

# St Matthnews

**The newsletter of St Matthew's Church, Oxford**

**July 2025**

**Great news! We welcome a new curate this summer.**



Bethan      Sean

**Dr Bethan Willis joins our current ministry team led by Revd Dr Jenni Williams.**

Bethan writes:

"I'm excited to be joining St Matthew's and St Luke's as the newest curate, and to work alongside Jenni, Jon, Mike, Rob and the whole church in serving the local parish.

I've lived with my family – husband Sean and children Huw, Ben, Edward and Alice – in Oxford for over a decade and we currently live in Marston. We've been very active members of St Clement's Church and have built up an incredible sense of community and family there. We now look forward to building new friendships and joining the community here over the coming years.

In my other job I lead The Oxford Pastorate, serving the graduate and research community in Oxford. I love helping those within the academic community engage their work with questions of life and faith. Before that I completed my PhD in theology, worked for various charities and the Diocese of Oxford, and have been involved in theological teaching and academic communities.

My spare time is mostly spent ferrying my children to their hobbies and clubs. But when I have a moment to myself I love reading, theatre, yoga, and heading off into the countryside. I'm currently trying to walk the Cotswold Way - it's taking a while but it's hugely enjoyable!

I'm really looking forward to meeting everyone here. See you soon!"

## **Your advice, please!**

We're wondering whether or not to carry on producing St Matthnews.

It's been going in its current format since September 2024, but it costs us quite a bit in time and money and if nobody wants it, why should we continue?

So please, if you have a moment, let us know what you think.

You can email me (John Price) at [john@pricejd.com](mailto:john@pricejd.com), or if you want to retain anonymity for any reason, just drop a note into the church letterbox.

## **Save the Date!**

**St Matthew's Day Garden Party**

**Sunday 21st September**

**2.30 - 4.30 pm**

**A great place to relax and meet your neighbours**

**Fun for all ages including Messy Church, games, stalls, teas, and with information and updates about our Refresh Project.**

**Look out for more information in next month's edition of St Matthnews.**

# WORKSPACE

**AN ALTERNATIVE SPACE  
TO WORK OR STUDY**

**FREE  
TEA &  
FILTER  
COFFEE**

**OTHER  
DRINKS  
AVAILABLE**



**MONDAYS  
2-5PM**

**PARISH CENTRE, ST  
MATTHEW'S CHURCH,  
63 MARLBOROUGH  
ROAD**

**Check out our  
socials for more  
information**



**DISCOVER**



# THE 24 MEN OF GRANDPONT AND COLD HARBOUR



Leslie Shepperd, member of the Boys Brigade in Grandpont, c. 1938 (image courtesy of Mike Harrison).



Oxford Police Constable Herbert Hacksley, 1938 (image courtesy of John Stobbs).



Ken Ayres and his wife Gladys, 1940 (image courtesy of Steve Ayres)



Kenneth Cole as a Prisoner of War, 1940.

As part of the commemorations of the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, a group of local volunteers is researching the lives of the 24 men whose names are on the memorial in St Matthew's Church. We carried out a similar project about ten years ago on the First World War memorial, called 'The 66 Men of Grandpont 1914-18', but between the wars St Matthew's parish expanded to include the newly built estate at the southern end of the Abingdon Road, and so this project is called 'The 24 Men of Grandpont and Cold Harbour 1939-45'.

We're also carrying out research into what Oxford and South Oxford were like before, during and after the War, to set the men's lives in context. This includes finding out about evacuees living in Grandpont and Cold Harbour, and what local women's roles were during wartime.

We've already written detailed biographies of almost all the men - you can read them via <https://southoxfordhistory.org.uk/24-men-of-grandpont-1939-45> - and we've been lucky enough to make contact with the descendants of quite a few of them. We've also gathered lots of information from primary sources including electoral registers and the 1939 register (similar to a census) to get an in-depth picture of what Oxford, and our area, were like in this period. It's been fascinating, and as well as giving an interesting insight into contemporary life, work and leisure, the men's stories are very moving. Their average age at death was less than 25 (and even lower - 21 - for those in the RAF) and they are buried and commemorated all over the world, from Oxford to Singapore, and from America to North Africa. Two members of the team, Frances and John Stobbs, recently visited the grave of one of our men, William Hedges, at Périers en Auge, northern France. Frances said: "It was a serene misty and sunny early morning and the grave is in a beautiful spot overlooking now peaceful countryside. And a cuckoo was calling. I felt extraordinarily moved."

Research is ongoing - not least into two more men who we think should be on the memorial but aren't - and plans are afoot for an exhibition in November and a documentary film thereafter.

Watch this space, or contact...

Liz Woolley

[liz@lizwoolley.co.uk](mailto:liz@lizwoolley.co.uk)



# YouShape

a year of discovery & deepening faith



## SIGN UP FOR SEPT '25!

YouShape is a faith community for 18–30s to meet monthly, share food, and explore life, purpose, and faith.

Over one year, you'll be apart of 9 meetups, a weekend away, and a 3-day pilgrimage – all led by young adults like yourselves.

SCAN ME!



Find us at **youshape.life**





## **Refresh Project Update**

***“Refresh” is the name we have given to the challenging project of bringing our 30-year-old church hall into the 21<sup>st</sup> century***

Thank you for the interest and comments in the emerging proposals for giving our building a Refresh. We are taking on board the comments received since our open meeting in May. We have been thinking about a Vision for the next five years, to transform our space, creating a welcoming environment that nurtures the mind, body, and spirit, for both our church congregation and into the wider community.

To achieve this Vision, we have four main aims:

### **1. A carbon friendly environment**

Our aim is to make the centre as eco-friendly as possible through investing in current green technologies and minimising wasted energy.

### **2. Modern facilities for events and activities**

The reimagined centre would include facilities to host a wide range of both professional and community events, including conferences, meetings, workshops, classes, drama groups, social gatherings and celebrations.

### **3. A space for young people**

We want to support young people and young adults by offering a fun, safe and welcoming environment.

### **4. Supporting the Community**

We will continue activities like our weekly Workspace Café, and the Community Lunch and Winter Night Shelter for the homeless, and develop programmes and support groups to ensure our centre becomes a source of hope and assistance for those in need.

***Join us on this exciting journey as we build a brighter future for our community!***

**Our Auction of Promises is on Friday November 21<sup>st</sup>!**



**Save it now! Friday, November 21st, 2025.**

This is going to be Fun, Fun, Fun!

Doors will open at 7.00pm for catalogue viewing, drinks and other light refreshments. The auction starts at 8.00pm.

Whether you're eager to bid on unique promises, enjoy the music and company of friends, or support our exciting Refresh appeal, this event will have something for everyone.

More details nearer the time, but for now, be sure to **Save the Date** and join us in making this event a resounding success. We can't wait to see you there!

Any questions? Contact Carolyn on [clloyddavies@msn.com](mailto:clloyddavies@msn.com).





## Church Information

**St Matthew's Church**  
**Marlborough Road, Oxford, OX1 4LW**  
**01865 798587**  
 office@stmatthewsoxford.org.uk  
 www.stmatthewsoxford.org.uk

<b>Sunday services</b>	<b>10.30 am and 6.00 pm</b>	
<b>Mondays</b>	<b>8.15 pm.</b>	<b>Meditation meeting</b>
<b>Tuesdays</b>	<b>6.45 pm:</b>	<b>Prayer meeting</b>
<b>Thursdays</b>	<b>11.30 am:</b>	<b>Community hot drinks</b>
	<b>12.00 noon</b>	<b>Community lunch</b>

<b>Vicar:</b>	<b>Jenni Williams</b>
<b>Associate Vicar</b>	<b>Jon Williams</b>
<b>Associate Minister</b>	<b>Mike Rayner</b>
<b>Curate:</b>	<b>Rob Rogers</b>
<b>Administrator:</b>	<b>Katharine Crouch</b>
<b>Church Warden:</b>	<b>Jackie Wilderspin</b>
<b>Church Warden:</b>	<b>Jane Jones</b>
<b>Parish Safeguarding Officer:</b>	<b>Nicky Rayner</b>
<b>Treasurer:</b>	<b>David Crouch</b>
<b>Stewardship:</b>	<b>Carolyn Lloyd-Davies</b>
<b>Pioneer Mission Worker:</b>	<b>Laura Evans</b>
<b>Deputy Warden</b>	<b>Peter Buchan-Symons</b>
<b>Deputy Warden</b>	<b>Margaret Price</b>

**St Matthnews** is the newsletter of St Matthew's Church, Oxford.

If you have any comments to make about this issue, we love to get feed-back.  
 If you have items you would like to include in the next issue, please send them to me.  
 (Our vicar, Jenni, reserves the right to decide whether or not we can accept matters for publication.)

**My contact details are:** John Price      john@pricejd.com

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