



The Friends Quarterly



Welcome to the Friends Newsletter

The restored weathervane stands proud atop the church tower.

Autumn 2025

Issue 55

FRIENDS UPDATE

We hope that some of you were able to come to the June concert and that you enjoyed the evening. It was a very successful event, giving pleasure to the audience and the choir and also raising about £500, which will go towards the Remembrance Garden project. None of this would have been possible without considerable help from our treasurer Bob and his wife Marian, who volunteered their time and energy when much needed. Our thanks to both of them and to all the church and Friends members who also gave their support.

As you know, successful events happen when they are backed up by good teamwork. In this update, we are appealing to our members to let us know if they can be part of a team providing hospitality to visitors coming to St Mary's during the two days of Heritage Open Weekend (HOW). This is the next Friends event, being held on Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 September, between 10.00am and 4pm on the Saturday and 11.00am to 4pm on the Sunday. A few members are comfortable guiding visitors around the heritage features and explaining the use of the touch tour resource, and it would be hugely helpful if other members could offer the welcome and serve light refreshments.

Please see page 7 for details on how to take part in the Ride and Stride event during HOW.

This year the HOW offers us an opportunity to promote the Friends and encourage much needed new membership. By being there you will demonstrate the purpose of membership, viz to support the fabric and life of the church for the benefit of the whole community, and to make its stunning heritage features better known. Your help for an hour or so on either or both days would be invaluable. Please consider it, and contact Lynn (01865 400402 or lynnbaker1@btinternet.com) if you can lend a hand.

Thank you.

LYNN, JUDITH, CANDIDA AND BOB
The Friends Committee

A NOTE FROM THE VICAR

Dear Friends

When I was in my early thirties, Kirsty and I attended a large Church of England church, whose vicar had a saying: 'When there are a lot of you, "love" looks a lot like good organisation'.

By this, I think the point that priest was making was to do with meaningful personal contact. The anthropologist Robin Dunbar famously argued that human beings only have brain space for about 150 stable relationships; this is called 'Dunbar's number'. The stability of these relationships requires time and attention, and when a community exceeds a certain size, good organisation compensates by making sure everyone receives care. So it seems my former vicar was on to something.

In a smaller village context, 'love' still looks a lot like good organisation, but here the issue is less to do with the limits imposed by Dunbar's number. In thousands of village churches around the country, the challenge is to find volunteers and resources. Fail to do that, and there are more jobs than people, and meaningful personal contact is strangled by an endless round of meetings, tasks, and other necessary but not necessarily enjoyable chores.

It is for that reason I am daily thankful that St Mary's has been blessed over the years with energetic and well-organised people (including the Friends) who have had the foresight to care for, restore, re-order and develop our building. I cannot tell you how much difference it makes to the life of a parish priest to be free from the constant round of building-related stresses. It has freed me up to think about other things, such as developing the ministry of the church – and these are bearing some fruit in projects such as the Junior Choir Development project.

I am also very grateful for the continued good organisation of such folk, including the working group who are currently looking at how to plan for the future of our churchyard. Proposals for consultation were recently received from our landscape architect, and we shall be considering a range of issues: maximising burial space, managing parking, using the churchyard as a reflective space, and environmental concerns. We hope this project will do for churchyard management what the re-ordering did for building management: enable us to organise away some of the ongoing stresses of property management. This will enable us to focus upon people and, because we are a Church community, bringing the needs of those people to our Lord, Jesus Christ!

For all that Friends does to support this work, thank you!!

God bless you!

FR MICHAEL

CHURCH NEWS

CELEBRATION, THANKSGIVING, MOVING ON

MATT CLARK'S ORDINATION

On Saturday 5 July, members of St Mary's congregation travelled to Oxford to witness the ordination of Matt Clark in Christ Church Cathedral. Before the service we assembled in the beautiful quadrangle of Christ Church and were then shown to our seats in the cathedral.

The presiding Bishop was Rt Revd Mary Gregory, Bishop of Reading, and the service began with the stirring hymn *O worship the King*.

There were seven ordinands, three from the Archdeaconry of Berkshire, which included Matt, and four from the Archdeaconry of Dorchester. Because of the restricted viewing in the main body of the cathedral there were TV screens positioned near all the seating areas so that the congregation could fully watch the proceedings.

The service lasted for nearly two hours, and it was both a joyous and moving occasion, especially when the ordinands made their Declarations of Assent. After this ceremony each newly ordained deacon was given a book of the New Testament. Communion followed at various stations and each ordinand helped to offer the sacraments to the congregation, during which time the cathedral choir sang *Agnus Dei* in Latin.



Matt and Jenny (above); Matt (left) with his fellow candidates face the congregation as they commit to upholding their friends and family in their new ministry'.

Matt will now serve as Deacon in the Benefice of West Downland in Berkshire.

After the service we all returned to Chalgrove, where Matt and Jenny generously provided a very welcome afternoon tea in their home for us and their family and friends. Our thanks to Matt and Jenny for making their celebration so special and so personal. They were married in St Mary's, and have been much-loved members of the congregation for several years, so it was especially joyful to share the beginning of their new life venture with them.

Matt left the very next day to take his first service in his new Benefice, and we wish him and Jenny all the very best for the future in their new community and new home.

MARGARET MOLLOY

FAREWELL TO MEL

On the afternoon of Sunday 20 July Revd Mel Stanley presided over a Book of Common Prayer Service. At this special occasion the choir sang the anthem *Day by Day*, and after the service we celebrated with prosecco and nibbles.

We said our final farewell to Mel as she moves away from the Oxford Diocese, and Jane, a churchwarden, presented her with a painting of St Mary's Church by Janet Dunkley. In her short presentation speech Jane said: 'Revd Mel, we had our farewell last year when you moved to work with the Dorchester Team, so as Fr Michael says this is a celebration of your appointment as Rector of Walgrave, Hannington, Wold and Scaldwell [in Northamptonshire].

Although this is a celebration it is also a 'final farewell', and we want to take this opportunity to say thank you for all you have given to the benefice of St Mary's and St Helen's. We remember when you first came to us for a few weeks, left and then rejoined a short time after, and since then we have seen how you have grown in your vocation. We attended your Ordination as Priest and celebrated your first mass with you here in St Mary's two years ago.

Our loss is your new benefice's gain, but it is not a loss as you are ready for your new role and challenges ahead; how fortunate they are to have you. So Mel, we give you this painting of St Mary's, don't forget us as we won't forget you. You will be in our prayers, and we send you and Rob off with our every blessing.'

JANE REEVE
Churchwarden



The painting of St Mary's presented to Mel, who said she was delighted with it and that it would be placed in her study as a reminder of her time in the benefice.

BELLRINGERS REPORT

Throughout the summer many of the team have assisted with weddings at Brightwell Baldwin, Ewelme and Henley. My thanks to all of you!

However, having enough ringers for regular services and practices is an ongoing struggle, especially during the holiday seasons. Learning to ring can take months, then years to grasp method ringing, and in this digital age that might seem rather unattractive to many. But like many such skills, it is immensely rewarding once mastered.

If you or anyone you know would like to come and talk to me to learn more about 'the art' I would be delighted! My contact details are chalgrove@southoxon.odg.org.uk or by phone 07815 374773. Thank you.

ANDREW DAVIS
Tower captain

CARETAKER'S REPORT

Every five years the church building is inspected by a Diocese-approved architect. This enables us to keep the building in good order on the basis that 'a stitch in time saves nine'.

The recent inspection of St Mary's revealed some necessary repair work that has been dealt with over the last few months. John Burder, our local artisan builder, has been busy, replacing the missing roof tiles, then repointing stonework on the tower and south walls. Many of you will have seen the scaffolding around the weathervane. It is now resplendent in black and gold and the cockerel is again turning in the breeze, having been freed and put back on a new bearing.

In a few weeks' time loose floor tiles in the nave will be carefully removed and reset. I have replacements on order from the company Original Features, and when we can book a couple of days between services John will do the work.

ANDREW DAVIS



The newly restored weathervane.

OHCT RIDE AND STRIDE

Saturday 13 September 2025 from 10am to 6pm

This annual event takes place throughout the county and is organised by the Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust (OHCT). Its purpose is to raise money to support the maintenance and upgrading of the fabric of the county's historic churches and chapels. Many such buildings will be open to visitors, and all can be included in a sponsored Ride or Stride. Full details, including how to sponsor a st/rider, how to register as a st/rider and obtain your sponsors, and how to pay in your donations can be found at www.ohct.org.uk/ride-stride.

This year Alan Thompson is organising the welcomers and paying in any cash donations from St Mary's sponsors. If you would like to sponsor someone, you can use the following website to search the names of everyone who has signed up and make your choice. www.goodhub.com/go/ohct-ride-and-stride-2025. You can sponsor st/riders via the OHCT website (see above) or using details in Pews News. If you're fundraising via the OHCT website please tick the box that gives 50% directly to St Mary's.

If you would like to support us in Chalgrove by welcoming visiting st/riders to St Mary's, please use the sign-up sheet at the back of the church. Thank you.

JENNIFER THOMPSON



The QR code for information on this year's Ride and Stride event.

FRIENDS EVENT

SONGS FOR A SUMMER'S EVENING

Saturday 21 June was a very hot day, so it was pleasant to step into the cool surroundings provided by the church.

The excellent Watlington Community Choir, supported by a talented piano accompanist and an enthusiastic choir director, made for a very entertaining evening. The choice of music suited a summer evening and there were many songs we all knew. The director also introduced each section and told us about the origins of the pieces they had chosen. The evening finished with a rendition of *Lovely Day*.

In the interval we were served a selection of appetizing food and drinks. It was a very sociable, well-supported event. Thank you to everyone involved in organising and supporting the concert, especially to those involved in the planning, publicity and hospitality. Just over £500 was raised for Friends to gift to St Mary's PCC in support of the planned Remembrance Garden. The Parochial Church Council is delighted and grateful, as this will enable equivalent church monies to be freed up to support the development of a Junior Choir.

FUTURE EVENTS

*(Friends events marked with *.)*

Saturday 13 September: OHCT Ride and Stride

10.00am to 6pm; please see page 7 for details.

Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 September: Heritage Open Weekend

Church open 10.00am to 4pm on Saturday and 11.00am to 4pm on Sunday. Welcome and refreshments provided by Friends*. Please help by contributing refreshments and/or helping to welcome visitors for a period of time on either or both days. Contact Lynn using details in Members' Update on page 2.

Sunday 21 September: Messy Church Pet Service

In church, 10.30am. All welcome, and refreshments provided.

Sunday 28 September: Harvest Celebration Service

In church, 4pm, followed by a shared meal; all welcome.

Saturday 25 October: St Mary's Autumn Banquet

In church, 6.30 for 7pm. A three-course meal, £22.50 per person. Please bring your own wines. For tickets or information contact barringtonjeanette@gmail.com or olga.james@me.com.

Sunday 9 November: Remembrance Day

9.30am Communion Service in church.

10.50am Service at Chalgrove Village War Memorial.

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.

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