



Dear Members of The Friends

I have pleasure in inviting you to attend our forthcoming 37th Annual General Meeting, and in bringing you all our latest news.

The AGM will take place in church on Thursday, 6th July, starting at 2.30 pm. The standard agenda for the meeting can be seen on the back page of this Newsletter, with an invitation to let me know in advance if there are any additional matters you would like to raise there.

I am delighted to say that after the meeting we will offer light refreshments, and Mr Peter Sargent, who has extensive knowledge of the church's history and fabric, will tell us about the detailed report of the comprehensive Condition Assessment of the paintings and decorations in the north aisle, and similar reports on sections of other parts of the ceiling recently commissioned by the Parochial church Council. This will bring us up to date on important aspects of the ongoing preservation of key features of our beautiful church.

We look forward to seeing many of you for this special occasion.

If you are unable to attend, please send me apologies and it would be good to hear from you at the same time – your news, whether personal, local church-related, or ideas for future outings etc.

Graham Rosam
Hon Secretary

APPOINTMENT OF NEW TRUSTEE

We are delighted to announce that our new Priest-in-Charge, Rev Heather de Gruyther, has accepted the invitation traditionally extended to the incumbent of Holy Innocents to become one of our Trustees (alongside Dr Peter Burman, Mrs Debbie Fenton Cook, and the Very Revd Rachel Treweek, Bishop of Gloucester as our Patron).

Heather hopes to be able to join us at the AGM both to meet our Members and to learn more about our activities.

FABRIC MATTERS

Although the murals and decoration in Holy Innocents were renovated between 1987 and 1993 – and localised treatments have occurred since – their condition has not been comprehensively reassessed in almost 30 years. As part of a phased programme of re-examination, a report was commissioned of the Condition Assessment of the North Aisle Paintings, conducted by Stephen Rickerby & Lisa Shekede Wall Painting Conservators. The examination and investigations generally confirmed expected conditions, which are that the painting and decoration largely survive in a good state of preservation and can be considered for the most part stable. However, there are few causes of concern, which we will hear about at the AGM

FORTHCOMING ACTIVITIES

The annual for members of The Friends has been arranged. On **Tuesday, 29th August**, starting at 2pm, we will be visiting the two churches in the village of Kempsey, near Dymock. St Edward's was described by Betjeman as a "mini-cathedral of the Arts & Crafts Movement". St Mary's is said to have the most complete set of Romanesque frescos in northern Europe.

Guided tours of both churches with tea and cakes @ £10 per head. Full details to be sent to members nearer the time.

THE STORY OF THE RESTORATION 1987 – 1994

Following on from the showing of the major restoration work DVD to members last October, we issued a brief note describing the whole scheme as illustrated by a photographic exhibition we also staged that day. Here is a resume of the Story.

It had become plain to see that the interior walls of the church were very dirty and rain damaged. Staining from incoming rain was very noticeable. In 1987 expert painting conservators test-cleaned patches to estimate for the work

Fund-raising to find £200,000 began in 1985 and was concentrated for the next two years, including local fund-raising. In addition photographs of the church went on sale, along with a greetings card featuring one of the roundels by the altar. A steam fair was held on the cricket field and a Costume & Flower Festival. The campaign was nationwide and was expertly promoted in a splendid, illustrated brochure sponsored by Kleinwort Benson et co.

Clearly a pre-requisite was to make the church interior weather-proof. In October 1987 re-roofing began and was completed by Easter 1988. In 1988 the conservators cleaned a sample area on the north aisle wall of the figures in the procession behind Jesus. In March 1989, the scaffolding was erected. Phase 1 included careful washing of the artwork with a mixture of water and a mild abrasive dust – often with toothbrushes. Damaged patches of plaster had to be consolidated for re-painting. Small patches of dirt were left to demonstrate to visitors how stunning the results were, some visible still today. Stencils were made to recreate the original patterns.

The two principal conservators worked on the project over a 5-year period. Students from the Courtauld Institute of Conservation course participated in March 1989 and gained some valuable experience in this type of work.

At the west end of the north wall two whole figures in the procession were completely lost. These were fully restored with faces of Tom & Debbie Fenton added to them. The final phase was reached in March 1994. During the work it was discovered that Thomas Gambier Parry dated the Chancel Arch scene A.D. 1861; this can be seen just below the feet of St Paul's symbol of the Sword.

A watercolour painting dated 1858 by a visitor to the Court was discovered showing some early ideas for the wall paintings and stenciling. Some of the tubes of TGP's paints from 1861 and his palette and equipment for mixing the paint remain in the family archive.

Celebrations of completion of the project included a village Victorian Supper in September 1994.

37th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AGENDA

THURSDAY, 6TH July 2023

The Meeting will take place in Church starting at 2.30 pm

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Minutes of the AGM held on 15th June 2022
3. Matters Arising
4. Chairman's Report
5. Secretary's report
6. Treasurer's Report
7. Election of Officers
8. Use of Funds
9. Subscriptions 2023
10. Outings
11. Any Other Business

Keynote Speaker – Mr Peter Sargent

Light Refreshments

If any Member has a matter to be raised at the meeting, an item of news, or the name of a potential new member, please do not hesitate to send it to :-

Graham Rosam, Hon Secretary, 66 Maidenhall, Highnam, Gloucester, GL2 8DL

Tel. 01452 416946 or e-mail: graham.rosam@highnambband.co.uk

Subscriptions: As a membership organisation we continue to rely upon your generous subscriptions, and we remain very grateful for this support.

Subscriptions (a minimum of £5) are due by 1st July (unless covered by a Standing Order)

Please pay at the AGM or send to our Treasurer: Mr Brian Mayell

15 Oakridge, Highnam, GL2 8EF (brian.mayell@btinternet.com)

Also a reminder our application form is on the church website to help with recruitment - <http://www.highnamchurch.org/friends-of-highnam-church>.

Why not direct family and friends towards it to invite them to join us.