

October 2022

Dear Project Rutherford Supporter

I am contacting you to update you about our Project Rutherford.

We had hoped that the renovation of the tower would have been completed by now but, if you have passed the church, you will have noticed very little has been done since the end of July. This is because, once the shingles were fully removed, the sad state of the underlying timbers became fully apparent. Some were rotten but the main problem was the rather *Heath Robinson* repairs effected post-war after the bomb damage. The largest timbers, dating back to 1483, are generally in good condition but the structure needs a lot of work to ensure it will survive for the next few generations. Unfortunately the delays means the work will now have to take place during the winter months, so we thought to have a temporary roof constructed to make it safe for the men. This requires a different, more robust, scaffolding but costing £31,000 and requiring three 8 meter buttresses to support the height, we have finally decided against this. So now we pray hard for good weather to allow the men to undertake the work before the depth of winter sets in.

Repair to the timbers is going to cost a lot more money - £65,000 more!. The NLHF is unable to assist us further but Friends of Essex Churches have been extremely generous with £30,000, and The Round Tower Churches Society and FSJ Charities have both granted us £5,000 so we are well on the way. A number of grant applications have been submitted and we are waiting prayerfully for some more positive responses. It is all rather a headache; however, we have no option but to progress with the work and trust the money will come in.

Clearly we are unable to develop anything to do with the internal decorations of the round tower and the conservation of the fresco until the building work is completed, sometime in the New Year.

Nevertheless, the teams of designers, researchers and activity volunteers are working apace and this side of the project is progressing well. The Faculty for the removal of the pews has finally come through although a few conditions needed to be met and we are waiting to see if the DAC are happy with our responses. One of the pews has been sold but there are still 2 left so if you know anyone who would like one in their house or garden – a lovely piece of oak furniture for £300. Hopefully these will be removed by the end of the month.

The design of the exhibition created by Patrick Readings and Ian Mercer is looking very professional; this has been accepted by the PCC and so construction can start as soon as the pews are removed. However, we will install a temporary exhibition in the space until the fully permanent one is available, probably by March.

The activities team have been creating some really interesting ideas to stimulate the children and the first trail was piloted extremely successfully last week with the Broomfield Beavers and Cubs. More are envisaged soon.

The first of the *People and Stone* talks will resume later this month so keep the 29th October in your diary when Ken Crowe will talk about the Saxon Princely Burials at St Mary's. Tickets are £5 available in church or from Ros Mercer.

From the beginning of July we started to open the church on a Tuesday and Thursday morning, 10.30-12.30. As the exhibition is not yet up and running, I have not contacted you about joining the rota for this; however, if you still feel able to assist with church sitting please do let me know as we would value more people helping maintain this.

Thank you for your continued interest in this important project.

With warmest wishes

Trudy

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