# Chairman‘s Report for period April 2025 to March 2026.

1. I was appointed chairman at the 2024 AGM and it is my pleasure to be presenting this annual report to you. It is the twelfth for The Friends of St Mildreds, Tenterden (FOSM) and my second as Chairman.

2. The building was closed at the start of the reporting period and remained so untiI around August. During the closure we did not hold any events. We did however spend much time developing a new-look website and new email and website domain. We moved to www.myfosm.org which enabled us to establish a series of role-based email addresses rather than relying on personal ones. This is theoretically better for transferring roles as individuals move on and stand down.

3. We set up a small team to take this forward supported and guided by the ever-patient Brian Guest who undertook most of the technical changes. Brian has been able to guide Babsi, one of our Committee, to take on some of the website work as it is quite an onerous task.

4. I have also spent much time learning how to use MailChimp, the on-line email marketing system. This has enabled me to send out regular communications announcing events and keeping everyone on our circulation list informed of our activities. Similarly, I have tried to get a regular article about FOSM into the Parish News either announcing a new event or providing a review of a recent one. Babsi has been most helpful with the reviews and has taken a coordinating role in event management for us. We are very grateful to the various editors of the Parish News for their help and support.

5. Our annual garden party took place on 16th August 2025 in the grounds of the vicarage of St Mildred’s thanks to Carol and Lindsay Hammond. This was a successful afternoon with lovely weather and over 70 attending. This is a great opportunity to get together and meet our members and guests for the social event of the year. It also raises money thanks to individual donations and the raffle. We had many small prizes donated by individuals as well as large items from the Kent & East Sussex Railway (KESR), Tesco and Chapel Down. Thank you all for your support.

6. Our commitment to provide £50,000 towards the new lighting project enabled the Parochial Church Council (PCC) to generate sufficient funds to carry out the work early in 2026. This will enable visitors to see the building and its architecture better and help improve its value to the community. It has helped us improve lighting for our events giving a variety of lighting options depending upon the type of event.

7. Knowing that there are other projects in the pipeline which will need our assistance, the aim for 2025/26 was to raise funds and increase our membership base.

8. We held three music events in this reporting period.

   a. On 2nd of October 2025, was part of the celebration week for the reopening of the church after the completion of the flooring and heating project. Dame Jane Whiteley who is one of our members and a skilled concert pianist gave us a wonderful piano recital. 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.

   b. On 8th November 2025 we had Kelly Bourne and her rock band - the KB5 Collective – perform. The band is local to Tenterden and one of the band members is part of St Mildreds regular

congregation. This was our first foray into Rock and it tested the acoustics of the church to the limit. We were lucky that the church roof had been raised back in the 16th century, because we certainly got close to doing it again that night.

c. Our last event of the period was on 21st March 2026. Our old friend Benoit Viellefon & The Hot Club gave us an evening of jazz and music from 1920's to 60's. As in the past the audience really enjoyed themselves. We also took the opportunity to try out a mixed seating arrangement with some café style tables dotted around the edges with the majority theatre mode. It seemed to work well and now we regularly put a handful of tables out.

9. Our 2025/6 targets were to:

a. hold four or five events, one of which will be the garden party, and one of which will be aimed at a younger audience:
We held four in the end. We certainly saw a different demographic for the Rock Concert and we had a good mix of ages for Benoit. My view is that we achieved the objective but we still have more to do. What is important is that we achieve a younger audience without losing our core.

b. Raise over £5,000 in a shorter 'year'. Our target for a full year will be £10,000.
The Treasurer's Report will no doubt give more details but net income from our four events was in the region of £3,400 excluding donations. Overall however our total income was about £16,500 and we spent less than £9,000 (of which £5,000 was given to the PCC for repairs).

c. Increase FOSM membership by 10%:
Membership has grown over the year from 130 in April 2025 to 147 at the end of March 2026. An increase of 13%. This was good news because Members are our core support and it shows that more people are willing to help maintain this iconic and important building for Tenterden. I hope we can continue to grow members this year.

d. 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 sent out 7 MailChimp broadcast emails, 5 articles for the Parish News and 1 for the Tenterden Directory. I set up a new FOSM Facebook page which has been useful although we have not yet got into the habit of posting regularly. If you use social media then please try and locate it – we need more followers. We also have a linked Instagram account.

10. And what did we do with your money? Because of the church closure there was not much maintenance work done. However, we did fund some repairs to the stone on top of the North Aisle at the west end (tower end). In addition, pigeons got into the Tower through a damaged top door and left a horrible mess which had to be cleared. Lastly some coping stones forming the border of the churchyard from the Woolpack up to the church path were reset and some of the coping on our border with Church Road was replaced / repaired or reset.

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11. The targets for next year remain similar to 2025/6:

a. Hold at least six events, one of which will be the garden party, and one of which will be aimed at a younger audience.
b. Raise over £10,000 surplus from events.
c. Increase FOSM membership by 10%.
d. Develop a process for legacy giving.
e. Support the PCC on the lighting project; promote the need for improved toilet facilities; develop a plan for repairs to the North Aisle roof in five years’ time.

12. 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. Brian Guest has, as usual, been a tremendous help to us for which we are hugely grateful. We work closely with the Transformation Group and the PCC and of course the clergy, Lindsay, Jeanette and the team. I am very grateful for the support given to us by Caroline and Anne who coordinate the use of the church and the church hall.

13. 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. So, thank you for your support and if you have any suggestions for events or other ways of raising money then please let me know.

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