

Andrew Mottram introduced himself, his job title is Heritage Buildings & Community Development Officer, [there are nationally around 30 such positions] this position is funded by English Heritage and local authorities, his job is primarily to help church communities and communities to have churches that meet their needs. He was a parish priest for 25 years. He was priest in charge of a church in Hereford just a stone's throw from the Cathedral, the church was ripe for closure, however a cafe was installed in the west end of the church and this enterprise now funds the building. AM works mostly with the Church of England, which has by default a vast majority of listed buildings. Over time the church has gone through a major change. Many years ago a priest's stipend was paid for by dead Christians, money came from Church of England investment, this now pays for pensions.

Today, in line with the world of Methodist, Catholic and other free church traditions the finances for the living church come from the living. The pensions bill is phenomenal because clergy now live so long, many well into their 90s, the church is facing a major crisis, here and up and down the country, it also costs an arm and a leg to uphold the buildings. The church can no longer pay for both the fabric of the buildings and its salaries.

It is time to rediscover how our medieval churches work. At its concept and origin the church building was the place of meeting for the whole community. It was the civil centre of administration between the church and the state. The churchwardens had the job of making the enterprise work. Until the reformation ale was brewed and consumed on the premises, the nave was the space for the people, the other side of the rude screen, the chancel was the holy, priests place. The building was run as an enterprise. Until the 1600 the building was used for all manner of activities, for schooling, meetings, partying, as fetling sheds, it housed the cattle in cold winters, it was a refuge in times of trouble.

The church is your space, in church law the ownership of the building is ownership by the people of the parish, vested with the PCC. The PCC have the responsibility of keeping it up and open. This is your building to keep or to lose. If you want to demolish the building it is a painful process. It is relatively simple to keep the building if you put in place some trickle funding, if you can keep the building dry, you can keep it. Wet causes more damage than fire. If kept dry this building will keep well into the future, this building has outlived everybody, none of us want to be the generation to say it couldn't be bothered. Some of the maintenance tasks we can do ourselves, others need specialist intervention.

Contrary to belief you can sell alcohol in a church, sell food, dance, hold social meetings, it is the legacy of Victorian spirituality which has indoctrinated us to believe you have to sit up straight face the front and prepare to be preached to death, or to be bored stupid with dull liturgy.

St James Bishampton is an interesting building, opposite the main entrance is a gem of a medieval head, a 12<sup>th</sup> century font, how many children have been baptised there? People have been hatched, matched and dispatched for hundreds of

generations. It might stand at the far end of the village, doubtless to do with the way the lad was owned, but has been relevant throughout the life of the village.

By supporting the building you don't have to sign up to its organised religion. This building will after all outlive religious organisation. It is a part of your community, it is your place of meeting to bring the big and the little things of life. It tells its own story. It would be interesting to do some work on the story of this place, its origins with Fladbury in early years. Unfortunately the Victorians swept everything old away. With research it may be possible to find people from Bishampton who have gone on to do great things in the past, for example the Former Governor of Quebec John Callow. In the 1930's Bishampton had a real nutter for a priest, all fascinating stuff.

As has happened throughout history, every so often the people abandon God, however this building remains your place.

The jam of stipendiary clergy is being spread thinner and thinner, currently Clive has 12 churches to look after, Clive can't be chief and king of Bishampton, he is being spread increasingly thinly, this means the people of the parish have an opportunity for huge involvement in determining the way things are and will be.

To run the building, saving for when things wear out, you should estimate £10K a year, to be comfortable £15K then when something breaks you have a fund you can dip in to fix it. Every year there is a need to carry out basic maintenance, pointing, clearing gutters downpipes etc. from a village this size it is possible. Peopleton has turned itself around, they are now motoring, lots of other villages waking up to this.

Andrew Mottram recently went to village with 84 houses, they had a public meeting 75 percent of households now give only £100 a year, that equates to just two tanks of petrol but it has secured the church for future. You might say you do not have enough disposable income to spare to give to the church, what we are asking tonight is that you get engaged, that you consider a friends group, a body of people that sits to the side of the PCC, support keeping the building in the parish.