

## **Site visit to Braithwaite** **10<sup>th</sup> February 2012**

Present: Richard Pratt, Stuart Penny, Tony Worsley (Day Cummins),  
Trevor and Colin (Churchwardens), Peter Vivash.

Apologies : Lady Cressida Inglewood and Wendy Sanders

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The Churchwardens and Vicar explained that Braithwaite is the daughter church to Thornthwaite, (which is listed Grade 2 and has the churchyard). Braithwaite was built in 1900 and, we subsequently discovered, consecrated in 1904. It has a 1980 extension and is not licensed for weddings. It is right in the middle of the village, which is one of the reasons why it was built, as Thornthwaite is across the road and in a field. As a community church Braithwaite is a very well used resource. It does need some tender loving care. The current heating is under pew electric heaters, which need replacing as they are elderly and unresponsive. There are a few minor leaks in the roof and we did notice something in the apex at the altar end (mould, cobwebs?), which will need investigating. Other issues that could be tackled in a re-ordering and other works and extension would include: the barge boards, the skylights and the flat roofs which are now 30 years old; a poor use of space; poor access to the store and ceiling tiles in the hall needing attention. Braithwaite is not in a conservation area but it is in the National Park.

### Proposed works in the hall

- To replace the ceiling and the lighting.
- To do a cosmetic alteration to the porch to signal that the building is a church, which will also include new doors to the porch to match the doors at Thornthwaite. (There are two sets of doors to be replaced : an exterior set and an interior set.) It is suggested that they could have glass insets, as at Thornthwaite, but at least one of the sets of glass to be obscured to give privacy to the Art Class which meets in the hall once a week.
- A new door would be formed in the hall on the notional South Wall, opening onto the playground (NB. there is a slight difference of levels).
- The sliding doors between the hall and the church would also be altered.
- It is proposed to extend the current service area to form a new vestry and a new store to increase the size of the kitchen and the store.
- The roof would continue the line of the existing extension which tucks in underneath the gutters of the older church building.
- We spent some time talking about the location and configuration of the toilet, kitchen and store and believe that the church have found the only possible configuration of these elements, given the constricted site.
- We suggested that instead of just one door to the store they formed two doors where the two church windows are, at the moment. They were going to lose the windows anyway because of the extension going past them. Having 2 doors would allow much more usable space within the store and would actually be less disruptive to the building, because the alternative proposal was to form a new door in the wall, in between the two windows.

### In the church,

- On the notional South side all four of the windows would be lost. The two that are currently out of action because of the existing extension would be formed into alcoves and, as noted above, the other two into doorways into the store. Instead of the windows, skylights would be formed in the roof on the South side.

- The current door into the Service Area might need to be moved to fit the way that the Service Area is partitioned into its different elements.
- It is suggested that all of the pews would go. These are nice pieces of light oak furniture but the space is very over-pewed. The pews would be in the way of access to the service area and they block the various spaces off from each other.
- The altar is on a single step at the notional East end and it is proposed to remove that step to make the space level throughout, which will improve its usability.
- The pulpit is of a dark wood and perhaps came from elsewhere. It is suggested that this would be disposed of.
- The lectern too is of dark wood and again might be disposed of.
- We suggested that they need to think about the colour scheme in the interior of the church soon. If they were going to go for a light oak colour scheme throughout they could form a new lectern, a new altar and possibly new altar rails all from the redundant pews and therefore all matching in light oak, which we felt would suit the inside of the church best. This work to be done by a local craftsman known to the church.
- The lectern would be multi purpose, allowing Bible to be read from it or a sermon to be preached from it or whatever.
- They would need to think about the altar rails. Do they really want them? We counselled that it might be a good idea to get them made while they are doing all the work so that it all matches, but perhaps to make them in more than one piece, so that they could easily be stored: single piece altar rails tend to be a bit unwieldy.
- They would also redo the lighting in the church, which at the moment is domestic bulbs hanging from rather poor pressed metal chandeliers.
- They would probably introduce a new (electronic) organ.

Their Architect estimates the cost of this work to be in the region of £250,000, of which they have probably got two-thirds at the moment.

Those members of the DAC attending were very supportive of the whole project. As Archdeacon I know they have been talking about this now for over 3 years. They have sensibly made a distinction between Thornthwaite as a traditional church for those occasions on which traditional services are wanted in a traditional building, and Braithwaite as a much more flexible and modern space right in the heart of the village, able to be used for other things as well as worship. It is also felt that the re-ordering will create a greater sense of space inside the church which will be an assistance to worship (it is currently rather cramped).

Our conclusion was, therefore, that they are proceeding carefully, with lots of discussion and significant support from the community including the local church school next door which would also be able to benefit from this project, and the village mums and tots group which already uses the church hall. This is the only public building in Braithwaite and, as such, is important to the community and it is very good that the church is thinking along these lines and we support it.