



The Friends of Bath Abbey

Enhancing Bath Abbey

New Year Newsletter 2026



9, Kingston Buildings Bath, BA1 1LT Charity Number 205082
www.bathabbey.org/friends e-mail: secretary.friends@bathabbey.org

LIGHTING THE WAY INTO A NEW YEAR



As we're in the season of lights and 'lighting up', it seemed an appropriate time to remind Members of a previous Friends of Bath Abbey project.

The much admired and notably individual Abbey chandeliers were designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott c 1870. Inspired by a Greek Orthodox design, the distinctive lights were restored and converted from gas into electricity in 1978, when lighting was installed in the roof vault crossing, organ case and choir desks – all through the generosity of the Friends of Bath Abbey. The chandeliers are now LED lit and remain a notable Abbey feature and a lasting reminder of how Friends' projects have endured to the lasting benefit and enhancement of the Abbey.

Annual General Meeting - Saturday 7 February at 3 pm

Please come and join us for our 2026 AGM. You can find the agenda and notes for the business meeting in the 2025 Annual Report. This is an excellent opportunity to hear a review of the past year's activities and achievements.

After the Meeting there will be an illustrated and illuminating talk by Anthony Acton: 'The Priests' Doorways of Somerset Churches - the stories they tell'. Anthony is a former Reader, Bath solicitor and a lively speaker. This is a talk to be enjoyed!

Tea will then be served in the Learning Centre, before a service of Choral Evensong at 5.00 pm.

Spring Lunch at the Bath and County Club, Queen Square Tuesday 10 March, 12.30 for 1.00 pm

After the success of previous years, The Bath and County Club will once again be the comfortable venue for our popular annual lunch. We'll gather in the bar (kindly note card payments only) for a convivial pre-prandial drink before continuing to lunch.



We're delighted to say that Adam Field, the Abbey's new Sub-Organist and Assistant Director of Music will be our guest and will provide a musical interlude afterwards offering a wonderful selection of Bach's Preludes and Fugues from the Well-Tempered Clavier. Adam's musical credentials are impressive. A former Organ Scholar at both Selwyn College, Cambridge and Exeter Cathedral, Adam has also played in concerts, services and recordings both in the UK and abroad, including live on BBC Radios 3 and 4; he recently had his first composition published. At Bath Abbey, Adam not only plays the organ for services but also directs the Melody Makers, a choir of children aged 6-11, and the adult Chamber Choir. It will be a privilege and joy to enjoy Adam's music making.

Visit to Chavenage House - Thursday 11 June

"An Elizabethan jewel, set in the Cotswolds" is a succinct description of Chavenage House and chapel, nestled in quintessential English parkland and countryside near Tetbury. The 'jewel' is in fact medieval in origin, although its major reconstruction was by 16th century owner Edward Stephens of Eastington who added wings at either end of the medieval house, together with a porch. It's the initials of Edward and his wife Joan, with the date of 1576 which are carved above the front door. Further sympathetic remodelling took place in the mid 17th century, but a final flurry of Edwardian building (including the addition of a formal ballroom complete with sprung floor) brought the house to the footprint we find today. The interior is rich in detail, with gloriously large front windows largely using ecclesiastical glass from nearby post-dissolution redundant churches and monasteries. Original panelling, carved mantelpieces and Mortlake tapestries reinforce the house's Elizabethan origins.

Only two families have owned Chavenage, and their stories are as fascinating as the house's architectural history. The Norman Fitz Stephens purchased the property in 1564 but it was the family's Civil War involvement which gave Chavenage the notorious 'Legend' – a family curse, and associated headless ghost, laid by Abigail Stephens upon her father Nathaniel in 1660. The property was sold to the current owners, the Lowsley-Williams family in 1891. Two World Wars have added to the estate's historical patina, with US forces occupying the house during the second World War.

Recent years have introduced a new dimension with the house becoming a desirable location for well-known films and TV series such as Poldark, Poirot, Barry Lyndon and Lark Rise to Candleford. No longer open to the public, a cornucopia of intriguing architectural and historical delights will be revealed during our exclusive private house tour followed by home-cooked lunch served in the dining room. Tickets include the house tour and 2 course lunch with coffee/tea. Chavenage House comes highly recommended with a Tripadvisor 2025 Travellers' Choice award.



LOOKING AHEAD - for your 2026 diary

We have an excitingly varied offering. Mark your diaries now so we can enjoy the company of as many Friends as possible during 2026.

Patronal Festival: Sunday 28 June at 3 pm

Celebrate with a festal service of Choral Evensong on Sunday 28 June, the feast of St Peter and St Paul, our patron saints, after which The Friends will hold a reception with refreshments.

Autumn Northern Saints Pilgrimage

Tuesday 15 – Saturday 19 September 2026

(subject to sufficient responses/see information below)

Great Chalfield Manor: Friday 2 October

Private house, garden and church tour with lunch nearby. Nikolaus Pevsner describes Great Chalfield as "one of the most perfect examples of the late medieval English manor house".

A THANK YOU

I want to express my warmest thanks and most heartfelt gratitude to members of The Friends for their support while I have been their Secretary and for their breath-taking generosity as I hand on that role. It really has been a very great privilege to serve in that capacity, and although there have been times when slaving over the office photocopier has been more of a chore than a pleasure, my abiding feeling is that it has been a lot of fun!

I am delighted that we now have a Secretary of demonstrable competence and wide-ranging skills; I have every confidence that The Friends will be extremely well served. I am grateful to her and to my colleagues on the Executive Committee for graciously allowing me to continue to serve thereon – the “cold turkey” of complete retirement is too uncomfortable to contemplate. I hope to find the balance between helpful contributions from experience and irritating reminiscence from the back benches, but others will have to be the judges of my success at that. As we wait to see whether my optimism is justified, I can only repeat that I am profoundly grateful to you all.



To borrow words from the late Dag Hammarskjöld, "For all that has been—thanks! For all that shall be—yes!"

Jeremy Key-Pugh

AN UPDATE ON ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP RATES

FOBA membership rates have not changed in 13 years. A great deal has happened in the economic world since then, so following a considered review by the FOBA Committee the following rates have been agreed:

Individual Member (annual)	£25
Joint members (annual)	£35
Life member	£300
Joint Life members	£500

The good news is that our **MEMBER BENEFITS** continue to grow and now include

- Invitations to exclusive Member events, excursions and social gatherings
- Ticket discounts and private views for selected Abbey events
- AGM with a lecture, tea and choral evensong
- Illustrated Annual Report
- Twice yearly Newsletter featuring upcoming Friends' events
- 10% off at the Abbey Shop
- Regular Abbey calendar updates
- Free entry to the Abbey

Your support directly helps transform Bath Abbey into a more beautiful place of worship. The FOBA committee values and appreciates every member and gladly extends a warm welcome to all our Friends including our Abbey volunteer members.



THE FRIENDS OF BATH ABBEY EVENTS 2026 BOOKING FORM

Please complete and return this form to: Penny Cracknell, Secretary at:
friends.secretary@bathabbey.org or send to the Abbey Office, 9 Kingston Buildings, Bath BA1
1LT. Any questions? Please email Penny or call 07811 066253

Please kindly note that tickets will no longer be issued for any FOBA events. All bookings will
be formally acknowledged by post or email.

Annual General Meeting on **Saturday 7 February** at **3 pm** in the Abbey.

You do not need to book for this event. Just come along! There will be an opportunity to
make a donation to defray the expenses of the tea.

Annual Spring Lunch **Tuesday 10 March** at **12.30** for **1.00 pm** at the **Bath and County Club** with musical entertainment over coffee

Number of places for Friends @ £34 _____ = £ _____
Number of places for guests* @ £38 _____ = £ _____

Visit to Chavenage House – Thursday 11 June 11.30 am A private house tour and lunch

Number of places for Friends @ £55 _____ = £ _____
Number of places for guests* @ £60 _____ = £ _____

Car sharing transport can be arranged for this short journey

PAYMENT: Please tick appropriately

I have paid online or by BACS transfer to

The Friends of Bath Abbey
Account Number: 00235253 Sort Code: 56 00 34
Please use the reference: Events

I enclose a cheque payable to The Friends of Bath Abbey

Title _____

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Telephone _____

Mobile _____

Email _____

* it would be helpful if you could include any guest name(s):

Conditions of Booking with The Friends of Bath Abbey

In order to conform with the terms of our insurance policy, everyone making a booking for events arranged by The Friends of Bath Abbey must be aware of the following conditions.

1. All bookings must be made in writing on the booking forms and will only be confirmed by email or post on receipt of payment for the appropriate number of places booked.
2. Tickets will not be issued for any event.
3. Cancellations are not normally refundable, unless the event is cancelled; however, if there is a waiting list your place may be resold and a refund made to you.
4. In the event that there are insufficient bookings for any event, it may be cancelled and your payment will be refunded.
5. The Friends reserve the right to change itineraries or venues due to unforeseen circumstances
6. Both smoking and pets are prohibited on coaches.
7. All reasonable steps are taken to ensure that independent suppliers of services (coach operators, caterers and restaurants and owners of properties visited – who may limit their liabilities) maintain the highest standards regarding safety, security and hygiene.

However, The Friends of Bath Abbey **do not** take responsibility for personal accident, loss or damage during any of their events

IN THE STEPS OF THE NORTHERN SAINTS: Tues 15 – Sat 19 September 2026



This 5 day tour is designed to encompass all the elements which Abbey Friends enjoy – history, both local and ecclesiastical, a journey of spiritual significance, conviviality and fun.

Led by Revd Ken Madden and knowledgeable local guide Revd. Dr Gavin Wakefield, the tour will combine elements of a sight-seeing holiday with those of a pilgrimage. Based at Durham’s comfortable 4* Marriott Royal County Hotel, the group will visit Durham Cathedral, Bishop Auckland (including the Castle and Faith Museum), Holy Island and Lindisfarne Priory, Bamburgh, Jarrow and Wearmouth, and York as we return to Bath.

The tour will be run by CGT Tours Ltd. (ABTA Membership No. Y6450), the highly reputable, specialist tour company used for our 2023 Ypres tour. Travel will be by executive coach throughout.

The cost includes all travel and accommodation; dinner on Day 1; breakfast and packed lunch on Days 2 and 3; breakfast, packed lunch and dinner on Day 4; breakfast and packed lunch on Day 5; the guide, and entrance fees. Full details of what’s included and not included, and the booking conditions will be sent by the tour company to all who express interest and return the initial booking form. All bookings will be handled by CGT Tours Ltd.

Cost: £789pp based on two people sharing a twin/double room if we can achieve up to 40 paying passengers. The single supplement is £280 (subject to availability).

To express interest and make a provisional booking, **please return the form below by Sunday 11 January** to Revd. Ken Madden c/o the Abbey Office or email KMadden@bathabbey.org. Any questions, contact Ken on 07894 208501. Places are limited and will be allocated on a first come first served basis with priority given to Friends of Bath Abbey.

I / We are interested in the Northern Saints 2026 tour and would like to reserve a place(s). Please pass on my/our name (s) and contact details to CGT Tours Ltd. in order to receive further details and a booking form.

NAME(S): _____

ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL: _____

TEL./MOB NUMBER(S): _____

SIGNATURE: _____



EXCLUSIVE 2026 MEMBER DISCOUNT OFFER

The Abbey is pleased to offer an exclusive **2 for the price of 1 ticket offer** for **Interstellar, an evening with Roger Sayer** on Friday 16 January, 7.30 pm.

The code is FOBA241 and can be entered on the Bath Box Office online checkout or by phone/in person.

FRIENDS' PROJECT UPDATE: THE ALPHEGE WINDOW

A new stained glass window at Bath Abbey is without doubt a momentous event, so we're thrilled to share the window's updated design. The Friends were pleased to donate £20,000 towards a project which is very much in tune with our aims, namely enhancement of the Abbey. This was reinforced by the fascinating recent talk on the project, which not only informed from a historical perspective but also enthralled on a design and technical level. How wonderful to hear that a local stained glass expert, Neil Ireson is both designing and creating this new masterpiece. Bath-born martyr and Abbey abbot, Alphege became Archbishop of Canterbury. He stood for peace and justice and was murdered by the Danes in 1012. Local history, design and manufacture all combining to enhance our wonderful Abbey – an inspired combination.

This is the excitement but the reality is that any artistic project is expensive, and funds need to be raised to enable its execution. The fundraising campaign was launched in July 2025 with a target of £90,000. At the time of writing in late November, a fabulous £33,403 has been donated towards this goal. Donations to the Saint Alphege Window Appeal can be made online through Bath Abbey's website (Alphege Appeal). All donations will be deeply appreciated and acknowledged with a message of thanks and invitations to special events at the Abbey.

The extraordinary beauty of the Saint Alphege Window will be experienced in our own lifetimes and by the generations that follow us, communicating Saint Alphege's profound message of peace, social justice and generosity for hundreds of years to come. By donating to this project, supporters will join Bath Abbey on a once-in-a-lifetime journey to create a new stained glass window, shining new light on Saint Alphege - Bath's local saint.

For more information, please visit www.bathabbey.org/alphege-appeal

Selected photos by Betty Bhandari

