

Care for St Anne's

Registered Charity No. 288889

Annual Report 2018-19

As presented to the Annual General Meeting of the Trustees on November 17th 2019

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Care for St Anne's was created some forty years ago to support the Rector and parish in the care of Nicholas Hawksmoor's mighty pile. 'Care' has many dimensions, from ongoing maintenance to major project fund-raising and management, and from advisory support for the conservation of a Grade 1 listed building, to publicity for and community engagement with a great local landmark. The registered charity has no single big achievement to report for the past twelve months but a brief summary of its activities illustrates these different facets of care.

Our biggest scheme in the pipeline is the **access project** opening a step-free route into the church via Hawksmoor's south-west doorway at crypt level, which is currently disused. A passage under the narthex will lead to a new lift rising through the crypt vault to the north-west porch and on up to the gallery. The diocese issued an outline faculty - equivalent to listed building consent - in January 2019 and work has continued with the architect Francesca Weal on the costing and technical specification of the lift, as well as on three sub-projects required to make it happen.

The first sub-project is **clearance of the NW crypt vault**, where an uncertain number of bodies lie buried under a unique mound of earth and charcoal, sealed with lime-plaster, behind air-tight brick walls. We have discovered that these public health precautions date from 1861 and appear to be related to the burial of cholera victims in the crypt some years earlier. As usual the exhumation will be under archaeological supervision, and there is a possibility that the medical interest of the relics will attract osteological research funding, as was the case with the clearance of burials from the crypt of Christ Church Spitalfields.

A second sub-project is **removal of the former high altar** which currently blocks crypt-level access to the churchyard. Designed as part of Sir Arthur Blomfield's 1891 reordering of the east end of St Anne's on behalf of Rev F.N.Thicknesse, it was moved out of the chancel early in the present century and awaits proper disposal.

The third sub-project is **preparation of the gallery** for future use as a display space and visitor interpretation area - a 'gallery' in the other sense. Full realization of this vision is beyond the scope of the access project: it will have to await the restoration of the nave. But it's essential to include the preliminary work on floor levels that will permit installation of interim display boards about the parish church of St Anne's and its history, creating a destination that justifies lift access to the higher level.

The access project will require finance on a scale obtainable from very few donors, among them the **National Lottery Heritage Fund**. The parish, having weighed the ethics of gambling and the needs of conservation, has indicated willingness to apply from the Fund, and our Project officer Sarah Watson has been liaising with them to ensure a chance of success. The grants programme was paused last winter, reopening in the spring of 2019 with new guidelines that laid extra emphasis on community engagement. We were advised not to apply for a large grant in the first instance but to establish our track record with an application for a smaller discrete project. The east window was the obvious candidate.

The massive **crucifixion scene by Charles Clutterbuck** (1806-1861) was installed after the devastating fire of Good Friday 1850. Like other aspects of the mid-nineteenth century reconstruction, the window evoked Georgian precedents: the entire opening was filled with a single picture painted in enamels and baked onto large pieces of glass at his Stratford works. Clutterbuck was vilified by Victorian

Ecclesiologists, who preferred quasi-mediaeval mosaic work, but his intense design in the Renaissance *cinquecento* style commands respect today.

We arranged for the chancel window to be professionally photographed by Imogen Radford. It looks deceptively fine from a distance but closer inspection reveals the bomb damages of two world wars, deep accumulations of soot and dirt, and widespread flaking of Clutterbuck's thickly applied enamel layer. Where larger pieces of glass have cracked over the years, the insertion of extra leadwork by repairers has added weight and caused crumpling. The window was declared to be at risk when glass conservators Chapel Studio carried out an exhaustive condition survey in 2005. They are now updating their report with further evidence of decay together with a new emphasis on what is to be done, and how the public can be involved in the project.

Before submitting an expression of interest to the National Lottery, we needed to demonstrate public support for the window. We set a target figure of £40,000 to be raised from the community, launching a popular 'Sponsor-a-Pane' appeal at the Limehouse History Evening in St Anne's in May 2019. It has already attracted well over £20,000 in donations, providing a strong basis on which to apply for heritage grants. We plan to keep up the momentum and use the conservation of Clutterbuck's window as an opportunity to engage the community with the building and stimulate interest in stained glass as an art form.

Visitors to St Anne's often express dismay at the distressed state of the nave interior, particularly in the corners where blocked downpipes have prevented **rainwater dispersal**. On several occasions flooding behind the parapets has spilled into the roof-void and penetrated the plasterwork. Interior repair and redecoration are still some way off, but Care for St Anne's has been addressing the cause of the problems with cages to trap leaf debris and discreet 'fail-safe' chutes drilled through the Portland stone of the parapet to drain off storm-water before it can cause flood damage. Rufus Frampton has played a key role in design and execution of these measures and deserves a special word of thanks.

Flying debris from the **churchyard plane-trees** has become a serious problem since their branches began to overtop the parapet in the past decade. They were among 300 trees planted in 1886-7 by the landscape architect Fanny Wilkinson when the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association cleared gravestones to the perimeter wall, transforming the burial ground into a 3-acre public park. Originally intended to welcome public access, the planes today screen St Anne's from view and its former landscape setting has become a shady undercroft. Two leading experts on urban trees - Bob Gilbert and Keith Sacre - have visited and recommended more active management of the churchyard trees. Happily the Borough's new Tree Officer Adam Armstrong seems to agree, and action is expected soon.

The **organisation of Care for St Anne's** has evolved to meet its work-load. Under Clause 7 of the Trust Deed (Delegation) the Trustees have discretion to set up a committee to manage their business. The Management Committee meets five or six times a year, and contributes to two working groups, one for fund-raising, the other - newly created this year - for building projects. These groups are joint creations with the PCC, reporting to both bodies, and drawing their membership from each (see p.1 of this report). The building project group is still at the setting-up stage, but the fundraising group has met regularly, overseeing the work of our professional project officer Sarah Watson, and leading Care for St Anne's into innovative modes of giving, such as the Sponsor-a-Pane campaign, the use of the cash-card *iZettle* at public events, and a switch to the Charities Aid Foundation CAF for online donations. With the

help of Hon Treasurer Richard Horner we became registered for Gift Aid, with all the enhancement that brings.

The **patrons** of Care for St Anne's continue to show a generous interest in the work of the charity. Sadly one of our earliest supporters, Professor Kerry Downes, died this autumn, sixty years on from the publication of his seminal *Hawksmoor* (1959); and Preb. Richard Bewes, a good friend to the church for many years, died in the spring. Our most recent patron is the architectural writer Owen Hopkins, whose *From the Shadows* (2015) combines the stories of the architect's life with that of his late rediscovery in the late twentieth century.

The **Friends of St Anne's** were at one stage a discrete membership organization but now exist mainly as an email and postal distribution list to which we send out periodic progress updates. These Friends have always been generous in response - the Treasurer reports a steady stream of contributions. All thanks to them, and to the growing number of business which have offered in-kind and *pro bono* support. Special thanks are due to Trustee Helen Kenney who has been outstandingly successful in securing corporate sponsorship from everything from gin manufacturers to postcard printers, but above all has built a collaboration with Canary Wharf Contractors, who have among other things generously fitted out a new kitchen in the crypt, offered advice and contacts for the access project, and undertaken to fund safe access improvements to the roof and tower.

This incomplete review of the year may convey something of our range of activities in caring for Hawksmoor's monumental Limehouse church. Most directly involve the Rector, Richard Bray. His positivity, energy and commitment are inspirational, but we just have to hope that attendance at all those extra meetings mitigates rather than aggravates the burden of building care.

Michael Hebbert

(Chairman)

November 12th 2019