

FRIENDS OF LITTLE GIDDING NEWSLETTER



November 2013

NICHOLAS FERRAR DAY AND FRIENDS' AGM



What a wonderful and hot summer we had, and nowhere hotter than for the Pilgrimage and the Eliot Festival.

Now we look forward to the start of another year at Little Gidding, beginning, as always, with the Feast Day of Nicholas Ferrar, which this year will be celebrated on **Saturday 7 December**. The President of the Friends, the Rt Revd Stephen Conway, Bishop of Ely, will preside at the Festival Eucharist at 10.30 am, and afterwards give an address.

The Annual General Meeting of the Friends will be held after lunch, starting at 1.30 pm.

This commemoration of the death of Nicholas Ferrar on 4 December 1637, his heavenly birthday, at the place of his death and around his tomb, is always a major feature of the Friends' year and we look forward to seeing many of you there.

For catering purposes please let us know if you require lunch, and any special requirements.

Left: Bishop Stephen Conway pictured leading the (cold!) 2012 Pilgrimage

LITTLE GIDDING CHURCH APPEAL

As reported in the last Newsletter, Little Gidding Church is now in need of significant restoration, and an appeal has been launched to raise £40,000. The hard work of raising this money is the responsibility of Great Gidding PCC, as Little Gidding Church is technically a 'chapel of ease' of its neighbour. Great Gidding Church is itself also in need of major restoration at the moment, so their efforts are divided and it is expected that the Little Gidding appeal will take longer than had been previously thought.

Meanwhile, the Friends have made a 'seedcorn' donation of £1000 from our reserves. This is in addition to any donations that individual members of the Friends may make. It is hoped that this donation will help to show various grant-making bodies that there is

interest in this restoration work and attract further grants.

The appeal organizers hope to write in the New Year to all members of the Friends with more information about the Appeal. Please help us to spread the word beyond the Friends to all who might be interested in ensuring the future of this beautiful historic and holy place.

May we remind readers that donations may be made by cheque payable to 'St John's Church Little Gidding' and sent 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.



2014 PILGRIMAGE

In 2014 the Pilgrimage will revert to its usual May date, and will be on **Saturday 24 May**. Please put the date in your diary for 2014. The Pilgrimage leader will be the priest and poet Malcolm Guite, Chaplain of Girton College, Cambridge, and well known to many Friends. Further details will follow but it is expected that the day will begin at 10.30 at Leighton Bromswold.

SEASONAL JOYS

Can there be many better places to worship against the background of the changing seasons than Little Gidding? We town and city dwellers see muted changes: the clocks going forward or back, the hours of daylight waxing and waning, greater or fewer days when one can venture out without raincoat or jacket.

But at Gidding nature is seen in sharper focus. One time the access road is covered with snow and thick ice; a month later there are buds, greenery and other harbingers of spring, and next time the glory and freshness of an early summer day. Then as we glide through those long weeks of Trinity, come the dog days followed by slow decline, turning leaves, a hint of mist on the lane.

Those who attend the Eucharist on the second Friday of each month experience all this and much more. The Service, with a short address, is followed by a convivial soup-and-fruit lunch in Ferrar House.

Do come and join us – you would be most welcome. Richard Scott is 'convenor'. Contact him about a week in advance if you would like to stay for lunch 01480 890286 / <info@littlegidding.org.uk>.

Neil McKittrick





FERRAR HOUSE

Ferrar House continues to be in regular use as a small retreat house with groups from across the region enjoying the space and hospitality. Children from Great Gidding school have also visited and were able to lunch on the lawns. The garden has been much complimented – and it has also produced a large amount of fruit which has been made use of in the kitchen.

A major event in October has been the visit by members of the Oratory of the Good Shepherd, an order of priests which was founded after a visit to Little Gidding 100 years ago in December 1913. A small brass plaque in the church commemorates that visit by John How (later Bishop of

Glasgow, who wrote the hymn honouring Nicholas Ferrar that is sung at the Pilgrimage and on Nicholas Ferrar Day), Eric Milner-White (subsequently Dean of King's College Cambridge, who began the world-famous service of Nine Lessons and Carols broadcast from that college); and Edward Wynn (later Bishop of Ely and first president of the Friends).

Various maintenance tasks continue: leaky roofs, faulty windows, monitoring environmental health issues, and so on.

As usual the House will be closed over the winter, after Nicholas Ferrar Day (7 December) and will re-open on Wednesday 5 February 2014.

LITTLE GIDDING CALENDAR

Saturday 7 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.

Saturday 24 May 2014 **Annual Little Gidding Pilgrimage**
 Led by the Revd Malcolm Guite, Chaplain of Girton College, Cambridge.
 More details to follow. Please put the date in your 2014 diary.

Sunday 15 June (TBC) **Trinity Sunday**
 Commemoration of the ordination of Nicholas Ferrar with Clare College, Cambridge
 We hope to continue this event with our friends at Clare College; but the date and details are still to be confirmed.

Saturday 5 July 2014 **Ninth Annual T S Eliot Festival**
 Sunday 6 July
 Planning is already under way for next year's Festival. Please make a note of the dates.

Regular Services

Evensong is normally said at Little Gidding when there is a fifth Sunday in the month:
 29 December (3 pm), 30 March (3 pm), 29 June (6 pm), 31 August (6 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:

13 December, 10 January, 14 February, 14 March, 11 April, 9 May, 13 June.

Poetry evenings

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

13 November; 13 March; 13 April; 14 May; 13 June; 13 August (AGM).

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



LITTLE GIDDING PILGRIMAGE

The 2013 Pilgrimage was held on perhaps the hottest day of a hot summer, with temperatures reaching the high 20s Celsius or even the 30s. Canon Alan Hargrave led the day with short reflections at each of the stations and longer addresses at the services which began and ended the day.

The picture shows some of the pilgrims enjoying lunch outside the

church at Leighton Bromswold – a considerable contrast to the damp and cold weather of the previous year. Canon Hargrave is pictured (wearing a blue-check shirt) in the foreground, in conversation with Frances Ward, Dean of St Edmundsbury and Chair of the Little Gidding Trust.

We are very grateful to Brenda Stewart (priest at Leighton Bromswold)

and to members of her congregation who welcomed us and fed us before we set off to walk to Little Gidding.

The common theme through the day was the journey of Abraham and his descendants, beginning with Abram and Sarai setting out from Ur, meeting strangers at Mamre, continuing with Jacob wrestling at the ford of Jabbock, and coming upon his brother Esau; and concluding with Moses coming near to the Promised

Land. All this was interspersed with poetry from Michael Leunig, Shakespeare, Wilfred Owen, W B Yeats, D H Lawrence, George Herbert, Philip Larkin and others. All in all a splendid and inspirational compilation – very many thanks to Alan for the hard work in putting together and sharing it with us. Thanks also to Mary Jepp for leading Evensong, to Bob Torrens (litanist), and to our choir, the Hurstingstone Singers for their fine efforts.

GEORGE HERBERT AND EDINGTON

It's but a year or two since I first went to the grand church at Leighton Bromswold. Many a time I had noticed the sign to this village on the A14, and I was aware that whilst he was rector of Bemerton on Salisbury plain, Herbert also had rights and influence at Leighton Bromswold.

My immediate impression was how this fine church would be an ideal spot for a wonderful music and liturgy festival – and this year my thoughts turned to comparison with the iconic church of St Mary, St Katharine and All Saints in Edington, Wiltshire: again like a small Cathedral in a very small village. Edington hosts a huge music and liturgy festival each August with

about 150 singers in three choirs and Matins, the Eucharist, Evensong or a similar service and Compline each day – all choral and very well attended. I have been fortunate to be a serving priest at the Festival over 51 years.

As opposed to the country silence of Gidding, Edington sounds like something very different – but Edington is where George Herbert was married on 5 April 1629 to Jane Danvers, two days after his thirty-sixth birthday. Sadly it was only four years before his death on 1 March 1633. As with Mozart, one wonders what might have ensued in all that George contributed to the world in his poetry had his life not been cut short at a comparatively early age.

So why was George married in the great priory church at Edington? His bride, Jane Danvers, was a cousin of the 1st Earl Danby, and lived at Baynton close to Edington – though not, I believe, the Baynton house of today, but an earlier one. It was a happy marriage after a courtship of only three days, on account probably of George's health.

King James I took a liking to George when he was Public Orator at Cambridge University and subsequently was a Member of Parliament, but following James's death in 1625, George resigned from Parliament the

next year and took Holy Orders as a deacon. He held the prebendal stall of Leighton before being priested in 1630 and becoming Rector at Bemerton.

There is therefore a small link between Edington Priory Church, whose wonderful annual Festival I support and commend – now almost in its sixtieth year – and this also very fine Church in Leighton Bromswold, whose restoration was funded by George Herbert and his wealthy friends, and directed on his behalf by the Ferrars from nearby Little Gidding.

Canon Paul Rose

Pictured left: the interior of Leighton Bromswold Church at this year's Little Gidding Pilgrimage (photo © Simon Kershaw); below: the exterior of Edington Priory Church, Wiltshire (photo © Humphrey Bolton)



ELIOT FESTIVAL 2013 and 2014

This year's Eliot Festival was remarkable in the near-decade of Festivals in that the weather was dry, free of strong winds, and indeed exceptionally sunny and hot. This made it a bit of a marathon for Festival-goers, and especially for the organizers and everyone working behind the scenes. But as we waved goodbye to the coaches from the International Summer School and others at the end of the Festival we were able to reflect on another successful weekend.

Peter Cochran and Jenny Sargent had regaled us with *Prufrock* and other



poems. Graham Fletcher, had paid suitable tribute to his aunt, Valerie Eliot (née Fletcher) and given us a respectful glimpse into Eliot's later years from Graham's own childhood perspective and family memories. Professor Kenneth Pickering gave us an insight into the genesis of *Murder in the Cathedral* – though our attempt to show some video clips and stills from the first performance was made rather difficult by the bright sunlight. And in the evening Peter Cochran and Jenny Sargent were joined by actor Richard Hampton in reading a 'reduced *Murder in the Cathedral*' which marvellously captured the essence of Eliot's play.

On Sunday, after Robert Crawford and Daljit Nagra had read 'Little Gidding', Nancy and Guy Hargrove educated and entertained us with their scholarly and musical double act, and Lyndall Gordon discussed Eliot's fine-tuning of his *Four Quartets*.

At the Festival we said 'thank you' to Judith and Tony Hodgson, who have helped organize each of the eight Festivals that have taken place. They are standing down from the Festival Committee and will take a well-earned rest in 2014 to enjoy their wedding anniversary, which the Festival has trespassed on for the last five years. We hope to see them as guests in 2015! We also said 'thank you' to Professor Ronald Schuchard. Ron conceived the



International Summer School and has brought the School to the Festival each year since 2009. Ron is now stepping down from organizing the Summer School, handing on the baton to Gail McDonald of Goldsmith's, London University. We very much hope to continue to see Ron each summer at the Festival, and we are grateful for his ideas and his enthusiasm, which have helped the Festival to prosper.

Planning for 2014 is already under way, with an outline programme for the Saturday sketched out, and plans made for the evening entertainment. None of this is confirmed yet, so it'll be a little longer before we publish the details. The Festival Committee, which is a joint committee of the Friends and the Eliot Society, is also taking steps to put itself on a more formal footing. In this way it is hoped to secure the future of the Festival and enable it to grow in a way that is sensitive to its setting and yet enables more people to appreciate the beauty and sanctity of Little Gidding, and understand a little more of Nicholas Ferrar and his family.



Opposite: Saturday supper; top left: Summer School students arrive; above: Daljit Nagra, Guy and Nancy Hargrove, Ronald Schuchard, Lyndall Gordon and Robert Crawford relax at the end of the Festival; below: Graham Fletcher; bottom: Judith and Tony Hodgson.



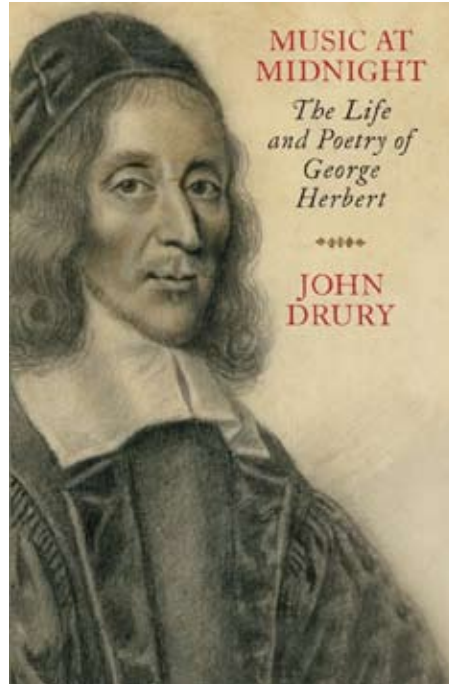
MUSIC AT MIDNIGHT The Life and Poetry of George Herbert

Music at Midnight is the title of a new book by John Drury, Chaplain of All Souls' College, Oxford, and formerly the Dean of Christ Church Cathedral in Oxford.

Drury integrates the life and poetry of George Herbert, giving us in *Music at Midnight* the biography of the man behind some of the most famous poems in the English language, poems in which George Herbert recorded his inner experiences of grief, recovery, hope, despair, anger, fulfilment and – above all else – love.

Because he published no English poems during his lifetime, and dating most of them exactly is impossible, writing Herbert's biography is an unusual challenge. In this book John Drury sets the poetry in the whole context of the poet's life and times, so that the reader can understand the frame of mind and kind of society which produced it, and depth can be added to the narrative of Herbert's life. His Herbert is not the saintly figure who has come down to us from John Aubrey, but a man torn for much of his life between worldly ambition and the spiritual life shown to us so clearly through his writings.

John Drury began as a biblical scholar, and while Dean of King's College, Cambridge, worked with Frank Kermode on the Gospels for *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, which sharpened



his sense of the role of imagination in the formation of the Gospel stories. He took this interest further, and into the realm of Christian paintings and their meaning, in *Painting the Word*, written while he was Dean of Christ Church, Oxford. *Music at Midnight* is the culmination of a lifetime's interest in Herbert, whose *Complete Poetry* he is now editing for Penguin Classics.

We hope to carry a full review of this important new book in the next Newsletter.

Music at Midnight by John Drury, published by Allen Lane, 2013; ISBN 978-1-84614-248-2, price £25.