



The Church & Parishioner Liability

Four shocked house owners in the tiny picture postcard hamlet of Homington, near Salisbury, have bought themselves out of future liabilities' for repair bills on their 800-year-old listed church.

Another property owner is about to settle – and negotiations are underway with two companies, allegedly also liable. They were all unaware of their 'historic liabilities' for St Mary's Church where 'a faithful 15 people turn up on a fine day' at services held twice a month.

In an agreement with the Parochial Church Council one person has paid £1,000 and three others have forked out £500 each. They have also each been faced with legal bills. Church Warden Brigadier Bertie Woolnough said: "We are still in negotiation with the fifth and two companies."

The payments relate back to controversial Chancel Liability Rights under Henry V111. Rev Canon David Henley – Team Rector for the Chalke Valley which includes the church – said: "Most of the people involved have now settled. They have paid to buy themselves out of any future liability.

"Unknown to them they had historic liabilities they were unaware of. They had to do that by a certain date, which is imminent.

"The aim is to do this amicably as most did not realise they had a liability, but are pleased to be shot of it."

Mr Woolnough said the land was sold in 1921 – and as a result the Church Commissioner said it was no longer responsible.

Sources say it is possible that thousands of property-owners throughout the UK may be unknowingly carrying the liability.

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