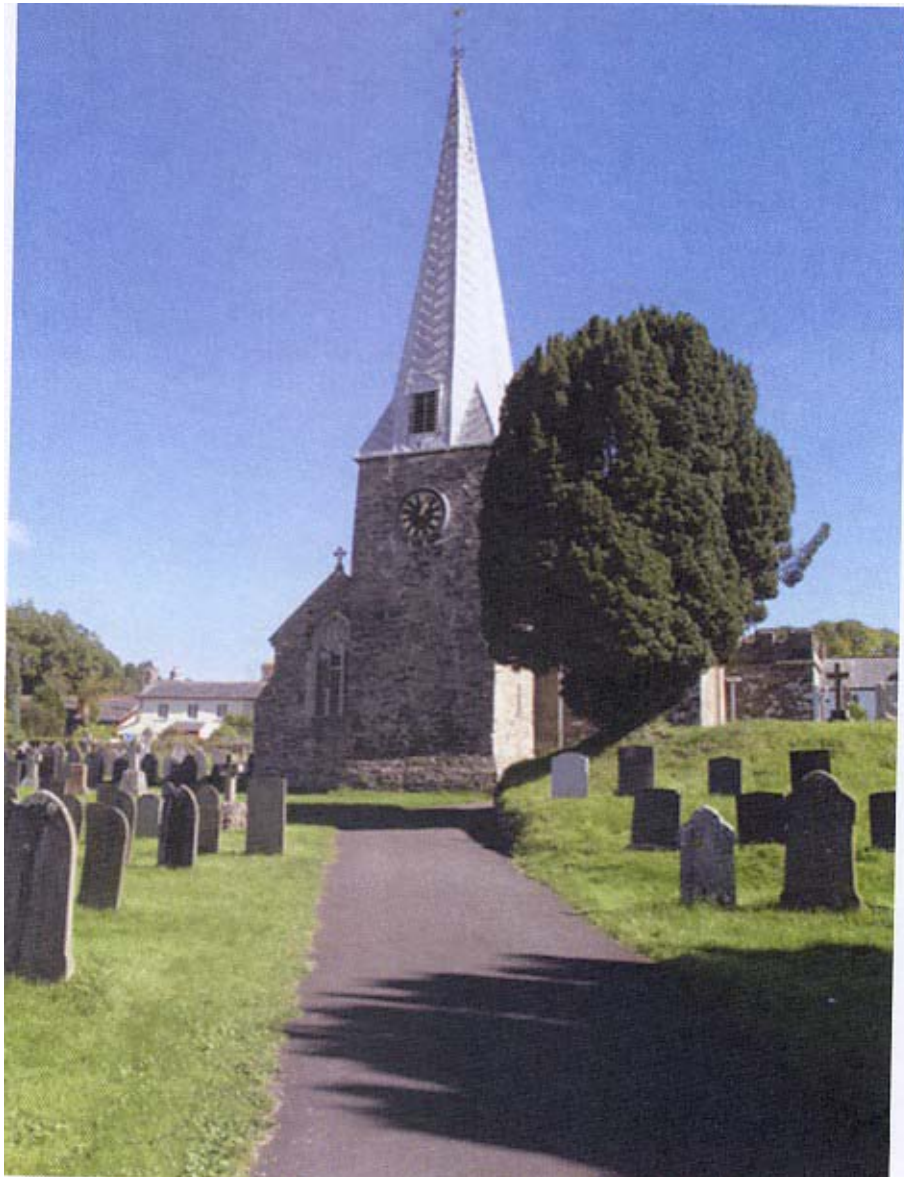


The Parish Church of St James, Swimbridge

ANNUAL REPORT



ANNUAL PARISH CHURCH MEETING

MONDAY 31ST MARCH 2014
7.30pm St JAMES' CHURCH

Introduction

St James, Swimbridge forms part of the Fourways Mission Community with the Church of the Holy Name, Gunn, St Peter, West Buckland and St. Pauls, Landkey. It is organized within Shirwell Deanery in the Diocese of Exeter.

The Parochial Church Council of St James, Swimbridge is a Charity, excepted from registration with the Charity Commissioners. It is required by the Parochial Church Council (Powers) Measure 1966 to co-operate with the incumbent, Revd. Shaun O'Rourke, in the promotion in the Parish of the whole mission of the Church, pastoral, evangelistic, social and ecumenical.

Index of Reports

Page		
2	Index	
3	Agenda	
4	Minutes from the AGM 2013	L Patt
6	Chairman's Note	Rev S O'Rourke
7	Accounts	N Arthur
11	Treasurer's Report	N Arthur
11	Deanery Synod Report	J Hayes
12	Electoral Role Report	M Fardon
12	Churchwarden's Report	V Knight
13	Bell Captain's Report	P Saunders
14	PCC Report	T Bateman/ R Ellis
15	Mission Community Magazine Report	P Ellis
15	Gunn Report	A Bradbury/ B Hawkins
17	Choir & Organ Report	J Patton
18	St James' Churchyard	D Netherway
19	Streamside Garden Report	D Netherway
20	School Report	H Searle
21	Pre-School Report	S Smith
22	Friends of St James Report	M Haworth-Booth
23	Report on the first AGM of Friends	M Haworth-Booth
24	Church Website	M Haworth-Booth

**NOTICE OF THE ANNUAL VESTRY MEETING OF ST JAMES' PCC
SWIMBRIDGE
31ST MARCH 2014 AT 7.30pm**

AGENDA

Election of Churchwardens
Election of Deputy Churchwardens

**NOTICE OF THE ANNUAL MEETING, ST. JAMES' PCC, SWIMBRIDGE
31ST MARCH 2014 AT 7.45pm IN CHURCH**

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the Annual Meeting 19 March 2013
3. Matters Arising
4. Annual Report and Financial Statement
5. Election of PCC Members
6. Election of Sides Persons (Ask for volunteers, then propose and elect en-bloc)
7. Election of Examiner
8. Election of Members for the Deanery Synod
9. Policy of Readers as regards membership of the PCC
10. Any Other Business
11. Meeting closes with a Prayer

**NOTICE OF A MEETING OF ST JAMES' PCC, SWIMBRIDGE
FOLLOWING THE ANNUAL MEETING**

1. Minutes of the Previous Annual Meeting for the Election of Officers
2. Election of PCC Officers:
Appointment of Standing Committee
3. Articles of Enquiry – Response to Archdeacon
4. Arrangement of dates for meetings for the following year
5. Any other Business

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING FOR ST JAMES' CHURCH, SWIMBRIDGE
Minutes of the Annual Vestry Meeting held in the Church
Monday 11th March 2013 at 7.30pm

Attended by 27 Members of the Electoral Roll.
The Meeting opened with a prayer

1. Election of Churchwardens

V Knight being duly proposed and seconded and there being no other nominations was unanimously re-elected. Thanks were expressed for the hard work carried out by Mrs Knight and the retiring churchwarden M Haworth-Booth during their term of office.

2. Election of Deputy Churchwardens

A Bradbury was proposed by C James and seconded by D Netherway. B Hawkins was proposed by M Clift and seconded by M Haworth-Booth.

The PCC ratified these positions and the meeting closed.

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of St James' PCC Swimbridge
Monday 11th March 2013 at 7.45

1. Apologies for Absence: M Bluge, N Ashelford, M Sumner, T Bateman and P Saunders
2. The Minutes of the last Annual Meeting were accepted as a true record.
3. There were no matters arising.

4. Annual Reports and Financial Statement

Financial Statement: N Arthur reported that the accountant, G Floyd, has changed the format of the accounts in order to simplify them. The examination is not yet complete and may vary by a few £100's when finalised. The overall position showed a loss of some £7,000 there being a few areas where expenditure could be reduced. A discussion followed regarding the financial position – Share rising despite a dwindling congregation, ways to increase numbers, together with suggestions as to how to increase income – 'Friends', inform wider community as to our financial position, approach relatives of those buried in the church yard requesting donations towards the upkeep, members on Electoral Roll be contacted regarding possible giving and attendance at services and functions. Following Bruce and Kathy's decision to retire from editing the Church Magazine thanks were expressed to them for all their hard work over the years. A vote of thanks to N Arthur was proposed by M Haworth-Booth and seconded by J Hayes.

Authors of the remaining reports were asked if they had anything to add: It was noted the Deanery Synod vote in favour of women bishops was unanimous. The number of members on the Electoral Roll has increased to 58.

The church at Gunn is thriving with 8 new members.

There has been a suggestion that a monthly evensong be implemented at Swimbridge.

The Pre-school has received an excellent OFSTED Report.

5. Additional Comments by Rector

Rev Shaun O'Rourke explained that he had been observing the life of the Church during his first months although nothing has changed there will be changes. These include the building of friendships by introduction of families, follow-up baptisms/Weddings, replacement/update of service books, bible study groups. 'We all need to work together'.

6. Election of PCC Members

E Patt is to stand down due to personal commitments.

Maureen Hayward was duly proposed seconded and elected The following were all duly proposed, seconded and re-elected: Mark Haworth-Booth, Anne Hayes and David Netherway.

7. Election of Side Persons

Liz Patt to retire. The following were re-elected en-bloc. Mr and Mrs Clift, A Hayes, D Netherway, M Sargent, J Searle, D Spencer and M Sumner. Proposed by Mark Haworth-Booth and seconded by M Meade.

8. Election of Examiner

G Floyd was proposed by N Arthur and seconded by E Patt agreed.

9. Election of Members for the Deanery Synod

David Spencer has resigned from this group but John Hayes is to continue.

10. Review of ServiceTimes

The revised times are to continue for a further six months. The original vote was 17 in favour and 14 against – several commented that they did not have the opportunity to vote.

11. Policy for Readers as regards membership of the PCC

It was proposed by M Haworth-Booth and seconded by M Sargent that C James becomes an ex-officio member of the PCC.

12. Any Other Business

J Hayes commented on the building restrictions that prevent further community use of the church.

The Ffeofees require an additional member – anyone interested to contact J Hayes or the Rector.

A minutes silence was observed following the recent deaths of M Dalling and A Yeo. Prayers said for them and those present.

The Meeting closed at 9.30pm

Minutes of the PCC Meeting following the Annual Meeting

1. **Present:** Rev'd Shaun O'Rourke, (Chair), N Arthur D Netherway, A Bradbury, Mo Clit, M Haworth-Booth, A Hayes, M Meade, J Patton, D Spencer, M Sumner

2. Minutes of last year's Meeting has already been signed in May 2012

3. Vice Chairman - D Netherway

Secretary - Vacant

Treasurer - N Arthur

Electoral Roll Officer - M Sargent

Standing Committee - Rev. Shaun O'Rourke, N Arthur, V Knight, A Bradbury

Chairman's Notes

Note from Churchwarden and Vice Chairman of the PCC.

It is a great pity that this year our rector Rev Shaun O'Rourke is unlikely to be able to be at our Annual Meeting.

As you will know he has been away from the parish due to sickness since November. We had expected he would have been back by the time of our delayed meeting but unfortunately he is still unable to return. We pray for his recovery and look forward to his return.

His letter, which was printed in the March Mission Community magazine, is reproduced here:

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It has been a while since I wrote to you all. First may I thank you for your prayers and your kind thoughts during my illness. Prayer is a wonderful healer and knowing that I have four churches keeping me close in their prayers fills me with good things and refreshes my soul.

I will be returning soon to take up my duties back in the parishes and I look forward to this with every breath I take. I have missed you all so much.

I would like to thank all who have covered services for me. A big thank you to my churchwardens for all the work I know you will have done.

While I have been away I have had time to ponder our future and I will be bringing back with me new strategies to help us move forward. I have prayed and thought about what is to be done. 2014 will be a very productive year for us, I hope.

It will take me a short while to catch up with all the paperwork that is lying on my desk. Please do feel free to call on me when I get home or phone me if you would like me to pop in for a chat.

Once again thank you for your Christian spirit in caring for me and tending to me and ministering to me. May God Bless you and keep you safe.

Yours in prayer

Fr. Shaun O'Rourke

**ST JAMES CHURCH SWIMBRIDGE (WITH THE HOLY CHAPEL AT GUNN)
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2013
RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT**

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2013 £
Receipts			
<i>Voluntary Receipts</i>			
Regular Giving - Planned giving	9295.51		
Collections	<u>4507.16*</u>		
*Gunn £1166.41			13802.67
Other – Donations and events	8022.53	12471.67	120494.20
Legacy	10,000.00		
Big Lottery Fund Grant		636.31	636.31
Miscellaneous	1273.02		1273.02
Wall safe	196.91		196.91
Tax Refund	58.35		58.35
<i>Activities for generating funds</i>			
Magazine sales and adverts	594.75		594.75
<i>Receipts from Church activities</i>			
<i>Fees</i>	3463.71		3463.71
<i>Investment Income</i>			
CBF Deposit account interest	1914.41		1914.41
<i>Other income</i>	-		-
	39326.35	13107.98	52434.33
Payments - Church activities			
Donation	79.50		79.50
Diocesan parish share	18316.00		18316.00
Church running expenses	2565.98		2565.98
Clergy Expenses	1624.51		1624.51
Cost of Services	1173.00		1173.00
Building maintenance	1552.43		1552.43
Magazine printing	423.00		423.00
Cleaning Church and Church yard maintenance and Church wall repair	4336.00		4336.00
Insurance	3439.69		3439.69
Miscellaneous	103.54		103.54
Web Site expenses	240.00		240.00
Streamside expense		744.90	
	33853.65	744.90	34598.55
Surplus of Receipts over Payments (Excess of receipts over payments)	5472.70	12363.08	17835.78
Bank Accounts			
As at 1 st January 2013	10328.48		
As at 31 st December 2013	25749.53		

**ST JAMES CHURCH SWIMBRIDGE (WITH THE HOLY CHAPEL AT GUNN)
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2013**

STATEMENT OF ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2013 £
Cash Funds			
Lloyds TSB Bank current account	10325.81	15423.72	25749.53
 Investment Assets			
CBF Church of England Funds			
2579.22 investment fund – income shares	32698.84		
5171.76 Fixed interest securities fund	<u>7967.61</u>	40,666.45	40,666.45
Income shares			

The attached notes form part of these financial statements

Approved by the PCC on

2014 and signed on their behalf by :

.....Revered S O'Rouke (PCC Chairman)

.....Mr N J Arthur (PCC treasurer)

**ST JAMES CHURCH SWIMBRIDGE (WITH THE HOLY CHAPEL AT GUNN)
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2013**

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

1. The financial statements of the PCC have been prepared in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations 2006 using the receipts & payments basis.

2. The following are recognised but not valued in the statement of assets and liabilities :

Fixed Assets

Movable church furnishings held by the Church wardens on special trust for the PCC and which require a faculty for disposal

Investments

Robert's Capsule Stopper Company – 547 Ordinary Shares – value unknown

3. The movements in designated and restricted funds during the year were:

	Bal b/fwd	Receipts	Payments	Bal c/fwd
Fabric Fund	4883.40	8.00	-	4891.40
Streamside Project	833.55	636.31	744.90	724.96
Star Appeal (wall)	1987.36	1050.00	3230.00	-192.64
Lighting Fund*	<u>10000.00</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>10000.00</u>
	17704.31	1694.31	3974.90	15423.72

The fabric fund represents accumulated donations and appeals for fabric maintenance, which can only be spent for that purpose.

The wall fund represents donations received principally from the annual gold star scheme each Christmas

**ST JAMES CHURCH SWIMBRIDGE (WITH THE HOLY CHAPEL AT GUNN)
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2012**

**Independent Examiner's report to the Parochial Church Council of St James Church
Swimbridge**

This report on the accounts of the PCC for the year end 31st December 2013 which are set out in pages 1-3 is in respect of an examination carried out in accordance with the Church Accounting Regulations 2006 (the Regulations) and section 145 of the Charities Act 2011(the Act)

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

As members of the PCC you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts you consider that the audit requirement of the Regulations and s.144(2) of the Act does not apply. It is my responsibility to issue this report on those accounts in accordance with the terms of the Regulations.

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with General Directions given by the Charity Commission under s145(5)(b) of the Act and to be found in the Church guidance,2006 Edition. That examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the PCC and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in, any material respect, the requirements:
-to keep accounting records in accordance with section 31 of the Act; and
-to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the 1993 Act; have not been met; or
2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Geoffrey Floyd
Chartered Tax Advisor
12 Newlands
Landkey
Barnstaple
Devon

Treasurer's Report for year ended 2013

Whilst the accounts may seem to be good reading, if you remove the generous legacy our expenditure exceeded our income by approximately £4,500. If you removed the donations and events then the deficit is nearer to £12,500.

The Halifax plc. closed all their charity accounts so the fabric fund monies of approx. £4000 was received into restricted funds

On a positive note our investment funds increased from last year.

Our weekly giving is simply not enough by itself to support what we spend out.

Our expenditure remains fairly consistent from year to year.

Our long term survival should not be based on donations, legacies or the help of the Friends of St James Church.

Our congregation numbers need to increase.

This is nothing new and many churches are faced with the same problem.

As always I remain very grateful to everyone in the congregation for what they give, to Mark and the Friends of St James Church for their efforts and generous donations to keep the fabric of our beautiful Church in good repair and condition and last but by no means least to Vera for her fundraising activities and thanks also to those who support them.

Nick Arthur Treasurer

Deanery Synod Report 2014

There were two Deanery Synod meetings in 2013.

1. Monday 10 June at St Mary's, Lynton.

The guest speaker was Andrew Maries, Diocesan Consultant for Liturgy and Music who spoke on Music in Worship. He explained that hymns and songs in church say a lot about who we are as a church community, who is in charge, and church tradition.

Music in church gathers God's people and impinges on all our emotions.

Music that connects:

On an intellectual level – good words shape the mind

On an emotional level – we need to feel something

On a cultural level – it needs to identify

Music involves body, mind and soul.

Andrew Maries then involved the synod in SINGING a variety of worship music, including the Sanctus to the tune of "Scarborough Fair".

(Probably the best Synod meeting this writer has attended!!)

The Rural Dean (Shaun) spoke on Assessment of the Common Fund emphasising that if forms from parishes were late they would be assessed on the last three years figures and the highest would be taken! Common Fund is needed to pay the parish priest and the Diocese recognises that some parishes need help and new initiatives.

The second part of the meeting brought one "down to earth" after being musically "elevated up"!!

2. Monday 14 October at St James, Swimbridge

The guest speaker was the new Bishop of Crediton, the Rt Revd Nick McKinnell, who outlined his background before appointment and his views on the future of the Diocese of Exeter, including: evangelism; discipleship; vocation; ministry and leadership; working with the local community and stewardship of finance and buildings.

Also a General Synod Report from 5 – 7 July was circulated by the rep, the main item being how to find a solution to the impasse of November 2012 on Women in the Episcopate which, of course, has yet to be resolved!

John Hayes Deanery Synod Representative

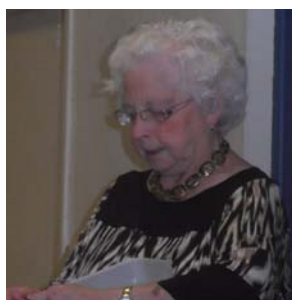
Electoral Roll Report

Lay persons are entitled to apply for membership of the Electoral roll if they are a member of the Church of England and are resident in the parish or habitual worshippers there. Those on the roll are entitled to take part in the Annual Meeting and become members of the PCC, taking a full part in the governance of their church. The roll is revised each year and renewed every six years.

There are currently 58 people on Electoral Role for Swimbridge Parish; this includes St James and the Holy Name, Gunn. This number remained unchanged over the past year. Our roll is due to be renewed in four years time.

Mary Fardon Electoral Role Officer

Churchwarden's Report



The church has had its ups and downs but after a long interregnum it was a breath of fresh air to have Shaun, our new vicar with us.

During the year I have attended many meetings as churchwarden and to represent our parish: PCC and Moving on in Mission (MOIM), plus six-weekly churchwardens' meetings with others in the Mission Community, to name just a few. All of these help to maintain the smooth running of our church and to work with our partner churches.

Unfortunately there has been a good deal of illness within our church community this past year. Our thoughts have especially been with Shaun who has been very ill and has had to spend a good deal of time away from our parish. Our thoughts and prayers are with them, lets hope 2014 will see them all return to good health.

As always we have been busy with fundraising. This year there were two successful coffee mornings in the church, concerts, harvest supper, and the Gold star appeal which together raised £1712. The Friends of St James Church events organised by Mark Haworth-Booth added to our activities. Each event was a social occasion and provided a chance to bring people into our church building.

This year we began our Food Bank collection at the back of the church. Donations of food brought in over the past months have been taken to South Molton and Barnstaple to be distributed by the Northern Devon Foodbank organisers. Enough food for hundreds of meals has been given.

Verger Shirley Ashelford with Nigel work hard. I must thank all the volunteers who work tirelessly, sometimes many hours both inside and outside the church. There are flower arrangers, grass cutters, tea ladies, the choir, path cleaners and those who work in the Streamside Garden and others joining in our working parties during the year. The church is open every day for visitors and local people to visit and use and closed each day by Mike Clift.

I must thank the clergy who have taken services in Shaun's absence, coming out of retirement sometimes at short notice. There have been some changes to our team which with everyone's support in the coming year I hope will mean we can look forward together to a growing congregation.

Our quinquennial (five year) inspection of the building was carried out by our architect in May. We have recently received his report. The fabric has been looked after well and in general is in good order for an ancient building, but there is always work to be done. Despite efforts to keep it going the clock has stopped working and will need expert attention. But an old and Grade 1 listed building is costly to maintain.

After twelve years I am retiring in May to give way to new blood and new ideas. I have had some wonderful support over the years and I have enjoyed it very much. It is a great job.

Thank you for your support and I shall always be ready to lend the new churchwardens my support.

Vera Knight. Churchwarden

Bell Captain's Report

The bells are in a sound condition but unfortunately Swimbridge does not have a team currently. The bells are now only rung when teams from other churches attend for weddings

and funerals, or when we have visiting bell ringers. Enthusiastic ringing by those on bell ringing outings, however, is a pleasure for those in the village who enjoy the sound of the bells.

We would welcome anyone who is interested in bell ringing to join us and help raise a team in order to ensure the tradition is kept alive and the presence of our church is heard regularly as well as seen in the village.

Perce Saunders Bell Captain

PCC report

The PCC welcomed two new members this term. Ruth Ellis and Tess Bateman offered to jointly take on the role of Secretary and were co-opted onto the Committee at the April PCC Meeting.

This term the PCC has gathered for six meetings between the period of March 2013 and March 2014 with an average attendance of 79%. The Council has 18 members including the Gunn Representative.

The key challenge facing the PCC this year is the future of the Church. Members of the PCC met for an "Away Day" in order to discuss this issue and the outcome was an Action Plan which included measures to raise the profile of the church within the community.

Other matters for consideration this term included church maintenance, churchyard maintenance, working with of the Friends of St James, finance and fundraising. These matters are dealt with in more detail later.

Vera Knight and her helpers have again worked hard to help raise funds this year. Fundraising included Coffee mornings, Gift Day and Cream Teas. Sadly this year Vera will be stepping down as Churchwarden. Vera has worked tirelessly in this role for many years. We thank Vera for all her hard work, enthusiasm, patience, resourcefulness and good practical common sense. She has been a great asset and will be much missed. The Friends Q and A sessions this year have not only been extremely interesting but also very well attended despite the weather! Our thanks must go to Mark Haworth-Booth for all his time, effort and commitment to these events.

The Church Choir is still strong and continues to flourish under the leadership and guidance of Janet Patton. A highlight of the year was the visit of the Newton St Petrock Male Voice Choir to St James' when our Choir had the opportunity to sing a couple of anthems with them.

Unfortunately the Rev'd Shaun O'Rourke has been ill and was unable to Chair the January meeting. We pray for his speedy recovery and return to Swimbridge.

Finally the PCC would like to thank all those who have helped and supported, in so many ways, the church at St James' and Gunn.

Tess Bateman and Ruth Ellis PCC Secretary

Parish Magazine

This year, after more than 10 years, there was change in the way that the magazine is compiled and yet, thanks to some sterling work by the new editors, the magazine has continued as before.

In July Kathy and Bruce Dixon stepped down as the editors of the magazine and the mantle was immediately taken up by Maureen Hawkins and Lesley Hartley.

First it should be recorded that a huge debt of thanks is due to Kathy and Bruce. Their steady hand and surety of touch has ensured over more than a decade that the magazine has developed into a very good, well produced parish magazine filled with information, articles, ideas, and wisdom.

We are most grateful to the new editors, Lesley and Maureen; they have a hard act to follow though it has been clear after the first six months that they will continue to produce our Mission Community magazine to the same high standard each and every month of the year.

West Buckland School has very kindly provided a very good service in printing and collating the 230 copies that are needed each month. However, after many years it has become necessary to increase the cover price to 40p a copy.

We are very grateful to the individuals, companies and organisations who advertise in the magazine. Through their payments much of the cost of printing is defrayed. Finally, the growing numbers of people who submit material each month are greatly appreciated – they are the life blood of this successful Parish Magazine.

The magazine has been renamed the Four Ways Mission Community parish magazine and is distributed throughout the Mission Community – Swimbridge with Gunn, Landkey and West Buckland – and also to a number of subscribers from surrounding villages and towns.

Some 77 copies are distributed to parishioners in the parish of Swimbridge and in Gunn.

Paul Ellis

The Holy Name, Gunn.

The church of the Holy Name, Gunn, a daughter church of St James the Apostle at Swimbridge, was founded by Rev John (Jack) Russell in 1873.

The small rural hamlet of Gunn is at the very north of our large parish. Our church is the only meeting place here and attracts a varied congregation from within the community and neighbouring area.

We continue to meet on the second Sunday each month (except November) for a communion service and link in with the other churches in our Four Ways Mission Community.

Our meetings attract a congregation of 25 – 30. They are generous in their collection giving which goes to support both churches in our parish and also with their time and support through fundraising for the church. They open their gardens, have coffee mornings and run our Garden Fete. In June John and Barbara Squire hosted the hugely successful fete in their lovely garden

adjoining the church. We also maintain our support for the David Rundle Trust, a charity that provides care and education and clean water in Rwanda.

We are fortunate to have music for all our services, Brian Kettle on the organ and Peter Cain, guitar. We are most grateful for their contribution to our worship.

Unfortunately our priest Shaun has not been well towards the end of the year. We missed his guidance and wise counsel, but are looking forward to his being with us again soon.

The clergy and readers have been a real support during the year. We have had wonderful support from The Venerable David Gunn-Johnson, Archdeacon of Barnstaple, Rev Bruce Dixon, Rev Chris Willis, Rev John Ewington, and readers Chris James and Peter Rossell. We do thank them.



Most of the congregation volunteer to help run the church through the year in one way or another. There is a great team spirit and willingness to help within our community.



A team of ladies regularly decorate, arrange flowers and clean the church, whilst outside a hardworking men's team keep the church yard tidy and maintain the building's fabric. Our Clerk of Works, Chris Hatt, guides us and seeks funding for remedial work that is sometimes urgently needed.

The building is in need of internal maintenance to the vestry and nave. The lime render is starting to crumble and fall off the walls. We are looking at a two stage renovation programme and are in the process of approaching various organisations for financial support. We hope to be able to start work in the spring.

It is important to remember the church is the only meeting place in Gunn. If we can make it more inviting then we can plan more activities and we hope build a congregation large enough to support the church in years to come.

Arnold Bradbury. Deputy Churchwarden

ORGAN AND CHOIR REPORT

The pipe organ was attended to and tuned by the Midland Organ Company in the spring, and again in the late August prior to the organ builders/tuners club evening event. The pipe organ at Swimbridge has been selected as no major changes had been made to the instrument since its installation and dedication in 1891. A recital was given on 27th August by Mr. Paul Morgan, Organist Emeritus of Exeter Cathedral. The programme included music played at the dedication of the organ in 1891. The audience were very appreciative of the performance and expertise shown by Mr. Morgan.

Questions were asked by various members of the organ builder/tuners club as to the tuning and maintenance of the organ. Sufficient concern was expressed by these various experts that perhaps we ought to be looking at an alternative company for tuning and maintenance of the pipe organ.

For the choir members it has been a busy year. We attended the various churches for the fifth Sunday service and sang at wedding services in Swimbridge. On 2nd June at 6.30pm a Benefice service celebrating 60 years since the Queen's Coronation was held at Swimbridge. On 25th July our patronal festival evensong was held at 6.30pm followed by refreshments. A break from practices in August. Harvest festival service and supper was held in early October.

Remembrance Sunday in November was marked by a service in church and at the war memorial. The Last Post and Reveille were played on the trumpet by Eleanor Elworthy. She had travelled back especially from her home overseas.



At the end of November we joined the Newton St Petrock Male Voice choir for an evening of music – anthems and audience hymns and soloist Tom Harding. Advent and Christmas were busy. The annual nine lessons and carol service was held on 15th December at 6.30 pm followed by seasonal refreshments.

A special thank you to all choir members. They have worked hard and given freely of their time and talents to ensure a high standard of singing within the services each Sunday. We also express our thanks to Eleanor Elworthy for her trumpet playing; to Mike Clift for his bass singing; to Revd. Bruce and Mrs Dixon for their help and encouragement. We also appreciate Revd. Bruce's tenor singing with the anthems.

Choir practice is on Friday evenings starting at 7.00 pm and ending at 8.00 pm. If you would like to come along and give singing a try, you will be made very welcome.

Janet Patton

St James Churchyard

The churchyard is the most prominent and cherished open space in our village. It is a huge task to keep it looking tidy and well cared-for but also to meet what are often conflicting views of how it should be managed. The church needs as much help as possible to meet the ever increasing costs and continue the regular work involved.

As well as the main task of regular grass cutting there is other work that needs to be done. This includes cleaning the paths, making sure gravestones are safe, repairing walls, looking after the trees, levelling sunken areas and more besides.

Fortunately we have a loyal and hard working team of volunteers led by Janet Patton with regular work by Matt Bluge and Martin Fry with others including Brian Meade who give their time throughout the year to cope with the grass cutting and other work.

Costs are met by a District Council grant through the parish council, donations and money raised by the church's Christmas Gold Star appeal.



A major project last year was the rebuilding of the stone retaining boundary wall at the western end of the church yard which had collapsed into the road.



With 2014 being the anniversary of the start of World War 1 it is planned to refurbish the village war memorial which stands in the churchyard. This will be funded by a Community Council of Devon Grant which has recently been received with additional funding from the Parish Council.



David Netherway

The Streamside Garden

Now in its third year the garden has continued to be enjoyed by the young and old alike. It is in use every week by the preschool children as their outside area, mum's stop off on their way home with their children from school and many others spend a while enjoying the space.



There were several volunteer days during the year when helpers of all ages did clearing, weeding and planting. Hundreds of daffodil bulbs were planted in the autumn. Snowdrops planted over the last two years were out in January at the lower end. We are working towards a cottage garden feel to the top end to be planted up in the spring.



Children enjoying the wild flower meadow area featured on the 2014 Exeter Diocesan calendar for the month of June. BBC Radio Devon broadcast a Sunday morning piece about the garden.



An open air evensong was held last summer and it is hoped more events will be held in the future.

David Netherway

Swimbridge C of E Primary School Report

Isn't it wonderful to be able to deliver good news and to congratulate others for their achievements? It really does lift one's spirits. The reason for this upbeat report is that once again, thanks to the hard work of our dedicated staff and children, our consistently successful school has achieved the most astounding outcomes.

In February 2013 Swimbridge Primary School was judged by Ofsted to be outstanding in all areas. The report highlighted the school's ability to support and respond to the individual needs of our children and to influence their wellbeing and progress. Encouragingly, we are advised that Swimbridge School is once again the top performing school in Devon and it is also encouraging to learn that out of 17,000 primary schools in England our school was 30th in the league tables, based on Key Stage 2 SAT results. Swimbridge Primary School continues to be in the top 1% nationally.

Our school roll has continued to increase to 112 pupils with a substantial waiting list. Last year our attendance was 96.4%, apparently the highest in Devon. The continuity of our long-serving staff is a real asset to our school and we welcome the permanent appointment of Mrs Sandra Tibbles as teacher of Class 2.

The school continues to provide excellent additional services such as an in-house school meals service and a breakfast and after school Cool Kids Club. A trial summer holiday kids club was a resounding success and well supported. Extra curricular activities such as Maths, Sports, Film clubs and a range of musical instrument tuition continue to be very well received.

Additional government sports funding has enabled the school to enhance sports provision with further curricular sessions for all years and to continue with swimming lessons for all children years 1 to 6. Good use has been made of the school playing field and a learning community inter-schools rounders tournament was held at Swimbridge during the summer term.

A most welcome addition to the school infrastructure is the construction of a playground shelter to enable some children to play outside during inclement weather. It has already proved

invaluable. The shelter has been partially funded by charitable donations and the PTFA. We are still very much actively fundraising to cover the cost.

Despite a valiant effort with the local authorities to obtain extra accommodation in order to maintain our standards and support future expansion we remain with our current accommodation and without a school hall. Daily acts of whole school collective worship, held in a classroom, is an organisational feat to behold!

School funding is a constant challenge and a good school roll is currently key to enable us to maintain our existing staff and teaching assistants. Devon is 146th out of 149 funding authorities and each Devon child receives £400 below the national average - yet our school is constantly improving? Do you wonder what role our church community plays towards the success of our school? Do you think you have skills to offer that could assist with supporting our school? The Governing Body has a vacancy for a foundation governor following the retirement of Mr A Comerford. The Governing Body wishes to thank Mr Comerford for his invaluable contribution and many years of support and guidance. Please contact us if you are interested in joining our team.



team.

In conclusion it is a pleasure to report that our church school continues to thrive with amazing academic achievement and is constantly seeking to improve and raise standards. The Governing Body and the community wish to thank Garry and all of the staff and volunteers for their dedication, commitment and hard work to make Swimbridge school such a special environment for our children.

Whole school Summer trip to Heddons Mouth

Helena Searle Chair of Governors

Swimbridge Pre-school

Swimbridge Pre-school celebrates its thirtieth birthday in May this year! We now have a child attending our group whose parent did! At present we have 13 children on our register with places available on some days. The main change during the past year has been to change our Annual General Meeting from February to September. This has enabled us to recruit a new committee, as in February it was proving to be difficult because most of our children leave us in July to start school. Our committee work hard making sure that we not only meet the requirements set by Ofsted but also raise funds to buy new equipment and take the children on educational visits. We are very lucky that we have had no changes to staff. We have all been on training to update and further our professional qualifications. Financially, it is a challenge to make ends meet. We receive Early Years funding for 3 and 4 year olds, but this has not been increased over the past couple of years when other costs for example wages, heating, equipment have all continued to rise.



We are very lucky to have a good relationship with Swimbridge Primary School. We visit the school regularly and the reception class has visited us – it was a tight squeeze!!

We continue to use the Streamside Garden as often as we can, even in the wind and the rain. Our planning now has two areas – indoor and outdoor, this means that we endeavour to cover the whole Early Years Curriculum in both environments. The children look forward to time spent in the garden and make observations on how the garden changes throughout the year. It was good to be invited to take part in an item by BBC Radio Devon about the Streamside Garden. As it was during the school holidays it was fortunate to find a parent and children also willing to be part of it! Following on from a photograph in the Streamside Garden newsletter we were all pleased to have a photograph of pre-school children in the long grass in the diocese's 2014 calendar. We all appreciate the hard work that goes into maintaining the garden by Mr Netherway and his helpers. The children often look out for Mr Netherway! In the spring and summer we will make use of the new trolley to transport equipment to and from the garden.

We appreciate the support of the church for the past 30 years.

Sarah Smith Pre school leader

Friends of St James Church, Swimbridge

First annual report by Mark Haworth-Booth, Secretary and Treasurer, 22 January 2014

The Friends were set up as a Small Charity on 20 February 2013. Lady Arran kindly consented to be Patron. The trustees are Shaun, David and myself. The purposes of the charity are 'To preserve, maintain and enhance for the public benefit the church of St James, Swimbridge, its churchyard and Streamside Garden'. The Friends are recognised by HMRC as a charity for tax purposes. The account is held with the Cooperative Bank.

There are 24 members. Members pay a discretionary sum of at least £10.00 p.a. The annual subscriptions currently brings in £2,272 per calendar year. This figure is slightly inflated by my giving to the church through my Friends' subscription rather than at the offertory on Sundays. I chose to do this to give the Friends finances more credibility in the early stages of the charity. Other income derived from a gift of £350 from Jeremy Helsby, son of the late Dr Joyce Helsby, £500 from the Estate of Betty Barker, via Nick our Treasurer, and moneys received from two seasons of the Swimbridge Q&As. These moneys derive from entrance fees and sales of

refreshments. The Spring season was on photography, featuring excellent and well-attended talks by Robin Ravillious and Chris Chapman. It realised £346.50. The autumn series was expanded from two to three talks. Two were on Exmoor, by John Burgess (with recordings of Exmoor characters) and Hugh Thomas (on the management of red deer), and the third was Ray Liverton on 'A Swimbridge Boyhood.' This season raised £425.00. We spent £30 on travel expenses for John Burgess (who lives in Somerset) and £69 on two tea/coffee urns for church, kindly suggested by Mo and Mike Clift. Our current account's stands at £257.00.

The Friends' work has been hampered by the unfortunate illness suffered by our vicar. The Friends would normally grow in part by proposing membership to those who come to St James's church for christenings, weddings or funerals. This has not so far happened to the extent hoped-for but perhaps it will in the coming year. Despite that, a cheque for £2500 was given by the Friends to Nick Arthur as Treasurer on Sunday 8 December and a photo was subsequently published in the North Devon Journal. The Journal has been a valuable means of communicating with the public about Friends' activities in its first year and we owe a debt of gratitude to Dr Richard Westcott for his good offices in helping with this.

I should like to offer my sincere thanks to the Rev. Shaun O'Rourke and David Netherway, my fellow trustees, and to all those who have very kindly helped to ensure that events have run smoothly – especially Vera Knight, churchwarden, and also my wife Rosie who has gallantly organised the refreshments, which are always donated. Our speakers have all given their time and expertise free of charge, for which we are most grateful. Finally, sincere gratitude to all those who joined the Friends and thus given our church the extra support it sorely needs.

Report on first Annual General Meeting, held on Wednesday 22 January in the Upper Room at 7pm

David Netherway took the chair as the Rev. Shaun O'Rourke was unwell. Present: Arnold Bradbury, Mike and Mo Clift, Jessica Duncan, Mary and Richard Fardon, Mark Haworth-Booth, Anne and John Hayes, Christopher James, David and Ros Jordan, Ray Liverton, Ruth Moore, David Netherway. Apologies: Vera Knight, John and Barbara Squire.

The first Annual Report was presented by Mark Haworth-Booth, Secretary/Treasure and accepted unanimously. The forward programme was outlined. Two upcoming events are on church music:

Wednesday, 23 April at 7.00 for 7.30: An Introduction to the Church Organ by Dr John Marston, Director of the Artavian Baroque.

Wednesday, 30 April at 7.00 for 7.30: An Introduction to Church Bells and Bellringing by James Clarke, Diocesan Adviser on Bells, and a team of North Devon Bellringers.

The Friends present offered many valuable ideas for future events, which will be discussed by the trustees. We also fruitfully discussed ways to build the membership.

In accordance with our constitution the trustees (the Rev. Shaun O'Rourke, Mark Haworth-Booth and David Netherway) resigned at the year's end. Arnold Bradbury chaired while the trustees were re-elected, with the addition of a new trustee, Richard Fardon. Thank you very much, Richard! Further ideas were discussed under AoB, including a Streamside Summer Party. The meeting closed at 8pm.

Mark Haworth –Booth Secretary and Treasurer

The Church Website



The church website was set up in 2011. It was designed and is maintained by Colin Jones, who lives in Dolton and designed the website for the parish church there. The website for St James has these sections: Homepage, History, Services, Pictures, Events, Other Churches, Friends, Contact, Map. Colin is paid an annual fee for his work updating and when necessary redesigning the website. I am Colin's contact on the PCC and I feed through new items, such as announcements of events at church, or reports on events. I also send Colin updates for the Services page each month – this gives service details for all of the churches in our mission community. This year we added a new page for the Friends of St James, where details of events can be found, as well as the Annual Report and Minutes of the AGM held in January. From the inquiries I receive through the Contact page, it seems that people find the website useful in finding out service times and if they are planning a visit to enjoy the church as architecture and design. Many of the excellent photographs in the Pictures section were kindly provided by the Rev. Peter Bowers after his retirement. A friendly feature of the site allows visitors to send virtual postcards from our selection of photos. We also put the Annual Report of the PCC on the website for ease of reference and to save the expense of printing out hard copies unnecessarily. We also receive regular inquiries via the site from people outside the area, and abroad, researching into family history. We hope at some stage to add a Donate section so that those who wish to can donate electronically to help the church with its work. To take the statistics from the most recent complete month available, in January 2014 there were 912 visits to the website and 1553 page views. Do get in touch with me if you'd like to put something on our church website.

Mark Haworth - Booth