

# THUNDRIDGE OLD CHURCH ACTION GROUP

England & Wales · Charity number 1202921

## Details

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**Status** Registered

**Legal form** CIO

**Registered** 2023-05-03

**Register** [View on the Charity Commission register](#)

## Contact

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**Website** <https://thundridgeoldchurch.org/>

## Activities

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**Objects:** TO PRESERVE FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE RESIDENTS OF THE PARISH OF THUNDRIDGE AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC, THE GRADE II LISTED TOWER AND GRAVEYARD OF ST MARY AND ALL SAINTS' CHURCH BY CONSERVING AND MAINTAINING THEM IN SOUND CONDITION WITH PUBLIC ACCESS AND REMOVING THE THREAT OF DEMOLITION BY CREATING CONDITIONS BY WHICH OWNERSHIP CAN BE TRANSFERRED FROM THE DIOCESE OF ST ALBANS. TO RESEARCH AND ADVANCE THE EDUCATION OF THE PUBLIC IN ALL ASPECTS OF THE CHURCH'S HISTORY, THE SCHEDULED MONUMENT WITHIN WHICH IT IS SITED, KNOWN AS THUNDRIDGEBURY MEDIEVAL MOATED ENCLOSURE, THE IMMEDIATE ENVIRONS INCLUDING THE 16C REMAINS OF THUNDRIDGEBURY HOUSE, THE MANAGED LANDSCAPE AND REGISTERED PARK AND GARDEN OF YOUNGSBURY AND THE UNSPOILED HISTORIC SURROUNDING RIVER RIB VALLEY. TO PROMOTE THE PRESERVATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE SAME LOCALITY AS A GREEN AND RECREATIONAL SPACE TO THE BENEFIT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE HEALTH AND WELFARE OF THE PUBLIC. NOTHING IN THIS CONSTITUTION SHALL AUTHORISE AN APPLICATION OF THE PROPERTY OF THE CIO FOR THE PURPOSES WHICH ARE NOT CHARITABLE IN ACCORDANCE WITH [SECTION 7 OF THE CHARITIES AND TRUSTEE INVESTMENT (SCOTLAND) ACT 2005] AND [SECTION 2 OF THE CHARITIES ACT (NORTHERN IRELAND) 2008]

**Activities:** To conserve and maintain with public access the listed tower and graveyard of Thundridge Old Church and remove the current threat of demolition of this oldest and last visible reminder of 1,000 years of

local occupation and worship. To research, bring to life and share the history of the church, medieval moated enclosure, surrounding River Rib valley and the remarkable people and events.

## Classification

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- **How:** Provides Buildings/facilities/open Space, Provides Advocacy/advice/information
- **What:** Arts/culture/heritage/science, Recreation
- **Who:** The General Public/mankind

## Geography

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- Hertfordshire

## Finances

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Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-03-31	£1,593	£279	-	-
2024-03-31	£6,235	£255	-	-

## Trustees

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Name	Role	Appointed
Dr David Blowers	Chair	2023-05-03
CHRISTOPHER MELLUISH		2023-05-03
Emma Blowers		2023-05-03
Sarah Junke		2025-11-03
Simon Constance		2025-11-12

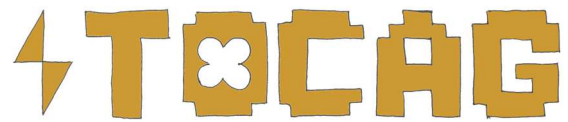
**THUNDRIDGE OLD CHURCH ACTION GROUP**

England & Wales - Charity number 1202921

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# Accounts

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**Thundridge Old Church Action Group, a  
Charitable CIO**

Charity No: 1202921

**Trustees' Annual Report  
& Statement of Financial Activity**  
for the period 01 May 2024 to 31 March 2025





# Trustees' Annual Report & Statement of Financial Activity for the period 01 May 2024 to 31 March 2025

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# Trustees Annual Report & Statement of Financial Activity for the period 03 May 2024 to 31 March 2025

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Charitable Objects

To preserve for the benefit of the residents of the parish of Thundridge and the public, the grade II listed tower and graveyard of St Mary and All Saints' Church by conserving and maintaining them in sound condition with public access and removing the threat of demolition by creating conditions by which responsibility can be transferred from the Diocese of St Albans.

To research and advance the education of the public in all aspects of the church's history, the scheduled monument within which it is sited, the immediate environs and the unspoiled historic surrounding River Rib valley.

To promote the preservation and maintenance of the same locality as a green and recreational space to the benefit of the environment and the health and welfare of the public

### 1.2 Overview (Executive Summary)

2025 has been transformational. It has put Thundridge Old Church Action Group (TOCAG) on a pathway to achieving all its key aims through an extraordinary £72,000 grant from Historic England. TOCAG is recognised as providing, after decades of unsuccessful attempts by previous stakeholders, the potential for a permanent future for the Old Church as an asset managed by and for the local community and wider public, removed from Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register and as a liability to the Diocese of St Albans.

TOCAG has also demonstrated through research over the last few years the unknown and unappreciated historic significance of the Old Church, extending from local history and personal stories through to events of national and international importance such as the Abolition of Slavery movement and the American war of Independence. Even this is just the tip of the iceberg with so much more to discover and share, bringing history back to life and help building pride in our forgotten heritage. The huge support Historic England are giving to this project shows how highly the Old Church is valued and the confidence they place in the TOCAG vision and potential.

Whilst this report covers the financial period 2024/25 it presents a timely opportunity to review a critical moment for TOCAG and the Old Church, in effect a manifesto, and therefore the remainder of the narrative is current as of December 2025.

2026 could be a springboard to the core vision of the Old Church and Tower as a unique green space unlike anywhere else for visiting, learning, relaxing and entertainment – within the constraints of its special situation and character. However, at the same time this brings forward our greatest challenge.

#### TOCAG must grow

TOCAG must have a robust board of actively involved trustees and volunteers, with a range of relevant skills who can effectively manage and keep the charity going for the foreseeable future to enable it to commit to 7-year lease for churchyard and tower.

With legal responsibility for the site and a credible plan for community use, the National Lottery has given positive indications that TOCAG could successfully apply in 2026 for a grant substantial enough to make the tower safe, accessible and ready to take its place as a community asset.

However, whilst the recent momentum and achievements have generated huge interest and some new active supporters, this is not enough.

Taking complete legal responsibility for a heritage building, applying for grants, running a repair programme and bringing it into creative use is a whole team effort beyond the capabilities of a few people, however dedicated.

TOCAG would also need independent funds to be able to operate the site and the charity.

We must stress clearly to anyone motivated and inspired by the vision for saving the tower for future generations and bringing it to life – now is the time your practical active involvement, donations and support is needed if TOCAG is to transition from being a campaign and research group to a charity with legal responsibilities for the repair, maintenance and operation of a historic building. This is your history, your heritage and your community – please reach out and join us.

Without a larger team, the trustees may be forced to conclude that the TOCAG vision for the Old Church is not achievable and the situation may fall back to where it started in 2019 when the Diocese of St Albans stated that, in the absence of an organisation willing to take on the ownership or management of the site, 'an application for demolition will be the only other option available'. This time, they can argue to the Secretary of State in the statutory process that every chance was given but this site in fact has no sustainable future.

## 2. Activities & Achievements

### 2.1 Outputs & Outcomes

#### 2.1.1 Grant

On 26<sup>th</sup> February 2025 TOCAG signed a grant award from Historic England jointly with the Diocese of St Albans, with TOCAG and the Diocese of St Albans each providing 5% match funding. This is an enormous proportional contribution relative to our funds, showing the seriousness of our commitment. I would like to give thanks to anyone who has helped TOCAG financially in the last few years; none of this would have been possible without you.

This grant funds just the development phase of a project that we hope goes on to repair and preserve the tower and prepare the site for limited use. It's aims can be summarised as

- To structurally investigate the condition of the roof slab, noted in the condition survey of 2023 as presenting a risk of catastrophic collapse. This requires creating a secure entrance door in the West tower arch, erecting scaffolding internally to physically inspect the slab, the upper parts of the tower walls and their interaction with each other and taking physical core samples of the slab to understand it's composition and condition.
- To review and reassess the outputs of the condition survey in 2023 and combine with the structural investigation of the roof to form a comprehensive and up to date assessment of the condition of the tower
- To consider the seriousness of risks and issues with the tower, cost effectiveness of grouping repairs (e.g. at high level together) and likely grant awards in 2026 to come up with a draft programme of initial and follow on repairs.
- To come up with detailed specification and costings for the priority repairs that can be used immediately to tender the works and apply for grants.

The grant gave TOCAG great opportunities for publicity on social media and national radio.

#### 2.1.2 Development Project

After the grant award, TOCAG tendered the contract to seven firms of conservation architects with experience and background in historic buildings. Initial responses were reduced to a shortlist of three and after careful consideration Thomas Ford Architects were appointed.

TOCAG took a detailed and leading role in the project, with the Diocese and Historic England as stakeholders, with planning, requirements definition, all statutory and local landowner permissions, responsibility for enablers and detailed cost control and contractual reporting. Managing a project of this size and complexity requires skills and experience not inherent to any of the current trustees and has required a huge personal effort, continually developing the competency of the charity as a result.

The project created a clear and enormously encouraging groundswell of interest both in person and online. It's clear how much people are interested in the site and what we are doing. Social Media engagement has quadrupled, and a recent video summarising the project achievements has had, at the time of writing, 37,000 views. There is every indication that the potential really is there to make this a project people will give up their precious time and enjoy getting involved.

Nothing exemplifies this more than the 'rubble processing' TOCAG organised in October. The challenge was to remove about six tonnes of bricks, gravestone fragments, soil, building materials and rubbish from the tower down to a solid floor so that we could put up scaffolding to do the structural investigations. Every single piece needed to be prised, shovelled, barrowed, sorted, sieved, cleaned, and bagged. 200 gravestone fragments needed to be labelled, photographed, measured, archeologically recorded, crated and stored. The effort to organise and make that happen was enormous but a large group of volunteers, some old friends of the tower and some completely new, came together to make it happen. This is objectively a remarkable achievement for a small group.

Two people who had met and talked to us while onsite a few weeks earlier went on to become our de-facto site manager and a trustee.

The challenge is to keep that virtuous spiral going. More people involved means more ideas, more activity which attracts more interest and engagement and so on. Our message is 'this is your church' - bring your interest, your skills and your vision and together we can do something amazing.

The current grant funded project is approaching its conclusion in February 2025. Some of the highlighted achievements at the site itself include

- Installed a steel access door with secure hooded double lock, like a shipping container, in the tower West doorway; enabling all the investigatory works this year but also strategically a first step towards bringing the tower into potential use.
- The tower cleared of rubble, as described above, through a magnificent group effort and made accessible.
- Discovered a flag and paved floor under rubble and rubbish possibly dating from mid 19C, with indication there is an original floor 40cm below.
- Scaffolding erected internally for ongoing inspection, investigation and maintenance, providing a tantalising vision of an accessible space for the future.
- Recovered Tudor and c17C bricks from tower rubble, stacked and cleaned for potential reuse in reconstruction of a small section of churchyard wall.
- Propped cracked and failing spiral stair lintel resulting from one missing jamb.
- Excluded pigeons from using the tower, preventing further mess and biohazard.
- Surveyed the tower for bats, finding many soprano and common pipistrelles feeding in the churchyard but none roosting in the tower
- Carried out a dendrochronological survey of surviving beams within the tower.
- Put up security cameras to detect and discourage vandalism and antisocial behaviour, so far successfully in the time they have been in place.
- Met with the Hertfordshire Constabulary rural crime team and cadets to discuss potential security and patrol improvements

The architect and structural engineers assessed the tower externally from a mobile platform and internally from the scaffold and reviewed a previous condition survey from 2023. The outcome can be briefly summarised that whilst there are many issues with the fabric of the tower that currently make it dangerous to approach and enter and are still deteriorating, the majority can be addressed with minimal in place interventions such as pinning and repointing.

TOCAG, architects and Historic England agree in a minimal intervention approach, consolidating, stabilising and preserving the tower to make it structurally safe and as a useable building, but avoiding as far as possible restoration and replacing to maintain the aesthetic of the tower as a historic ruin. This even extends to the potential to replace both floors and bring the spiral stair back into use, the original joist sockets being largely useable as they are with new timbers.

However, there is one highly significant exception. The concrete flat roof is believed to have been originally installed in the 1940s, with a second layer added in the 1990s. Unfortunately, the original layer was poorly made and the combination of that and the new layer is not structurally sound. The interface of this heavy modern slab and Tudor rubble walls is also suspect. As a result, the entire roof must be removed and replaced.

By next February the project will produce a detailed and costed Scope of Works of the most urgent repairs, focussing on everything at the high level of the tower so that scaffolding only needs to be done once and to a quality that minimises ongoing maintenance – a 'once in a generation' repair principle. No organisation or private individual is likely to consider taking responsibility for a building that presents a high likelihood of ongoing maintenance costs.

### 2.1.3 Communications

Due to a shortage of volunteers TOCAGs online presence and communications remains sub optimal. The website <https://thundridgeoldchurch.org/> has had little attention for a long time, and the email mailing list is difficult to use and delegate and consequently is underutilised, neglecting a significant group of supporters

TOCAG has, however been extremely fortunate in the support of Sarah Junke as a skilled and enormously appreciated volunteer and now also Trustee, with a professional background in history and archival services. She has, from her base in Florida, been leveraging TOCAG research especially that previously presented in our exhibitions and talks to post regularly on our Facebook and Instagram social media. Thanks to this our social media following has more than doubled and continues to grow with even greater increases in engagement. We believe TOCAGs public value is just as much in the online space in education, research and bringing history to life, complementing the motivated local in-person audience.

Sarah has also proposed and is implementing for TOCAG a dedicated instance of industry standard online archival software called Omeka at <https://archive.thundridgeoldchurch.org/>. This allows accession of artefacts, source material and curated research articles from TOCAGs research archives in a structured way where they can be interrelated, searched by the public and used to curate exhibits flexibly as well as supporting controlled public collaboration on research projects (see 'Research'). We are very excited for Omeka to add considerably to our online presence and capability, complementing the more static website and dynamic but ephemeral and shorter 'form factor' of social media.

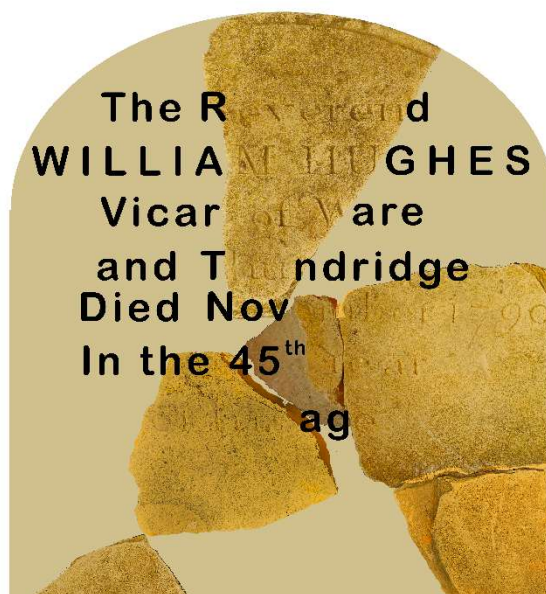
We are also delighted to have volunteer Jerry Dyer with video editing and drone skills who has done a superb job complementing pictures and written word with recordings of the development project, interviews and storytelling such as the history of our bells, published on his YouTube channel [https://www.youtube.com/@The\\_Past\\_Everywhere](https://www.youtube.com/@The_Past_Everywhere)

TOCAG needs more communications officers with IT literacy and/or content creators to be part of turning more of our research and history into shareable, fun, interesting and engaging materials and stories online in written and multimedia formats, in onsite interpretation and into schools and events.

### 2.1.4 Research

#### William Hughes

TOCAG research, led by trustee Emma Blowers, is uncovering the unexpected and highly significant role people in the Thundridge area took in the very early Abolition of Slavery movement. One of the key individuals was Reverend William Hughes who publicly challenged arguments published by another cleric that the Bible condoned slavery by delivering the sermon 'A Discourse in Favour of the Abolition of Slavery in the British West Indies' in Ware, later published by public demand. In recognition of his influential arguments, in July 1788 he was made an honorary member of Clarkson's 'Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade'. TOCAG discovered a fragment of his lost gravemarker and were granted Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) and a faculty from the Diocese of St Albans to create an archaeological report and remove the fragment to a place of safety. Several months later further fragments were found, and a second round of consents granted. TOCAG hope to discover,



record and preserve further fragments and consider a project to use them to partially reconstruct the gravemarker as a memorial to Rev Hughes and those with the courage to stand against slavery.

### **Gravemarker fragments**

As mentioned above, the Scheduled Monument consent (SMC) TOCAG secured for emptying the tower of rubble required a full formal archaeological report of all artefacts and especially gravemarker fragments. Every one of 200 fragments needs to be measured, photographed, drawn, transcribed and described. All the data needs to be digitised into a pre-designed and agreed spreadsheet and a report written with background, context, commentary and analysis. This report needs to be submitted to national databases and Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies (HALS). All artefacts will also be uploaded into Omeka as a permanent and publicly searchable online record. The effort to do this is considerable, and work is ongoing. Once again, this demonstrates an exceptional professionalism and commitment from TOCAG in general and our volunteers and research lead in particular. These artefacts will be related to each other, and to the wider churchyard project (see below) in reconstructions, genealogical and story telling narratives.

### **Churchyard Project**

TOCAG have initiated an open ended long-term project to: reference every known grave within the churchyard; archaeologically record all remaining gravemarkers; locate memorials precisely on churchyard ground surveys done by Historic England; cross reference memorials to historic parish records and 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> surveys; and research, explore and share the life stories of individuals and families for whom the Old Church and surrounding area was the focus of their lives.

The 200 gravestone fragments found in the rubble of the tower (above) will form part of the initial inputs to this data as do articles and research already written by Emma.

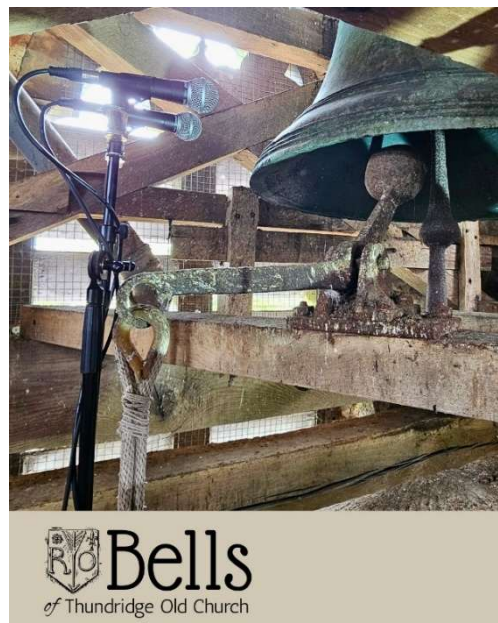
TOCAG advertised for volunteers to become involved, with most activity initially at least being remote in the home, though some onsite work and meetups are anticipated in future. This is a new initiative for TOCAG and we are experimenting and learning how to coordinate and empower people to contribute positively within their areas of interest and capabilities. We are also delighted to be working with a year 9 pupil of a local school within the scope of this work for her bronze Duke of Edinburgh award. We would very much welcome anyone interested in contributing and even more so with experience in leading and coordinating projects such as this.

### **Village Life**

Emma Blowers continues to research individuals with life events at or responsibility for the Old Church, and their familial ties and significance to the church and the locality. Some have purely local significance and some either they or their families or events they were involved in regional or national importance with truly remarkable and highly engaging stories. These articles are at present mostly published in a local 'Village Life' publication, there is a backlog task to bring them to our online community.

### **Thundridge Bells**

The four bells that hung in the Old Church tower were transferred to the new parish church tower of Thundridge in 1853 where they still hang. One is dated to around 1480 and was very likely made with three siblings at the same time as the tower itself. Three of the bells have not been rung for about 40 years and none photographed. TOCAG, working with Jery Dyer, organised a professional sound recordist, a senior member of the Hertford County Association of Change-Ringers and a videographer and with the permission of the Diocese of St Albans and the churchwarden the bells were carefully individually sounded and recorded. Added to this they were cleaned and photographed. Subsequently the sounds of the bells were reassembled digitally into a peal typical from the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century when the last of them was cast and the entire event assembled into a published video



## 2.1.5 Events

### Disney Rose

On 24<sup>th</sup> June TOCAG again revived an eight-hundred-year-old tradition to 'render yearly one rose at the feast of the Nativity of St John the Baptist' which is also midsummers day. This is a condition in a 'Feet of Fines' document transferring 'the manor of Thunrich' (and other properties) from William Disney the Elder (knight) and Eustache his wife to William Disney the younger and his wife Joan (and the heirs of their bodies) on payment of 300 marks of silver on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 1347 in the reign of Edward III.

The event was attended by Thundridge beavers, local families and supporters with craft activities organised, and tea and cakes. It was highly enjoyable, went very well and generated excellent publicity. However, despite being extremely well advertised for several months' including personal attendance at a local professional production of 'Beauty and the Beast', attendance was well below what had been hoped and did not justify the extended and significant effort in organising and contributing to it especially given the small already occupied volunteer capability. The interim conclusion is that there is insufficient support for open invitation events such as this and higher priority should be given to online activities or events with a specific and pre-agreed audience.



## 2.2 Looking Ahead

2026 is going to be a make-or-break year for TOCAG and the Old Church where the outcomes cannot be confidently predicted (ref: section 3.5). Nevertheless, the following is an optimistic but reasonable timeline of activities and actions.

- The currently running development phase of the repair project is forecast to conclude in February 2026. The outputs of this project are a costed schedule of works, that is a prioritised package of repairs to the tower that will make it structurally safe and accessible so that its management is practically achievable by a charity such as TOCAG and forming the foundation of future enhancement and development phases.
- The Diocese of St Albans will work with TOCAG in the early new year to complete an Expression of Interest (EOI) to the National Lottery, to which they will respond with feedback on requirements and feasibility for considering a grant application.
- TOCAG will convene an AGM and local presentation of the state of the project, the opportunities of the future and the challenges, largely as covered in this report – focussing on the need for organisational development with greater community involvement and leadership. Officers must be formally appointed to key roles and trustees confirmed in their positions.
- TOCAG will continue to develop its organisational capability and capacity as far as is possible to reach an acceptable level, mobilising new leadership and external support. Appropriate policies and processes must be formally drafted and adopted and professional services partners sought out.
- TOCAG will oversee a package of the most urgent repairs within the tower using recovered VAT and project underspend.
- Assuming risks can be mitigated, in late spring 2026 TOCAG could sign a 7 year lease for the site partially to fulfil the objectives of: the Diocese of St Albans relieving their financial and administrative responsibilities; TOCAG becoming empowered to develop and manage the site according to their mandate and ; TOCAG being enabled to apply for grant funding in their own right, notably the National Lottery.
- Assuming the lease is in place, and the feedback from the EOI manageable and positive, TOCAG will begin the lengthy process of preparing a national lottery grant application. This is expected to take much of the remainder of the year.
- TOCAG have currently committed to four public talks and engagements in 2026, with content and narrative to be determined as the year progresses. Further events and publicity will be organised as capacity, need and opportunity allows.
- TOCAG will continue develop its volunteer research group, submit the gravemarker fragment report, leveraging Omeka as a dynamic research archive, collaboration tool and storytelling capability.
- TOCAG will continue to leverage its existing archives and new research to interpret and publicise the historical significance of the Old Church using all available online channels.
- Depending on leadership and organisation largely from outside the current team, TOCAG would welcome and facilitate independently conceived ideas for events using the Old Church as a venue.

## **3. Financial Review**

### **3.1 Financial Position**

TOCAG finances remained straightforward in 2025, since the grant money and project invoicing was by agreement managed through the accounts of the Diocese of St Albans. Nevertheless, TOCAG defined and managed project cost control and invoicing which was at a times challenging. In this, as in many other matters, the current team have little prior experience of operating project contracts and finances of this kind and are on a steep learning curve.

A major commitment was required by Historic England for 5% match funding on the total grant amount, which falls due in the 2025/26 accounting period.

TOCAG are very aware that operating as an independent charity with legal responsibility for a historic building and six figure sum budgets is an entirely different league to our current commercial and financial capabilities. We will need advice and support, including some professional services, from people with experience of contracts and financial administration to become competent in this capability.

### **3.2 Details of Any Funds Materially in Deficit**

The Charity has no funds which are materially in deficit.

### **3.3 Policy on Reserves**

TOCAG reserves are small, and there are no committed designations while the new organisation assesses its capabilities. TOCAG has no debt or liabilities.

It is expected that any major projects of repair to the tower, one of its principal objectives, will come largely from specific grant sources as restricted funds rather than reserves.

Reserves are currently anticipated to be allocated to objectives such as.

- Environmental improvements to the churchyard that enhance its utility such as interpretation, seating, security, and signage.
- Investments in the site that may enable revenue generation
- Investments in education and outreach such as IT services, research expenses, publishing, and publicity materials.
- Operational costs and professional services such as materials, equipment, legal services, insurance, repairs, consultancy and business services.

### **3.4 Principal Sources of Funding**

TOCAG funding remains principally through small scale public donations and reclamation of associated Gift Aid, for all of which we are immensely grateful.

Some funds come from giving public talks, and a small amount from merchandise sales.

TOCAG hopes to develop a modest sustainable business model leveraging events at the site such as musical, theatrical, filming and private events including wedding celebrations but not civil marriages. To date, no such revenue creating events have been developed or taken place.

TOCAG have been notified that it is the subject of a future bequest, though not its source or nature.

### 3.5 Description of the Principal Risks Facing the Charity

As described in previous sections, TOCAGs achievements and potential are extraordinarily positive. At present there are no risks to the operation of the charity as a campaigning and research group. However, to move forward in 2026 TOCAG must make a step change in its capabilities.

TOCAG are expected to sign a 7-year lease with the Diocese of St Albans for the churchyard and tower, presenting both a legal and financial risk. The terms of this lease have been discussed verbally but not yet documented. Some risks may be mitigated but the responsibilities and liabilities this would place on the organisation are significant and legally binding. It has not escaped TOCAGs notice that it is expected to sign such a lease before there is any guarantee or even application for grant funding to progress the management or development of the site.

Secondly, TOCAG need to apply for grant funding expected to be at the scale of hundreds of thousands of pounds. This is a huge effort in its own right but also requires TOCAG can demonstrate it is a 'robust' organisation capable of delivering the stated aims of the grant and its vision for the foreseeable future. This indirectly drives a requirement for the other organisational capabilities described here.

Thirdly, TOCAG need to deliver on the stated vision and to the expectations of grant funding and statutory bodies of a site and a building as a community asset and a place in use.

Together this would require TOCAG to become an organisation of a different scale and capability to the one that it is in 2025. The Trustees must very carefully consider whether these are commitments that they individually, and the charity collectively, are able to fulfil and whether the charity's vision, despite all that has been achieved to date, has sufficient public support to be practically deliverable.

- Financial:
  - TOCAGs current reserves are not sufficient for operating a historic building, nor are its policies and processes sufficiently robust for managing significant sums of money.
  - TOCAG would need sufficient private reserves for at least routine maintenance of the tower to fulfil legal responsibilities for insurance and public safety. The current charity reserves, already depleted by match funding, are insufficient and could leave the charity insolvent and unable to fulfil its new legal responsibilities.
  - To administer very large grant awards, TOCAG will need to operate a professional standard of accounting and financial policies and reporting, with skills and effort beyond the capability of the current team.
- Legal:
  - TOCAG need to ensure any legal agreements such as the lease and grant award conditions are appropriate for and do not present unintended risks to the charity.
  - TOCAG will need professional support for awareness of and ensuring compliance with all relevant legal responsibilities, and to respond to regulatory burdens or challenges.
- Organisational and Administrative
  - TOCAG will need to conduct itself in effect as a business with formal officer appointments and processes, including the basics of a dedicated secretary/clerk and treasurer. The current informal processes and appointments are appropriate for now, but insufficient for the future.
- Operational:
  - TOCAG will need sufficient capability to manage the site routinely including damage or threats to it in a timely manner, to protect the site and public safety, including organising and managing professional services and statutory permissions.

- As a prospective client of a highly significant repair project with a value of up to £250,000, TOCAG will need to have sufficient dedicated skilled management resources within the organisation and supplemented professionally as necessary.
- TOCAG need to begin to fulfil the mandated vision of bringing the building back into use through developing and managing it as a venue. To all intents and purposes, albeit at a small scale, this positions TOCAG as a business that needs to be administered as such, seeking, advertising, facilitating and organising opportunities.
- TOCAG must continue to develop the historic research, interpretation and content creation of the site itself and online materials through developing and empowering a community to deliver and maintain public interest and value.

### **3.6 Remuneration of Trustees**

All Trustees act in a voluntary capacity and receive no remuneration or other material benefits from their services to the Charity.

Out-of-pocket expenses necessarily and reasonably incurred by Trustees in promoting the purposes of the Charity are reimbursed at cost.

### **3.7 Statutory Statements on Liabilities**

The Trustees declare that:

The charity has given no guarantees where potential liability under the guarantee is outstanding at the date of this statement.

The charity has no debt outstanding at the date of this statement which is owed by the CIO and which is secured by an express charge on any assets of the CIO.

## 4. Reference and Administration Details

### 4.1 Charity Name & Registration

Name: Thundridge Old Church Action Group

Charity No: 1202921

Registered with HM Revenue & Customs

### 4.2 Charity's Principal Address

3 Meadow View Cottages, Cold Christmas, Thundridge, Hertfordshire SG127SW

e-mail: friends@thundridgeoldchurch.org

website: www.thundridgeoldchurch.org

### 4.3 Names of the Trustees Who Manage the Charity

<i>Name</i>	<i>Office</i>	<i>Appointed</i>	<i>Initial term</i>	<i>Resigned</i>
David Blowers	Chair, Treasurer, Administration	03/05/23	4 years	
Christopher Melliush		03/05/23	2 years	
Emma Blowers	Research, Education and Outreach	03/05/23	2 years	
Sarah Junke	Communications	03/11/25	2 years	
Simon Constance		12/11/25	2 years	
Claire Ridgewell		03/05/23	3 years	12/11/2025

### 4.4 Names of Advisors & Senior Members of Staff

Not Applicable

### 4.6 Independent Examiner

As Thundridge Old Church Action Group income is well below the £25,000 threshold required by the Charity Commission in the period reported, and has limited funds available for professional services, no Independent Examination has been carried out on this report.

## 5. Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2025

### 5.1 Receipts and Payments

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total funds	Last year
<b>A1 Receipts</b>				
Charitable Service Fees	145	-	145	60
Donations	1,398	-	1,398	5,584
Fundraising Events	-	-	-	541
<b>Sub total</b> (Gross income for AR)	<b>1,543</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,543</b>	<b>6,185</b>
<b>A2 Asset &amp; investment sales</b>				
Merchandising	50	-	50	50
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Total receipts</b>	<b>1,593</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,593</b>	<b>6,235</b>
<b>A3 Payments</b>				
Equipment	-	-	-	20
Printing, Stationery and Supplies	252	-	252	150
Repairs and maintenance	-	-	-	85
Cost of fundraising events	10	-	10	-
Services	17	-	17	-
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>255</b>
<b>A4 Asset &amp; investment purchases</b>				
	-	-	-	-
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total payments</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>255</b>
<b>Net of receipts/(payments)</b>	<b>1,314</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,314</b>	<b>5,979</b>
<b>A6 Cash funds last year end</b>	<b>6,164</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>6,164</b>	<b>185</b>
<b>Cash funds this year end</b>	<b>7,478</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>7,478</b>	<b>6,164</b>

## 5.2 Assets and Liabilities

		Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds
Categories	Details		
<b>B1 Cash funds</b>	Bank Accounts	7,478	-
	<b>Total cash funds</b>	7,478	-

The Charity has no Assets or Liabilities of the following categories at the time of reporting.

- B2 Other monetary assets
- B3 Investment assets
- B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use
- B5 Liabilities

## **6. Structure, Governance & Management**

### **6.1 Type of Governing Document**

Constitution

### **6.2 Statutory Declaration**

The Trustees confirm that they have paid due regard to the guidance issued by the Charity Commission on public benefit in deciding what activities the charity should undertake.

### **6.3 Trustee Selection Methods**

There must be at least three charity trustees. If the number falls below this minimum, the remaining trustee or trustees may act only to call a meeting of the charity trustees or appoint a new charity trustee. There is no maximum number of charity trustees that may be appointed to the CIO.

Apart from the first charity trustees, every trustee must be appointed for a term of three years by a resolution passed at a properly convened meeting of the charity trustees.

In selecting individuals for appointment as charity trustees, the charity trustees must have regard to the skills, knowledge and experience needed for the effective administration of the CIO.

Approved by the Trustees and signed on their behalf.

24 December 2025

Dave Blowers (Chair)

# 7.0 Appendix – Activities

## Bell Recording



## Thundridge Hill House Open Day



## Disney Rose



## Door



removing the wood that covered the doorway



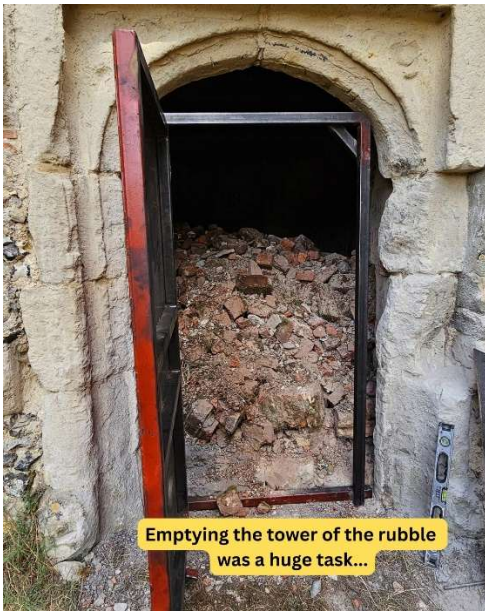
removing the concrete door wall... note the tall stack of bricks and rubble behind the concrete!



installing the door

Thundridge Old Church has a door!

**Rubble**



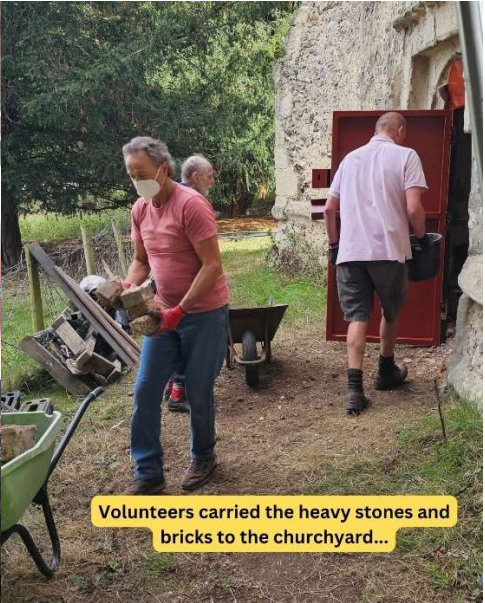
Emptying the tower of the rubble was a huge task...



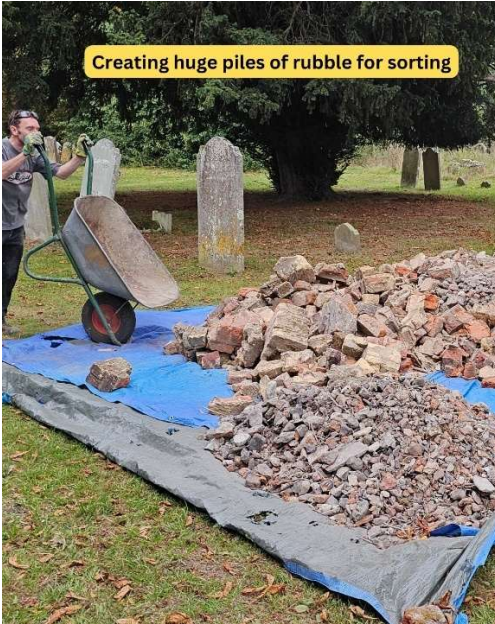
It was dirty work - starting in the northeast corner, cleaning up pigeon mess, broken glass, and rubbish



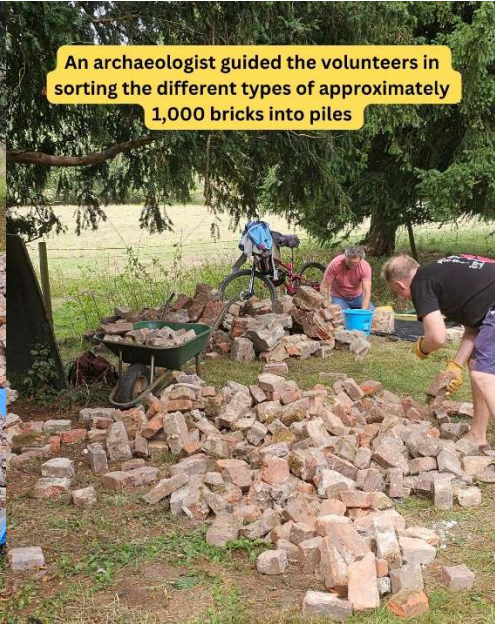
Volunteers started removing the pile of bricks, gravestone fragments, flint and other bits



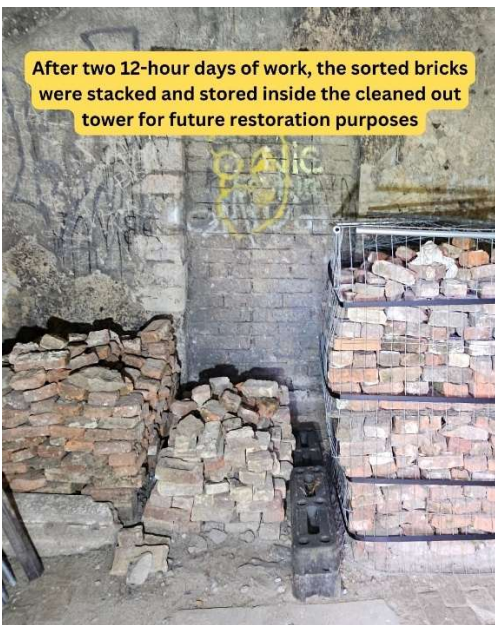
Volunteers carried the heavy stones and bricks to the churchyard...



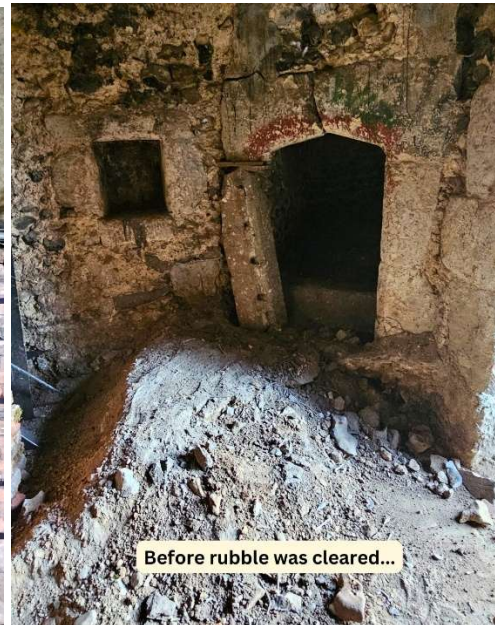
Creating huge piles of rubble for sorting



An archaeologist guided the volunteers in sorting the different types of approximately 1,000 bricks into piles



After two 12-hour days of work, the sorted bricks were stacked and stored inside the cleaned out tower for future restoration purposes



Before rubble was cleared...



Thundridge Old Church has a floor!



Our heartfelt thanks to everyone involved: Jerry Dyer, Eddie Norris, James Dawkins, Carol Dawkins, Sue Patel, Lynn and Tony Palmer, Angelo Russo and son, Jane Allen, Simon Constance, Roger Blowers, Christopher and Nick Melliush, Sara Matthews, Gareth Ellis, Tom Abraham, Kazz Bull, Eddie Hunt, David Dormer Andrews and Emma Blowers, and Paul of Pat Taylor Garden Services Ltd in Colliers End.



## Gravemarker Recording



**JOIN  
OUR  
TEAM**



VOLUNTEER TO HELP WITH  
OUR GRAVESTONE PROJECT

[friends@thundridgeoldchurch.org](mailto:friends@thundridgeoldchurch.org)

## Bat Survey



## Structural Survey





**Replacing safety fencing**



## Dendrochronology



**THUNDRIDGE OLD CHURCH ACTION GROUP**

England & Wales - Charity number 1202921

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# Accounts

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**Thundridge Old Church Action Group, a  
Charitable CIO**

Charity No: 1202921

**Trustees' Annual Report  
& Statement of Financial Activity**  
for the period 03 May 2023 to 31 March 2024





# Trustees' Annual Report & Statement of Financial Activity for the period 03 May 2023 to 31 March 2024

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# Trustees Annual Report & Statement of Financial Activity for the period 03 May 2023 to 31 March 2024

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Charitable Objects

To preserve for the benefit of the residents of the parish of Thundridge and the public, the grade II listed tower and graveyard of St Mary and All Saints' Church by conserving and maintaining them in sound condition with public access and removing the threat of demolition by creating conditions by which ownership can be transferred from the Diocese of St Albans.

To research and advance the education of the public in all aspects of the church's history, the scheduled monument within which it is sited the immediate environs and the unspoiled historic surrounding River Rib valley.

To promote the preservation and maintenance of the same locality as a green and recreational space to the benefit of the environment and the health and welfare of the public

### 1.2 Overview (Executive Summary)

This was a productive year for TOCAG, notably:

- Becoming a Charitable Incorporated Organisation
- Conducting extraordinary detailed survey work of the moated enclosure and tower and a physical condition survey of the tower that is critical to future planning.
- Putting on an 8 week exhibition at Ware Museum and giving the first two of four public talks of the history and significance of the Old Church, the current threats and TOCAGs aims as an organisation, along with online and onsite education and outreach.

We look forward in 2024 to what may be a transformative year with great opportunity but also very significant challenges.

## 2. Activities & Achievements

### 2.1 Outputs & Outcomes

#### 2.1.1 Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)

TOCAGs application to be registered as a CIO was approved and it is now able to act, raise funds and enter into agreements independently, which is a critical enabler for achieving its constitutional outcomes.

TOCAGs charitable status publicly recognises its aims and has enabled registration with fundraising services such as GoFundMe and PayPal Business, and HMRC for Gift Aid recovery.

#### 2.1.2 Archaeological Survey and Assessment

In 2023, TOCAG worked with Historic England's Archaeological Investigation Team to survey the moated enclosure using a drone equipped with high resolution photography and ground radar. The same team returned in March 2024 for a week to carry out a detailed ground survey which will be further developed in summer by the East Herts Archaeological Society in their 125th year conducting a geophysical investigation of the moated enclosure and churchyard, with a variety of equipment available to them, supported as far as possible by TOCAG volunteers. All this will be combined with interpretation of the features and documentary research, into a full archaeological appraisal of the site, with particular focus of the origin of the moated enclosure itself and signs of early occupation.

TOCAG also worked separately with the Historic England Geospatial Survey team who used an advanced drone and laser scanning equipment to precisely model the tower inside and out to a resolution down to 1mm, producing a complete orthophotographic record and fully navigable 3D model that is a permanent exceptional and regionally unique resource that is an aid to its further historic and structural investigation and preservation. A publicly accessible version of the 3D model has been published on the website sketchfab.com as 'Thundridge Old Church' which can be leveraged as an engaging and educational resource.

#### 2.1.3 Condition Survey

After over a year of tendering and securing funds from Historic England and the Diocese of St Albans, TOCAG commissioned architects RH Partnership to carry out a physical inspection of the tower inside and out and to produce a condition report.

The report made detailed recommendations for repairs to stabilise and preserve the tower but also highlighted potentially serious issues with the roof that need a structural engineer to get direct access inside to investigate further. This is currently the most important next step towards planning the tower's future.

#### 2.1.4 Education and Outreach

In early 2023, TOCAG completely refreshed its website and plans to do so again in 2024 to reflect the large amount of progress and new information available as an authoritative and comprehensive reference source and to facilitate more frequent updates to encourage repeat visits. TOCAG also created a social media presence on both Facebook and Instagram to serve as a means of engaging and building a community and signposting to the website for more detailed information. It is a focus of the organisation to invest greater effort in making these channels more effective, training and transferring knowledge to volunteers to be empowered to take greater responsibility.

An 8-week exhibition was put on at Ware Museum in the summer, including several new outputs of historical research, including the significance of the site and patrons in the abolition of slavery movement and diplomacy to avoid the American War of Independence and the historical narrative around how the church came to be demolished in 1853.

In spring 2024 TOCAG delivered two presentation talks for the Ware Society and the Hertford and Ware Local History Society. Together these were attended by around 120 people and made available

online for a short period where it was estimated to have reached a further 50 people. The same talk is booked to be given to the After Eights Ladies group in May and Stanstead Abbots Local History Society in June. These in person events raise awareness of TOCAG and its objectives, provide new contacts for our community engagement and have created offers of help we will be leveraging.

TOCAG organised on-site educational events for both Beavers and Cub Scouts which were very well received and extremely enjoyable to host. We have been approached by schools to develop and run on-site educational events.

TOCAG attended the 'Ware's the Community' event in the Southern Maltings which built new relationships with other local volunteer organisations as well as the public.

### 2.1.5 Volunteer work

The condition survey report identified that parts of the tower are now unsafe. As a result, TOCAG purchased safety HERAS fencing and organised a fun community day to install it.

TOCAG consider this to be a model for community engagement and demonstration of capacity to manage the site that it is important to develop further. In response to vandalism of the tower, the need for simple routine maintenance and other issues onsite, TOCAG are seeking guidance on how to get the necessary guidance and approvals to take an active role in the management of the site.

## 2.2 Looking Ahead

Areas for development in 2024 include.

- Continue historical research and interpretation to develop interest and significance – engaging volunteers as far as possible.
- Bring website up to date as reference and share actively and regularly on social media to build community engagement.
- Seek grants and organise investigation of the roof. If possible, consider the same for at least the most urgent remedial works identified in the Condition Survey
- Consider opportunities to make the church a better place to visit (e.g. seating, interpretation panels, rebuild front wall)
- Develop a capability through professional relationships and community volunteer groups for routine maintenance and minor repair.
- As support allows, organise creative events such as: summer service, music/sound/light; drama, community stalls to develop the utility of the site and raise awareness.

## **3. Financial Review**

### **3.1 Financial Position**

TOCAG holds modest reserves from private donations, one of a magnitude unlikely to be repeated. It is therefore taking a cautious approach to ensuring any spend delivers maximum benefit.

However, these reserves are now sufficient to enable some significant independent objectives.

### **3.2 Details of Any Funds Materially in Deficit**

The Charity has no funds which are materially in deficit.

### **3.3 Policy on Reserves**

TOCAG reserves are currently small, and there are no committed designations while the new organisation assesses its capabilities. TOCAG has no debt or liabilities.

It is expected that any major projects of repair to the tower, one of its principal objectives, will come largely from specific grant sources as restricted funds rather than reserves.

Reserves are currently anticipated to be allocated to objectives such as.

- Environmental improvements to the churchyard that enhance its utility such as interpretation, seating, security, signage and minor repairs.
- Investments in education and outreach such as IT services, research expenses, publishing, and publicity materials.
- Operational costs and professional services such as legal and business services.

### **3.4 Principal Sources of Funding**

In this financial year funding has been principally through public donations and reclamation of associated Gift Aid, notably one large donation, for all of which we are immensely grateful.

Some funds have come from giving public talks, and a small amount from merchandise sales.

Whilst TOCAG managed the delivery of the condition survey and was a co-signatory on the Section 17 Management agreement with Historic England, it was practical at the time for the Diocese of St Albans to be the grant recipient and client. It is anticipated that in future TOCAG will take on both roles themselves.

Similarly, where TOCAG has undertaken maintenance tasks on behalf of the Diocese of St Albans, it has been simpler for invoices to be presented directly to them rather than to TOCAG with subsequent reimbursement.

TOCAG have been notified it is the subject of a future bequest, though not its source or nature.

### **3.5 Description of the Principal Risks Facing the Charity**

**Governance:** There may be insufficient volunteers and trustees to enable the charity to be effective and sustainable in its long term objectives, especially saving the tower from demolition. Mitigation remains to emphasise in all interactions the absolute need for community support from the public and representative bodies.

**Financial:** The resources required to preserve the tower may exceed the capacity for grants and fundraising, notably if the roof is a fundamental structural issue. Mitigation is to prioritise investigation of the roof to quantify this risk and combine this with the findings of the Condition Survey to create a scope of works to address necessary repairs and begin to evaluate and seek sources of funding to those amounts to create a viable business plan.

Strategic: It may not be possible to negotiate a mutually satisfactory long term management agreement for the tower. TOCAG will in the meantime try to develop the skills and people to become an organisation capable of taking effective management responsibilities.

### **3.6 Remuneration of Trustees**

All Trustees act in a voluntary capacity and receive no remuneration or other material benefits from their services to the Charity.

Out-of-pocket expenses necessarily and reasonably incurred by Trustees in promoting the purposes of the Charity are reimbursed at cost.

### **3.7 Statutory Statements on Liabilities**

The Trustees declare that:

The charity has given no guarantees where potential liability under the guarantee is outstanding at the date of this statement

The charity has no debt outstanding at the date of this statement which is owed by the CIO and which is secured by an express charge on any assets of the CIO

## 4. Reference and Administration Details

### 4.1 Charity Name & Registration

Name: Thundridge Old Church Action Group

Charity No: 1202921

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### 4.2 Charity's Principal Address

3 Meadow View Cottages, Cold Christmas, Thundridge, Hertfordshire SG127SW

e-mail: friends@thundridgeoldchurch.org

website: www.thundridgeoldchurch.org

### 4.3 Names of the Trustees Who Manage the Charity

<i>Name</i>	<i>Office</i>	<i>Appointed</i>	<i>Initial term</i>	<i>Resigned</i>
David Blowers	Chair, Treasurer, Communications, Administration	03/05/23	4 years	
Claire Ridgewell		03/05/23	3 years	
Christopher Melliush		03/05/23	2 years	
Emma Blowers	Research, Education and Outreach	03/05/23	2 years	

### 4.4 Names of Advisors & Senior Members of Staff

Not Applicable

### 4.6 Independent Examiner

As Thundridge Old Church Action Group income is well below the £25,000 threshold required by the Charity Commission in the period reported, and has limited funds available for professional services, no Independent Examination has been carried out on this report.

## 5. Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2024

### 5.1 Receipts and Payments

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total funds	Last year
<b>A1 Receipts</b>				
Charitable Service Fees	60	-	60	-
Donations	5,584	-	5,584	245
Fundraising Events	541	-	541	-
<b>Sub total</b> (Gross income for AR)	<b>6,185</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>6,185</b>	<b>245</b>
<b>A2 Asset &amp; investment sales</b>				
Merchandising	50	-	-	50
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Total receipts</b>	<b>6,235</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>6,235</b>	<b>295</b>
<b>A3 Payments</b>				
Equipment	20	-	20	-
Printing, Stationery and Supplies	150	-	150	-
Repairs and maintenance	85	-	85	-
Cost of fundraising events	-	-	-	10
Membership Fees	-	-	-	100
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>110</b>
<b>A4 Asset &amp; investment purchases</b>				
	-	-	-	-
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total payments</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>110</b>
<b>Net of receipts/(payments)</b>	<b>5,979</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>5,979</b>	<b>185</b>
<b>A6 Cash funds last year end</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>185</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Cash funds this year end</b>	<b>6,164</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>6,164</b>	<b>185</b>

## 5.2 Assets and Liabilities

		Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds
Categories	Details		
<b>B1 Cash funds</b>	Bank Accounts	6,164	-
	<b>Total cash funds</b>	<b>6,164</b>	<b>-</b>

The Charity has no Assets or Liabilities of the following categories at the time of reporting.

- B2 Other monetary assets
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- B5 Liabilities

## **6. Structure, Governance & Management**

### **6.1 Type of Governing Document**

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### **6.2 Statutory Declaration**

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In selecting individuals for appointment as charity trustees, the charity trustees must have regard to the skills, knowledge and experience needed for the effective administration of the CIO.

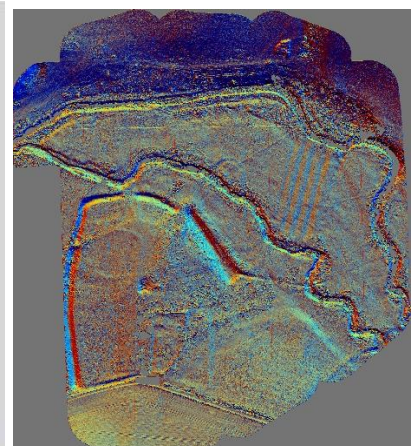
Approved by the Trustees and signed on their behalf.

29 March 2024

Dave Blowers (Chair)

## 7.0 Appendix – Activities

**Archaeological Assessment** - Geospatial Survey work and draft diagrammatic and LiDAR outputs, pending addition of geophysical survey data all inputs to archaeological interpretation and assessment report



## Condition and Tower Survey



## Exhibition and Talks



Outreach

