

Offer

Hello! My name is David Pennant, and I have just offered to buy Christchurch Longcross.

This letter is going out to local residents to keep you informed. I care what you think, and I am looking forward to meeting you.

When I spoke to one resident, and he grasped that I wanted to put homeless people in there, he said, "Oh no, that means noise and booze and needles. No, I will definitely object."

I could not agree with him more. Christchurch and its graveyard is a beautiful and peaceful place, and there is no way I would want to spoil that.

The Present

The church closed in 2004. Despite several offers being taken to contract stage, the building has not sold. Lack of maintenance means that there is up to £150,000 needed to restore the building, making it watertight, dealing with rising damp, eliminating woodworm, repairing stonework, replacing gutters and the odd fallen slate, etc. Then for any use, a toilet will be needed, and there is no mains drainage at present. There is only an outside tap for water. The

interior is dark. There is no heating.



The Future

If no purchaser comes forward, then the building will continue to deteriorate, eventually becoming a dangerous ruin. Somewhere along the way, it seems likely that squatters will move in, creating the very situation that our friend was keen to avoid.

I had to renew our house insurance recently, and I noticed that one of the things we are covered for is up to £10,000. Squatters can be a real problem.

Another Possibility

There is a class of person that we seldom meet, who has come to the end of the road. Take my friend F, for example, who in the 1990s was so depressed and suicidal that I hardly expected him to still be alive when we meet up the following week. He came through it and is now earning a good living. At one point he said to me, "David, is there some monastery or something I could get away to, where I could just be, to clear my

head?" I spent ninety minutes on the phone, and discovered several places which would have him at £40 a day, but nowhere that would take him free of charge. Or imagine someone who has ended up on the streets. He finds all the hostels and refuges are full to bursting. He wonders whether the church might help, and is confronted by 50,000 buildings in the UK which are all locked.

I should like to help such people. My idea is to keep the facilities so basic that there is no motive to stay for a long time. There are no local amenities, for example; the only activity beyond maintenance and caring for the graveyard would be walking on the Chobham common. It would be a place to escape, and find peace with God.

Contact

Details and pictures on www.pennantpublishing.co.uk click on Christ Church.

Woking (01483) 823163.

df.pennant@ntlworld.com

Thank you

PS Would any reader care to host a meeting one evening so that people could meet me? I will pay for the rotten eggs and tomatoes and other projectiles and bring some cleaning materials. It would be good to talk.