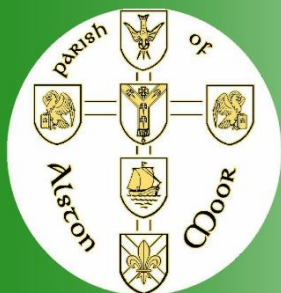


Church of
St John the Evangelist,
Garrigill



**Notes of the Public Meeting
held on Friday 19th January,
2024 at 7pm**



Notes of the Public Meeting held on Friday 19th January, 2024 at 7pm in St John's Church, Garrigill

Over 30 people attended the meeting, which Mark Nash-Williams (the Vicar) had called to discuss the future of Garrigill Church.

Introduction

Mark welcomed those present, stressed the importance of the church as a place of worship, peace and reflection for all the community, and thanked the Friends of Garrigill and others who support it financially, as well as the organisers of the Shwapping Evening and Christmas Fair for generous donations to the porch fund.

Unfortunately the church at present is not sustainable: with no congregation, so no collections or fundraising events, and insufficient income to cover basic costs, let alone contribute to the paying a vicar. And there are still repairs to be done.

Mark explained that he had called the meeting to outline a vision for the church, and what the community could do to ensure its future for generations to come.

History of St John's Church

Alastair Robertson gave a presentation about the history of the church over the centuries. He pointed out that, because of the many changes which had been made, the building was not listed and so not eligible for some grants. Alastair also spoke about the churchyard and some of the historic graves, including that of Westgarth Forster, one of the fathers of geology.

Recent works

Richard Glover then spoke about the works which have been completed in the past few years: complete re-roofing (including insulation) of church and vestry, repointing, replastering and decorating. He pointed out that even with grant funding and generous donations, this work had exhausted the church's financial reserves, and that there remains work to do:

- ◆ Replacing the porch roof
- ◆ Internal works to the vestry
- ◆ Levelling the path to the door

The cost of these works was estimated at £15-£20,000 before the pandemic, and is likely to be significantly higher now.

A proposal for the future

Alice Bondi, who has been working with us representing the Alston Moor Partnership, outlined an exciting proposal to attract more footfall and income.

We are in a UNESCO Global Geopark, but there is little information locally about geology. Garrigill's history is built on mining, and the churchyard contains the graves of geologists Westgarth Forster and Frederick Park, so the church is an ideal place for a permanent exhibition about the local geology and social history.

We propose to create a space at the back of church by removing a few pews, to house a well-illustrated permanent exhibition, as well as regular temporary exhibitions. We also aim to provide water and drainage, with a toilet and mini kitchen in the current vestry. The church will remain a place of worship, and most of the church will be unchanged. We intend to manage the churchyard as a haven for wildlife once again, with a trail to the graves of Forster and Park and others. This proposal may well attract some grant funding, and should make the church a 'must see' attraction on Alston Moor.

The need for community support

Mark pointed out that the community needs to want, and care for, the church if it is to survive. He outlined four specific areas:

1) Money

Annual income is around £1400 (not counting donations for the porch fund), but running costs are around £1900. So our reserves (around £2000, plus £3300 in the porch fund) will run out in 3-4 years. That includes nothing for maintenance, or contributing to the cost of paying a vicar – we are being subsidised by other congregations, especially Hexham Abbey.

So we need to increase annual income by about £3000, and raise £17-20,000 (maybe more) for the remaining repairs. This could be from donations (£2/week from everyone present would transform the situation!), fundraising, income generated in other ways – e.g. 'champing' (overnight camping in the church)

2) Practical support

There is currently no congregation or Churchwarden, so nobody to do the routine work of caring for the church: we need volunteers to help with

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|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ◆ Cleaning | ◆ Fundraising events |
| ◆ Polishing | ◆ Distributing posters, flyers... |
| ◆ Flower arranging | ◆ Refreshments at events/services |
| ◆ Building maintenance | ◆ Setting up for services |
| ◆ Churchyard maintenance | ◆ Music? |

3) The development project

Alice outlined our proposal, but there is work to be done to bring it to fruition: we need volunteers to help with

- ◆ Researching grant funding
- ◆ Grant applications
- ◆ Researching practicalities – drainage...
- ◆ Mapping the churchyard
- ◆ Developing a churchyard trail
- ◆ Researching (and managing) champing

4) Worship

The church is fundamentally a place of worship, but there is currently no congregation. We want to hold services there, but need to know what sort of services, and what times and frequency, would be appreciated: no point in holding services that nobody attends.

Next Steps

Mark asked everyone to take away a questionnaire to complete, and to return it to the church by Sunday 28th January – or to fill in the online version at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/6FYPNZJ>

The questionnaire invites people to offer donations, practical help and support to develop the project; and to indicate preferences for worship.

Mark explained that he had recently received a very generous offer of financial help from a potential benefactor, which would go a long way towards meeting the church's needs, but that the funding depended on the community supporting the church too – the offer was to fund a going concern, not a dying one.

Questions and comments

Responses were generally positive, and encouraged that the clear intention is to keep the church open.

Several people pointed out that they already supported the church, for example by cleaning and polishing before weddings and funerals, mowing paths through the churchyard, pressure washing the path. This was very encouraging to hear, and thanks were expressed to those concerned.

A few years ago there was a very successful Easter event with activities for children. It was asked if that sort of event could be held again. The answer was yes, but they take a lot of organising so parental help would be needed.

A question was asked about making donations: the questionnaire invites people to offer a donation; Mark will then contact them with bank account details.