

# Lackford Parochial Church Council

## Churchwarden's Report

2020 has been a year like no other at Lackford Church. We started the year full of optimism, looking forward to starting up the Coffee, Cake and Conversation mornings and making plans to hold other social events for the village using our 'new' facilities.

As the threat of the spread of the coronavirus became a reality, we said goodbye to Rev Canon Mark Howarth at Evensong, but without the planned ceremonial tea party to follow, on a stormy March 15th. Following Rev Mark's farewell service, the church was closed for business and locked, and apart from regular security checks, remained so until we reopened, following the necessary risk assessments and with Covid security precautions in place, in August.

September saw the **Suffolk Historic Churches Ride and Stride event** and thankfully we were visited by 5 cyclists, making it worthwhile, unlike last year when only one cyclist turned up. The **Harvest Festival** was very different this year – there was no singing and no fresh food. Instead, people were asked to give canned and dried foodstuffs which could be given to a local foodbank to help some of the many people struggling due to Covid related issues.

We have continued with our regular pattern of services – 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday: 10am Eucharist and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday: 8am Holy Communion, but without the continuity of a regular vicar, congregation numbers have diminished further. Even during the latest lockdown, when Lackford has been one of only 2 churches in the Lark Valley holding actual services, attendance has been poor.

Ironically, during the night of February 8<sup>th</sup> one of the oldest Beech trees in the churchyard was blown over during stormy weather, damaging several smaller trees and the fence which SWT quickly reinstated; fortunately, it fell away from the church building. Following prolonged hot weather, without any rain, several of the other trees in the churchyard 'dropped' large branches, prompting the churchwardens to take professional advice regarding the state of the trees, a number of which have been found to be diseased and dangerous. Any remedial action will be costly, and funds are currently being sought to enable this to happen.

The churchyard has once again been adopted by the Community Payback Team, which is a great relief for the churchwardens, though the current situation makes it difficult for the team to function.

The departure of the Smith family in February left two vacancies on Lackford Parochial Church Council; unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, it is not possible to fill these at the moment. Despite advertising services in the Newsletter, leafletting the whole village, advertising on the Lackford website, and a number of new families moving into Lackford, congregation numbers have continued to fall, and the church still depends on the same few people.

It is still our hope that by encouraging residents to familiarise themselves with the re-ordered church and its facilities, they may be less reluctant to attend services in the building and encouraged to use it as a community asset, when eventually life returns to some semblance of normality and we have a regular celebrant taking the services.

*Harry Lidster*

*March 2021*