

# The Friends of St James Church, Swimbridge

## Spring Newsletter 2018

This newsletter is circulated to The Friends of St James and supporters of the Old School Room project. We shall make it widely available, including on the Friends page of the St James Church website. We are keen to share news of some exciting initiatives with everyone in the community.

### The Old School Room



The Old School Room – at the top of the churchyard beside the entrance to the High Street – is one of the most historic buildings in our village. This 17<sup>th</sup> century heritage building requires careful renovation to make it fit for 21<sup>st</sup> century needs. The downstairs space has housed the village Pre-school for thirty years. The Upper Room is available for use by clubs, societies, etc. We hope to be able to install an accessible toilet with baby change on the ground floor for Pre-school, Upper Room and church use. We also plan to install a lift to make the Upper Room accessible to everyone. We also aim to create a home for the Mervyn Dalling Archive of Swimbridge History, plus important items relating to Swimbridge's most famous resident, 'Parson Jack' Russell.

Our fantastic supporters have organised the village Open Gardens weekends, a Big Breakfast, a sponsored bike ride, a Mega Draw, plus lively and well-attended talks organised by the Friends. We have received generous private donations and support from the St James Parochial Church Council. Grants so far given or promised are from our local County and District Councillors, Richard Edgell, Glyn Lane, and David Luggar; South Molton Rotary Club; South Molton Lions Club; Barnstaple Rotary Clubs and the NDDC/DCC TAP fund. We have now raised enough to get the project underway.

We have been able to engage the David Wilson Partnership (the architects who worked on the Jubilee Hall and Streamside Garden in Swimbridge) to take our ideas forward to achieve our vision. This is Stage One of the project – making it ready to apply to the larger national and regional funders for the construction work, once all the plans have been agreed, and Listed Building and Diocesan consents are in place. The building's electrics were recently updated with new safety measures in place, using funds from the Elizabeth Meadows Bequest.



We need evidence of support to back up our next grant applications. If you could help by writing a supporting letter that would be really appreciated. Please send a brief note, or something longer if you wish, to either Sarah Smith at the Pre-school or to Mark Haworth-Booth, (either by post to Barn Cottage, Swimbridge EX32 0QH or by email to [markhaworthbooth@gmail.com](mailto:markhaworthbooth@gmail.com)).

**Our new collecting box for the project....Every penny helps**

### Our AGM

The Friends of St James AGM was held on 15<sup>th</sup> February in the Old School Room. It featured a report on the past year's events and on enhancing the church, the churchyard, Streamside Garden and Old School Room. Ideas for the future were shared and the finances explained. With so much enthusiastic support have been able to raise over £10,500 in the past year. This includes some grants awarded in 2017/18 but to be paid on expenditure.

The appointment of the architect for the Old School Room Project was agreed. A new form of registered charity and constitution for the Friends was approved to better fit our growing ambition and need to manage larger sums of money.

### **Streamside Garden and churchyard.**

Beautifully kept by volunteers and hugely enjoyed by so many, these are real assets to the community. The hundreds of bulbs planted by our volunteers have been giving a fantastic show. A Tesco 'Bags of Help' grant through the Parish Council has provided £600 to support the volunteers and replace a bench in the Streamside Garden. Our project to create a memorial to Anne Hayes will see a special sundial and path installed and the second bench replaced in oak. Unfortunately, the original donated benches had rotted ...the new ones are very heavy and in local green oak made by a village craftsman at a special price.

### **The Swimbridge Flood**



During the Sunday morning service on 21 January a flash flood inundated the village centre. The Jack Russell Inn and several cottages were flooded – some are still drying out. Cars were written off, including some belonging to members of the congregation, and the Streamside Garden and churchyard were underwater. Dozens of villagers and the emergency services were busy clearing up almost immediately. Fortunately, little damage was done to church property, but our thoughts are with those for whom this short-lived flood has left weeks and months of heartache.

### **Where Shall We Go This Spring?**

All are welcome to three talks on wonderful places to visit this Spring, all in the Old School Room at 7.30pm (admission £3, Friends free, refreshments)

**Thursday 8 March:** 'Arlington Court: It shouldn't happen to a room volunteer' by Richard Fardon - a light hearted and entertaining look at one of North Devon's most beautiful historic houses, plus a slide show by Julia Bigham, head gardener.

**Thursday 5 April:** 'The Beauty of RHS Rosemoor in the Spring' by David Squire. A fascinating preview of the lovely spring colour at one of North Devon's most beautiful gardens.

**Thursday 12 April:** 'From mooring to mowing' by Dr John Marston, on turning a bullock field into the acclaimed garden at Gorwell House, Barnstaple.



### **Note for May**

A plant sale and swop has been planned for Saturday May 5<sup>th</sup> 10.00 am – 12.00. Why not get growing to help the event, donate spare plants and come along and buy or swop for the coming season in your garden? The contact for this is David Netherway: 01271 830587 or 07522 589312

### **Finally...**

Our parish church and churchyard are here for all, not just the regular church goers. Your support is really important if the church, churchyard and the Old School Room are to be here for everyone into the future. If you would like to know more, can help in any way or have ideas for fundraising, please contact David Netherway 01271 830587 [david.netherway@btinternet.com](mailto:david.netherway@btinternet.com) or Philip Dalling, historian of our village history ([dalling.philip@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:dalling.philip@hotmail.co.uk)), Sarah Smith at the Pre-school, or Mark Haworth-Booth on 07813 776349 or [markhaworthbooth@gmail.com](mailto:markhaworthbooth@gmail.com)

This newsletter is sent on behalf of The Friends of St James Church Swimbridge with Swimbridge Pre-school.