

St Mary's

News

Issue 1: January 2019



Welcome to St Mary's News

We hope you enjoy this first edition of St Mary's News. We want to keep you informed about what is happening at St Mary's and are thinking of publishing three times a year, but we'll see what happens. Please give us your feedback on what you would like to hear more about.

We aim to share updates on practical projects and plans that will help us to contribute to the life of the village and the benefice, as well as the human stories that make things happen.

In this edition Andy Jeffs writes about what inspired him to find out more about the fallen heroes of Froyle and share their stories during services. And Amanda Maher reminds us how the Vestments Group came into being - it didn't just happen.

William Knowles reviews progress on our parish Mission Action Plan (pMAP) which we agreed three years ago. This is being updated but in the form of a bMAP (you've got it – a benefice Mission Action Plan).

Lastly, we would like to say how much we appreciate your support. Thank you. A lot goes on thanks to your support and we want you to know about it.

Yann

*Front cover image:
Detail of one of the restored vestments*

Fallen Heroes

Throughout the last four years Andy Jeffs has allowed us to remember those from Froyle who fell in the First World War. During the Sunday service nearest the anniversary of the death of each, Andy told us about the soldier and helped us relate to him as a person and understand better the tragedy of each loss. We asked Andy to tell us about the journey all this work took him on.



Lorraine and I moved to Froyle in August 2007, shortly before the birth of our first daughter, Charlotte. My first recollection of visiting the war memorial was while out walking with our new arrival, however, it wasn't until I attended my first Remembrance Day service, that I started to wonder who these men were, what was their connection to the village, where did they live, were some of them brothers, what units did they serve in, where did they fight and what unfortunate events led to them ultimately dying for their King and Country.

Despite these questions repeating themselves at each subsequent Remembrance Service it wasn't until 2013, that I seriously started to research the 30 fallen men of Froyle from the First World War. What I didn't know at that time was that Chris and Annette Booth were also doing this for their book, 'Lest We Forget – Froyle in the Great War' and I am pleased that I was able to share my research with them.

So with just the names as they were set-out on the War Memorial, I started my research on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website. From there I cross checked information with that on the Froyle website, and other websites such as Ancestry UK.

Fallen Heroes (continued)

Once I was confident I had the correct person, their rank, fighting unit and date of death, I was then able to use the resources at the National Archives in Kew to obtain an insight through war diaries to understand where and how the men fought, and what had happened to their units in the months, weeks, and on the actual day that the men had died.

I have also had the great pleasure in meeting and talking with relatives of some of those killed. The most poignant of these for me was meeting the relatives of Private James Oakley (known as Jim), 1st Battalion, Hampshire Regiment, who was killed on 12 May 1915, aged 31, leaving a wife and four young children.

He wrote his last letter home to his wife and children on 5 May 1915, and the letter is a vivid account of what horrors the men faced daily.

Jim writes, after detailing his latest engagements with the enemy, “and so ends the most awful ten days of my life”. He also wrote “When you see the names of numbers of men lost read it with pride for they died like men and never flinched so cheer up again and again and if I should fall I shall have the satisfaction of knowing I have done my duty and best to keep the huns from you and mine and let you live in decency”.

He finished his last letter with these words “I will draw these few lines of scribble to a close with fondest love and kisses to you all and leave me to still remain your own loving and affectionate husband and father J. Oakley xxxxxxxx”.

I visited his grave just outside Ypres, Belgium, on 13 September 2014, a beautiful late summer afternoon.

As I always do when I visit the graves or memorials of the fallen men I knelt and said a short prayer, took a number of photos, and then left a thank you message from the village of Froyle in the visitor book. On this occasion, as I had read James’ last letter to his family, I said that his wife had received it in my message.



Mrs Oakley with three of their four children.



WW1 Cemetery Ypres

Two weeks later his great Grandson visited his grave from Australia and was surprised to see my message from the people of Froyle, as James and his family were at the time of his death living in Holybourne, and he is also remembered on the War Memorial there.

However, what they didn't know was that he was also remembered on the Froyle Memorial, as his mother was still living there.

There are another 29 pen pictures of the fallen men of Froyle, and the journey I have taken in helping build these pictures for present and future generations has been for me very rewarding, although on many occasions quite emotional.

Despite now concluding the series of commemoration services at St Mary's, my research continues, and I am still discovering new material on the fallen men of Froyle and I am continuing to update their pictures. We will remember them.

FALLEN HEROES

1914--18

<i>Nelson Aitcheson</i>	<i>Charles Hillier</i>	<i>James Neale</i>	<i>Gladstone Steer</i>
<i>Lt Thomas Aitcheson</i>	<i>Robert Hillier</i>	<i>Frederick North</i>	<i>Albert Stratton</i>
<i>William Ayres</i>	<i>David Hounsham</i>	<i>James Oakley</i>	<i>Capt William Summers MC</i>
<i>Andrew Binfield</i>	<i>Frank Hounsham</i>	<i>Frederick Oliver</i>	<i>Richard Vickery</i>
<i>Frederick Binfield</i>	<i>Charles Ivil</i>	<i>Henry Pinnells</i>	<i>Albert Ward</i>
<i>Tom Brownjohn</i>	<i>Frederick Knight</i>	<i>Walter Pinnells</i>	<i>Albert Webb PO, RN</i>
<i>Reginald Cooper</i>	<i>Capt Wilfrid Messenger</i>	<i>Robert Scrivener</i>	<i>Percy Yalden</i>
	<i>Edward Mitchell</i>	<i>Herbert Shurville</i>	



Vestments

'If you want to see something really special visit the vestments in Froyle,' Jacqueline Hayman of the Arts Society advised representatives from York Minster, Hereford Cathedral, and the Orange Order amongst others, underlining the importance of our unique collection. Used regularly during services and displayed annually to much admiration, the survival of these antique pieces is a story of passion, determination and commitment which could have had a very different outcome.

Sitting in the balcony beside the banners every Sunday, it was no surprise that Sarah Thursfield thought of taking one of them when she was asked to bring an example of some embroidery to an ADFAS textile workshop. There she met an Arts Society lecturer, Jacqueline Hayman who had more than 35 years' experience conserving and restoring textiles. Jacqueline had seen the Froyle vestments some 15 years earlier and was curious to know if the storage arrangements had been improved.

Meanwhile, another member of the congregation, Jean Norkett, had found some unidentifiable cloth trapped in a

stuck drawer whilst she was cleaning the sacristy. It turned out to be a pink cope.

Together, Sarah and Jean decided to investigate. Tentatively opening the cupboards and drawers which had housed the vestments for over 100 years, they discovered nearly 200 individual pieces. Unfortunately, they were not alone. Mice, moths, carpet beetle larvae and silverfish had all been enjoying easy access thanks to the backless furniture.

Wrapped in newspaper, polyester sheets, dust, and droppings, the fine needlework and fragile silks were being damaged by damp, creases, and the creatures which had decided to make the vestments their home. Some were so fragile Sarah and Jean worried about moving them.

Keen needle workers themselves, they were determined to improve the situation and, in 2003, asked the Parochial Church Council to fund their visit to an ecclesiastical textile conservation workshop in Shropshire. An intensive practical course, Sarah and Jean learned what they could safely do themselves and when to seek professional advice and so began a long and painstaking journey to restore the vestments to their former glory and preserve them for the future.

Jean and Sarah inspired nearly 40 other members of the congregation to help,

To find out more visit:
www.froylevestmentsgroup.org.uk



Damaged altar frontal before restoration...



and after

beginning with thorough housekeeping which included very careful vacuuming of the vestments using conservation mesh to protect them. When the church was found to have damp levels of 80% it was clear that a humidifier for the sacristy was a key priority, along with protective storage. Metal containers were considered the best type of housing for the vestments, particularly as metal would offer extra security too. In the meantime, there was much to be done to immediately protect the collection, including repacking it with conservation quality acid free paper, laying it flat where possible and putting it onto padded rollers to prevent creases becoming splits.

Recognising there would need to be a significant amount of professional restoration too, research into potential funding began. The age and intricacy of the vestments meant that each time-consuming piece of work would cost a significant amount of money. Exhibitions, group visits and donations raised money

to start sending items off to professional conservators. A number of individuals also sponsored specific pieces, often in memory of loved ones. After investigating guilds and grants up and down the land, Linda Bulpitt secured £10,000 of lottery funding to install a display cabinet at the back of the church.

With the exception of a few pieces, which are retained in their current condition for comparison, most of the vestments have been restored to their former glory. Displayed annually to raise money for their continued upkeep, they are also made available for groups to view on request. Perhaps most importantly, those that are robust enough are regularly worn on special occasions.

As Jean and Sarah put it so eloquently themselves: "These beautiful and historic textiles, which were made for the glory of God, are preserved for future generations who will come after us to worship at St Mary's Church."



Mission Action Plans - pMAP, bMAP

For many of us, the term 'Mission Action Plan' does not inspire much enthusiasm. William Knowles suggests why we should nonetheless view this as an important tool in securing the future of our church.

What on earth is a pMap?

In 2015 we held an open meeting in Froyle Village Hall for Froyle churchgoers to discuss how we thought the Church in Froyle should develop over the following three years. These thoughts were then put together by the PCC into what was called a 'parish Mission Action Plan' or 'pMAP' – a set of objectives grouped into four broad aspects of Church activity. This pMAP was widely distributed to churchgoers when it was finalised, and can be found online at www.benbinfro.co.uk/churches-in-the-benefice/froyle.

Empty-minded jargon or a helpful focus on our future?

This was an exercise carried out at the Winchester Diocese's request by all parishes in the Diocese. Many of us were sceptical about this endeavour, and initially viewed it as little more than a top-down exercise in corporate-style bureaucracy. We felt it would trivialise complex activities and trends by reducing them to strap-lines and



provide a false sense of activity – the kind of thing for which the Church should be an antidote rather than a cheerleader.

I was probably one of these sceptics, but of course any organisation, even (or especially?) a Church organisation, needs a clearly understood sense of direction if it is not to ossify, as well as some means of measuring how far the organisation is moving towards its objectives on a day-to-day basis. Used well, the Mission Action Plan is an effective tool for this. I still find the terminology off-putting, but 'mission' was after all a Christian concept long before it was hijacked and debased in other contexts. In formulating the objectives, we were forced to think about what it means to be part of our Church community: what is its point? How much more are we than simply custodians of an ancient, beautiful building and some deep-seated but dwindling traditions....? How is our answer to this reflected in our day-to-day activities and aspirations?

The results so far

I'm not sure that when we prepared the pMAP in 2015 we fully answered these questions, and for this and other reasons – the document was probably too sweeping in its scope and often unrealistic in its aspirations - the pMAP has not been as effective as it might have been. But it was a start. The point about such a document is that we should continually revisit it and assess what elements of it are helpful and what is achievable.

Next steps

Now that the initial three year period covered by the pMAP has come to an end, we are being asked by the Diocese to carry out a comprehensive review of our objectives for the next three year period, in the light of our experience over the last three.

We shall be doing this on a benefice basis, resulting in one document (a 'benefice Mission Action Plan' or 'bMAP'!) in place of the pMAP. This will be a good opportunity to look at, among other things, how the relationship between each parish and the benefice as a whole has developed over the last three years – slowly, you might say, in the case of Froyle, but it is hard now to dispute that the different strengths and weaknesses of the three parishes mean that we all derive considerable benefit from being part of the same benefice.

The structure of the Church of England is of course changing, as is the society in which we live and work. We need to engage with the opportunities that this presents, and be clear in our minds what we have to offer, if we are to have a role. The Mission Action Plan should really help us to focus on this.



St Mary's in the Community

As part of its wider role in the community, St Mary's hosts a number of varied and diverse events and, more recently, we have been pleased to welcome:

Music for Remembrance

A concert of powerful choral music and reading to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the end of the First World War. This concert saw the church packed with a full audience to listen to Winchester Consort.



Members of Winchester Consort in rehearsal prior to the evening performance.



The Forbidden City

We were delighted when Mary Ginsberg agreed to give us a talk and presentation on the rise, fall and rise again of China's Imperial City. A former curator at the British Museum, specialising in Chinese art, Mary gave a unique insight into the historic development of this fascinating World Heritage Site.

Our annual **Christmas Craft Fair** was as popular as ever offering an excellent selection of stalls selling a wide range of Christmas gifts.



And finally

The PCC wishes to thank all those who have helped in the production of this first edition of St Mary's News.

We welcome your feedback and look forward to receiving your comments by email to media@benbinfro.co.uk

By the way, this first edition of St Mary's News has been produced at no cost to St Mary's.

Credits go to:

Andy Jeffs

William Knowles

Amanda Maher

Karen Potter (photography)

Yvonne Irvine (graphics)

and a working party including:

Nigel Bulpitt

Jane Macnabb

Jonathan Pickering



Illustration by Anna MacInnes

Printed by Treloar Print

