

The Friends of All Saints church, Houghton
Chairman's Report for year ending March 2018

As you all know, the purpose of FOAS is to raise funds for the PCC to be spent on the maintenance and repair of the fabric of the church.

This year we had a tremendously successful fund-raising event which, thanks to the generosity of Sophie and Daniel Busk, was held in the beautiful walled garden of Houghton Lodge. The 'summer drinks' event was held in June on a glorious warm evening; The 160 guests who supported it were able to wander around the magnificent grounds and gardens of the Lodge. Between them, our guests generously contributed over £4,000 to our funds. Thanks are also due to the hard-working team who produced and served a seemingly endless supply of delicious canapes; and to the 'Bar' team that ensured glasses were topped up throughout the evening. Thanks also to all those who donated a tremendous range of raffle prizes.

The Friends has also continued to receive contributions from both existing and new members. We thank all those people/families for their generosity too.

There have been quite major repairs to the church this year: the west wall has been re-plastered and the wooden floor at the west end of the nave has been replaced. Bell ringers now have a sound floor to stand on with no fear of being struck by falling plaster! You may be aware that bell ringers may stand for two and half hours while they ring a 'full peal'!

Some churchyard maintenance costs (e.g. repairs to graves, paths, etc..) have also been funded by The Friends. The 'Adopt a Grave' scheme is working well and the churchyard is looking magnificent thanks to the hard work of the working parties organised by Michael Woodhall throughout the year. Particular thanks to Ian Harman for the tremendous amount of work that he has put in.

The Friends funds have paid the professional fees for the design of an updated lighting system; this project is being led by David Livermore and Michael Woodhall and at the moment is 'on hold' pending further funding. Routine costs of heating, lighting and insurance are also funded by FOAS.

We have the Quinquennial (five yearly) inspection of the church by the architect for the Diocese due this coming year, which is likely to identify more work needed to maintain the fabric of the church. Also some of the large trees in the churchyard will need professional attention. All this means that the challenge to raise funds continues!

I should like to thank all the Committee members for their tremendous support again this year; you all do far more work than I do! However, I should like to highlight the enormous contribution Julie continues to make as both Secretary and Treasurer. She is always on top of what's important for The Friends – certainly many steps ahead of me - and I very much appreciate her support. Thank you, Julie.

I look forward to working again this coming year with our great committee team. Thank you **all** for your support.

Bob Gosse – Chairman

20 March 2018 – FOAS AGM; 13 April – Houghton Parish Council Annual Assembly