



FRIENDS FOCUS

FRIENDS OF SHAKESPEARE'S CHURCH NEWSLETTER
SPRING 2019 ISSUE 23

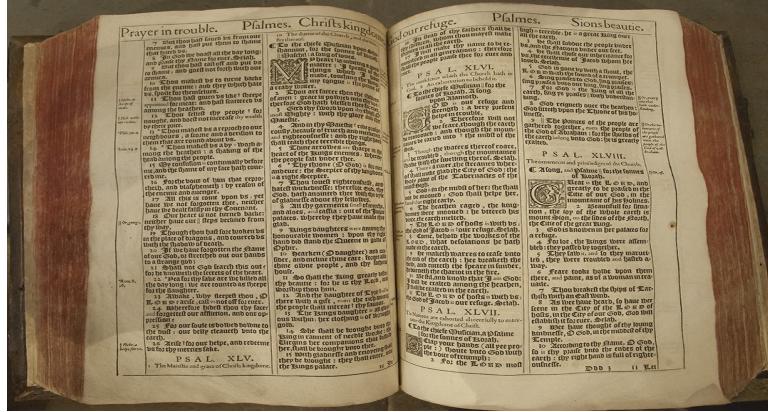
CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE



Holy Trinity's 1611 King James Bible is often open at Psalm 46, which has an intriguing connection with Shakespeare. In the first four months of 1611 when the first edition was published, Shakespeare was aged 46. He turned 47 in April that year. Ignoring the title of the psalm, if you count down to the forty-sixth word you will find *shake*. If you then go to the end of the psalm, ignoring the word *selah*, which is like *amen*, then count forty-six words back, you will find the word *spear*.

Whilst he may have well have read from it, there is no evidence at all that Shakespeare was involved with the translation of the King James Bible, which must anyway have been going on for several years and can't have been reliably expected to be ready for publication during the poet's forty-sixth year. The idea that he worked his name into the psalm is fanciful; but it demonstrates the intrigue which inevitably clusters around him.

Val Horsler, Shakespeare's Church: A Parish for the World



Holy Trinity's 1611 King James Bible and (left) RSC Artistic Director Greg Doran showing the rare first edition to the cast of David Edgar's 2011 play *Written on the Heart* which Doran directed in Stratford in celebration of the 400th anniversary of the Bible's publication.

Major structural repairs and restoration of the 13th Century North Transept and choir vestry — including a more prominent and secure space for the Church's precious first edition King James Bible — is the next fundraising challenge we have set ourselves as the Friends of Shakespeare's Church.

Holy Trinity's first edition King James Bible is a rare and fragile artefact. It needs a proper secure housing and it needs the correct controlled environment to conserve it. The proper display and conservation of the Bible is at the centre of this phase of work to our church.

The clergy and Parochial Church Council want to see the transept become an integral part of Holy Trinity rather than a private, nondescript and seemingly unloved space hidden behind a rood screen. The area needs to function as a choir vestry on Sundays and before weddings and special services, but during the week the

Turn to next page

**REVITALISED
NORTH
TRANSEPT
WILL PROVIDE
A SECURE
NEW HOME
FOR HOLY
TRINITY'S
HISTORIC
KING JAMES
BIBLE**



The North Transept and Choir Vestry. Major structural repairs similar to those recently undertaken in the South Transept present an opportunity to revitilise the transept, open it up to the public, reveal "hidden" treasures ... and the glorious Scenes from the Life of Christ stained glass window (below)

Continued from Page One

intention is to open it up to the public and, as with the recently transformed St Peter's Chapel, make more visible its beautiful Victorian stained glass and other hidden gems and thus enhance the Holy Trinity experience for the 250,000 who visit our historic church each year. At the same time it will provide an accessible new home for the 1611 King James treasure.

It was on the King's orders that this first Authorized version of the Bible was distributed to -- and chained to the pulpit of -- every church in the land. Fewer than 200 copies are thought to have survived, and it may well be that William Shakespeare, as lay rector and baptized and buried at Holy Trinity, would have read scripture from this edition.

In 2011 the North Transept underwent a major facelift and uncluttering. A mezzanine floor used for storage was removed, stained glass repaired and "lost" architectural treasures revealed. But with funds unavailable, the PCC's vision for the space was never fully realized and it has remained largely concealed ever since.

One of those treasures is the glorious *Scenes from the Life of Christ* stained glass window, which, until 1896, held pride of place in the Chancel. Replaced by the magnificent *Te Deum or Adoration of the Crucified* window, the former east window was carefully removed, made smaller and installed into the North Transept. On careful inspection, shards of mediaeval glass can be seen in some sections.

Restoration work is planned to commence within the next two years as part of a larger **North Transept Project** which will also see vital repairs similar to those recently undertaken in the South Transept, i.e. to stabilize the outer wall, replace crumbling stones and ensure there is no risk of collapse. The trustees have agreed that the Friends



should support this project — along with longer term essential repairs and roof recovering needed to ensure the South Aisle continues to be watertight. A new Friends' fundraising initiative will be launched this summer, the first target being an estimated £100,000 needed for the combined North Transept Project, whilst the overall target is £250,000. This will enable us to open up the North Transept, repair and renew the stonework on the exterior wall, display and conserve the King James Bible and make the church watertight. All of which will significantly enhance the experience that visitors will have when they visit Holy Trinity Church.

Since the Friends was launched in 2003 some £1.2m has been raised towards essential restoration work, the most recent being the stunning transformation of St Peter's Chapel. Today this is the much-used, tranquil and sacred space that Professor Ronnie Mulryne envisaged. On the other side of the Crossing, the new North Transept will beautifully complement the wonderful legacy that the inspiration, drive and determination of our former Friends' chairman has left us."

Alan Haigh

THE VICAR WRITES

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'm sure most Friends will be aware by now that Professor Ronnie Mulryne died in January this year at the age of 81. He had been ill for some time, although many people wouldn't have known it: Ronnie was determined not to let his illness get in the way of living and he was an active member of the congregation at Holy Trinity until just a few weeks before his death.

He and Eithnie first worshipped at Holy Trinity in the early 1960's when he was teaching at the Shakespeare Institute. They then returned in 1977 and Ronnie went on to be a bell ringer, a Church Warden, lay deacon and a founder member of the Friends. He took up the Chair of the Friends in 2013, the year before I arrived as Vicar, and I remember how thoughtfully he helped to ease me into this aspect of the life of Holy Trinity.

A lasting tribute to Ronnie's time as Chair will, of



Ronnie with the Bishop of Coventry and Patrick at the dedication of St Peter's Chapel

course, be the reordering and refurbishment of St. Peter's chapel, alongside the restoration of the Beckett chapel. He was always keen to remind the Trustees that the purpose of the Friends is not only the "preservation and restoration" of this wonderful church building, but its "beautification" as well. It's certainly true to say that as a result of Ronnie's vision and determination, the church interior has been enhanced as much as the exterior has been repaired.

A strong theme of the words and music at Ronnie's funeral service was that death does not have the final say, "Death has been swallowed up in victory" (1 Corinthians 15. 54). A church building like Holy Trinity, which continues to stand despite the death of many, many generations of people over the centuries, bears witness to eternal truths beyond the solid stone and mortar of its construction.

As Ronnie well understood, Holy Trinity stands not only for the hope we have beyond death, but also carries the history of a community, both locally in the town it serves and, of course, of a worldwide community of people who value the literary heritage of our most famous parishioner.

It strikes me that the most powerful tribute to Ronnie we can offer is to ensure this beautiful church building is passed on in good repair to the next generation, defying death once more.

Patrick

TREASURER'S REPORT

IN THE absence of any major new projects, 2018 was a quiet fundraising year for the Friends. Draft financial results show income of just over £10,000 with £1,900 (including Gift Aid) to support our appeal for the South Wall repairs of which £750 (plus Gift Aid) was raised from the Shakespeare Lunch. £3,300 was raised through memberships, £2,000 received from our donation point in St Peter's Chapel and a further £2,000 from sundry donations. We made two large grants to Holy Trinity Church during the year, one being a £40,000 contribution towards the South Wall repairs, the other £1,500 towards the ongoing costs of restoring the hatchments. Funds at the end of December stood at £39,500, down from £72,000 the previous year. Whilst 2018 was a quiet year 2019 onwards promises to see significant fundraising efforts for our new projects, outlined elsewhere in this Newsletter. The support of members, donors and fundraising volunteers is always welcomed.

Graham Poole, Honorary Treasurer

Friends of
Shakespeare's
Church



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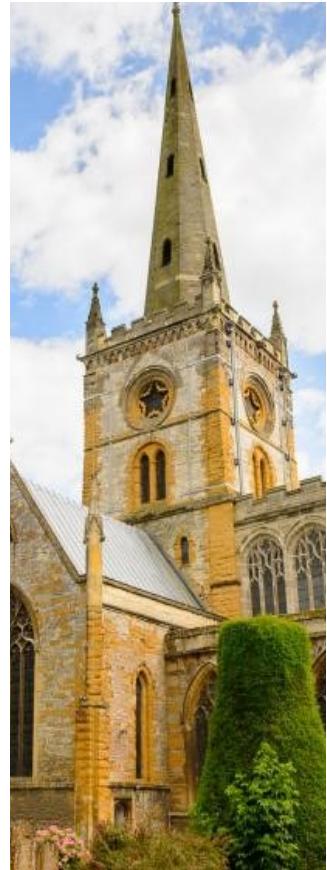
Sir Antony Sher

Sir Patrick Stewart

THAT'S WHAT FRIENDS ARE FOR...

It costs £100,000 a year to maintain for future generations the world famous church that is Holy Trinity. The age and sheer size of the stunning Grade 1 listed building means that continuous repair work is needed. *The Friends of Shakespeare's Church* was formed in 2003 with the sole objective of raising much needed funding for the preservation, restoration and beautification of our 800 year old building. Your continuing support — along with legacies, gifts, the backing of church groups, congregation and grant making bodies — has helped us raise more than £1.1m so far. But, as this newsletter reports, there are still big challenges ahead. If you are not a member of the *Friends* then please consider joining either in the Gold (£60), Silver (£40) or Bronze (£20) category. *Friends* enjoy free entry to the chancel, discounts in the Church Gift Shop, invitations to special events, and a newsletter. Application forms can be found at the back of church, on request, or for more information, please go to:

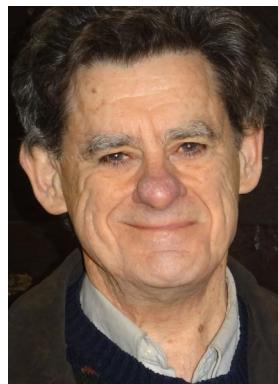
www.shakespeareschurch.org.



Do join us for the Friends' AGM at 4.30pm on Trinity Sunday, June 16 in Holy Trinity Parish Centre followed by choral evensong in church. Tea, cake and a chance to catch up with Friends!



David Austin



Lindsay MacDonald

OUR NEW TRUSTEES

Following the retirement of Mike Warrillow, Josephine Walker and Cathie Penn at our last AGM, two new trustees have joined the board. **David Austin** is a Fellow of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. He lives in Old Town, is married to Diana and they have three grown up children. David's working life has centred around property development and investment and he has served as a JP on the Birmingham Bench and as a Commissioner of Taxes. He is a member of the Council of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. His business expertise, local contacts and fund-raising experience are already proving invaluable.

Lindsay MacDonald and his wife Sandra moved to Shottery in 2016. He is a member of Holy Trinity PCC, sings in the choir and leads a team of volunteers keeping the churchyard tidy. He is also an elected Trustee of the Town Trust and Programme Secretary for the Stratford Society. Lindsay grew up and was educated in Sydney. He has degrees in Science and Engineering and specialised in image science in which he obtained his Ph.D. from University College London. He is now an Honorary Professor of UCL. Lindsay has become deeply interested in the history of the town and is collecting prints, engravings and postcards of Stratford and, in particular, of the Guild Chapel and Holy Trinity from the 19th Century.