

Bressingham Church

Heritage Lottery Fund building repairs blog: by Linda Holly

Tuesday, 2 May, 2017

Building works finally begin at Bressingham Church!



Diana Burroughes, Churchwarden, and I met Keith and Alex (builders) at the church. Stage I is groundworks, digging soakaways. Keith was adept at driving and turning the mini-digger up the church path.



Archaeologist Sarah Bates oversaw the digging. Unfortunately, several burials were discovered beneath the path from the Lych gate to the north door which indicates the remains are certainly older than the path! The remains will be carefully documented and reburied by Diss Team clergy.

Monday, 15 May

Groundworks continue at the church. Archaeologists Sarah and Simon are still carefully removing bones from the soakaway trench. Sadly, some of the remains they found last week were young children. (A reburial service will take place in the next few weeks). Some interesting archaeology has been discovered in the church: Sarah and Simon noted layered foundations in the holes next to the 13th century chancel north wall (close to the north aisle) that had to be dug ready for the new downpipes. These black stripes indicate they date from the 12th century.



13 June, 2017

Heritage Lottery Fund building works at Bressingham Church are going well and on schedule. All the groundworks and archaeological work in preparation for new gutters and downpipes are now complete, and smart new gullies installed. Unfortunately, 17-19th century graves were discovered beneath a church path in the new soakaway location. Our archaeologists sensitively uncovered and recorded their findings and a reburial service (led by the Reverend Canon Tony Billett) took place on 1 June close to where the human remains were found.

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) also funds some improvements to the church to ensure that the building is sustainable long term. Currently, the electricians are installing new under pew heating. Bressingham Church will have some heating.....Hurrah! New lighting fixtures will also be installed.

Our builder (Atthowe's) is about to begin work on repairing the tower roof, replacing the wooden louvres in the tower (which are currently almost falling out!) and installing new cast iron gutters. We are planning an Open Day at a time when repairs to the base of the tower wall are taking place so that visitors can learn traditional flint wall repair techniques using lime mortar. We believe the craftsmen will be working in July – we will put up a notice on the website when we have a firm date.

Several heritage activities have also taken place which have been recorded elsewhere on the website: a Landscape History walk in April, a visit to Norfolk Archives in May, and Medieval Graffiti workshops with Bressingham Primary School Children were also held in May. We also commissioned two reports: a bench ends specialist wrote a report on the magnificent bench ends, and Matthew Champion produced a graffiti report and worksheets for visitors (we will be posting these reports on the website).

FLINT REPAIR OPEN DAYS at Bressingham Church 19-20 July:



Tim and Lee were excellent instructors showing how best to repair flint walls. Tim recommended a mix of three parts sharp sand to one part hydrated lime, with enough water added to make a pliable but not too wet mix. Tim guided attendees how best to apply the mix with a trowel. Tim waits for the lime to set sufficiently, then pushes the lime deep into the wall. Once set, the lime is brushed off and wiped. The repaired wall will then be left slowly to dry.....Hessian covering helps prevent the lime setting too quickly in sunny locations. Volunteers discovered it is not as easy as Tim makes it appear – but of course he has decades of experience! Thanks to Tim, Lee, Howard and Paul for their cooperation.



BUILDING WORK RESTARTED at BRESSINGHAM CHURCH 11 SEPTEMBER:

Keith and fellow builders from G.F. Atthowe returned to Bressingham Church after a one month hiatus as work on the roof had to wait until the bat breeding season was over. All the nave scaffolding is now in place and work on relaying lead roofs is underway. The builders first had to remove all the old lead which was sent away for recasting. There are records of previous lead repairs, so the builders were asked to look out for date marks from previous lead work. Although date plaques were not found, stonemason Steve found two small matchboxes resting on a soffit on the southwest corner of the nave roof close to the tower. Inside one of the delicate matchboxes the date "1910" and the name "N (?) Knott" can just be discerned. We know from Churchwarden Accounts that the lead roof was last replaced in 1910 by local builders Hoggs. It would be interesting to find out whether Hoggs (now R&J Hoggs) have any records about an employee named Knott. The matchboxes provide a poignant sense of the individual workmen who worked on the church just a few years before the outbreak of WWI – and they also connect two sets of skilled craftsmen more than a century apart.

