

The Friends of ST MARY'S CHURCH STEVENINGTON

Annual Review **2025**

Evolution of a Community Hub

Since the official opening of our new link building in March 2025 trustees have been hard at work, supporting the PCC to enhance the building; ensuring that it serves the whole community, meets its charitable purposes and builds a sustainable future.

Many positive steps have been taken in 2025!

We continue to wrestle with the balance between improving the fabric of this beautiful Victorian building and fulfilling its original purpose, set in 1897. Stevington is unusual in having two buildings currently relying on the financial support of the Church of England. The Friends charity supports a space in which to reduce isolation, improve social cohesion and



promote healthy community life – but we are not a religious organisation. Many of our independent village organisations find a home in this building, notably the Community Shop and café with its 31-year history of service. The building provides a cohesive space for the fabric of community life that is so much under threat today. If we want this amenity to survive, we need to stimulate debate locally about how this is best achieved.

As always, if you value what the Church Room Community Hub represents, we need your support. To support us by joining as a member, renewing your membership, donating money, offering your time and skills, or attending our events the official contact is fosmteam@gmail.com. We are a dynamic, welcoming, inclusive organisation and whatever skills you bring we will always be pleased.

The successes of 2025 and challenges for 2026 are listed below.

Fostering creativity – Stevington Arts and Crafts Group



can change displays easily to generate much needed fundraising.

We are delighted to show the new gallery space, supporting a new Stevington Arts and Crafts group as well as the Children's Craft group. The modular hanging rails mean that we



If you would like to get involved, attend the bi-monthly workshops or support the gallery in any way do get in touch.

For all the community - Youth Engagement



In August 2025 a Rural Youth Council began, with a games and pizza night. Feedback from local young people suggests they value safe welcoming spaces and opportunities to socialise – but they want more. They explained how the room could become a more welcoming space for them. Older teens are looking for opportunities for part-time work and skill building as well as socialising.

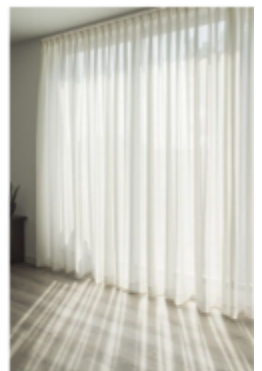
The Friends have worked with students from

Bedford College, this time gaining insights from the interior, product design and foundation art courses. Their enthusiasm is valuable in stimulating ideas of how the building might evolve.



The start of my Designs

Keeping the original features using long sheer curtains to make the roof feel taller and cozier. The dark wood and neutral tones work well together



The beating heart of our community – Community events, talks and groups

It has been a busy year with regular monthly events such as Coffee and Croissants remaining popular and providing a welcome way to catch up with friends old and new. Our local councillor described this venue and event as a 'hidden gem' in his ward newsletter as he finds it useful to catch up with residents on issues that concern them. Many independent groups met to sing, talk and learn. The year ended with the return of Christmas wreath making and the Stevington Christmas Concert which had last been arranged in 2019. Stevington showcased its amazing musical talent, dramatic and literary performances, its sense of humour and some legendary wassailing.



John Aphthorp Charity grant

We are delighted FOSMS has been awarded a grant from The John Aphthorp Charity to improve the windows and thermal efficiency of the building. Trustees work closely with the PCC to improve the building. Despite a delay, in which the Certificate of Lawful development was refused by Bedford Borough Council planning department, work should begin in 2026 as long as a Full Planning Application to repair the windows is allowed.



*The John Aphthorp
Charity*

Charity Number: 1100472

*Helping The Young, The Old, The Disabled
And The General Community
In Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire.*



Summary of Accounts – as at 31st December 2025

Receipts 2025

Membership Subscriptions	£ 795
Donations	£ 1,967
Fund Raising (net)	£ 2,651
Grants Received	£ 19,700
Account Adjustment	£ 100

Total Receipts £ 25,213

Expenses 2025

Church Room Project (Windows)	£ 19,400
Community Hub	£ 4,185
Link Building	£ 11,192
Grant Expenditure: Community Hub	
	£ 1,101
Insurance	£ 223

Total Expenses £ 36,101

Deficit 2025	£(10,888)
Surplus Brought Forward	<u>£ 16,609</u>
Balance of Funds Carried Forward	<u>£ 5,721</u>
Comprised of:	
Cash	£ 1,586
Bank	<u>£ 4,135</u>
	<u>£ 5,721</u>

These figures are still subject to an External Review



For more information, if you would like to get involved as a supporter or a trustee, or you have suggestions for improvements or initiatives in the Community Hub, please contact The Friends via fosmteam@gmail.com.

Remember to pay your 2026 subscription and or complete the direct debit form. Your funding is very valuable to us and appreciated.

Donations:



THE FRIENDS OF ST MARY'S CHURCH STEVINGTON

Registered Charity Number: 1139161

Trustees 2025:

Fiona Muir-Howie (Secretary)
Rev Jacqueline Curtis (ex-Officio)
Jane O'Connor (Resigned Jun 25)

John Strutt (Compliance, Audiovisuals)
Nataliia Pavliuk (Treasurer)
Penny Hattam (Arts & Craft Group)

Richard Taylor (Resigned Nov 25)
Tricia Lennie (Chair)

Annual review leaflet design, layout and editing by Keith Parkinson