



Chairman's Report for period April 2024 to March 2025.

I was appointed chairman at the last AGM taking over from Jeremy Cooper who had served his three years. He had just announced the tremendous achievement of getting £200,000 in funds for FOSM, to be invested in St Mildred's church.

During Jeremy's chairmanship FOSM held three concerts and a garden party. In April we hosted Rosanna Rolton, a British/Dutch harpist, in May the Bukolika piano trio, and in September the Kate Daniels jazz sextet. In total the three events were attended by 220 people and raised £1,962. The annual garden party for members was in August.

I joined at a time when the church was about to be closed for a prolonged period of six months whilst the flooring was replaced and underfloor heating added. This proved to be a bit of a blockage for events and so we decided not to hold any for the first half of the year. and we concentrated on administrative matters which were in need of addressing.

We simplified our domain name to MYFOSM.ORG, although we have still kept our old domain name of 'www.friendofstmildredstenterden.com' as many things are still registered to that. We also created email addresses for each of the main activities of the organisation. For instance, instead of using my personal email address for correspondence we created 'chair@myfosm.org'. This means that all correspondence is in one place theoretically and will transfer to the next holder of the office whenever that may be.

This also coincided with the opportunity to revisit the website and a small team of the committee set about redesigning and building it. We were ably guided by Brian Guest who undertook most of the technical changes. Brian has been our 'IT Rock' for which we are hugely grateful.

Our annual garden party took place on 10th August in the grounds of the vicarage of St Mildred's thanks to Carol and Lindsay Hammond. This was a really successful afternoon with lovely weather. This is a great opportunity to get together and meet our friends and socialise.

During the year FOSM has helped the church pay for two urgent roof repairs totalling about £10,000 and committed over £50,000 towards the new lighting project which hopefully will take place early next year. This seed funding has enabled the Parochial Church Council (PCC) to generate significantly more money from other sources and we are looking forward seeing the results. This will enable visitors to see the building and its architecture better and help improve its value to the community.

We know there are other projects in the pipeline which will need our assistance, so the aim for 2025/26 will be to raise funds and increase our membership base.

Although not taking place within the reporting period of this AGM, I must mention our first public event of the new year which was held on the 2nd of October 2025 as part of the celebration week for the reopening of the church. It was a piano recital by Dame Jane Whiteley who is one of our members and a skilled concert pianist. We were enthralled by her skill as she performed works by Mozart, Brahms, Schubert and Chopin. The concert managed to raise just a little over £700 which we agreed would be dedicated to the new lighting project.

Our 2025/6 targets are to:

1. hold four or five events, one of which will be the garden party, and one of which will be aimed at a younger audience.
2. Raise over £5,000 in a shorter 'year'. Our target for a full year will be £10,000.
3. Increase FOSM membership by 10%
4. We will also improve our communication through more information on the web; increased articles in the local media and greater use of MailChimp without overwhelming the membership.

I see the job we have as FOSM as not to set strategies for the use of the building but to do the best we can to help the PCC keep the building and its assets in serviceable condition. It is an essential job that many people will never notice. For most, buildings such as this just carry on and 'exist'. They don't notice how much time and effort goes into keeping them relevant and functioning. Like the proverbial swan, St Mildred's looks solid and graceful in it's setting. From a distance one doesn't see the frantic paddling going on out of sight keeping going.

It is always a challenge to join an established working organisation as a new leader. I am tremendously grateful for the support and encouragement from my colleagues on the committee and those people who give their help in other ways. We work closely with the Transformation Group and the PCC and of course the clergy, Lindsay, Jeanette and Andrew. Most importantly I want to thank you, our members and friends. We all have a shared objective relating to the building, to see it thrive into the future. Without all of you we would not be able to help in the way we do.

Lastly I particularly want to thank Jeremy Cooper for his three years as Chairman, Malcolm Kneller for his work as Treasurer, and Roger Graham and Jane Johnson for their help with IT and on the Committee. Thank you all.

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