

## **St Mary, Bletsoe**

### **Churchwardens Report to Annual Parish Meeting 2017**

#### **April 2017**

From a churchwardens' perspective, the past twelve months have seen steady progress with the fabric of St Mary's, together with a welcome improvement to the churchyard environment.

The general upkeep of the fabric has been uneventful and we are pleased to report that there are no new issues of any significance. Following the 2015 Quinquennial Inspection, a number of small tasks which had been highlighted were put in hand and are either complete or commissioned. The regular roofs, gullies and gutters maintenance by contractors has proved useful in the early identification of remedial repairs which are in hand. The one item outstanding which has been identified in the past year, water incursion to the turret, will be repaired during the chancel restoration.

The Friends of St Mary's group has continued to project manage the upcoming chancel restoration and a revised scheme designed to fit available financial resources (and any subsequent grants) has been discussed by both the Friends and PCC committees. It is currently being approved by the Diocesan Advisory Committee, further grant applications are in train and it is hoped that work will start in mid-summer subject to further approval by all parties.

Various members of both PCC and congregation (and friends) have done a sterling job in reviving the Victorian graveyard extension, bringing it back from its severely overgrown state. It now resembles the graveyard of old and our thanks go to all concerned in sourcing equipment, tackling what was an eyesore and is now once again part of a well-kept graveyard.

The Annual Inspection took place as normal and there were no issues raised. All documentation required by the Diocese of St Albans and the Archdeacon of Bedford has been provided. One change for the future which will be noted at the 2017 Inspection is that the various key parish records are no longer held in St Mary's but, in the wake of recent thefts from North Bedfordshire churches, deposited in the County Records Office. They are still available to continue to use as and when necessary but are now in safe hands. Given that some dated back to the mid-Victorian period and were the only copy, this is clearly necessary. A digital copy has been taken for reference if needed. Indeed a recent request from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office for historical information reminds us that we must have details to hand.

St Mary's PCC operates a well-ordered rota of duties and this is reflected in the smooth running of church life, PCC meetings and services. The churchwardens offer their thanks to all for their help in their task.

Mike Gibbons and Edward Bean