



The Friends Quarterly



Welcome to the Friends Newsletter

A highlight of the year: the St Mary's Banquet

Winter 2025

Issue 56

FRIENDS UPDATE

I (Lynn) am writing this on Tuesday 11 November, which is Remembrance Day, and of course a time of national significance. For Judith, our fellow committee member, editorial team member, and friend, it is also a very poignant and personal day to remember. After some weeks receiving nursing and medical care at home, her dear husband Tim died peacefully this morning, and our care and sympathies are with Judith at this hard time.

Tim was also a longstanding Friend of St Mary's, and we will pay tribute to him in a future edition of the Quarterly.

It is in this edition that we look forward to the annual St Nick's Fayre, when St Mary's hosts the community in a pre-Christmas time of festivity. Andrew Davis writes more about this later in the newsletter, but my appeal is to all Friends to let me know if you can spare an hour from 11.00am to 2.30pm to help man the Friends' stall. We will be selling our greetings cards as usual. Having launched the cards in 2023, our sales record shows that we are about £90 short of breaking even on the production cost. It will be a great moment of celebration to reach the point when each sale is a profit!

*Please see pages
6–7 for details
about St Nick's
Fayre.*

On behalf of the committee, I want to thank Bob Kuyper, our Treasurer, for his support as a committee member. Bob has decided to step down from that role, but we are delighted that he will continue as our Treasurer.

Finally, as this is the last edition of the year, here is a gentle reminder that if you would like to review your annual membership donation this is a good moment to do it, before the beginning of our next financial year.

LYNN, JUDITH AND CANDIDA
The Friends Committee

A NOTE FROM THE VICAR

Dear Friends,

I can hardly believe that it is approaching Advent once more. Not once did my younger self believe my parents and grandparents when, Cassandra-like, they wagged their fingers and said, 'When you get older, time will just seem to run faster and faster!' Yet here we are, moving towards the

second quarter of the 21st century at pace. And 2025 seems to have been a blur. Yet one thing that my various elders failed to tell me was that the gift of children and young people can make one slow down and enjoy the moment. I think that Advent and Christmastide are the times when I am most aware of this. Partly, it is due to the sheer number of services and activities at St Mary's at which children and families play a big part.

- ◆ On Saturday 6 December, we have the St Nick's Fayre in church, at which I am assured St Nick himself will make his usual appearance.
- ◆ On Sunday 7 December we have our annual 'Toy and Tin' appeal service.
- ◆ On Friday 12 December, we welcome back Mr Chamberlain for his Christmas Student Showcase Concert. This is a free event, at which Kane's music students perform a series of rock and pop hits, including some Christmas-themed songs.
- ◆ The school joins us on Thursday 18 December for the school Carol Service, which is a lovely event.
- ◆ On Sunday 21 December, we have our annual Christingle Service, which also includes a Nativity play. That afternoon, we also have our annual service for those who struggle with the season: *A Blue Christmas*.
- ◆ Then, only a few short days later, we begin the celebrations proper with our annual Christmas Eve Crib Service, followed by our Midnight Service, and Family Communion on Christmas Day.

Then I sleep!

We do all of this activity with children and families for various reasons: partly because it is fun; chiefly, because the faith that inspired this community to erect and beautify the church, the fabric of which you generously help to maintain, matters; and also because communities must pass on what they have to their children if they are to flourish. Reaching out to another generation in our village is something we are called, as church and as community, to do. With that in mind, please keep an eye out for a new arrival, Rachael Pedley, our new Junior Choir Development Officer, who will play a major part in our outreach to young people in the next few years.

I do hope to see you at some or all of these. Through the Christ-child, God really does *'impart to human hearts the blessings of His heaven'*. May He bless you this Advent and Christmas!

FR MICHAEL

CHURCH NEWS

STUDENT MUSICAL SHOWCASE CONCERT

St Mary's church building has excellent acoustics, and this attracts a wide variety of musical performance. In July we were delighted to welcome local musician and music teacher Kane Chamberlain to showcase music from his students.

Students play an array of instruments including guitars, drums, keyboards and vocals as they perform a rich selection of songs such as A Little Respect, Pink Pony Club and Run, Run Rudolph.

The students, often accompanied by family members – including Father Michael – work very hard to share with us such wonderful music. Kane does a fantastic job pulling it all together. It's a very special evening, and we are already looking forward to their pre-Christmas concert on 12 December. Do come!

KIRSTY LAKEY

OHCT RIDE AND STRIDE

On 13 September members of St Mary's welcomed and signed in 24 St/Riders. They were offered refreshments and encouraged on their way to fulfil their fundraising targets.

To date Alan's cycle ride is the main fundraiser for St Mary's, though we won't know of anyone else until OHCT pays our share of the funds. With the inclusion of Gift Aid, Alan raised a splendid total of £921, of which £385 will be given to St Mary's church. Alan writes:

'It is always a bit of a gamble when you sign up to do a charity ride in September. The weather can be roasting hot, or it can pour incessantly. With wind and rain forecast for the afternoon and a planned route with 21 churches and 67km of cycling it was an early start at 9.30am at Lewknor, riding over to Ewelme and then on to Dorchester before heading back to Chalgrove. It was not until church 17 at Stadhampton that it rained. Miraculously, the last leg through Newington and the Berricks skirted the hailstorm that hit Chalgrove. A very big thank you to everyone who sponsored my participation in this fundraising event. I am now back in training for next year.'

Our thanks to everyone who very generously sponsored Alan, and/or helped at the church on the day. It's thanks to everyone's generosity that the event is such a success.

JENNIFER AND ALAN THOMPSON



*Isabelle Goldsmith
and Fr Michael
performing at the
concert.*

Editorial note: *If you would like to be involved in, or know more about, this very worthwhile annual event either as a St/Rider for St Mary's (walking, cycling, horse riding) or as a church welcomer, please contact Jennifer. Thank you.*

jenniferjanethomp@btinternet.com

ST MARY'S BANQUET

Friendship, Fellowship and Food. There is nothing as exciting and relaxing as the fun and feasting that is provided on St Mary's Banquet night, which this year took place on Saturday 25 October.

Supported by all the dedicated helpers, our 'MasterChef' Jeanette and her team prepared and cooked a delicious and generous three-course meal for some 60 guests.

The evening's highlights for us were the sharing of time together with so many friends. And secondly the candlelight, music and song. What more could we have wished for, except perhaps winning the quiz?

Special thanks to Jeanette and her stalwart team of willing volunteers, and to Fr Michael for the wholehearted support of St Mary's. The occasion raised £1346.16, which will be used to support the ministry of the church.

Here's to seeing you all again next year.

And finally...prayers for all those who were unable to be with us.

ROSS AND JUDY MARTIN

BELLRINGERS REPORT

Congratulations to Alison who rang her first quarter on Sunday 26 October, dedicated to her parents for their Diamond Wedding Anniversary. This is a milestone for any ringer, concentrating on ringing 1260 changes, taking over 45 minutes to complete.

Meanwhile we continue to join Watlington's practice night every third Wednesday, helping both teams experience Triples and Major (change ringing on 7 and 8 bells respectively).

ANDREW DAVIS
Tower captain



Jeanette and churchwarden Jane, bottles at the ready at the Banquet.

CARETAKER REPORT

Quinquennial report

All external work has been completed. Internal work on the uneven floor tiles will begin early in the New Year.

St Nick's Fayre

Parochial Church Council members are busy planning for the last fundraising church event of the year. St Mary's will be at the heart of the community, again being a welcoming meeting place with hospitality for all.



St. Nick's Fayre

Saturday 6 December
at
St Mary's Church Chalgrove
11am - 3pm

Prize Draw
Stalls & Produce
Santa's Magical Grotto
Lunches, Teas, Mince Pies,
Mulled Wine and Much More
Organised by St Mary's Church

*There will be a great
deal to enjoy at the
Fayre.*

Do come and enjoy the atmosphere of anticipated Christmas celebration. Hot drinks, sweet treats, mulled wine, mince

pies, and hot dogs will all be available – and of course Santa will leave his busy elves to join us in his grotto. Local groups will be offering gifts to buy and games to play.

Christmas Raffle tickets are now available, so do buy some – there's a good chance of winning something, and every donation helps to maintain St Mary's in good condition to continue its welcoming and open-door hospitality for our village community and beyond.

Helping hands are always needed to join the team who set up for the Fayre and then tidy up at the end. Donations of bottles for the bottle stall will also be gratefully received. Thank you.

Contacts

Raffle tickets: Andrew, andrewjdavis5@icloud.com or Jeanette Barrington, 01865 890607

Set-up and tidy-up: Andrew, or use the sign-up sheet in church

Bottles: Bob Kuyper, 07518 506406, or use the box provided in church

ANDREW DAVIS

UPDATE: THE FRIENDS AND ST MARY'S CHURCHYARD

I wrote in February about the appointment of architect Henry Sanders of Hestia Architects to consult on the initial stages of a long-term plan for St Mary's Churchyard. It was at that early stage that the Friends' committee agreed to help fund the creation of a memorial garden as the first element of the plan.

The garden will be designed to be a beautiful, peaceful, and distinct place for quiet contemplation, and where ashes will be buried directly in the soil. It will be durable, requiring minimal repair and maintenance. Burials will be at low cost, as no permanent memorial markers are involved. This can be important for families of the dead. We will record names in a book in the church which all can view.

Throughout the process Diocesan advice and approval will be sought. We will provide a sympathetic and appropriate way of extending the capacity for burials of all kinds as far into the future as possible.

So where are we now? We have identified one site for the memorial garden that has promise. This lies at the west end

of the church on the other side of the footpath from the patch where we have been growing wild flowers.

Henry Sanders has now proposed a plan for this area. It fulfils the brief and provides space for more seating and somewhere to stand up old gravestones around the periphery. There will be a fairly low hedge all round, probably yew. The plan also provides more parking.

We will now talk over this new plan with the Diocese. We took on board the comments of their Church Buildings Officer, Hannah Robertson, who visited the churchyard before we wrote the design brief. We hope they will appreciate what we aim to do. Watch this space for the next update.

We will keep the Friends and the PCC informed. We will press on!

ANDREW WHITE

FRIENDS EVENTS

HERITAGE OPEN WEEKEND

During the weekend of 13 and 14 September St Mary's welcomed 48 visitors to this annual church event, for which the Friends provide hospitality and refreshments. This is a considerable increase in visitor numbers, we think partly due to St Mary's being named as one of this year's top ten accessible visitor sites by the national organising body that supports HOW events.

Our thanks to all the Friends and to members of the church congregation who rose to the challenge and provided a generous welcome and informative experience to all our visitors. This year, as well as the Touch Tour resource, we had the additional asset of showing Bob Heath-Whyte's new film about the wall paintings. Neither of these resources would have been possible without the costs having been partly met by St Mary's Friends. So, thank you again! The film proved a perfect way to enable visitors to get an overview of the Chancel wall paintings while enjoying (delicious) cake and a hot drink. Many visitors wanted to follow this with a more detailed personal tour of the paintings, which is always a pleasure to provide as the interest is keen.

Please see page 9 for an image of the film being shown.

LYNN BAKER



Visitors watching the new film about the wall paintings. Before her coming death, as announced to her by the angel Gabriel, Virgin Mary gives the disciple John the palm of paradise. This image is on the south wall of the chancel.

Editorial note: Learning more about our heritage features and then sharing that knowledge with visitors is a really fun and fascinating thing to do. The number of church guides has become depleted over recent years. You would receive a very warm welcome to the team if you are able to join us. For more information, please contact Lynn.

GREETINGS CARDS

Sometimes requests bear repeating, and I hope this is one of them. Please remember that since the church has been open daily to visitors, the Friends greetings cards have become a regular source of income into our account. St Nick's Fayre also provides an excellent opportunity for us to promote and sell the cards. If you can help to man the stall I would love to hear from you. Thank you.

LYNN BAKER
lynnbaker1@btinternet.com or 01865 400402

FUTURE EVENTS

*(Friends events marked with *.)*

Saturday 6 December: St Nick's Fayre

In church, 11.00am to 3pm. All welcome.

*Helpers needed on Friends card sale stall please.

Friday 12 December: Christmas Student Showcase Concert

In church, 7pm. All welcome. Admission free. Come and enjoy performances of rock and pop hits and some Christmas-themed songs.

Sunday 21 December: Messy Church Christingle Service with Nativity Play

In church, 10.30am. All welcome. Refreshments provided.

Sunday 21 December: *A Blue Christmas*

In church, 4pm. All welcome to this special service for those who struggle with the season.

Wednesday 24 December: Christmas Eve

In church, 4.30pm Carols and Crib Blessing; 11.30pm Midnight Mass.

Thursday 25 December: Christmas Day

In church, 9.30am Family Communion.

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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