

The Friends of St Lawrence

NEWSLETTER

Issue No 46

Autumn 2026



Chairman's Welcome

"Hot weather keeps one in a continual state of inelegance"

Jane Austin

If any of us have ever wondered about finding buried Treasure, Alix Smith has written a fascinating article on pages 6-8. There are also some interesting snippets about the history of churches around Old Sarum, a description of the Devenish Nature Reserve and a report on the essential work carried out by the St Lawrence Fabric Committee.



TREASURE!

We are very much looking forward to a talk by local resident Clare Waddell on 2nd October titled *"Can we make Stratford sub Castle a Blue Zone?"* where she will explore how simple changes in diet and lifestyle can make a major difference to both physical and mental wellbeing. A poster about her talk is on page 5 and it promises to be an enlightening evening.

Early next year Anna McGill will be sharing her experiences while working on a variety of BBC TV programmes which include *Antiques Roadshow*, *Spring Watch*, *America Live* and *Green Planet*. The date will be confirmed in the village magazine & website and we hope that her talk will generate interest.

The Friends stand ready to help with funding support towards the refurbishment of the churchyard gates and the rood screen inside the church, once the PCC has decided upon the scope of the repairs. As always, we remain most grateful for the generous support of our members and other village residents, which helps to maintain our church in good order.

Ian McGill, Chairman

If you are not yet a Member of The Friends, please consider joining us.

We have annual memberships from £10 that renew from the date of joining, not the calendar year. (We can make this easy for you with a standing order form, so you don't need to remember to renew.)

If you are a UK tax payer, as a Registered Charity (no. 1063271) we can claim 25% Gift Aid on memberships making the £10 subscription worth £12.50, or the £15 joint subscription worth £18.75 at no increased cost to you.

Lifetime memberships are also available.

Our contact details are on the back page.

In the last Newsletter I presented an article about St Mary's Chapel inside Old Sarum drawing on the historical evidence given by June Effemey in Sarum Chronicle, Issue 25. In the article below I look at the reasons why there were so many other places of worship on Old Sarum and its immediate surrounding area in the later Medieval Period and how the population suffered and was affected by events that took place in that period. Ed.

History of Churches on and around Old Sarum in the Period after 1220: Part 2

Introduction

It is known from historical records that in the later medieval period there were at least five churches/chapels on Old Sarum and five more outside in its immediate vicinity. So why were there so many? To answer that question we need to look at the different types of Ecclesiastical buildings. They could be broken down into **Parish Churches**, of which in England there were between 9,500-10,000 by the early 1500's and the thousands of minor **Chapels** which included:

Chantry Chapels: which were endowed spaces inside or attached to churches/Cathedrals for prayers for the dead.

Ease/Dependent Chapels: Built in large or geographically sprawling parishes so outlying villagers could avoid long journeys to the main parish church.

Private and Castle Chapels: Built for nobility or royals inside private manors and fortresses.

Gospel, Guild, and Hospital Chapels: Maintained by trade guilds or charitable foundations.

Local Buildings

From the above list of different types of Ecclesiastical buildings it is easy to see why there were so many on Old Sarum and its immediate surroundings, shown in table 1 below.

	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

Table 1. List of known Churches/Capels in the area of OS and its immediate surroundings

In 1220 Old Sarum might have lost its Cathedral but there was still the Castle and the communities living immediately around OS. However what



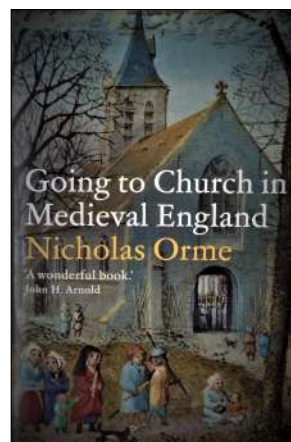
1960's AP of Old Sarum showing the site of the Castle mound in the centre and outline of the former Cathedral beyond

size was the population and did it grow or shrink over the rest of the later Medieval period? It has been calculated that during the late medieval period, (roughly 1300 to 1500 AD) England's population dropped sharply from a peak of about 4 to 5 million down to a low point of roughly 2 to 3 million. Why did this happen?

There were two main reasons. The first was the Great Famine of 1315—1317 caused by torrential rain ruining the crops and causing a desperate food shortage. The second was the even more serious arrival of the Black Death from 1348 onwards which it has been estimated to have killed almost half the population. Fewer people meant more food and land per person, but recurring outbreaks of the plague kept population numbers from growing quickly until the end of the Medieval period in the 16th century.

Going to Church

So what was going to Church like in the Medieval Period? Nicholas Orme gives a very detailed



description in his excellent book on this subject which I can thoroughly recommend to all those interested in life in this period. He explores how Parishes came into existence, who staffed them and how the buildings were used. He looks at the people who attended church (as well as those who did not!).

Finally he looks at the effect of the Reformation in the 16th C which was to leave so few places of worship here locally.

David James

The Devenish Nature Reserve: A Significant Marker of Our Heritage

Our Devenish Nature Reserve (DNR), just a couple of miles up the Avon Valley in Little Durnford, is one of several philanthropic gifts made by the Devenish Bradshaw family to the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust in 1991. This generous gesture gave us public access to an exceptionally varied space within an area of 66 acres, offering a wide range of geological and scenic settings. The DNR is a memorial to several members of the Devenish Bradshaw family, recorded on an informative stone plaque at the junction of two central paths.

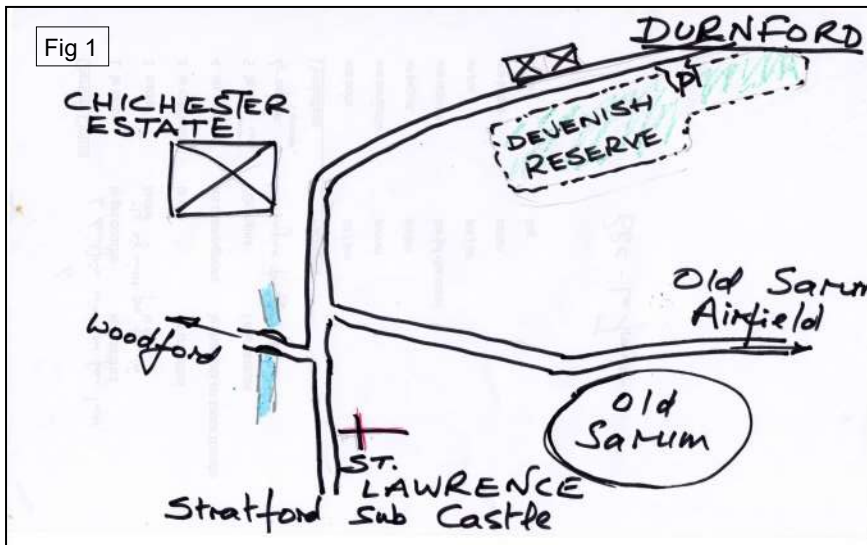
about 200m past the cottages, on the opposite side of the road (Fig 1). The car park has an informative board and map of the Reserve, and an indication of seasonal attractions, including winter. **Be aware** that the Reserve is an exceptionally steep site with a set of well-engineered but uneven steps to the upper level, so bring walking poles or a stick if that helps.

The Devenish Reserve is a treasure chest of genetic diversity in a landscape of intensive agriculture. It is the perfect place to see a wide variety of trees and wild flowers, fungi, butterflies and ground-dwelling insects, birds and occasional deer, hare, or badger. Our Reserve has not seen any recent commercial exploitation, and almost no exposure to chemicals.

English woodland is a managed environment, so our Reserve volunteer Warden, Richard Death, leads

volunteer working parties on the rewarding tasks of undergrowth clearance and hazel coppicing. This helps to ensure pollination at surface by sunlight convection and wind movement.

The DNR has a rare asset in its alluvial flower meadow on the flat valley ground near the car park. The meadow surface rewards careful examination of multiple plant, ground insect, and butterfly species. The other end of the lower path takes you on to the steep set of steps up to the upper level, with a rope handrail (Fig 2).



The entrance to the access car park can be easily missed. Take the old road to Amesbury on the east bank of the Avon, through the Chichester estate, passing four attractive stone cottages on the left. The car park entrance is

The climb is rewarded by a variety of landscapes in a compact area, with a fantastic view of the Avon valley from a bench at the top of the grassland down. Walking into the woodland will take you along a central ride to another bench and varied woodland scenery.



A warning note— fires and barbecues are not allowed, with recent summer heat-waves offering acute risk of wild-fires. Dogs are welcome but on leads please.

The final delight as you walk down to the car park is a grove of veteran beech trees, each one a superb example of an iconic Wiltshire species, Enjoy!

Ted Uren
DNR Volunteer

Fabric Committee Report to The Friends - Autumn 2026

Stonework

Early this summer Barry Goldsmith, a member of the PCC Fabric Committee, noticed that a chunk of stone was hanging loose in the middle of the south window. We contacted Henry and Tamsin Gray who have maintained the stonework in the church for many years. It is



electrical inspection was carried out in September 2025. Henry and Tamsin have addressed the other two items. They diagnosed that the tower lead flashing has moved and therefore the pointing above it has failed in some places. This was raked out and repointed using a lime mortar



very useful that we have one of the top stonemasons in the south of England living in the village. They came quickly and carefully removed the chunk of stone. Having removed the loose stone, they could see that the iron cramp has expanded and split the stone. They carefully removed any excess rust from the iron bar and painted it with rust retardant. The next step was to pin and lime mortar the stone piece back into place. The failed mortar was removed and the joints repointed. The rest of the cracks were repaired with lime mortar. A beautiful job expertly carried out.

Church Technical Manual

A recently retired Churchwarden asked me to write up all I know about the behind-the-scenes operations in St Lawrence Church. This document attempts to set down in one place the technical issues in operating the systems in the church. A copy sits on a shelf in the Vestry and all members of the Fabric Committee have a copy. The manual is divided into seven chapters: Security; Lighting including floodlights; Organ maintenance; PA system; Streaming; Tower-including clock bells and flag; and the Printer.

This list gives some idea of the breadth of responsibilities of the Fabric Committee Chairman. There is a check list of maintenance tasks in the tower room like bleeding the radiators, ensuring the header tank is working, booking annual lightning conductor test and fire extinguisher maintenance. The manual points out some of the less obvious linkages such as the fact that the light on the minister's desk not working could be because the gardener has cut the cable to one of the lantern lights over the gates causing a short circuit - this has happened on several occasions!

Tower Flashing

Those who remember my article in the Autumn 2025 Newsletter will recall that I reported that the Quinquennial inspection of the church had been carried out. Four items were flagged up for attention – broken roof tiles, electrical inspection, repair flashing on the tower roof and repair mastic around flag pole. The roof tiles were fixed in the Spring and the five yearly

Jim Platt
Chair Fabric Committee

**A FUNDRAISING EVENT by
The Friends of St Lawrence Church
Registered Charity no.1063271**

Friday 2nd October 2026 at 7.30 pm

**in the Reading Room, Stratford Road,
Stratford sub Castle, SP1 3LL**

“Can we make Stratford sub Castle a Blue Zone?”

A Blue Zone is defined as an area of the world where people live longer, healthier lives – often reaching 100 years and beyond.

Join local resident Clare Waddell for an engaging and practical talk on how simple changes in diet and lifestyle can make a major difference to both physical and mental wellbeing.



Clare holds a First-Class degree in nutrition, as well as a State Registration in Dietetics, and has worked in nutrition for 30 years.

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**Tickets: £10 FOSL members, £15 non-members
(includes wine or soft drink after the talk)**

**Please contact: Alix Smith 07590 260096
or email alix.smith@me.com**

TREASURE!

What would you do if you found Treasure in your own back garden?

Lots of us come across old coins, odd pieces of glass or pottery, sometimes even jewellery. All these things have value as part of the history of our house, telling the story of the people who lived there before us. But what if you were lucky enough to discover something like a gold posie ring, for example, dating to the 16th century and inscribed with a romantic love motto? See below



Well, such an object is officially classed as Treasure and belongs to the Crown, even though it was found on your own property. Furthermore, the 1996 Treasure Act made it a legal requirement to report Treasure to the coroner, and the failure to do so became a criminal offence!

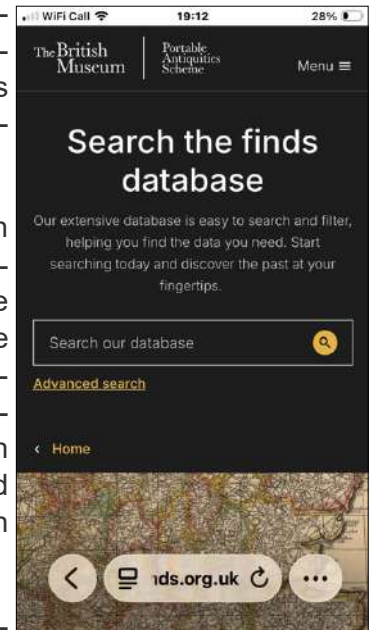
So, what is officially classified as Treasure? The basic Treasure categories are;

1. Any object over 300 years old which is not a coin, but has metallic content comprised of 10% or more precious metal.
2. Any two or more coins over 300 years old found together and comprised of 10% or more precious metal.
3. Ten or more base metal coins over 300 years old found together.
4. Any object of 'outstanding historical, archaeological or cultural interest', regardless of material (a 2023 amendment to the Act)

When potential Treasure is found, it must be reported to the coroner within 14 days. But how? The easiest way for someone in Stratford sub Castle to report Treasure would be to take it to the Finds Liaison Officer for Wiltshire, who is based locally, in Salisbury Museum. The Finds Liaison

Officer (FLO) actually works for a department of the British Museum, called the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS). The PAS was set up in 1997 with several aims:

- To promote the reporting and preservation by record of portable antiquities for the benefit and wellbeing of present and future generations.
- To encourage best practice by finders/landowners and archaeologists/museums in the discovery, recording and conservation of finds made by the public.
- In partnership with museums and others, to raise awareness of the importance of recording archaeological finds in their context and facilitate research in them.
- To create partnerships between finders and museums/archaeologists to increase participation in archaeology, thereby advancing our understanding of the past.
- To support the Treasure Act 1996 and increase opportunities for museums to acquire archaeological finds for public benefit.



After receiving a potential Treasure item, the FLO will report the item to the coroner for the finder, they will also write a report on the object, including identification, weight, measurements, photographs and also comparisons with other, similar objects, recording all this information onto the PAS database at www.finds.org.uk. The report will recommend whether or not the FLO believes the item meets the criteria to be considered as Treasure. It is then sent to the British Museum to be reviewed by a curator before going on to the coroner who makes the final decision.

If the coroner concludes that the object is not Treasure, it can be returned to the finder. If the conclusion is that the item is indeed Treasure, it is then offered, firstly to the British Museum, and then to the Museum most local to the location

where it was found, to see whether or not they wish to acquire it for their collections. If neither museum wants it, it is disclaimed and, again, it can be returned to the finder. If, however, a museum does wish to acquire the object, it is valued by an independent valuation committee (the valuation can be appealed by either the finder or the museum) and the museum will then pay that sum which is divided 50/50 between the finder and the landowner.

Meaning that if you found Treasure in your back garden and a museum wished to acquire it, not only would you claim 100% of the reward as both finder and landowner, but you would also have your object on display in either the British Museum or Salisbury Museum!

The majority of finds reported to the FLOs are recovered by metal-detectorists, but they also come from gardeners, hikers, field-walkers and others. Although the FLO for Wiltshire is based at Salisbury Museum, she also makes regular visits to Devizes, Chippenham, Swindon and Trowbridge, thereby giving as many people as possible the opportunity to record their finds, preserve our heritage and increase our knowledge of the past.

All kinds of objects are brought into the museum, from Victorian pennies to Iron Age Staters to Mesolithic worked flints. All are regarded as special, although not all meet the criteria to be recorded. Victorian pennies, for instance, are not over 300 years old, whilst some potentially "prehistoric, worked flints" simply turn out to be... well, just stones!

But the enthusiasm of the finder is always appreciated, and any finds, whether officially Treasure or not, can still be none the less exciting for that!! And for those working in the museum PAS department, handling medieval silver hammered coins, or copper alloy Roman brooches, or indeed a post-medieval posie ring, when most people only get to see such things inside a glass cabinet, is a true privilege.

What if an object is not Treasure? In that case, recording it with the PAS is voluntary, and although many finders, including detectorists, will consider it good practice to do this, there are many who choose not to. Although, perhaps, not Treasure, this still deprives the country of the valuable historical knowledge that each of these objects and the place where they were found could have provided. With more people having taken up the hobby of detecting, particularly since lockdown, and the growing number of commercial detecting rallies taking place, sadly more and more historic objects are now being removed from our landscape with no record of them ever having been there.

Over 95% of small finds recorded in the PAS have been made by metal detectorists, which is a fantastic achievement. However, a commercial rally can be attended by 200 or more detectorists over an entire weekend, and sometimes not one item from the rally is recorded with any of the 42 FLOs representing the PAS counties around the country. There is no telling how much valuable historical information is being lost....

In contrast, when finds are declared, the information provided can play a vital role in archaeological development. A recently-excavated site in Bowerchalke, for example, was only discovered because the detectorists reported their finds; the FLO noticed a particularly high concentration of Roman coins in one corner of a single field and commissioned a geophysical survey which suggested the presence of a building. Based on this,



Anglo Saxon Treasure found in Wiltshire in 2026, now on display in the British Museum



WILT-F66D3E: Iron Age gold quarter stater



WILT-B078A3; Flint knife



WILT-5BEAFC: Roman Disc Brooch

the Teffont Archaeological Project organised a community dig involving volunteers and students led by a small team of professionals, and discovered an extremely high-status villa with mosaics, a bathhouse, a large, two-storey outbuilding and a concrete road. All thanks to those detectorists who understood the potential importance of their finds and reported all of them to the FLO, crucially including the specific findspots and the details of the landowner.

A findspot is usually noted by using the What3words app on a mobile phone and, when they are put into the PAS database, a map can gradually be built up to show the distribution of finds across Wiltshire, and indeed the whole of



Mosaic at Bowerchalke Roman Villa

England and Wales (the PAS does not cover Scotland or Northern Ireland). In this way patterns can be followed, e.g. that no medieval coins minted in Salisbury are found in Northern Britain; that the number of Roman finds on the Western side of Old Sarum hillfort strongly suggests that was the site of the Roman town of Sorviodunum. With every find that is reported, the PAS database becomes a more and more useful research tool and, although it is not mandatory to report items, it really makes a difference.

Alix Smith

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
Phil Waddell (Treasurer) 07786513544
Rosemary Winson (Membership) 325183

Jeff Long (Secretary) 324421
David James (Editor) 324624
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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.