



Friends of St Mary's Churchyard

SPRING NEWS 2025 Issue No. 7

Message from the New Chair

As many of you may know, Sam Kelly had to step down as Chair of the Friends at the start of this year due to pressing family matters. In support of her decision, I agreed to take on the mantle of Chair for the time being. I am so grateful for all Sam has done for the Friends. Together with John Fitch, Sam was a founding member and has done an incredible job in bringing life and joy to the churchyard, managing its wildlife with passionate dedication, teaching people about its rich ecology (especially its bats, lizards, snakes and toads), as well as drawing in and enthusing volunteers from the community and across the country. Sam was presented with a gift and card at St George's as a token of thanks on behalf of all the Friends and the congregation. I am glad to say that Sam is remaining a Friend. As parish priest of St George's, I already have legal responsibility for the churchyard, and pastoral care for those whose loved ones are buried there. This is an immense privilege. I am also very fond of the churchyard as a secret garden of stillness and delight, birdsong and natural beauty, sacred memory and local history. In taking on the role of chair, I want especially to say thank you to the many Friends who have given their support, time, and creativity to caring for the churchyard. It is humbling and full of hope – as every churchyard should be. Given restrictions on my time, I will focus mainly on co-ordinating working parties and working with the other members of the Friends' committee – Liz, Geraldine, and Ian – for whom I am most thankful for their continued support. One immediate change is that Liz and Geraldine have kindly agreed to produce a new shortened edition of the newsletter. I look forward to meeting many of you in the coming months and please do contact me with any questions.

Angus Reid

Date of Annual General Meeting – We plan to hold the annual meeting of the Friends later this year and have set the date for Saturday 14 June. More details to follow in due course.

Planting of Bulbs - Our sincere thanks go out to the member who generously donated 100 assorted bulbs for the churchyard. They were planted around the bench area and along the eastern border. We look forward to seeing the Anemone Blanda, Puschkinia (Russian snowdrops) and assorted crocus in flower in the coming months. The daffodils planted during the autumn of 2023 are beginning to appear and don't forget all those wonderful wild flowers that were sown last year, what a picture they are going to make!

Lime Trees – With the appropriate permissions received from the District Council and the Archdeacon of Chichester we are now able to report that all suckers from the Lime trees that run along the southern border adjacent to the Scout land have been removed. Our sincere thanks to those individuals who gave of their time in carrying out this work. An inspection by the arboriculturist has confirmed there is no fungus present. Quotations and permissions are now being sought to pollard the trees later in the year. *Please note*, the Lime trees within the grounds of the old church are the responsibility of the person who has recently taken ownership of the building.

Bay Tree – There are several dead stems on the bay tree next to the Garden of Remembrance which will be removed by a tree surgeon in the coming months as the stems present a greater risk to those using the churchyard.

Disposing of spent flowers and wrappers – We are disappointed to see that the area that had been cleared from being a dumping ground for discarded floral items is still being used including items that are of a non-compostable material. A notice has recently been introduced requesting that compostable items should be taken to the compost area and all other items to be taken away and disposed of. We continue to monitor this area.

Grass Mowing – Our thanks to Leslie Valerio who has agreed to continue with the organising of the rota for grass mowing. If you would like to get involved, or provide support in any matter regarding the churchyard please do make contact, details at the end of the newsletter.

Our thanks to Liz Ashurst for the following contribution, so, so true.

With the ever-increasing need for more and more houses, finding an accessible area which is not cultivated but has a little wildness is becoming more difficult. However, living in Whyke, we are particularly fortunate in having a little-known retreat hidden within the bounds of Chichester, St Mary's churchyard. As you walk through the wrought iron gate by the side of this ancient building, you can escape from the demands of daily life and reconnect with your senses through the changing seasons. This February after a damp and chilly winter with little sunshine, the churchyard is hosting drifts of tiny white crystalline snowdrops almost smothered under the dried grasses and brambles. These flowers are only one of many varieties which will bring colour and scent throughout the coming months making the area a magnet for bees, moths, butterflies and wildlife, proving the regenerative power of the seasons and giving us hope for the year ahead. If you are unacquainted with this special nature reserve, do call in at some point and enjoy a quiet wander. And if you are interested in local history, some of the inscriptions on the gravestones are fascinating to read, recording past lives of Whyke residents.

Finally, here are some upcoming dates for your diary. Please come along to help if you can!

Note: all churchyard activities are weather dependent, and a notice will be sent out ahead of dates advertised.

Date	Time	Activity
Saturday 29 March 2025	2-5pm	Working Group to maintain the churchyard – Please note a separate email will be sent out confirming details.
Saturday 17 May 2025	2-5pm	Working Group to maintain the churchyard – Please note a separate email will be sent out confirming details.

If you would like to join the Friends' mailing list and receive an electronic copy of our newsletters, please email us: friendswhyke@gmail.com. We keep emails to a minimum and will not share your information elsewhere.

[Postal address](#) – Friends of St Mary's Churchyard, St George's Church, Cleveland Road, Chichester PO19 7AD Facebook – Friends of St Mary's Churchyard Whyke

