



Friends of St Mary's Church

NEWSLETTER

Issue 14 August 2006

Chairman's Report July 2006

As the new Chairman firstly my thanks to the committee of The Friends in electing me, but more importantly for all the committee members for remaining in their posts to help me to try and continue the good work carried out by Bernadette over the past number of years.

Bernadette has done a superb job and we all thank her for her enthusiasm and professionalism. We have not lost her, as you will see in the newsletter, she is organising and chairing the Millennium Committee and we look forward to the celebrations in 2008.

In our last newsletter you may recall we took a stand at the Cricklade Show. At that show we received from a local artist, David Sherwood, a painting depicting St. Mary's Church. We subsequently raffled this and the proceeds of no less than £150 were added to the funds. We will be taking a stand

again this year in August. Another interesting donation was a print we received from the owners of the house next to St. Mary's. The print was found in the attic when clearing the house before moving. Gerry organised for the print to be remounted and this was also raffled at our Open Day on Sunday 19 June (Cricklade Medieval Weekend). Together with donations, sales of cakes and books, another £221 was added to our funds.

I had hoped in this newsletter to say that all our projects were progressing but this is not the case. The up to date position is:

The Churchyard Cross

Still no news from the submissions admitted in July 2005 although Tony Thompson has sent several "chasers" the latest dated 13 June. We await their reply to the contractors suggestions, which we feel this time will be

positive.

Church Lightning Conductor

It is hoped that this will be installed before the end of the year.

Church Wall

The repair of the portion of the wall that is damaged is being dealt with by Cricklade Town Council.

Hopefully in the next newsletter some of the above will be completed and others started.

Thank you to all those who have contributed to this newsletter also to Catherine Allen who has brought a little colour into our lives as well as composing and printing this news letter.

On behalf of the committee I would like to thank you for your continued support, if you have had your holidays I hope your batteries are re-charged, if not have a great time when they come.

Eddie Condon
Chairman

Visit our Website

<http://welcome.to/friendsofstmarys>

- Virtual Tour
- Photos
- Church History
- Church Development
- Parish Map
- Churchyard

Lost Tomb Found



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Lost tomb revealed

By Edmund Lee

The clearance of the shrubbery along the south churchyard wall undertaken this Spring has revealed a lost tomb. The remains are of the memorial to Mr Olive Mills, who died March 1788, and his wife Ann, who died twelve years later in December 1792. The tomb has been dismantled, and there has been some damage, but we can, in the minds eye, reconstruct its original appearance. It would have been a table tomb, similar to, though slightly larger than the pair of tombs nearer to the church porch. The large slab that is now set into the ground would have been the top, while the elegantly carved and decorated slabs now leaning against the churchyard wall would have formed two of the sides of a large stone box. Presumably another side and end piece have been lost or are



The Lost Tomb

buried. Remains of the original ornate iron railings are still in place, with stone footings beside the top slab indicating where the railing would originally have surrounded the table tomb to create a very impressive family memorial. The

top slab has cracked and subsided into the ground somewhat, suggesting that there is a remaining vault beneath the ground.

When it was dismantled is unknown, although it may possibly be at the time of the 1860's restoration, or twenty

years or so later, when the churchyard was closed for burials. It seems likely that the cedar tree that magnificently draws the eye in the churchyard was planted in the late Victorian period, and perhaps there was a desire to create a more

landscaped naturalistic appearance to the churchyard, which the enclosed memorial detracted from. Certainly the large number of tombstones that were laid flat at the time, or broken up altogether (for example to form parts of the floor of the church) suggests that the overhaul of the cemetery was given as much attention as the church by our Victorian predecessors.

Undoubtedly, had it survived intact, the tomb would have been listed as of architectural interest, as are the two surviving table tombs. Its re-discovery forms an important addition to our understanding of the history of the churchyard.

Millennium by Bernadette Yarnold

Millennium, you may be forgiven for thinking that was 6 years ago. Now we are about to start celebrating again. In 2008, by our estimation, there will have been one thousand years of worship on the site of St Mary's – commencing as a small chapel in the northern defences of the town in Anglo Saxon times and later developing into a small and very beautiful church.

In October 2008 a Son et Lumiere pageant depicting St Mary's history is planned. Anyone with skills in this field, or simply enthusiasm for the project and wanting an active role should contact either of the following:

Bernadette Yarnold 01285 861586 or Trish Snape 01793 752179.

We have already enlisted the services of Prior Park School (Headmaster Gerry Hobern and Staff)

*one thousand
years of worship
on the site of St
Mary's*

Take a pew

By Edmund Lee

The long history of St Mary's is, for the most part, reflected in the stonework; the changing fortune of the church and its gradual expansion into its present form are all there in the fabric. Smaller scale changes are also apparent in the fixtures and fittings however.



Take the pews for example. As we see them today, the wooden 'box pews' with their iron door furniture are for the most part the work of the 1862 restoration by the architect Richard Galpin. Galpin left us two plans, preserved in the Wiltshire Record Office (copies can be seen in our guidebook and on the Friends website). The plan from after the restoration shows the church interior arranged more or less as we see it today. But not entirely. When I first saw these plans and noticed the differences I assumed that this was a proposal, and that not all the planned arrangements were actually

built. However a careful examination of the pews suggests that Galpin does in fact shows us exactly what he did, and that a later reorganisation of the church took place some time after the 1860's.

Have a look at the evidence next time you are St Mary's:-

i) Looking from the back of the church at the two blocks of pews in the central aisle, look at the back of the third pew forward on the right. The carving is slightly more elaborate than that on other benches with decorative chamfering of the panels.

ii) Look at the door on the same pew, opening on to the central aisle. On the top of the bench in front you can see how a later piece of wood (lighter colour and more prone to woodworm) has been let into the bench to allow a hinge to be fitted. Down at floor level you can also see a vertical joint where the rail running along the floor has been extended.

iii) And notice also the flagstones in the floor, just beside this pew. Along the whole length of the aisle they are regular and evenly sized, but at this point they become more irregular.

What I believe has happened is that, when Galpin put in the box pews, he created an uninterrupted aisle running straight across the back of the church from the door, in line with the last pillar in the arcade, with pews on either side, exactly as shown in his plan. At some later date the pews that would have sat where the door to the sacristy and the font

now are have been moved forward, creating a dog-leg in the aisle leading in from the door. The more decorative pew-backs would have originally been on show facing on to the aisle, so were given a nicer finish. The change in the flooring would have been exactly where the original aisle met the main aisle running up the nave to wards the chancel.

The date and reason for the change are still speculative. However a possible context is the 1916 restoration, which we know replaced the west window in the chancel, and re-instated the dormer windows above the South aisle, which Galpin had removed. Perhaps the rigour and purity of the lines of the Victorian arrangement proved to be a step too far for more pragmatic Edwardian tastes! Whatever the case, it suggests that we can trust the other details of Galpin's 1862 plan. For example, his plan shows the presence of a staircase in the tower. Where was that leading? Was there perhaps a gallery across the back of the church (perhaps a replacement for the 18th century gallery that he had removed from the South aisle)? Galpin's plan shows a line of four posts which might perhaps have been the supports for such a feature. There foundations are still apparent in the floor, where patching (apparently with concrete) is apparent beneath the back of the last pews. However, there doesn't seem to be any other record of it, or photographs of the interior from this

The history of St Mary's is fascinating to locals and visitors alike. If you have any memories, stories or pictures you can share about this beautiful church then please do contact us

Gerry Dudley,
Friends of St Mary's Church
4 Pleydells Cricklade
Swindon SN6 6NG



Close up of pews at St Mary's

Update on the work on the church grounds

- by Trish Snape

Since our last report, and thanks to Helen (Cliff) and a friend of hers, we now have a water butt which, after heavy rains in early May is full to capacity.

We have planted some 500 bulbs, 250 of which were donated by the local "Bloomers" group. A mix of miniature daffodils, narcissus and grape hyacinth, which put on a lovely display this spring and hopefully will spread and delight us for years to come.

Following the further appeal for helpers, a small dedicated band of 10 volunteers continued working on the border that had been cleared on the first occasion. Unfortunately, the weeds were almost as bad as at the beginning of the project, so it was decided to concentrate on the first section of the border, get it under control by planting and mulching, before moving on. This session was so satisfying, and at the end of the morning, we had a plot of loam ready for planting with shrubs which will not only enhance the churchyard, but in time will provide the church flower arrangers with a source of

greenery.

In the process of digging and turning the soil over, we uncovered a lovely headstone



which had been buried for many years. In its day this must have been a splendid memorial and one can only guess at its original size and height. At this point I must mention the stirring work done by Dan McLoughlin who, despite suffering from a nasty head cold, turned up with a shovel that was so big I could hardly lift it when it was empty, let alone when full. It was thanks to Dan, his shovel and his much needed trailer that we achieved so much in our two hours.

At the end of May, Gerry Dudley and I were able to plant up this part of the border, with a lovely selection of shrubs and plants as the photograph shows. A few days this the

planting, another working party of 4.5 (Hugh Dudley, Peter Baister, Steve Mills with his 3 year old son Benedict!) put down about 20 bags of bark chippings as mulch. This just shows how much can be achieved with only a few volunteers. Imagine what we could do with a little more man-power!

If you are finding working in your own garden a bit tame or are bored on the odd Saturday morning – Keep a lookout for the next appeal and come along and join us. You will experience real satisfaction and a wonderful sense of achievement and get a much better workout that you would at any gym. If you would like to be informed of our next session, contact Gerry Dudley (Secretary) on 01793 750107 and put your name down NOW.

Friend's of St Mary's Cricklade, Wiltshire	
Chairman	Eddie Condon, Highbank, 18 Lampeter Rd, Oakhurst, SWINDON SN25 2BP
Secretary	Gerry Dudley, 4 Pleydells, Cricklade, SWINDON SN6 6NG
Treasurer	Kevin Allen, 9 Woodgate Close, Charlton Kings, CHELTENHAM GL52 6UW

Dates for your Diary

- **Coffee Morning - Brook House 23 September 2006 10.00. am to 12 noon.**
- **Cricklade Show 28 August 2006**
- **AGM - Brook House 10 October 2006 at 7.45pm.**