

The Friends of St Lawrence

NEWSLETTER

Issue No 45

Spring 2026



Chairman's Welcome

"Today I will live in the moment, unless the moment is unpleasant in which case I will take a nap."

Snoopy

Having endured almost continuous rain and cold winds for the first two months of the year, I was sorely tempted to follow Snoopy's recommendation. Spring could not come soon enough!

The fascinating articles in this edition of the newsletter by David James and Kerry O'Connor highlight the unique history of St Lawrence Church, the sole survivor of at least five churches or chapels on Old Sarum that were in the local area over eight hundred years ago. Also included is an interesting update from Jim Platt about the rood Screen and the bells in the Church, an account by Jon and Alix Smith about how they have established a wildlife garden and a summary of the accounts for 2025 by Phil Waddell our Treasurer.

The Friends have arranged two events since our previous Autumn newsletter was published. On 24th October 2025 Tobias Ellwood, ex MP, Minister and Army officer captivated the audience with an inspiring talk which provided a unique insight into both UK and global politics. On 6th March 2026, Spencer Bull shared his experience of living with MS after having to cut short a promising military career. His remarkable resilience was helped by him tackling demanding sporting and physical challenges, including the Invictus Games.



Spencer Bull shown above with thumbs up.
(Picture courtesy of the Wiltshire Times)

After long-standing pleas for some more trustees, Guy Hockley has very kindly volunteered to become one. Another individual has expressed a keen interest, and we hope that he will also join, still to be confirmed. We need enough trustees to enable us to arrange events and we have some interesting speakers lined up. We hope to confirm the dates soon.

Last year the Friends contributed almost £2,000 towards repairs to St Lawrence Church plus £710 towards the Church lighting and we continued to fund prizes for artworks drawn by the schoolchildren, displayed in the Church over Christmas. We are extremely grateful for the generous support of our members and other residents in the village that enable this financial assistance.

Ian McGill

In the last Newsletter I presented an article about the Churches of Stratford in the period between 1220 and 1600 mentioning that in the next issue of 'Sarum Chronicle' (see page 3) June Effemey would be looking at the historical evidence for the church of St Mary inside Old Sarum during the period after the first Cathedral moved to New Sarum in 1220. In my article below I have drawn on much of the detail about St Mary's chapel from June's paper, this is very gratefully acknowledged. Ed.

History of Churches on Old Sarum in the Period after 1220: Part 1

Introduction

	Name	Location	Date of Origin	Last seen or recorded
1	St James	Inside hillfort	8th C	
2	St Ethelreda	Inside or just outside hillfort	8th C	14th C
3	Cathedral	Inside	1075	13th C
4	St Mary	Beside Cathedral	10/11th C	1427
5	St Margaret	Inside hillfort	11th C	1246
6	Holy Cross	Above E Gate of Outer Bailey	11/12th C	1531
7	Lady Chapel	Beside Cathedral	11th C	16th C
8	St John	In East Suburbs	12th C	Mid 16th C
9	St Peter	Outside City E Gate	12th C	Early 15th C
10	St Nicholas	Free Chapel of the Castle	12th C	14th C
11	St Lawrence	In West Suburbs	12th C	2013
12	Stratford Common	In Southwest Suburbs	12th C ?	1641

List of potential Churches in the area of Stratford and Old Saum

Following the move of Salisbury Cathedral from Old Sarum to its new site in New Sarum in 1220 I looked in the last Newsletter at the two churches left in Stratford sub Castle in the period from 1220 to 1600. It is known from historical records that there were at least five churches/chapels on Old Sarum during the same period. One of these is the chapel of St Mary which is the subject of a very detailed paper by June Effemey in Sarum Chronicle 2025. Her research into the history of St Mary's chapel is summarised below.

St Mary's Chapel

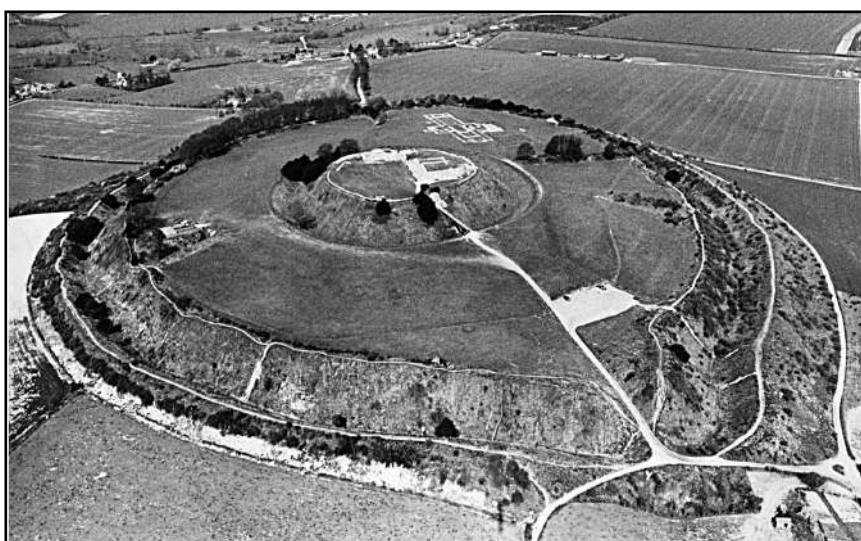
Apparently the impetus to examine the history of St Mary's chapel was due to discoveries in 2023-24, by Salisbury Cathedral archive volunteer Les Baker, of references to it in the Chapter's Dunham Act Book (one of eight such books or registers recording the appointment from 1335 to 1468 of over 60 named vicars to celebrate mass in St Mary's chapel) and fabric accounts from 1464 onwards recording building works and repairs to St Mary's.

Further research then unearthed many more references. The article in Sarum Chronicle 25

traces the history of the chapel from its founding in the mid-13th century to its demise in, or after, the 16th century. The author used three main primary sources covering around 200 years from the mid 1300's to the mid 1500's from the Salisbury Cathedral archives: they were Chapter Act Books, communars' (Canons) accounts, and fabric accounts as well as, for the first hundred years of the chapel, from the mid-13th century to the mid-14th century, other published and unpublished documentary material This has enabled June to produce a very clear narrative of the chapel's history.

For the first 100 years of its existence it was located in the old Cathedral on Old Sarum. The chapel may have been constructed anew elsewhere in the outer bailey at Old Sarum, sometime after 1331, before eventually reverting to the site of the former Cathedral.

The Canons' accounts survive from 1342 and continue beyond the 16th century. The scrolls are quarterly accounts of receipts, from land, churches, offerings at masses and so forth and expenditure, such as payments to individuals, purchases of items like wine and parchment, cost of repairs to buildings and expenses of those travelling on cathedral business, such as the hiring of horses. The communars' accounts attest



1960's Aerial Photograph of Old Sarum showing the sites of the Castle mound in the centre and the outline of the former Cathedral beyond

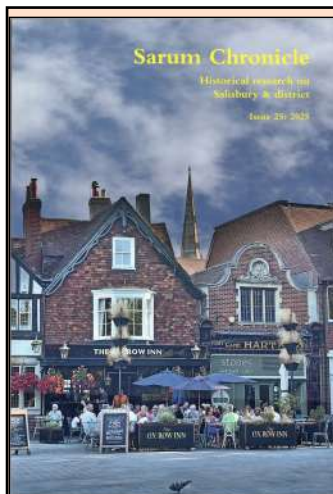
to the involvement of the cathedral's clergy with St Mary's chapel for over 200 years.

The final account mentioning vicar's stipends for celebrating mass at Old Sarum is dated 1543. The next surviving account (April to June 1550) makes no mention of chaplains celebrating in the old castle. The following account (October 1550 to January 1551) had an entry which was then crossed through as if the canon had forgotten that vicars/chaplains were no longer celebrating mass at Old Sarum.

In addition to providing vicars for St Mary's chapel the dean and chapter also provided a vicar to celebrate in the chapel in Stratford sub Castle. Stratford chaplains are recorded in 1454 and in every subsequent surviving canons' account. The accounts also recorded that the dean and chapter paid for repairs to the fabric of Stratford chapel and continued to hold lands and properties in Stratford sub Castle throughout the medieval period and beyond.

The demise of the St Mary's chantry chapel occurred by 1547. All chantry chapels were funded from land which paid for chaplains, their vestments and church ornaments such as a chalice for masses and they were intended to continue in perpetuity. Chapels didn't need a congregation with most masses celebrated by just a priest and respondent. Priests could only celebrate one mass a day and this had to be done between daybreak and 11am. All chantry chapels had a stone altar at the east end of the building. The demise of chantry chapels occurred following first, King Henry VIII Chantry Act of 1545 which was not fully effective in dissolving chantries due to his death in 1547 but became so due to the Chantry Chapel Act of King Edward VI in 1547/8. St Mary's chapel on Old Sarum then appears to have conformed to the edict.

David James



Sarum Chronical 25, 2025, (shown left) is an annual publication which contains historical articles on a wide range of subjects about Salisbury and its district. It is definitely essential reading for anyone interested in the history of southern Wiltshire.

The current edition not only has June Effe's article about the history of St

Mary's chapel on Old Sarum but a number of others of local interest in particular one about Frances Nisbet entitled '**Fanny Nelson—The Forgotten Wife**' by Christine Mason. The article follows the turbulent life of Frances, from her marriage to Josiah Nisbet to her eventual marriage in 1787 and subsequent life of on/off companionship with Admiral Nelson. The article commences with a photograph of the Memorial tablet on the chancel wall in St Lawrence Church put there by Frances in memory of her departed husband Josiah Nisbet who died in 1781 and is buried in St Lawrence churchyard.

Update from the Chairman of the Church Fabric Committee

Rood Screen - the project to clean up the rood screen continues to move slowly forward. The PCC has approved the cleaning procedure recommended by the project manager, Barry Goldsmith, who you may remember, was also the project manager for the successful chancel roof renovation programme. We are currently in discussions with the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) who have to approve the work in detail. The secretary of the DAC, Dan Crooke, met with Barry and me in the church recently and gave us some pointers on how to proceed.

Bells – the Friends of St Lawrence was created to raise money for the installation of the bells in 1998.

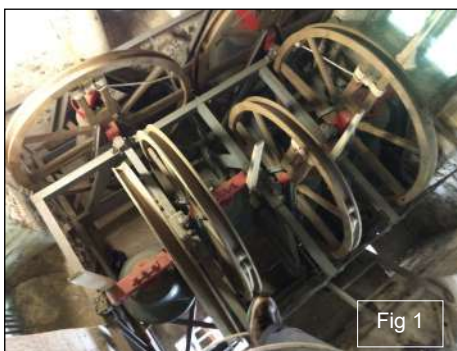


Fig 1

It has supported the maintenance of the bells since then. As well as chairman of the Fabric Committee, I am a bell ringer and the steeple-keeper. In the latter role, I am responsible for maintenance of

the tower, the bell frame and the bells themselves (Fig 1). With the help of my assistant steeplekeeper, David Clayton, we make sure everything is working properly and **safely**. Safety is a major consideration as, when the bells are ringing, a ton of metal is in



Fig 2

motion exerting forces on the bell frame which in turn transmits those forces into the tower structure itself. Periodically it is reassuring to Dave and me to have the bells given a professional

service. We recently employed the company that installed the bells, Nicholson Engineering Ltd, to carry out such a service and issue a formal report. The work was carried out by an engineer who previously worked for Whitechapel Bell Foundry, the ancient foundry where the bells were cast (Fig 2), sadly now closed down after several hundred years of bell production. He reported that all was fine.

I would like on behalf of the ringers and the PCC, who need to be assured of the safety of the installation, to thank the Friends of St Lawrence for paying for this service and for the purchase of three new bell ropes.

Jim Platt

700th Anniversary of the 1326 Reconsecration of St Lawrence Church Stratford

In 1326 St Lawrence Church in Stratford sub Castle was reconsecrated as one of many delayed consecrations. The precise date is unknown but, based on the recorded movements of the Bishop, it was probably September or October; Michaelmas September 29th was a favourite date for such ceremonies. Medieval churches were usually re-consecrated after major rebuilding, construction of a new altar or churchyard extension: rarely re consecration followed a desecration. For St Lawrence it probably followed structural works tied to the prosperity of the Bishop's estate at Old Sarum.

The reconsecration was undertaken by Bishop Roger de Mortival (or Martival), Bishop of Salisbury 1315 to 1330. He was ordained as Bishop on Michaelmas Eve 1315 and his tomb shown right is in Salisbury Cathedral.

The Latin wording for liturgical practises developed at Salisbury Cathedral was known as the Use of Sarum or the Sarum Rite and was widely used in Britain and northwestern Europe. The likely sequence of events at Stratford in 1326 can be deduced from it. (*Ordines ad Consecrandum Ecclesiam et Altare*)

In preparation, on the evening before, any relics were prepared and guarded, the font and church were cleaned and psalms said. Twelve crosses were painted or marked on the inner walls, each with a candle bracket or nail. In the morning,, Bishop Roger, clothed in amice, alb, cincture, stole, white cope of deep blue orphreyed with gold, mitre, and bearing a crozier, arrived as the priests chanted seven Penitential Psalms with the antiphon "*Ne reminiscaris, Domine, delicta nostra*". He blessed the boundary "*Pax huic domui et omnibus habitantibus in ea*" (Peace to this house and to all who dwell within), then circled the church three times clockwise, sprinkling holy water as psalms were sung (first circuit Psalm 51, second 70, third 117). He knocked three times at the door with his crozier and cried "*Attollite portas, principes, vestras*" (Lift up your gates, O princes) to which the clergy responded "*Quis est iste Rex glorie?*" (Who is this King of Glory?) And the Bishop replied "*Dominus fortis et potens*" (The Lord, strong and mighty.)

The Bishop then entered the church as the priests sang *Ingremente Domino*. He knelt and drew Latin and Greek alphabets in ashes in front of the altar, symbolising the teaching of the

Church spreading to all peoples. He anointed the twelve small consecration crosses with chrism, a consecrated oil, usually a mixture of olive oil (the base) and balsam or another aromatic resin (for fragrance). It is blessed only by a bishop, traditionally during Holy Week. At each cross, Roger said "*Sanctificetur et consecratur hoc templum.*" (May this temple be sanctified and consecrated), and a cleric chanted "*Sanctificavit Dominus tabernaculum suum.*"



Bishop Roger then moved to the altar, washed it with holy water, anointed it with chrism and placed relics into the cavity or sepulchre stone, saying "*Sub altare Dei animae sanctorum requiescant*" (May the souls of the saints rest beneath the altar of God). He then sealed it with mortar or wax and censed it heavily. Twelve candles were lit as he chanted "*Terribilis est locus iste*" ("How awesome is this place"). Then came the first mass, including the Litany of the Saints, the sprinkling of the congregation and the chanting of Psalm 83 ("How lovely are thy tabernacles").

After the ceremony, Roger moved outside and declared that the church was consecrated in honour of St Lawrence: "*Ego Rogerus Episcopus Sarisburensis consecravi hanc ecclesiam et hoc altare in honorem Sancti Laurentii...*", that its boundaries were fixed, its

graveyard sanctified, and certain feast days carried indulgences for those who visited. And finally the villagers held a feast—bread, ale, cheese, perhaps a slaughtered sheep or two?!

Other local churches, St Peter, St Ethelreda, St John, Holy Cross of Stratford Common, not to mention a cathedral, have long since disappeared, and seven hundred years later St Lawrence alone survives, still used regularly for worship.

Kerry O'Connor

Sources

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also at *Prebendaries: Stratford*, in *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae* 1066-1300: Volume 4, Salisbury, ed. Diana E Greenway (London, 1991), British History Online <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/fasti-ecclesiae/1066-1300/vol4/p99> [accessed 11 February 2026].
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Taxatio Ecclesiastica Angliae et Walliae, auctoritate Papae Nicolai IV 1291
From <https://bletsoearchive.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/1291-Taxatio.pdf>

WHEN DID ST LAWRENCE BECOME A PARISH CHURCH?

In the 13th century St Lawrence was a chapel, annexed to St Martin's and possibly, for a while, St Thomas' in Salisbury. By the close of the 14th century it was a parish church in its own right, with parochial clerics serving a "cure", looking after the souls of the parish.

auctoritate Papae Nicholai IV of 1291 – a record commissioned by Pope Nicholas IV and listing all ecclesiastical incomes in England and Wales for taxation purposes. Whilst the reconsecration in 1326 would have been an ideal occasion for the conferring of parochial status on St Lawrence, the naming of the prebend suggests that this may already have happened at the end of the 13th century.

Kerry O'Connor



A parish church was staffed by at least one priest, known as the rector (literally, ruler). But often, in the Middle Ages, he was not resident and his role was taken by the vicar ('substitute') or curate ('priest with care of souls'). Parish clergy were required to recite the daily round of services of the Office, to celebrate Mass, to conduct the rites of baptism, marriage and burial, to hear confession, and to minister to the sick and dying.

The date of St Lawrence's elevation from chapel to church is not known. Roger Mortival (Bishop 1315-1330) did not record a rector or vicar to St Lawrence in his registers, nor did Simon of Ghent (Bishop 1297-1315) before him. But the latter did twice record a prebendary "*Roberto Patrica, prebendario prebende sancti Laurencii juxta Sar*" in 1321 and "Robert Patrica, prebendary of the prebend of St Lawrence near Sar[um Castle]" in 1327. Robert Patrica was a canon at the Cathedral and the prebendary at the time of the 1326 reconsecration.

There were 52 prebendaries, each with a vicar attached. A prebend was an endowment of land for funding a prebendary or canon, it could sometimes be attached to a chapel, but the convention was to give it the name of the mother church, e.g. St Martin's. This suggests that St Lawrence was a parish by the time of Simon of Ghent's prebendary record in 1321.

A prebend of St Laurence (*sic*) was recorded in the *Taxatio Ecclesiastica Angliae et Walliae*,

Sources

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Taxatio Ecclesiastica Angliae et Walliae, auctoritate Papae Nicholai IV 1291

From <https://bletsoearchive.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/1291-Taxatio.pdf>

Creating a Wiltshire Wildlife Garden – Part Two

Continuing the previous newsletter's diary entries of our experiment to create a wildlife garden... It is difficult now, after the almost unbelievable amount of rainfall that the last few months has produced, to remember how dry it was last summer!

At the end of July we were considering digging a second pond – seemingly unnecessary when several natural ponds appeared in the garden over the winter! Besides which, we do, in fact, already have a pond. It is small, but still inhabited by frogs, toads, newts and many other water bugs. We even spot the occasional dragonfly or damselfly. So there is no urgency to build a second one. And we are also very aware of how



much work is involved in maintaining a pond, particularly one in full sunlight, as this new one would be. The plan was put on hold to further consider its merits. In the meantime, however, we still needed a focus for that northern area of the meadow, and so two delightful hare sculptures became joyful new residents.



August 1st 2025: By the beginning of August we were wondering what to do with our enormous, Roman-legion-worthy turf walls. After much consideration, we decided that our meadow was overly flat! But a sweeping, crescent-shaped bank beside the silver birch copse would remedy this deficiency. So, over two afternoons, turfs were unstacked, barrowed and restacked, and two Roman walls became one crescented mound which, we hoped, would gradually settle and eventually, when the rains finally returned, be grassed over.

August 9th 2025: So what next? Surely the idea of a wildflower garden is that it's wild – it doesn't need human intervention? Certainly, this creation of ours has taken greater effort and expense than we had ever imagined! But already the results have been worth all that and more. And once established it should provide colour, movement and an invaluable habitat for pollinators and other wildlife. But it will still require a little seasonal management to help maintain plant diversity, keep the grasses in check and allow the wildflowers to return each year.

Traditionally, wildflower meadows would be grazed by animals, trampled by herds or harvested for hay, all of which keeps the soil fertility low and suppresses dominant grass growth creating opportunities for the more delicate wildflower species to flourish. We therefore need to replicate these disturbances by cutting back the meadow every year. Properly managed, our meadow should provide nectar sources for insects, seed heads for birds and overwintering cover for small animals of all kinds, thereby supporting a resilient ecosystem. It can either be cut in a single sweep, between late July and September (after the majority of wildflowers have set seed, but before the tall grasses form a dense, collapsing sward), or as we have decided we would prefer to do it, cut in different sections at different times. This will prolong flowering – some areas will keep blooming whilst others are cut – provide nectar for longer, and leave refuge habitats for insects, birds and small mammals during the cutting of the other sections.

September 1st 2025: The guidance is to start the first cut in late July, the second in August, and a final one in September, but we have planted our meadow late, so for this first year we had to delay our cuts by a few weeks and also, for this year only, carry out all the cutting in one go. So we cut! Much as we would have liked to use the traditional scything method, a strimmer did seem somewhat simpler and more controlled, enabling us to cut down to a height of 5-10cm, removing the tall growth, but leaving basal rosettes and new shoots intact.

The stems fall to lie flat on the meadow for a week, allowing as many seed heads as possible to come off.

September 8th 2025: Then we threshed, dispersing the last of the seeds (but also for the fun of it!), Finally raking everything up into bundles and stacking them at the southern end of the meadow to create another safe haven for small animals and insects. Leaving anything behind will smother regrowth and enrich the soil, which will then favour grasses over wildflowers: exactly what we have worked so hard to avoid.



Each future year we shall rotate the order of



cutting to avoid favouring any one area of plants or wildlife. And we'll also leave a few small patches or edges uncut over the winter as refuges.



September 23rd: Once it was all removed, we sowed fresh yellow rattle to once again weaken the grass and promote the wildflower growth. We also sowed the crescent mound with a meadow grass mix, as well as over-sowing any bare looking patches in the meadow with some more wildflower mix. Then we settled in for winter!

March 7th 2026: To date, we have lightly mown the grass between the wildflower areas, and watched as the mound has become fully grassed over and the turf wall has grown a fine head of hair and some impressive fungus! The only work to the wildflower beds has been to remove some very spiky thistles we really didn't want. And now we eagerly anticipate the appearance of the perennials in the Spring. This is the true test of whether or not the garden is a success. But the signs are good, and we are hopeful.



Regardless of the results, this experiment has been a great adventure: it fills the soul to be in tune with nature, and we truly feel the wild garden has given us that.

Jon and Alix Smith

Friends of St Lawrence Church Accounts**31.12.25****INCOME**

Subscriptions	£825.00
Donations	£3,599.00
Gift Aid Rebate	£228.98
Bank Interest	£511.51
<i>Fundraising Event Ticket Sales:</i>	
Nigel Afford Talk	£535.00
James Dewar Talk	£365.00
Tobias Ellwood Talk	£720.00
Sale of Picture	£50.00

Total Income**£6,834.49****EXPENDITURE**

PCC Contribution to Repairs	£1,924.00
PCC Church Lighting	£710.00
PCC: FoSL Newsletter Printing	£453.00
School Prizes	£75.00
Bank Charges	£44.74
<i>Fundraising Event Costs:</i>	
Nigel Afford Talk	£94.55
James Dewar Talk	£53.97
Tobias Ellwood Talk	£89.91

Total Expenditure**£3,445.17****NET INFLOW OF FUNDS****£3,389.32****BALANCE SHEET****Balance b/f 1 January 2025**

£17,130.64

Add Net inflow

£3,389.32

Balance c/f 31 December 2025**£20,519.96****Held in Savings Account**

£16,146.16

Held in Deposit Account

£5,489.10

Held in Current Account

£47.70

Amount Owed to PCC

(£1,163.00)

£20,519.96**Philip Waddell****Treasurer****11 February 2026**

If any reader has a potential article, letter or comments for future newsletters please contact the editor or one of the other members of the Friends Committee listed below:-

Ian McGill (Chairman) 338210**Jeff Long (Secretary) 324421****David James (Editor) 324624****Rosemary Winson (Membership and Publicity) 325183****Alix Smith (Assistant Editor) 324949**

The Editor would like to thank all those who have contributed material towards this Newsletter. Also the invaluable help of Heather Platt and her distribution team in delivering the Newsletter with the Parish Magazine is gratefully acknowledged.