

Central focus for worship

AN ambitious project to transform a church with D-Day links has been launched - 60 years after the successful landings.

Churchgoers at Christ Church, Portsdown, will rearrange the inside of their church so they can worship in a circle around a central altar.

The idea is to provide a new, flexible worship area centred on a raised table, which will be lit from above by natural and artificial light. It will provide a dramatic new focus for worship.

The individual seats could also be rearranged to allow the building to be used for concerts, flower festivals, exhibitions or community events.

The importance of the existing D-Day windows - which recall the vigil service held at the church on the eve of D-Day - will be emphasised. The church's new entrance and porch will be dedicated in memory of those who took part in the landings.

A separate chapel will also be created at the opposite end of the church, where the sanctuary is now. A new extension will



The proposed new layout for Christ Church, Portsdown

include meeting rooms, toilets and a kitchen. And outside the church, areas of peace and solitude will be landscaped next to the existing military cemetery.

The plans echo our diocese's Kairos thinking about the Church serving its community by providing much-needed facilities.

The vicar, the Rev Paul Norton, said: "Our vision is to create a new focus for the community centred on Christ Church, which will include an updated church interior, a new extension with facilities available to everyone, an upgraded church hall, and

an improved look to the site."

The project was launched on April 24 with a short service, balloons, afternoon tea and swing music by the Unity Stompers jazz band. A special service also took place on April 25. Prominent figures were approached to become patrons of the new parish centre.

The D-Day commemorative windows were unveiled in 1948 by General Sir Miles Dempsey to remember the service held at the church on 4 June, 1944, which members of the armed forces attended ahead of the D-Day landings.



(left to right): Diocesan MU president Pauline Wale, Mrs Maureen Blair, MU chief executive Reg Bailey and Lord Mayor Tom Blair

Pop stars are big fans

LIVE Aid founder Bob Geldof and U2 lead singer Bono are big fans of the Mothers' Union, Portsmouth members have heard. The man in charge of the Mothers' Union nationally revealed the celebrity supporters during a visit to our diocese.

Chief executive Reg Bailey also told members that the organisation's expertise was called on by the Chancellor, Gordon Brown. He consulted the world-wide organisation for comments

when setting up international action to tackle child poverty.

Mr Bailey met clergy from the diocese; spoke during a service at which trustees and officers were commissioned; and enjoyed a bring and share lunch with guests and members.

His day at St Mary's Church, Fratton, culminated with a talk to members which involved stories of his personal experience working for the Mothers' Union in the UK and abroad.

Repairs to historic landmark

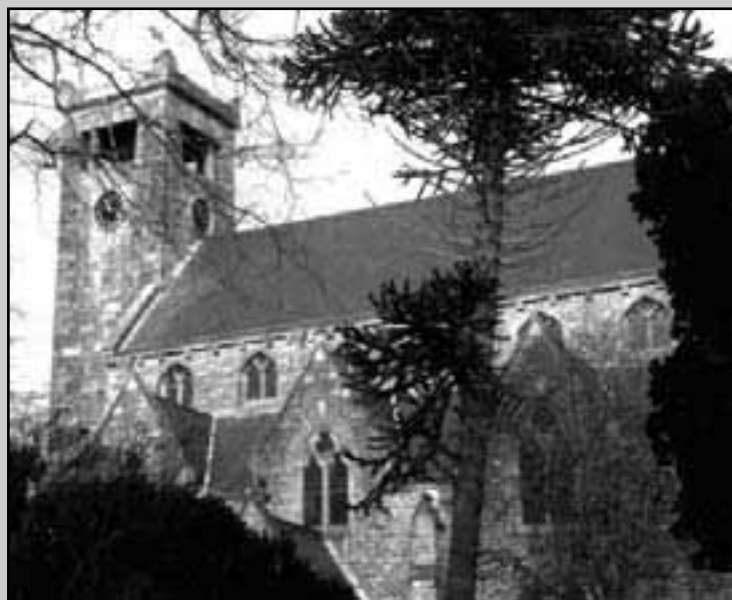
ONE of Cowes' most prominent landmarks will have its clock stopped for part of the summer.

The tower at St Mary's Church, which was designed by Regency architect John Nash, will be repaired in a £100,000 project.

The work includes repairs to the stonework, timbers and iron fittings of the tower, and new electric winding motors for the clock. The tower's lead and timber roof will be replaced and the bell sent to Somerset for renovation.

The church held an open day last month so people could see what was planned, before scaffolding went up.

The tower, commissioned in 1816 by George Ward, is one of the few examples of John Nash's work on the island. The four-faced turret clock dates from 1805 and was made by Richard Somersall of London. For more than 100 years, the Taylor family of the High



St Mary's Church in Cowes with the Nash tower to the left

Street jewellery and clock business maintained it voluntarily. The new electric winding motor will mean it won't have to be wound weekly.

And bell, which weighs six-and-three-quarter hundredweight, was cast in 1816. Red Funnel Ferries have already agreed to sponsor its trips across the Solent.

English Heritage will cover 58 per cent of the costs. Church members have given generously and are raising funds, as are the Friends of St Mary's. But there is still a £25,000 shortfall.

Cheques, made payable to 'St Mary's Church, Cowes', can be sent to 30 Sylvan Drive, Newport, PO30 5QS.



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