

Trustees' Annual Report

The Friends of St James the Great, Thorley *Registered Charity No: 288678*

Year ending 31 December 2023

Legal and Administrative Information

This report is for the financial year beginning on 1 January 2023 and ending on 31 December 2023.

The Principal Address of the charity is:

60 The Paddock
Bishop's Stortford
Herts
CM23 4JW

E-mail: friends.stjames@btinternet.com

Website: www.friends-stjames.org

The object of the charity is to help and support the Rector and Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of St. James the Great, Thorley (subject to any necessary faculties being obtained) to:

- maintain and embellish the fabric, furnishing and fittings of St. James the Great, Thorley
- maintain, protect and beautify the Churchyard of the Church.

The Governing Document of the charity is the Constitution as adopted on 21 February 1983 and amended on 18 March 1984 and 1 October 2021. This calls for the management of the charity to be in the hands of a Committee of Trustees consisting of two members appointed by the Parochial Church Council of St. James the Great and six members elected at the Annual Meeting of the Association. The Committee may co-opt additional members as necessary and invite the Incumbent of St James the Great to be an ex-officio member. The Officers of the charity are a Chairman, Vice Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary who are appointed by the Committee. The Constitution calls for an Annual Meeting to take place in the month of March and the Accounts to be made up to 31st December every year.

In fulfilling the object of the charity, the Trustees have had due regard to the Charity Commission's public benefit guidance when exercising any powers or duties to which the guidance is relevant.

At a meeting of the Committee held on 15 January 2007 it was agreed that it would be prudent to maintain reserves at a level of £2,500.

The following table details the Trustees as of October 2024 and those who acted during the period covered by this report.

Name	Office (if any)	Dates Acted Since 1 January 2023	Mode of Appointment
Mrs Emma Collins		24 June 2024 - Present	Parochial Church Council Appointee
Mr Desmond Conridge	Treasurer	1 January 2023- Present	Elected
Mr Daniel Daniells-Smith		1 January 2023 - Present	Parochial Church Council Appointee
Mr Bill Hardy		1 January 2023- Present	Elected
Dr Philip Hargrave	Chairman & Secretary	1 January 2023 - present	Elected
Mr Clive Hayball		1 January 2023-present	Parochial Church Council Appointee until 21 May 2023 Co-opted from 21 May 2023 – 8 March 2024 Elected from 8 March 2024
Mrs Lina Loadman		1 January 2023 - 8 March 2024	Co-opted until 10 March 2023 Elected from 10 March 2023 – 8 March 2024
Mrs Margaret Morley	Vice Chairman	1 January 2023-present	Elected
Mr Graham Rundle		1 January 2023 - 10 March 2023 17 April 2023 - 8 March 2024 15 April 2024 - present	Elected until 10 March 2023 Co-opted from 17 April 2023 – 8 March 2024 Co-opted from 15 April 2024
Mrs Sue Russell		1 January 2023 - Present	Elected
The Revd Gareth Tracey		1 January 2023 – present	Ex-Officio
Mr Clive Weir		3 July 2023 - 24 June 2024	Parochial Church Council Appointee

Chairman's Report to the Annual General Meeting held on Friday 8th March 2024

Good evening and thank you for coming to the 2024 Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Friends of St James the Great, Thorley.

Since our 2023 AGM, we have been saddened to learn of the death of three of our members, Margaret Allen, Jean Papworth and Janet Rundle. Jean was not only a loyal member of the Friends of St James but also a founding Patron when the Association was formed in 1983. She was always an enthusiastic and generous supporter of our activities and will therefore be sorely missed.

As has been our tradition in recent years, the Friends' 2023 fundraising started with a Quiz Evening, but last year it had a new twist. We joined forces with St James Church to host a Family Quiz Night, with questions of a similar format to those in previous years set by Pam Robertson interspersed with more family friendly ones. Our Rector, Gaz, ably took on the role of Quiz Master and Chris Collins prepared a fantastic selection of meals for the interval. It was a most enjoyable evening. Given the success of last year's event, we were delighted to start this year with what was an equally enjoyable joint Family Quiz Night held here, in the St Barnabas Centre, last Saturday evening. Our thanks go out to Gaz and Chris for making these events possible.

The Friends other activities during 2023 were a Sale of Nursery Plants in May, the provision of Sunday Afternoon Teas from the Church Room during the summer months, and an Autumn Craft fair in November. As you may recall from my report to last year's AGM, the Committee decided to seek donations for the refreshments served during the 2023 season, rather than have a definitive price list as had been the case in previous years. As well as simplifying the serving of the Teas, this approach has the advantage of enabling the Friends to benefit from the 25% uplift obtainable on cash donations of individually no more than £30 through the Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme (GASDS) administered by HMRC. I will leave it to our Treasurer, Des, to report on the financial aspects of all of our activities last year, but I am pleased to say that this change in approach worked well, and the Committee therefore intends to continue with it going forward.

As you will have seen from the letter inviting you to this year's AGM, the Committee's plans for the remainder of this year once again include a Sale of Nursery Plants in May and an Autumn Craft Fair in November. We would also like to be able to offer Sunday Afternoon Teas from the Church Room during the months of May, June, July, August and September. However, the Committee has been experiencing increasing difficulty in recent years in finding volunteers to organise rotas for segments of the season and those willing to sign-up for the weekly slots in these rotas. Although I make a plea for such volunteers every year, I do so this year with a greater sense of urgency than previously. However, ever hopeful that sufficient volunteers will be forthcoming, the Committee has, with the kind help of John Loadman, procured a new set of roadside notice boards to promote the Teas, as the old boards were in a very sad state of repair after many years of use. We have also taken the opportunity of obtaining these new boards to change the timing of the Sunday Afternoon Teas from 2.30pm to 5.00 p.m. to 2.30 p.m. to 4.30 p.m.

The Friends Churchyard Team continued their important work throughout last year's March to December growing season. We were very grateful to our small band of regular volunteers who undertook this task, and to those others who helped whenever they were able to do so. The Churchyard powered machinery has recently been serviced for this year's season.

Conscious that one of the trimmers used in the maintenance of the Churchyard was reaching the end of its life, the Committee had to decide whether to buy a new petrol trimmer or to instead purchase a more environmentally friendly electric version. After careful investigation we concluded that the limited run time of an electric trimmer would significantly curtail its usefulness during Churchyard maintenance sessions even if a second battery were to be purchased, something that would also have significantly increased the cost of such a purchase. We also ascertained that an electric trimmer would be much heavier than a petrol one, and therefore more difficult and onerous to manipulate, with potential safety implications for the volunteers who would be called upon to use it. The Committee therefore concluded that the only viable option was to purchase a replacement petrol trimmer, which we are acquiring for the new season.

If you can spare a couple of hours each month to assist with Churchyard maintenance this year, please contact Margaret and Peter Morley who will be delighted to hear from you.

As you may recall, the 2019 Quinquennial Church inspection ascertained that the stained-glass window in the tower is in need of some restoration. The PCC therefore commissioned a report on its condition by Andrew Taylor, the Wiltshire based ecclesiastical stained-glass designer and conservator who undertook a major restoration of that window that was funded by the Friends in 1993. Andrew's report concluded that the current need for further work was because the glass that had then been repainted had eroded back to its condition before that restoration and other previously unaffected areas had succumbed to similar erosion in the intervening 30 years. Although Andrew advised that the ideal remedy would be to repaint such eroded areas and to seek to prevent future paint loss by installing isothermal glazing, he suggested that simply repainting these areas would be a far more cost-effective solution that would likely last for a number of years even without the protection of such glazing. As I noted in my report to last year's Annual General Meeting, the PCC decided to proceed with this latter approach, subject to receiving approval through a faculty application, and the Committee agreed that the Friends would cover the modest cost involved.

Unfortunately, the PCC's application for a faculty was turned down as the diocese did not recognise Andrew Taylor as being qualified to specify and undertake such restoration work. This despite the conservation, care and repair of historical stained glass being an important area of his work and him having previously been entrusted with the restoration of the window in the tower in 1993 and those in the north and south walls of the chancel in 1995. The PCC was instead asked to seek a further report on the window in the tower and enquired if the Friends would contribute towards the cost of obtaining this. The Committee declined to do so given the then already availability of Andrew Taylor's report. The PCC instead sought and were fortunate to be able to secure other grant funding to cover the cost of a second report.

The Committee is concerned that a new report could lead to the Friends being asked to cover the cost of a far less cost-effective approach to the restoration of the tower window than that suggested by Andrew Taylor, something that we are not sure would be the best use of the Friends' funds. This is particularly so when there could shortly be other calls on these funds, such as a contribution towards the significant cost that would likely be incurred if the PCC were to proceed with an enlargement of the Churchyard. Making such a contribution was agreed as a worthy use of the Friends funds during the 2016 AGM and the possibility of doing so discussed in greater detail at the 2021 AGM. Given that the enlargement of the Churchyard is a matter to which the PCC is planning to return at its next meeting, the Committee would value any views members might have on the Friends' way forward in respect of the funding of the restoration of the stained glass window in the tower.

Once the necessary business of this AGM has been completed, Ron Sambridge will give a short presentation entitled 'The Bells of St James the Great. Thorley'. This has been prompted by the grant being made by the Friends towards work being undertaken on the Bells as was suggested at our AGM last year, something about which Des will be saying more in his report. Our evening will then conclude with a 'bring and share buffet' with drinks provided.

However, I cannot end my report without paying a very special tribute to a long-standing member of the Friends' Committee who has decided not to seek re-election, or co-option to the incoming Committee. Looking back through the Friends' records, I have confirmed that Lina Loadman joined the Friends' Committee in 1992. She initially served as a co-opted member until transitioning to becoming one of the PCC's appointed members, a position she held until standing down as a member of the PCC in 1996. Lina was then immediately co-opted back on to the Friends' Committee, and has served on it ever since, clocking up over 30 years of sterling service. Although Lina is now standing down as a member of the Committee, she has indicated that she will be happy to continue to assist in the organisation of the Friends' activities. Lina, I would like to say a big 'thank you' for everything that you have done for the

Friends during your time as a member of the Committee and ask you to accept this small token of our thanks.

I will now draw my report to a close by thanking Margaret Morley, our Vice Chairman and Des Conridge, our Treasurer, and indeed all the members of the Committee, for their help and support since our last AGM. On behalf of the Committee, I would also like to thank you for the support you have given us.

Unless there are any questions or observations at this stage, I will pass over to Des for him to deliver his Treasurer's Report.

Thank you very much.

Treasurer's Report to the Annual General Meeting held on Friday 8th March 2024

The formal annual accounts for 2023 (Annex A) show how income was received and expenditure incurred in the year ended 31st December 2023, with comparative figures for 2022.

The Friends' income in 2023 was as follows:

- £805.00 in membership subscriptions,
- £482.33 from ticket sales for the February Quiz Night and £190.00 from the associated raffle,
- £643.32 in interest for Quarters 1-3 on reserves held in the Church of England Deposit Fund (interest in respect of Quarter 4 was not received until January 2024 and will therefore be included in this year's accounts),
- £898.30 from the sale of plants and £102.80 from donations for refreshments during the Plant Sale in May,
- £1,555.00 in donations for Sunday Afternoon Teas,
- £238.26 in the form of a tax refund from HMRC in respect of Gift Aided donations,
- £79.17 in respect of Gifts in Kind,
- £1,536.40 from the Autumn Craft Fair in November.

The Friends' total income in 2023 was £6,530.58.

Our expenditure in 2023 was as follows:

- Fund-raising costs of £964.10 consisting of
 - £650.00 to Matthews Plants for the Plant Sale,
 - £314.10 to Matthews Plants for the Craft Fair.
- Other expenditure amounting to £988.76 consisting of:
 - £568.70 for Churchyard Equipment service, repairs & fuel,
 - £31.58 for AGM expenses,
 - £268.48 for insurance,
 - £120.00 for the purchase of new Tea Signs.

The Friends' total expenditure in 2023 was £1,952.86.

The Friends started 2023 with total reserves of £21,809.98, which by the end of the year had increased by £4,577.72 to £26,387.70. Of the latter, £2,387.30 was in the Friends' current account with Barclays Bank and £24,000.40 with the Church of England Deposit Fund.

Looking forward, the Friends have made the following spending commitments:

- Up to £5,000 for the installation of permanent equipment to enable the flexible streaming of services in the Church, together with display screens for the presentation of video material,
- Up to £3,000 for new bell ropes,

- Up to £2,000 for lighting repairs,
- Up to £1,000 for repainting the stained-glass window in the tower window

The Friends' total spending commitment therefore amounted to £11.000.

Consideration of the installation of permanent Church streaming equipment is temporarily on hold pending a check that there will be adequate mobile data coverage following the relocation of the mast on the former site of the Bishop's Stortford High School in London Road.

Authorisation

This Annual Report is issued on behalf of the Trustees and was approved by them at a Committee Meeting held on 30 September 2024.

Philip Hargrave
Chairman and Secretary

Margaret Morley
Vice Chairman

Desmond Conridge
Treasurer

October 2024

Annex A

**FRIENDS OF ST JAMES THE GREAT, THORLEY
BALANCE SHEET**

AS AT 31st DECEMBER

2023		2022
£		£
NET ASSETS		
2,387	Barclays Community Account Bank Balance	2,546
24,000	CBF Church of England Deposit Fund Bank Balance	19,264
26,388	TOTAL NET ASSETS	21,810
REPRESENTED BY:		
21,810	Surplus Brought Forward from Previous Year	20,665
4,578	Year Surplus / (Deficit)	1,145
26,388	TOTAL RESERVES	21,810

FRIENDS OF ST JAMES THE GREAT, THORLEY

INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 DECEMBER

2023			2022
£	INCOME		£
805	Subscriptions		900
79	Donations		560
	FUND RAISING		
672	Quiz		719
1,001	Plant Sale		1,104
1,536	Craft Fair		1,163
1,555	Refreshments		1,383
4,765	Sub-total Fund Raising		4,370
643	Bank Interest		240
238	Tax Rebate (Gift Aid)		283
6,531	TOTAL INCOME		6,353
	EXPENDITURE		
	Fund Raising Costs		
0	Quiz		48
650	Plant sale		803
314	Craft Fair		40
964	Sub-total Fund Raising		890
	Other		
32	Annual General Meeting		26
120	Notice Board		510
268	Insurance		268
569	Repairs and Maintenance		656
0	Church microphone		297
0	Church boiler		2,560
989	Sub-total Other		4,318
1,953	TOTAL EXPENDITURE		5,208
4,578	TOTAL SURPLUS / DEFICIT		1,145

Desmond Conridge Treasurer
March 2024