



FRIENDS OF LITTLE GIDDING NEWSLETTER

Winter 2025



Little Gidding Open Gardens, May 2025 by Angie Mortlock

Due to some confusion on my part over the start time, we arrived early for the open gardens. It was lovely to be able to just sit and enjoy the quiet. Inside the church, it was almost silent. The only sound I could hear was the wind outside. The hard pew reminded me of the hundreds of others who had sat here before me over the centuries, seeking peace and guidance. I noticed the distinctive smell that many older churches share, a faint mustiness that is unmistakable. I love the ornate yet simple decor of this English country church.

This church has become so familiar and yet there is always something new to see. I noticed that a free standing cross had been placed near the altar. I always find this such a welcoming and almost secret quiet space. The visitors' book confirms that many others also feel the same. Most days during the previous week, someone had left a comment about how special they had found their time here. No one was here to share the space with me today, for which I was grateful.

Today was billed as an Open Day, and whilst there were a lot of people, there was space for everyone to enjoy the glorious riot of colours in the garden, to sit quietly and enjoy the day, or choose from the many plants. There was plenty of tea and cake, of course, as ever, and chance to browse the gorgeous crafts from lots of talented artists and artisans.

I noticed a Red Kite overhead, just hanging there as if suspended on an invisible thread. Rain threatened but fortunately never arrived. The garden was looking at its very best, almost showing off, as if to say "Look at me, aren't I gorgeous". On the drive home the view was just as marvellous, with patchwork fields seeming to kiss huge fenland skies. A lovely day altogether.



If You Came This Way by Susan Waters

A column for *Friends of Little Gidding* to describe their first visit to Little Gidding and any significant memories.

[Maximum A4 in length using Arial 14 font please.]

I first came to Little Gidding as a young student by reading T S Eliot's poem. The fashion then was to take a given text without reference to biographical or historical context. When I arrived at the 2012 Eliot Festival it was with a greater understanding of Ferrar history and the perspective of middle age. For me, **Four Quartets** quests to find a still point in time to harmonise the muddles and mistakes of half a life already lived. The poem's resolution suggested I might find a place of tranquillity here.

It was a new route to drive. I noted how the busy carriageways and roundabouts gradually changed to winding rural roads until I turned into a single track lane with grass growing up the middle. Little Gidding was rightly named the "World's End". There were the beautiful vistas of gardens, elm woods and rolling countryside, but it was more than that. There was a powerful sense of stepping away from the normal routines into a thin place *where prayer has been valid*. It is a feeling I have come to know well there.

The day was bustling with the T S Eliot Festival crowd. I had corresponded with Judith Hodgson, then Festival Secretary, and received with her husband Tony a cheery welcome. It was announced later that it was their Golden Wedding anniversary. It was also significant for them as twin grandchildren were due to be born later that day. Yet there they were, welcoming strangers and contributing to the success of the festival.

I enjoyed the lectures and the hospitality; seeing the enthusiasm of young American students from the T S Eliot International Summer School; locating the walled garden and pig-sties; the reading of the poem outside St John's Church near the Ferrar tomb.

The wood panelled Church gathered us into its cradle for Evensong. There was a particular atmosphere of stillness where we knew this was one moment before God in its long history.

After giving the Blessing, Tony smiled and continued: "Fare forward, O voyagers". As we all filed out down the sloping path I wondered if we would ever really leave. Whether returning in person or only in memory we had been gifted a sense of the Presence; the grace of God and of the devoted community founded by Nicholas Ferrar in 1625; carried onwards by us and every other visitor in our own way.

All was well.

Little Gidding Trust has a new chairman

At this year's Trustees' AGM, the Chairman for the past six years Ven Philip Buckler – former Dean of Lincoln - has stepped down and succeeded by Canon Tim Alban-Jones the present Vice Dean of Peterborough.

In the following extract from his final report to the AGM, Philip spoke with encouragement of the work of the Trust, looking forward hopefully to the future of Little Gidding.

Chairman's Report, November 2025

This past year has seen a number of changes, and more are to come. Yet, if anything, the Little Gidding Trust is emerging stronger and more focused for the future. That Ferrar House continued to fulfil its many diary commitments so seamlessly has been entirely due to the work of Fiona Brampton, our Chaplain, along with Ashley Mather Holman, Trustee, who gave many hours of practical support in running the House together with Sarah Johnson our Catering Manager. The Trustees acknowledge with gratitude all that these three have achieved over the past months.

Our 400th Anniversary Year began in the summer with a Garden Party attended by almost two hundred people. H.M. Lord-Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire laid a wreath on the tomb of Nicholas Ferrar, and the High Sheriff cut the anniversary cake (both items made by Sarah Johnson). The most rewarding aspect was the number of people who felt they had 'come home' and were able to re-connect with Little Gidding once more. This Anniversary Year concludes on 2nd June 2026 with Choral Evensong in Westminster Abbey on the very day that Nicholas Ferrar was ordained Deacon there by Bishop Laud in 1626.

This is the last letter I write in my capacity as Chair of Trustees – a role I have been privileged to exercise for the past six years. My successor will be appointed at the AGM of the Little Gidding Trust Ltd. I have every confidence in the future of the Trust, served as it is by so dedicated a Board of Trustees supported by a loyal band of staff and volunteers.

I have often reflected upon my first visit to Little Gidding more than 50 years ago. I found it to be a place not only of great beauty but also profound holiness. I leave it with a deep sense of thankfulness that it remains a place *where prayer has been valid* and can continue to be a source of inspiration to all who come. To further this work is the happy task of the Little Gidding Trust.

Philip Buckler.

To celebrate this handover, Sarah Johnson had prepared a wonderful cake decorated with a picture of Ven Philip Buckler and Canon Tim Alban-Jones. An earlier one, taken at the 400th anniversary garden party, shows the former Chaiman of the Trust with the Mayor of Huntingdon and Lord Lieutenant of the County, laying a wreath on the tomb of Nicholas Ferrar who came to Little Gidding in 1625.

Words by Richard Scott, photographs by Ashley Mather Holman

Note: The Little Gidding Trust Limited is a separate body to the Friends as they own Ferrar House and property at Little Gidding. The Trustees are the people responsible for controlling the work, management and administration of the charity.



Note from the Treasurer, Nigel Seaman:

This year we have had 93 members, 20 of whom are new, and through your subscriptions, our Gift Aid reclaim and one or two gifts, we have had an income of nearly £3,7000. We spent all but £35 of this income across the familiar headings of supporting the Chaplaincy with expenses, improving our website appearance, improving the outdoor signage for visitors, cutting the grass in the churchyard, maintaining the gardens at Ferrar House, purchasing new stock for the Eliot Room Library and helping the monthly Poetry Group. New ideas keep surfacing, mainly around improving the visitor experience to the Church and Ferrar House. We will keep you informed as we go into 2026.

Note about our ponds' DNA from Helen Bailey, the Land Advisor at The Wildlife Trust for Cambridgeshire who facilitated the dredging in 2024:

I thought I would give you some good news about the ponds. From the samples we took earlier in the year from both ponds to test for presence or absence of Great Crested Newts, both ponds tested positive. The bottom pond furthest away from the house had a score of 12/12 and the top one 6/12. This suggests there was more DNA detected in the bottom pond. Both have scored well, which is great news especially as this is the first year of monitoring and many ponds have struggled with the drought conditions.

Add to this that both ponds held water through the long dry summer, and they are filling up with rain now as shown in these photographs taken last week. Numerous animal tracks weave around and between them.



St Andrew's, Steeple Gidding

There's nothing there but St Andrews.
Empty but full
The bridleway continues its way.
Empty but full
Surrounded by uneven meadows.
Empty but full
Collared by weathered unreadable stones.
Empty but full
Now all alone, ruffed with nature's greens.
Empty but full
What tales does it have to tell?
Empty but full
Some we know. Many we never will.
Empty but full
Those who have lived, worked, worshipped.
Empty but full
Born, baptised, communed, loved and died.
Empty but full
Now redundant. No longer ... needed?
Empty yet full
For it is unlocked, clean, tidy. At peace.
Empty yet full
Welcoming, if only to wait out the rain
Empty yet full
Or rest aside from bridleway's toil.
Empty yet full
Willing to share its peace with all.
EMPTY ... STILL FULL

Peter J Larke, June 2025

Organised Quiet Days in 2026

Our organised Quiet Days are held on the 4th Friday of the month from March to November, plus a Quiet Day on Ash Wednesday. They offer a chance to step out of your regular routine to be with God in a variety of ways.

Quiet Days run from 10 – 4, with coffee served from 9.30am. The cost of the days includes a simple soup lunch and afternoon tea. Tea and coffee are available throughout the day. The current total cost for the day is £32.

Booking a Quiet Day

Please pay a deposit of £10 for each Quiet Day you would like to book. The balance is payable on the day. Please email the Chaplain with the Quiet Day reference number, your contact details, deposit amount paid and any dietary requirements.

Please use the Quiet Day reference as your BACS reference.

BACS details: Little Gidding Trust Ltd Sort Code 40-52-40 Account 00012221

Alternatively, send a cheque made out to Little Gidding Trust Ltd to the address below.

And Not So Quiet Days

These are chances for families to explore faith and life together.

Day retreats and residential retreats

All are welcome to come and spend some time at Ferrar House and in the gardens, either on your own or with a group. Do check availability and prices. If you wish to use St John's Church for worship, please contact the Chaplain in good time, both for availability and also to complete safeguarding checks. Fiona is usually at Little Gidding on Thursdays and Fridays – other days by arrangement.

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Wednesday 18th February **Held in the Dust : A Quiet Day for Ash Wednesday.**

A gentle day for orienting towards God afresh as we bring our whole selves to the threshold of Lent. The day is led by Rev James Bamber, Superintendent Minister of the St Neots and Huntingdon Methodist Circuit. Day to day, he loves the people he shares home with, baking and being with God. Listening is one of the gifts he treasures, and tries to practice. (QD260218)

Friday 27th February **Radio Thoughts** led by Clifford Owen.

Clifford will shortlist a few of his regular 2025 *Thought for the Day* scripts on Ouse Valley Radio and reflect on the ideas and incidents that gave rise to them. Clifford was in the Royal Navy for over 20 years and then trained for the ordained ministry. He is now retired and works for both Ely Diocese and the local Methodist Circuit. Ecumenism is his passion. (QD260227)

Saturday 21st March **400th Anniversary Quiet Day.**

Led by Dr Charlie Bell on The Psalms. (QD400-2)

Friday 27th March **Nurturing the Seed Within** led by Kevin Burdett.

Kevin is a retired Baptist Minister, having previously worked in banking and then 22 years in farming. He has been a parish councillor chairing councils in both Fenstanton and Burwell. He was Lead Governor of North West Anglia NHS Foundation Trust for about 6 years. He has chaired regional and national committees for the Baptist Union. Currently he is enjoying a course in Spiritual Direction and developing a more contemplative approach to faith and scripture. (QD260327)

Saturday 18th April **400th Anniversary Quiet Day.** Jonathan Herbert on **Hospitality.** (QD400-3)

Friday 24th April **Our Life Pilgrimage: reflecting on the Seven Celtic Sacred Spaces** by Margaret Cooper

Margaret writes about herself: "I was born in Newton Cambridgeshire. After going to the village primary school, I continued my schooling at the County High School. My long held wish was to train for work in the hospital laboratories at Addenbrookes and this is where I was accepted and stayed apart from two years in London, training for my Fellowship in Haematology. During my time at Addenbrookes I began to train as a Reader (LLM) in the Anglican Church and received my Licence at Ely Cathedral in May 1982. I served in the newly formed Parish of the Ascension in Cambridge. Of course my position at Addenbrookes was full time with some shift work, so my time in the Parish was limited, although I did what I could. When I took early retirement in 1998, it was to look after ageing and poorly parents, but I also found myself drawn into quite a full time job in the Church and it is from this position that I am retiring on Low Sunday 2026 after 44 years as an LLM. (QD260424)

Friday 22nd May **Theme TBC** led by James Shakespeare.

James is Vicar of St John the Evangelist, Hills Road, Cambridge and Bishop's Advisor for Spirituality. (QD260522)

Friday 26th June **Theme TBC** led by Tim Alban-Jones.

Canon Tim Alban-Jones is Canon Pastor and Vice Dean of Peterborough Cathedral. He is currently Chair of the Little Gidding Trustees. (QD260626)

Friday 24th July **Theme TBC** led by Pamela Soult.

Pamela is a retired priest living in Kimbolton and helping out in the Benefice. She writes: "My interest and work is mainly in Spiritual Direction, also leading Quiet Days and Retreats." (QD260724)

Friday September 25th **TBC** (QD260925)

Friday October 23rd **Through the Eyes of St Francis: celebrating the Natural World through artwork, words and quiet reflection.** The day will be led by Jenny Mashford and Kate Green. Kate Green is an Artist and Spiritual Director, working creatively as a Ministry. She expresses the Lord at work in watercolour painting and embroidery on vintage blankets. She explores faith and her journeying with St Francis in The Third Order. Kate is collaborating with the Poet Jenny Mashford, who is also a Third Order Franciscan and is training to become a Spiritual Director. They are currently exploring and expressing the life of St Francis in their creative output. Kate and Jenny are collaborating and praying towards a joint exhibition of words and art in 2027! (QD261023)

Friday November 27th **Mary's Song** led by Jane Gardiner.

Jane is LLM at St John's Church, Hills Road, and training in Spiritual Direction. (QD261127)

Little Gidding Calendar 2026

15th February Choral Evensong at Clare College. Booking details to follow.

Saturday 21st March Quiet Day focusing on the Ferrars' use of the Psalter, and the Psalms in our day, led by the Rev Dr Charlie Bell.

Saturday 18th April Quiet Day focusing on Hospitality in the Little Gidding household and its importance in our lives, led by Rev Canon Jonathan Herbert. Hopefully, one outcome will be a renewed focus on links with the Pilsdon communities.

Saturday 16th May Little Gidding Pilgrimage

led by the Rt Revd John Inge, KCVO, formerly Bishop of Worcester, starting at 10.30 am Leighton Bromswold Church.

Tuesday 2nd June Choral Evensong at Westminster Abbey

marking the quatercentenary of Nicholas Ferrar's ordination in the Henry VII Chapel.

Sunday 5th July **Nineteenth Annual T S Eliot Festival.**

Saturday 5th December **Nicholas Ferrar Day and Friends' AGM.**

Fifth Sunday Eucharist at St John's Church, Little Gidding at 11.30 am
2026 dates are: Sunday 29th March, 31st May, 30th August, 29th November.

Monthly Service at St John's Church, Little Gidding: 12 noon on the second Friday of each month, except January and December.

2026 dates are: 13th February, 13th March, 10th April, 8th May, 12th June, 10th July, 14th August, 11th September, 9th October, 13th November.

Quiet Days at Little Gidding: generally the fourth Friday of each month, except January, August and December.

2026 dates are: 18th February (Ash Wednesday), 27th March, 24th April, 22nd May, 26th June, 24 July, 25th September, 23rd October, 27th November.

Plus extra 400th anniversary Quiet Days on: 21st March and 18th April.

Poetry Group Meetings at Ferrar House (via Zoom in February and November), on the 13th of each month at 2.30 pm, except January, July and December.

For further details email susanwaters144@gmail.com



For further information, please contact Ferrar House on 01832 293383; email info@ferrarhouse.co.uk

May we encourage you to support the work of the Friends of Little Gidding by remaining a paid-up member: Individual: £25; Household: £35; Patron: £75.

A cheque made out to 'The Friends of Little Gidding' can be sent to Sally Seaman: 12 Bayswater Avenue Bristol BS6 7NS, or for Standing Orders and online banking information to membership@littlegidding.org.uk.

This Newsletter has been compiled by Susan Waters. Please email contributions and suggestions to susanwaters144@gmail.com or by post to: NL Editor, FOLG, c/o Ferrar House, Little Gidding, Huntingdon PE28 5RJ.

This email has been sent from newsletter@littlegidding.org.uk to people on the contact list of the Friends of Little Gidding. If you would like to be removed from our list please email Simon Kershaw at chair@littlegidding.org.uk



Photo: Sally Seaman