



# Friends' Newsletter

Autumn  
2004

## From Our Chairman, James Morgan

There is good news about our new notice board for the porch entrance. Work is currently in hand and should be finished for installation in November. As another Friends Project nears completion we can turn our attention to deciding what should follow. There were several proposals put forward at the AGM and your Committee have met recently to discuss these and decide on priorities. A popular request for some additional coat hanging facilities has already been followed up and the Friends have offered to pay for a portable coat rack or permanent fittings whichever is considered most suitable. Considering the more substantial projects suggested by the AGM, your Committee have decided to obtain estimates for improved lighting around the church-

yard, 'beautification' of the organ, and preserving the west window that was designed by C. E. Kempe a famous artist and contemporary of William Morris.

Our Annual Dinner was well attended again this year and after a most delicious buffet with a wide variety of cold meats, quiches and salads, we were very well entertained by Susan Matthews with an illustrated talk about the Stained Glass Museum at Ely including some history about the development of its use as a form of decoration. The coloured slides were spectacular and as a consequence of this talk, a party of 20 Friends made an evening visit to the museum in July for a private view. Susan Matthews was our guide and she took us around the wonderful collection

explaining the history behind each exhibit and although the slides shown at the Dinner were spectacular the real thing was just stunning! On a personal note, I have decided that it really is time that I stood down as chairman after 15 years in the role, so I shall not be standing for re-election to the Committee at the AGM next year. I feel that it is important that the post of chairman should be rotated to encourage fresh ideas and that somebody else is given the chance to take the Friends forward in its declared aims. Finally, on behalf of your committee, I would like to thank you all for your continued support and would ask you to make note of the date of the next AGM and Dinner which is Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2005 when our guest speaker will be Mr Alan Wyatt who will be talking about his collection of musical instruments.

## The Fen Chapel

by Brian Macdonald-Milne  
Vicar 1983-1988

When I arrived as Vicar of Waterbeach (and Rector of Landbeach) in 1983, I was told by Jack Harding, the long-serving Lay Reader, about the old daughter Church of St. Andrew "down the Fen". One Harvest Festival, while he was preaching there, the floor collapsed and the congregation descended a few feet! The Church was closed, and eventually demolished. However, items were brought from there into St. John's, including the altar and the bell. These were placed in the South Aisle, but there was very little space between the front pew and the wall of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century organ chamber, where the names of the departed of the First World War already hung in the old window space. Jack died after 41 years as a Reader, having ministered in Waterbeach and in Landbeach. I proposed that a me-

morial to him be placed in the Church and that the "Fen Chapel" in St. John's be re-furbished, particularly as Jack had exercised his ministry in "The Fen" as well.

There were already memorials on the wall of Landbeach Church made from pottery so, with the agreement of Waterbeach PCC, I visited Prickwillow Pottery near Ely (now closed) and asked if they could make a similar one in memory of Jack. They made three attempts at it, but only charged us for one! One of these round memorial plates went into the chancel of St. John's, near where Jack used to sit in the pew by the pulpit. Another went into the chancel at Landbeach. The third remained with me. When the Church Room was last extended, a small side room was added and named "The Jack Harding Room", and I have now offered the third one to be placed in there. Other items associated with Jack, which have been on the screen at the back of the South Aisle, will be placed

there as well. On that screen, covered to protect them from the light, are also pictures in watercolours of the old Fen Church and of the interior of St. John's after it was further embellished in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

The P.C.C. also agreed that the Fen Chapel should be improved and beautified. Money given in memory of Jack was used, together with other donations in memory of Mollie Mullucks of Way Lane, who had worked for the Church in various ways, and Ernest Wallis, a former Church Warden. When the re-furbishment was completed, the Chapel was formally dedicated to St. Mary the Virgin and St. Andrew by the Bishop of Ely, the Right Reverend Peter Walker, on Sunday October 6th, 1985.

The Vicar and P.C.C. expected that the application for a faculty (made to the Chancellor of the Diocese for the work to be done) would be straightforward, and that permission would be granted swiftly as no ob-

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## The Fen Chapel

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jections had been raised locally to what had been proposed. Imagine then our surprise when the Chancellor, Canon Routledge (brother of the actress Patricia Routledge), the ecclesiastical judge of Ely Diocese, insisted on holding an ecclesiastical court to consider the application! It sat in the Church Room, with the Chancellor assisted by the Diocesan Registrar, the Bishop's legal adviser. The Vicar and Churchwarden were in attendance, but nothing happened! This event can perhaps be explained by the fact that our proposals involved removing one pew - as there had been a big row in Cottenham parish previously about an application to remove some pews there. After the sitting I said to the Registrar that I felt it would be quite wrong for any charge to be made for this unnecessary occurrence....

The permission was granted, and the pew was duly removed. But unlike the situation in Cottenham, the pew

was re-used in the same place! Mr. William Belton, a skilled cabinet-maker, had come to live in Waterbeach to be near his daughter, Sheila Gill, and her husband and family. He transformed the pew into a moveable communion rail, and kneelers were made by ladies of the congregation, incorporating symbols of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He also made a rail around the edge of the wall of the small sanctuary, and a wooden base for the space in the wall, which was the old piscina, the drain where water could be poured after the washing of the sacred vessels after Mass in the Middle Ages. This piscina indicated that there had been a chapel there before. After the re-dedication, it officially became the Lady Chapel, perhaps for the second time! Cloth for the altar in blue - a colour which is associated with the Blessed Virgin Mary - was chosen by the late Mrs. Mary Osselton, whose husband had been Churchwarden. It was made to fit the altar, and it blended with the banner of the branch of the Mothers Union which then existed in the parish. The regular Army Chaplain at Waterbeach Barracks, Padre Robin

McDowall, then gave to the chapel a statue of St. Francis, in memory of the old Waterbeach Abbey. This had existed in the early Middle Ages on the south side of the church, until the nuns were persuaded to join their fellow Franciscan Sisters (the Minorettes) at the newly founded Denny Abbey. Like me, Robin is a member of the Third Order of the Society of St. Francis.

So the Fen Chapel reminds us of many things and people: St. Andrew's Church in Waterbeach Fen, Jack Harding and others who have served the parish, William Belton, who died in a tragic accident crossing the railway line, and the Sisters following the Rule of St. Clare who served and prayed at the two medieval Abbeys in the Parish of Waterbeach. And it also honours the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose image appears on the Mothers' Union banner, and the Apostle who brought his brother Simon Peter to Jesus - St. Andrew. May our worship in the Chapel of St. Mary and St. Andrew bring us ever closer to Jesus as well.

## Where are they now?

*Nigel Beaumont writes from Bavaria*

Red squirrels, black squirrels, buzzards, tasty beers and Bratwurst (fried sausage) some of the delights my German wife and I now enjoy in our new life in Bavaria! We live in a farming village one hour west of Munich and on a clear day can see the lower Alps and Austria and Switzerland are both within two hours drive.

We look onto St Stefan's Kirche (church) two hundred yards away and hear the bells ringing thrice daily for the Angelus. (Goering had the previous bells melted down for weapons). The ringing seems random, no beautiful Landbeach - style peals! Two or three farms come right into the village so the smells are "interesting". Every south German village has its tall pine Maypole with attached carvings, each approach to the village has a guarding crucifix, and many churches decorate the countryside for this is a very Catholic area. The churches are often beau-

tifully decorated, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century Baroque and Rococo styles on medieval Gothic.

Sunshine seems more frequent than in England and is definitely stronger, but winters can be severe with lots of snow. We will be snug as a bug in a German rug, for houses (we live in part of a restored farmhouse) are superbly built. West German workmanship and quality of materials and goods is manifestly higher than in Britain.

My favourite meal?:- Spargelcremesuppe (white asparagus soup), Leber und Knodel in Sosse (liver and dumplings in rich gravy), washed down with ein stark dunkel Bier (strong dark beer with a big froth)! Germans here are very friendly, taking an interest in our British number plate and my accent! But Germany is not a happy country (is Britain?), as there is much "angst" over foreigners, especially Turks being 10% of the population, over the huge influx

of Russians and eastern Europeans (some of whom bring criminality) and over East Germany's high unemployment (20%) and poverty relative to the West. Happiness lies in the communities and extensive families and Bavarians know how to enjoy themselves - festivals and cultural events abound. My wife's large family live near so I don't feel lonely - but I miss you lovely Waterbeach and Landbeach folk and Anglican hymns!

Auf Wiedersehen!

Alles Gute (all the best)

Date for your diary

AGM and Annual Dinner

Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> May, 2005

Guest speaker:

Mr Alan Wyatt