

The Friends Quarterly



Welcome to the Friends Newsletter

Signs of spring: snowdrops in the churchyard of St Botolph's, Swyncombe, bring a welcome promise of renewal.

February 2022

Issue 41

FRIENDS UPDATE

Thank you to all our members who have chosen to continue their membership for another year. As ever, we are very grateful indeed.

What a long time since we've been able to offer you a programme of events to enjoy! Thankfully we can now do so with a bit more confidence that they will actually happen as planned. All the events are listed on the final page of the newsletter, but there are three I want to highlight here to encourage you to put into your diaries and come.

Friends concerts are back! On the afternoon of Sunday 27 February the highly acclaimed international OCCAM String Quartet will play Beethoven's "Razumovsky" Quartet. After the interval they will be joined by Helen Smith to perform Mozart's Clarinet Quintet K581. We are very fortunate indeed that the musicians have all generously offered to perform without a set fee and instead will share in the proceeds of the concert. Please do come – they are excited to perform in St Mary's and it would be good to return their generosity by giving them an appreciative and large audience. Admission is by suggested donation of £7, and teas will be provided in the interval.

*Concert on Sunday
27 February*

The next concert is on Saturday 2 April. This is an exciting new venture for Friends: a jazz concert that we're really looking forward to introducing for you to enjoy. The Rob Terry Trio will perform a Tribute to George Gershwin. It may be that seating numbers in church will still be limited to the current 70, so we advise all who intend to come to notify us in advance. Actual seat reservations aren't possible but knowing who wants to come, and advising you to come early to confirm your place, will help us ensure that you will get in; see page 12 for details – and please spread the word among your family and friends!

*Jazz concert on
Saturday 2 April*

And finally, another new venture in St Mary's. From Saturday 30 April to Monday 2 May the church will be open for an exhibition of art and craft work done by Chalgrove residents during lockdown. Contributions of art, craft, photography and poetry are all welcome so please share your talents and imagination with others. Participation forms will be available to download from www.chalgrovechurch.org and to pick up from Chalgrove Post Office.

*Lockdown arts
and crafts show*

*See page 12 for
details of all our
future events.*

LYNN BAKER
on behalf of the Friends Committee

A NOTE FROM THE VICAR

Dear Friends,

Christmas, even the extended season in which tree and crib remain in place until Candlemas, is now well and truly over. If you are like me, I should imagine that looking back it all feels like a blur. What sticks in my mind are a series of little victories – small successes that suggest that life may, at last, be beginning to approach normal once more.

*Looking back at
Christmastide*

Due to the success of the vaccine in managing Covid, we entered the Advent period confident that we could return to many of the activities we are used to. St Nick's Fayre was arranged, in church, for the first Saturday in Advent – including Father Christmas in his grotto in the North Aisle. The wardens and I met to discuss how we might welcome as many of our fellow villagers to Carol Services as usual, and with a wee bit of rearranging of the schedule, we found a way. New activities were planned too: the Children and Families Group planned a 'Looking forward to Christmas' Messy Church Service. As a description, 'service' probably doesn't do Messy Church justice: it is an 'event' in which the experience of sharing in Christian worship is framed by crafts, games, activities and food.

However, in late November and early December, as the Omicron variant began to spread through the British Isles, it seemed that all we had planned was thrown into question. We took advice, and resolved to continue with our plans.

This was the right course to take. St Nick's Fayre was lively, noisy, joyful and well attended. So too was the Messy Church event, which saw 35 parents, grandparents and children come to St Mary's in response to only a modest amount of publicity. This gives us great confidence that even more folk will come to similar services with the right publicity.

As December progressed, and Omicron began to take hold locally, it became clear that members of the public are now used to making their own risk assessments. The Carol Services were well attended, even though the number of those attending was down – I suspect because people were managing potential exposure so as to protect family events only a few days later. Being a little less busy gave each service a spacious meditative feel, in the midst of all the joy and anticipation. This was rounded off by the reintroduction of Midnight Mass and the Family Communion on Christmas morning. I was left with the sense that 2022 is going to be different!

One particularly satisfying moment occurred recently, when our Treasurer, Bob Kuyper, reported the proceeds of our Christmas collections, which this year we are donating to the Village Youth Club for the decoration of their facilities. The total, comprising service collections, gift aid, and a PCC gift, came to £500. This was presented by Fr Michael and PCC officers to Cllr Ann Pritchard of the Parish Council who was receiving on behalf of the Youth Club. We pray for local young people who, like young people across the country, have found the restrictions of the Covid period particularly difficult. The Youth Club is essential to supporting them and we are glad to have the opportunity to make this connection.



Cllr Ann Pritchard accepts the church donation from Fr Michael on behalf of the Village Youth Club

Of course, all that we hope to do by way of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ in our parish this year relies on the hard work of our congregation, our PCC, our volunteers, and groups like the Friends. I am very grateful that, because of the building works in recent years, we don't have to get elbows-deep in plant and fabric concerns, but can focus upon the life we share. I invite you to join me in praying that 2022 will be a year in which we can move on from our period of intermittent, enforced, hibernation, and that spring, when it comes, will bring us a return to life and growth.

God bless you.

FR MICHAEL

WE REMEMBER

KATHY TURNER JANUARY 1947–NOVEMBER 2021

Many Friends of St Mary's knew Kathy Turner, and were shocked when she suddenly and unexpectedly passed away. The church was full for her funeral on 7 January.

Kathy's roots were in Wales, where she grew up in the Rhondda Valley and Cardiff. She attended Cardiff High School for Girls and from there was able to go to Worcester Teacher Training College, fulfilling her ambition to become a schoolteacher for infants. While there she met David, when they were both campaigning for the Liberal Party. They were soon engaged and got married the next year. They also remained staunch Liberals!

Kathy and her family moved to Chalgrove in 1980 and settled very happily. Their sons Karl and Jonathan went to the village school, where Kathy did some teaching, and they all became part of the community.

Kathy worked for 16 years in the Travellers Education Service, supporting children from travelling groups, including the fairground and circus communities. This was a demanding job, important and hugely appreciated. People she had taught stayed in touch on Facebook for the rest of her life; one even publicly thanked her at a circus show, in front of the entire audience! The Showman's Guild of Great Britain made her an honorary lifelong member in recognition of her contribution to their children's education, a great honour.



Kathy and David celebrating their Golden Wedding

Many people have been saddened by Kathy's passing, but David and his family are particularly in our thoughts at this hard time. We send our deepest sympathies to them all.

NICK BATES

PAST EVENTS

ST NICK'S FAYRE

After the hiatus last year caused by the Covid pandemic, St Nick's Fayre was held in the church this year. The change of venue, partly to allow the event to take place while minimising risk of infection, meant fewer stalls but still allowed a good number of village groups to attend. It was lovely to see so many people from the village coming through the doors throughout the day keeping the church space busy and full.

Father Christmas opened the Fayre and then met and talked to a steady stream of excited and happy children.

Village events are so valuable as a time to meet old friends and make new ones. Refreshments provided a welcome excuse to sit and chat, and undeterred by the limited kitchen space Jeanette Barrington and her helpers provided an ample array of delicious food with hot drinks and mulled wine. Second helpings were in high demand, as were the take-away cakes!

Church and Friends members ran the ever-popular bottle stall and the raffle, both doing brisk business through the day. The WI, the Flower Club, Local History Group, First Responders, Friends of Chalgrove School, Age Concern, and others ran stalls. It is a credit to the village community that our local voluntary groups have weathered the pandemic's restrictions.

The enormous unseen efforts of organisation, setting up and clearing up are often overlooked: we are grateful for the generosity and commitment of all those involved, particularly Andrew Davis and Jeanette Barrington. The Fayre and raffle raised over £1700 for the work of St Mary's – a welcome boost to the church's income in a year of very limited fundraising – and it provided an equally welcome boost to our spirits.

The total of over £1700 raised was a boost to morale and to church funds.

JENNIFER THOMPSON

CHURCH NEWS

BELLRINGING REPORT

We continue to practise on Wednesday evenings, though Sunday's ringing commitments have been a struggle. Shift work, health and other events that need our time normally limit service ringing to rounds on four or five bells. Wearing masks and keeping the tower ventilated is tiresome but manageable. We have welcomed Mark Wasmuth's wife Christine, who has returned to ringing after a break of 25 or more years. She's already hunting the treble.

The newer team members are progressing from Plain Hunt to Bob Doubles. There are a couple of people in the village wanting to learn, so my plan is to let the latest Covid variant fizzle out and then start teaching again.

In St Helen's Berrick Salome, I am running a regular practice on the second Saturday of the month, 2.00–3.30pm. Any ringers are welcome to come along to chat and enjoy refreshments with us. By the time you receive and read this newsletter we will have rung for our first wedding since 2019 – a very special moment of celebration and joy.

ANDREW DAVIS

CARETAKER'S NEWS

Jonathan O'Hara and I have spent quite a lot of time improving the church Mi-Fi system. This will enable the church to use a Sum-Up card reader for services and events, and also livestream services and other church events at a cost that is manageable. Oxford Aerials guided us and supplied the equipment, which consists of a small antenna on the roof, router in the belfry, then a cable following a cable run down to the nave. The Wi-Fi transmitter sits on top of a cupboard providing coverage through to the chancel.

Jonathan's expert knowledge and advice has meant that we can use a frequency that avoids all the neighbours' Internet systems and gives us the best speeds in the village!

We're happy to share our experience if any other churches are considering going digital.

ANDREW DAVIS

NEW CHILDREN'S RESOURCES

Messy Church at St Mary's

The concept of Messy Church was developed by the Bible Reading Fellowship, and was introduced into the UK about 10 years ago. It offers fun, hospitality and creativity (the messy part!) to enable youngsters and the young at heart to learn about the Christian understanding of God. If you would like to see a brief introductory YouTube video please go to https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mnmFaveW_8g&t=105s

We have now done two trials of Messy Church at St Mary's, one before Christmas and the other at the end of January to celebrate Epiphany. We were really delighted to welcome lots of young families to both sessions, with children who attended ranging from young babies to 12 years old.

Each event starts at 10.30am with a warm welcome and the choice of several appropriately themed craft activities. Then all gather to sing, play musical instruments, and listen to Michael's talk. We finish at about 11.30am by sharing a delicious brunch, generously provided by church helper volunteers.



Messy Church in full swing, with Fr Michael on guitar

It is so lovely to see good numbers of all ages enjoying this relaxed style of church worship. The start time seems to work well, and there is plenty of fun and socialising: several people have commented on the happy, buzzing atmosphere.

If you haven't come along yourself yet, please do come and join us in the future – you will be really welcome! If you have friends or family members who might enjoy Messy Church, please do invite them along too. We are aiming to run another event before Easter, on Saturday 19 March at 10.30am, and after that are hoping for Messy Church to become a regular part of the Sunday service pattern at St Mary's.

We are so grateful for all the volunteers who have helped us thus far in lots of different ways – both front of house and behind the scenes. Thank you, your input has been invaluable! And if anyone else would like to help us occasionally or regularly, please do speak to me (891933) or to another member of the committee.

LOUISE BATES

on behalf of St Mary's Children's Committee – Marian Kuyper, Kirsty Lakey, Christine Smith, Heather Topping

Tots service

Having moved to the village only a few months ago, it was lovely to find an active Tots group at church. My son was born very shortly after arriving in Chalgrove and we first went along when he was only a few weeks old, not knowing anyone, and we found a warm welcome. Now it's a relaxing hour of friendly faces on Wednesday afternoons from 2.00 to 3.00pm. There is a cosy play area with plenty of toys and books, and I doubt that many other Tots' groups can boast a ukulele-playing vicar to lead the singalong!

It's lovely for the babies and children to enjoy the church, as I think it's important for churches to be used by all members of the community – something that Chalgrove seems to do well!

I would like to thank all the members of church who have made us feel so welcome at both Tots and Sunday services - quite a few people have said how they have enjoyed seeing and hearing a baby at the Sunday service.

EMILY HINES

Our new children's area

Before we had our children's area it could be boring because we sat at the back, and we didn't have anything really to play with. The pew wasn't very comfortable, and we couldn't see anything at the back. We couldn't join in.

Now it's fun because we have toys like a wooden Noah's Ark. We have pretend candles and communion set. They can't break. We pretend to have communion. The teddies are nice and cuddly. The rug feels very soft. We can see all the books in the new bookcase and read them for as long as we want. The bookcase and table are made for children so we can reach.

It has things to do with God and it helps us to think about God like Jesus having communion with his disciples. Jesus was a baby, and we have baby dolls. We love the dolls, and we baptise them.

If we could have anything else, we would really like some pin boards so we could put up pictures in the children's area.

AMELIA (9) AND AVA (6)



Families enjoying the Tots group

New toys in the church



HERITAGE FEATURE

THE IVY LEAF BORDERS – PART 1

The Medieval Wall Paintings Symposium, held last October in St Mary's church, provided me with the opportunity to look into one aspect of the paintings I had completely ignored: paintings of foliage in the form of leaves that decorate the tops of the window arches on the north and south walls of the chancel. I wanted to find out if they were "just" decoration, or if they were trying to tell us something. In a word, are they iconographic? The painted scenes in the chancel, of the stories of Jesus' life and Passion, and the Virgin Mary's death and Assumption, are full of iconography, the artists giving us visual clues to various aspects of the stories in the objects they have painted in the scenes. It seems quite likely that the foliage might also be iconographic.



The 3-branched vine on the north wall.

As they appear on each side of the top of the window arches and there are four windows, we might expect there to be eight foliage paintings, but the artists have used two of the possible spaces for additional parts of the painted scenes, so there are only six. Two of these, above the western window of the north side of the chancel, are so badly eroded that they are undecipherable, leaving us with just one painting on the north wall and three on the south wall.

The north wall painting can be found on the east side of the eastern window, adjacent to the remains of the Crucifixion scene and above the painting of Mary Magdalene in the window alcove.

It depicts a vine with three branches coming out of a central small circle; one goes to the left to the top of the arch, the second to the right towards the Crucifixion scene, and the third downwards along the top edge of the arch, above Mary Magdalene. Nine leaves are still visible.

What kind of leaves are they? Trying to answer this question for all four paintings has taken up most of my research. There are two possibilities: the artist has painted from life, or he has copied from a book or other picture. As the scenes are copies of scenes from manuscripts, or even from a book of mural artist's masters, it is probable that the leaves are also copies of other paintings or drawings. I do not know of the existence of any medieval artist's copy book, but at the beginning of the 14th century, a few years before our paintings were executed, a new manuscript herbal was produced called the *Tractas de herbis*, in which the artist drew all the plants from nature, so perhaps our artist was

using that as his copy book? A medieval copy of the herbal is in the British Library and has been digitised so we can look at it online; it contains no leaves that exactly match our painting.

Even if we can identify the leaves, we then have to find out what they mean, what they symbolise. What comment is the artist making? And about which of the adjacent scenes? If we cannot identify the leaves then we can perhaps work in reverse by selecting leaves that have a meaning relevant to the adjacent scenes and then trying to match them to our paintings. One such leaf is the bindweed, convolvulus, which, because of its way of seeking to reach the top of its host, was seen as a metaphor for the search for eternity, and also denotes humility. Both Jesus on the cross and Mary Magdalene are figures associated with humility, Jesus, in the words of St Paul, “humbled himself to death even death on the cross”, and Mary Magdalene is believed to have been the woman who washed Jesus’ feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. Jesus’ Crucifixion is also a precursor of his Resurrection and eternal life, so on iconographic reasons alone perhaps this painting is of bindweed?

I have bindweed in my garden so have plenty of leaves to compare with the painting. Here are some of them, but there isn’t an obvious match with the shape of the leaves in the painting. It is possible that our painting is of bindweed, but I am not convinced.

Another possibility is the leaf of the silver birch tree, which does look very much like our painting. If this is what the artist was painting, then what is its meaning? In Celtic and Anglo-Saxon myths, the leaf of the silver birch was a symbol of purity and love, which again is appropriate for Jesus, but not for Mary Magdalene.

In the small town of Eksharad in central Sweden, there are a number of iron memorial crosses in the churchyard with iron birch leaves hanging from them. The surrounding countryside is covered with forests of silver birch, and I believe the symbolism of these crosses is one of resurrection, the silver birch leaves dying each autumn and ‘coming to life again’ in the spring. I have not yet found a reference to the use of silver birch leaves in medieval iconography, however, so this remains a work in progress.

Three subsequent articles will consider the other three visible paintings of leaves, all on the south wall of the chancel.

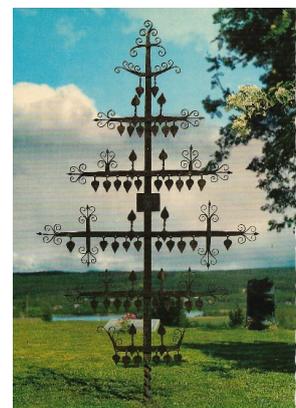
BOB HEATH-WHYTE



Bindweed in Bob’s garden (above)

A leaf of silver birch (below)

One of Eksharad’s memorial crosses (bottom)



FUTURE EVENTS

*(Friends events marked with *)*

Sunday 27 February: OCCAM plus ONE Concert at St Mary's *

OCCAM String Quartet, joined by Helen Smith, to play works by Beethoven and Mozart. 3pm at St Mary's. Teas will be served. Suggested donation £7 at the door.

Saturday 26 March: St Mary's Quiz Night *

Village Hall doors open at 7pm for 7.30 start. Join others to make a team of 8, or join a team that needs your help! Entrance £7.50. Bar and free supper. Contact Judith Bennett 01865 890958, text 07811 656597, or email Judith.bennetts@outlook.com.

Saturday 2 April: Jazz at St Mary's *

The Rob Terry Trio plays a Tribute to George Gershwin. Starts 7.30pm, doors open 6.45pm. Please let Geoffrey know on gsparrish@gmx.com of your intention to come, and arrive early to get your seat(s). Interval refreshments. Suggested donation £10 at the door.

Saturday 30 April – Monday 2 May: Lockdown Art Exhibition in St Mary's

Opening times to be decided. You can download participation forms from www.chalgrovechurch.org or collect from Chalgrove Post Office. All welcome.

Monday 2 May: Friends stall at May Day Village Festival *

Friends will be there to welcome all comers and offer free, delicious muffins.

Saturday 28 May: Plant Sale *

Plant Sale in the car park behind The Crown pub, 10.00am to 12.30pm. Plant donations welcome from 8.45am. Poor weather back-up date: Saturday 11 May, same place and time.

Sunday 26 June: Members of Friends Strawberry Cream Tea *

3pm-5pm at The Great Barn, 20 Mill Lane. Book the date in your diary, and do come.

EDITORIAL POLICY

We welcome your contributions (up to a maximum of 500 words) to the newsletter but we reserve the right to edit them. We should also point out that the views expressed in *The Friends Quarterly* are not necessarily those of the editorial team, the incumbent, or the PCC of St Mary's Church.

Editorial team:

Geoffrey	gsparrish@gmx.com
Lynn	friends@chalgrovechurch.org
Candida	candidahunt@gmail.com
Judith	Judith.bennetts@outlook.com