

The Christmas Tree Festival

Doug Loveridge

I had never experienced a Christmas Tree Festival before, and when Jo told me that one was planned for All Saints I must admit to having felt somewhat mystified. What could possibly be done with Christmas Trees to justify the word "Festival"? Rather a lot, it seems!

All Saints Church is a magnificent building, giving the opportunity to present the trees in impressive style. On the Wednesday evening, at the regular 7.15pm Choral Evensong, I could see that the scale of the Festival would be vast. Trees along the aisles, trees in the chancel, trees in the sanctuary and trees in the Memorial Chapel. Trees everywhere, in fact, and on the Sunday evening I admitted that I had never preached to such a large congregation - of trees. All 101 of them.

The planning and implementation must have been impeccable, because all the electrics were in place for the lights, everyone had their tree decorated on time, refreshments and stalls ready to go. Special guests previewed on the Thursday and then the festival continued through to Sunday evening with school visits, families and people from across our area coming to see the festival. They were also treated to music, with organ music, soloists and duets, and John's "Sing-a-long-a-fest". What was great was the large numbers of people coming in to enjoy the festival, many of whom knew little of All Saints previously. And in the end, a substantial sum of money was raised for the Isabel Hospice and for the Church.

The trees themselves were beautiful. Some were dedicated to the memory of loved ones, with photos and characteristic objects to remind us of them, some were from local societies and groups, and some represented local firms. They were all presented creatively, and I noted one tree featuring the tools used by a much-missed handyman next to a dentist's tree with silver sprayed teeth and gum imprints hanging from its branches. Yet every tree had

something to remark on, and particularly in the evenings it was so lovely to see their lights shining out.



I feel that our church can be proud of the Christmas Tree Festival, because it really brought so many people together for such wonderful enjoyment. It obviously brought pleasure to everyone, and was an attraction for people of all ages.

I admired, too, the sheer enthusiasm of all involved, the determined hard work put in, the generous giving of time and resources, and I want to thank all who contributed to the festival for a special time of pure enjoyment.

Financial Result – Colin Bird

As of press date we have made a surplus of £5,364.96, of which the Hospice is due £2,293.51. There are more monies to come, including the tree auction, so I expect the Hospice to receive near to £2,500 and All Saints around £3,250. In addition, all the events before the weekend raised a further £3,455.37 for All Saints.

Well done to Denise, Helen, Renee and everyone involved!!