

FRIENDS OF LITTLE GIDDING NEWSLETTER

June 2013



SUMMERTIME

Summer arrived fleetingly at Little Gidding as the golden rays of the setting sun turned the façade of the church ablaze in early June. We hope that the weather – unseasonably cold and wet so far – will relent and provide warmth and sunshine for our two big summer events: the **Eliot Festival (6 and 7 July)** and the **Pilgrimage (13 July)**.

Closer examination of the picture reveals weeds growing over the doorway and near the southern pinnacle. Removing these and undertaking various rather more substantial repairs to the church fabric are items on a major list of repairs about to be undertaken at Little Gidding. The PCC at Great Gidding, which is responsible for the fabric, is to launch an appeal for some £40,000. It is hoped that grants from various bodies will cover the majority of this sum, but some of it will certainly need to be raised elsewhere.

Inside, along with details of the Festival and the Pilgrimage, you will find further information about the Church appeal and improvements at Ferrar House.

MEMBERSHIP

Our thanks to all who have renewed their membership this year; may we encourage others to renew theirs, to consider setting up a Standing Order, and where possible, to 'Gift Aid' membership and other donations to the Friends? Please return forms and subscriptions to Sally Seaman, our Membership Secretary, or email her at <membership@littlegidding.org.uk>.



LITTLE GIDDING CHURCH APPEAL

The present church of St John the Evangelist, Little Gidding has been a place of worship and pilgrimage since the 18th century, although there has been a place of worship on the site for eight centuries. This grade 1 listed building has significance to many people as it has connections with both Nicholas Ferrar, who established a community there in the 17th century and T S Eliot who following a visit in 1936, wrote 'Little Gidding', the last of the *Four Quartets*. It is from this poem that the words 'You are here to kneel where prayer has been valid' have resonated with so many and have been the inspiration for their pilgrimage to this place.

St John's Church is now in need of significant restoration. This work includes structural work, window repairs, bell restoration and refurbishment of the exterior inscription and re-gilding of the weather vane. These repairs will cost £40,000, and it is hoped that this work will ensure that St John's Church remains a place of worship for generations to come.

The responsibility for the maintenance of St John's rests with the Parochial Church Council of Great Gidding who also maintain the Parish Church of St Michael at Great Gidding. Significantly, there is no regular congregation at St John's.

Can you help us in maintaining this ancient church by making a donation to the Restoration Appeal for St. John's, Little Gidding?

Donations made payable to: St John's Church Little Gidding.

Please send your donations to: Mr John DeVal, Churchside House, Main Street, Great Gidding, Huntingdon, PE28 5NX

Friends may like to accompany any donation with a note that they are giving through the Friends of Little Gidding. Please ask for a Gift Aid form if you can contribute this way.

LITTLE GIDDING PILGRIMAGE : SATURDAY 13 JULY

This year the annual Pilgrimage takes place on **Saturday 13 July** at the conclusion of the Giddings Gala week.

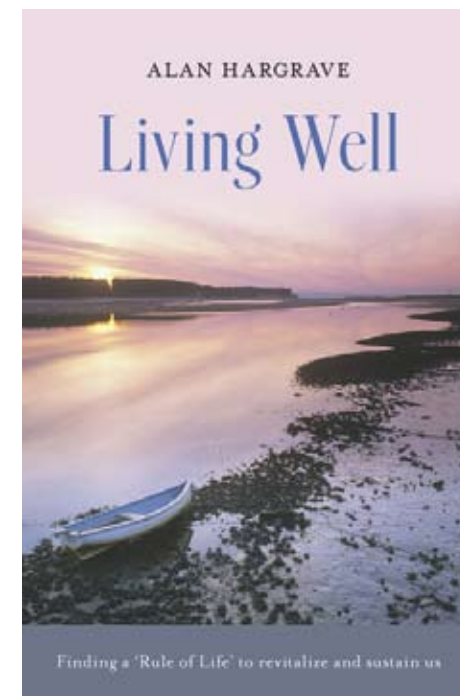
The Pilgrimage will be led by Canon Alan Hargrave, who is Canon Missioner at Ely Cathedral. Canon Hargrave will be well-known to many potential pilgrims, and he recently led a study day for the Companions. He is also the author of *Living Well: Finding a 'Rule of Life' to revitalise and sustain us* which draws upon 'Rules of Life', from Benedict to Iona, along with many of his own experiences, with the aim of helping readers find their own 'rule of life' and, as the book cover says, 'to express the love of God to our wonderful, needy world'.

The day follows the now usual format, beginning with a celebration of the Eucharist at Leighton Bromswold church at 10.30 am. Brenda Stewart, priest at Leighton, will preside, and Canon Hargrave will preach. After lunch at Leighton Bromswold, the pilgrimage walk will begin at 1 pm with stations at Salome Wood, Hamerton and Steeple Gidding, arriving at Little Gidding for prayers at the tomb of Nicholas Ferrar followed by Choral Evensong at 4.15 pm, where Mary Jepp, priest at Little Gidding, will officiate and Canon Hargrave will preach again. The day finishes with afternoon tea in Ferrar House.

Numbers at the pilgrimage continue to increase year by year as pilgrims

return, bringing friends with them. We hope that as many of you as possible will be able to come, and that you too might bring others with you to share in this typically English day celebrating the spirituality and holiness of Nicholas Ferrar and his family at Little Gidding, and also reflecting on our own journeys.

We do need to let the caterers know numbers, so it is helpful if you are able to let us know you are coming. If possible, please email us at <pilgrimage@littlegidding.org.uk>. Of course all are welcome to join us, and provision is made for those unable to walk the route.



LITTLE GIDDING CALENDAR

Saturday 6 July 2013

Eighth Annual TS Eliot Festival

Sunday 7 July

See page 10 for details.

Monday 8 July to Friday 12 July The 'Great Giddings Gala'

Various events take place in the week between the Festival and the Pilgrimage, including poetry readings, guided tours, Civil War talk and a Retreat (see page 7).

See www.thegiddings.org.uk/2013/06/great-gidding-gala-week for more details.

Saturday 13 July 2013

Annual Little Gidding Pilgrimage

This year only, the Pilgrimage is in July as the climax of the gala week. See page 12.

Saturday 6 December 2013

Nicholas Ferrar Day

10.30 am

Holy Communion, followed by lunch

The Rt Revd Stephen Conway, Bishop of Ely and President of the Friends of Little Gidding will lead the annual Commemoration on Nicholas Ferrar Day.

1.30 pm

AGM of the Friends of Little Gidding

The AGM will begin after lunch, not earlier than 1.30pm.

Regular Services

Evensong is normally said at Little Gidding when there is a fifth Sunday in the month:

29 September (6.00 pm), 29 December (3.00 pm).

A monthly service is held at noon on the second Friday of each month and is followed by lunch in Ferrar House. For catering purposes please email <info@littlegidding.org.uk> if you would like lunch. Services are held on the following Fridays:

14 June, 12 July, 9 August, 13 September, 11 October, 8 November.

Poetry evenings

Poetry evenings are held each month at 7.30pm in Ferrar House, as follows. For further information please email <info@littlegidding.org.uk>.

13 June, 14 August.

For further details about any of these events, or to book a place, please email <info@littlegidding.org.uk>.

To arrange your own event, please contact the Warden, Mrs Wendy Skirrow, at Ferrar House, telephone: 01832 293 383; email <info@ferrarhouse.co.uk>

For an updated calendar and diary of events see www.littlegidding.org.uk

Nicholas Ferrar Day and the 2012 AGM

Nicholas Ferrar Day was marked at Little Gidding on 1 December, the Saturday nearest to the anniversary of his death early on the morning of 4 December 1637.

The Revd Mary Jepp presided at the commemorative celebration of the Eucharist, and the new Dean of Ely, the Very Revd Mark Bonney, having assisted at the service, afterwards gave an Address from the warmth of Ferrar House. We are grateful to them for leading this festival day.

After lunch the AGM of the Friends was held. Simon Kershaw was re-elected Chair, and Judith Hodgson stood down from the post of Secretary after four years (which of course followed her service, with Tony, as Warden at Ferrar House). In her place, Neil McKittrick was elected Secretary, having served as Judith's assistant

through the last year. Peter Powell was re-elected Treasurer. Judith Hodgson, Canon Paul Rose, Richard Scott, Sally Seaman, the Revd Bob Torrens and the Very Revd Frances Ward were elected to the Committee. We gratefully record the service over many years of the Revd Tom Gillum and the Revd Tony Hodgson. As well as his service as a Committee member, Tom was for several years the Chair; Tony has for long been associated with Little Gidding including a period as Warden.

Advance notice that the 2013 AGM will be on Saturday 6 December, preceded by the annual celebration of Nicholas Ferrar Day. Our President, Stephen Conway, Bishop of Ely, will preside and give the Address.

Below: not midwinter, but just before Easter; campers at Little Gidding in late March had to deal with the unseasonal weather.





FERRAR HOUSE REFURBISHMENT

If you have visited Ferrar House recently, then you will no doubt have seen the gradual refurbishment of the public rooms.

Most recently the Eliot Room has been redecorated and the Friends have funded the purchase of 20 new chairs, some of which are seen in the picture above. Wendy and Paul report that groups using the re-furbished room have been most appreciative and they believe that the upgrading will help to attract future bookings.

On occasion a few more chairs are needed and Ferrar House have purchased ten matching stacking chairs. At a recent meeting of the committee of the Friends it was agreed to donate

£500 to cover the cost of a further ten stacking chairs.

The improved facilities help to make Ferrar House more attractive as a venue, both for retreats and church groups, and also for literary meetings and secular courses such as First Aid training and business meetings. Accompanying this edition of the Newsletter is a new Ferrar House leaflet. Please encourage groups and individuals to come and visit Little Gidding and where appropriate to suggest Ferrar House as a venue for meetings, study days and similar events. Wendy and Paul will be pleased to hear from you and see if the event can be accommodated at Little Gidding.

CLARE COLLEGE

For the last three or four years the Friends have formally commemorated the ordination, early in the morning on Trinity Sunday 1626, of Nicholas Ferrar as a Deacon by Bishop William Laud in Westminster Abbey. This year, as in 2012, we were delighted that the Dean of Clare, the Revd Gregory Seach again invited us to the college to mark this occasion.

In 1626 Trinity Sunday fell on 4 June, and our commemoration at Clare took place close to this date on Sunday 9 June. The Very Revd Frances Ward, Dean of St Edmundsbury and Chair of the Little Gidding Trust, preached at choral evensong, which was followed by dinner in the college hall.



Clare College Chapel (picture by Jim Linwood)

little gidding

Saturday 13 July

**10.30 am: Holy Communion
at Leighton Bromswold**

**1 pm: Pilgrimage Walk
to Little Gidding**

4.15 pm: Evensong

**Pilgrimage leader:
Canon Alan Hargrave**

*Friends of Little Gidding
www.littlegidding.org.uk*

pilgrimage

A RETREAT

In the week between this year's Eliot Festival on 6 and 7 July, and the Pilgrimage, on Saturday 13 July, Little Gidding is the venue for a retreat organized by the Fellowship of Contemplative Prayer. Led by Canon Charles Dobbin, the Retreat runs from 4pm on Wednesday 10 July. At 12 noon on Friday 12 July retreatants will join the regular monthly celebration of Holy Communion at Little Gidding, and this is followed by lunch, after which the retreat ends. The retreat can be residential or non-residential. For details contact Tony Hodgson, 01832 275343, <hodgsons@phonecoop.coop>.

AN ORDINAND'S PILGRIMAGE

Throughout the months of February and March, I was on placement at Ferrar House and in the surrounding parishes of Great Gidding, Winwick, Hamerton, Upton and Alconbury. This formed my final placement during training towards ordained ministry in the Church of England at Westcott House in Cambridge.

It has been a very fruitful time for me, allowing me the time and space to gather together my thoughts about ministry, particularly in the rural context, which will come in useful, as I am to serve my title as assistant curate to the parishes of Feltwell, Methwold, Hockwold-cum-Wilton, Northwold and Weeting, in the North-East part of the Diocese of Ely.

My time at Ferrar House has been quite varied. I have helped out with everything from cleaning, making soup, decorating and moving furniture to encountering visitors and making them welcome, engaging with groups who have visited and reading and reflecting on the themes of retreat and pilgrimage in the context of Little Gidding and Ferrar House. It is some thoughts on the latter, namely pilgrimage, that I wish to share with you here.

My time living at Ferrar House has taught me that visitors come to Little Gidding for a large variety of different reasons. People come because of Fer-

rar and Eliot; they come because they are passing by on a walk and fancy a cup of tea; they come on retreat to find time away from the usual cares and concerns of the world; they come because there is a convenient field to camp in; they come because of conveniently sized meeting rooms; they come because the hospitality is good... There are nearly as many reasons for coming as there are people who come.

The point is that, irrespective of the reasons for coming, Little Gidding is a place where the divine seems to impinge a bit more readily on our earthly reality. It is a place where people can find Christ near to them. This is precisely what seems to have captured Eliot's imagination when he visited in May 1936, which led to his writing of the poem, 'Little Gidding'. It is for this reason that the Trust and the Friends are both committed to maintaining Little Gidding and Ferrar House as a place of retreat and facilitating pilgrimage.

So what precisely is pilgrimage that we should want to promote it? Pilgrimage is more than a simple journey. It is more than a trip from A to B. It is a journey, yes, but it is a journey in which the end point is not simply mechanical; not just a geographic place: the supermarket, the school, the pub, Calvary and the Cross, home... It is a journey with a spiritual purpose, a

journey towards a place, yes, but also towards closer relationship with God. Pilgrimage is also a journey in which the beginning matters as well as the end. What we take with us, who we are, what we stop and do along the way, how it forms who we are, are all important; they are part of the roots that ground us along our pilgrimage.

In the context of Little Gidding, these roots are the history of the place. The roots are the family community created by the Ferrars, as they sought to give glory to God in all aspects of their lives; the visit of a broken king; the visit made by Eliot, which so captured his imagination and inspired him and led him to be involved with the first Friends of Little Gidding; the history of community, friendship and hospitality; and the continuing hos-

pitality and prayer offered in Little Gidding thanks to the current wardens through the support of the Trust.

What all this boils down to is that when we come to Little Gidding, we can't help the experience changing us. I have been changed by my sojourn, my pilgrimage of sorts, here – space and time given to God, in which I have found nourishment from God in return. So I thank you for your support as Friends of this place and encourage your continued support and encourage you to come, as often as you are able, to this place and allow God to continue to transform you into God's people through this place of Little Gidding, where 'prayer has been valid'.

Berkeley J Zych

Below: Berkeley, fourth from right, with fellow pilgrims on Good Friday



ELIOT FESTIVAL 2013 – Saturday and Sunday 6 and 7 July



Another year, another Eliot Festival, now in its eighth year, and firmly established in Little Gidding's calendar.

Once again a joint planning committee from the Friends and the Eliot Society has been beavering away at the host of tasks that must happen in order for the Festival to take place.

A reading by Peter Cochran and Jenny Sargent has become a much-loved opening at the last couple of Festivals, and this year they return with *Prufrock* and other poems. Graham Fletcher, Valerie Eliot's nephew

(and therefore the poet's nephew too of course) will pay tribute to his aunt and recall his memories of her and her husband. Graham was at last year's Festival and we hope that his presence will continue as a reminder of Mrs Eliot's presence at the first Festival in 2006.

This year's T S Eliot Society Lecture is to be given by Kenneth Pickering, who is Professor of Drama and Theatre at the University of Kent at Canterbury and author of *Drama in the Cathedral*, a chronicle of the Canterbury Festival



at which Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* was first performed. Professor Pickering's subject is 'In the Presence of a Masterpiece: the Genesis of *Murder in the Cathedral*' and will include rare film footage from rehearsals for the first performance.

After supper the evening entertainment will feature Peter Cochran and Jenny Sargent in a dramatic reading of extracts from *Murder in the Cathedral*.

On Sunday we will be joined once again by members of the International T S Eliot Summer School. Both the School and its visits to Little Gidding were the brainchild of Professor Ronald Schuchard of Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, and this year will be the final visit organized by Professor Schuchard before his retirement. It has been a mutually beneficial partnership which has enriched both the Festival and the Summer School, and we much look forward to it continuing into the future.

A highlight of Sunday is always the reading of 'Little Gidding' on the lawn overlooking the church; this year it will be read by Robert Crawford and Daljit Nagra. Crawford is Professor of English at St Andrews and read the poem in 2009 with Seamus Heaney, described at the time as 'the Irish poet and the Scots poet read the American poet's great

English poem'. He will be joined by Nagra, a British poet of Indian origin who teaches at a Jewish school!

After lunch Nancy and Guy Hargrove will give a musical talk, 'Eliot and Popular Music'. Nancy Hargrove was Professor of English at Mississippi State University and the author of *Landscape as Symbol in the Poetry of T S Eliot and T S Eliot's Parisian Year*. Guy Hargrove is retired Professor of Voice at Mississippi State University and an accomplished tenor singer

The Annual Little Gidding Lecture of the International Summer School is given by Lyndall Gordon, and is titled 'What might have been and what has been: Eliot's Search for Perfection in *Four Quartets*'. Lyndall is a Fellow of St Hilda's College, Oxford and the author of *Eliot's Early Years* and *T S Eliot: An Imperfect Life*, which have recently been republished together under the title *The Imperfect Life of T S Eliot*.

As usual, the Festival ends with a service of Choral Evensong in Little Gidding Church.

Tickets are now on sale and details can be found on our website at littlegidding.org.uk/eliotfestival. This year tickets can be bought online or by phone through an arrangement with the Oundle Box Office or via littlegidding.org.uk/boxoffice.

Pictured opposite top left to right, Lyndall Gordon, Guy Hargrove, Nancy Hargrove; bottom: Robert Crawford (left) and Ronald Schuchard (right) with Seamus Heaney at the 2009 Festival

LITTLE GIDDING COUNCIL OF REFERENCE

On 14 March the Trustees of the Little Gidding Trust convened a meeting of the new Council of Reference, chaired by the Bishop of Huntington, and together we explored pilgrimage and retreat, led by the Westcott ordinand, Berkeley Zych. He distilled the thinking from John Inge's book, *A Christian Theology of Place* where three elements are highlighted: the roots of a place, of which the pilgrim becomes part, like a thread in a rich unfinished embroidery; then the journey of the individual through life from God and to God, and thirdly, the larger progression of all things towards the consummation of Jesus Christ at the end of everything.

And so pilgrimage is a journey in which we look both backwards and forwards, and an engagement with God in the present, which should disturb our complacency, and lead us more deeply into prayer. The general discussion that followed discerned the difference between 'spiritual tourism' and 'pilgrimage' – but recognized that many come as tourists and leave deeply moved, and come back, again and again for the special multi-layered meaning that is Little Gidding. For me, what stood out was the need to focus on this place *where prayer has been valid* – the interpretation of the place by Nicholas Ferrar and his household, and by T S Eliot in poetry. Both looked to Jesus Christ as the beginning and

end of all things, and sought to follow where Christ led, and so it's important to hold them both in mind – not in competition – as one contemplates the significance of Little Gidding.

Ideas started to emerge – and others have occurred to me since. How about making more of the garden and grounds by a pilgrim's route, taking one to different points where a verse from the Psalms, or lines from Eliot's work can be read? Or a labyrinth, mown on the lawn, as at Sandringham, modelled perhaps on that under the West tower of Ely Cathedral? Or a series of six Saturdays with speakers addressing the topic: *Where Prayer has been valid: Prayer and ... the Psalms; English Mysticism; Poetry; Pilgrimage; Place?* Or cleaning out the pigsties and turning them into a place to pray, little chapels for private prayer?

Whatever happens over the next year or so, we agreed it would be good to produce a programme of events for 2014: Pilgrimage, Eliot Festival, Nicholas Ferrar Day, other occasions too – all ready at the beginning of 2014 to publicise and draw people. Not in any loud-mouthed, or grand way, though, but by serendipity, Bishop David called it: encouraging people to come by word of mouth, in gentle quirky ways, in ways consistent with the remoteness of the place itself.

Frances Ward