

CHURCH RECORDING REPORT AUGUST 2019

After two visits to Chester Records Office in November 2018 and January 2019 to collect as much information on documents pertaining to St. Mary's Church, Whitegate, the Recording officially began on Wednesday 9th January. Wednesday is the agreed day between us to work in the church. Recorders are: P. Beeby, J. Kirkby, D. Pritchard, J. Jordan, H. Minshall with C. Thomas from the Bowdon Group giving her expert advice on the Metalwork section.

There was a slow start due to bad weather and funerals but by February we were well under way. Jo and Helen initially worked on recording the organ with help from the organist plus further information in March from the organ tuners. Pauline, John and Denise worked on the Windows section. Jo, Christine and Helen worked on Metalwork in the mornings and in the afternoons Jo and Helen worked on Library.

There was a most interesting find of a Holy Bible, Book of Common Prayer and Apocrypha in two very large leather-bound volumes dated 1660 which led to a great deal of research on 17th century printing as there are three specific stamps used on title pages that are quite unusual. We have consulted Cambridge Academicians, Rylands Library and even travelled down to CU Library, Bible Section to see if there are any similarities to their copies. The version here is older than the one in CU Library but similar to one held in the Ryland collection. It also has a handwritten section by a local, but very eminent calligrapher, and it is nearly impossible to distinguish his written hand from the printed letter.

Metalwork progressed very smoothly and was completed at the end of July by Helen's visit, accompanied by Deryk Petty clock winder, up to the bell tower to look at the tubular bells. Simultaneously work began on recording the clock which is one floor below the bells. On this we were helped by Deryk, John, a clock expert from Little Budworth and the authors of a book on Joyce clocks. We now hope to have an accurate description of both clock and bells. Our verifications from Silver experts have shown initial identifications by valuers to be incorrect. We have identified all hallmarks on silver, silver plate and pewter.

By the beginning of July the Windows section was completed and Pauline, John and Denise started the Paintings section and completed this by early August. John, Pauline and Denise have now finished Recording until early October when we hope to get together for an update. Pauline will be working hard on the computer compiling her work before final checking.

Jo, Helen along with Christine have now started on the Stonework section. This is mostly composed of a reredos which adorns all three walls of the Sanctuary and is proving very testing. However, we hope to finish the item in the not too distant future.

We have had a great deal of support from the churchwardens, vicar and parishioners and their help, knowledge and welcome has been invaluable to us. Progress has been excellent with four sections completed and two parts finished. However, once the church work is done, compiling and photography is likely to take as long again.