



The Friends Quarterly



Welcome to the Friends Newsletter

The annual Friends Strawberry Tea, hosted by Lynn and Charles, in full swing.

Autumn 2026

Issue 59

FRIENDS UPDATE

First, a message of sympathy to all members who have really struggled with the weeks of seemingly endless heatwave. My hope is that by the time you receive this edition, we will be experiencing easier climate conditions for ourselves, all our community, and our natural world.

The summer holiday months are deliberately 'quieter' in terms of Friends events and activities. However, since the last Quarterly we have enjoyed meeting and sharing time with the members who attended the Strawberry Cream Tea in early July.

We are delighted to confirm that our recruitment campaign for new committee members has borne good fruit. Our two recruits are both called Sue, so that will keep us on our toes when it comes to clear communication! We have met together socially to listen to what help they would like to offer, and the date for the first full committee meeting is already arranged. However, as five people is still a relatively small number for the committee work of the Friends to rely on and to continue in strength over future years, we would encourage you to consider whether you too can offer to help the Friends scheme in this way. Your support would be very welcome indeed.

Finally, it is with sadness that we acknowledge the recent death of Muriel Burton following a long period of increasing frailty. Muriel was a much respected, admired and loved village resident: respected for her intelligent and enquiring mind, especially on matters political; admired for her determination to continue her international travels for as long as possible and to represent the Liberal Party at home and abroad; and loved for her idiosyncrasies and for her deep commitment to her faith and Methodist membership.

Muriel's carers, both in her home and latterly in the care home, all grew very fond of her and she will be missed by them and by her friends in the village. Her funeral date has yet to be arranged so we have included only this brief tribute to her in our Autumn edition.

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

A NOTE FROM THE VICAR

Dear Friends,

I hope you have been managing in what has been an exceptionally hot and dry summer!

Every village, community, church and group must, from time to time, regenerate itself. Lately, we have begun that process at St Mary's, in the form of the renewal of our music department. With the advent of Rachael, our Junior Choir Development Officer, last year, we began recruiting younger singers. And more recently we had a very successful recruitment drive for our 'rebooted' Senior Choir, who had their first big sing at the end of July. Do come along at Harvest, as we hope to have both choirs together!

We're very grateful to the Friends of St Mary's for their recent notice in Pews News (#129, 12 July) regarding the need to recruit more Friends' Committee members. This is something we very much support, since the renewal of all the aspects of our common life is essential to our being here in coming years and decades. Church, in all its aspects, flourishes best when we spread it around.

Sometimes, regeneration looks an awful lot like starting over. This was the case earlier this year, when we decided to revive what I am reliably informed is the old 'tradition' (well, not quite a tradition!) of having a large meeting to discuss the forthcoming year's social, musical and heritage events. The aim is to review what has gone well, to plan what may be new, and to make sure that each event is secure in monetary, time, and volunteer support – and to publish the resultant schedule along with the Christmas Card. We have pencilled in the afternoon of the first Sunday in October for that meeting.

All this thinking of regeneration puts me in mind of that memorable sentence from T. S. Eliot's *Little Gidding*, the last of his *Four Quartets*:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

We pray that St Mary's will continue to be the place in our village in which folk at whatever stage or condition of life may arrive at the end of their exploring and discover that they are known and loved. Thank you for the part that you play in keeping that mission alive for another generation.

FR MICHAEL

CHURCH NEWS

ORDINATION OF MATT CLARK

For the past year, since completing his ministry in St Mary's, Matt Clark has been serving as a curate in the West Downland benefice, a group of six parishes set in rather beautiful countryside between Newbury and Swindon. His training for the priesthood is now complete, and he was ordained as a Church of England priest on 27 June.

A group of five of us from Chalgrove were able to share in the event. The ordination service took place in Reading Minster, in the centre of the town, and was led by the Rt Revd Mary Gregory, Bishop of Reading. She was supported by numerous other clergy, including Revd Dr Isabelle Hamley, the newly appointed Principal of Ridley Hall theological college in Cambridge, who preached.

Matt was ordained with two others. For all of them this occasion represented the conclusion of several years of training, and a confirmation of their calling to be ministers in the church. It was an important milestone in their lives.

It was a pleasure to catch up with Matt and his wife Jenny after the service. They are both well and have settled into their new home. It has certainly been a busy year for Matt, but a productive one. The rector of the West Downland benefice, Mike Griffiths, is Matt's training incumbent, and we took the opportunity to meet him. It's clear that he and Matt have built a strong and happy working relationship.

For now, Matt carries on in the same post, as curate. He will no doubt be well occupied – his first service was at 8am the morning after his ordination! Our very best wishes and prayers go out to him and to Jenny as they continue this new phase of their lives.

NICK BATES AND OLGA JAMES



Bishop Mary and Matt (above), and Jenny and Matt (below) at Matt's ordination.



VICARAGE GARDEN PARTY

At the start of what has proved to be a very hot summer, the weather on 14 June was about perfect for the annual gathering in the Vicarage Garden. There was a wonderful spread of refreshments; gazebos provided shady places to sit; and conversation flowed as everyone enjoyed the delicious cakes and more. The children, meanwhile, took time away from the refreshments to play games and explore the garden.

This relaxed occasion is a lovely thank you to everyone who contributes in any way to the life of St Mary's, with partners and children also welcome. The friendships formed through such occasions help everyone feel part of a larger team, serving in

many different ways. A huge thank you to Michael, Kirsty, Ava and Amelia for hosting us in the garden of their family home.

SAM RICHARDS

CARETAKER AND BELLRINGERS REPORTS

Caretaker

The prolonged heat has thoroughly dried the building fabric, ideal after the wet winter. However, the heat has caused the internal south door to shrink and drop on its hinges. All being well it will lift again when more regular rain returns, which will save the need to trim it.

Bellringing

Health and holidays mean we struggle with numbers. As my professional retirement beckons, I'm looking forward to devoting more time to seeking and training new recruits. Meanwhile, the team has been actively supporting many weddings around the area as other towers have the same problems.

Having rung her first quarter peal, Alison has now rung 'inside' to Plain Bob Doubles, in a quarter peal for Evensong at Brightwell Baldwin. Spurred on, the team is now ringing Little Bob Minor and Reverse Canterbury again.

On 31 July we were pleased to host a group of professional ringers who rang a full peal, 5040 changes of nine Treble Bob methods, taking just over three hours – not easy, as it was a very hot afternoon!

If you'd like to understand what all this terminology means, do get in touch or come along to a practice night. We ring in St Mary's on Wednesday evenings from 7.30pm, except on the third week of each month when we ring in Watlington parish church.

ANDREW DAVIS

Tower captain and caretaker

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COMING SOON

Saturday and Sunday 12/13 September Heritage Open Days

This is a national event in which St Mary's participates. The Friends are responsible for providing and serving light refreshments, so please could you help to make our hospitality generous? So far three members have offered to bake, but if our visitor numbers are similar to last year more offers will be needed. Home baking is always popular with everyone, but offers of purchased biscuits or cake are also welcome.

Sunday 20 September 3pm–5pm Concert performed by The Shepherd Trio

What's in a name? The answer lies in the instrumentalists, and the name Franz Schubert gave to what became the most famous of his works, *Shepherd on the Rock*. His composition was for soprano, clarinet and piano.

Pianist Jack Redman, soprano Anne Sutton and clarinettist Helen Smith first met at Christmas 2025 at a concert organised by Jack. Although they perform across many different genres, they quickly recognised their mutual love of chamber music. Since then, they have performed extensively as The Shepherd Trio.

Jack, Anne and Helen are all highly talented and recognised professional musicians. Helen has performed in St Mary's on many occasions, and we are delighted to welcome her and her fellow musicians. We are in for a treat: do come and enjoy it with us!

This is a Friends fundraising event at which we will be serving teas. Offers of baking (cakes or tray bakes) or purchased items *before the event* are needed. Help is also needed on the day to set up the refreshment area before 2.30pm, to welcome the audience and take their entrance donations, and finally to serve teas and tidy up.

Please could you help us run these two events successfully? They are the last for this year!

Contact me: Lynn on 01865 400402, 07774 952781 or lynnbaker1@btinternet.com



Jack, Anne and
Helen – The
Shepherd Trio.

FUTURE EVENTS

*(Friends events marked with *.)*

Saturday 12 September: Ride and Stride for Churches

From 10.00 am to 6.00pm St Mary's will be welcoming Riders and Striders on their sponsored travels around churches. This is a national major fundraising event organised by The Historic Churches Trust. A Chalgrove church member will be Riding to raise money for the Trust and St Mary's. Please contact Jennifer on jenniferjanethomp@btinternet.com to volunteer your help or to sponsor our Rider.

Saturday and Sunday 12/13 September: Heritage Open Days

In church Saturday 10.00am to 4.00pm, Sunday 11.00am to 4.00pm.

*Hospitality provided by Friends, who will be helping to serve refreshments as well as providing the food. This is a great opportunity to showcase St Mary's heritage features to all the visitors. There will be occasional showings of the film on the wall paintings; audio/visual and audio/touch tour resources will be available, and guided tours offered when resources allow.

***Sunday 20 September: Concert performed by The Shepherd Trio**

In church 3pm to 5pm. An hour's performance of classical music (see page 6) followed by teas. Suggested donation of £10; free entry for children under 16.

Sunday 27 September: Harvest Thanksgiving

A service of Holy Communion at 4.00pm followed by a Bring and Share supper.

Saturday 10 October: Autumn Banquet

In church from 6.30pm ,with dining at 7.00pm. Ticket cost is £25. Please contact Jeanette on 01865 890607 or barringtonjeanette@gmail.com for tickets.

Sunday 1 November: All Saints Service and All Souls Memorial

All Saints service at 9.30 am. All Souls Memorial Requiem at 4.00pm.

Sunday 9 November: Remembrance Sunday

Service at 10.50am at Chalgrove War Memorial.

Saturday 5 December: St Nick's Fayre

In church. Save the date!

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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