

CHALE CHURCHYARD COMMITTEE

REPORT FOR 2022

After another three years of uncertainty, both in our village, and throughout the world, we seem to be returning to some degree of normality although the future of our church is not entirely certain. The retirement of our Rector, and general changes within the Diocese, places great pressure on the PCC to maintain an active church in Chale, and this is in the good hands and dedication of Mr. Sven Tester and his Council. The independent Churchyard Committee takes the burden of both cost and fundraising away from the PCC and allows people of all denominations or even non-church attendees to know that their loved ones have a quiet resting place when the inevitable occurs. We have seen several people whose families moved away from Chale many years ago, but who still regard our village church as their desired resting place, wishing to be returned and buried in our churchyard. Often this relates to former pupils who attended Chale School (now sadly closed).

It is also good to see that the church attracts many visitors, some from all over Great Britain, and the world, with ancestors buried here, and their generous comments in the visitors' book in the church about the appearance of the churchyard reflects the importance of our role in keeping the area neat and tidy. As a lady said to me recently, "it's very important that we keep our churchyard looking good". Thanks to the support, both by donation of funds and of activities, we can do this.

We must never forget that our churchyard houses the parish War Memorial (first erected by soldiers from Chale who returned after the First World War to commemorate their fallen comrades) and where Poppy Wreaths are laid every year. There are two War Graves in the churchyard for which we receive donations from the War Graves Commission annually (one in memory of a member of Chale Home Guard, who with another member died in an accident during training in Chale).

Any person whose family lived or worked in Chale cannot be refused a burial here, and this year we have welcomed several former parishioners to rest in our churchyard. We are grateful to valued donations from, for example, Chale Parish Council, Chale Horticultural Society (Chale Show), and from representatives of the Methodist faith, and the former 'Blackgang Mission', etc.

The area, some one and a half acres, is kept in good order despite major problems due to extremes of weather and this year we have experienced heavy rain, and long periods of extreme high temperatures, all affecting the times when the grass can be cut, etc. The fact it draws generous comments is due to the dedication of our hard working groundsman, Dave Holmes and his helper.

We only attempted one fundraising event this year, an antique valuation day, which due to circumstances beyond our control did not attract the desired support, but related donations did make a profit of £102. My thanks go to all who gave their time and support to the event, and to the PCC for allowing the use of their newly installed kitchenette, and toilet facilities which makes the venue most suitable for events.

Due to good husbandry, we actually covered all costs in spite of the difficult weather, and ended the year with £1,778 in hand, and further generous donations since the end of last year from Chale organisations and residents are greatly appreciated. With such valued support, the future looks good but with the uncertainty of rising costs we must not be over optimistic and the need to hold some fundraising events remains. Our Committee will be considering this when we next meet.

Personally, I have acted as both Chairman and Treasurer of the Chale Churchyard Committee for over 30 years, and I am grateful to all our members for their support. In particular to Lynette Atkinson, and I am delighted she is willing to share the tasks, but I do wish to ask for some new members to help with future fundraising events.

Derek Sprake
Chairman and Treasurer, Chale Churchyard Committee.