



Friends of St George & St Mary's NEWSLETTER

No. 9 SEPTEMBER 2025

Still

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

HERITAGE ROOFING SPECIALIST INSPECTS THE PARISH CHURCH

The Friends of St George and St Mary's, who are pursuing the church's restoration on behalf of the PCC, were delighted to welcome a visit from Richard Jordan of W J Conservation. Richard has worked in the field of roofing since 1986, when he began working as a slater and tiler alongside his father Bill. His CV is impressive. **He's worked on a wide range of historical buildings in the UK including the Tower of London, Lincoln Castle and St Pancras Station**, and is now regarded as a leader in the conservation and restoration of our heritage. He commented on several flaws in the roofing construction and condition.

STOP PRESS

Thanks to everyone who supported our CREAM TEA to such a fantastic success. And to our incredible team of bakers, helpers, and waiters.

**OVER £570
RAISED!!**

From roofing Richard's expertise developed into all aspects of traditional building methods and materials. Richard is working with Historic England towards the possibility of a grant for emergency repairs for our building. That means we will have two major grant applications progressing at the same time – help!



A FAMILY MYSTERY

Janet Parcell (née Woodward) responded to our article about family names in the churchyard in Newsletter 8 (still available on Facebook) We couldn't include all of the many images and information supplied.

Janet and her sister Christine Hopwood, and Janet's daughter Tanya, have been researching the Woodward family history for many years. They have traced their line back as far as 1660 and their 7th great-grandfather, Richard Woodward (1660–1733). His son John (1687-1759) was buried at St George and St Mary's, and the line continues through Thomas (1722–1794), Richard (1768–1807), Robert (1805–1869), and Samuel (1844–1909), down to living memory with their great-grandfather, Samuel (1877–1939).

GRESLEY FUNERAL.

The Late Mr. S. Woodward. 1939

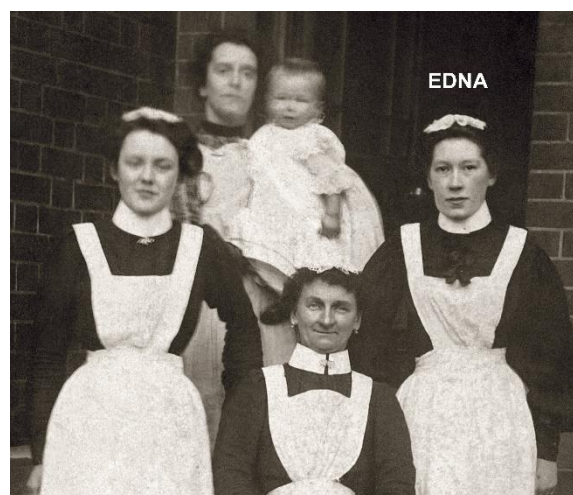
The funeral took place at Gresley Cemetery, of Mr. Samuel Woodward, of 122, Regent Street, Church Gresley, who died after a very short illness, aged 61. A native of Woodville, he came to Gresley about 50 years ago, where he saw long service with the firm of Messrs. B. Robinson, Ltd., pottery manufacturers, for whom he worked for about 45 years. His only surviving sister, Mrs. S. Locker, of Shirebrook, was unable to attend, owing to ill-health.

The mourners were:—Mr. Samuel H. Woodward, Mr. Kenneth C. Woodward (sons), Miss Nellie Woodward (daughter), Masters Leslie, Harry and Kenneth (grand-children), Mrs. W. Brabbins, Mrs. F. Hudson, Mrs. G. Johnson, Junr. (nieces), Mr. H. Talbot, Mr. G. Johnson (brothers-in-law), Mrs. S. Woodward (daughter-in-law), Mrs. G. Johnson (sister-in-law), Miss E. Stephenson (grand-niece) and Mr. D. Morton (friend).

Workmates, who acted as bearers, were:—Messrs. W. Brabbins, C. Cave, J. Dolman and R. Scott.

Floral tributes were from:—Sister Fanny and family; Sam, Doris and family; Nellie, Ken and Leslie; Emma, Will and family; G. Johnson and family; Mr. Botham and family; and a marble vase from neighbours and friends.

Much is known about this Samuel. His wife Bertha died young, leaving him a single parent at 122 Regent Street. His daughter Edna, their grandmother, worked locally as a servant. In 1922, at just 18, she gave birth to their father, Leslie Marshall Woodward, out of wedlock. The family story is that Edna was seduced while in service by her employer. Leslie was baptised at St George and St Mary's, with his father recorded as John Smith, miner, though no trace of him has ever been found. Even an appeal in the *Burton Observer* drew a blank.



Edna later married Wallace Sturt and had three sons, but tragically died in childbirth aged only 24. Leslie was then raised by his grandfather Samuel and his aunt Nellie, who cared for him as a mother throughout her life.

Samuel worked as a potter at Robinsons, a trade Leslie briefly followed as a sagger maker's bottom knocker before moving to Birmingham for engineering work. He died in 1992. Years later, a suitcase belonging to Nellie was discovered, containing photos and documents that filled many gaps in the family story.

If any readers have information about this branch of the Woodwards, Janet, Christine and Tanya would be delighted to hear from you. Also if you have interesting stories about your own family's local history you can contact us via our email address, friends@gresleychurch.co.uk.

DANCING IN THE WARS OF THE ROSES

Sometime in the 1400s, a man called Johanes Banys or John Bains had a precious notebook



1The Gresley Dance Book about the size of a double CD

which he used to copy down things of importance. Apparently, he was into palm reading and copied down a Latin article about it – did he intend to erect a booth, dress up as Mystic Meg and say ‘Cross my hand with silver’?

But what makes John’s book so precious that it is regarded as one of the treasures of Derbyshire’s Archives is the back of the book which contains **the earliest collection of dances in the English language**. As the book is in the Gresley Family archive it became known as **the Gresley Dance Book**. As such

it is famous throughout the world of historic dance. (But few locally have ever heard of it!)

From England and Scotland to the United States, lovers of historic dance are working at reconstructing these dances. You’ll even find some on YouTube. (Just search Gresley Dance) John records the titles of over 90 dances, some in French, and describes the steps of 26 of them, with a line of music of their tunes.

The music can be worked out after a fashion, but the steps are sometimes obscure.

John seems to have been writing in the 1450s or 60s, because at the end of the book, after a few pages of prayers, he jots down a reminder to himself to write to Ralph Shirley of Staunton Harald about a vacancy for a vicar. Ralph died in 1466. So was John ordained and looking for a job? Or was he a dancing master enquiring for someone else?



The Gresley Dance Book will form an important part of our Heritage Activities if we are successful in our National Lottery bid. We aim to bring in a teacher and prepare for a Mediaeval Ball. Get your glad rags on!



MAKE A NOTE ON YOUR CALENDAR!

CHRISTMAS FAYRE

ON 22nd NOVEMBER 2025
AT GRESLEY CHURCH CENTRE
WITH SANTA’S GROTTTO, REFRESHMENTS
AND LOTS OF STALLS



WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE RESTORATION PROJECT?

- **WORKING WITH OUR CONSULTANT** to create a successful application for lottery funds.
- **RAISING MATCHING MONEY.** The National Lottery Heritage Fund will only grant 90% of what is needed. So **we will need to raise eye-watering sums of money**, over £200,000 as our contribution to the work. There are other Grant Making Bodies but we need lots of additional ways of achieving the total. Any ideas you have that could **help us climb this mountain** will be much appreciated.
- **WORKING WITH LOCAL COMPANIES** to create a business-friendly facility.
- **RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS AND TRAINING.** There will be many opportunities for volunteering with the project both now and in the future. Training will be provided where some specialist skills are desired.

BE PART OF THE STORY!

- There's a great opportunity to volunteer with the Friends Group! As you can see, we still have much varied work to do. If you would like to join in we would be glad to welcome you on board! Or if you have helpful suggestions about any of our current tasks, please contact us. Especially if you have ideas to help our fund-raising.
- Please, if you possibly can, donate to our appeal. The **QR code** below links directly to St George and St Mary's restoration account. Remember companies can set their donations against tax. Also we now have an **EasyFundraising** account. Sign up to donate cashback whenever you shop online.
- Sign up to our Newsletter. Just email us at friends@gresleychurch.co.uk or contact us via Facebook. It's also online at our Facebook page, 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.
- The Friends of St George and St Mary's is an official activity of the PCC, which is a registered charity, number 1159929.



How to Get in Touch

Email us at friends@gresleychurch.co.uk

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

Also, **COME AND MEET THE TEAM** at Morning Church at the Gresley Church Community Centre most Sundays at 10am.