

THE FRIENDS OF DORCHESTER ABBEY

SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2016



from: Ingrid Lunt
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10 Manor Farm Road
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Registered Charity No. 275819

President: The Bishop of Dorchester

Vice-President: Mr Christopher Gibbs

Abbey Website: www.dorchester-abbey.org.uk

Email for list of concerts and events:

events@dorchester-abbey.org.uk

Membership enquiries:

Honor Juniper 01865 343228

friends@dorchester-abbey.org.uk

Annual General Meeting

The AGM took place on Monday June 6 at 6.45 p.m. In his report the Chairman gave thanks to the Trustees for their work the past year. The Rector reported on the very successful lighting project (and launch), for which half the funding had been provided by the Friends. She also reported to the AGM the proposals for future development of the Guest House. The membership secretary reported that membership of the Friends stands at 247, and the Beauforest Society at 87. As mentioned in the last Newsletter we hope to increase Beauforest membership to around 100.

Note: Next year's AGM is planned for June 5, 2017.

Current Trustees (all honorary)

Chairman: Richard Dick
Vice Chairman: John Taylor
Revd Canon Sue Booy (Rector, ex officio)
Hugo Brunner
Gerry Wells (Church Warden)
Christine Dawson (Treasurer)
Stephanie Forman
Tanya Hawley
Christian Hoyer Millar
Honor Juniper (Membership secretary)
Ingrid Lunt
Judy Macfadyen
David Parker
Mary Saunders
Hilary Warburton (Secretary)

Friends Outing to Llandaff Cathedral and St Fagan's, South Wales

May saw a very successful outing to Llandaff Cathedral and St Fagan's Open Air Natural History Museum. St Fagan's Natural History Museum has over 40 re-erected original buildings of all periods and all types, on a beautiful 100 acre site in the grounds and gardens of St Fagan's castle. A unique building, St Teilo's Church, shows how a church would have looked just before the Reformation.

We are very grateful, as always, to Yvonne Lawden for arranging these outings.

The 2016 Dorchester Lecture

Thursday September 29th, 7.30 p.m.



Sir Charles Pollard QPM

Tackling crime and terrorism in London and Thames Valley.

We are very honoured that Sir Charles Pollard has agreed to give the 2016 Dorchester Lecture. He is an eminent figure, both nationally and internationally, in the policy and practice of policing in contemporary society. Sir Charles began his career at the age of 19 in 1964 as a constable in the Metropolitan Police and undertook the accelerated promotions course at Bramshill Police College. From there he took an LLB at University of Bristol supported by a Bramshill Scholarship. In 1991 he was appointed Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police, the largest non-metropolitan force in the country, covering Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire and a population of over 2 million.

He retired in 2002 but still works in the Justice system today.

His talk will include his personal experiences of the policing of public disorder and terrorism, in which circumstances caused him to become somewhat of a specialist, including:

- **Policing disorder**
 - the “Winter of Discontent” picket lines in London in 1978
 - the anti-racist protest demos during the 1979 General Election campaign in which a protester Blair Peach was tragically killed
 - the Blackbird Leys ‘car racing’ disturbances of 1991
 - the anti-road protests at the Newbury By-pass in 1995

- **Tackling terrorism**
 - protecting Oxford Street from IRA bombs & bullets in 1975-76
 - the Balcombe Street siege in Paddington in 1975
 - the Iranian Embassy siege at Prince’s Gate in 1980
 - the Brighton Bomb - Grand Hotel, Brighton 1984 – aimed at assassinating the Prime Minister, Mrs Thatcher
- **Policing the unexpected** – the Hungerford Shooting Incident 1987

He will also cover his national Chief Constable role in arguing for reform of the Criminal Justice System.

This promises to be a very stimulating, relevant and fascinating talk and we look forward to welcoming Friends and their friends to this annual event.

Tickets £10

Available from <http://www.dorchester-abbey.org.uk> or from Hair of Dorchester or on the door.

Music in Dorchester Abbey

The Abbey provides an excellent place to enjoy music and a great acoustic for both instrumentalists and singers. There is always a rich programme of events, which includes a regular programme by John Lubbock’s Orchestra of St John’s (OSJ) and the Benson Choral Society. Future Events include:

OSJ’s Summer Festival: Music in the Abbey (15 - 25 September)

Thursday September 15 Derek Paravacini Jazz quartet

Saturday September 17 Brahms Requiem (in Brahms own arrangement for two pianists) with OSJ voices

Thursday September 22 Jan Schmolck (violin) and Howard Moody (harpsichord and organ) performing sonatas by Bach and Handel

Friday September 23 Rising Opera Stars (students of Christine Cairns)

Saturday September 24 Michael Tirabosco plays the pan pipes

Sunday September 25 Opear Gala with Illona Domnich, Hannah Davey and Francesca Saracino

**Benson Choral Society Saturday 26 November,
7.30 p.m.**

Verdi Requiem

Soprano Elizabeth Roberts

Mezzo soprano Susan Legg

Tenor Mark Chaundy

Bass Christopher Foster

Beauforest Society

The Beauforest Society was established to support fundraising to help to preserve the fabric of the Abbey. We are all aware that Dorchester Abbey is an ageing building, built for the most part in the 14th century and is therefore continually in need of maintenance and repair. A central role for the Friends is to support the PCC with funds (and on occasion expertise and effort) for restoration and maintenance projects. The Beauforest Society, in its turn, provides additional support to initiatives to preserve the fabric of this wonderful building.

So named after Richard Beauforest who purchased the Abbey Church of St Peter and St Paul at the time of the dissolution of the monasteries for £140; this was said to be the price of the lead on the roof. He presented the Church to the parish of Dorchester in 1554 together with 'twenty shillings for the reparations'. A wonderful gift, and an enormous responsibility.

The subscription for membership of the Beauforest Society is £100 a year for four years.

Beauforest members receive the Friends of Dorchester Abbey Newsletter, and an annual Beauforest event is planned in the autumn each year to ensure that members have the opportunity to be fully involved in activities in the Abbey.

Many thanks to all those who signed up for Beauforest membership, and who have enabled the Friends to support the PCC in important projects. This is a great way to support Dorchester Abbey. Additional Beauforest members are always welcome: please contact the Chairman Richard Dick or the Membership Secretary Honor Juniper for further details.

MISCELLANEA

Sarah Fletcher's Memorial Stone in Dorchester Abbey

With many thanks to Roger Mitchell

About halfway between the font and the doorway to the Lady Chapel, on the left side of the People's Chapel, there is a memorial stone set into the floor commemorating the death of a lady called Sarah Fletcher in June 1799. The unusual inscription reads :-

"Reader, If thou hast a heart famed for Tenderness and Pity, Contemplate this Spot. In which are deposited the remains of a young Lady whose artless Beauty, innocence of mind, and gentle Manner once obtained her the Love and Esteem of all who knew her. But when Nerves were too delicately spun to bear the rude Shakes and Jostlings which we meet with in this transitory World, Nature gave way. She sunk and died a Martyr to Excessive Sensibility.

Mrs Sarah Fletcher, wife of Captain Fletcher, departed this life at the Village of Clifton on the 7th of June 1799 in the 29th Year of her Age. May her Soul meet that peace in Heaven which this Earth denied her."

Sarah and her husband had lived for several years at Clifton (now Clifton Hampden only a short distance from Dorchester) and she appears to have been a popular villager living at a house, which still exists, not far from the present crossroads. Her husband was an officer in the Navy and appears to have succumbed to the charms of a wealthy heiress living some distance to the west. An arrangement for a bigamous marriage was set in place which somehow Sarah was warned about, and which she managed to stop by arriving at the church just in time. Despite her entreaties, her husband refused to return to Clifton with her and set out to London from where he sailed to the East Indies.

Sarah returned home alone and hanged herself in her bedroom from the curtain-rod of her bedstead. An inquest, held at Clifton a few days later by one of His Majesty's Coroners gave a verdict of 'death by lunacy'. In normal circumstances at that time, suicide denied a person a church burial, but such was the local regard for Sarah, the story goes that a petition to allow her to be commemorated and buried in church was presented to church leaders in Oxford. This was successful and she was laid to rest in the Abbey not long after.

Over the next 200 years, people at the house in Clifton Hampden have heard footsteps on the stairs and seen glimpses of a young lady wearing a black cloak and slamming doors and moving furniture, particularly on dates close to 7th June. The ghost of Sarah Fletcher has thus become written into local folklore and the present owner can testify to hearing footsteps on the stairs at night on occasion.

Sarah Fletcher's memorial stone, so delicately commemorating her death, is viewed by hundreds of people attending events or just visiting the Abbey for some peace during the day. Of Captain Fletcher, her unfaithful husband, I know little. Perhaps he perished in the East Indies or returned to claim his "bigamous" bride at the second attempt. That is a story for another to research but what is certain is that his unlawful behaviour in 1799 ensured lasting recognition for his poor wife.

***Note: any interesting pieces about the Abbey are warmly welcomed by Ingrid Lunt
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