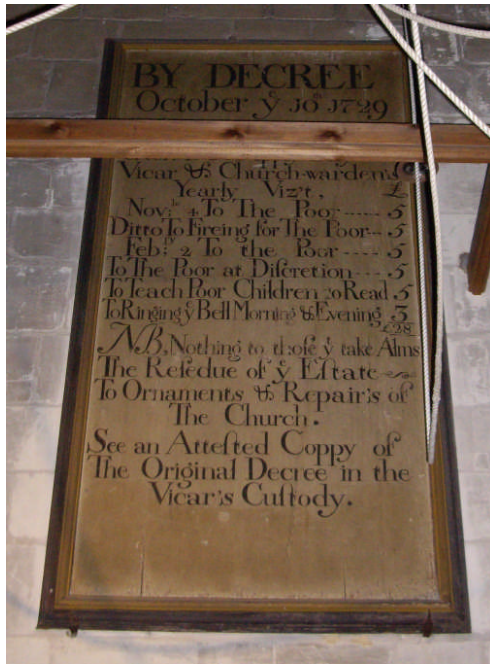


A HISTORY OF ST ANDREW'S IN 100 OBJECTS



13.

The Charity Board

Date: 1729

In the middle ages the village of Chesterton had several guilds—which were a sort of cross between a trade union, the Rotary Club, the Mothers' Union and a mutual insurance society. The wealthiest was the Guild of the Resurrection, established in about 1337 by young people of both sexes. It had an entry fee of 5 shillings, held an annual procession on Low Sunday, paid for the lights before the great Rood (or cross) on the chancel arch, ensured that its members had a decent funeral and paid for masses for their souls after their deaths. It supported those in need, paying three pence a week to those unable to work.

By 1545 all of the parish poor were supported, which was perhaps why the assets were not confiscated by Henry VIII and became part of the Church and Town estate. The income of the estate was administered by the churchwardens both for the upkeep of the church and for the relief of the poor. At times there was disagreement about how the money should be distributed and the chancery court had to decide. Its decree of 1729 was published as a board displayed in church (and now in the base of the tower: see opposite). It cut back the amount to be spent on church repairs and allocated most to the poor, including amounts for their fuel and their children's education.

The modern welfare state has largely taken over the 'relief of the poor', but St Andrew's continued to have a significant role in children's education until the recent closure of St Andrew's School and its absorption into Shirley Primary School. As one chapter closed, another began with the opening of St Andrew's Hall, through which our church seeks to continue being a contributor to the wider social good in our community, providing a home for the modern 'guilds' of clubs, activities and coffee mornings that offer fellowship, support and a sense of belonging—and to do so with a special eye for those in need or distress.