

2. A visit to the new Medieval Gallery at the British Museum

On 9 December 2010 a group of some 20 Friends were privileged to be guided by Jonathan Williams, the Keeper of Pre-history and Europe, in whose department Early Christian and Medieval Art belong, to see the new Medieval Gallery, opened some 18 months ago. We looked first at the period in the 4th century AD when Christianity had been accepted by the Roman Emperors, and the earliest Christian images were formulated, often by appropriating Roman types. The mosaic roundel of *Christ* from the Hinton St Mary mosaic floor, probably the earliest known mosaic picturing Christ, shows him as beardless: an Apollo-like visage very different from the later, standard bearded face. We stopped to study the Franks Casket, a whalebone box made in Northumbria in the first half of the 8th century. This is covered with narrative carvings of subjects variously drawn from Germanic myth, and Judeo-Christian and classical sources. The themes of exile, good and bad rule, salvation and damnation include the *Adoration of the Magi*, the *Sack of Jerusalem by Titus* in 70 AD, and the *Finding of Romulus and Remus*. A group of late Antique ivories also showed a wide range of subjects, some still pagan, others of Old Testament and New Testament themes including one of the earliest representations of the *Crucifixion* (showing a beardless 'Triumphant Christ', and *Judas hanged*). The new gallery treats European art between 1050 and 1500 thematically, with cases displaying works grouped under topics such as Saints and pilgrimage, Icon and image, and Sin and salvation, and secular themes like Kings and queens, and Merchants, towns and trade. In the 'Icon and image' section we noted especially an icon painted in Constantinople in around 1400 showing the *Triumph of Orthodoxy* after the period of Iconoclasm that ended in 843 AD. Finally we admired the Lacock Cup, a silver-gilt chalice of around 1430-50, a very rare survivor of the Reformation and Commonwealth melt-downs of liturgical silverware; and in contrast, the spectacular Royal Gold Cup made for the celebrated Duc de Berry in the 1370s and showing, in exquisitely detailed and coloured enamel against burnished gold, scenes from the Life of St Agnes.

The Friends' Management Committee

Chairman, and Editor of the *Newsletter*: Francis Ames-Lewis,
52 Prebend Gardens, London W6.0XU; tel.: (020) 8748 1259;
email: f.ames-lewis@bmk.ac.uk

Minutes and Membership Secretary: Christabel Ames-Lewis

Treasurer: Malcolm Smith

Ex-officio Trustees: Fr Simon Brandes, Janet Lucy, Malcolm Smith

Committee: Adrian Biddell, Clive Cheesman, Mylene Curtis, Richard Ellis,
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THE FRIENDS OF ST NICHOLAS CHURCH

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Winter - Summer 2011 Dates for your Diary: please write them in NOW!

THURSDAY 17 FEBRUARY 2011, at 7.00pm in the church. Dr Nigel Llewellyn (Head of Research, Tate Britain) will give a lecture entitled 'The Chaloner Monument at Chiswick: Commemoration and Society in post-Reformation England'. Dr Llewellyn will discuss the design and commemorative imagery of the tomb-monument in the Lady Chapel to Sir Thomas Chaloner (died 1615) and his wife, in the light of contemporary Jacobean social practices. The lecture will be illustrated with slides, but we will not be able to see the monument from where we sit, so you are strongly advised to study the monument in advance of the lecture. This event will be free to friends; a small entrance fee will be invited from others. Refreshments will be available.

SUNDAY 15 MAY 2010, from 7.00 pm in the church. After the annual Choral Evensong to commemorate the benefactors of St Nicholas Church (which we hope many Friends will wish to attend), we will hold our annual Reception and brief AGM. We hope that it may be possible to put on display the two silver flagons to the repair of which the Friends recently contributed, and/or the complete run of archive books that have been restored and rebound over the last few years.

SATURDAY 25 JUNE 2011, at 7.30 pm in the church: 'The Long Day Closes'. The St Peter's Singers will give a concert of music for a midsummer day: details of the programme, which will include Johannes Brahms' 'Vier Quartette' op.92 for chamber choir, will be circulated nearer the time.

We are also hoping to arrange **AN EASTERTIDE EVENT**, perhaps a visit to the National Gallery to look at Renaissance paintings of scenes and images of Christ's Passion. If this, it will probably take place on **Wednesday 20 April 2011, at 6.30 pm**. We will let you know nearer the time the precise details of any visit we may be able to arrange.

Financial position, and recent and future projects

Since the last issue of this Newsletter was circulated, we have received news of an immensely generous bequest of £32,063.10p from the estate of the late Jim Barron. The Committee has been tentatively approached with a request that we consider providing some 'seed-corn' funds to help to launch an appeal for the funds needed for the church extension project, by which kitchen and toilet

facilities will be provided in a new building at the west end of the south aisle. Jim Barron's bequest would make it possible for the Friends to offer a substantial sum to encourage other charitable trusts to follow our lead. At the time of writing we await a formal approach from the PCC, but the Committee hopes to be able to discuss this major funding project at its next meeting in February 2011.

Thanks in particular to Jim Barron's bequest, the Friends' financial position is currently very comfortable – indeed, perhaps too comfortable; so we are looking for other new projects that the Friends might help to finance. In mid-September 2010 our accrued funds stood at £54,381.29; last year a further £915.48 was received from HMRC under the Gift-Aid scheme. We have also gained small amounts of income from events that we organised last year, and from the Christmas card that the Friends designed and produced in autumn 2010. The card reproduced a photograph (taken by Donald Maxwell) of a detail from the stained-glass window in the west wall of the north aisle. We had 1,500 cards printed, and thanks to Richard and Sophia Ellis, most of these were sold. We have also recently paid in full for the handsome new notice board at the back of church; and we are hoping that an interpretation board, funded by the Friends, will be installed by this summer to provide information for visitors to the tomb of William Hogarth in the churchyard.

Friends' events, Autumn 2010

1. The chamber music concert on 16 October 2010

On Saturday 16 October 2010 Friends and others were treated to a delightful concert in the church. Patrick and Louise Grattan, prominent instrumentalists in Bedford Park, were joined by three friends of theirs (Colin Kitching (viola), Ruth Ridley ('cello) and Andrew Carter (piano and organ) to offer us a varied programme of chamber music. The concert opened with Haydn's Piano Trio no.6 in D major, a characteristically lively piece to get the audience into the mood; and this was followed by Mozart's Flute Quartet no.4 in A major (KV 298), which opens with a well-loved theme and variations. After the interval, Andrew Carter played three movements from Louis Vierne's '24 Pièces en Style Libre' for organ solo, and joined the string players for the major item in the programme, Gabriel Fauré's Piano Quartet no.1 in C minor, op.15. This magnificent piece, full of haunting melodies and rapid, virtuoso passages, was played with great vivacity and warmth of expression, to the delight of all gathered to hear this excellent concert.

2. *A visit to the new Medieval Gallery at the British Museum*

On 7 December 2010 a group of some 20 Friends were privileged to be guided by Jonathan Williams, the Keeper of Pre-history and Europe, in whose department Early Christian and Medieval Art belong, to see the new Medieval Gallery, opened some 18 months ago. We looked first at the period in the 4th century AD when Christianity had been accepted by the Roman Emperors, and the earliest Christian images were formulated, often by appropriating Roman types. The mosaic roundel of Christ from the Hinton St Mary mosaic floor, probably the earliest known mosaic picturing Christ, shows him as beardless, an Apollo-like visage very different from the later, standard bearded face. We stopped to study the Franks Casket, a whalebone box from Northumbria in the first half of the 8th century. This is covered with narrative carvings of subjects variously drawn from Germanic myth, Judeo-Christian and classical sources. The themes of exile, good and bad rule, salvation and damnation include the Adoration of the Magi, the Sack of Jerusalem by Titus in 70 AD, and the Finding of Romulus and Remus. A group of late Antique ivories also showed a wide range of subjects, some still pagan, others of Old Testament and New Testament themes including one of the earliest representations of the *Crucifixion* (including a beardless 'Triumphant Christ' and Judas hanged). The new gallery treats European art between 1050 and 1500 thematically, with cases displaying works grouped under topics such as Saints and pilgrimage, Icon and image, and Sin and salvation, and the secular themes of Kings and Queens, and Merchants, towns and trade. In the 'Icon and image' section we noted especially an icon painted in Constantinople in around 1400 showing the Triumph of Orthodoxy that ensued at the end of the period of Iconoclasm in 843 AD. Finally we admired the Lacock Cup, a silver-gilt chalice of around 1430-50, a very rare survivor of the Reformation and Commonwealth melt-downs of liturgical silverware; and in contrast the spectacular Royal Gold Cup made for the celebrated Duc de Berry in the 1370s, and showing in exquisitely detailed and coloured enamel against burnished gold, scenes from the Life of St Agnes.