

Jane's Story



The Parish Church of St Alban, Tattenhall

THE PRIVY COUNCIL

(A light hearted story of How the Vault was Done!)

Many were involved in making The Vault a reality. The following is my personal account. If at any time I have expressed a view, it is not necessarily shared!

From the start The Vault Community Room, as it became known, was a little controversial and some may never accept it as a good thing. However that does not prevent the tremendous sense of achievement I and my fellow Privy Council members have in the finished project.

The Vault is a major achievement created through perseverance, determination and a lot of work.

Jane Richards

May 2016

It did not take the Reverend Canon Lameck Mutete long, once he became Rector, to decide that St Alban's Church needed to have a toilet! The idea had in fact been mooted and discussed within the

Parochial Church Council for many years but for some reason never got off the ground. Fr Lameck's sponsored run raised a spark but then things went quiet whilst we got the required permissions; finally in 2012 it all came together. A plea was issued to get help finding the money to fund it.

It all started for me when I answered that plea! I have said many times that I had no idea the project included an extension to house a meeting room as well as a toilet or how much money was needed. When I attended the first meeting of what would later be called The Privy council there were 5 of us and we had a fund of £10,000. Ridiculous! My estimation of giving it a couple of years drifted away to Cloud Cuckoo Land – this was never going to happen.

During that first meeting we discussed the present position along with what we needed to achieve. A lot of boring technical stuff but essential to the task of course. How to raise funds wasn't really on the Agenda at that early stage but I mooted the idea of having a box based on the swear box principle but instead of paying when you swore you put money in a box when well never mind - you get the picture!

The second meeting once again dwelt on riveting topics like build costs, grant application forms, planning permission etc. etc. but we did eventually get into some discussion about money and where it would come from. Bob Blackhurst had done some research in relation to the pay as you pee box idea which indicated a cost of literally hundreds of pounds. Having mentally knocked the idea on the head I was amazed when Bob - in true Blue Peter style - did the "here's one I made earlier" routine and produced a modified Christingle candle money box which was perfect. The idea was introduced to the congregation and later to the general public with some degree of trepidation but it turned out to be incredibly successful and raised in excess of £2000 and the pots are still coming in!

At that meeting we talked about approaching individuals, businesses and organisations with a view to asking if they would help and contribute and we ended up with a list of six each to contact. Three of mine responded positively which was a good start. Someone then mentioned that Mike Reece had offered to do a breakfast. From that The Launch Weekend in May 2013 evolved and then we were off! A consistent round of meeting after meeting, grant application after grant application, Prospectus booklets, planning, building regulations, Architects, Builders, newsletters, parish news articles, thinking up new ideas and events and generally jumping through hoops!! Never a dull moment!

Early on we decided that it was likely to be a long hard climb and we needed some fun while endeavouring to reach our goal and before long the lavatorial puns started and The Privy Council was born. We were slightly uncomfortable with it at first but we kept within the boundaries of decency and I don't think we ever received any complaints although we had a few about the massive toilet that appeared in the Church at one stage – remember that? My suggestion to name the room The Cistern Chapel didn't get very far either!!

It wasn't always a cheerful care free fun experience. It could become quite stressful at times. Getting knocked back with negativity from time to time, the fund appearing to be at a standstill, promises of donations not materialising, many hours of filling in endless pages of grant forms to get nothing or be told you raise £25,000 or over and we'll match it was sometimes hard to take, and a bit depressing. Interestingly when some were down, others were usually up and we were able to chivvy each other along which, of course, is what a team is all about.

On those occasions, though, one Rev Canon Lameck Mutete never wavered from his resolve that the Lord would find a way and it was

never a case of **IF** but always **WHEN** we do it. His total faith and positivity were an inspiration.

At the start of 2013 the Group consisted of Father Lameck, Bob Blackhurst, Andy Morris, Robin Farmer and myself. We were eventually joined by Vivienne Saddler and Peter Kitchin. Robin found it difficult to get to the meetings especially on cold, dark nights and eventually wished us well. He was incredibly helpful and supportive during the planning of “Tea at the Ritz at the Barbour” and I thank him for that. Vivienne and Peter brought their particular expertise to the table and finally it made sense for the Church Wardens, Georgina Blackhurst and Dee Mason to be included too.

It has to be said that we reached a sort of downer at one point and everything seemed to slow down. Ideas and enthusiasm waned a bit but then the eclectic bunch in the now **EIGHT** strong Privy Council realised they could blend together for the common good and with each member having different individual skills it meant that certain jobs could be allocated and become their responsibility. We developed a strategic plan, had goals, budgets, guidelines on how to market and administrate each event and dreams! We presented such a professional, united front at meetings with Architects, Builders and Church House to name but a few, it was impressive even if I do say it myself!

Not everything worked but that's the way of things. We still laugh at the spectacular flop of the TEXT giving and the DVD idea wasn't as lucrative as we hoped. Sometimes turnout was a little disappointing but those that did attend our events were never disappointed. Anyway it is as one would expect – a constant barrage of requests for attendance and giving money wears thin.

Looking back, the events we held were pretty diverse. Ideas would either come from a lot of thought and planning or unfold from a chance comment. Take the Rector's Road Show for instance. One flippant

comment about Rectors and megaphones and suddenly not only was I organising it but first up to speak. I never did grasp exactly why or what I should say and was pretty nervous when facing the Parish Council and Tattenhall Business Alliance! That fades into insignificance though compared to what Vivienne Saddler was faced with! She stood up and announced the name for the room and explained the process involved to arrive at such a conclusion. No-one seemed riveted which must have been nerve racking but she calmly explained that it might not mean much at that particular time but eventually would roll of the tongue – a bit like Orange! Whoever thought a mobile phone company with such a random name would be so successful when it was first announced. Brilliant!

*I don't recall whose crazy idea the Zip Wire Challenge was but the determination and guts of Georgina and Lameck have to be commended. The demo video was enough for me. Father Lameck claimed he wasn't scared at all but I think he was being macho or maybe he put his faith in the Lord again!! The inspired idea of brick pavers was very successful. Peter and Cathy Kitchin first saw the idea in California and realised it would be the ideal finish for the new building. A large percentage of Purchasers are not directly involved with St Albans and with some requests coming from overseas it really is **THE PEOPLE'S PATH**. The hardy folk who strolled up Snowdon made no fuss at all although Peter will tell you about his feet even if you don't ask him! Maybe it was a walk in the park for them and no big deal, perhaps they often pop up there. Listen carefully and you might hear Andy Morris on a Sunday morning calling “won't be long dear, just off up Snowdon, back for the 10.30 Service!!!! Well done to a bunch of cool guys!*

There were many highlights for me including Tea at the Ritz and the hymn singing. The latter was such a joyous occasion it felt as if St Alban's became a Church without a roof as well as one without walls!

The fantastic Concerts, the Beauty of Bolesworth on an English summer afternoon surrounded by one's family, swinging in the aisles to a band of Puppets and as for the fireworks.....my list could go on and on!!

For three years we continued to beat the drum and then suddenly it became apparent that we were going to do it. When we were awarded the huge WREN grant we were all so excited. I was so convinced I had misunderstood what we had been awarded that I asked three different people for confirmation before I believed it. Then I went a bit potty and rang my husband who wondered who the excitable creature on the end of the phone was for a moment or two! Immediately after that we received an unexpected huge donation and the uphill struggle started to be a downhill slide.

Now we have a wonderful meeting room with superb facilities and two toilets.

The final responsibilities of The Privy Council were to organise The Official Opening and Village Open Day.

Through working together with one common aim Nehemiah and his small band of helpers managed to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Many hundreds of years later the Bishop of Chester, The Right Reverend Dr Peter Forster officially declared The Vault at St Alban's open – a room full of promise for future generations - built using the same principles as Nehemiah.

As for me I still can't really believe it!

*A thank you
to all those good people who spent pennies so that others
may spend them in years to come !*

Jane Richards – May 2016

