

ANNUAL REPORT

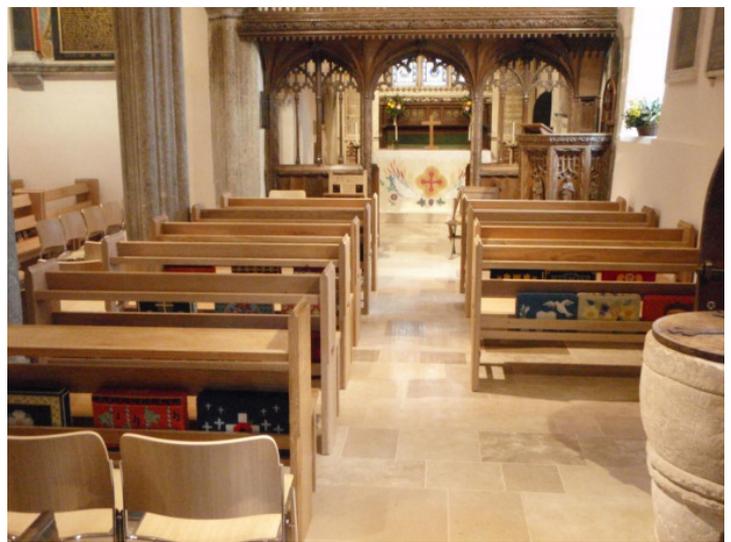
Diocesan Advisory Committee
for the Care of Churches
2014



2014 was my first year as Chairman of the Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches (DAC). It has been a busy year for the committee and staff, attending eight committee meetings, 8 subcommittee meetings, and attending 27 site visits and informal meetings with parish and mission community representatives.

It has been an exciting year in that we have seen many projects on which we have advised come to fruition including major reordering projects at Exmouth, Holy Trinity; Trusham, St Michael the Archangel; and Dartmouth, St Saviour.

2014 has also been one of change for the Church Buildings Office. Senior Church Buildings Adviser Louise Bartlett made a welcome return to the office after maternity leave. Louise and her colleague Eve Van der Steen have a substantial, continuous work load, and during the year they have dealt with over 1100 telephone enquiries, handled 123 faculty applications and 66 minor works applications, been on 17 site visits, attended national and regional conferences in addition to preparing committee agendas and writing up the meeting minutes often with the agenda running to over 35 projects.



Completed reordering at Trusham, St Michael the Archangel

In addition to DAC activities they were involved in the preparation of the strategy paper on Festival Churches which was presented to the October Diocesan Synod. This DAC is very fortunate to have such well qualified and dedicated staff.

In 2014 Jonathan Lomas retired from the committee after 35 years' service. His contribution over this period has been considerable, as is that of all the professional members of the committee. It must be remembered that they give their time voluntarily and in addition to attending meetings and site visits they study plans, read applications and write reports for other committee members to read.

Archdeacons David Gunn Johnson and John Rawlings retired in 2014 and so stepped down from the committee. Their sage advice and common-sense approach has been very helpful to us and until permanent replacements are appointed Clive Cohen (Totnes) and Mike Edson (Barnstaple) are attending the committee as Acting Archdeacons.

Keith Dodd (heating engineer) and Piers Denny (Stonemason) joined the committee and bring very important skills and experience to the debates. In September Bishop Robert appointed Jeremy Pearson to the role of Deputy Chairman of the DAC. Jeremy was Historic Properties Adviser and Senior Curator

for the National Trust in the South West until his recent retirement, and I look forward to working closely with him. His contribution will be invaluable in the coming years.



DAC site visit at Exeter, St David to discuss repairs and reordering

The provisions of the Faculty Jurisdiction Rules of 2013 came into effect on January 1st 2014 and introduced simplified processes for faculty applications. In November, at General Synod the Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction (Amendment) Measure to reduce the number of proposals requiring full faculty process was passed. The changes to the Rules are expected to be approved at General Synod in July 2015.

Also this year, the Church Buildings Council (Church Care) issued its revised guidance on church seating. This is an important advisory document that should be read by all parishes thinking of removing fixed pews, and a link to the guidance is available within the Church Buildings section of the Diocesan website. The Church Buildings Council has also completed the development of an Online Faculty Application System during 2014 and trials in the Dioceses of Truro and Leicester are proving very

successful. The official roll-out will begin on 9th February 2015, and it is probable that this diocese will elect to go online later in 2015.

IN SUMMARY, VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE WORK OF THE DAC IN 2014 ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- In 2014, 305 items of casework were discussed during the 8 meetings and 8 sub-committee meetings held. This covered formal applications where parishes had applied for the DAC's Notification of Advice, requests for Informal Advice on outline proposals, variations of faculties already issued, discharging provisos attached to faculties issued, and discussions involving the issuing of an Archdeacon's Permission for Temporary Reordering.
- The Church Buildings Office received 123 applications for a Notification of Advice (formally a DAC Certificate, and the first stage in making a faculty application). Following discussion at a committee meeting, the Church Buildings Advisers were then able to issue 112 Notifications, allowing the applicants to petition the Chancellor for the faculty. 38 of these applications were recommended by the DAC, 65 were recommended with provisos, 8 were not objected to, and 1 was not recommended, the final decision on the application resting with the Chancellor.
- Of the 123 formal Notification requests, 94 were granted at the first meeting considering the application. Another 17 were discussed two or more times before the DAC were in a position to be able to issue their Advice. The outstanding 12 had not yet been resolved to a point where the DAC were able to issue a Notification of Advice, and discussions are still ongoing.
- 24 of the 123 applications were from private individuals requesting items such as memorials or benches in churchyards, headstones which fell outside of the Churchyard Regulations, or applications from Local Authorities carrying out works within closed churchyards.

- In 2014 the Church Buildings Office handled 87 requests for Informal Advice which were then discussed by the DAC and a written response provided for the PCC. The DAC encourages parishes to apply for Informal Advice prior to making a formal application for any works to change/adapt their building, and of the 123 formal applications received during 2014, 27 had previously received Informal Advice from the committee.
- In 2014, 66 requests for permission to carry out work to a total value of approximately £133,434 under the Minor Works process were granted, although specific costings for some applications were not provided.
- In 2014, formal applications to a value of significantly more than £1,676,000 were being discussed.
- In 2014 the Diocesan Registry issued 122 faculties, 32 of which were authorised by the relevant archdeacon and 90 by the Chancellor. Some of those issued in 2014 would have related to a DAC Notification of Advice from 2013 or earlier, and conversely faculties may not have been granted in 2014 for those faculty applications submitted to the Registry late in the year.

In the context of this activity it is worth bearing in mind that of the 607 churches in Devon 236 are listed grade 1 and 203 grade II* which are the highest categories of listing of buildings of special architectural or historic interest. They require very careful consideration when advising on major repair, maintenance or improvement projects.

Indeed in the Court of Arches decision in the St Alkmund, Duffield Appeal (2012) the court, in giving new guideline to Chancellors, held that there should be a strong presumption against proposals which would adversely affect the special character of a listed building, except where it can be shown that public benefit arising from the project was such that it outweighed the damage done. Public benefit includes liturgical freedom, pastoral well-being, opportunities for mission, and putting the church to viable uses that are consistent with its role as a place of worship and mission. Of course the more serious the harm, the greater will be the level of benefit needed before the proposals should be permitted. This will particularly be the case if the harm is to a building which is listed Grade I or II*, in these cases serious harm should only exceptionally be allowed. So in advising parishes and the Chancellor in respect of such projects, DAC members are involved in consideration of substantial detail not least of which is trying to find a compromise solution which mitigates the harm caused to the building.



New lighting at Brixton, St Mary (photo: Le Page Architects)

I am very grateful to all committee members for the work they have done in 2014 and in particular to the Church Buildings Advisers for their support and guidance during my first year of office.

Frank Eul, Chair of the DAC