

LEWES PRIORY SCHOOL MEMORIAL CHAPEL FUND ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2023

January 1st 2023 - December 31st. 2023

WEBSITE <https://lewesprioryschoolmemorialchapeltrust.org> Charity No. 274381

1) ADDITIONAL RENOVATION WORK COMPLETED

Thanks to the wonderful donors who supported the building renovation appeal held in the Spring of 2021 it was possible to continue with renovation to the fabric of the building

- a) Joiner Alex Woodland supplied and fitted a new door for the utilities room.
 - b) Lewes Decorators Co carefully sanded, repaired and re-stained the main external doors and sanded and varnished all the new internal doors to match
 - c) Finally some glass panels in the main external doors had broken over the years and been replaced by perspex so we had the doors restored with new matching glass panels.
- Once again all the work has been arranged and co-ordinated by Trustee John Murray.

2) MARCH AGM

- a) We looked back at past renovation work carried out by the school and by the Trustees and concluded that over the past 12 years the repairs and renovations have cost approximately £10,000 per year on average. This is rather more than we had thought.
- b) We discussed additional work to be considered during the next few years including repair or replacement of the stone slabs that make up the front entrance paving and trying to find some way of removing unsightly copper staining on the chapel tower, which appears to come from the copper lightning conductor rod.
- c) We discussed the forthcoming Civic Service (see report below)
- d) We discussed ways to re-vitalise the role of Junior Trustees (ie Priory students to take an on-site interest in the care and promotion of the Chapel)
- e) We discussed ways to try and encourage past Priory School students to join the Trustees.

3) CIVIC SERVICE

At the end of April a special 'Civic Service' was held in the Chapel. It was attended by a wide-ranging congregation which included the Mayor of Lewes Shirley Anne Sains, the local M.P Maria Caulfield, The MP for Worthing East, Tim Loughton (Ex Priory Pupil) the Headteacher of Priory school Jon Curtis-Brown, a number of ex pupils and some Trustees.

The service was led by a local vicar, Ben Brown, and a number of speakers including our Chairman Alan Pett talked about the history of the Chapel and its importance both to the school, and to the Lewes community. A highlight of the service was music performed organist Terry Steele and by pupils of the school. We were treated to an excellent performance of Pachelbel's Canon in D by a string quartet composed of school pupils and a wonderful rendering of Amazing Grace sung by pupil Lucy Lewis

After the service, there were refreshments and an opportunity to meet with others for whom the Chapel is also an important part of their lives and memories.

4) NEW TRUSTEES June 2023

John Gower organised a special "zoom" meeting to welcome our new Trustees, Ruth Gottlieb and Ellie Canavan-White to their first live AGM. Both are on the staff at Priory School and give us an "on-site" presence.

Ruth has a BMus Hons at Manchester University a Postgraduate Diploma in Orchestral Studies From Guildhall School of Music and a PGCE from Sussex University. She has taught at Priory School since 2020. She particularly enjoys the extra-curricular music e.g. the Choir and String Ensemble.

Ellie has been at Priory School since 2021 and is subject lead for Religious Studies as well as teaching the Life Skills curriculum. She took her first degree at Bath Spa University in Religion, Philosophy and Ethics before returning to Sussex to complete her teacher training. She has also taken a part time course with the Royal Academy of Dance to become a qualified ballet teacher.

5) HERITAGE DAY

There was another good turn out for the annual Heritage Day and the Trustees would like to thank trustee David Arnold for taking the lead role, Terry Steele for playing the Organ and the school staff and trustees who made the day possible

Following the service Terry Steele sent a very useful record of memorable events that took place in the school chapel while he was on the staff at Priory School between 1975 and 2005. I am copying his email here so as to preserve this record for future trustees

Written by Terry Steele

What happened in Priory School in music and the other performing arts between 1975 and 2005 was remarkable, due in probably equal measure to talented staff, able students and supportive management,

Around one hundred Concerts, Recitals and informal recitals have taken place, which have included a performance of Britten's 'Noyes Fludde' filmed and broadcast by BBC Panorama. The first - and very successful Ofsted - began with the Inspectors assembling in the Chapel for a performance of Beethoven First Symphony - yes, a full Symphony Orchestra in a Comprehensive School.

Whilst Director of Music I was also Conductor of the East Sussex Community Choir which rehearsed in the Chapel, but also gave Concerts, including a full performance of Haydn's 'Creation' with orchestra and eminent soloists. I also conducted The Ashdown Singers, who gave performances in the Chapel, including Haydn's 'Nelson Mass', and also supported School Concerts and events.

For a number of years the Chapel was also a major local centre for the examinations of the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music, administered by my wife who was also principal accompanist.

For many years, indeed, predating my time as Director, the school provided the choir for the Crown Court Service at St Anne's Church, for which of course, rehearsals were held in the Chapel.

I hope that this gives a picture of a vibrant use of the building at the highest level of local artistic use.

5) REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY November 12th (Written by Valerie Shrubbs)

The annual Remembrance Sunday service was held at the Priory School War Memorial Chapel on the 12th September 2023. It was well attended including by the Mayor of Lewes, Councillor Matthew Bird. The programme was arranged by myself, Martyn Relf and Ray Henning with huge support from the Priory School Head Jon Curtis-Brignell and his Team (notably Ruth Gottlieb) plus the Chapel Trustees. The focus, as always, was on the 55 former Boys' Grammar School pupils who lost their lives in World War 2 as well as others commemorated within the Chapel including Neville Bradshaw, the former Headmaster to all of the 55

The names of the 55 were read out by Priory School pupil Maria Pastorelli and David Carter for the OLO whilst a hand bell tolled for every name and other school pupils made up a poppy wreath. After all the wreaths had been laid in the anteroom of the Chapel and the exhortation read, David Arnold related the poignant story of one of the 55, the result of his ongoing research into their lives..

Music is increasingly a feature of the programme, very ably supported by Terence Steele, former head of music at the school. The pupils play a significant role and this year the trumpet for the Last Post and Reveille was beautifully played by Matilda Motley. We were treated to

"Fields of Gold" sung by Maya Naumann and Imogen Hartnett accompanied by Rachel Lambert on the piano. Sarah Hall, a former Priory School pupil, sang Pie Jesu movingly for the congregation. The hymns were "I Vow to Thee My Country" and "Abide with Me". The final piece of music was "Hymn to the Fallen" by John Williams, played on the organ by Terence Steele

We look forward to continuing to organise this event each November, using the current formula albeit with variations and with ongoing school support and involvement, Remembrance being a relevant and mindful part of our history particularly in this troubled world of today.

Valerie Shrubbs, Chair of The Old Lewesians Organisation, (OLO).

The trustees would like to thank Valerie for all the care she has taken in the planning and leading of this service

6) HIGH STREET DISPLAY (During Remembrance week)

To coincide with Remembrance, David Arnold and John Gower mounted another display at the Tourist Office in Lewes, building on the first one the previous year.

Preparation for the display extended over several months and a number of other people were involved, not least several foreign friends who generously gave of their time to translate the leaflet we had produced in English last year, into a total of eight other languages. These formed part of this year's display as did a lot of the material which David had amassed last year.

The Spitfire print in the display depicted an example that actually flew on D-Day and was painted by Lewes artist, Bob Mayston, who also helped with the layout of the book of the 55.

The staff at the Tourist Office fed back afterwards that the display had again attracted a significant amount of interest both among locals and tourists. In the light of this, window space has again been booked for next year and it is hoped that the event might become an annual one, enabling us to bring the Chapel and its story to new generations as the years go by

6) ORGAN SCHOLAR

It is now four years since the last of our previous three scholars left Priory School. All have continued with their keyboard studies and one holds an Organ Scholarship at Bristol University. It is a difficult instrument and finding a place to practice playing a pipe organ can be tricky but we now have a student from year 9 at Priory School who wishes to start learning on the Chapel Organ. It is all very early days yet but we are hopeful of having a scholar in the making.

7) WEB SITE

Under John Murray's guiding hand the website continues to grow and increase in detail. If you haven't looked at it for a while please do as it has some extremely interesting details about the chapel. The website address is at the top of this report

Paul Hayler 30.12.2023