

# CENTREPIECE

June—July 2026

Free but donations are helpful



By Paul Milgate-Searrott

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## St Mary's Arts Festival

Mayor Making

St George's Day Parade

One World Update—Introducing Mercy Ships

Your church needs you

Anzac Day



The Collegiate  
Church of

*Saint ⊕ Mary*  
in Stafford

# Stafford Churches

Saint Chad : Collegiate Church of Saint Mary : Saint Leonard

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Email: parishoffice@stmarysstafford.org.uk

For Baptisms and Weddings:  
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Monday 11am—3pm  
Tuesday 11am—3pm  
Wednesday 11am—3pm  
Thursday 11am—3pm  
Friday 11am—4pm

## SERVICES IN STAFFORD CHURCHES

Usual weekly services

The three Parishes Eucharist on Sundays

8.30am at Saint Chads

10.00am at Saint Mary's

*Tuesdays at noon in St Mary's - suspended for the time being*

Wednesdays at 11.00am in St Chad's

Fridays at noon in St Chad's

**First Sunday of the month at 10.00: a service at Saint Leonard's, Marston**

There is a weekly newsheet sent out by email. If you are not receiving this and would like to, please contact the Parish Office.



## From the Editors

In this edition we have a few photos of the many civic services that St Mary's is so good at. Anzac Day, Mayor Making ceremony, St George's Day. We don't have room to do it justice, but hope to give you a flavour of what it was like.

We have a busy time coming up with St Mary's summer Arts Festival. A wide variety of events including music of different genres, art exhibitions, workshops, poetry.... Something for everyone so we hope you'll come along and enjoy it. On the back cover of this magazine is a QR code, scan this and it will take you to the festival website for more info or to buy tickets.

*If you have something interesting to share with us —please do.  
It's always nice to hear from different people.*

**Steve and Dee Turner**

[steveanddeeturner@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:steveanddeeturner@yahoo.co.uk)

## From The Musing Ministers

### **‘March winds and April showers bring forth May flowers’,**

Well that's how the old saying goes, but I think that this year it seems to have been rather overturned with the showers in March, the extremely strong gales in April and a rather 'iffy' May. But despite all that the May flowers still bloom and I, as ever, give thanks that I live in a countryside which is so beautiful at this time of year, no matter what 'climate change' throws at it. The lanes and verges are lined with the foamy blossom of cow parsley and the hawthorn hedges are filled with 'May' blossom with it's evocative smell of spring. Couple this with bluebells in the grass and woodland, how lucky we are to live in such a verdant and temperate land.

We at St Mary's must congratulate ourselves that we have this month been a year without the benefit of a Rector of Stafford to lead us forward as the propagators of the Gospel of Christ in the town of Stafford, following the retirement of Fr Richard at the end of May last year. It is to the credit of the many talented and committed people of our parishes that everything has continued in much the same way as it did and the cycle of the church's year has been celebrated correctly and with style

Not only the week by week pattern of services, but also the phenomenal success of Christmas Tree and Summer Arts festivals which do so much to contribute to the life of our county town, along with the civic responsibility to provide worship for the Crown Court, the High Sheriff and for the installation of the new mayor of the Borough.

All these things have been achieved as we come to the end of the Easter season and look forward to the long, liturgically green season that will take us inexorably to Advent and Christmas.

So, as the seasons change, so do the events in our lives and the people with whom we interact in order to spread our mission to the spread of the gospel. The Diocese of Lichfield is now beginning to prepare itself for the nomination and appointment of our next bishop, who will be the 100th Bishop of Lichfield in succession to St Chad. Quite a lot to live up to one would imagine.

If it has taken us twelve months to get this far in the search for our next Rector we can only wonder just how long it will take to find someone who would like to take up the cross of St Chad and lead us into the heart of this century. In the meantime, we must declare our support for Sarah, Bishop of Shrewsbury as she takes on the role of Acting Bishop of Lichfield from the September retirement date of Bishop Michael. There will undoubtedly be many occasions to wish Bishop Michael and Julia well in their retirement from Lichfield, but we will be able to welcome him to join us at St Mary's as he will be present at our celebration of that great Staffordian, Izaak Walton, at 10.00 am on Sunday 9th August. We well remember when Bishop Michael was with us for the Easter triduum in 2025 and how wonderfully affirmed we felt after his time with us.

In the meantime though, we will carry on with our mission to bring the gospel to the people of our three parishes, beginning with a presentation of the Bible Society 'Romans' Course in the weeks after Trinity in St Mary's, at 2pm on Saturday afternoons (Festival performances permitting). A good-sized group of people have enjoyed and gained a lot from the Bible Course that we ran in the early Spring and I think this will be similarly stimulating. Anyone can join in and you don't need to have done the Bible Course to benefit from 'Romans'. I am very much looking forward to co-ordinating it at St Mary's. Please do ask me any questions you may have.

Bishop Tom Wright in his translation of Paul's letter to the Romans has Paul writing,

"I am under obligation to barbarians as well as to Greeks, you see; both the wise and the foolish. That's why I am eager to announce the good news to you in Rome. I am not ashamed of the good news; it's God's power bringing salvation to everyone who believes – to the Jew first, and also, equally, to the

Greek. This is because God's covenant justice is unveiled in it, from unfaithfulness to faithfulness. As it says in the Bible, 'the just shall live by faith'".

Well, I'm not sure about Barbarians and Greeks, but you never know in these enlightened times!

Blessings and best wishes to you all.  
Philip Taylor



## *Friends of Saint Mary's*



### **Support for St Mary's Festival**

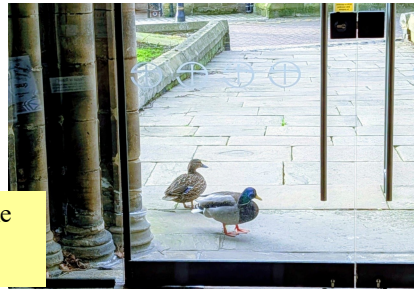
Once again the Friends of St Mary's are pleased to be able to support St Mary's by sponsoring the summer Arts Festival, in particular the Jackie Oates concert.

We have given £500 towards the costs of putting on the festival as it is an important outreach project bringing a wide variety of people into the church and introducing some people to St Mary's for the first time.



Jackie Oates, who grew up in Stafford, will be performing traditional and contemporary folk songs inspired by the festival theme, peace, and accompanying herself on fiddle and keyboard.

This year she is performing on the opening night of the festival, Saturday June 20 at 7pm. along with Stafford's own world music group Fish from Oblivion.  
Tickets £15.



Paul spotted these two visitors waiting to come in to church!

# Building for Peace at St Mary's Arts Festival 2026

*St Mary's Festival returns this summer with two weeks  
of concerts, creativity, worship and community*

From Saturday 20 June to Sunday 5 July, St Mary's Church will once again host our annual summer festival of music, poetry, conversation and worship. Now in its fourth year, the festival has become a valued part of Stafford's cultural calendar, drawing performers, audiences and our congregation into one shared celebration. This year's theme is both timely and enduring: Building for Peace.

“May your feet be shod with the gospel of peace.”

This verse from Ephesians 6:15 appears in the beautiful stained glass window by David Gleeson in our church, which also features on the cover of this year's brochure.

Peace is something many of us long for, yet it rarely arrives by accident. It must be built patiently through imagination, generosity, courage and care. Throughout this year's festival, music, art, words and worship will explore the many ways peace may be sought, sustained and shared.

Across the fortnight, the glorious spaces of St Mary's will be alive with creativity. A bustling concert hall by night, an art gallery by day, a workshop studio in the morning, an intimate recital space at lunchtime. Some of our events will invite quiet reflection, while others will fill the building with energy and sound.

The opening weekend begins with Jackie Oates joined by festival favourites Fish from Oblivion. Later evenings bring the adventurous folk spirit of Filkin's Drift and their ensemble, the exuberant voices of All Woman Choir & She, and the striking Da Pacem, where jazz improvisation meets early sacred music.

Classical music also has a strong presence throughout the programme. The acclaimed English Wind Consort returns, while Mercia Baroque offers an afternoon of music by Bach, Telemann and Handel. Free daytime recitals remain one of the festival's great pleasures, with performances ranging from piano and harp to chamber ensembles, organ duets, conservatoire singers and intimate voice-and-lute music.

Words and music will meet in An Act of Peace, an evening of poetry and song, while younger voices take the stage in a family concert from St Mary's Children's Choir. The festival closes in celebratory style with the return of Foden's Band, one of the finest brass bands in the country.

There are many ways for you to take part in the festival as more than just an audience member. Workshops in drawing, embroidery and poetry sit alongside the ever-popular Choral Workshop.

We are also delighted to host our Building Peace Day, with presentations and discussions including representatives from Concordis International, who were nominated for this year's Nobel Peace Prize. The morning will feature dialogue between family mediators and international peace-builders, exploring shared concerns and practice, while the afternoon will be open to anyone from church or community with an interest in peace-building.

Visual art continues to play an important role in the festival. Exhibitions this year will include photography, community artwork and Lisa Henderson's Landscapes of my Mind, a series of collage prints responding to peace in both real and imagined landscapes. We are also launching a new poetry competition, inviting writers from around the country to submit original poems responding to the festival theme.

Worship remains at the heart of the festival. Through Festival Eucharists, Choral Evensong and the Closing Festival Eucharist, we are reminded that peace is not only pursued in the world around us, but also through prayer and worship.

Many of our daytime events are free, supported by audience donations, while most of the evening concerts and workshops are ticketed. Full details of concerts, workshops and ticket prices can be found at [www.stmarysfestival.info](http://www.stmarysfestival.info) Our website will help you explore the programme in more detail and discover which events might appeal to you. We are always happy to answer enquiries and would be delighted to welcome your participation.

We hope you will join us this summer as St Mary's becomes, once again, a place where music fills the air, creativity is celebrated, and together we explore what it means to build peace in our lives, our communities and our world.

***The St Mary's Arts Festival Team***





A Report from  
**St Mary's One World Group**  
**Introducing Mercy Ships**

For our new overseas charity St. Mary's PCC has agreed that we support **Mercy Ships**

**What are Mercy Ships?**

Mercy Ships is a faith-based international organisation with a headquarters in UK. There are two hospital ships: *Africa Mercy* and *Global Mercy*; these ships are sent to some of the poorest countries in the world, delivering vital, free healthcare to people in desperate need.



Above: The Global Mercy and the Africa Mercy.

**Where do the ships operate?**

They are currently based in sub-Saharan Africa, with *Africa Mercy* stationed in Madagascar and *Global Mercy* in Sierra Leona.

**How can Mercy Ships help?**

For those people living in developing countries where healthcare infrastructure is limited or non-existent, finding safe affordable healthcare is almost impossible. Many of these people live within 100 miles of a coast — which is why Mercy Ships uses modern hospital ships to bring world-class volunteer medical professionals directly to the places they're needed most.

## How does Mercy Ships operate?

Mercy Ships operates a five-year partnership with the country it's supporting. Relationships are built with the national government, so that the particular needs of that country are met. Mercy Ships isn't limited to addressing immediate health needs but also helps to provide education and training for healthcare professionals to better care for their own communities.

## How can we help?

Saint Mary's One World Group is proposing that we support Mercy ships for the next couple of years. During that time any money we raise will be sent to the charity so that we can help them in their drive to provide free and safe surgery for a range of conditions: cleft palate surgery, eye surgery and the removal of tumours, to name but a few.

## Like to know more?

Over the coming months, look out for a new display in St Mary's Church and further reports in Centrepiece magazine. To find out more now look up the Mercy Ships website [www.mercyships.org.uk](http://www.mercyships.org.uk)



**THE ROMANS COURSE**

*An in-depth journey through St Paul's letter to the Romans by looking at 10 key themes using the metaphor of a mountain climb.*

**First Session: Saturday 6th June**  
**2.00pm at St Mary's**

*Please contact Philip Taylor for any questions.*



**Summer Craft Fair at St Chad's**  
**Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> July**  
**10am-4pm**

To book a stall contact the Parish Office  
07593 928837  
[parishoffice@stmarysstafford.org.uk](mailto:parishoffice@stmarysstafford.org.uk)

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# **Your Church needs you now – every voice matters**

## **Inspiring 18-25s to stand for election to General Synod**

The Church is at a crucial moment in our life in so many ways:, there is, despite the debate over figures, an undoubted generational shift in attitudes towards the Bible and the church and locally, we are in the early stages of realising our vision: Seeking the Kingdom. We are at a moment of so much challenge and opportunity. We need to grow our church, our ministry and our financial resources to fulfil our vision.

We need all hands on deck!

A key part of our vision is to grow a younger church and to see younger people taking responsibility for our governance.. It is obvious that young people should be encouraged to take an active role in every part of our church life. There are so many issues of crucial importance for our life, witness and worship that need fresh and new perspectives, rooted as always in the life of the church, our Christian beliefs and faith revealed in scripture and our worship together week by week.

As well as encouraging participation in parishes, in ministry and in chaplaincies, our church is governed by elected Synods. The General Synod is our elected national assembly, essential for shaping its direction and governance. Elections occur every five years, with the next elections between August and October this year.

Would you consider standing for election to General Synod?

General Synod considers and approves legislation for the entire Church of England, develops new forms of worship, discusses important national and international issues, and sets the annual budget for national activities. It has legislative authority – it is one of the few bodies in England authorised to make national laws through Measures that are approved by Parliament and the Monarch.

Candidates for the Synod are driven by their commitment to mission, governance, and pastoral care, aiming to influence policies on key theological and social matters, including social justice and environmental issues.

Drawn from among people across our worshipping communities and voted for by members local Deanery Synods, being a General Synod member means being ready to speak in debates, with clear sight about their views and the views we represent. This calls for determination, strong communication and negotiation skills and strength of character and conviction.

To be elected, candidates will need to plan, network and build support. Involvement in parish, deanery and diocesan activities helps establish a reputation that can lead to endorsements and votes.

Candidates should create a clear manifesto and set out their stall to resonate with potential electors, engage with voters, and build trust.

Synod is not all work. Among the 450 members lasting friendships develop, bringing sharing and support for each other's ministry.

Are you called to serve on General Synod? Are you ready for the challenge? Do you know someone who could represent our diocese? Ultimately, standing for General Synod is a call to serve the Church in shaping its mission and governance for today's world.

*Tug Wilson has represented the Lichfield diocese at General Synod for twenty-one years and is active both locally and nationally in supporting the Church's mission and ministry.*

## Key dates for the 2026 General Synod election:

14 July	Current General Synod dissolves;
14 August	Nominations for New Synod open;
7 September	Nominations close;
21 September	Voting opens
13 October	Voting deadline
14-16 October	Voting Count
16-18 November	new General Synod meets



### **Dates for next QUIET MONDAYS at Shallowford House**

**8 June, 13 July, 17 August, 14 September  
10.00 am to 3.30 pm**

a gentle day of devotion, quiet time and worship

£28 including lunch  
To book call 01785 760233

*Further information about these Quiet Days from Sheila Young*

# Mayor Making 2026

**Stafford welcomed its new Mayor on 16 May with a ceremony at Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, followed by a service at St Mary's Church and a parade through the town centre.**

Councillor Mark Winnington took office after the council's annual meeting, commonly known as 'Mayor Making'.

Hundreds of people lined the streets as servicemen and women, together with local organisations, celebrated Councillor Mark Winnington's inauguration as Mayor of Stafford Borough.

The march through the town included the Stafford-based Tactical Supply Wing (TSW) of the RAF, the local branch of the Royal British Legion, Stafford Burgesses Guild, Stafford and Rugeley Sea Cadets, 395 Stafford (Sqn) RAF Cadets, 5th Stafford Boys Brigade and Girls Association, Girlguiding Stafford – along with other organisations.



Councillor Winnington said it was an 'honour' to have been chosen as the borough's 'first citizen' – a role that dates back more than 400 years. His wife, Rosie, is Mayoress.

He will be raising funds during his Civic year for Katharine House Hospice and Staffordshire Air Ambulance.

Councillor Winnington was first elected to the borough council in 2003 and

currently represents the Gnosall and Woodseaves Ward on the local authority. He has also served as a Staffordshire County Councillor and is a member of Ranton Parish Council.

He said: “This is a great honour and I thank everyone for putting their faith in me. I am looking forward to representing the borough and promoting it as a great place to live and work.

“I was born here, I went to school here, and I live and work here – and that



makes me so proud to now be the ‘first citizen’ of an area I really cherish. It will be an incredible 12 months in office and I hope to raise the profile of this borough while raising money for my chosen charities.”

Councillor Frank James was chosen as the Deputy Mayor. He represents the borough ward of Holmcroft and previously served as Mayor in 2024/25.



## Morning Prayer

Morning Prayer is normally held each day Monday to Friday online and everyone is welcome to join in.

**BUT there will be no Morning Prayer during June.**

If you would like to join in when it resumes in July please contact  
Rev. Pam Merriott ([pamamerriott@gmail.com](mailto:pamamerriott@gmail.com)) or  
Ruth Duffy ([r.m.duffy@me.com](mailto:r.m.duffy@me.com))

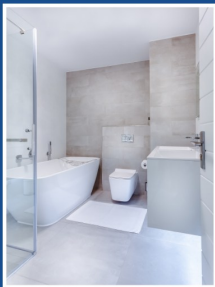
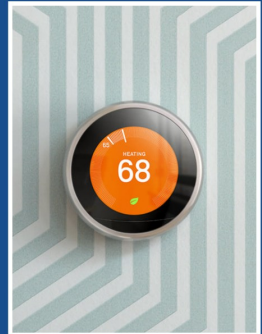
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# Saturday Morning Coffee Concerts at St Mary's



July 4th                      Tristram Cooke (alto),  
Peter Martin (lute)

Juy 25th                     Margaret Outen (organ)

**All concerts begin at 11:00am**

Doors open 10:30am when tea and coffee will be available.  
All are welcome. Admission free but donations very welcome!



**Tuesday 23 June 2026**

**NOTE Change of venue - Beaconside Conference Centre.**

**Cartoons and Contraptions! The wonderful world of W Heath Robinson**  
**Lecturer Barry Venning**

*For over a century Heath Robinson has been famous for drawing rickety devices that carry out the simplest of tasks, like potato peeling and pancake making etc..*

**Tuesday 21 July 2026**

**The Enigma of Edward Elgar**  
**Lecturer Christopher Newlands**

*One of our greatest composers, Edward Elgar was an extraordinary man. Completely self-taught, evidence of the strong determination behind this unique genius.*

**Venue is Stafford Gatehouse Theatre at 1.45pm.**

Membership for the year starting on April 1st costs just £60 for 10 lectures.  
Guest attendance fee is £10

**For more information please see our website: [www.theartsocietystafford.org.uk](http://www.theartsocietystafford.org.uk)**

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# St George's Day Parade

The annual Stafford St George's Day Parade is an event organized by the Stafford District Scouts, a traditional Scout parade through Stafford town centre followed by a service at St Mary's Church,

Squirrels, Beavers, Cubs, Scouts, and Explorers from the many different groups across the district marched through the town centre to St Mary's Church for a rather special service in front of the then Mayor, Cllr Jenny Baron.



Photo :Paul Milgate-Scarrott

Each year one group takes on the organisation of the service and this year it was the turn of 12th Stafford Scouts.

Lee Smith, from 12th Stafford Scouts said “We did perform a comical skit retelling the story of

St George and the dragon and raised the roof with our members singing very loudly about going on a dragon hunt!”

Many certificates were presented that day including one to Doreen Smith. She was presented “The Silver Wolf “ this is the highest award in scouting for distinguished service. Doreen is 83 and up until earlier this year ran the largest scout group in the county with over 300 members attending weekly . She still continues as a cub leader.

Doreen is seen here with commissioner for Scouts Richard Williams, former Mayor Cllr Jenny Barron and Cllr Ray Barron.



Photo by Paul Milgate-Scarrott

*R N Clarke*

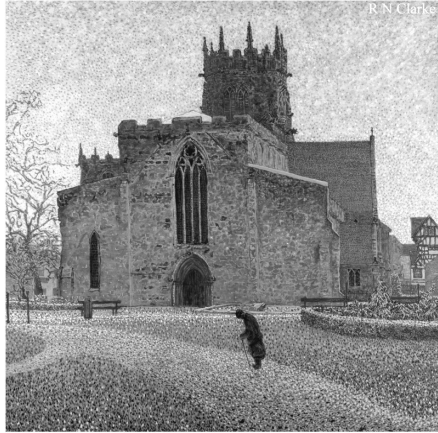
Paintings, drawings and  
watercolours of  
R N Clarke

Gallery address

R N Clarke Fine Art  
Suite No1, St Mary's Mews,  
St Mary's Place,  
Stafford ST16 2AP

The Gallery is **Open by Appointment**  
please telephone 07874 708372  
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richard.n.clarke@outlook.com

The Gallery also holds occasional  
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# Mark in a Landscape

R N Clarke

This Summer sixteen of my oil paintings based on the Gospel of St Mark will be on display in St Mary's.

The series of landscape paintings were prompted by my reading of St Mark's Gospel. Each painting is my personal response based around an event or incident from this Gospel, and each event or subject is set in a particular landscape to be found in and around Sherbrook Valley on Cannock Chase. It's a landscape of beauty and intimacy, heathland and trees, and also a landscape with recent history where reference to 20<sup>th</sup> Century World Wars is evident. It's an environment where you can reflect, stir up and develop ideas.

Changing weather and time of day, changing colour dynamic and colour symbolism, changing drama, different moods, different aspects, divine perspective and purpose were aspects that came to interest me in the making of this painting series.

How deep is the cry of the Baptist, from where does it come? Divine presence, support and testing of vocation, healing and inclusion, mental well-being, a blind leap of faith, innocence, loving versus moralising, divine agony, worldly power and human nature, life derived from Christ's moment of dying, and then holy joy: all these concerns raised questions or lodged in my thoughts.

This is work that I hope sits within the centuries-old tradition of Christian painting. Each painting the same size, 10" x 12", as if from the pages of a Christian Celtic book. Small, personal, easy to connect with, I made these oil paintings employing drawing, variety of mark and ornamentation, glazing, colour and tone, with the intention of pointing toward spiritual meaning and significance. Perhaps these paintings could be considered a part of living contemporary Christian culture.

The exhibition, *Mark in a Landscape*, can be seen at St Mary's in Stafford from 22<sup>nd</sup> July to 20<sup>th</sup> September. I'm grateful to members of the congregation at St Mary's for their help and support. If you are able to get along to see the exhibition, I hope you will have an enjoyable and rewarding experience.

*Richard (the painter R N Clarke)*



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# ANZAC DAY

It was a beautiful sunny day, Sunday 26th April, for the ANZAC Day "Drumhead" Remembrance Service 2026 at Commonwealth War Cemetery Cannock Chase.

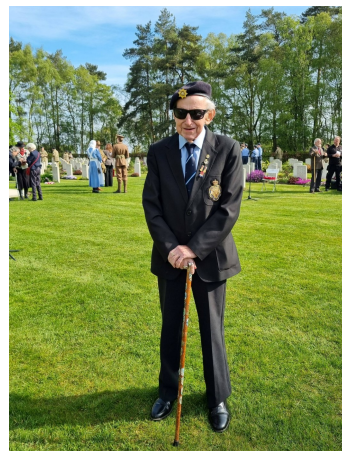
Ever wondered what ANZAC and Drumhead actually mean? Well ANZAC stands for Australia and New Zealand Army Corps, their soldiers were known as Anzacs. And Drumhead? A Drumhead service is a traditional, open-air military religious service conducted in the field. Historically, when troops were deployed or unable to attend a chapel, the regimental chaplain would stack the unit's drums, drape them with flags to create a makeshift altar, and conduct the service.

ANZAC Day remains one of the most important occasions in both Australia and New Zealand. It commemorates all Australian and New Zealand soldiers who served and died in all wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations.



During the first world war there was a large military camp on Cannock Chase which became the base for the New Zealand Rifle Brigade. There was also a prisoner-of-war hospital (with 1000 beds! Both the camp and the hospital used the Cannock Chase burial ground.

Cannock Chase War Cemetery contains 97 commonwealth burials from WW1, mostly New Zealanders.



# The Soup Kitchen



This beautiful 16th Century eating house offers the ideal place to meet your friends and is described in The Times as "Stafford's hidden gem". Visitors from all over the world regularly return and comment 'there is nowhere else that compares in atmosphere, traditional old-fashioned service and genuine warm welcome which is unique to Stafford's Soup Kitchen.

# Church Lane Antiques



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## CHURCH CONTACTS

### *St. Mary's*

Churchwardens.....Sue Savage.....  
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Bellringers Selwyn Jones..... 242116  
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### *St. Chad's*

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..... Carla Lewis

### *St. Leonard's*

Churchwarden .....Gail Wray .....01889 271176

### WEBSITES:



Website for StaffordChurches: [www.staffordchurches.uk](http://www.staffordchurches.uk)  
St Mary's Website: [www.stmarysstafford.org.uk](http://www.stmarysstafford.org.uk)  
St. Chad's Website: [www.stchadsstafford.co.uk](http://www.stchadsstafford.co.uk)  
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# SAINT MARY'S FESTIVAL

20 JUNE - 5 JULY 2026

MUSIC, ART & POETRY



## BUILDING FOR PEACE

Visit [www.stmarysfestival.info](http://www.stmarysfestival.info) for  
events & tickets or scan the code



St. Mary's Church, Stafford

### Contributions to Centrepiece:

*If you would like to advertise an event, comment on one you have attended or just share something interesting with us— then please do so.*

*Email us at: [steveanddeeturner@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:steveanddeeturner@yahoo.co.uk)*

*Deadline is about 10 days before the first Sunday of the month.*