



# The Friends of Tewkesbury Abbey

## Newsletter – November 2024

### From the Chairman

Dear Friends

Much has been happening in the Friends since the Annual General Meeting on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

First, the Meeting said goodbye to Graham Finch after ten years 'bearing the heat and burden of the day' as Chairman. During his tenure, the Friends have been transformed. The membership lists have been modernized; Council and its committees reformed; policies on safeguarding tackled, our website overhauled; visits and lectures organized and our finances, impeccably handled, have been solid, although in need of injection of funds. This is because the Friends helped the Abbey in many ways, especially since COVID 19, and the very considerable extra expenses that that inevitably brought in its train. While Graham would be the first to acknowledge that much of the work was done by others, the drive and inspiration came from him.

Aware of his remarkable contribution, Council voted by acclamation that Graham should be elected and appointed a Vice-President of the Friends when it met for its Introductory Meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2024. Graham felt '...deeply moved and greatly honoured...' and was 'delighted' to accept.

However, others also stood down from Council this Summer. Janice Smail had combined a contribution embracing the Friends' hospitality on lecture evenings, refreshments for Council Meetings and also supervision of the Friends' Table in the Abbey. While we are most grateful to her for all that she has done, we are also pleased to know that she will continue to look after the

Friends' Table. Joanne Raywood has sadly indicated that her outside commitments were such that she could no longer look after the Young Friends, with whom she had achieved much, and for which we are so grateful.

Council were delighted to learn that Rafael Bellairs and Sue Coulton agreed to serve for another three years. John Goom has also joined Council who, as a former architect, knows about church buildings. He is most welcome.

The Events Committee organized a half-day visit to Worcester Cathedral on 1 July with a guided tour and refreshments that was appreciated by everyone who went.

Council met again on 7 September when two working parties were set up. The first was to look at our Constitution in the light of recommendations of the Charity Commissioners. Moreover, it was felt that the purposes of the Friends needed to be clarified. The second working party was to look at our current administrative arrangements given that much of the innovative work that Karen Vincent had been recruited to do on our records had been largely and expertly completed.



*The Chairman presents Mr Graham Finch with a certificate commemorating his appointment as a Vice-President of The Friends*

Since the meeting, Karen Feighan has most kindly agreed to become the Friends' Safeguarding Officer. We warmly thank her for taking this on.

Given that the membership could do with an expansion in numbers as well as in income, it was also decided to ask members to each recruit a new member this year if they possibly could. It was also agreed to remind members how much legacies are appreciated by the Friends. It is only through such generosity that the Friends can make a significant contribution to fabric issues at the Abbey, as outlined by Fr Nick, the Vicar, at the AGM.

On Friday 20 September, the Abbey was visited by HRH the Duchess of Gloucester. The party included the Bishop of Gloucester, the Rt Revd Rachel Treweek, and the Lord Lieutenant of Gloucestershire, Edward Gillespie, OBE, who are, respectively, President and a Vice-President of the Friends. Among many other people, the Chairman had the honour of being presented to the Duchess.

The highlight of the first six months of the Friends' year was on 8<sup>th</sup> October when our Friends' Scholar, now Dr Ellie March, gave a fascinating illustrated talk on her research into the immediate environs of the Abbey prior to its dissolution in January 1540. The sell-out occasion was enhanced by some delicious nibbles and drinks, for which the Events Committee are to be warmly thanked.

It is clear to me that the Friends are particularly blessed in its Vice Chairman, Dr Ian White, its Hon. Treasurer, Nigel Bennett and its Administrator/Secretary, Karen Vincent. These three have gone out of their way to support the Friends and particularly me. I am most grateful to them. I would also like to thank those many members who also contribute time, expertise and thought to making the Friends as successful as it is..

*Revd C. E. Whitney,  
Chairman*

Dear Friends

I am grateful for this opportunity to offer heartfelt thanks for your generosity in marking the end of my chairmanship of The Friends with such generous gifts, presented at the AGM in June. As you can imagine, book tokens and theatre tokens are the stuff of dreams for me and are well on the

way to being spent. Jack Boskett's framed photograph of the interior of the Abbey and the rose, aptly named "Best Friends for Ever", will provide constant reminders both in the house and garden of my close association with The Friends. Furthermore, I was greatly moved and humbled to learn that Friends' Council has bestowed upon me the honour of electing me a Vice-President. This will mean that I can myself be a Best Friend for Ever. I shall, of course, be eager to serve and support The Friends of Tewkesbury Abbey in any way I can over the coming years. Thank you.

*Mr Graham Finch*

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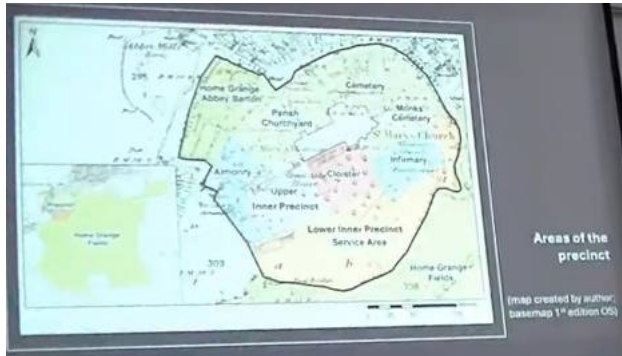
**Friends' Autumn Lecture, 8<sup>th</sup> October 2024:  
"Beyond the Abbey Church: An Examination  
of Tewkesbury's Medieval Monastic Precinct"  
– Dr Ellie March**



The Friends' Scholar, Dr Ellie March completed her PhD studies this year and the Friends wasted no time in booking her to give the autumn lecture. The hall was full to learn more of Ellie's findings, and those who had gathered for 'some things you haven't seen before' were most definitely not disappointed.

Despite Tewkesbury Abbey being one of the most prominent Benedictine monasteries in England prior to the Dissolution there have been few archaeological investigations of the site and Ellie initially had little to go on. Using an unpublished pipework survey of the Abbey meadow from 1992, the excellent 2003 book 'Tewkesbury Abbey: History, Art and

Architecture' ed. Richard K Morris and Ron Shoesmith, and Ellie's own geophysical surveys of the site, Ellie has been able to create a new and more accurate layout for Tewkesbury's Medieval monastic precinct.



Ellie's lecture covered the general background to monastic communities in the medieval period, exploring the relationship between the Abbey and the town. The significance of the Almonry Barn and gatehouse was explained, and the extent of the daily poor relief provided by the Abbey revealed. The location and purpose of the bell-tower and tenements in the churchyard was demonstrated through the descriptions in art and documents. The crafts and industry on the site, the several uses of the cloister, the likely position of the infirmary and refectory, the practices and behaviour – both praiseworthy and disorderly – of the monks, and the general scale of activity connected to the Abbey, all were divulged in Dr March's summary of the outcome of her scholarly pursuits.

Questions at the close included enquiries about the Abbey's library, the impact of flooding, whether a second church stood on the site, and areas for future research.

Those who were unable to attend this superb lecture and exciting introduction to new discoveries may be interested to learn that the lecture was recorded and is available to view and hear in the 'Just for Friends' section of the Friends' website. As Graham Finch stated in the introduction to the lecture, the funding of The Friends' Scholar was perhaps "one of the best decisions the Friends' Council ever made", and the Friends – and the Abbey – are extremely grateful recipients of the results of Ellie's endeavours.

*Mrs Karen Vincent, Friends' Administrator*

## Visit to Worcester, 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024

We gathered in the Crescent on a bright July morning to start our visit to Worcester Cathedral. After being met by a small band of Guides we split into groups and started our tour.



We learned about the early times of the building and that it changed to follow Benedictine teachings in the middle of the tenth century. The sun streaming through the stained glass made our visit memorable as we were shown the tomb of King John (died 1216) and Prince Arthur's Chantry, Henry VIII's younger brother. The steps into this memorial show heavy wear indicating just how many visits have been made over the centuries. Out time spent in peace of the crypt listening to the descriptions by our guide were especially interesting.



After the tour we met up as group in the Chapter House where the Friends of the Cathedral served us with hot drinks and cakes. All too soon we were back on our comfortable coach for the journey back to Tewkesbury.

*Dr Ian White, Vice-Chairman*



## Legacies

The Friends have received a number of small legacies this year for which we are extremely grateful. If you are revising your Will please consider leaving a gift to The Friends of Tewkesbury Abbey, these gifts will frequently form the basis of the match-funding for the Abbey which enable the more substantial repairs and enhancements to be completed.

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## Coming Events

### The Fitzhamon Lecture

12<sup>th</sup> April 2025 at 7.00pm



The subject of the lecture will be the stained glass in the presbytery windows, with particular reference to the Kempe and Co restoration of 1925. The lecturer will be Conservator Jim Budd. Full details will be available in the new year with tickets on sale in the early spring.

The Friends' Events Committee are exploring ideas for future events – a hidden spaces tour, a summer barbecue, visits to historic sites, concerts and more. If you have any ideas please get in touch. Information about forthcoming events will be placed on the Friends' website:

[www.friendsoftewkesburyabbey.org.uk](http://www.friendsoftewkesburyabbey.org.uk)

and advertised through the Abbey's weekly newsletter and posters at the site. The Friends are also looking to develop a Facebook profile during 2025.

*We look forward to seeing many of you at the Christmas and Epiphany events and services at the Abbey. The Abbey continues to live-stream a number of services – do subscribe to the Abbey's YouTube channel (@tewkesburyabbeyofficial) to keep notified of these.*

**Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> December 6.45pm**

### Schola Cantorum Carol Service

**Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> December 7pm**

### Handel's Messiah

Schola Cantorum with the Bristol Ensemble.  
Tickets from £15 available from the Abbey Shop

**Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> December 6pm**

### Christmas Carol Service

*This service will be live-streamed*



**Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> December**

### Christingle 4pm

Doors open 3.15pm

### Midnight Mass 11.30pm

**Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> December**

### Christmas Day Mass 10.30am

*This service will be live-streamed*

**Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> January 6pm**

### Epiphany Carol Service