



"I count myself in nothing else so happy  
As in a soul remembering my good friends"

Richard II, William Shakespeare

# Will's Quill

ISSUE FIVE

## OUR MISSION

THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE FRIENDS OF SHAKESPEARE'S CHURCH

Delivering the means to preserve Shakespeare's church for the enjoyment of present and future generations.

## New Year's Resolution

*Help the Friends Once Again*

Many of you have already been very generous but our next phase of crisis repairs for the tower and spire is already over budget - we are short of cash!

- Original estimate £160,000
- Latest figure £200,000
- Shortfall £40,000

Please send a new year donation to the Friends. And if you are a taxpayer, why not gift-aid your donation, so that the Friends receives an extra percentage from the government?

## Stop Press

We are pleased to announce that The Alan Evans Memorial Trust have made a donation of £2000 to the Friends.



Stratford-upon-Avon  
TOWN TRUST

The Friends of Shakespeare's Church gratefully acknowledge the generous support given by Stratford-upon-Avon Town Trust

## TOWER NEEDS URGENT REPAIR

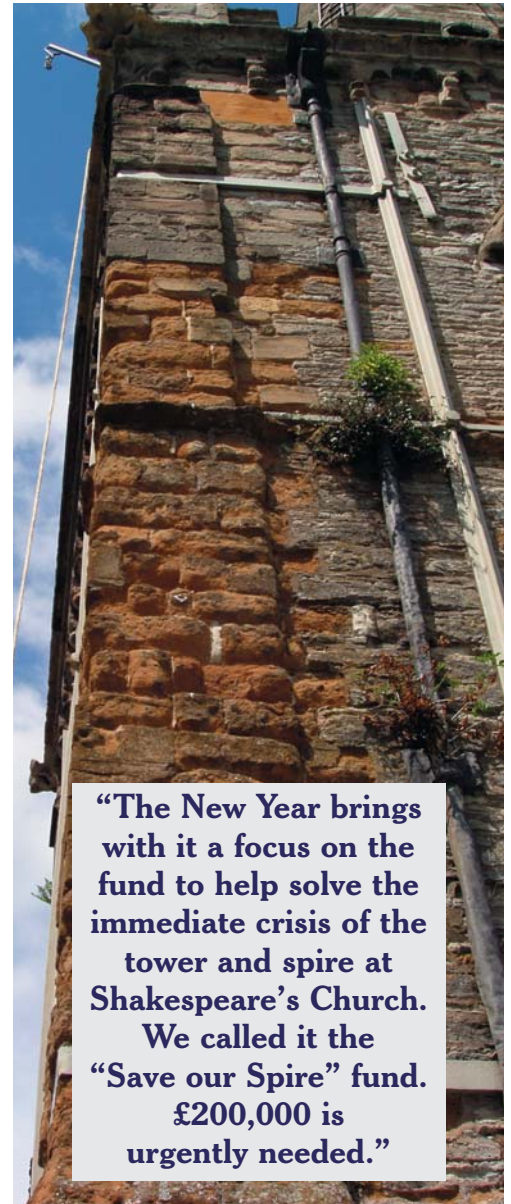
We have been busy. Past weeks have seen two closely linked events. The arrival of the latest plans from the architect has dramatically demonstrated the crisis of cracks and crumbling in the tower and spire. The candlelit dinner to launch fund-raising for the next phase was held in the crossing at the base of the crumbling tower. It had a certain poignancy.

The evening was a splendid occasion. It brought back memories of the appeal some two years ago for funds to repair the chancel roof on the south side. I well remember that hopes were high but as the magnitude of the task unfolded so we wondered whether we would reach our aspirations. Well, we did and the first phase of the repairs to the chancel, entirely funded by the Friends, was completed last year.

Last year's fund-raising was a major achievement. Yet, even as this was celebrated the Trustees were working with the vicar, PCC and architect to establish the needs of the overall project. This has continued. We hope to have the full detailed plans of an exciting overall programme in time for our next newsletter. At the present it is inevitable that we are tackling the crisis repairs. We try to prevent bits of the building crumbling and Shakespeare's Church slowly turning into Warwickshire's Tintern Abbey! This could be both beautiful and poetic but, it would do little to retain the Shakespeare heritage or preserve a beautiful building at the heart of the Christian community.

Many possible sources of funding are being explored. As always, so much depends on the response of our members. I am extremely grateful to many who have helped and also to those who have suggested innovative ways forward. One idea that was easy to adopt was the timing of this newsletter. As you will see this edition is being sent out in the new year rather than just before Christmas. We aim now to produce our six monthly newsletter in early January and early July.

The beginning of the new year is an opportunity for me to say a big thank you to the Clerk and to my fellow Trustees who have contributed much in various ways over the past year and, of course, to our President Martin Gorick and our distinguished Patrons. The biggest thanks must go to all of you who are reading this. It may sound like a cliché but it is certainly true that without the contributions, financial and otherwise, from our members and



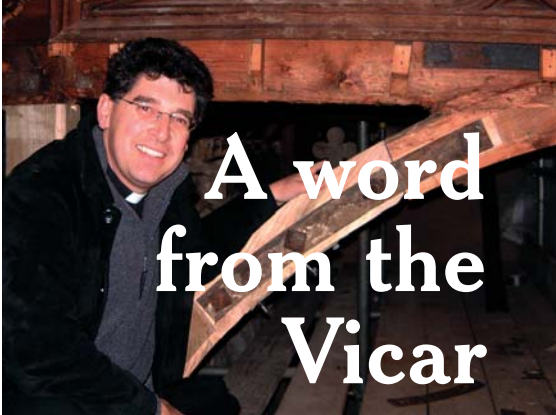
**"The New Year brings with it a focus on the fund to help solve the immediate crisis of the tower and spire at Shakespeare's Church. We called it the "Save our Spire" fund. £200,000 is urgently needed."**

supporters we would have achieved very little.

The New Year brings with it a focus on the fund to help solve the immediate crisis of the tower and spire at Shakespeare's Church. We called it the "Save our Spire" fund. £200,000 is urgently needed. Thank you so much for whatever you can give.

With my very best wishes for the New Year,

Philip Cheshire



## A word from the Vicar

The other day, in Holy Trinity, I discovered something really exciting. I was preparing to lead a tour before a Friends Fundraising Dinner, and I wanted to be able to show people things they wouldn't normally see as visitors. I was in the

**“I found myself looking into the face of God himself”**

sanctuary, as the section of the church around the High Altar is known, when I came across it. I was looking at the Sedilia, the three 15th century canopied stone seats set into the south wall, alongside the Piscina, the stone sink where sacred vessels were ritually cleansed after Mass. That part of the church had already yielded unlikely mediaeval treasures in the shape of the remarkable glass depictions of Resurrection, Ascension and Pentecost, discovered when we had the scaffolding up for Phase 1 of the current restoration programme, on the south chancel parapet and roof timbers (work fully funded by the Friends to your great credit!) I never expected to find anything so exciting again, but looking into the underside of the canopies, which is not something one does every day, I found myself looking into the face of God himself.

**“Its significance and rarity, and my excitement, lies in the fact that every other image of God or Christ in Holy Trinity was systematically destroyed during one or other iconoclastic episode of the Reformation.”**

Two canopies contained nothing more than Tudor roses, as their date of 1482 would suggest. But the third contained a quite wonderful, and perfectly preserved carved stone relief of a face with long flowing hair and beard. God the Father

# Work on the Spire and Tower

The graceful spire of Holy Trinity Church rises from the banks of the River Avon, proclaiming more than a thousand years of faith and prayer on the site and marking the last resting place of Stratford's greatest son. This quintessentially English scene, known to millions around the globe and forever associated with the name of William Shakespeare is currently under threat from the forces of nature which are eating into the fabric of the church and which will destroy it if action is not taken.

**“The tower parapet and its corner pinnacles are a matter for serious concern and urgently require restoration.”**

The spire, built in 1763 to replace an earlier wooden one, rests on a ring of masonry supported by brickwork vaults which spring from keystones in the corners of the late 13th century tower. This brickwork is crumbling as a result of nearly 250 years of exposure to the English weather and more than 500 of the bricks have to be carefully cut out and replaced in order to make the base safe. Cracks have developed in the stonework of the spire itself which need to be secured with stainless dowels and the whole re-pointed. Inside the spire the masonry has to be secured with stainless steel restraining ties and the steel



and timber work securing the golden ball and vane which crown it must be replaced.

The tower parapet and its corner pinnacles are also a matter for serious concern and urgently require restoration. Finally the steel ladders which give access to the tower roof and parapet have to be brought up to modern standards of safety.

The work will take nearly 6 months, but the congregation, strongly supported by the Friends, is determined that these costs will be met and that the spire will be saved for future generations.

*Bill Hicks, Church Warden*



## A word from the Vicar continued

perhaps? He was certainly depicted in mediaeval carving. Or could it be a 'Vernicle', the face of Jesus Christ as it appeared on the cloth in the legend of St. Veronica, said to have wiped his face on the road to Calvary. Bloom, in his 1902 history of Holy Trinity, calls it the latter in a rather cursory half-line mention. Its significance and rarity, and my excitement, lies in the fact that every other image of God or Christ in Holy Trinity was systematically destroyed during one or other iconoclastic episode of the Reformation. There are clear examples in various parts of the sanctuary (come to the next Friends tour and I'll point them out!), and also in the ceiling of the North Porch. There were

specific injunctions to destroy such images, so the fact that this one survived, completely intact, seems remarkable. The clergy of the day must have known it was there, but presumably stayed quiet about it as the other more obvious images were destroyed.

It has already appeared in local press, on radio and local TV, and I hope you'll take the chance to see it personally if you haven't already. It's not visible during normal visiting, but look out for the next Friends Tour.

It is just another one of Holy Trinity's remarkable treasures that the work and generosity of our Friends help to maintain.

**Thank you for all you do to keep this place alive.**



**Fifty Friends of Shakespeare's Church and their guests arrived at Holy Trinity Church on the evening of 24 November to be greeted by a peal of bells and a glass of champagne in the candlelit church.**

## Candlelit Supper in Holy Trinity Church



*Mr Tony Bird, Mrs Heidi Doherty and Josephine Walker enjoying the evening*

A fundraising dinner was held to launch an appeal for the urgent restoration work about to be started on the spire and tower. Canapés were served to the music of the King's Brass players from King Edward VI School and the organist of the church, Stephen Dodsworth. A fascinating tour of the glimmering church was led by the President of the Friends and vicar of Holy Trinity, the Reverend Martin Gorick. New Trustee Bill Hicks presided over the church treasure - silver chalices and patens which are rarely seen in public. The company then sat down to a formal dinner in the central area of the church, underneath the

tower. Much of the cost of the event was underwritten by the generosity of anonymous benefactors. The caterers, Naylor's, produced miracles of good food from the confines of the choir vestry. Clarinetist Sarah Miller played during the dinner, and a 'silent auction' was held, with articles being bid for in writing. Despite the freezing weather outside, the heaters loaned by Tony Bird, a Trustee of the Friends, kept everyone warm - we longed to have them every Sunday through the winter!

**The church looked magical in the candlelight, the conversation and wine flowed, and nearly £2,000 was raised for the desperately-needed funds to keep the iconic spire and tower of the church in good repair for the future.**



## Flower Festival Raises £4,000

A cheque for nearly £4,000 was presented to the Friends of Shakespeare's Church by the Avon Evening Flower Club. The funds were raised during the three-day Flower Festival at Holy Trinity Church in August. The event was a huge success and involved different flower clubs coming together for a competition of floral art. Visitors to the church enjoyed wonderful displays, demonstrating great skill and creativity.



**Members of Avon Evening Flower Club present the cheque to Dr Philip Cheshire and Jane Hornby**

## eBAY ... WHY NOT GIVE US THE UNWANTED TREASURES FROM YOUR ATTIC OR CUPBOARDS?

Things offered to the Friends so far for sale on eBay

- Silver muffin dish**
- Aston Villa football shirt**
- Silver sugar shaker**
- Croquet set**
- Filing cabinet**
- Silver tea strainer**
- Wine cooler**

There must be so many more things in your cupboards that you don't want yourself, but somebody else might really be interested in. Please get in touch with us - it is so easy for you to help us in this way, and we have already sold quite a lot of items and raised our first £100. But we need more, much more ... *call Jo at the Friends Office to find out how you can help.*

## Portrait of a Friend

Various Friends have taken up our request for sitters for the Stratford Studio Art Club and have come beaming to the Friends office, bearing not only a donation to the Friends but portraits of themselves that they have purchased from the artists. It is an enjoyable and interesting way to spend a couple of hours, being minutely scrutinised by a group of painters who are interested more in the bone structure of one's face, or the play of light on one's features, than in one's beauty or lack of it! Why don't you offer yourselves as models in the New Year? You might be surprised and pleased by how others see you.

## Book Sale

A sale of books raised valuable funds for the Friends. Andrea Blood and Jan Craven collected quantities of second-hand books from parishioners and Friends, and sold them at various points through the summer, donating the profits to the Friends. We are grateful to them - Andrea's living room and garage got quite taken over by boxes of books at one moment - and to those who presented and bought books.

# Events Diary

We are currently organising a range of events to help raise funds for The Friends.

Details will be available on our website: [www.shakespeareschurch.org](http://www.shakespeareschurch.org)

If you have any suggestions for future events or wish to advertise your fundraising event, please contact the Office on 01789 290128 or email: [friends@shakespeareschurch.org](mailto:friends@shakespeareschurch.org)

## Friends Quiz

The Friends of Shakespeare's Church were narrowly defeated by the Friends of the RSC at a three-way quiz evening, held at the Shakespeare Centre by the kind invitation of the third set of Friends, those of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. Each team had to answer several rounds of general knowledge questions and

then an individual round on their own specialism. The questions on Holy Trinity were tough, but between them the team of Martin Gorick, Stephen Dodsworth, Rob Bowen and Tony Boyd-Williams battled through. We plan that this should be an annual event, so next year perhaps we shall be the victors.

## TUTORED WINE-TASTING

Last year's tutored wine-tasting evening at Hall's Croft was such a success that we are holding another in May 2006 (final date to be advised). We were fortunate in 2005 to have a generous sponsor who funded the hire of Hall's Croft for the evening. **Is there a Friend who would be prepared to do that for us in 2006?** Perhaps you might get in touch with the Clerk to the Trustees on 01789 290128 or by e-mail at [friends@shakespeareschurch.org](mailto:friends@shakespeareschurch.org) if you would like to find out more about taking on the generous role of funder for this entertaining and instructive evening.

## Bill Hicks Becomes New Trustee

We are pleased to welcome Bill Hicks, our long-serving Church Warden and bell ringer as a Trustee. As head of Holy Trinity's Buildings Team, Bill has been a strong supporter of the Friends from the beginning.

## AGM - Nominees Needed

The constitution of the Friends lays down that up to two Trustees are to be elected from the Membership. If you would like to nominate a Friend to serve on the governing body, do please get in touch with us at least three weeks before the AGM being held on 9 March, with details and the written agreement of the person in question.

## CONTACT US

The Friends office will not be in full operation during the period from 13 January to 6 February. Both the Chairman and the Clerk will be "down-under" - though in different parts of the antipodes - and although they are both on holiday there, they will also be trying to spread the word about the needs of the Friends.

Messages, letters and phone calls will be picked up from time to time during this period so if you have fundraising ideas, names of potential new Friends, or donations, please keep them coming in, but apologies in advance if they do not get acknowledged as swiftly as they should do. Normal service will be resumed, hopefully with renewed energy, on 7 February.

## Future Events

**Martin Bell** has agreed to give the Annual Friends lecture on Thursday 11 May 2006.

**Spring Barn Dance** - date to be confirmed

**May Wine Tasting with Hazel Tattersall** - date to be confirmed

**Midsummer Dinner in Holy Trinity Church** - date to be confirmed

**AGM 9 March 2006** - guest speaker Dr Roger Pringle on the American links with Stratford-upon-Avon and Holy Trinity church.

**Judi and Jeffery Dench in a Dench Family Evening** - November 2006

All dates to be confirmed

## DEATH OF ONE OF THE PATRONS OF THE FRIENDS

We were saddened to hear of the death of Lord Alexander of Weedon, one of the founding Patrons of the Friends. Bob Alexander, who died aged 69, followed his career as the country's top barrister with one as top banker at NatWest. He was a governor of the RSC from 1995 before becoming Chairman from 2000 to 2004.

He was a man of great intellect and integrity and a great supporter of all things Shakespearian. He was generous to the Friends at its inception and we are grateful that he supported us so strongly in our early days.

## Trustees

**President**  
Revd. Martin Gorick

**Chairman**  
Dr Philip Cheshire

**Vice-Chairman**  
Vince Seaman

**Treasurer**  
Brian Vince

**Trustees**  
Tony Bird  
Jane Hornby  
Catherine Penn  
Tim Raistrick  
Bill Hicks

**Clerk to the Trustees**  
Josephine Walker

## Patrons

Sir Eric Anderson  
The Right Reverend Colin Bennetts,  
Bishop of Coventry  
Mr Jasper Britton  
Dame Judi Dench  
Mr Martin Dunne,  
Lord Lieutenant of Warwickshire  
Mr Patrick Stewart OBE

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