



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

NEWSLETTER No 6,  
AUGUST 2024

*Still*

**WORKING TO REPAIR AND REOPEN  
ST GEORGE AND ST MARY'S CHURCH  
CHURCH GRESLEY**

## WHAT'S GOING ON? WHERE IS EVERYBODY?

Time's flying by! It seems like no time since we were having a great weekend at the Festival of Leisure and enjoying many useful and encouraging conversations. **We are still making progress, although it may seem that there's nothing to see.** Since clearing the hurdle of the Expression of Interest to the National Lottery, we have been extremely busy completing a huge amount of paperwork for the next stage. If we had a pound for every word we've written, we wouldn't have to fundraise!

**Practical progress is also happening.** Back in February a visiting heating consultant pointed out that our electricity supply was

inadequate for a building of this size. So we need to upgrade from single phase to a new higher amperage three-phase supply. And more recently a friendly engineer from the National Grid visited to assess the situation. At some stage a new cable will need to be laid – Oh Joy! Other plans mean that alongside that there will need to be new drains and a new gas main. The diggers will be out in force! Well, all that is a little way off.

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## Cream Tea



Gresley Church Community Centre  
Saturday 7th September 2024  
Anytime between 3-5pm,  
Cost - £5

Raising funds towards the repair and reopening  
of St George & St Mary's, Church Gresley

Organised by the Friends of St George and St Mary's

To book, please contact [friends@gresleychurch.co.uk](mailto:friends@gresleychurch.co.uk)  
Places are limited!

In our last newsletter we highlighted **businesses who have made significant donations to our project.** We hope to be able to make this a major feature of our newsletter, website and Facebook page going forward.

In the meantime we are also working to raise funds by means of events. Coming up next is a repeat of last year's popular **Cream Tea. Book soon to avoid disappointment!**

## A FANTASTIC COUP FOR GRESLEY!

The Friends of St George and St Mary's are delighted to present **An Evening with Kev Crane, The Singing Plumber**. Kev is currently fulfilling a decade-long dream of touring the UK with his music, and he is generously breaking into his schedule to support St George and St Mary's restoration appeal. All profits from the concert will help to secure a £1.5m grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Kev has the exciting prospect of the adaptation of his story into a Hollywood film. His musical talents were discovered while he was working in the home of record producer Paul Conneally. He recalls **"I was singing in the bathroom, and the next-door neighbour heard me.** He asked Paul, 'Who's that singing in your bathroom?' and Paul replied, 'The plumber.' We started chatting, and I mentioned I had just built a recording studio in my loft to revive an album I began 25 years ago."

Following the release of his music through Conneally's label, **Hollywood screenwriters noticed coverage of Kev's story in the Washington Post.** This led to him flying to Los Angeles to meet director Billy Ray, who wrote the screenplays for *The Hunger Games* (2012) and *Captain Phillips* (2013). Billy Ray found the story of the two men compelling. Each had rediscovered their connection to music after many years through their link to each other.

The script is by writers Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais, best known for sitcoms such as *The Likely Lads*, *Porridge*, *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet*, and the feature film *The Commitments*. The working title is *The Music Inside*, it will have a similar feel to *Fisherman's Friends* and Colin Firth has been approached for a leading role! **So hear The Singing Plumber for yourselves, on October 26<sup>th</sup> from 7-9pm at Gresley Church Community Centre. Tickets are just £10.** Online booking go to <https://gresleychurch.co.uk/tickets/>



**An evening with**

**Kev Crane**

**aka The Singing Plumber**

**Join us on 26<sup>th</sup> October 7-9pm @ Gresley Church Community Centre to hear his story and his songs!**

## ISLE OF WIGHT SUCCESS STORY

*We have been excited to read the amazing journey of Newport Minster on the Isle of Wight. Jacqueline Gazzard, chair of the Friends of Newport Minster writes:*

In May 2024 Newport Minster, at the heart of the Isle of Wight, reopened its doors after a decades-long fight to restore crumbling fabric. *(As at Church Gresley, the congregation had been meeting in the parish centre nearby.)* We had a wonderful celebration involving local schools and groups, alongside the teams involved in the project and their families. There were the PCC, craftspeople, builders, as well as our Friends group. And very special visitors, including our Patron, HRH The Duke of Edinburgh, who helped secure our funding, alongside our Bishop Jonathan Frost and Archdeacon Stephen Daughtery.

The several phases of our project at times felt impossibly endless! As Chair of the Friends, I stated, "Our aim all along was to see the Minster come to life again. It is one thing saving important bricks and mortar, but creating community is much tougher and yet that is what is happening here. I think we should be proud to boast an Island church building with new purpose that local craftspeople, volunteers and donors have made possible. This extraordinary building is going to be busy year-round and also warm for the first time in decades!"

Our professional Fundraiser secured support from the Heritage Lottery and Historic England. There were additionally generous donations from private benefactors. But there was our mission too... the Minster as a spiritual hub committed to supporting those in crisis in the community. Also a rolling programme of exhibitions and events for all ages and interests to provide income and introduce the Minster to new and wider audiences. A gift shop will also promote local craftspeople and artists and provide an income to support Minster upkeep.

### What did we learn to pass on...?

1. **The triumph of teamwork** with key talents welcomed and used. A good person on accounts, someone to encourage and build

volunteers, a proper fundraiser and good communications.

2. **A strong, involved congregation.** Numbers were dwindling but parish reorganisation grew a wonderful team across our group of churches, working with the Friends. Now the congregation is building and adding fresh volunteers not all of whom always worship in our church.
3. **Get early advice** from professionals and present the church authorities early on with proposals that the church wants and needs. Not doing so cost our project both time, money and unnecessary stress.
4. **Hang in there and don't give up.** There will be tough decisions around things that should be straightforward.

At the start we had a cold dark church letting in water. On the English Heritage 'At Risk' Register, it felt miserable and neglected. Now today it is light, airy, and warm with meeting rooms, spaces for all ages, proper toilets, storage and a catering kitchen. **There is life and joy in the spaces we've created and a sense of what is to come, not what held us back.**



***So much of Newport Minster's story resonates with our situation here in Church Gresley. When contacted, Jacqueline said she was delighted to write an article for us. There's clearly a whole community of people who have paved the way before us, who are willing to help!***



**St George and St Mary's Church from the South**, a little island of green.  
Our thanks to Kev Smith of **Burton Drone Images** (see on Facebook) for this  
and many other aerial images that will be extremely useful in our bid.

## CAN YOU HELP US OUT?

- Please, if you possibly can, donate to our appeal. The QR code below links directly to St George and St Mary's restoration account. Or in person when events are happening.
- Sign up to our Newsletter. Just email us at the address below or contact us via Facebook. It's online at Issuu.com, just search Friends of St George and St Mary's Newsletter.
- Follow us on Facebook. We will publicise our news and activities there. Please like and share our posts on your own Facebook news feed.
- Why not Volunteer with the Friends Group? As you can see above, we still have much work to do. If you would like to help us we would be glad to welcome you on board! Or if you have helpful suggestions about any of the current tasks, please contact us. Especially if you have suggestions to help our fund-raising.
- Continue to tell us your stories about Church Gresley and your families.



## How to Contact Us

Email us at [friends@gresleychurch.co.uk](mailto:friends@gresleychurch.co.uk)

Message us or comment on Facebook at  
Friends of St George and St Mary's.

Also, **CHURCH IS STILL HAPPENING** in the Gresley  
Church Community Centre each Sunday at 10am.

Why not come and meet us?