

# 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 fund-raising event, please contact the office on 01789 290128 or email: [friends@shakespeareschurch.org](mailto:friends@shakespeareschurch.org)

## Forthcoming events: do put these dates in your diary

### 29 March 2007

Our AGM is going to be held on 29 March at The Shakespeare Centre. We are delighted that Vikki Heywood, executive director of the RSC, will speak to us at the end of the formal part of the evening.

### 31 March 2007

The Pontarddulais Male Voice Choir will be giving a concert in Holy Trinity Church at 7.30pm. This event has been very generously arranged by the Mayor, Cllr The Revd Dr Roy Lodge, with proceeds going to the Friends. Tickets (£10) are available in the Parish Office and in the Church Shop, or by post from the Clerk to the Trustees.

Don't miss this - it promises to be a wonderful event.

### Annual Lecture

Mr Michael Wood, historian, archaeologist, Shakespearian scholar, has kindly agreed to give the annual lecture on a date to be decided in May.

### 7 July 2007 Summer Fete

The vicar, the Revd Martin Gorick, is kindly allowing us to use the vicarage garden for a big summer fete on 7th July. This will hopefully involve all sorts of different groups from the Friends, the church congregation, and the neighbourhood.

## The Muniment Room

How many times have you walked down the lime avenue towards Holy Trinity and given the window above you only a cursory glance?

Visitors on the Stratford Heritage Trail in September climbed the narrow spiral staircase - not usually accessible to the public - and were transported back into the history of the church. The Muniment room above the porch was constructed during 1480-1520, and it was here that the Vicars of the parish did their paperwork, warmed by the cosy little fireplace, met their churchwardens for discussion and appointed doctors, teachers and midwives, and maybe dismissed some. Possibly the church court was held in this room and maybe fines paid for not attending church. I wonder if William Shakespeare climbed these narrow stairs and how many times?

On entering the room you would have seen the large table used by the Vicar, 19th and 20th century bibles, photos/prints of our previous vicars, and prints of the church dated 1856. Also the wonderful Communion Plate given by the Woolmer family in 1716.

All of the items on display were framed by the exquisite window looking back along the lime avenue. Standing in the Muniment Room, oblivious to the hustle and bustle of tourists below, you are truly aware of the history within its walls - oh, if only walls could talk!

I would like to thank everyone who helped clear the room and also the volunteers who helped make Heritage Weekend a success. If you didn't manage



to have a look, let me know on 01789 268596 and I will see if I can arrange an evening viewing later in the year.

Catherine Penn.  
Trustee of the Friends



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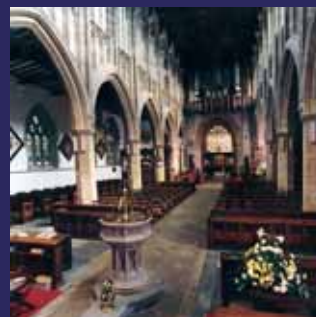
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## Friends of Shakespeare's Church

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## 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

Stratford-upon-Avon Town Trust has promised £40,000 towards the final consolidation work on the tower



Stratford-upon-Avon  
TOWN TRUST  
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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 SEVEN

THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE FRIENDS OF SHAKESPEARE'S CHURCH

## From the Chairman

In July I wrote of our vision of an exciting and challenging future for the Friends. These thoughts have been firmly endorsed over the past few months.

A major challenge for the Friends is how to bring together disparate interests to focus on a vision for the future development of Shakespeare's church. The Parochial Church Council (PCC) has an historic role in decision-making and responsibility, but there are many other major stakeholders in the use of Shakespeare's church. Our many visitors, who enjoy time in the church, also have a role and responsibility. Press publicity in recent weeks highlighted the crisis facing the

**With your help we have reached our 2006 target of £200,000**

church. It demonstrated also the genuine affection and concern felt by many, from all over the world, for Shakespeare's Church. It has been good to welcome new members and we are deeply grateful for the generous support from the international community as well as from those closer to home.

Over the past six months the Friends have worked hard with the PCC and with other groups not just to raise the much-needed funds but also to establish

**The Friends of Shakespeare's Church is the only world-wide charity that is dedicated solely to the restoration of Shakespeare's church.**

an overall and agreed picture for the restoration and development. We are very grateful to the Town Trust for their generous and continuing support, to the Birthplace Trust for their advice and backing, and to our neighbours, the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, for their help and encouragement.

With your help we have reached our 2006 target of £200,000, committed for the restoration of the tower and spire. That really is good news and thank you all for your part in that. However, it may come as no surprise to learn that there is still more to do even on this limited area of the church. The scaffolding has allowed a closer inspection



revealing that more work should be done before the scaffolding is removed. We hope that we can rapidly raise the extra £100,000 estimated to be required to finish this part of the work.

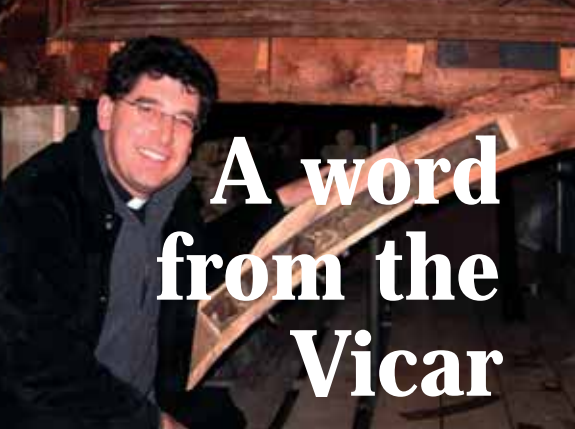
The Friends of Shakespeare's Church is the only world-wide charity that is dedicated solely to the restoration of Shakespeare's church. I believe we have an obligation to be the voice for conservation and restoration of this beautiful and historic building but at the same time to represent the many who are interested and committed enough to become our members and to support us in other ways. For that reason I hope you will continue supporting our events, writing to tell us of your concerns and ideas for Shakespeare's Church as well as continuing your commitment through membership.

For my part I am committed to working to steer the Friends of Shakespeare's Church through the next stage of its growth throughout 2007. I am extremely grateful to my fellow Trustees, our hard-working Clerk and our team of volunteers for their support. This year marked the start of our five-year development plan. A target of raising £0.5m per year sounds ambitious but with your help it is possible. We have much to do over the next four years in time for the eight hundredth anniversary of Shakespeare's Church in 2010.

Thank you again for all that you are able to do to help.

With my very best wishes for the new year.

Philip Cheshire



## A word from the Vicar

I hope you've had a good Christmas and wish you every blessing in this new year. Holy Trinity was busier than ever over Christmas with around 6,000 people coming to Christmas services of one kind and another over that period. Most local schools held carol services within Holy Trinity, as did the RSC, this year with HRH The Prince of Wales in attendance, and visiting Shakespeare's Grave for the first time. As I saw the church filled to overflowing again and again over that time I was reminded that Holy Trinity is not just a 'priceless piece of national heritage' but is also the centre of a living and vibrant community of faith.

Our heritage is of course 'priceless', but that doesn't mean it comes 'cheap', or will somehow 'always be there' without the committed and generous support of people like you. The tower and spire were in quite a perilous state. We have completed (and paid for) the key safety work, but I still don't know whether we will have the funds to complete all the work on the tower before the scaffolding comes down. I do hope that we can.

### Holy Trinity is not just a 'priceless piece of national heritage' but is also the centre of a living and vibrant community of faith.

People are constantly amazed that a building of such international and national significance receives no state funding or support. In France, for example, at least the basic fabric would be maintained automatically by the state. You might like to lobby your MP on this matter as there are certainly moves to encourage the government to take seriously the fate of our church buildings, particularly those listed Grade1, like Holy Trinity. In the meantime the responsibility falls solely on those good people with a heart for these great centres of spirituality, culture and community, like you and me. Professor Owen Chadwick described the medieval church as, 'A natural place to meet with friends and a supernatural place to meet with God.' A wonderful description of what a church building can be, and one that still rings true at Holy Trinity today. I hope I will have the pleasure of meeting many 'Friends' at Holy Trinity itself or at one of our events or meetings in this coming year.

May God bless you in all you do.

# Repair work on the Spire and Tower



*Bill Hicks, head of buildings team, writes:*

Work has been going on throughout the year to repair the spire and tower. The main problem was vertical cracking of the stonework. This was repaired by drilling at an angle across the crack from both sides and at different levels, then bonding a stainless steel pin into the holes. Within the spire, stainless steel bands were bolted to the polygonal faces at several levels and linked to form strengthening bands round the structure. The keystones and sills of several of the lucarnes, or windows, in the spire were replaced and areas of worn stone cut out and renewed. Finally, almost the whole surface was re-pointed.

The cone of brickwork which the 18th-century builder placed in the 13th-century tower to support the spire was re-pointed, and a large number of the bricks were cut



out and replaced. The orb, weathervane and cross that surmount the spire were refurbished and gilded with gold leaf.

**All that is left now, and it is a large 'all', is to repair and consolidate the masonry of the main body of the tower. If we receive sufficient funding, we shall start on that in early spring.**

At the level of the tower parapet, worn stone mouldings have been cut out and replaced, and the corner pinnacles have been strengthened and re-pointed, with some replacement of carved work. One of the four corner grotesques has been completely removed and replaced with one newly carved.

Within the tower itself work has included the fitting of balustrades to the ladder platforms, and safety handrails to the ladders themselves.

All that is left now, and it is a large 'all', is to repair and consolidate the masonry of the main body of the tower. If we receive sufficient funding, we shall start on that in early spring.

*Trustee, Bill Hicks, with the foreman, Stuart, on top of the spire.*



*Trustee, Jane Hornby with the church's Director of Music, Andrew Jones discuss vertigo whilst examining the orb, weathervane and cross!*



## HENRY VIII and The Phoenix and the Turtle

Holy Trinity Church was the venue for the Royal Shakespeare Theatre's Complete Works production of Henry VIII in August and September. The production ran for 10 days and was a sell-out success. The seats and pews in the nave were removed and seating was installed so that the audience faced each other across a wide central aisle which was the acting space. The cast played up and down this oddly-shaped space, and the production included the use of the font at one end of the church and the altar at the other. Reviewers were enthusiastic: one headline read 'History comes alive in Shakespeare's church'; another wrote 'the real star... is Holy Trinity, which lends this rarely seen late play a sombre, melancholy grandeur'.

The Friends were very pleased indeed to be involved in this production: we provided the interval refreshments, and a number of volunteer front-of-house ushers, and the RSC generously allowed us to make an appeal for funds at the end of each performance.

Some weeks later, the church was the venue for a late-night performance of the little-known poem The Phoenix and the



## FRIENDS AND RELATIONS

We were surprised and pleased to receive an invitation to a conference for Friends of Cathedrals and Greater Churches - Holy Trinity is part of the Greater Churches group - and the Clerk to the Trustees spent a rewarding weekend at Wimborne Minster in October.

It was interesting to meet representatives from 24 other Friends' groups. Most were from much larger churches than ours: cathedrals, abbeys and minsters among them. Many of these groups have been in existence for a good number of years, and most, though not all, are involved with enhancement of the buildings, the music or the environment of the church rather than with major fundraising for structural repairs. It was notable that many were supported in the main through substantial legacies.

The programme of the conference was a mixture of talks and discussion groups. The Archdeacon of Dorset spoke about how Friends make a difference in making their churches 'fit for purpose', in which he

**It was notable that many were supported in the main through substantial legacies.**

included worship, the sustaining of arts and treasures, hospitality, education, and social justice. The Dean of Salisbury referred to the growing popularity of cathedrals and greater churches for worship but warned about the pressure of the expectations of visitors and the difficult balance between opening one's building as an 'attraction' but keeping it as a holy place. This struck home forcibly in Holy Trinity's case! She stressed the need to identify the core purpose of one's church and nurture its identity. But she also spoke about the need for change. She recognised that changes make people anxious, but nonetheless successful organisations need to know where to be bold, even while remaining financially conservative.

The discussion groups examined the various roles of Friends, subscriptions, business community involvement, and the difficulty of asking for financial support for buildings when world poverty was also a major issue.

We had many concerns in common; and it was heartening to meet and talk about them in such beautiful surroundings, with the warm hospitality and welcome provided by the volunteers from Wimborne Minster.

**A petition is being circulated to ask the government to help fund historic churches.**

**The wording is as follows:**

**We the undersigned petition the Prime Minister to arrange for the cost of repairs to C of E church buildings to be reimbursed to help preserve our archeological & historic heritage for the future.**

**If you feel that you would like to be associated with this, please go onto the website at <http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/Preservation/> and sign up for it. It can't do any harm and might help.**