

## **St Edith's Church, Monks Kirby**

### **Heritage Tile Project 2017-18**

#### **1. Introduction**

When requesting funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, we indicated that we would achieve a number of key heritage-related outcomes. The report below lists these outcomes and provides a narrative on how we have met this.

#### **2. Heritage will be identified/recorded**

Our ceramic artist shared her recollection from the 1970s, when as student she had danced down the aisle of the church as part of a festival.

One long-standing member of the congregation shared a photo from the 1960s of the interior of the church, showing a low wall separating the chancel from the rest of the church – this is no longer present. This became a talking point as the photo was put on display.

As part of the Patronal festival in July 2017 (during which we launched the Heritage Tile Project), we held a concert during which 4 local people shared their memories, from when they were a school teacher bringing children into church, when they were a boy and were part of the bell-ringing team, and when they were on the organising committee for the 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of St Edith's Church.

#### **3. People will have developed skills (clay making skills)**

A total of 438 attendances were recorded at our tile making workshops (144 children, 181 adults and 113 older people) to design, make and glaze heritage tiles. It should be noted that it takes two visits to complete a tile, which the vast majority of participants did. Participants mostly came from Monks Kirby and surrounding Revel villages, with a handful of people visiting from nearby towns of Rugby and Bedworth (usually due to a local family connection). The workshops have been informal, with fun and inter-generational in nature. The breakdown of attendances is as follows:

##### 15<sup>th</sup> July 2017

40 children

80 adults

52 older people

##### 9<sup>th</sup> September 2017

27 children

22 adults

18 older people

2<sup>nd</sup> October 2017

19 cubs aged 8-10 years old

17<sup>th</sup> October 2017

20 adults at the WI meeting

4<sup>th</sup> November 2017

19 children

28 adults

11 older people

9<sup>th</sup> December 2017

9 children

18 adults

7 older people

15<sup>th</sup> December 2017

15 children at the Toddlers group – morning workshop

15 children and 19 older people (school pupils and Sociables/Kirby café members) - afternoon

Participants have helped each other, demonstrating what to do and advising on design and glazing colour-schemes.

#### **4. People will have learnt about heritage**

The heritage tile project invited village residents and community groups to explore the church and create their own interpretation of St Edith's into a clay tile design. Exploration of the church was aided by use of the St Edith's Church Family Trail booklets and the heritage education learning resources (both developed earlier in 2017) which included worksheets on the stained glass, I-spy activities and photo matching games.

Visual prompts were provided to the participants e.g. kneelers, photos of the Victorian wall and floor tiles, pictures of well-known Bible stories, pictures from Church festivals, and photos of the church exterior.

Activities during the Patronal festival (and first tile making workshop) include stained glass window crafts, climbing the church tower and having a go at bell-ringing, all aimed at encouraging a exploring the divers heritage and inspiring tile design. When the cubs visited the church, they were able to explore all over the church, being encouraged to run, jump, shout, touch – all the things they are not normally allowed to do in a church! When we asked the cubs to tell us what was the most interesting thing they had seen around the church, answers included the organ, the 16<sup>th</sup> century tombs to the Denbigh family, and the church safe. When we asked what was the oldest thing they had found in the church, they could all identify the head of the Norman knight [William de la Guerche] dating from 1067. When we asked what they had seen for the first time that night, one

cub said it was the angel face at the end of the communion rail – which having only ever come into church for school services before where the school pupils are expected to sit quietly in the pews, he would never have seen before.

At the first three tile making workshops, we used evaluation forms and asked about people's knowledge and understanding of St Edith's Church heritage. Responses were:

- I have learnt something about the history/architecture/artistic value/social history/Christian symbols - 27 people
- I have explored the church building and noticed things relating to its heritage – 15 people
- The heritage tile making project has particularly increased my understanding of the heritage 7- people
- I have developed an interest in St Edith's heritage which is something I knew little about before – 8 people
- I have learnt new things about my family's history/involvement in St Edith's Church 4 people
- I have learnt new things about St Edith's and its role in the wider local community - 12 people

## **5. People will tell us what they have learnt**

Visitors during the heritage open afternoon in July 2017 were asked to tell us what they had learnt about St Edith's heritage. Their answers included:

- Importance of church in community
- Its foundations as a monastery church
- About the bells and tower
- It is a beautiful space for the community
- Importance of church in community
- Its foundations as a monastery church
- About the bells and church tower
- History of the bells
- The very ancient history
- William the Conqueror wanted to rebuild the church
- Loss of part of the tower in 1701
- Everyone was involved
- Its wealth of history
- It is a beautiful space for the community

There has been a marked impact on children's learning and enjoyment as seen below from the cub's heritage and tile making visit. Verbatim quotes from the cubs during the exploration of the church include:

*“This is actually quite cool”*  
*“This is actually quite interesting”.*

Feedback from parents afterwards (posted on Facebook) included *“xxx came back telling us lots of facts and figures about the church. He loved ringing the bells and going up the tower. Thank-you to everyone who was involved in the evening, it was a great success.”*. A total of 214 people saw this comment and the accompanying photos posted on Facebook – thus increasing the reach of this project even further.

There has been a marked impact on individual adults as well, including a young pregnant lady - who visited the church for the first time with her mother. She had graduated with a Fine Arts degree and was inspired by the chancel tile floor and used this to design her own heritage tiles. She was so captivated that she returned the following day, and came again to the next workshop so that she could finish her tiles and “leave a legacy for her baby” in years to come. She told us that she had seen how well worn the tile floor was and that she had noticed that the floor tiles were in fact hand painted tiles (she could see the brush strokes). Inspired by the tile floor, she made three tiles using similar pattern, textures and colours. This lady and her baby returned to the unveiling ceremony on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2018. On our feedback wall, she wrote: “You’ve spread love and worship in such a beautiful way” and on behalf of her daughter, she added: “I’m too little to write my own tile (only 9 months) but I can’t wait to be old enough to visit the tiles and understand their meaning”. Her tile is featured in the photos accompanying this report.

One gentleman had never been to St Edith’s church before, but came because he was a member of the Rolls Royce heritage club nearby (and had received a special invitation to attend). Commenting on the church, he said “it is unique”. Accompanied by his wife and grand-daughter, he confirmed he had never worked with clay before but had enjoyed it, especially the glazing part. He said he had been inspired by the wooden screen carvings in the Chancel area and around the Skipwith Chapel. His tile is featured in the photos accompanying this report.

Another participant reported that whilst he had many artistic interests, he had never worked with clay before. He took inspiration from a range of sources and designed his tile to include a cross of nails (this is a famous local connection with Coventry Cathedral), a wheatsheaf (representing the local farming community), a Tudor Rose (signifying a key period in the church’s history when the priory was destroyed by Henry VIII) and a Christmas tree. His tile is featured in the photos accompanying this report.

## **6. People will have had an enjoyable experience. People will tell us they enjoyed their experience.**

We surveyed people who attended the heritage open afternoon during the 2017 Patronal festival – many of whom then made a heritage tile. Key results were:

- 75% of respondents at the Patronal festival said their visit was very enjoyable

- 100% would like to visit St Edith's Church again
- Comments included:
  - It is a wonderful church – I especially love the disabled loo
  - Thank you for leaving the church open
  - A warm welcome by all. We enjoyed the celebrations. The church was on our list to visit. What an afternoon!
- People were given a free text space to state their favourite activity. Relevant comments include:
  - i. Tile making because I like creating things
  - ii. Tile making because I like a bit of craft
  - iii. Tile making because it was crafty and something to last and visit
  - iv. History and heritage because I have lived in Monks Kirby for 32 years
  - v. Meeting old friends
  - vi. Partaking of the general atmosphere throughout the afternoon because the atmosphere was friendly – lots of fun and laughter

We were also able to chat informally to participants at subsequent workshops. One local resident had visited the church specifically to take part in the tile making workshop and highlighted the community spirit as the thing he had most enjoyed. He commented that the workshop was a way of making the church relevant to the community, and helping keep the building viable.

Two older members of the congregation had never made anything in clay before, but confirmed they had enjoyed the whole thing, especially the sociable aspect of the tile making workshops. Another participant concurred – he liked the community spirit and bumping into people he knew. He felt the heritage tile workshops were a way of making the church relevant for the community and keeping the building viable.

One cub attending a tile-marking workshop said that he most enjoyed was making patterns in the clay. Another cub returned with his mother and sister to make more tiles on another occasion because he had enjoyed it so much.

Many participants had never been into St Edith's before and some had not been in any church before. Their experience was positive and several said it was a turning point in their attitude to what a place of worship is, and the different ways to worship. Many said it has given them new insights and changed their ideas.

The enjoyment of this heritage tile project has extended beyond the actual workshops into the unveiling on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2018. At the unveiling, the heritage tile panels were on display along with a presentation, special celebration heritage tile cake, a display of photos charting the progress of the project and an exhibition of resources used to inspire participants. One of the activities we encouraged people to do was to leave comments on a paper tile – which we added to a picture frame. These comments have been recorded and again show what huge enjoyment people have had seeing the heritage tiles on display:

- Lovely snapshots of life round and about Monks Kirby and St Edith's – captured in clay and involving all ages of villagers
- Very interesting ideas, colours and designs. I could live with them all.
- A moment frozen in time then baked in the kiln
- Was take back by the incredible display of hand crafted tiles. Thank you!
- You've spread love and worship in such a beautiful way
- I'm too little to write my own tile (only 9 months) but I can't wait to be old enough to visit the tiles and understand the meaning.
- A truly beautiful addition to a beautiful church.
- Lots of happy memories here for all of us at St Edith's Church – let it continue
- My beautiful granddaughter had the honour of designing a tile. I hope that her children and grandchildren have the privilege of enjoying them in years to come
- If only you could bottle and preserve the fun and friendship that we found next to each other making tiles
- What a wonderful expression of community here at St Edith's! Unique, individual and very special – well done to all of the creative people involved!
- History of the future executed by the present generation, to join with the past
- This is a true community project
- An amazing project superbly carried out. Thank you all.
- This is a brilliant idea involving the communities and especially the young ones. It is a way of encouraging people to cross the threshold of the church and to appreciate the God-given gifts of many.
- Such a wonderful idea that not only looks beautiful and amazing, but the whole community came together to create it. Well done everyone!
- Amazing! Well done to all. Beautiful tiles – a pleasure to view. Thank you!
- Such a stunning addition to our wonderful church. How brilliant to have such a great community project that brings art to the centre of our village and celebrates heritage.
- Terrific
- I had wonderful fund making tiles
- I love the display
- Lovely idea, and looks great
- Thank you to everyone involved in the Heritage Tile project
- What an amazing display!
- We love coming to our lovely church
- Impressive

**7. People will have volunteered time. People will report benefits including a sense of purpose, a feeling of contributing to heritage and society; and influencing the success of the project.**

We had a number of people volunteer their time to help. Volunteers helped with the setting up/putting away of each workshop and helped prepare the clay for the tiles. Other volunteers supported the refreshments (including teas, cakes, bacon butties at the various workshops).

Considerable additional voluntary hours were worked by the ceramic artist, her husband and the St Edith's PCC lead for this project, to make the project a success.

We didn't specifically interview anyone to ask about the impact on them, but we know from general conversations that they all enjoyed themselves and were happy to have given their time and supported this project.

### **8. More people and a wider range of people will have engaged with heritage**

A total of 438 participants engaged with the heritage tile making project during the workshop phase in 2017, with hundreds more during the unveiling in October 2018 (which itself was part of a flower festival and heritage weekend). Whilst most participants came from nearby villages, some had visited the church for the first time. One of the cubs had never been in the church before. The members of the Rolls Royce Heritage Club had not visited before. The young pregnant lady mentioned above was a first-time visitor.

The unveiling of the heritage tile project coincided with a harvest flower festival and fundraising concert. The Warwickshire Choristers performed with their parents in the audience. Only one of the 26 boys had ever been to the church, this presumably being the same for their parents. Many of the parents visited the heritage tile display during the concert interval.

Although many of the participants were locals, not many would normally visit the church or would have engaged with the heritage. This was evident from the evaluation sheets and informal discussions. We deliberately targeted local community groups, emphasis the community aspect of this heritage project – as a result, the WI, Toddler group, OAP groups, school and cubs all took part.

To help raise funds for the project, we had asked local businesses and other stakeholders to provide financial support. This meant that we were able to engage a wider range of stakeholders, including the local farm shop, pub, hotel – either by them participating in the workshops or enjoying photos of the workshops and project updates.