

## Friends of Forncett St Mary, Heritage Angels



The Friends of Forncett St Mary Church successfully brought the redundant Grade I church and churchyard back into use both as a consecrated building and community resource. Initially volunteer work was essential, coupled with local fundraising. A steering committee was formed to oversee the project. Later on, as the project gained momentum, Nicholas Warns Architect was employed to oversee and run the architectural and structural project.

Their main challenge was to prove the project was viable before they were able to apply for the larger grants. They did this by holding events, even when the church was still in quite a poor state of repair. This meant that they were then able to have the building taken out of redundancy and become a fully consecrated, functioning church.

It was funded by a mixture of fundraising events, donations and grant aid from Historic England, Norfolk County Council, the Garfield Weston Foundation, Geoffrey Watling Foundation, South Norfolk District Council and Norfolk County Council. The project is 95% complete with only relatively minor works outstanding.

The fact that a Grade I listed building has been saved for the community is a source of pride in the local area. The events held in the church are always well supported from both inside and outside the local area. Importantly, they still retain over 100 Friends and the level of support, both for events and Church services, remains high.

The Friends group continues to be the driving force and they actively look for their successors. They have had some requests from other churches and community organisations to share with them their story, particularly the setting up of friends groups as these are a very important factor for the future.

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