

31.7.20

St Edmund's ceiling repair and redecoration

Update 8

You may have thought you'd heard the last from me when you didn't get an update last week. I'm sorry if you feel you missed out, there were some hectic days and I just ran out of time. You may have seen my report, written at that time, in the August magazine. If you're not a subscriber and you would like a copy please let Peter or Caroline know and someone will see that you get one. Although the ceiling contract was complete a fortnight ago our church was still in rather a disordered state as people called in to help or took things home to work on (with the benefit of decent lighting!).

During the past two weeks we have brought out of the area behind the font the mountain of contents temporarily stored there and we have cleaned down the surrounding walls, the pair of west-facing stained glass windows and the usual furniture within the tower. The hassocks have gradually been cleaned up by Pam Highman (a huge task because of the number to do and each one with six faces and twelve edges to inspect and attend to) and Paul has bravely taken on the repainting of several of the intricate wrought iron flower stands. Michèle has refreshed all the pew cushions, including removing the numerous spillages of wax on the material.

Maureen and Denis Caughey made a start on dusting and then polishing our pews, the first of their five visits to complete this task. We even moved out the ones abutting the walls to do the rarely-reached small gaps at the ends, and then moved them back again. Some of you will know how heavy they are. Late in the day we gave up on some, feeling our stamina had ebbed away, but on another morning, with strength renewed, we discovered that they had been securely nailed down, hence our initial difficulty! I don't know why, I can't imagine anyone making off with them. Anyway the pews are all now glowing beautifully. We had the entire Hutchinson family on site one day and they set-to on the woodwork starting at the pulpit and working their way steadily around the Altars and rails to the wooden screen by the organ, again with spectacular results. Sophie even volunteered (or was it her dad who volunteered her?) to go up the ladder to change some light bulbs for me. Anyway it was a very rare offer that I was pleased to accept. Doreen Heath came in to dust the piano inside and out and also to clean the lower parts of the organ case which has now been uncovered by Mike Thompson and declared fit for use after he had exercised his fingers and feet on it and unstuck a few reluctant keys.

After some thought as to suitable positions for the ladder, making up an extended mop and moving the altars aside briefly, I have cleaned the two stained glass east windows right up to their highest points, including some very tiny lights that now shine out as intended from within the stone tracery. I think it is a very long time since those high areas were touched, so do look up and enjoy the pictures and colours when you come. Now with all the windows clean internally the amount of natural light from every side is much increased.

Ken and Jackie have continued to shine our brass and silverware and Ken prepared the wooden pole of the processional cross for the several coats of new varnish it has received

over the past few days. Richard Wood has polished up the large copper flower pan and a large silver flower vase, much to Michèle's delight, and he is now working on restoring more of our furniture. We still have a few more small pieces of furniture in need of restoration, so if you are skilled in that type of work have a word with me and I will show you what is involved and you can decide whether there is anything you could take on. Richard and Gill have washed and re-hung both sets of Sanctuary curtains and they then called back to clean and service the handbells ready for the day when practices can re-start. All our other curtains have been washed or dry cleaned although they will not all be up in time for our first public service. Some of the special hooks needed for the Lady Chapel curtain were found to have failed and a few more were missing, but Jill thought of a way of making some new ones. She fashioned a model from thin flower-arrangers' wire and provided me with a pile of wire coat hangers. We'll see soon whether my afternoons in the shed with tools and soldering iron were time well spent.

In the choir vestry the sink cupboard and waste plumbing is now complete and ready for use and we have had a good clear out in the lobby. Michèle has been working steadily around the floor areas and I have cleaned up the blue tiles on the Sanctuary step and some of those around the font. There is more to do to care for the font and its supports. We have gradually put back the framed items which have all been cleaned, including the roll of honour, churchyard map and Adelard's tree certificate. The British Legion standards have been re-hung and the various white markings of the steps have been refreshed.

I cannot give you a photo yet of the final appearance of the interior with the Altars 'dressed' but I attach a couple of photos to show you how the church will look if you are able to come to a service soon. One shows the restored pews with alternate ones closed off to ensure social distancing. The other shows some notices about staying safe and the arrangements for receiving offerings. If you have a contactless bank card you can use the machine and there is a box in case you have cash or have been saving up your weekly envelopes. So long as it is not impossible for you for medical reasons, please wear a face mask in church if you come to a service. You will be able to read elsewhere about what we have done to ensure your safety whilst in church and I hope that if you feel able to come you will enjoy the cleaner and brighter surroundings.

So thank you to all of you who have put in time and considerable effort to make this transformation happen and for putting up with my endless demands in the process. Especially you should appreciate that Michèle has visited nearly every day not only doing physical work but taking responsibility as church warden for the numerous decisions, proposals and questions arising during the job. I include in my thanks those behind the scenes dealing with the contractors' payments and VAT. The contractors have written to me to express their appreciation of the timely payment of their invoices in these difficult times. I'll make this the last of my weekly updates, but there may be more to report in a future *News from the Parish*.

Geoff
31.7.20