



# The Friends of Tewkesbury Abbey

**Newsletter – December 2022**

## From the Chairman

Dear Friends

Since I last wrote a great deal has happened internationally, nationally and here in Tewkesbury. The death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and the accession of King Charles III has had a seismic impact on our national life. No fewer than three Prime Ministers and an assortment of senior Cabinet Ministers have upended the even tenor of our political life. Our life at Tewkesbury Abbey has been profoundly affected by the retirement of the Rev Wendy Ruffle, Pioneer Minister at Celebrate, our church on Prior's Park and, most especially, by the appointment of Fr Paul Williams as Rector of Sandringham. I have no doubt that many of you will have seen and heard him reading prayers at the Service of Committal at St. George's Chapel following the Queen's funeral in Westminster Abbey. Tewkesbury's loss has been Norfolk's and the Monarch's gain. I'm glad to say that Paul and Catherine have not been lost to The Friends, however. By unanimous acclaim, Council determined that they should both be offered Honorary Life Membership. I'm delighted to say that they both accepted. We wish them well in their new life and ministry in East Anglia.

We have now embarked on the discernment process to appoint a new Vicar. A group has been formed to produce the requisite Parish Profile and, as part of that, a survey was initiated to discover what those associated with the benefice (which includes Twyning and Celebrate) consider to be its strengths and weaknesses and to express a view about the

qualities and skills we'd like to see in our next incumbent. I hope that you will all have been notified of the opportunity to contribute your views and I very much hope that some of you did so. It is likely that the post will be advertised in January and with interviews scheduled for early March it is hoped that we shall welcome a new Vicar during the summer. We ask for your prayers and support as we move forward in our task.



*Paul and Catherine Williams in the Medieval Festival parade outside the Abbey, 10 July 2022*

Despite such significant change, the Friends have remained very much on an even keel and continue to offer what support we can to the PCC. Nevertheless, we have seen changes of our own. At the AGM in July in addition to saying farewell to Paul and Catherine, we also saw the election of a new Vice-Chairman and Treasurer. Andrew Crowther and Hugh Sweet had both intended to stand down two years ago, but the pandemic intervened and both were persuaded to remain as Officers until it was

behind us. Andrew had been Vice-Chairman for over 30 years; we owe him a huge debt of gratitude for his ceaseless commitment and support for all that time. Hugh became Treasurer some 11 years ago and has filled that office with distinction, putting in hours of unseen, but I hope always appreciated, work behind the scenes. I'm delighted to say that both remain members of Council. We welcome, in their place, Ian White as our new Vice-Chairman and Nigel Bennett as our new Treasurer. We are enormously grateful to them for stepping in to these roles, which I know they will discharge with zest and enthusiasm. We are fortunate to have such expertise and experience not only in our Officers, but in Friends' Council at large. I thank them all, on your behalf, for all that they do for The Friends.

2023 is a significant year in the life of The Friends. Following a public meeting in October 1932, Canon Gough, then Vicar of Tewkesbury, set up The Friends of Tewkesbury Abbey and its first constitution was established shortly afterwards during 1933. In 2023 therefore we celebrate our 90th birthday and we hope to mark the occasion with an exhibition outlining all that The Friends have done for and given to the Abbey during that time. We shall make the anniversary a major focus of next year's Annual Report. We're also looking forward to a special Friends' Festival, which will take place on



*Friends in the ruins of the medieval Coventry Cathedral*

Sunday July 2nd. Do make a note in your diary; we hope to have many of you with us on that occasion.

Elsewhere in this Newsletter you'll find accounts of our events over the past few months and also a programme of events for the first part of 2023. You'll also find details of all the Christmas services at the abbey and we hope to see many of you there.

I wish you and your families a blessed and joyful Christmas.

Graham Finch

## **News of The Friends' 2021 Appeal**

We're sorry that the position with regard to our 2021 Appeal remains as it was when we wrote in the Annual Report. The project to reorder the west end of the Abbey and, in particular, to provide a more welcoming entrance at the north door remains in abeyance. The plans agreed and submitted failed to find favour with the Diocesan Advisory Committee and it has been decided that we should await the arrival of our new Vicar before proceeding with a revised scheme. The money so far raised amounts to £123,500, which is well over half-way to our target. Council has been clear that this sum will be ring-fenced for the purpose for which it was raised. It will therefore only be applied once a new scheme has been agreed and fully approved. We know that there remain one or two Friends who continue to contribute by Standing Order. We are hugely grateful to them, but feel that under the circumstances we must urge them to consider whether they wish to continue to give regularly, bearing in mind that the original intention was to close the Appeal on the Feast of the Consecration in 2021.

## **Friends' Events**

### **Festival Outing**

On July 4th over 30 of us travelled by coach to Coventry, where we were met by one of the Cathedral guides on the site of the ruined medieval cathedral and told about the importance of the city and the cathedral to our national life. In those evocative surroundings we



*Friends attend the Litany of the Cross of Nails*

heard about the air raid on the night of November 14th 1940 when incendiary bombs rained down on the Cathedral destroying most of its structure, though leaving the tower and spire intact. Following the destruction of the Cathedral a competition was launched to design a replacement. That competition was won, of course, by Basil Spence, whose new Cathedral, consecrated in 1962, now sits alongside the ruins of the old. We were then taken into the light, spacious interior of the Cathedral, just in time to participate in the Litany of the Cross of Nails. This takes place daily at noon and is centred on the need for forgiveness and reconciliation, which is at the heart of the Cathedral's current ministry. We were given time to take ourselves round the building to experience its beauty and symbolism, whilst also listening to a splendid organ recital.

After a short break for lunch at a local hostelry, we were driven the short distance to the Sikh

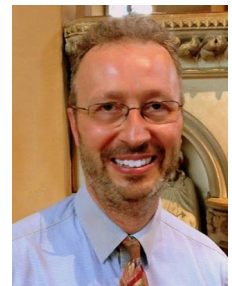


*Friends suitably attired for the Gurdwara*

Gurdwara, where, with our heads suitably covered, we were made most welcome and taught something of the Sikh religion, its beliefs and practices. We even shared in part of its worship style and were able to ask many questions. It was a joyful visit and the hospitality we were shown was quite remarkable. We left the Gurdwara with a much better understanding and with enormous gratitude for the welcome we received.

### **Autumn Lecture**

On Friday 28th October over 60 of us gathered in the Parish Hall to hear a wonderful lecture by Tim Bridges, Conservation Adviser for the Birmingham and West Midlands branch of The Victorian Society. Tim took as his title "Sir George Gilbert Scott: Hero or Villain?" With an astonishing sequence of colourful slides, Tim charted the remarkable career of Scott and his record of cathedral and church restoration nationally and locally. We heard also of his emulators and successors, both from his own family and from elsewhere.



Clearly the focus was very much on Scott's famous 1870s restoration of Tewkesbury Abbey, which prompted William Morris's critical letter to The Times and subsequent establishment of SPAB, The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. Morris's argument was that Scott had gone too far in removing certain features not only of later accretions, but also of original features of the medieval building and introducing Victorian recreations of what he imagined would have been present during the Middle Ages. This lies at the root of the controversy. Whilst Tim posed the question about Scott's legacy, on which several members of the audience made observations, when pressed for his own view he came down firmly on the side of Scott as hero. Certainly the state of preservation of the Abbey today owes much to his skill, craft and spiritual vision.

The lecture is now available as an audio file on the Friends' website.

## Programme of Events for 2023

**Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> February 2023**

### Visit to Nicholson Organ Works and Little Malvern Priory

*James Lancelot will be giving a short organ recital at Little Malvern Priory. He has provided the following information:*

Nicholson & Co are one of the two largest firms of organ builders in Britain. The firm was originally established by Richard Nicholson in Rochdale in the 1820s; his son John set up business on his own in Worcester in 1841, and quickly rose to fame through instruments such as that at Great Malvern Priory (1850). 1956 saw a move to Malvern, where (now in newer premises) the firm continues to operate.

Recent years have seen some major contracts as well as much bread-and-butter work. The Milton organ in the Abbey received a thorough overhaul in 2018; current projects include major work on the organs in Leeds Town Hall and Manchester Town Hall, and future projects include restoration work at Gloucester Cathedral.

The small but beautiful organ at Little Malvern Priory is by the leading Victorian builder William Hill, and was recently restored by Nicholson's.

### **22<sup>nd</sup> April 2023 – The Fitzhamon Lecture**

Dr. Adrian Ailes, 'The Heraldry of Tewkesbury Abbey'

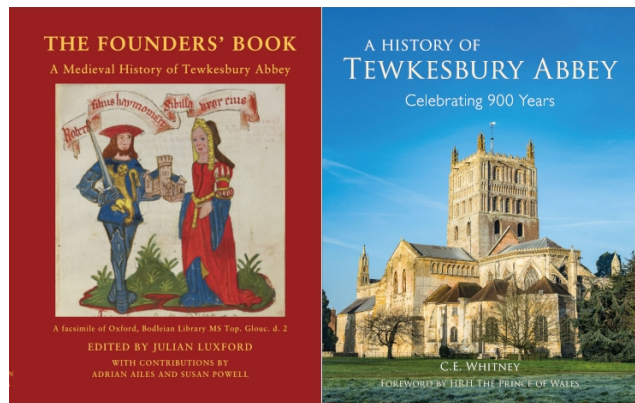
### **2<sup>nd</sup> July 2023 – Friends' Festival and Annual General Meeting**

### **3<sup>rd</sup> July 2023 – Friends' Festival Outing**

### **October 2023 - Autumn Lecture 2023**

A new website for the Friends is being developed and we hope to launch this early in 2023.

Please look out for emails and posters giving information about events and booking arrangements.



**The Founders' Book and 'A History of Tewkesbury Abbey' by Revd. Charles E Whitney are both available to purchase from the Abbey and would make excellent Christmas presents!**

## Christmas Services 2022

The poster for Tewkesbury Abbey Christmas Services 2022 features a background of red poinsettias and warm, bokeh-style light spots. The text is centered and reads:

**TEWKESBURY ABBEY  
CHRISTMAS SERVICES**

**Sunday 27 November**  
6pm **Advent Carol Service**

**Tuesday 13 December**  
6.30pm  
**Schola Cantorum Carol Service**

**Sunday 18 December**  
6pm **Christmas Carol Service**

**Christmas Eve**  
4pm **Christingle**  
doors open at 3.15pm  
11.30pm **Midnight Mass**

**Christmas Day**  
10.30am  
**Christmas Day Eucharist**

**Sunday 8 January**  
6pm **Epiphany Carol Service**

*Tickets are not required  
All services are subject to change  
Please check with the website nearer the time  
www.tewkesburyabbey.org.uk*

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