

PRESS RELEASE

**Monday 28th November 2016
For immediate use**

ILLUMINATE – PILGRIMS FESTIVAL GETS BETTER AND BETTER

Beat that? They did! – ILLUMINATE Pilgrims Festival gets better every year! 2016 events exceed the success of 2015 on the way to the 400th Anniversary in 2020.

From an inspiring art exhibition and fascinating talk at Babworth church to the closing presentation at Retford Town Hall... The week was filled to the brim with the stories and celebrations of the region and heritage - our 'Mayflower Roots'.

The United States of America traces its origins to the people aboard the Mayflower and recognises the Pilgrims as its forebears. Bradford and Brewster, came from Austerfield and Scrooby, with important influencers coming from Babworth - Clifton, and Robinson and Smyth came from Sturton-le-Steeple. Because of this we have a 'special relationship' with the U.S. and it was celebrated in style at Spencer's on the Square with an '**Americana Evening**' on Tuesday 22nd November. Over 60 local people gathered for a glittering evening with a sumptuous early Thanksgiving dinner. Jessica Mary Brett and Max Bowker provided uplifting, toe-tapping entertainment - singing American classics from the 50s and 60s.

More than 150 people flocked to the picturesque Babworth Parish Church over the weekend of 19th/20th November to see the inaugural '**Pilgrims Festival Art Exhibition**', and to listen to the knowledgeable Adrian Gray speak about "How Nottinghamshire Changed the World". Thirty-nine diverse exhibits were on show - all the work of local artists who had their own individual interpretations of the Pilgrims' story. An exhibition which illustrated the Separatist and Mayflower Pilgrims story ran throughout the week in Retford Town Hall and was seen by over 300 visitors.

Heritage talks were given by Malcolm Dolby, who gave a fascinating talk on the life and times of William Bradford; Sue Allan provided a perceptive view of what life was like at the time of the Separatists; and Natasha Scullion delivered an absorbing look at '**St Martin's, Bilborough, Hidden Treasures: The Building and its People**'.

Last year, three primary schools (about 100 children) accessed the Pilgrims Story in an entertaining and educational way. This year, eight primary schools, plus local Cubs Brownies and Rainbows were engaged in Pilgrim-themed workshops and enjoyed Talegate Theatre, with their '**Chronicles of the Pilgrims**' - an uproariously funny look at the pioneering adventure, in which over 400 local schoolchildren participated. On Thursday 24th, Carr Hill Primary School gave an outstanding performance of a special play written by one of their governors, Barry Upton. This was attended by around 80 schoolchildren from Carr Hill, plus teachers and parents, and grandparents.

On Thursday 24th there were candle-lighting services during the day at the 'Pilgrims Churches' in Austerfield, Scrooby, Babworth, Sturton-le-Steeple, and Gainsborough (United Reformed Church). The day started at Gainsborough United Reformed Church with a service led by the

Minister, Rev Dr Gillian Poucher, including clergy members from the local Anglican (Canon Mike Cooney) and Methodist (Rev Louise Carr) churches and members of the congregation. Then there was a service at St Peter & St Paul's in Sturton-le-Steeple led by Rev Mark Cantrill and Barbara Bartle, Churchwarden, who dressed up for the part in outfits from the time of the Pilgrims. They were joined by pupils from nearby Sturton Primary School, who joined in question and answer sessions and began to understand the part that the village has played, through Robinson and Smyth, in the development of the beliefs of the modern Western World. Then there was a simple service at St Helena's Church in Austerfield, where William Bradford was baptized, led by Rev Jonathan Strickland, assisted by Churchwarden, Sue Goodall. This was followed by a service at St Wilfrid's Scrooby, led by Rev Julia Jesson, Area Dean, which was attended by Ed Marshall, Chair of the Parish Council, and members of the congregations of Scrooby, Ranskill and Blyth. At All Saints' church in Babworth, in the afternoon, the service was led by Canon Tony Walker, Team Rector of Retford, and was attended by Rev Rose Hudson-Wilkin, who had arrived specially from London for the evening, Rev Julia Jesson, Area Dean, and members of the Babworth and Ranby congregations.

St Swithun's Parish Church in Retford welcomed all to a Civic Service on Thursday 24th November. Rev Prebendary Rose Hudson-Wilkin, Chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons, Chaplain to the Queen, Priest Vicar at Westminster Abbey and Priest in Charge of St Mary-at-Hill near Monument, gave the address and spoke powerfully and movingly about tolerance and caring. Retford Post 16 Centre drama students performed an insightful interpretation of **'Separatists, Rebels and Religion'** written and dramatised by Anna Scott and Neil Thornhill. Worksop College Choir, VOX, and the North Wheatley Choir 'Songbirds' sang inspirational songs as part of the service, which told the story of the Pilgrims' decision to leave England and seek a new life overseas.

The Civic Service was attended by Judge John Machin, Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Nottinghamshire; John Mann, MP; Cllr Jim Anderson, Chairman of Bassetlaw District Council; Cllr Garry Clarkson, Mayor of Retford; Ven David Picken, Archdeacon of Newark; Cllr Madelaine Richardson, Deputy Chairman of Bassetlaw District Council; Cllr George Derx, Deputy Mayor of Doncaster Metropolitan Borough; Cllr Helen Richards, Deputy Mayor of Retford and Neil Taylor, Chief Executive Officer, Bassetlaw District Council. Councillors from Bassetlaw, and West Lindsey, District Councils and local Parish Councils were also welcome guests.

The service began with candles being brought from churches at Austerfield, Scrooby, Babworth, Sturton-le-Steeple and Gainsborough (URC) to provide one light as remembered in William Bradford's words **'as one small candle may light a thousand, so the light here kindled hath shone unto many, yea in some sort to our whole nation.'** All those who took part in the Civic Service gathered in St Swithun's churchyard to create a '400' image again using lights to illuminate the shape in the darkness. This is part of the national Mayflower 400 campaign led by Plymouth in Devon, England where towns with a connection to the Pilgrims Story are encouraged to create an image based on light referring to the Bradford quote. Plymouth created the first '400' in 2014, and Retford has participated in 2015 and 2016.

A Civic Reception was held in the Town Hall where Anna Scott, Heritage Consultant, introduced a sand art film showing the Pilgrims Story; Cllr Jim Anderson, Chairman of Bassetlaw District Council, reflected on the success of the week congratulating the organisers on having improved on the excellent 2015 events. This was followed by John Mann MP, who gave an inspiring speech on his commitment to the Pilgrims Story and its beneficial relevance to Bassetlaw. He also revealed that he had invited Richard Gere and Bruce Springsteen to visit Bassetlaw's commemorations – it remains to be seen whether they will attend. The speeches were completed by Rick Brand, Chair, Bassetlaw Christian Heritage, who emphasized the focus on

local engagement with the Pilgrims Story to ensure that the area in and around Bassetlaw connected with the Pilgrims benefitted beyond 2020.

This amazing week of celebrations culminated on Sunday 27th with the Christmas Market and Light Switch-on and an enchanting display of almost 100 beautifully decorated Christmas trees in St Swithun's church (until 3rd December), and a Star Festival at Grove St Methodist Chapel.

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Notes to Editors: see next page

Bassetlaw Christian Heritage

- The ILLUMINATE Pilgrims Festival is designed and delivered by Bassetlaw Christian Heritage and Bassetlaw District Council, supported by Retford Business Forum, and funded by the National Lottery through the Big Lottery Fund.
- It focuses on the people and their stories based on faith heritage, with their roots established in and around Bassetlaw, North Nottinghamshire.
- The area covered centres on Retford, with a radius of around 30 miles, including parts of Lincolnshire and South Yorkshire.
- Bassetlaw Christian Heritage is keen to work collaboratively with groups and individuals, and if anyone would like to get involved please email: contact@bassetlawchristianheritage.com or visit the website www.bassetlawchristianheritage.com
- For further information contact Rick Brand rickbrand@hotmail.com (01427 891376)

Biography for Rev Rose Hudson-Wilkin, Bphil Ed.

Born and grew up in Montego Bay. She was ordained deacon in 1991 and ordained to the priesthood in 1994. For sixteen and a half years she served as a priest in Hackney – North East London. In 2007 she was appointed as a Chaplain to Her Majesty the Queen and in 2010, she became the first female appointed to the position of the 79th Chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons. In her new role, she leads the prayers in the House of Commons daily when the House is sitting and carries the responsibility for the pastoral care of both members and staff of the Palace of Westminster. In November 2014, she became the Priest in Charge of the city Church, St Mary-at-Hill near Monument.



She has previously served as a member of the General Synod of the Church of England, and also as one of the Panel of Chairs of the Synod. She has twice represented the Church of England at the World Council of Churches (in Zimbabwe & Brazil) and is also one of its representatives on the Anglican Consultative Council. As a Selection Secretary for the Church of England, she has helped to select men and women seeking to test their vocation to the ministry. She is often called on to preach in the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge; she does numerous speaking engagements nationally (and occasionally overseas). She does some religious broadcasting and is often called upon for interviews by the media.

Photographs of Rev Rose Hudson-Wilkin