



The Friends Quarterly



Welcome to the Friends Newsletter

A glimpse of the chancel through the squint.

Spring 2026

Issue 57

FRIENDS UPDATE

This is the first of our 2026 newsletters. We hope that by the time we distribute it there will be more signs of the coming spring and the return of sunnier days, warmth and less mud! We hope too that for all our members this year will bring much that is good, creative and worthy of celebration.

For St Mary's Church, and for the community it serves, 2026 marks a very special celebratory moment. The Sunday after Easter Day (12 April) marks the day when 10 years ago the building was reopened for worship, welcome and hospitality for all. For about 10 months prior to this the building had been closed for a major internal refurbishment, and the congregation enjoyed fellowship and worship with the Methodist community in the Chapel. During the closure St Mary's heritage features, particularly the medieval wall paintings, were carefully cleaned and conserved by experts; new discoveries were made of wall paintings dating from the 16th and 17th centuries. Our knowledge and appreciation of St Mary's heritage features was enhanced beyond measure, and the building was transformed into what you now see.

St Mary's worshipping community received a further blessing when the Methodist congregation chose to join with them for services and ministry. In recognition of the generous Lottery Fund donation towards the cost of the refurbishment, the joint congregations began the work of ensuring that St Mary's remarkable heritage features would be better known and better seen by this generation and well into the future.

Since 2016 Friends has continued to contribute much to the success of this undertaking by donating money generated from the Friends membership scheme and fundraising events. Thanks to the Touch Tour resources, visually impaired visitors can now enjoy, better understand and 'see' some of our heritage features, particularly the wall painting images; sales of our greetings cards help to spread the word about the wall paintings well beyond the village; our concerts also bring in audiences from beyond Chalgrove; and the screen and projector are used for some church services, and to enhance guided tours to St Mary's. This names just a few of the contributions the Friends scheme has made. Our current and ongoing commitment is to support the Memorial Garden project through to its completion.

There is much to be thankful for. On Sunday 12 April at 9.30am everyone is welcome to join the Anniversary celebrations in church, so please book the date in your diary and do come.

Friends activities and events for 2026 are either already fixed in the diary or in the pipeline. The Quiz Night has already taken place, and we include a report on this very successful event. Future confirmed events are listed on the final page. In the pipeline there are enquiries regarding possible concerts. So we are busy!

*See the report
on page 5.*

*See the Plant Sale
poster on page 6
and Future Events
on page 7.*

Which brings me to my appeal. In the Winter edition I wrote about Bob Kuyper stepping down from the Friends committee while remaining as our Treasurer. There are now only three of us on the committee, and we urgently need more committee members to generate ideas and with the enthusiasm to help plan and run events. **Please** could all our members give this very careful thought. The Friends scheme needs renewal from time to time – and this year is one of these times. If you believe that the Friends events and activities, and this newsletter, are all positive inputs into village life, and worth continuing because of this and for the benefits they bring to the village church, and you think you can help in any way, please contact me and we will be more than happy to meet and talk with you.

Thank you.

LYNN (01865 400402/07774 952781), JUDITH AND CANDIDA
The Friends Committee

WE REMEMBER

Tim Whatley March 1942–November 2025

Tim was a quiet gentleman whom we got to know well when he became a 'full-time regular' in our pub The Red Lion. His previous watering hole had been The Six Bells in Warborough. Tim would come in for his two pints of Butcombe Ale, but on doctor's advice and the promptings of poor health he cut this down to one pint. Among the many things that Tim liked to collect were beer mats.

On Sundays Tim and his wife Judith used to come for lunch to enjoy a meal in the company of my mother and their good friend and neighbour, Christine Smith, before she moved away from the village.

Tim's natural kindness became very evident when, towards the end of Covid restrictions, Raymond had a battle with a circular saw and lost. Tim volunteered to be Raymond's taxi service for the many long hospital appointments. Because he wasn't allowed into the hospital Tim patiently waited, read and snoozed in his car until Raymond was ready to go home.



*Tim Whatley, a
long-standing
member of the
Friends...*

At about that time Tim and Judith decided to marry, and they invited me, Raymond and Christine Smith to be their witnesses in their civil ceremony. Despite the Covid restrictions of required distancing, masks and limited numbers, their wedding day in April was full of fun, laughter and hand gel! Celebrations followed in The Red Lion, where we snuggled into blankets in a cold and windy marquee – this was one week before people could eat inside a pub or restaurant! We dutifully wore our masks and followed the one-way system. What a very special day for all five of us to remember.

If our dogs could speak, they would voice how much they miss Tim. Every day he would order a sandwich with his drink, most of which he gave to the dogs, despite being a 'cat man', and my constant nagging not to. Our dogs loved him and miss him and so indeed do we for his happy smile, determination, kindness and even his stubbornness.

SUZANNE SEXTON

CHURCH NEWS

BELLRINGERS REPORT

St Mary's Chalgrove

Practice nights have continued most weeks despite holidays, hospital visits and other commitments. Alison has achieved her first quarter peal, soon to ring another. Everyone in the team is making steady progress, so before long we may even manage 'Little Bob' again. On the third Wednesday of the month, we join the team at Watlington for a good chat and experience on eight bells.

Sadly, on Sundays we rarely ring all six of St Mary's bells. We continue to be indebted to Gordon who makes the trip from Little Milton to join us most weeks. New ropes have recently been supplied by Ellis and Pritchard. Waiting for the delivery was a test of my patience and DIY skills at repairing our old ropes to keep them in ringing condition! I fitted the new ropes over Christmas, though to be honest they are not as good as the previous set. The sallies (the woollen section of the rope) appear to be lacking in body, so time will tell how long they will last.

St Helen's Berrick Salome

With the assistance of Wendy, we have managed to ring on the first and third Sundays most months, often all six bells. As the church is quite remote from neighbouring houses, this year we will have some occasional ad hoc practice sessions which we hope won't be too intrusive for village residents. Details to follow.

ANDREW DAVIS
Tower captain



*...and with our
committee member
Judith on their
wedding day in
April 2021
– after 46 years
together!*

FRIENDS EVENTS

ST MARY'S QUIZ NIGHT

A warm welcome greeted us at the Quiz Night in Chalgrove Village Hall on 28 February. Organised by the Friends of St Mary's, the event was a roaring success, bringing together families, neighbours and friends for an evening of laughter and healthy competition. If you've not been to this quiz before, it's one to put on your quiz team calendar as a highlight next time it's on!

Good fun was had by all, as teams tackled a breadth of rounds, from science and technology to music, history and geography. The 'just for fun' bumper round proved particularly head-scratching, leaving many of us baffled! Quiz question composer extraordinaire Judith Bennett did a marvellous job crafting some answerable – and some not so answerable – questions. Meanwhile, Quiz Master Dave kept the rather rowdy crowd in line, commanding the room with humour and patience throughout the night.

At half time some lovely brain food was served by the helpful St Mary's crew – bread, crackers, cheeses, paté and pickles, grapes and flapjacks – which went down a treat with a glass of wine or beer from the very reasonably priced bar. There was a chance to have a little gamble on the raffle, with some lovely prizes up for grabs. Sadly, for my team, who will remain nameless, another low table finish, but we had a blast, won a raffle prize and shared good times with good friends. You can't win them all (or any it seems!).

CHARLOTTE BELL AND TEAM

EDITORS' NOTE: The quiz made a wonderful profit of £1182, all of which will be used by the Friends to support the life, work and fabric of the church. A huge thank you to our loyal and generous helpers, and to all the quiz enthusiasts who came and made the evening such fun.



Plan ahead for Chalgrove's

Plant Sale

Please

**Book the date – Saturday morning
9 May (16 May for back-up)**

**Grow the plants – veg or flowers
to donate**

**Come and buy – location is the
Car Park behind the Crown Pub**

See you there!

**Proceeds in support of the life, fabric and heritage
of St Mary's church.**

***Enquiries to 01865 400402 or lynnbaker1@btinternet.com
or to Pat Hougham on 07481 935817***

FUTURE EVENTS

(Friends events marked with *.)

Saturday 11 April: Chalgrove Progressive Supper

Evening event from 6pm. Contact Jeanette Barrington for details on 01865 890607 or barringtonjeanette@gmail.com.

Sunday 12 April: Benefice celebratory service

9.30am in church to mark the tenth anniversary of the return to St Mary's following the major refurbishment, and the beginning of our Ecumenical Welcome and the amalgamation of Anglican and Methodist congregations.

Saturday, Sunday and Monday 2,3,4 May: Art exhibition in church. Teas and refreshments. See next edition of *Link* for opening times.

Monday 4 May: Chalgrove May Festival

11.00am until 3.30pm on the recreation ground.

*Friends Muffin Stall and Open Church Welcome. Helpers much needed to support both these hospitality commitments. Muffin makers, stall or church manning – please contact Lynn.

***Saturday 9 May: Plant Sale**

9.30am to 11.30am in the car park behind The Crown. Back-up date Saturday 16 May. This has proved to be a major fund raiser, but its success relies on generous plant donations and many helping hands. Please support it this year; contact Lynn or Pat Hougham (see poster) if you can help with setting up and/or stall manning.

***Sunday 5 July: Strawberry Cream Tea**

3pm to 5 pm. Members only. Location tbd.

Saturday and Sunday 12/13 September: Heritage Open Days.

In church all day. Timing details tbd. *Hospitality provided by Friends. Helpers needed to bake, to set up and to welcome visitors. Contact Lynn, please, if you can give your time or talents.

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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