



# Friends of St George & St Mary's, Church Gresley

NEWSLETTER No 4, MARCH 2024



## A NEW LOTTERY BID

As I write this, our next (and we sincerely hope our last) bid for National Lottery funding to repair and reopen our Parish Church, is receiving finishing touches from the Friends team and St George and St Mary's Church Council with Vicar Rev'd Mike Firbank. **This stage is known as the Expression of Interest (EOI)**, and the Church has been here before. Three times. Each time it has been bounced back in a disheartening tussle with the requirements of the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF). However, on the last occasion there was constructive feedback from the NLHF's Senior Development Manager Lesley Owen Jones. So building on the work of the previous bids, The Friends of St George and St Mary's took up the baton to attempt to take the project forward.

Those who have been following us know the story. That we had a renewed public launch of the project last June and since then have had the most encouraging and rewarding response. We have researched our history,

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made important links with partners and professionals, and put together a vision for the repaired and reopened Church building. We recently sent all of our accumulated material to Lesley Owen Jones for a last look before formally submitting a fresh EOI. At our online meeting, Lesley was extremely positive about the team we had assembled, the research, and the vision, saying **we seemed to have met the necessary requirements**. The only stumbling block at that point was that the Heritage Fund had changed its criteria from 9 outcomes to 4 investment principles. (This is known as moving the goal posts!)

This meant further work, but one key factor in our favour is a new emphasis on assisting heritage at risk. St George and St Mary's is on the 'At Risk' register, so this is a major plus for our prospects. Once the EOI has been submitted, which may have happened by the time you read this, **the NLHF will normally give their verdict within 20 working days**.

## STORIES IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD

In the quiet earth of St. George and St. Mary's churchyard lie many silent narratives of lives lived, stories as yet untold, and history etched in stone. Research by Melissa Martin, helped by husband Greg, unveils a captivating glimpse into this consecrated ground, where 184 accessible marked graves enfold the remains of 321 named individuals. Between the stones are many unmarked graves, whose monuments are obscured, or whose occupants never had a lasting memorial.

Some weathered headstones are indecipherable but of those that can be made out, the oldest appears to be that of Henry and Lydia White, inhabitants of Ashby Wolds, who departed this life in the early 1700s. Conversely, the most recent addition to this silent congregation is the memorial to Martha Richards, wife of Joseph Richards of Cannock, who bid farewell to her loved ones in 1950. She presumably came from a local family and wished to return to her native village.



Memorial to the Pope Family 1870

The 20<sup>th</sup> century also saw the interment of many ashes, some into old family graves, such as those of Cyril Holmshaw in 2020, which were placed in the grave of John and Elizabeth Simpson who died in the mid-1800s. Others, such as Alan Stretton, who died in 2004, have been interred in the area set aside as a Garden of Remembrance.

Melissa's research has revealed several poignant stories relating to Church Gresley's memorials. There is the Pope family who lost 6 of their 10 children to Scarlet Fever in 1870, and Henry Payne, a young veterinarian who died at the young age of only 26. The dangers of coal mining are represented by the story of Edward Baker, a young boy who was killed in a mining accident at just 14 years of age.



William Leedham was struck by lightning. Yet Robert Walters lived to be the colliery manager at Church Pit for 23 years! Ongoing investigation will likely turn up more interesting people of the local area.

Of course personally interested in Melissa and Greg's research are those pursuing their family history, and there are certainly many surnames still to be seen in the local area, including Staley, Clamp, Bloor(e), Smalley, Leedham and many others. And **we welcome stories from local residents based on their family knowledge**. There is more to do, with some graves that are currently inaccessible due to the safety fencing and church closure which will need cataloguing at a future date. It is the aim of the Friends of St George and St Mary's project to make all of this research available online for everyone interested in our shared heritage.

## KEEN TO GO DOWN THE PIT!

Martyn Clamp records: One story from our Memories Day was of a local man who remembers going to see Gresley pit as a young boy in the 1950's on a school trip. It left an impression on him that resulted in a lifetime of work down the mines. Here is his tale of how that first trip to Gresley pit came about.

*“There was two trips from school, one to Green's Pottery and one to Gresley Pit. **We went down the pit and from then on I never wanted to go anywhere else.** As I was*



*leaving, I was told by the training officer that I could start work there as soon as I was 15yrs old. My Dad was a butcher and Mum sang in choirs and they didn't want me to become a miner.*

*Anyway I turned up at the pit on the Wednesday I was 15yrs old with me boots on. I had a hat and a tin can with me snap in. I arrived on me bike. I didn't know who to see or where to go, so I was told to wait outside an office, which I found out was the training officer's office. When he called me in he said 'What are you doing here?' and I said you told*

*me that when I was 15yrs old I could start so here I am!!! So he went off to see the manager Mr Bosworth and then he comes back and said, all right you can start. He takes me up to get a tally, shows me where the baths were, gets me a key for the lockers and showed me where everything was. Then he took me up to the screens and the chap up there put me on a bench, standing in the coal in front of a bench with coal on it and my job was to pick stone out from the coal”.*

illuminating stories of a bygone age of mining which is fundamental to the heritage of the people of Gresley. Very proud men, who worked hard in dangerous conditions who had these and many more stories to tell.

**Do you have an interesting local story relating to local collieries or one of the potteries or other workplaces? We'd love to hear from you. Contact our Facebook page or email [friends@gresleychurch.co.uk](mailto:friends@gresleychurch.co.uk).**

## WOULD YOU LIKE TO JOIN THE 'FRIENDS' TEAM?

Are you someone who is keen to see Gresley Parish Church repaired and reopened? Then **why not join our team** in helping to bring it about? The Friends of St George and St Mary's would welcome people willing to help with events, stewarding, serving food, researching heritage and so on. We are also particularly looking for young people to come on board with the project. If you are 18-25 and interested in learning more or know a young person who might be interested then **contact our Facebook page or email [friends@gresleychurch.co.uk](mailto:friends@gresleychurch.co.uk).**

## WE LEARN FROM 2024's PROGRAMME OF EVENTS FOR ST WILFRID'S

One aspect of funding by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, which Gresley will have to follow, is creating a series of **heritage-related activities for the local community**. This seems to normally last around three years, and St Wilfrid's at Barrow on Trent have had a great programme over the past three years led by their events manager Llynda Baugh. These

have proved so popular that they have decided to continue in 2024 with films, talks and heritage related activities. We went to several last year which were well attended and came with cake and a glass of wine!

Presentations and talks are given by top experts and reenactors. Some of the films are old favourites Love Actually, Downton Abbey (The King's Visit) Breakfast at Tiffany's and Mrs Miniver.

To see the full range of their activities go to [stwilfridsbarrow.org/2024-heritage-events/](http://stwilfridsbarrow.org/2024-heritage-events/)

Why keep mentioning St Wilfrid's Barrow-on-Trent? Well, they have been of enormous help to us and are a continuing inspiration in our own project. Also we are going to be running a comparable programme of heritage related events in Church Gresley. Finally, they have a great programme planned that can entertain and educate us all!

If you have suggestions for activities and events that you would like to see in Church Gresley, please let us know via our Facebook page or email [friends@gresleychurch.co.uk](mailto:friends@gresleychurch.co.uk)

## HERITAGE EVENTS

All start at 7.30pm. £15 per ticket including a glass of prosecco and lovely chocolate. Please book at [stwilfridsbarrow@gmail.com](mailto:stwilfridsbarrow@gmail.com)

**Mary, Queen of Scots - with Lesley Smith**  
Friday, 10th May

This performance gives you a chance to meet the tragic queen during her final imprisonment at Tutbury and share her hopes and fears as her dramatic tale approaches its bitter conclusion.

**Katherine of Aragon - with Lesley Smith**  
Friday, 16th August

Katherine of Aragon was born into one of the most powerful and warlike families in Europe. Henry desperately wanted a male heir and after more than 20 years of marriage to Katherine, he divorced her to marry Anne Boleyn. Katherine died in isolation, near poverty and ill health when she was just 50 years old.

**Charles II - with Gareth Williams**  
Friday, 4th October

After years of austerity, the "Merrie Monarch" was determined not just to restore stability, but to teach England to enjoy itself again, and he believed in leading by example! Come and see King Charles brought to life again - but lock up your daughters!

## HERITAGE OPEN DAYS

**The 10 Best Things we Have Discovered**

**Saturday, 14th September 10:30am - 4pm**  
Join our guided tour 'Our historic village' at 1pm

**Sunday, 15th September 12noon - 4pm**  
Join our guided tour 'Our medieval grave yard' at 1pm

No booking required.

## WORKSHOPS

Please book your place at [stwilfridsbarrow@gmail.com](mailto:stwilfridsbarrow@gmail.com)

### Embroidering Beautiful Flowers

**Saturday, 10th August 10:30am - 3:30pm. Cost £50**

Learn how to transfer a picture onto your cloth and enhance it with embroidery. Bring a magazine picture of your choice or choose from magazines provided. All kit provided. Drinks provided, please bring own lunch.

Led by Jill Bishop.

### Willow Weaving

**Saturday, 31st August 10:30am - 4pm. Cost £40**

Come and make a bee or bird for your garden. Drinks and materials included. Please bring own lunch.

Led by willow artist Nita Rao.

## HERITAGE TALKS

All start at 7.00pm. £4 per head including tea and coffee. No need to book.

### The CGI Recreation of Barrow in the Year 1300

**Wednesday, 3rd April**

A visualisation and narrative of the village, presented by the creators, Duncan Hewitt (Albino Igit) and Dr Rory MacLellan (Historic Royal Palaces).

### The Knights Hospitaller in Britain

**Wednesday, 1st May**

Presented by Emrita Professor, (Cardiff University) Helen Nicholson, a world-leading expert on the military religious orders.

### The Rutland Roman Villa

**Wednesday, 5th June**

Peter Liddle, former County Archaeologist for Leicestershire, will talk on this high-status Roman villa, discovered between Ketton and Luffenham, south of Rutland Water.

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## The Journey of a Brooch

**Wednesday, 3rd July**

How did an Italian cameo brooch make the journey from Rome to Barrow upon Trent in the 1800s? Presented by Anne Heathcote, one of the several former owners.

## The Vikings

**Wednesday, 7th August**

Presented by Dr Gareth Williams, Curator at the British Museum.

## Mediaeval History in England

**Wednesday, 4th September**

Carolyn Twomey is Assistant Professor in Mediaeval European History at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, USA, where she specialises in the religious and material history of the Early Middle Ages.

(This may be presented as a film or podcast)

## The Crusades

**Wednesday, 2nd October**

Dr Nic Morton (Nottingham Trent University) returns to give another exciting talk, this time on the Crusades.

The Friends of St George and St Mary's Church  
invite you to an

# Easter Egg Hunt!



Saturday, 30<sup>th</sup>  
March

2pm-5pm



£3 per child

Gresley Church Community Centre, Church St.  
Church Gresley, DE11 9NR

Booking preferable  
but not essential:  
<https://bookaby.me/gresley-friends/whats-on>



## NEW EMAIL ADDRESS

Keen eyed readers will have noticed that the email address quoted above is not the same as before. We decided to take pity on everyone (including ourselves!) who found it a pain to try and type in such a long address. Especially a problem trying to quote it over the phone! So the new address is mercifully simple, [friends@gresleychurch.co.uk](mailto:friends@gresleychurch.co.uk). Don't worry if you've recently sent something to the old address, it is still active and emails to both addresses are channelled into the same inbox.