



The Friends Quarterly



Welcome to the Friends Newsletter

Jazz in St Mary's proved as popular as ever.

August 2023

Issue 47

FRIENDS UPDATE

It has been a busy three months since the last newsletter! As ever, there have been times of shared sadness, celebration and achievement.

In this edition we pay tribute to Matthew Marriage and to three Friends in Age Concern who have died. There are Church News reports on two weddings, and Rev. Mel Stanley's ordination into full priesthood, as well as reports on Friends events and activities.

A special celebratory moment for Friends took place on 15 June. This was the launch of the Touch Tour resource for blind and partially sighted visitors to St Mary's. Throughout its years of development, the Friends have given this outreach and heritage-focused project wholehearted support, both financially and in other ways. We were absolutely delighted to see it in use and so enthusiastically received by the users. A full report follows later as the Special Feature.

See pages 10-11 for the full Touch Tour report.

Please could you spread the word about what is now available to anyone with sight impairment who wants to visit St Mary's? To ensure that a guide is available for the visit, the contact is: friends@chalgrovechurch.org.

Another new Friends achievement has been the production of a general greetings card that will be sold in church and promoted at Friends and church events. The card is very well designed in concertina form, and features images from the wall paintings in St Mary's chancel. This is another way in which Friends can help to raise awareness of the church's very special 14th-century heritage features, whilst also raising money to support maintaining the fabric of the building and churchyard. This, in a nutshell, sums up what Friends are for!



All Friends events and activities help to make St Mary's better known and better seen. Thanks to your support, St Mary's heritage can now also be 'better seen' by visitors with sight impairment. We hope that our future events and activities will continue to bring into the building a wider population than the congregation and will also provide opportunities for many to meet socially, together enjoying music, gardening interests and brain-teasing quizzes.

The new card – these photos don't do it justice! – will soon be displayed and on sale in church. We do hope you will support this venture by buying them.

LYNN BAKER
on behalf of the Friends Committee

A NOTE FROM THE VICAR

Dear Friends,

I hope you are all well. This is a short note from me.

I was thinking the other day about the way that, since the official end of the pandemic, life has opened up again. At St Mary's, this has taken the form of a refocus of our attention towards ministry to children and families.

Messy Church has now been going for about a year and a half. The relaunched 'Tots' has found new life as a group, where we are able to meet with parents and carers as well as enjoy the noise and the play of the little ones. All of this has been made possible by a dedicated team of helpers, and the flexibility of our wonderful building, which has accommodated the children's area as if it has always been there. This is as it should be; there is a line in the Psalms (145.4) that goes:

*One generation commends your works to another;
they tell of your mighty acts.*

One unexpected joy happened in July when we were able to have the first of what I hope will be a regular series of children's rock concerts in the building. The concert happened by happy coincidence: my youngest takes drum lessons from Mr Chamberlain, one of the music teachers in the village. He usually organises an end of term revue, involving several bands, made up of children (and often their parents). So I said, "Why don't you come to the church – we have loads of room, accessible seating, and fabulous acoustics – plus, it is the coolest building in the village in the height of summer." And so they did!

Bands played (even I had a go!) for an hour and a bit. Refreshments (fizz, soft drinks, water, coffee) were served, and a good time was had. This felt like hospitality as it ought to be.

Of course, we couldn't be this hospitable if our building was not so well supported by the community and congregation, and the Friends are a key part in all of this. So God bless you, and thank you for your work in supporting St Mary's.

FR MICHAEL

WE REMEMBER

MATTHEW MARRIAGE OCTOBER 1998 – MAY 2023

We are glad to pay tribute to Matthew and to his family as longstanding and loved members of St Mary's church family.

Matthew was baptised in Harmondsworth as a baby. When his family moved to Chalgrove he joined Tots, as did Gail, as his mother and later as a regular helper. In July 2011 Matt, his brother Sam and Gail were all confirmed in St Mary's by Bishop Colin Fletcher. Matthew served in church as a reader of lessons and later volunteered to train as a church guide.

His most committed service and witness to his faith was as a member of the Chalgrove Scouting movement, which opened the door to many life opportunities, notably attending the Annual Scouting Jamboree in Japan in 2015, and leading Chalgrove Explorers. His many years of volunteering and Scouting achievement were honoured when he was presented with the Diamond Chief Award.

Matt revelled in new experiences and adventures, all shared and enjoyed with his friends and family. The extent and depth of Matt's impact on community life, his warmth of friendship, and his love of living life to the full were evidenced in his funeral. A profound and deep shock and sadness was felt and shared by the many people, of all generations, who were there in support of his family and of one another.

No greater tribute to Matt could be given than that given by his family, who were so proud of him and loved him dearly. They courageously and lovingly accompanied him all the way, from his arrival in hospital until he died; from home to the church; in the eulogies spoken by Steve his father, and Sam, Thomas and Michael his brothers; and then to Matt's burial in St Mary's churchyard. Finally, they honoured his love of classic cars and sparkly sense of fun by dressing up his much loved and admired VW Beetle and parking it for all to see outside the Red Lion where, with the same generosity of spirit, Matt's family and Ray and Suzanne welcomed those who had attended the funeral.

Matt has not gone from the lives of his family and the many others whose lives he touched. He is and will be held in their minds and hearts to be remembered and re-remembered for very many years.

LYNN BAKER



Matt, whose funeral took place in St Mary's after the distribution of our May issue.

THREE FRIENDS FROM CHALGROVE TUESDAY CLUB

Three Friends sadly died within eight days of one another. On 19 July we lost Peggy Waugh, on 26 July, George Bowden died, and a day later Janet Cooper also died.

George, originally from Stadhampton, joined Age Concern's Tuesday Club in recent years. Janet was a long-time volunteer at Age Concern, first helping in the kitchen and then joining the coffee rota with her husband Lionel; more recently, frailty had caused Janet and Lionel to become full members – being served instead of serving. Both George and Janet will be sadly missed.

Peggy's death, so soon after the celebration of her 100th birthday, was very poignant. She had been in failing health since January, and there was a general crossing of fingers that she would reach her birthday in June. Together with Betty Farrell, also 100 in June, Peggy did make her centenary, and we celebrated both remarkable achievements with a party at the Tuesday Club and then a garden party at the Mill Barn. I can still see the beaming smile on Peggy's face as she was leaving the garden party – she had clearly enjoyed herself.

JUDITH BENNETT

PAST EVENTS

BELLEVUE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL CONCERT

From past experience of concerts by visiting choirs from the USA, we were hoping for an interesting and well performed concert by the Bellevue Christian School from Washington State. Our expectations were wildly exceeded at this concert on Saturday 24 June!

The choir entered singing 'Bonse Aba', a Christian song of celebration based on a folk song from Zambia, the words of which are loosely translated as 'Those who sing have the right to be called the children of God'. A lively and rhythmic piece, it set the tone for what was to follow.

For the programme the choir was divided into groups, starting and ending as the full combined choir, and also splitting into Women and then Men and then Kantorei, a smaller mixed group of very strong and talented voices.

They sang mostly unaccompanied and with more than the usual four parts of harmony usually sung by choirs, for example in Gustav Holst's 'Ave Maria' the Women sang in eight parts – quite extraordinary and beautiful.



The choir, who attend a Christian school, sing from their hearts and thoroughly enjoy every minute of their singing – and we did too.

The Men then sang 'The Wellerman', a maritime song that was for recreation not work (and therefore not technically a sea shanty). With much bravado and gusto, they sang without a conductor, taking their cues from each other and not missing a single beat. The Kantorei group started with Rachmaninov and ended with Gershwin, all beautifully sung in many parts and with complete precision. It was difficult to hear individual voices when they were singing together because each word sounded as one with no late notes.

The combined final section contained four Christian songs, 'All my heart this night rejoices', 'For Good', 'Praise his Holy Name' and 'There is a Redeemer'. For the last one the choir moved away from the front, walking down to position themselves all around us before they started, and creating a very moving ending to what was a most interesting and very enjoyable concert.

Organised by the Friends of St Mary's, who also provided the refreshments, this was an excellent evening and a great opportunity to meet some very talented young singers.

BOB HEATH-WHYTE

FRIENDS STRAWBERRY CREAM TEA

The afternoon of Sunday 2 July was warm and very sunny – a rarity for July this year, as it turned out. A merry crowd of Friends enjoyed a lovely afternoon with good company, delicious cakes, a beautiful setting – and of course the strawberries with cream!

Thank you so much to Lynn, Charles and several members of their family for hosting a very enjoyable event.

LOUISE BATES

JAZZ AT ST MARY'S

On 22 July the Pete Billington Trio brought the glamour and feel of a sultry New Orleans jazz club to a Chalgrove summer's evening.

Jazz? In a church? Anticipating this unspoken question, the band kicked off with 'Hymn to Freedom' – itself perhaps Oscar Peterson's gentle and beautiful tribute to 'I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel to be Free', the Civil Rights anthem of 1960s America. You know, the one that everyone knows from Nina Simone. And Barry Norman. And why not.

Then we were into the evening's main theme: music inspired by Walt Disney tunes. From the infectious jungle rhythms of 'Bare Necessities' to the tears shed by toys of 'When She Loved Me'; from putting your trust in snakes, to feeding birds. No matter which Disney era you prefer, the set list had something for everyone.

The musicianship was amazing: Pete with fast fingers flying across his piano in a wild ride of improvisation; Paul Jefferies mesmerising us with his gorgeous double bass (which must be a thrilling instrument to play, if a little awkward to carry on the bus); and Simon Price on brushes and sticks, directly controlling his audience's tapping toes.

If you want to hear it all again, you can recreate the experience at home. Just search for The Magic of Sidney by The Pete Billington Trio on bandcamp.com.

SAM LAMB



Pete, Paul and Simon in full swing on keyboard, bass and drums.

CHURCH NEWS

REV'D MEL'S ORDINATION AS PRIEST

On Sunday 25 June, we joined people from all over the diocese in Dorchester Abbey, where our own Reverend Mel was being ordained Priest.

The actual ordination was particularly moving. The Bishop of Dorchester, Gavin Collins, and assisting priests laid their hands on the head of each candidate. Then the candidates held their hands, palms up, towards the Bishop who anointed them with consecrated oil and continued with the ordination prayer. The newly ordained priests stood and their Training Incumbent, in Mel's case Father Michael, replaced their ordination stole, now to be worn priest-wise. The newly ordained priests turned to face the congregation and were welcomed with a huge round of applause.

Rev'd Mel then officiated at Holy Communion in St Mary's for the first time, assisted by Rachel and Rev'd Sarah, friends and fellow trainees at Cuddesdon Theological College.

This was a really special day in so many ways, and we wish Mel every blessing as she starts on her journey as an ordained Priest.

JANE REEVE

Mel leading Holy Communion in St Mary's for the first time, wearing her beautiful new chasuble.



WEDDING CONGRATULATIONS

To the delight of their families and many friends, Andrew Dixon (Andy) and Irene Ann Stanley (Anna) were married in St Mary's on 3 June. The church was full of joy and celebration, the service uplifting, the bride looked stunning, and the bridegroom looked almost bewildered by his happiness. His splendidly kilted Best Man escorted Anna up the aisle and then stood beside him in support.

Stadhampton church hall was beautifully decorated and arranged for the reception, and the meal delicious and generous to a fault. Thank you Andy and Anna.

We felt honoured to be invited to share such a very special day with Andy and Anna and to see and feel the warmth of family and friendships around them to "support and uphold their marriage in the years to come".

CHARLES AND LYNN BAKER



An elegant Anna on her and Andy's special day.

WEDDING CONGRATULATIONS

Lucy Davis and Charles Austen were married in St Mary's on Saturday 17 June. Andrew, Lucy's Dad, stepped aside from his usual role as bellringer and proudly walked her down the aisle, leaving the team to 'give it their best' in honour of such a special occasion.

The couple have been together since their sixth form days in Lord Williams's School in Thame, though the family connections go back even farther. Lucy and Charles are now living in Chinnor, where both Andrew and Charles grew up, and Lucy's and Charles's grandmothers were good friends.

LYNN BAKER

BELL RINGERS' REPORT

The Ringers have been busy over the last few months at both St Mary's and St Helen's, ensuring that the bells are rung for as many services as possible. Practice nights are well attended and very sociable, and we usually start and finish by ringing rounds to improve our striking.

A steady number of weddings has kept us busy. As noted above, on Saturday 17 June I left the team in charge whilst I walked my daughter Lucy down the aisle for her marriage to Charles Austen. A special day, with the team ringing Plain Bob and Grandsire Doubles.

We have also celebrated the safe arrival of Faye and Jonathan O'Hara's new baby, a daughter named Edith and sister to Dorothy. Who knows – maybe I'll be teaching these little girls how to bell ring one day!

At our last practice in July, a year to the day since he passed away, we remembered Brian Gray. We were joined by Fr Michael, Jeanette Barrington and Alison, Margaret Coombe's daughter. Fr Michael led us in prayer, giving thanks for the lives of Brian and Margaret, and for the circle of life as we welcome baby Edith into the world. After ringing Grandsire, we raised a toast to all three.

In the months ahead visiting ringers will be joining us in the ringing chambers, and we have plans to start a regular practice at St. Helen's.

ANDREW DAVIS
TOWER CAPTAIN AND STEEPLE KEEPER



Here comes the bride – Lucy escorted by Dad Andrew.

SPECIAL FEATURE

ST MARY'S TOUCH TOUR

On 15 June St Mary's launched what we hope will become an increasingly well-known and popular Touch Tour experience for visitors to the church who have limited or no sight and want to enjoy the richness of our heritage features. It is the first of its kind in the Oxford Diocese.

Our visitors who came to use the resource for the first time were members of MyVision and of the Oxford Gardens, Libraries and Museums (GLAM) Touch Tour service. Members of Friends provided hospitality, and Fr Michael welcomed everyone. Some of our church guides were also there to help. The event proved to be a wonderful experience for our visitors, for the guides helping them, and for those who had helped in the development work.



The full audio and touch resource: one of the six touch-sensitive (Swell) images, PenFriend and headphones (left), and a visitor listening with the headphones while exploring details of one of the images through touch (below).

Having alerted various media outlets about the resource and the planned tour, the *Church Times* wrote a feature on it, a research worker attached to Canterbury Cathedral has an interest in developing a similar resource, and BBC Radio Oxford requested a recording of the event, followed by a live interview with the two of us. Here is the link to listen to it:

<https://soundcloud.com/oxforddiocese/breakthrough-church-painting-guide-for-people-living-with-sight-loss>

Many readers will know that this project has been long in the making – even before the 2016 refurbishment of the church was completed – and we think it's worth describing in some detail the background to the momentous day of the launch as



so many individuals and organisations have contributed their expertise to make the idea a reality.

To follow through on the commitment made by the church when applying for the National Heritage Lottery grant, St Mary's Lay Reader Bob Heath-Whyte led new initiatives in outreach, especially with minority groups in mind. Using his deep knowledge of the church's heritage features and his considerable technical expertise, he enabled two excellent audio-visual guides to St Mary's to be developed, one for use by adults and the other for children, both accessible by uploading an app or by using headphones and audio sets.

Similarly committed to outreach and heritage, the Friends supported the development of a guide for blind or sight limited visitors from the outset. Looking back, we realise that key moments in this were inspired by people who we hoped would be future users of the guide. It was members of the Ashmolean's Touch Tour service who advised us to provide touch-sensitive Swell images of selected heritage features rather than the Braille descriptions we had envisaged. Later, when trialling the Swell images we had developed with the help of Dr Susan Griffiths, members of the Oxfordshire Association for the Blind (OAB, now MyVision) asked for sound recordings to accompany the images. Susan told us about the PenFriend, a recording device produced by the RNIB that could fulfil the need for sound as well as touch, and enable users to get the most from their visit to St Mary's. Trialling the scripts before they were recorded, Candida's blind friend Irene told us how important colour descriptions are for her. What an important realisation! It is thanks to her that our recordings were considerably enriched.

We are grateful to everyone who contributed to the project, and in particular to:

Members of OAB/MyVision and GLAM's Touch Tour service
John Cook (artist, illustrator of wall paintings as first painted)
Dr Susan Griffiths (GLAM Community Engagement Officer)
Jude Barrett (GLAM Continuing Education Officer)
Simon Reynolds (raised image work)
Russell Kilmister (recordings)
Kate Clyne (RNIB, help to add recordings to PenFriends)
Rachel Jaques (historical accuracy advisor)
Margaret Hauser (line drawings)
Madeleine Katkov (wall painting conservator)
Charles Baker (press release)
Friends of St Mary's Church (financial support)

The Friends of St Mary's also played a vital part in the project, not least in enabling us to buy the PenFriend devices – thank you so much.

BOB HEATH-WHYTE AND LYNN BAKER

FUTURE EVENTS

*(Friends events marked with *)*

Saturday 9 and Sunday 10 September: Heritage Open Weekend*/Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust Ride and Stride

Saturday 9th – Church open for Heritage* from 10.00am to 1pm, and from 4pm to 5pm. Sign in and welcome for Ride and Stride participants from 10.00am to 6pm.

Sunday 10th – Church open for Heritage* from 11.30am to 4pm.

Editors' note: Friends offer the welcome and hospitality for Heritage visitors. Please volunteer to help for an hour on either day. Contact friends@chalgrovechurch.org or 01865 400402.

Saturday 7 October: Church Banquet

The church will be open at 6.30pm for a 7pm start. Tickets cost £20. To reserve tickets or book a table for 8 guests please contact Jeanette Barrington on 01865 890607 or email barringtonjeanette@gmail.com

Saturday 4 November: Church Quiz Night*

7pm to 10pm in the village hall. £10 entry with light supper provided. Bar and raffle. Please book in your quiz team with Judith Bennett on 01865 890958, 07811 656597 or email judith.bennetts@outlook.com

EDITORIAL POLICY

We welcome your contributions (up to a maximum of 400 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:

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