

Gospel taken to heart of community

WHEN the new vicar comes to Waterlooville, he wants to let everyone know he's arrived.

So the service that will introduce the Rev Mike Sheffield to St George's Church will include a procession out to the town's shopping centre.

The entire congregation, including Bishop Kenneth, the Mayor of Havant and Mike himself, will process out of church for a Bible reading. The idea is to let shoppers, those drinking in coffee shops and passers-by hear the gospel by bringing the worshippers to them.

It echoes the theology behind the bishop's Kairos process, which encourages churches to take Christ into their communities rather than expecting peo-



ple automatically to come to church.

The collation and induction service will be at 7.30pm on July 16. It will mark the start of Mike Sheffield's ministry at St George the Martyr after eight years at St Alban's Church, West Leigh, Havant.

"Reading the gospel in the town centre symbolises the fact that the vicar is not just there for the church, but for the whole community," he said. "It's an event that the town should mark."

"The idea is to show, in a physical, practical way, that the church is part of the community. There is always a procession of the gospel in a church like St

George's anyway. Taking it to where people are gathered anyway is an important symbol of our commitment to bring Christ to them.

"Serving in Waterlooville will be an exciting and challenging time, though I'll also be sorry to leave West Leigh."

Mike, who chaired the group that organised the Family Fun Day and Diocesan Eucharist to celebrate our diocese's 75th anniversary in 2002, previously served as curate at St John the Baptist, Locks Heath, between 1979-83 and curate at All Saints, Ryde, from 1983-86.

He then served at Holy Trinity and St Michael's, Ryde, for 10 years before moving back to the mainland. He was also a producer and presenter of local BBC religious programmes for 10 years between 1979-89.

Festival celebrates church architect

FOUR days of events will be held this month to mark the achievements of the Victorian architect who helped create modern Southsea.

Thomas Ellis Owen, who built St Jude's Church and created the villas, terraces and curvy lanes still apparent in central Southsea, was born almost 200 years ago.

The Thomas Ellis Owen Festival will be held between July 1-4. Among the events is a music soiree at St Jude's on July 1, and a play written by a team from the University of

Portsmouth, staged at 7.30pm each night from July 2-4 at the Third Floor Arts Centre in Guildhall Square.

During Saturday and Sunday there will be talks on Owen's life, a 19th century flower show judged by gardening writer Brian Kidd, children's activities and puppet shows, an art and sculpture trail, guided tours and cream teas in and around Kent Road.

An exhibition at Portsmouth's City Museum will continue until September 19. For details, see: www.thomas-ellis-owen.org



Participants in the 'Living Churchyard Day' at All Saints', Godshill (courtesy: Michael Camps)

Cash for greening churchyards

OUR diocese's assistant social responsibility adviser is urging parishes to apply for cash to improve their churchyards or cemeteries.

Alison Holbrook is backing a campaign by the national conservation charity, the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV), to help local groups improve their local environment.

The BCTV scheme offers grants of between £3,000-£8,000 to community groups - including churches - that want to create or improve a 'people's place'.

This could be an area of land or building that the group wants to turn into an environmental community resource.

The grant can cover project costs, training costs or even tools and equipment. The project also needs to involve volunteers, be accessible to the wider community, have clear community and environmental benefits, and it should involve a significant proportion of disadvantaged users.

"This grant gives church groups the opportunity to turn a neglected cemetery or churchyard into a haven for wildlife

and a community resource," said Alison. "I would like to see a cemetery warden scheme develop, whereby local people are trained in how to manage cemeteries with these two ideals in mind. The People's Places funding could kick-start this."

For details or an application form, please call the BTCV People's Places Award Unit on 01491 821621 or see: www.btcv.org/ppawards.

You could also contact Ray Harrington-Vail, BCTV project officer on the Isle of Wight, on 01983-822282.



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