



The Rev Canon Derek Kerr with a small section of his Winnie the Pooh collection at the exhibition in Drummaul.

Derek turns a hobby into a fun fundraiser

Drummaul Church Hall was transformed into the Hundred Acre Wood in June, as the Rev Canon Derek Kerr released his Winnie the Pooh collection from the vicarage and presented it to an unsuspecting public.

For three days, the walls of the church hall were literally lined with hundreds of Poohs, Piglets, Tiggers, Eeyores and others from the cast of AA Milne's most famous books. In the middle of the floor was a mini Hundred Acre Wood.

The cuddly toys, mugs, ornaments, pictures, bedroom furniture and more all belong to Derek, rector of Drummaul, Duneane and Ballyscullion. Derek traces this obsession (though he doesn't call it that!) back to his days at Oakhill Theological College, when his friend Simon Everett, now Rural Dean of Wareham in Dorset, would 'go on' about Winnie the Pooh.

"I said 'Simon, you turned 30 last year, you just got engaged, is it not time to put Winnie the Pooh to one side?'" Derek explained. "In response, he bought me 'The House on Pooh Corner.' I found myself sitting on my bed reading it."

The Pooh bear love affair may have begun in the late 1980s, but it blossomed when Derek was curate at Holy Trinity Parish, Woodburn, many years later. "Four years in a row, a friend bought me a giant character from Winnie the Pooh. Winnie, Eeyore, Piglet and Tiger currently reside in my bath," he said.

"Then, for a badge, the church GB decorated my bedroom from floor to ceiling with Winnie the Pooh characters while I was on holiday, and I loved it. Unfortunately I could not take it with me. When I was leaving the house, the people moving in must have thought there had been children living there – not just a 27-year-old bachelor!"

Derek's passion continued, as over the years he picked up Pooh characters and memorabilia, including mugs, tea pots, snow globes, duvet covers and more, in charity shops, spending just a few pounds on each item.



A table full of Eeyores in Drummaul Parish Hall.

"I had the idea of putting all this stuff out in an exhibition and turning what was a daft hobby into something that children would enjoy and which would raise money for charity," Derek said.

And so he did...

Looking at the collection, it beggars belief that it fits into the vicarage. "They are mostly stored in one bedroom, but were beginning to spill out the door," said Derek. "Even I was getting embarrassed."

"Some time ago, the vicarage was burgled. A stereo was stolen and on it was my Winnie the Pooh record. The police officer who was investigating told me not to worry, he wouldn't tell anyone about my collection. The next week in church, three police officers came up to tease me," Derek joked.



Tiggers, Tiggers everywhere!

As the main attraction in the June exhibition, Winnie the Pooh himself appeared in many guises - dressed as a bee, in his pyjamas, as a leprechaun, and a pirate – the list goes on.

A total of £1,300 was raised through both the exhibition and a town festival church service held the same weekend, and cheques have been presented to three charities - Tiny Life, The Lily Foundation and Fields of Life.

Derek chose all three for specific reasons. "We have supported Fields of Life for many years," he said. "Just before I came here, this parish had raised £45,000 for Tibero School in Uganda, and that fantastic link continues through sponsorship of children."

Tiny Life is a charity which has made a big difference in the lives of twins Eva and Gracie, whose family belong to the parish, and the Lily Foundation supports people with Mitochondrial Disease, including parishioner Alex Marks, aged four.