

THE FRIENDS OF ST NICHOLAS CHURCH

Registered charity no. 291262

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Editor: Francis Ames-Lewis

Membership and financial position

At the time of writing, membership of the Friends numbers 78 households, and a total of some 120 individuals. The Management Committee is very pleased with the rise in membership since the beginning of this year, although of course we are eager to attract more members of the congregation and the local community to join the Friends. We are also hoping to attract corporate members from local businesses and other organisations, and further sponsorship for forthcoming events. If any Friends have contacts, or suggestions as to whom we might approach, we would be very glad to hear from you.

The end-year accounts showed that 2005-06 donations already amounted to over £4,600, and this had risen to around £5,500 by the time of the AGM. The Treasurer predicts that we will also recoup nearly £1,000 from Gift Aid donations this year. Modest sums have been raised from the first two Friends' events, and we are very grateful to the estate agent Featherstone Leigh for agreeing to sponsor the St Peter's Singers concert on 18 March.

The Management Committee will soon reconsider the levels of donations to be invited from Friends in 2007; and more Friends will be encouraged to pay their donations by Standing Order. We are hoping that we will build up towards an annual income that can make some considerable contribution towards the funds needed for future work on the church fabric.

Projects for which Friends' funds could be invited

At the meeting of the Management Committee held in March 2006 it was agreed that we should immediately offer £4,500 towards forthcoming work on renewing the lighting in the church, with new lighting for the North Porch being the first call on these funds. This offer was gratefully accepted by the PCC. While work is done on the lighting, the Property Committee is also proposing to renew the sound system, and this is another element of this project to which the Friends might contribute. At the time of writing, the consultants' detailed and costed scheme for the lighting project has not yet been accepted by the PCC, and discussion continues. As a result of the successful outcome of the first-stage Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) application for funding to restore the churchyard and the Old Chiswick Burial Ground, Land Use Consultants have been commissioned to draw up detailed proposals for the project plan. Work started on this at the end of March, and their report is expected around the end of the year. A second-stage application will be made early in 2007, in the hope that if this is successful work might begin at the end of 2007 or early in 2008. Some Friends' funds might be made available towards the church's contribution which will be needed to complement the HLF funding. We are always interested in hearing Friends' views on the priorities for the expenditure of Friends' funds.

Friends' events, Spring 2006

1. The tour of the College of Arms

A group of some 16 Friends was treated to a fascinating visit to the College of Arms, generously hosted and guided by Clive Cheesman, a Friend and member of the St Nicholas congregation, and Rouge Dragon Herald at the College of Arms. The tour took in the three principal rooms of the College: the Earl Marshal's Court (where the High Court of Chivalry sits); the Waiting Room; and the Record Room. We were given an account of the history of the College and its building, and detailed explanations of the functions of the College and of the Earl Marshal and the Heralds, and of how one goes about applying for the grant of a coat of arms. We were shown a wide range of heraldic and genealogical drawings and manuscripts dating from every century of the College's history, including manuscripts that relate in some way to Chiswick, to Chiswick families and specifically to tombs in the church on which heraldry can be seen – most notably, obviously, the Chaloner monument. The evening ended with refreshments and conversation, and heartfelt thanks to Clive for entertaining us to such a memorable evening. If enough Friends are interested in joining another group, Clive may be open to persuasion to arrange this: please let me know.

2. The St Peter's Singers concert

The St Peter's Singers, a chamber choir numbering some 30 singers based at St Peter's Church, Hammersmith, visited St Nicholas Church for the first time on Saturday 18 March 2006. They treated an impressively large audience to a most enjoyable concert consisting principally of Haydn's *St Nicholas Mass* (an appropriate choice for our venue) and the Duruflé *Requiem*.

3. The Annual General Meeting and Reception

After the annual Choral Evensong on 7 May 2006 to commemorate the Benefactors of the church, a Reception was held for Friends of St Nicholas Church, during which there was a brief Annual General Meeting. The Chairman gave a report on the progress of fundraising since the re-launch in September 2005, and thanked the Vicar and the Churchwardens, as Trustees of the Friends, and the members of the Management Committee for their support. With the exception of Ann Frye, who regrettably has had to step down, the Management Committee was re-elected unopposed.

4. Future plans

A lecture provisionally entitled 'John Loughborough Pearson and the rebuilding of St Nicholas, Chiswick' will be given in the church on Thursday 12 October 2006 at 7.00 pm. The lecturer will be Professor Anthony Quiney, an architectural historian who has written the definitive monograph on J.L. Pearson, the architect of the main part of the church which was rebuilt in the early 1880s. Refreshments will be available after the lecture. Attendance will be free for Friends; others will be invited to make a small donation to defray costs.

If Friends show sufficient interest, I (Francis Ames-Lewis) will be very happy to lead a visit to the National Gallery to talk with Friends about paintings on the joint themes of the *Nativity of Christ* and the *Adoration of the Magi*, as part of our preparation for Christmas. I suggest that this might best be held on Wednesday 13 December, at 7.00 pm, if I can arrange this with the National Gallery. Meanwhile, please let me know as soon as possible if you would like to book a place on this group: donations to Friends' funds will be welcomed.

Chiswick Baroque, a local *a cappella* group of five voices who sing baroque and contemporary songs, negro spirituals and other music in richly varied programmes, will give a concert in aid of the Friends, in the church, provisionally on Saturday 17 March 2007.

Further news of this concert and other future events will be circulated in the third issue of this *Newsletter*. In the meantime, if any Friends have suggestions of events of any sort that they might be able to help us to put on, or in which they would like to participate, we are always eager to hear from you.

The Friends' Management Committee

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