

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

If you have any suggestions for future events or wish to advertise your fund-raising event, please contact the office on 01789 290128 or email: friends@shakespeareschurch.org

Friends Quiz

Thursday 14 September

2006 at 8pm

at the Shakespeare Centre,
Henley Street

Joint quiz with the Friends of the RSC and the Friends of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. Question Master will be Richard Cordery, who is playing Buckingham in *Richard III*, and Humphrey in *Henry VI*.

Last year the Friends of Shakespeare's Church did magnificently well to come second. The joint organisers have agreed that we should all have new teams this year, so we are looking for volunteers! If you think you might

like to become involved, do please let the office know.

But we are mainly looking for AUDIENCE, so do come and support your team.

In the interval the audience will be able to take part in a fun picture quiz and have the chance of winning a copy of Shakespeare's Sonnets signed by Michael Boyd (Artistic Director RSC), the Revd. Martin Gorick and Roger Pringle (Director of the Birthplace Trust).

Tickets from the Parish Office/Holy Trinity bookshop: £5.00 adult, £3.50 under 16. And if you, as a Friend, buy three tickets, the third is free.

Mayor's Fund-Raising Events

The Mayor, the Revd. Dr. Roy Lodge, has very kindly nominated the Friends as one of his Mayoral charities for this year. His first fund-raising event, a concert by Tarantara in the church on 10 June, raised over £900 for the cause. There will be two more events in his calendar that will benefit the Friends:

Friday 15th December

7.30 p.m. at Stratford Town Hall, Stratford on Avon Operatic Society Christmas Festival of Music.

Saturday 31st March 2007 at 7.30 p.m. at Holy Trinity Church, Pontarddulais Welsh Male Voice Choir.

Please put these dates into your diary and help the Mayor to support us.

RSC Henry VIII in Holy Trinity Church

The RSC is, as you probably all know, putting on ten performances of *Henry VIII* in Holy Trinity Church from 23 August to 2 September.

The Friends will benefit from these performances in two ways. Firstly, a collection will be taken for the Friends at the end of each performance. And secondly, and more important in this instance, is that the Friends have agreed to run the refreshments bar in the interval, in the Parish Hall. We shall be serving wine and soft

drinks only, at fixed prices - no difficult till calculations! - and all profits will come to the Friends. But we urgently need volunteers to come and help us, for one or more

days within this period. Please, please, get in touch with the Friends office (01789 290128 or come to the Parish Hall any morning) and let us know if you can do a short evening of bar work with us. I'm afraid it will not guarantee a ticket to the show, but you might meet some of the actors!



Future Events

Thursday 14 September 2006

Friends Quiz

Shakespeare Centre, Henley St.

Thursday 23 November 2006

Candlelit Dinner

to be held in Holy Trinity Church. Last year's dinner was such a success that we thought we would hold another along the same lines. Champagne reception, candlelit tour of the church, dinner, entertainment. Details to follow.

Friday 15th December 2006

Stratford on Avon Operatic Society Christmas Festival of Music.

Saturday 31st March 2007

Pontarddulais Welsh Male Voice Choir.

Wine-Tasting

The second in what we hope will become an annual wine-tasting event was held at Hall's Croft on 8 June. This year Hazel Tattersall guided us through a series of Portuguese wines, of a range and diversity that surprised many of us. We were again lucky with glorious weather, so we could start off in the garden with an aperitif before moving onto the more serious matter inside. As we expected, it was a fascinating evening; we learned a great deal about some unusual wines and Hazel even produced Portuguese-style tapas for us.



Trustees

President
Revd. Martin Gorick

Chairman
Dr Philip Cheshire

Treasurer
Brian Vince

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

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



Friends of Shakespeare's Church

The Parish Office
Holy Trinity Church, Old Town
Stratford-upon-Avon
Warwickshire CV37 6BG
United Kingdom

Tel: 01789 290128

Tel/Fax: 01789 266316

Email:

friends@shakespeareschurch.org

www.shakespeareschurch.org

Registered Charity No. 1097403



OUR MISSION

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

If we do not act rapidly we could see the end of Shakespeare's Church as we know it.

Stop Press

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



Stratford-upon-Avon
TOWN TRUST
A registered charity

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

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

Richard II, William Shakespeare

Will's Quill

ISSUE SIX

THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE FRIENDS OF SHAKESPEARE'S CHURCH

FIVE-YEAR PLAN IN READINESS FOR EIGHT HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY

"How are the Friends doing?", I was asked.

"Well ... ", I took a deep breath, reflected and looked at the scaffolding surrounding the spire. Developments were making heavy demands. Fund-raising by the Friends was focussed. Were we being successful? The answer must be 'yes' but also in part 'no'. A little like the proverbial curate's egg!

Let me explain.

The start of the year following the AGM is always a good time for reflection. The AGM was an opportunity to celebrate our successes: the significant funds already raised; promises of legacies for the future; events enjoyed; the restoration work already completed and the good progress developing an overall plan. Thus there is much that is 'yes' for success.

The 'no' to success perhaps reflects our ambitious targets. Last year we hoped to raise £100,000. We raised, with your very generous help £94,506. We hoped for the exciting phased £2.5m restoration plan from our architect, Ian Stainburn, in time for the AGM. We now expect it by September. In the event this new timing will fit in well with our updated Business Plan and some new fund-raising initiatives. Thus the 'no' to success in 2005 will, we hope become a 'yes' to success in 2006. To date we have £100,000 in the fund for the emergency 'Save our Spire' appeal. Well on the way to our target of £200,000 for 2006.

continued on page 2

Americans in Stratford

At the end of the Annual General Meeting on 9 March 2006, Dr Roger Pringle, Director of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, gave a fascinating talk on the history of American visitors to Stratford-upon-Avon.



The first recorded visit of Americans was in 1786: John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, both of whom were later to become President of the USA. Over the following century the presence of American visitors was significant enough to attract comment and by 1885 the Pall Mall Gazette

wrote 'Although we have no statistics at hand, it is pretty certain that Stratford is nourished chiefly by the visits of globe-trotting Americans, whose craze it is to pay their homage at the shrine of the great English poet.'

One American above all gave form to Stratford's special role as a centre of literary pilgrimage: Washington Irving - America's first widely-recognized man of letters. In his 1815 Sketch-book he recorded his observations as an American visitor in England. Irving's good-humoured amusement at the questionable relics in the

Birthplace was tempered by his description of the church. He thought Shakespeare's bust was 'pleasant and serene'. He goes on: 'It was a long time before I could prevail upon myself to leave the place, and as I passed through the churchyard I plucked a branch from one of the yew trees, the only relic that I have brought from Stratford.'

Another notable American visitor to Stratford, in 1855, was the novelist Nathaniel Hawthorne. In his English Notebooks he writes: From Shakespeare's house we inquired out the church where he is buried... An old man in small clothes was waiting at the gate to the churchyard; he inquired whether we wished to go in and preceded us to the church-porch and rapped - all of which we could have done quite as well ourselves; but it seems, the old men of the vicinity haunt about the churchyard to pick up a sixpence from the visitorsThe bust is quite unlike any portrait or any other bust of Shakespeare that I have ever seen and compels me to root up all old ideas of his aspect and adopt an entirely different one. ... Sophia [his wife] seized the opportunity to clamber

upon a nameless, oblong cubic tomb, supposed to be that of a collegiate dignitary of the fourteenth century; she thus gained a near profile view of the bust....

One of the saddest Americans ever to visit Holy Trinity was surely Delia Baron. She spent years researching and writing a book *The Philosophy of the Plays of Shakespeare Unfolded*. In it she set out to prove the plays were written by a committee which included Francis Bacon, whom she claimed as an ancestor. In 1856 she managed to spend a night in Holy Trinity Church, with the intention of opening Shakespeare's grave, in which she believed would be found incontrovertible evidence about the authorship of the plays. However, armed only with a small shovel, she found she had neither the strength nor the nerve to go through with the project. After returning to America she was taken into a care home and died three years later.

In the 1870s the Vicar, Dr Collis, was the prime mover of an initiative to install a new stained glass window in the chancel, depicting the Seven Ages of Man. It was mainly paid for by American subscriptions and was completed in 1885. Collis's successor, George Arbuthnot, whilst in America, began collecting for an 'American window' to be placed in the South Transept. Rather than risk an embarrassing delay of the kind that had beset the chancel window, the one in the South Transept was unveiled in 1896, even though it was incomplete and the debt for this work was still outstanding in 1905.

It is a fact that Americans have been very generous to Stratford. For well over a century they have helped to fund many projects which have enhanced the town. These include the first and second Shakespeare Memorial Theatres; the American Fountain in Rother Street; the Public Library in Henley Street; the purchase and restoration of Harvard House; the completion of the Shakespeare Centre; and the Swan Theatre.

Given this history of American interest in and generosity to the town, Stratfordians should be willing to exclaim with Miranda, 'O brave new world / That has such people in't'.

volunteers and I are all ready to do what we can to meet these challenges but we do need your help. We have a strong team but it is clear that if it were not for your support none of the work we do for Shakespeare's Church could happen and I want to thank you for your help. We are totally dependent on your continuing support to help realise our vision for Shakespeare's Church in the twenty-first century.

Thank you again. I look forward to seeing you at one of our events.

With my very best wishes for the summer,
Philip Cheshire

...continued from page 1



2007 will be a special year. It will be the fifth anniversary of the Friends. It will also be the start of our major five-year development plan. The target will be to raise £0.5m per year. This will enable restoration and developments to be completed in time for the eight-hundredth anniversary of Shakespeare's Church in 2010.

The next five years will be exciting and challenging but they are also vital for Shakespeare's Church. If we do not act rapidly we could see the end of Shakespeare's Church as we know it. My fellow Trustees, the Clerk, our many

Busy day for Archbishop

Friends from further afield than Stratford-upon-Avon might be interested to hear about the visit to Holy Trinity Church on 'Shakespeare Sunday' of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams. The packed church heard Dr Williams give the annual 'Shakespeare Sermon' on the subject of poetry and prophesy. He linked the Old Testament lesson reading from Jeremiah with the English poetic voice of Shakespeare. The interest in his visit was so great that the congregation overflowed into the Methodist church across the road, where the service was broadcast. After a quick lunch with the vicar, the Archbishop joined the RSC's open day, where he spent time on a 'question and answer' session, before returning to Holy Trinity to officiate at an afternoon communion service. The church was filled to capacity again, and the congregation was delighted that the Archbishop not only celebrated the eucharist but also preached the sermon.

The Friends were grateful recipients of the collection at the morning service, not



only from Holy Trinity itself but also, by the great generosity of the Methodist church, from the 'overflow' congregation.

2007 will be a special year. It will be the fifth anniversary of the Friends. It will also be the start of our major five-year development plan. The target will be to raise £0.5m per year.

Reflections of a War Zone Thug Annual Lecture May 2006

'The Man in the White Suit' was the name given to Martin Bell by the media when he transformed from a television journalist to an anti-sleaze Independent member of parliament. But 'War Zone Thug' was how he was once described in his journalism years, and this was the title of the talk he gave to the Friends on 18 May 2006 in Holy Trinity Church.

He warned his audience that he would be provocative, but he was, perhaps, surprised by the whole-hearted agreement and approval that he received. His talk ranged from the current trivialisation of the media, through the work of the elected representatives of the country, to the politics of war and war-reporting. His recent experiences filming for UNICEF in the Congo had saddened him, but the lack of interest in serious reporting from the press and media back home was worse to bear. His work as a journalist in Iraq confirmed his belief that the invasion was a mistake and that politicians had misled the country and ignored its protests. He was interesting about his time at Westminster: as an Independent MP he could talk to members



from all parties equally, and find good and bad on all sides.

Lively questions from the audience showed their interest in his experiences and opinions and he was generous with his time and the thoughtfulness of his responses.

The Friends have been very fortunate so far in their Annual Lectures. Do you know, or can you suggest, anyone that you think might be prepared to give a future Annual Lecture?



heritage open days

Have you heard of Heritage Open Days? Buildings, areas, rooms, venues, in towns and villages all over Britain, which do not normally open to the public, will have open access for a few days in September. We are offering to open the Muniment Room, over the porch of Holy Trinity, for a few hours on Thursday 7th and Friday 8th September. Visitors can climb the narrow spiral staircase to visit the small room where, in the 'old days' the church wardens used to meet and the vicar did his paperwork.

We are intending to have some of the church's special treasures on display, never normally seen by the public, and the room itself is remarkable. But access is so limited that we shall have to have a 'timed visit' system, and that means having a volunteer stationed at the bottom of the stairs and another up in the Muniment Room itself.

Could you give us an hour or two of your time on either day to act as a marshall? We should be hugely grateful. Further details from Catherine Penn, 01789 268596

Would you like to be a Friends' Host or Hostess?

Charge £5 for a coffee -morning, £6 for an afternoon tea party, with strawberries and cream, just right for a summer's afternoon, or be adventurous and host a more elaborate dinner party, and charge £20. These are of course only suggested charges. You can ask what you like, depending on what you provide. Or, if you feel more comfortable with it, just ask for donations. All profits to the Friends.

For more information contact the Friends' office.

New Trustee

Cllr. Vince Seaman had warned the Friends some time ago that he had decided he must cut down on the large number of committees on which he sat. Although we were sad to lose him, because he had brought great wisdom and humour to the Friends' Trustees meetings, we understood his reasons and were grateful for the time he had given us.

In his place, we are delighted to welcome another councillor, Cllr. Bill Lowe, who was mayor of Stratford-upon-Avon during 2005/6. Now his heavy workload has eased a little, we are looking forward to benefiting from his huge experience in local politics and his interest in the future of Stratford.