

NORTH TUDDENHAM FESTIVAL 2022!

SUMMARY

In August 2021, North Tuddenham resident Mike Smith, the Fabric Officer for the project to repair the 14th-century tower of St Mary's church in the parish which had been in imminent danger of collapse in 2019, approached fellow resident Adrian O'dell to determine what might be an appropriate way to celebrate the completion of the restoration which had then been scheduled for February 2022.

The latter responded with an outline plan for a 3-day, 7-event Festival which, in addition to focusing on the successful rescue and reparation of the church tower, would also celebrate community life in the small central Norfolk village. His proposal covered a range of activities which might appeal to residents and their families and to all age groups. The separate events within the newly-named North Tuddenham Festival 2022! would include live music on the first evening, with farm visits, guided wildlife tours on the Common, an arts and crafts workshop for children and a film-screening in the church on the second day. The final day, on a Sunday, would start with a celebratory service in St Mary's followed by specialised talks on church history and conservation and the festival would conclude with a grand bonfire party in a field next to the church.

A small organising team (OT) was put together which comprised Mike Smith (MS), Angela Hook (AH) and Adrian O'dell (AOD) and it had its first meeting on 09/09/2021 with subsequent meetings each month. Dates were established for the Festival to take place on Friday, 6th May-Sunday 8th May 2022. It soon became clear that the restoration work would not be completed as scheduled because of a variety of delays attributed to Covid problems, poor weather conditions and financing difficulties but the OT stuck to the initial target date.

MS approached North Tuddenham Parish Council for funding assistance and the project was awarded a £1000 grant. Further financial support was given by an anonymous donor (£250), TES Garage Recovery Ltd (£100) and Julia Meynell (£100) who sponsored an individual singer; that singer was subsequently unable to perform because of sickness, so the donation was refunded. All these monies were gratefully accepted by the OT. Other income would be generated by ticket sales for the events, a raffle, bar receipts at the bonfire party and small donations. No specific target was set for overall income, but the objective was to make some profit which would go towards St Mary's church to sustain it as a community asset. A dedicated bank account was set up to ensure that all monetary transactions were transparent and verifiable.

It was hoped that the small NT community itself would support and actively participate in the Festival, as audience members or volunteers. It has to be said that North Tuddenham has not had a good track record when it comes to supporting initiatives such as this in the past. MS produced a survey showing that less than ten per cent of households actively engage on a regular basis with events organised for their benefit.

With that in mind, it was necessary to broaden awareness of the Festival so a website was created by AOD and that was followed by constant targeted marketing to other communities in surrounding areas and throughout the county. This included the use of social media (Facebook and Instagram postings), email-shots, articles in local newspapers and other publications, the distribution of printed flyers and links from websites or other institutions such as Historic England and Norfolk Churches Trust, both major contributors to the St Mary's tower restoration project.

Meanwhile, the individual events were constructed as follows:

Music Alive! – Friday 6th May – St Mary's Church

Organist; Opera/Jazz singer and accompanist; Duo singing 'Blues and Roots' music; The Gressenhall Singers choir

Farming Focus – Saturday 7th May – Danns Farm

Guided tour of the farm visiting the Dairy, Chicken Barns, Ice Cream factory with a talk on farming in the 21st c.

Wildlife Wanderings – Saturday 7th May – North Tuddenham Common

Guided tours led by experts: A conservationist, insect and bird specialist, tree specialist, wildlife photographer.

Draw, Paint and Make Workshop for Kids – Saturday 7th May – Village Hall

Fun with tuition for 4-12 year-olds with 2 experienced art and crafts teachers. Included refreshments and prizes.

Movie in the Nave at Night – Saturday 7th May – St Mary's Church

Feature length family film "Dream Horse" shown on a big screen.

Church Service and Tower Dedication – Sunday 8th May – St Mary's Church

Special service to commemorate the repairs to the church tower – amended because the tower was incomplete.

Church Conservation and Historical Talks – Sunday 8th May – St Mary's Church

Specialised and more academic talks by a church historian, historic buildings architect and civil engineer.

Grand Finale Bonfire and Party – Sunday 8th May – in field beside St Mary's Church

Large bonfire with hog roast, bar and live music.

Tickets went on sale at the beginning of April 2022, but uptake was desperately low, especially from local residents. The day of specialised talks was reduced to just a morning session and the activity on the Common was made a free event. The OT also considered cancelling the movie night. Covid fears and cost-of-living worries were thought to be influencing factors for the poor sales, so a marketing push was instigated two weeks before the scheduled start of the festival which resulted in a turnaround in fortunes.

As the festival progressed, it became clear that participation levels were greater than had been feared at one time but, more importantly, the feedback from those who took part was extremely positive and enthusiastic. At its conclusion, 437 individuals attended the 7 events and the age of participants ranged from 4 to 91. Twenty-four volunteers helped with preparations before and during the varying activities.

North Tuddenham Festival 2022! was the biggest event ever to have taken place in the village.

It was ambitious in its objectives and successful in its outcomes. For those who did their bit by purchasing tickets or volunteering, it provided an opportunity to celebrate the remarkable restoration of St Mary's church tower and life in this quiet Norfolk village.

ATTENDANCE AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION IS SET OUT ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES

Total Attendance (includes volunteers, performers, specialists, etc.)	437
North Tuddenham residents	179 (41%)
From other locations	258 (59%)
Participating NT households (150 houses in village)	30 (20%)

See separate spreadsheet for details

Adrian O'dell
May 2022

Addendum

Did it meet the organisers' expectations?

Socially - There was something for everyone over the two days and three evenings of the Festival. Feedback received from each of 8 events was very positive. Everyone including the children had an enjoyable time. It brought the community together which was one of our objectives.

Financially - Probably not. We were hoping for possibly £2000 profit whereas we made just under £1000. We adapted to circumstances - loss of one singer on the day itself, made economies in cost of Hog roast, reduction of number of hired toilets and some of the charges for events.

Support from the village was disappointing only 20% of households attended. Without the highly active marketing outside of the village, it would have been a different story!

What will we do with the money in the bank?

At this point in time, we don't know the final cost of the repairs to the church tower. The removal of the west window including treasured medieval glass was budgeted for, but its restoration and re-instatement were not included. A separate bid for funding was initiated. If there are unspent funds from the main project, Historic England have verbally agreed they could go towards the window restorations. The Festival team would like the money in this bank account to go towards the stained-glass window restoration and re-instatement as well.

MS