.

We have continued to maintain a presence in our community with a number of successful social occasions. A spring Flower and Coffee morning, D Day celebration bonfire and Barbeque in the Church Paddock, our annual Bonfire party, and Carol singing in the pub.

There is so much more that can be done but we are in a strong position. Working with focus and a more united front to go forward with full commitment promoting the Gospel of Christ and serving our communities in the name of our Lord.

This is very much a journey we travel together in the life of disciples. We will rise to the challenge of promoting our Christian values, linking our churches and communities together and moving towards a more united parish as we work towards installing a new Incumbent and bringing our Interregnum to a close. We look forward to the steps we will take together over the coming year.

This review of last year is not an exhaustive list of all that has been achieved, but it is evident that our numbers are growing again and coming together in fellowship with one another is encouraging. When we do, we are met with beautiful buildings, wonderful floral displays, lovely music from our musicians and the dedication of volunteers who make our services come together. We want to say a huge "Thank You" to everyone who helps to keep our buildings open and welcoming.

**Phillipa Kerr, Paul Wren and Caroline Noble**

**Church Wardens for the Parish of Funtington West Stoke and Sennicotts**

## **St Mary's Church, Funtington, Fabric Report**

### **Routine Maintenance**

All electrical equipment was PAC tested in 2023, so is due again in 2025.  
All fire extinguishers (6 in all) were replaced in November 2024.  
Gutters cleared .

### **Repairs**

1. In spite of several reminders to the architect, our request for more information and estimate for work to the internal surround of the tower arch did not materialise. However, as of March 2025, this has now been received. Following temporary repairs in November 2023 due to falling masonry, it became clear that more substantial work was required. All surface rendering must be removed due to the wrong materials being used previously and is now detaching from the subsurface. Removal of loose rendering at the top of the arch has revealed a rather pleasant subsurface. Subject to PCC and architect approval, it is likely that the subsurface above the corbel stone will remain unrendered. Below the corbel stone will be rendered as now.
2. Due to poor drainage, the SW wall has become damp. Repairs to the down pipe and drainage channel have been approved by the PCC and instructions given to the contractor to proceed. The internal wall in this area will require rendering and it is anticipated this can be done as part of the work above (1).

3. Most windows in the Church Room are suffering from blown seals and as a result, unsightly moisture between the panes. A suitable contractor will have to be found shortly.

### **Churchyard**

Keith Goacher and his team have continued the work this year and the contract runs from April to November. The grounds have remained quite tidy throughout the winter.

In Spring, we usually arrange some clean-up sessions to clear fallen branches etc.

The pathway from the Lychgate to the main entrance requires attention. This will be discussed by the PCC in the near future.

### **Cleaning**

Our contractor comes once a week for around 3.5 hours.

*Paul Wren & Pippa Kerr*

### **St Andrew's West Stoke Review**

The attendance numbers at SAWS and Sennicotts services have happily increased this last year.

Coffee and croissants/biscuits served after the services have provided a happy and positive time for people to gather and chat. They are a success and warmly received.

Sennicotts and West Stoke together have had three funerals.

Christmas 'Carols by Candlelight' service at SAWS was an outstanding and memorable moment in the year with the church being filled to capacity.

SAWS is beginning to experience problems with the church car park being filled on sunny weekends as people overspill the Kingley Vale car park. The Churchwarden has organised for 3 x green metal signs stating "Private Church Parking Only," which hopefully will be noted and respected by the public.

Our thanks go to Emma Heaver for efficiently managing the Flower Ladies and gatherings. The Churchyard grounds continue to be beautifully kept by Liam Orchard Webb and the church cleaned by Natalie and Sibebe.

SAWS is looking to host three weddings and one christening service during the summer/autumn 2025.

*Caroline Noble*

## **Sennicotts 2024 Review**

Our group of regulars have settled into the monthly interregnum pattern of services well. Being the only service in the Parish on the fourth Sunday, has resulted in regular congregations of 25-30. A number that's more sustainable longer term.

One of the highlights of the year was the Christmas Nativity Service organised by Eloise and James Rank, which attracted over 130 adults and children on a chilly December evening. They followed the star, and were rewarded at the end of the service and procession, with mince pies and mulled wine.

2024 was the first Christmas for many years that there was no service on Christmas Day. This service in the past attracted one of our largest congregations of the year, and it's to be hoped that it will be reinstated once a new incumbent is appointed.

We are very grateful to David Mason and John Dane for taking our services this year, and of course Margaret McMullen for her wonderful flowers. *Andrew Lillie*

## **Electoral Roll**

This year was the year a completely new roll had to be prepared, so everyone who wished to be included had to complete an application form.

The total, 101 compared to 127 in 2019, the last time a new roll was prepared.

2024 was a total of 135, the same as 2023.

Considering we're going through a period of an interregnum in the Parish, the response has been extremely encouraging. *Andrew Lillie*

## **Treasurer's report 2024**

The 2024 Accounts were approved by Nigel Brown, and passed unanimously at the PCC meeting held on 6 March. (A full copy is available on request.)

### **Income**

Planned giving, ie, envelopes and regular bank payments, was £37,698, an increase of £1,434 on 2023. SumUp donations totalled £1,388, an increase of £716 on 2023. And, cash collections were £4,347, an increase of £2,420.

We were able to claim £10,708 Gift Aid from these payments.

We received a legacy of £10,854 from the late John Rank, specifically for use by Sennicotts.

We received £9,867 in fees for weddings, funerals, etc; £4,096 more than in 2023.

We received £3,323 in fees for the use of the Church room, marginally less than in 2023.



We received £5,186 in sales of the parish magazine and advertising. The increase in advertising revenue resulted in this breaking even, as opposed to the £493 loss in 2023. We received £21,567 interest on our bank and CBF accounts, an increase of £8,762 on 2023. We also received dividends from our investments totalling £4,273. Three major community events, a D-Day celebration, Bonfire party and Christmas Fair made a total profit of £6,006, an increase of £4,539 on 2023. In addition, other fund-raising events, including parish lunches and West Stoke teas, raised a further £778.

### **Expenditure**

We paid £40,772 to the Diocese as our 'Parish Share', 50% of the total requested for ourselves and Chidham. This was a decrease of £6,505.

We have one employee (organist) and paid £773 in salaries, less than in 2023 but largely due to differentiating the cost of visiting clergy.

Visiting clergy fees and expenses were £1,650, all reclaimed from the Diocese. As we were in interregnum throughout 2024, there were no costs usually associated with an incumbent. Energy costs were £4,699, just £49 more than in 2023.

There was no significant maintenance of any of our three churches during the year.

### **Charitable Donations**

We made donations totalling £4,515 to nine charities including CYE, St Wilfrid's, Sanctuary, Four Streets project and Stone Pillow locally, and others including Ukraine and the Royal British Legion.

### **Summary**

Although our giving was less than our expenses, we were fortunate to have benefited from interest on our reserves and dividends on investments. Obviously, we may not be so fortunate in future years and, in any event, we may well decide to 'use' some of our reserves which would naturally reduce income derived from them.

**Finally ...** I want to thank the Finance Team - Andrew Hughes, Jamie Noble for their time and valuable contributions, but in particular, Neil Watt for his support throughout the year, not to mention the many hours he put into the preparation of this year's accounts. We also want to thank Nigel Brown for his independent examination of our accounts, and for approving them.

*Tricia Dry*

### **Gift Aid**

The Gift Aid refund from HMRC for 2024 was £10,708 a small increase from 2023. This refund was claimed on £36,980 of gift aided donations from 80 donors as well of cash donations of £5,834.

The majority of planned giving is made through regular standing orders, and this is the easiest way for us to administer. Weekly envelopes are also available for those who wish to give cash. There is a card machine at the back of St Mary's in Funtington for card payments and the QR codes available in all our churches have proved a popular way of giving since their inception.

It is worth noting that HMRC allow us to claim gift aid on cash collections in our three churches up to a value of £8,000 per year. We are currently under this value and are able to claim gift aid on all our cash donations.

Thank you so much to all those who regularly give to the church and allow us to supplement their giving with gift aid. The £10,700 extra is a significant part of our annual income. Please let me know if your tax circumstances change so that I can amend our records appropriately. There is a QR code and a gift aid form available on the church website.

*Neil Watt*

### **Safeguarding.**

All in all a quiet year with the completion of the SPQ specification for a master file which is held by myself. A number of renewal DBS checks have been undertaken after the 3 year expiration period. The Good Neighbour Volunteer Base is the main user of the Thirtyoneeight System! Currently there are circa 34 that are currently valid with 2 in the pipeline!

*Tony D'Alton*

### **Deanery Synod**

The deanery synod met on four occasions, to share news and events in our deanery. There have been presentations from the head of Bishop Luffa, Chichester Cathedral Friends, and a presentation on Eco church and Sustainability.

*Neil Watt*

### **Church in our Community – Prayer Group**

The Church in our Community group meets on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Mondays of each month at 5:00pm in the church room for a time of prayer. We pray for all aspects of our church life, growth, and outreach. We also pray for specific individuals, and we pray through the prayer requests left on the prayer tree in the back of St Mary's. During August we enjoyed prayer walks around West Ashling, West Stoke, and Funtington. It's generally a small group of us between of between 3 and 6, and we would love it if others could join us. We miss Angela Craven and her dedication and encouragement. We believe our prayer times are a powerhouse for the life and growth of our church and thus very important. *Neil Watt*

*Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. Philippians 4:6-7*

## **Church in Our Community – Ideas Group**

This group meets on the second and fourth Wednesdays each month at 5:30pm in the Church Room for an hour or sometimes more. The group is open to everyone in the Parish and is forum to receive, test and flesh out ideas for action and growth in the Parish that can then be submitted to the PCC for approval and implementation.

Initiatives approved or supported in 2024 and 2025 so far include:

- Free “Special Edition” Parish Magazine for everyone in the Parish
- Practicalities for the D-Day and the Christmas Craft Fair events
- Introduction of a Parish Film Night
- Reviewing and supporting other day-to-day practicalities relating to the running of the three churches in the Parish

*Jamie Noble*

## **Tuesday Homegroup, Wednesday Study Group and Alpha**

The Tuesday Homegroup meets weekly and has followed the Alpha course, as well as studying the book of James. The studies in James were each led by different members of the group, which everyone found inspiring. The seven regular members of the group take great comfort from being able to explore the Bible, share and pray together. Any new members would be very welcome.

The Wednesday Study group of up to 9 people followed the 6 sessions of the Bible Course and the 8 sessions of the Romans course. Members of the group found the videos and the discussions instructive, thought provoking, challenging and exciting. It been remarked that these two courses by Andrew Ollerton have provided a level of Biblical teaching which is not generally available from Sunday sermons, and they have been greatly appreciated.

The Alpha course has taken the place of the Wednesday Study group for the spring term of 2025. The course is still ongoing at the time of writing but has been very well received with 24 people enrolled.

*Neil Watt*

## **Funtington Society of Ringers**

Tower Captain’s report

I am very pleased to be able to say that we have rung for every Sunday service during the last 12 months for which I thank everyone for their effort and support, we have also only missed very few practices which again is due to your efforts. The practice times have been varied as with the clocks, afternoon 2.30 to 4.00 with GMT or 7.00 to 8.45 with BST and pleasing comments have come to me from local residents who are pleased to hear our bells at those practice times.

We very much miss Simon Kelly being one of our ringers but he knows that we will be very pleased to welcome him to any of our practices when he can help the ringing and enjoy the social side of our meeting. Sadly, we have had to say farewell to Andrew Rose who was our Captain from 2007 when this new ring of bells was installed. He was a very quick learner and through his work in various locations, managed to practice his skills far and wide.

We have had to make changes with our financial arrangements. June Hughes was our Treasurer for several years but when she resigned, I was very pleased to accept an offer from my daughter, Nikki Petry, to take on that responsibility, which you all then agreed to. More details later by our Treasurer. My thanks to June for the work she did on our behalf and for the reaction from Nikki.

Paul has very efficiently handled all visiting ringers and been very helpful towards ensuring we have the correct information during the various changes to the Church service arrangements. His workload which includes Choir leader, organist at different Churches, ringing bells and Churchwarden duties, is very demanding but he always manages to keep smiling.

My great concern is the threatening reduction in the numbers of our ringers which must be due our age and health. Our effort via the Scout and Guide youth have not yielded any results. We are now offering Taster Sessions after the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday Service of the month hoping to attract those approaching or within retirement. Our search for new ringers is also being spread through the Church magazine.

*John Kitchener. (Tower Captain)*

## **Social Committee**

Our social year has been very busy this year and we have managed to have several celebratory events in the community, attended and assisted by members of our congregation and the wider community.

In February we had coffee and cake to celebrate the amazing work of Denise Foster, stepping down after decades of service leading the flower arranging team at St Marys Funtington.

In March we had a well attended Lent lunch in the church rooms.

In May we had a plant sale and coffee morning when we raised £600 to go towards the cost of keeping our beautiful church decorated for the special Christian calendar events like Easter, Harvest, Remembrance and Christmas. This was very well attended and looks set to be a regular annual fixture by community demand!

In June our hardworking Events Committee and helpers organised a very successful Funtington Tribute Evening to commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the D-Day landings. The High Sherrif of West Sussex attended as guest of honour and highlights included:

Bellringing; BBQ and bar; a D-Day exhibit; 1940's dress and musical entertainment with a singalong led by the Chichester Community Choir; all culminating in the lighting of a spectacular bonfire beacon as part of the national tribute. Over 220 people attended and whilst entry was free the food, drinks and tombola stalls made a profit of ~£1800 which was distributed between the Royal British Legion, CYE and the church. We also pioneered the use of 'TicketSource' to handle the free ticketing online for the first time which was deemed a great success.

In July our baking and serving ladies did sterling work on a lovely afternoon, serving afternoon Cream Teas at West Stoke Village Hall. They had a very steady stream of customers and were able to reliably take payment by card with the highly competent Sue Smithers' skills. We raised £..... of which £ was given to the West Stoke Village Hall fund and the remainder divided between three local charities: CYE Four Streets project, Sanctuary and church funds.

There was a Harvest Barn dance in Chidham in September which was well attended and enjoyed and is becoming an annual fixture in the calendar.

At our joint service with Chidham for Harvest in St Marys on the fifth Sunday in September, we had a social event with soup and sausage rolls as well as cakes and coffee. Next year we may stick to cakes and coffee as it was a little too early for most to have lunch directly after our 10am service!

Next came Bonfire & Fireworks Night in November expertly planned and safely executed again by our resident Events Committee (Andrew Hughes, Neil Watt, David Heaver and Tony D'Alton) with multiple helpers along the way and on the day. We were able to return the event to the Church Paddock this year and it was a massively successful evening with record crowds of over 300 attending from local villages and further afield. Building on our success with the D-Day event all ticketing was all done online using 'TicketSource'. The mulled drinks were very popular as were the BBQ sausages (courtesy of Adsdean Farm Shop). We made a healthy profit of £1600 after expenses, distributed to our chosen charities.

Christmas Music and Crafts was a superb event with a slightly new format, masterminded by Sue Smithers, Paul Wren and Deborah Hughes. It was an afternoon of wonderful music in our acoustically blessed, ancient church with contributions from several locals and the Chichester Community Choir. There was the aroma of mulled wine and mince pies, as well as delicious cakes for refreshments and we also had the fabulous plants from East Ashling Nurseries for sale outside. The craft stalls in the church room were delighted with the crowds attending and we are hugely grateful for the hard work of Anna D'Alton and her team on the tombola and the contributions of local businesses all mentioned in the Parish magazine. The event raised £850 for our charities and is already in the calendar for 2025, when we hope to get some local school choirs to sing as well.

Sadly Julie Morrow had to give up the Mums and Toddlers group this year but we still have all the equipment and pray for a new leader to take this up so we can support and encourage new mothers in particular to make connection in their social community.

Let's dance and the Bridge club continue to meet in the church rooms weekly and have a very loyal group of attendees. They are included in our annual report as they regularly use the church rooms and are community resources.

The majority of our social events have been profitable for charities but some have been purely for the benefit of our community as well as being a source of pleasure and fun for everyone involved.

We need to make a special mention of Pippa Kerr and Paul Wren, our church wardens, who are a huge source of calm and dedicated support on every occasion. We hope that next year the events are ably supported and organised with the assistance of our new vicar.

*Deb and Andrew Hughes*

### **Funtington Parish Magazine**

The magazine circulation remains the same (around the 350 mark, 300 going into households and remaining 50 displayed at the back of the Churches). We are pleased to report that despite the increase in the cost of postage and print we have broken even. The figures for the year are:

Sales of magazines - £2,688

Ads sales - £2,498

Total - £5,186

Printing and miscellaneous costs £5184.61

(Our Treasurer remarked `uncannily close`!)

We sent invoices to our 30 existing advertisers at the end of January and are pleased to report that the majority have paid up. Just a few more left to chase. Annual subscriptions are not due until the end of March and a reminder will go out in the April issue. Response has been fairly good, 170 having paid already (by BACS transfer or cash). A reminder will go out with the April issue, and distributors will chase up payment when the April issue is delivered.

I would like to thank all those who support us so brilliantly. The contributors, who we couldn't do without with a special thank you to our visiting clergy who have really stepped up to the plate in the absence of a resident Vicar and have produced a letter for us each month. Thank you too to our distributors – 18 volunteers strategically placed throughout the parish who deliver door to door and who enthusiastically embraced going to extra households to deliver the bumper May edition so that as many people in the parish receive a copy of the magazine that month whether they want it or not! Finally, the advertisers who really help us to hit breakeven and keep the cost of the magazine down.

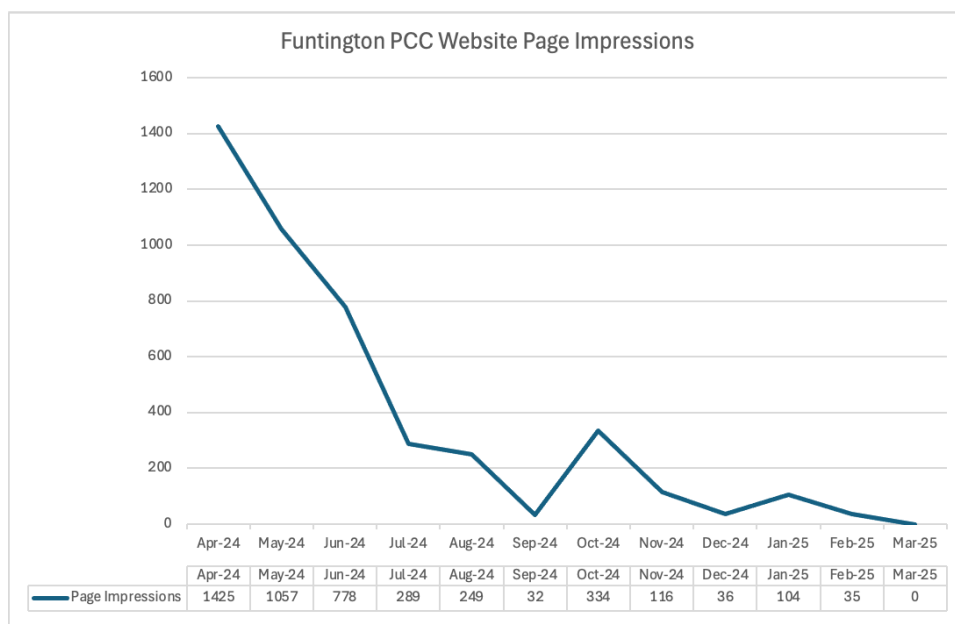
We have now found three extra volunteers to help with the production and ongoing costs of producing the magazine. Dick and Sue Nicholson who will be taking on print production and Richard Worsley who has just started a campaign to find more local businesses to advertise with us. Myself and Jo Laird will continue as contributing editors. The Funtington Parish Council have also offered financial help.

*Anna D'Alton*

## Parish Website Update

The PCC have expressed concerns over the past year or two that the current Parish Website ([www.funtingtonweststoke.org](http://www.funtingtonweststoke.org)) not delivering the outreach required for such an important element of the the Parish’s communications and that it requires attention.

A working group was set up in September 2023 to help clarify the ‘best of breed’ requirements for the site. Progress was made with the existing suppliers, ChurchEdit, including regular calendar updates for church services and events, directing online ticket sales for events, providing access to previous Parish Magazines, and updating Church notices. However, after a surge of initial interest, visits to the site and page impressions have fallen dramatically:



The increase in October visits is attributable to the Funtington Bonfire Night event and the ticketing link.

Separately, the Funtington Parish Council successfully integrated the Octagon Parish website within a broader, combined Parish Council and Church website recently, supported by a grant from the Rural England Development Fund (REDF). In 2024 the Parish Council approached the PCC, offering to do the same, supported by a grant of £4,000 from the REDF.

A proposal supporting this offer was submitted to the PCC in November 2024

This was reviewed and agreed by the PCC in January 2025 on the following basis:

- The potential to increase engagement and community outreach
- Enhanced community cohesion
- Improved website user experience
- Practical administration and financial advantages

Following this, work has begun on the new site and further consultations will be held with the working group and Ideas Meeting to ensure the finished product is fit for purpose. The site is expected to be ready for release in June 2025.

*Jamie Noble*

## **Good Neighbours**

The Good Neighbours Scheme has been running since 2017. It covers all residents in the Parish although we do sometimes agree to give help to someone further afield.

The idea was first put forward by the late Lou Scott-Joynt who at the time was living in Funtington. After lots of investigation and a Grant from the Funtington Parish Council a Committee was formed and we sent out a flyer to everyone in the Parish. It was not long before we had gathered together a number of Volunteers and Clients. All Clients and Volunteers are visited before they are registered and the Volunteers are required to have a DBS check.

Although the Scheme is not a Church Scheme they do support us by carrying out the DBS checks, and giving us free advertising space in the Parish Magazine and use of the Church Room. The Funtington Parish Council continue to support us with an annual donation. The Good Neighbours Network in Hampshire have adopted us and keeps us abreast of all current regulations and covers us for insurance.

The initial idea was to help people who found it difficult to get to medical appointments as they could no longer drive. Since then, this has expanded to helping people with shopping and organising visiting rotas to some Clients who have become isolated. And more recently we have expanded further and we organise 5 or 6 lunches or teas a year which are very popular with both Clients and Volunteers.

We currently have 36 volunteers at present. Last year we carried out 200 hospital or doctor visits, shopping trips and home visits. Volunteering is not onerous you can do as little or as much as you wish when you have the time.

We make no charges to the Clients but ask for a small donation for transport. Our funding comes from the support from the Church and the Funtington Parish Council and from a West Stoke Cream Tea which we do every year.

If you would like to know more about becoming a Volunteers or know anyone who you think might be in need of help please let us know.

*Jo Laird*

