

Sweden link paved way for choir visit

LINKS between St Peter's Church in Petersfield and a Swedish parish paved the way for a four-day visit by choir members last month.

The link with Osteraker-Ostra Ryds began in 2002 with the backing of the bishop. Since the signing of a formal agreement in 2004, the link has flourished. At Pentecost 2005, the Swedish parish's chamber choir, Non Silentium, visited Petersfield and Portsmouth. The return visit involved choir, supporters and vicar travelling to Sweden at the start of September.

An initial sightseeing tour of Stockholm was followed by an evening concert at which the St Peter's choir joined four choirs from the host parish in the 17th century Osteraker Church. All 110 singers joined forces at the end for five pieces in Swedish.

St Peter's choir contributed to the parish high mass on the Sunday, and the vicar, the Rev Giles Harris-Evans, preached. Director of music Mark Dancer conducted the choir and the epistle was read by supporter Joyce Deavin.

The afternoon was spent visiting the other two churches in the parish - the medieval Ostra Ryds and the modern church centre at Akersberga.

Choir member David Francombe said: "This was a wonderful weekend which was splendidly organised by our welcoming hosts, and where new links were made and old friendships renewed."

Three months to save our tower



Canon Bob White at the top of St Mary's church tower. Examples of the erosion to carvings on the stonework can be seen on the pinnacle behind him. Repairs are also needed on the tower walls

THEY have just three months to raise £600,000 to help repair their church tower.

Worshippers at St Mary's Church in Fratton need to raise the cash by the end of the year to secure a grant from English Heritage towards the repair work.

The 165-foot tower was built by Victorian architects to inspire and raise the spirits of those living and working in the city, and to be a dramatic statement of the presence of God.

But after 120 years of exposure to the sea air and city pollution, the tower is in need of restoration and repair. Parts of it have eroded away and other parts are in danger of crumbling. If the repair work is not carried out, nets or scaffolding may have to be put around the stonework, hiding it from view.

The cost of repair is £900,000, and the church has received a grant of £300,000 to carry out the work. But it needs to have started the work by the end of the year to secure the grant. Worshippers are now looking for help to do this, emphasising the key role that the

tower plays in the city's skyline.

The church had already received support from bishops, councillors and other community members and hoped to gain further support at a weekend of celebrations last month.

The weekend involved a special service at which the preacher was the rural dean, the Rev Michael Lewis; an open day during which visitors climbed the tower and enjoyed views across the city, explored parish registers and shared in a choir workshop; and a barbecue Sunday lunch. Among the visitors were the Lord Mayor and city councillors.

The vicar of St Mary's, Canon Bob White, said: "About 18 months ago we had people abseiling down the side of the church picking off loose bits of stone to keep it safe. If we don't raise the money, we'll have to decide if we want to do that again or put up scaffolding and nets to catch falling bits of stonework."

If the money is raised, the work should take around eight months to complete.

For more details, contact Bob White on 023-9282 2687 or vicar@portseaparish.co.uk

Historic church's paint job

ANOTHER inner-city Portsmouth church was given a lick of paint as the finishing touches to its restoration project.

Work has recently finished at the historic St George's Church in Portsea to repair damage to a section of its walls and protect it for the future.

Water had been seeping into the wall and penetrating brickwork and render as well as affecting plaster and timbers.

Part of the funding for the project came from the Onyx Environmental Trust, which gave a £10,000 grant under the landfill tax credit scheme. English Heritage donated £35,000 and the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Churches Historic Trust gave £1,000.

The work started in September 2005 and involved



Pat Arnold helps to paint St George's Church

repairing bricks and timber, removing damaged plaster and render, and treating and replastering the affected area. The painting work was the final touch.

The vicar, the Rev Karina Green, said: "The church has

been serving the area for many generations and is an important part of community life.

"The grants meant we have been able to carry out essential work to preserve and enhance this historic place of worship for future generations."

Pompey Chimes

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Apologies that incorrect phone numbers were published in last month's Pompey Chimes