

Bittadon Parish

newsletter 01.06.2023

Important – Please read whole letter



Dear residents of our beautiful sleepy little parish in North Devon. A newsletter is a rare occurrence as not much happens of national importance in the parish that is newsworthy or needs resident participation.

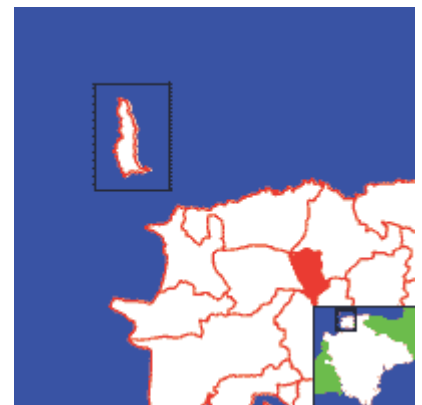
However, there are some matters to communicate at this present time. This letter is sent by email where possible with a printed copy delivered by hand.

If you know a friend or neighbour in the parish who doesn't use email, would you be kind enough to safely pass this on to them.

In case of any confusion there are two Bittadon parish boundary areas. The civic boundary is inside Colam Stream and inside the stream that issues near to Lynton cross. It includes Horedown Farm and the garage at Lynton Cross. The Parish of St Peter's, our picturesque little church, has a larger ecclesiastical boundary encompassing more properties including all properties off Hewish Lane, Burland house and more.

I have been 'Chairman of Bittadon Parish Meetings' (it is such a small parish that it does not warrant a full parish council) for over 20 years and am in my later 70's. I feel that the time has come and would now like to retire from this position.

I am asking if anyone would like to take on this role and if so would you advise me of nominees please. The role is a wonderful opportunity for someone to be involved in the community and local government, planning issues and being a communication centre for local civic matters. The role is unpaid but very rewarding, it could be an interesting career start in politics or an insight of how local government operates or just helping your



community. The new chairperson can be as involved as they want, there are many interesting meetings and visits to attend if wanted or not.

There is only one statutory duty that must be carried out annually

In the event of no successor being nominated and taking the position, the alternative is that The Parish of Bittadon joins with an adjacent parish, for instance – Marwood.

Please let me know your thoughts, my contact details are at the end of this newsletter.

A snippet of history (courtesy of Wikipedia)

During the reign of King John (1199–1216) the manor was held by the de Bittadon family. They remained seated there for six generations. The Lovering family next acquired Bittadon, followed by the Luttrell family. This was a junior branch of the Luttrells of Dunster Castle in Somerset. In about 1635 Bittadon was held by the Chichester family, the senior branch of which was seated at Raleigh, Pilton, near Barnstaple.

St Peter's Church (Pictures by Shaun Ferguson)

A Time for Decisions? - *Father John Roles*



The tiny church of St Peter has served the scattered community of Bittadon for many hundreds of years. Quiet and peaceful as it is now, who would have thought that in 1549 the government of Edward VI wanted to hang the Vicar of Bittadon from the church tower for his part in the so-called Western Rising (also sometimes called the

Prayer Book Rebellion). Fortunately, he escaped, unlike the Vicar of Pilton!

These days this Grade II listed church serves one of England's smallest parishes and has a small regular congregation, approximately 10% of the parochial population. That sounds very impressive, and it is a statistic many parishes would envy until we reflect on the total population!

Nonetheless, St Peter's is the only public building in the parish and, until recently, has kept

its door unlocked 24 hours a day to be a place of welcome and quiet to all who pass by.



The church itself is unpretentious but contains a couple of 18th century monuments, some murals painted in the 1930s, by the then owner of Burland House, depicting the life of St Peter. There is a unique charm about the place and the fact that it is well cared for makes it attractive to many.

Sadly, we have come to a time when decisions about its future must be made. The church is presently locked because of the state of the

ceiling. At present, it can be viewed by arrangement, contact details are on the church door.

Or, for direct information telephone 01271 850500, also, we have had to give up on our monthly service and two proposed weddings and a baptism.

The fact is that we simply have no funds to approach the repairs which are estimated in excess of £30,000. It is worth saying that the responsibility for church buildings falls entirely on the congregation; despite the common perception that the church is state funded and rolling in money, it is neither. Grant funding might be available but this usually requires substantial seed-funding, and a clear indication of future benefit for the community.



We have to consider our options.

* Becoming a Festival Church: this means having a limited number of services each year but being available for celebrations of marriages, baptisms and funerals as well as being a place to host local events. The building still needs to be insured and maintained.

* Closure: this is a complicated legal process but could see the sale of the building for another purpose, possibly housing or storage. There is also the possibility of a slow decline into a ruinous structure.

* Continuing as a place of worship with the support of the community and looking at ways in which we could better serve that community.

These are some of the things that are going through our minds at the moment; there may be other options.

However, like any other church, St Peter's was built to serve the whole community and it seems only right to invite you, as members of the ecclesiastical and/or the local government Parish of Bittadon to have your say.

We will be holding a meeting with light refreshments which will be open to all. It will be for looking at the church and to informally discuss the situation and options.

This meeting is arranged for **Tuesday 4th July at 6pm in the church itself**, do come along and share your thoughts, also to get any questions you may have answered.

In the meantime, and as a way to help us prepare, please feel free to contact Richard Jerrard with your initial thoughts, and to let us know if you can come to the meeting
We sincerely look forward to hearing from you. Richard's contact details:-

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