

***The Friends of St Mary's and St John's, Whitchurch,
an independent charity***

Just as other local organisations, the Friends have not been able to have any social and fundraising events because of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, we did manage to have a number of socially-distanced workdays at both St Mary's and St John's Churchyards over the past few months. Many thanks to the volunteers who took part in these events.

When considering new projects to finance, the Friends need to work closely with the Parochial Church Council (PCC) as the two church buildings are, of course, their responsibility. At present, the PCC are arranging significant building repairs to St Mary's and assessing possible improvements to St John's. The Friends will need to consider if some financial assistance is appropriate for such developments.

The Friends Trustees have continued to meet through Zoom to ensure that we will be in good shape to resume activities when the pandemic ends.

The Friends AGM took place on the 6th January 2021, again through the use of Zoom and after 5 years as a Trustee and Chairman, I stood down. I am very pleased to report that Geoff Weir was appointed by the membership to become a Trustee at the AGM and that Paul Witcher has agreed to take over the position as Chairman of the Trustees.

The Friends Trustees are now: - Paul Witcher (Chairman), Gordon Painter (Treasurer), Theresa Elsome, Geoff Weir, Ken Baker (PCC nominated), Graeme Pearce (PCC nominated) and Revd. James Leach (ex-officio). Sally Woolhouse continues as Secretary.

Finally, my sincere thanks go to fellow Trustees and all members of the Friends for your excellent support and enthusiasm throughout my 5 years as Chairman.

Keith Williams

Paul Witcher writes: Just a few words to introduce myself to those who don't already know me. Firstly, I must thank Keith for his excellent chairmanship of The Friends over the last 5 years and his trust in recommending that I take over as chairman.

I moved into Whitchurch on Thames with my wife Geraldine nearly 25 years ago, having previously lived in west Reading. I am a retired Chartered Building Surveyor and have family and grandchildren living in Somerset and Colorado USA. During my time in the village I have been churchwarden in St.Mary's and St.John's to two previous incumbents, namely Peter Steddon and Claire Alcock, and I played a significant role in obtaining the permission and the development of the Old Stables meeting room from a vacant derelict building into the present day meeting room with an apartment above.

There is no doubt that the forthcoming months will continue to be challenging with regard to fundraising and social events for The Friends, but we will keep everyone posted as the future becomes clearer. I am sorry to see Keith stepping down, but I am very thankful that he leaves an excellent team of trustees and secretary of The Friends.

January 2021