

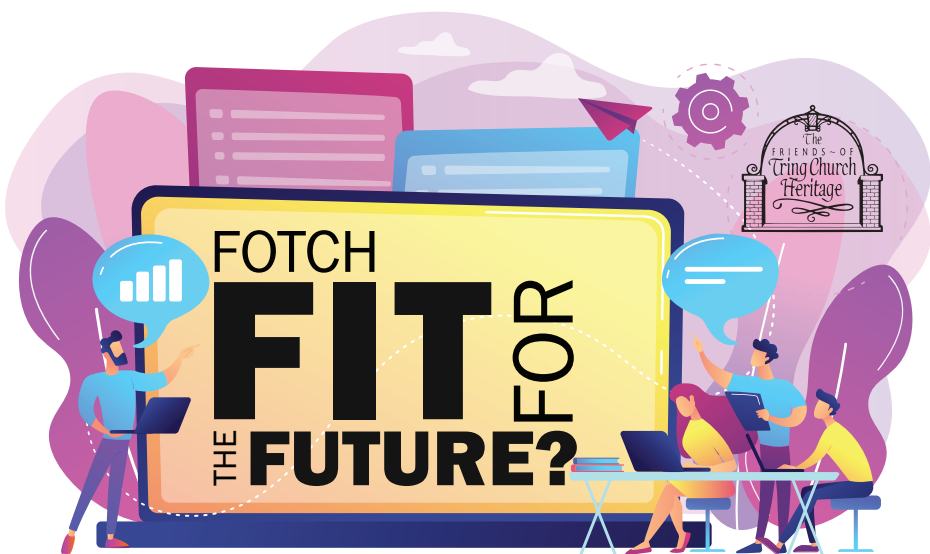


FRIENDS OF TRING CHURCH HERITAGE

MAGAZINE
AUTUMN 2023



***Church
survey:
the results***



What is FOTCH?

Tring's ancient Parish Church building and its surrounding grounds right on the High Street look great and are an important part of the character of the town.

All old historic buildings need regular maintenance, and in a large medieval Church building that doesn't come

cheap! The building also needs to be updated from time to time, so that it doesn't just look beautiful but continues to be a great place for schools, community groups and the church congregation to use and hold events.

The Friends of Tring Church Heritage (FOTCH) is a local heritage charity dedicated to maintaining Tring's historic Parish Church and grounds for future generations.

Over the past 30 years or so, FOTCH has made grants of over £300,000 for projects ranging from repair of 600-year-old walls to a new sound system and modern lighting to make the building more usable for schools and other groups.

No one is too young or too old to take part and we welcome volunteers to join in and be part of the FOTCH community. For more details, visit the website www.fotch.co.uk



A word from the Editor

Last year, Andrew Kinsey (from the Fabric Committee) organised a survey as part of a consultation on people's views about potential changes for Tring Church.



This questionnaire was to find out what people thought of various ideas to reorganise the interior of the Church.

These suggestions will inform the development of costed plans that can be considered. For example, one of the questions was about the removal of pews to improve flexibility of the space.

In this issue, we see the results of this survey. We see a summary of the responses to the questionnaire - the questions asked, a score of all the responses and some of the comments made (all anonymous).

I asked contributors to address the following questions: What changes do you want? What is your opinion? What's good and what's bad?

Contributors responded and we see articles in this issue addressing those questions. These include a thoughtful piece from the Rector Huw Bellis about change - what parts of the Church are worth keeping and what may be worth changing?

In the next issue (Spring 2024), I hope to get an update on any decisions that have been made about future development

plans (and if any special fundraising is planned).

Also in this edition, we look back to this summer's FOTCH family fun day. We hear from Maria Lashley on what was involved to organise this event and what is planned for next year. And we see some photographs from the day, including images from the famous Teddy Tower of Terror!

We hear from Rosie Southworth about her treasured vintage FOTCH sweatshirt!

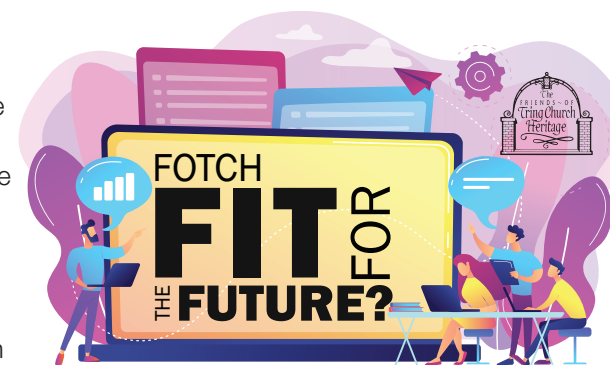
Lucy Kibble gives us an update on what the Tring Choral Society are up to, with plans for a Winter concert later on this year and a Spring concert early next year.

And we have regular contributions from our Honorary President (Grahame Senior) and Chair (Richard Abel), as well as a report from the Fabric Committee (Andrew Kimsey) and a report from the Treasurer (Malcolm Rogers).

Many thanks to all our contributors for their articles.

We hope you enjoy the magazine!

Phil Dowden
Editor



Thoughts about Change

Have you ever stopped to look at the door into Tring Church? It is stunning. I sometimes worry that it is overbearing and dark, and that we should have a glass door to be much more welcoming, but equally there is something imposing about the big oak doors and the triple pillars outside. However, it is only recently that it has dawned on me that what I am looking at is not in the least original. Tring Church underwent some major restorations in the late 19th Century. The 14th century porch was restored in 1880 (look at the outside and you will see the flint is very different from elsewhere on the Church) and the door was replaced at the same time. Look again at the door, but this time from inside the Church. Now you can see the original moulded rear arch of the south door. The stunning door to the Church is not medieval; it is a Victorian pastiche.

Those who visit castles and ruins on their summer holidays will be familiar with the dilemma faced by the custodians of our history. Do you rebuild to make it look like it used to look, do you leave it as a ruin or do you add distinctively modern structures onto an ancient building?

The Victorians weren't always that sympathetic to the history of the building. The oldest part of the existing church is a 13th century lancet window. It is half blocked now by the clergy vestry built

across the window. Originally, the north aisle would have had a great 15th century east window but the servers' vestry built in 1874 to accommodate the new organ makes this redundant. Little is recorded to know how popular this change was to the Church community at the time. However, we do know that a generation earlier they were highly resistant to having an organ at all. In 1827, an organ was installed in this musicians' gallery. According to 'The Short Guide to Tring Church' (printed in 1968), the 1827 installation of an organ in the musicians' gallery "caused a mutiny among the singers which was resolved by the incumbent refusing to preach if there was no singing!" I fear there would be rejoicing if I refused to preach! Ironically today there are members of the Diocesan



Advisory Committee who believe that the organ is now sacrosanct and must be preserved at all costs, even though those cost are astronomically high.

Do I still like the door? I am not sure. I do wonder, however, if it is symbolic of something which is a common problem faced by all churches. We are privileged to be the custodians of incredible medieval buildings but all of the history and culture which is wrapped up in these places can draw us backwards. We have a tendency to look back to a heyday of church life. We remember times when churches were filled, or we go even further back and we marvel at the massive church building programmes undertaken by the Normans. However, our faith is an incarnational faith. It might well be rooted in the life of Christ at a particular moment in history, and as such historical, but the significance of that moment in history was God revealing God's self through the culture of the day. God is never to be frozen in the past and we should never be tempted to re-create old fashioned images of God or trap God in previous limited understandings of God's self-revelation. A God who lived as one of us, continues to live as one of us

in the 21st century. We need to be aware of how God spoke to God's people through time, but more importantly we need to listen to how God speaks to us now, in our culture.

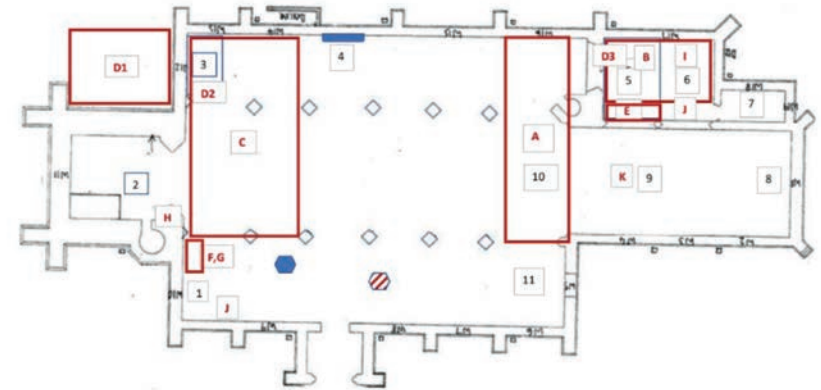
I love trying to read the faith of past generations through the building we have inherited and hope too that St Peter and St Paul's might reflect the spirituality of the whole people of Tring moving forwards as well. It should be like our faith: a living building, ever adapting and changing, honouring the past but looking to the future.

We do know that we need to make some massive decisions about the Church. We cannot keep delaying on deciding what to do with the organ. We need to create more space for people to meet and socialise, and we need to recognise that with changing patterns of worship the Church needs to be more flexible for community use (as it was in medieval times). In making these decisions we need to understand what is culturally and historically significant in the existing building, why previous changes were made, what is ugly and what is aesthetically pleasing, and how can the Church best serve the town and community in the future.

Huw Bellis
Rector, Tring Team

Church survey: the results

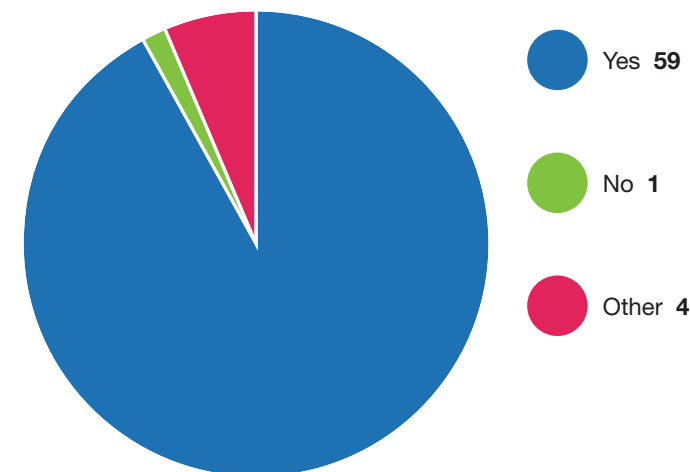
Plan of Church



Phasing Plans	Needs
A	[10] Nave table is too low
B	Youth Club space for 30.
C	[1] Insufficient space for coffee etc after church. Lack of venues for receptions after Life Events.
D	Hall Kitchen limited for major events
E	[5] Organ requires major refurbishment. Costs being sought for rebuild or replace.
F	Audio Visual systems out-dated, over specified and complicated to operate
G	Visual Projection:
H	Wifi, is currently provided by a 4g hub
I	Office space
J	Storage space
K	Open up Chancel, for small Worship and other meetings

Zone Designation	
1	Coffee area, Font
2	Tower, W.C.
3	Children's Corner
4	Monument
5	Organ and Loft (above)
6	Servers' Vestry
7	Vestry
8	East Table
9	Choir stalls
10	Nave Table
11	Side Chapel

Do you agree with the font being moved to the south aisle to make more space for the coffee area?



It is indeed forward-looking to make some of the suggested changes to some internal areas of the church building. However, I find some of the suggestions unnecessary and over-reaching.

Please don't forget the need for easy access and seating space for the less abled.

If FOTCH paid for the outdated AV systems, this may have been more tactfully expressed so as not to offend others seeing this who were proud of it. The table in the Lady Chapel is not a suitable place for the small children's activities because the stone step is an accident waiting to happen and the altar cloth has already been pulled down once while bearing lighted candles...

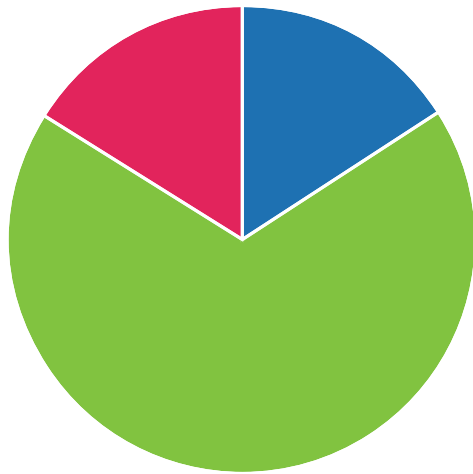
When we were planning the building of the toilets where D1 is on your plan, because the tower moves when bells are rung. And I hate the idea of a kitchen close to the high altar. That is a problem. I am concerned about reducing seating too much for big events if you remove all front pews.

I think You Must Do What comes into Your Budget.. Yes The Church Does Need Updating.. I'm not sure the Church is ready to have all the pews removed! Something for the Future! Pipes open up the area move the pipes to a back wall with an Electric Organ!

I think there are a lot of excellent ideas here. I very much support opening up the back of the church, with provision of a linked external kitchen; also the concept at the east end of raising a dais for the nave altar and (I think) removing the choir stalls to provide a large area of small worship, other meetings - and as a performance space (something I am very keen on).

I am concerned re the cost of this laudable project and for how long there will disruption in church.

Organ replacement or repair - Which option do you agree with?



- Repair the current organ (cost circa £300-£400k) 10
- Replace the organ with an electronic version, but keep the show pipes (cost circa £65k) 43
- Other 10

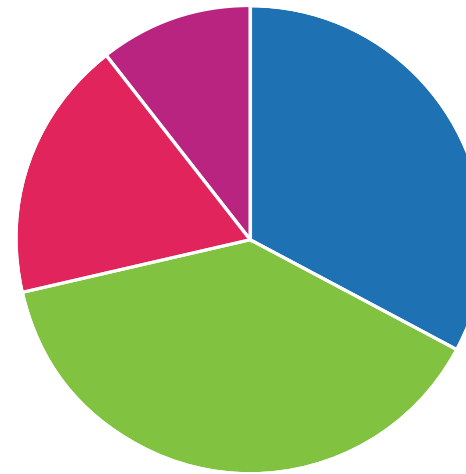
I think an electronic replacement almost certainly is the best option. The wonderful pipe organ in Berkhamsted is a great asset there, and is very well used, but the advantages of replacement in Tring are really too numerous to ignore.

I am ambivalent about this. The existing organ is a good instrument for the church but has drawbacks. It is not loud enough for major gatherings and concerts and, being largely mechanical, it requires regular tuning, maintenance and cleaning. If we spend £340,000 on refurbishment, the difference to the listener will be fairly minimal. To the players it would be significant. New digital organs, provided they are properly voiced and have substantial amplification, can be very effective. I would suggest that a working group be set up to come up with a formal recommendation having visited and played several digital instruments. Parts of the existing organ could probably be sold.

Being a Choir Member would be happy for the Organist Director to show his/her preference - if 1st option is preferred then a suggestion that people of Tring and Congregation do Crowd Funding

The idea of an electronic organ does not appeal but the cost for repairing is exorbitant I would like to know what Colin Stevens has to say re repairing or re-placing.

Removal of pews - to improve flexibility of the space



- Remove pews in front of the sound desk and replace with chairs 22
- Remove pews across the entire west end and replace with chairs 26
- Remove all pews and replace with chairs 12
- Other 7

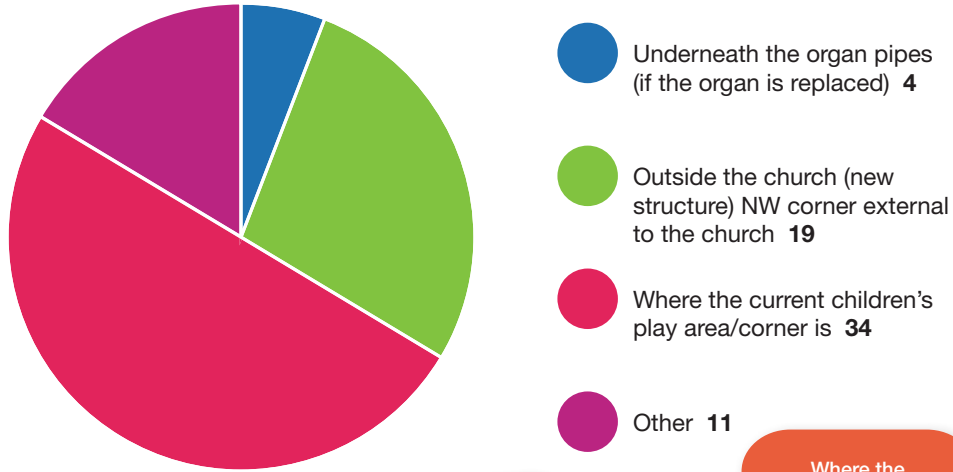
I think the pews are in keeping with the architectural appearance of the church.....although chairs would be more comfortable!

Do not remove any pews

Remove as many as we're allowed to! I wouldn't be too upset if the eastern pews in north and central aisles remain.

Remove all the pews and replace with chairs", "It seems crazy to me to keep "chipping away" at the pews. Over the years, front pews have been removed, rear pews removed, and Lady Chapel pews removed. We have the opportunity to make the church a huge flexible space for community use, with good underfloor heating and comfortable moveable seating. We should take this opportunity.

In order to provide better hospitality an improved kitchen is required. Where do you think this should go?



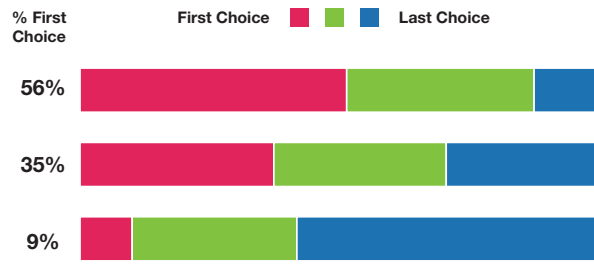
Don't mind either way

By removing the current organ seems sensible if this provides space for an improved kitchen

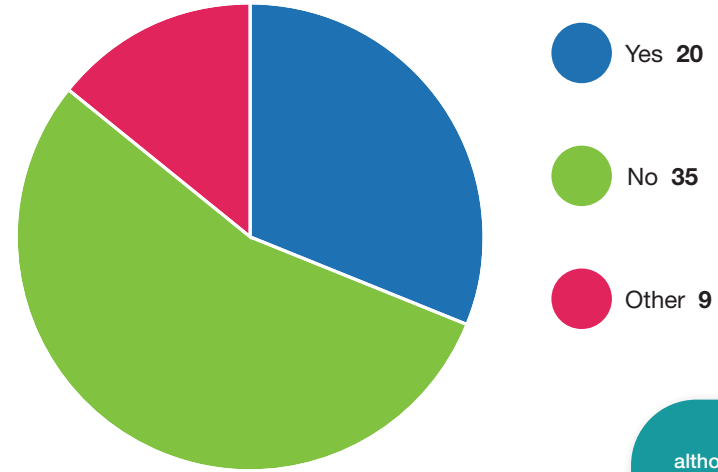
Where the current children's play area/corner is, if it is impractical to enlarge where it is now.

Ideally somewhere out of sight. The NW corner idea is a good one, but it seems that cost and other hurdles are likely to prevent it.

NW corner external to the church or where the current children's play area/corner is - Happy with either of these



Do you think the choir stalls should be removed to provide more flexible worship/concert space?



Don't think so but open to persuasion

By making such dramatic changes is the heart of the building being ripped out

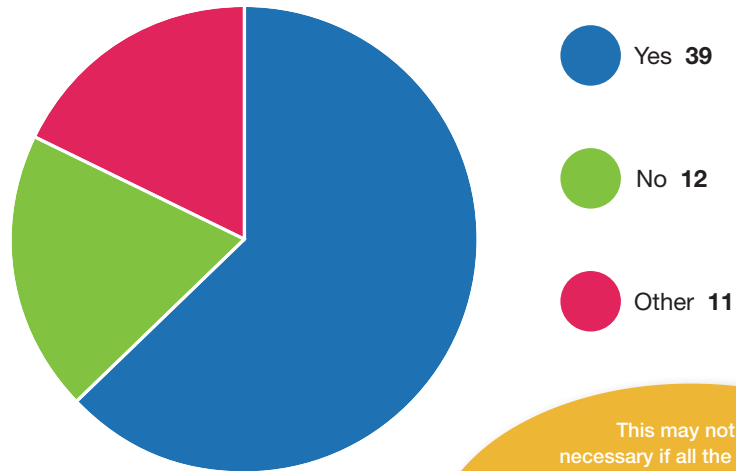
No because although there are a few of us at times it is better seating for weddings - also when for special services there is more space for extra clergy and for anyone else participating in the procession

I don't have a strong opinion but given the current choir numbers it does seem wasted space (apart from history)

Yes, provided that a suitable choir location is arranged elsewhere

no opinion either way

Front of the Nave - extending the raised area



This may not be necessary if all the pews are removed and the congregation is then sitting on the same level rather than higher than the portable altar. Flexible, moveable seating will improve visibility substantially as well. A fixed raised area actually reduces the flexibility of that particular space. Maybe leave this and wait to see if it is needed after the other works are done.

Unless ramps are provided for wheelchairs

Steps would be required, further impinging on nave space.

If the choir stalls are removed, could this space not function as a raised platform area? Not sure, both are needed

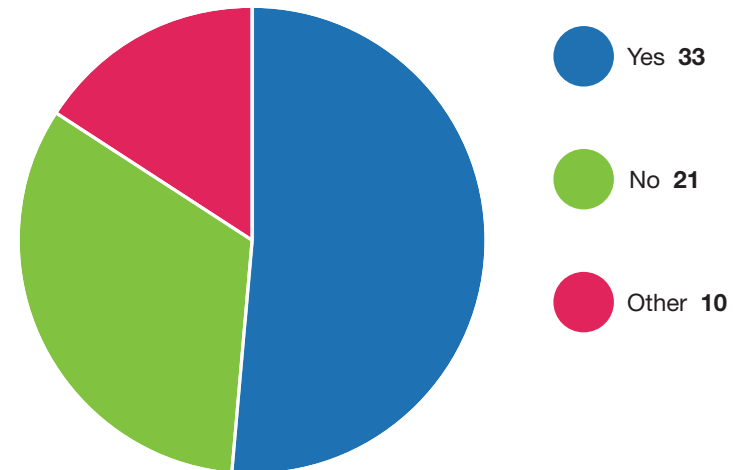
Will this reduce the flexibility of the church use?

Don't mind either way

Extend raised area but include altar rail for communicants so avoiding steps to reach main altar

Providing there are step support rails for communicants etc.

Do you think the front three pews nearest the front of the nave should be removed permanently to accommodate more space for concerts?



not sure x2

This is a difficult one - how often are there concerts and some congregation like to sit in front pews to be nearer for the Services

no strong opinion

Yes, it would enhance options for worship too.

Only if extending raised area is done

If the floor level is brought up to level with the chancel.

Yes, some of the front pews might go, but for concert needs, maybe only the first row would be better gone. This of course assumes that the choir stalls have gone, and that the altar platform has been extended into the nave.

I think all the pews should be removed.

The Church definitely needs to be upgraded good luck with fund raising

Unless you have a pot of gold that I am not aware of, I feel that you should minimise expenditure at this time. The only thing that really makes sense to me is to provide more area for sociability (biblically, socialising outside the Temple).

I'm happy with anything that makes the church more flexible and welcoming and easy to use. If there had been an "either" option to the questions, I would have ticked that Chairs would be great, but I think we should factor in a paid person/verger to be in charge of moving the chairs for all the different combinations. I dread coming in to warden for a service and having to move 100 chairs.

How can the church afford this major works as I get the impression that it is always pleading poverty re current expenditures. Any change is going to upset certain people but if the system is prayerfully approached and God's will is implemented it can only be for the benefit of future generations.

I think it's important to remember that the church is primarily intended for worship and not for the convenience of participating organisations, though I'm in favour of its being used on these occasions.

I can see why it would be a good idea to take the choir pews out, but the church would look a purely social area if this was done.

It is nearly 40 years since the last re-configuring of the church, with the Emmie Hobbs room, and it will probably be a long time until the next occasion, so we should make the most of the opportunity, and all the complexity involved, to create a welcoming and flexible space. Also, we need a glass south door!

I like to preserve history; but also think the church building needs to change to meet the needs of current and hoped for future users. A more comfortable space for after-church events would enhance the use of the building for the many members of the congregation for whom that social space is a lifeline. A safer area for small children and carers where children do not escape into the body of the church might be helpful. A place where Christian books could be recommended would be good.

Thank you for adopting this approach to formulating a plan. Please consider "going big", fix the roof, remove all the pews (and choir stalls if that is thought right by those who worship regularly), install energy efficient under-floor heating, re-jig the lighting and sound/AV etc as necessary, bring in easily moveable comfortable chairs. Visit St Mary's Wendover and St Mary's Thame to see how good this approach proved to be for them.

Not sure about extending the raised platform right to the north wall as it will be impossible to get through the door with enough head height.

The ideas are good, but where is the finance coming to make them possible. FOTCH cannot possibly pay for them all.

Can we get rid of the Gore Memorial - or give it to a museum? It just seems a throwback to an era of hierarchy and patronage that doesn't sit very well with me. Perhaps then, all the pews on the north side part of the church could be removed giving a big flexible space wrapping round from the back up to the vestry area.

It would be good to be able to provide added value for weddings, funerals and baptisms such as catering, wedding packages (inc. orders of services, as well as the more usual flowers, choirs and bells) as well as funeral and baptism packages so that the Church is at the centre of more than the service.

If the children's area becomes a coffee area/kitchen, would there be a different designated childrens area (useful to have to keep children entertained). The side chapel seems to be most used for children at the moment. The cost of repairing the organ seems excessive - surely the money could be better spent on other things? Music is an important part of services, but modern electronic organs probably sound just as good (especially to the average person). I like the pews - they're part of the heritage of the building. They also possibly mean more people can sit in the church on big occasions, as there are larger gaps between people with chairs/the chair legs, especially so with family groups/children. Also it's a very big job to put out/put away/tidy into straight lines a church full of chairs! A new external kitchen area would surely be very expensive, but I suppose could be useful for serving refreshments after concerts etc as well as coffee after services. But it would also cause quite a lot of disruption in the churchyard too. I don't find it difficult to see the communion table during services.

Do you wish to be a church or a coffee house/concert venue?

It would be wonderful to restore the organ, but this is very expensive, so an electronic one would be my alternative.

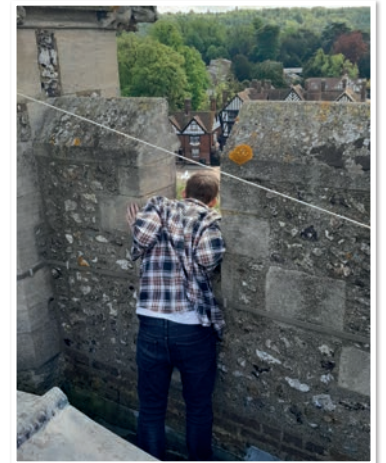
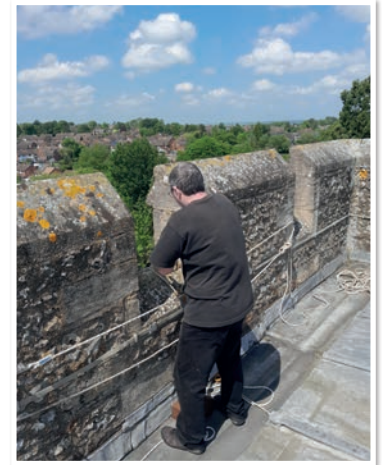
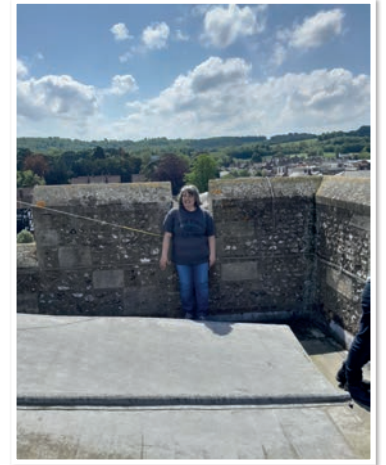
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I worry that seating for big events will be too much reduced if you remove front pews.

Am aware that there needs to be some progress and compromise but this is a traditional church and still should keep traditional values

I live in hope that one day when we can find a suitable house we will be able to return to the valuable community of Tring with its friendly churches. Meanwhile I appreciate You Tube on Sunday mornings plus MU monthly gatherings.

FOTCH Family Fun Day



Organising the FOTCH Family Fun Day

I was asked by Graham Senior (the President of FOTCH) the year after Covid to organise the FOTCH family fun day. In a moment of weakness when I thought this will be easy, I said “yes, of course”.

He told me that Vivianne Child would do the inside entertainment arrangements and I would do all the rest. In all fairness, the team have had my back all the way through the experience. Luckily, we had the email addresses of all the helpers and a rough outline from previous years which helped guide the operations, along with Graham’s extensive knowledge.

I really don’t do it all myself as we have a small group of volunteers who each take responsibility for one stall or more. Over the last two years, we have tweaked the set up. As is the way of things, it’s more preparation based around the internet and using email.

In the run up to the event, it gets really nerve-wracking as last-minute preparations are finalised. After a sleepless night worrying about the unpredictable British weather and other uncontrollable occurrences, the day begins bright and early. All hands are on deck from 7am and the team set up their individual stalls.



Once everything is in full swing and the pubic arrive (usually earlier than expected), the atmosphere is really great and it feels like an old-fashioned village fete, with everyone pulling together – even people not connected with FOTCH or the church get involved.

It’s lovely to bring an amazing day to the Tring community. We often hear from people who share their experience of living in Tring for years and never coming into the wonderful church apart from on FOTCH family fun day.

This year I was pleased to introduce a couple of new stalls, like the TeddyTombola and candy floss making a return, as well as the old stalls which are always popular. Next year we will be introducing a book stall and I would like to ask new families/groups of people to take on and run stalls. I also hope that next year we will find a way to make Splat the Rat possible!

We ended up having brilliant weather and everyone enjoyed their time.

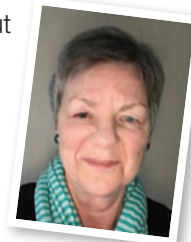
Maria Lashey
FOTCH Member



Do you have a FOTCH sweatshirt?

The recent articles about FOTCH and its history have prompted me to wonder how many people out there still have their FOTCH sweatshirt. I can’t recall which year these were produced, but I seem to remember that they came in two colours: navy and silver grey. I decided that the grey one would be more useful because it would go with just about everything – so I bought one and it did; and I’ve worn it pretty well non-stop ever since.

The earliest photograph I can find is this one from a holiday in the New Forest in 1999.



On the request of the Editor, I had a more recent photograph taken.



Occasionally, people have asked me about the logo and about Tring and I’ve been happy to tell them about the lovely friendly town we settled in when we got married fifty-five years ago. The sweatshirt is still in very good condition and, as I write, is drying in my garden on the washing line!

We came to Tring in 1968 and I joined the Choral Society almost immediately when Ro Stevens was its conductor. St Peter & St Paul’s Church became very familiar to me and has been for fifty-five years. The parish Church is an integral part of the heart of Tring and when FOTCH started, it seemed an obvious thing for us to join.

Rosemary Southworth
FOTCH Member

FOTCH funding and our future priorities

I was mowing the Churchyard during a particularly wet week in July, congratulating myself for managing to find a rare dry two-hour slot just ahead of yet another downpour. A greater cause for congratulation was to see that the grass in the new soakaway pits taking hold. Soon you won't be able to tell there was a whole lot of excavation for underground repair and improvement of the previously collapsing drainage system around the Church. It's been future-proofed for potentially more extreme downpours in the future, in addition to dealing with day-to-day needs – avoiding the risk of future water-related damage to the building foundations.

FOTCH funded these extensive works in full, committing funds during the pandemic when the funding outlook for parish and community was particularly uncertain. Over the years, maintenance and improvement of key features of the Church building and Churchyard like this have been supported by FOTCH. That is in addition to patiently building up financial reserves for the future, as yet unknown, major expenses which can't be met from normal parish funds.

Many of the urgent or transformational projects funded recently have involved repair and improvements to older features of the Church – the worn



medieval tower staircase steps, overhauling the clock, making safe and speciality cleaning the historically significant Gore memorial. In recent years, we have prioritised grants to projects that have improved the usability of the Church building to all the communities of Tring. These have included a new audio-video system, sound system and lighting system. Some of the FOTCH grants have been made in partnership with other local organisations and some – such as the large-scale external wall repair project – with a specific fundraising campaign.

Looking forward, the Trustees have to keep a prudent eye to future requirements to support the building: in that respect we have never as FOTCH liquidated long-term invested reserves designed for the long-term for a near-term project. It would also be fair to say over the past decade we have given in grants a greater proportion of cash raised by FOTCH, as opposed to increasing those longer-term reserves. As with all charities, we are in a tougher fundraising environment given cost of living pressures and competing priorities for people to spend their time. In order to keep supporting priority projects in the near-term - and get back to building further the longer-term reserves - we will need to be imaginative and innovative as a charity, as well as realistic about the kind of activities and events we can organise ourselves.

Richard Abel
Chair of Trustees

Update on FOTCH'S finances



Provisional accounts for financial year ending 31st March, 2023.

These accounts and the related Trustees' Annual Report have been approved by the Trustees, and are currently subject to an Independent Examination (IE) by a local Accountancy firm. I do not expect the IE to result in any more than the odd tweak or typo. The table opposite shows the headline figures, with some associated notes.

Transfer Portfolio for Professional Management

As you may well know, we have held discussions with Stringer Mann Partnerships – part of the St James's Place operation – to transfer all

our investments (excluding savings accounts) to SMP. This has taken much longer than expected, for a variety of reasons. Most recently, SMP have been conducting due diligence on our current investments and getting proven up-to-date valuations – this is complete except for one provider. When finished (which they hope will be within a matter of days), SMP will conduct a suitability review (to check that what they are setting up is consistent with FOTCH's Investment Strategy), and arrange a meeting with (probably) Richard Abel and myself for a final check / conformation after which we would provide a formal go-ahead. This meeting is expected to take place during September, after which SMP have the authority to transfer all our investments to SMP for them to manage actively and professionally, and in compliance with our strategy.

Malcolm Rogers
FOTCH Treasurer

Description	This Financial Year	Last Financial Year	Comments
RECEIPTS			
Donations & Bequests	£638	£319	
Compensation, etc.	£0	£1,250	Dowry from NWB for tfr to Merio
Membership Subscriptions	£1,161	£1,371	
Gift Aid	£0	£197	
Charitable Activities	£7,707	£1,181	Family Fund day reinstated in FY 22/23
Interest from Savings, etc.	£337	£315	
Total Receipts	£9,843	£4,633	
PAYMENTS			
Charitable Activities	£1,271	£500	100 Club continued throughout COVID
Administration	£3,869	£1,347	Insurance, etc, incl Rodwell Flowers
Grants Paid	£23,355	£11,321	Drainage and related works
Total Payments	£28,495	£13,168	
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) – Cash	(£18,652)	(£8,535)	
INVESTMENT PERFORMANCE Gain/(Loss) on Investments	(£4,111)	£49,786	Substantial volatility re multiple causes
TOTAL OPENING BALANCE	£657,801	£616,550	
OVERALL SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	(£22,763)	£41,251	
TOTAL CLOSING BALANCE	£635,038	£657,801	

FOTCH Fit for the Future?

Making Sure the Best is Yet to Come

FOTCH is now almost 35 years old and has achieved many of its original aims. Our support of so many development projects which have enhanced the Church building has been a vital lifeline. Our progress towards developing the long-term significant capital sum still goes forward – increasingly likely to be needed before the century is out.

We can reflect with satisfaction for what has been achieved; we now need to ensure that we are in good shape to achieve all our aims.

The world has changed enormously since 1990 and even more so since the lockdown years. The Church has changed, social attitudes have changed and Tring has grown out of all recognition as a market. Following a strategic review, we have decided that some fairly radical action is necessary to repair the damage inflicted by the lockdown years and to make FOTCH fit for the future.

So, What Comes Next?

An essential part of the mission is that we want input from all our members and supporters. Please contact either Richard Abel or myself with all queries and suggestions. We must ensure we make the organisation fresh and appealing to the whole community of Tring. We'll do a better job if we all work together.



Running up that hill – again

When we started out, we had a big hill to climb. The Church current account was effectively in deficit and bleeding money fast. The founding of FOTCH was part of the tripod of stability that we realised was needed – balance the current annual account; consolidate the assets; create a long-term firewall.

The message was simple: this wonderful asset (the heart of Tring) is not just for those inside the building but for all of us outside as well. It's our heart, we need to keep it beating. That was encapsulated in the slogan: "Help Keep our Heart Healthy?" It worked. We soon hit our target membership and our events were pretty popular.

Fun & Fundraising

It worked. The Church accounts were soon well in order and FOTCH (the Friends of Tring Church Heritage) was born. We soon passed our membership target and our events were to prove very popular. "We don't need to worry – we have FOTCH as our social event committee" was the way the then Rector John Payne Cook put it. Our many fundraising events, from pageants to black tie dinners in the ballroom at Tring Park (with jazz and bellringers on the lawn), were a sell-out. But that was then. The "Past is another Country" as they say.

The World Has Changed!

The world has changed, Tring has changed, the Church has changed and we Brits have changed... and then came Covid!

I have recently been reading two books which touch on the same

theme. The first is called "That Was The Church That Was" (Brown/Woodhead) and the other is called "Is God still an Englishman?" (Moreton). They both chart the massive decline in membership of our churches and the increasing secularity and diversity within our society.

You might think I found the books depressing. In fact, I found them full of hope and promise. Let me offer you a quote: "The English God appeared to be dead, but it wasn't true. He was just regenerating. This new English God wants us to work with nature, believes in fair play and good versus evil; also, in freedom of choice, mutual respect and equality... whatever we call Him, or Her, or Them." Food for thought and reasons to be hopeful rather than fearful.

Reasons to be Cheerful

Last May, we held our second Family Fun Day after lockdown and it was a great occasion. Our best attendance ever, a wonderful contribution to the funds but above all a very happy time for every generation. It was a real family day and so many people said how happy they were to be able to come... but "who is FOTCH; what is FOTCH; what does FOTCH do?" were frequently asked questions.

We had the answers to those questions but the overall message was clear; FOTCH is not understood as being 'The Friends of Tring Church Heritage'. Nor is it seemingly perceived as relevant to the community of today.

However, the idea and concept of the church in its green space as being the 'Heart of Tring' is attractive and believable. This applies both to

those who worship there and the wider community who treasure the historic asset at the heart of their town.

This space is the 'Green Heart of Tring' and an asset for every part of the Tring community

FOTCH has always been about preserving the asset for the whole community. It seems clear that we need to re-connect with all segments of our town to ensure our role is understood and valued. Then we can confidently offer events like our postponed Auction Evening.

Who We are and what We do

The hill we have to climb is that the majority of our community does not currently know who we are or what we do. The route to the top of that hill is to re-launch "FOTCH" (neither known nor valued by most) as an organisation that is known and valued by everyone.

We are starting to put together a plan to do just that. If you would like to be involved or make suggestions just get in touch with either Richard Abel or myself – or any of the Trustees. We will listen and we will act. We are determined to get this right and we will do that better if we do it together. With your input we can climb that hill, achieve that relevance and get on with doing that long-term job for the heart of Tring.

Then we can truly say that after 35 pretty-effective years, "The Best is Yet to Come." Then we really will be Fit for the Future.

Watch this space!

Grahame Senior
FOTCH Honorary President

A Building at the Heart of Tring



One of the best things about St Peter and St Paul is that it is physically in the heart of Tring. How many times have I directed people "drive past the Church and turn right", "drive past the Church and go up the hill"? Thousands! The Church is a 'you can't miss it' landmark.

We are blessed with a beautiful town and a fantastic Church building, which leads inextricably to visitors and tourism. If you look at the Tring High Street footfall data, the Church shows up in the highest density colour. And a quick look at the Church visitors' book shows how far people come to visit Tring. When I looked last weekend, the last 11 entries were from Mexico, Sussex, Norfolk, USA, Sydney, Ireland, Cambridge, London,

Perth, Luton and Kenya. (I know 11 is an odd number, but I wanted to include the mention of Kenya). Whether those people are Christian tourists or 'any religion or none' tourists, it does not matter to me. They came into the building, and they were moved to write something positive in a visitors' book. That can only be a good thing.

And so, in thinking about the research into a new layout for the Church, I favour changes that will make people more welcome and more comfortable in the church. If the church isn't welcoming and friendly, then in 100 years it won't be here for anyone. The worshipping community need the visiting community to help pay for maintaining the building. The visiting community need the worshipping community (and FOTCH) to love and care for the building.

Vivianne Child
FOTCH Member and Parish Coordinator
for the Tring Team Parish

How the Church might be used in the Future

In thinking about how the Church might be used in the future, I am sure there will be some great ideas from other people.

My idea is actually 'borrowed' from St Albans Abbey! I notice that St Albans Abbey offer a full and varied calendar throughout the year, with some really interesting and exciting events. Some events have religious undertones like 'A Day in the Life of a Monk' but others seem unrelated such as 'Interactive Dog Talks for Children' or 'Fleetwood Mac by Candlelight' - which must be stunning in the splendour of the Abbey.

St Peter and St Paul is a fabulous setting too! And would make a great



backdrop for some events of our own, events that would draw in a new group of people. When FOTCH hold their annual 'Family Fun Day' it is attended by all sorts of people, some of whom probably don't enter a church for worship from year to year but who might find a place within the church family by attending similar occasions. Tring is home to many talented and well-connected people, so putting together a calendar of events might not be as difficult as it would initially seem.

I know we have held very successful events in the past (like the popular jazz evenings) but maybe we could expand the number of events, and include some untried and untested occasions to see whether we can expand the way the Church is viewed by the community and the role it has to play

Emma Heaney
FOTCH member



Against the Removal of the Pews

I am not a church goer (nor a FOTCH member), so I do realise that my opinion may not necessarily carry much weight. For what it's worth, I am strongly against removal of the pews. I like to think of the many people that have sat there in the past. and that we are part of a community through years gone by as well as at the present time.



To my mind, it would become just a hall if it had ordinary chairs and a more 'flexible space'.

I know there was mention of improving catering etc but if we want a coffee there are many options the High Street - I don't think the Church would ever become my venue of choice as a cafe. Without its character, definitely not.

As I have mentioned in a previous survey, what does the 'H' in FOTCH stand for if we do not protect the heritage?

Lindsay Hankey

FOTCH NEEDS



YOU

For almost 35 years the Friends of Tring Church Heritage have focused on fundraising and fun events to secure the heart of Tring for all future generations.

It's a long game and we need new friends, new ideas and energy to keep that focus fresh. If you haven't joined the Friends yet – or are new to Tring's unique environment – please consider joining us. We are a very friendly bunch that likes to have fun as well as doing some effective fundraising and providing some serious grants to keep our heart in good condition.

Please use the form opposite to join us, or call Chair Richard Abel, President Grahame Senior or any of our trustees for a chat about how you can get involved.



APPLICATION FORM

Please complete this form in BLOCK CAPITALS

Title: _____ Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____ Telephone: _____

If you wish your membership to include other family members, please include the name(s) of all other adults, and the number of children (under 18 as at 1st April, 2023).

Names of other adults in your family group

Number of children (under 18) in your family group:

Please tick the box for the membership category of your choice.

Annual Memberships – I enclose my membership renewal for 2023 - 2024

Individual: £12 Family Group: £20 Junior: £5 (under 16s)

Corporate: £100 Voluntary donation _____

Life Memberships - I should like to change my/our membership to Life

Individual Life: £100 Joint Life: £150 for couples

To set up a standing order or pay by bank transfer the FOTCH bank account details (now Metro Bank, previously Nat West) are as follows:

Account Name: "The Friends of Tring Church Heritage" Sort Code: 23-05-80, Account number: 40555293.
Please add your name in the 'Reference' field. Cheques can be made payable to: The Friends of Tring Church Heritage

Gift Aid

I want to Gift Aid my subscription (and any voluntary donations) I make this year, or have made in the past four years or make in the future to Friends of Tring Church Heritage.

I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax (other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not apply) than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year, it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

Signature _____ Date: _____

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM WITH YOUR REMITTANCE TO:

Helena Cook, 20 Mortimer Rise, Tring, Herts, HP23 5NE or leave in the "C" pigeon hole at the back of the Church.

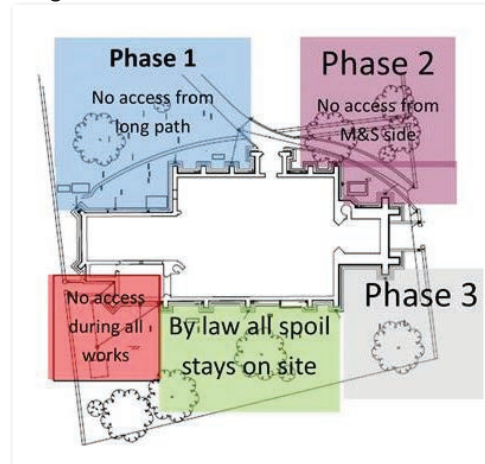
I understand that the charity will reclaim 25p of tax on every pound I give. If you pay Income Tax at more than the standard rate, you can claim extra tax relief through your HMRC tax return. I will notify FOTCH if I wish to cancel this declaration; OR change my name or home address; OR no longer pay sufficient tax for Gift Aid to apply.

Drainage Works Update

Work to improve drainage beneath the Church continues with several phases of work planned, commencing from late February 2023.



To maintain access to the building, the work is being undertaken in three phases - but despite this, it does mean unfortunately that accessibility will be somewhat restricted during different phases of the work. The main Church door remains accessible, but not from all directions as shown on the on the diagram below.



These works are essential to help protect the Church building from damage. The existing drainage is no longer functional and at the last quinquennial survey it was noted that rainwater was being discharged alongside the historic walls. The soft friable Totternhoe clunch used as

material for the walls is vulnerable to water damage from constantly being soaked, so this work is very important to help preserve and maintain the building structure.

The photo shows part of the existing drainage which was completely obstructed with debris and unable to be unblocked in situ.



The work now ongoing follows the urgent phase of work completed by the vestry in 2021 and is being undertaken in accordance with a faculty that has been granted by the diocese. This is a permissive right that is necessary to undertake works to a church building or it's contents, a bit like a planning permission for churches.

Some of the conditions that were granted as part of the faculty require us to notify an appointed archaeologist if any remains are found. Remains are recorded and, if directly affected by the works, are removed for reburial as close to the point of origin as possible.

On day two of the works, excavations found some lead and work

was stopped until the archaeologist could inspect. The edge of a lead coffin was found, it's date unknown without disturbing the coffin (and it is important not to if there is no good reason). The coffin was surprisingly close to the surface, probably indicating that this was once a superstructure but now lost in the midst of time. It's likely it was a very wealthy person, as a lead coffin would have been very expensive and is unusual, and also its location so close to the Church, as close to being buried inside the building as possible.



Photo showing lead coffin discovered at shallow depth during excavations

A number of bone fragments were also found during the excavation and are potentially of Victorian vintage. These are being kept and will be reinterred as close as possible to the area that they were found, once the works are completed.



Photo showing some of the bone fragments discovered during excavations

All of these items have been measured and recorded by the archaeologist for the future.

Legally all the excavated materials (spoil) are required to stay on site. The contractor is carefully stockpiling the arisings to avoid damage to existing trees and minimise impact on any other biodiverse features on-site.

Andrew Kinsey
Fabric Committee Chair

Tring Choral Society 2023/24 Season

Our new term starts on Monday, 11th September. We are a friendly choir and are always keen to welcome new members. We meet every Monday at the Akeman Street Baptist Church in Tring. Please contact our membership secretary, Margaret Collier, on 07426 771226 or email membership@tringchoral.org.uk if you would like to come along to see what it is all about. There is more information on our website at tringchoral.org.uk.

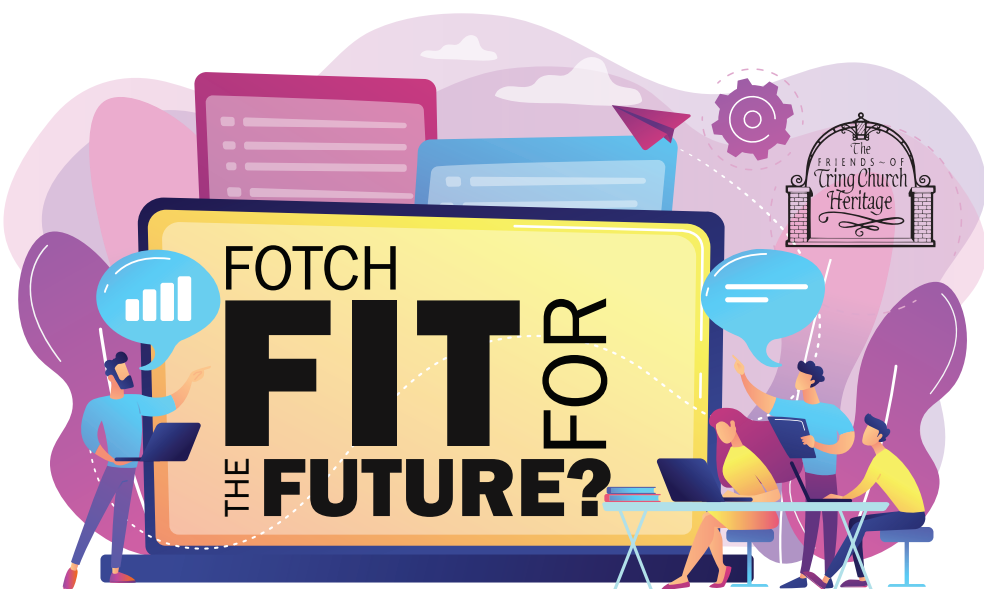
This term we will be working on a

lovely programme of music: Charpentier's 'Messe de Minuit', Vivaldi's 'Dixit Dominus' and JS Bach's 'Magnificat in D'. This is in preparation for our Winter Concert on Saturday, 16th December at St Peter and St Paul's Church, Tring.

Our Spring Concert is on Saturday, 23rd March 2024 and we will be singing Mozart's wonderful 'Vesperae Solennes de Confessore' and his 'Requiem Mass in D Minor' – again in St Peter and St Paul's Church.

Do join us to sing or to be in the audience at one of our concerts. We are usually accompanied by a professional orchestra and soloists, too.

Lucy Kibble
Publicity Manager, Tring Choral Society



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

FOTCH AGM

Thursday 16th September 2023

St Peter & St Paul's Church

Wine and nibbles will be served. It's a relaxed event, so do please come along

Tring Choral Society Winter Concert

Saturday 16th December 2023

St Peter & St Paul's Church

Tring Choral Society Spring Concert

Saturday 23rd March 2024

St Peter & St Paul's Church

If you have any ideas for things we could do better or differently, or that you would like to have a go at, please get in touch with Richard Abel (Chair) or Grahame Senior (President).

For more details, visit the website
www.fotch.co.uk

If you have any photos of FOTCH events as they occur, please send them to the Editor.



FOTCH CONTACTS

We would be pleased to hear from you!

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Ginger Promo

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