



ST MARY'S
STEBBING

✦ THE WAY FORWARD ✦

Issue #19
June 2026



Forward Momentum

BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR THE WAY FORWARD PROJECT

The National Lottery Heritage Fund Stages for Funding

First Round Bid

COMPLETE

Development Phase

COMPLETE

Second Round Bid

COMPLETE

Delivery Phase

CURRENT

November 2021

May 2022 - July 2023

August 2023

July 2024 - Dec 2027



Activity Update

Since reopening, St Mary's has continued to settle beautifully into its new role as both a restored church and a welcoming community space. Hot on the heels of our Easter Open Day and Take Note concert came a full programme of spring and early summer events, each showing a different way in which the building can now be used and enjoyed.



Our **Springtime Spectacular**, on Saturday 2nd May, was a wonderfully busy and cheerful day. With glorious sunshine, the church and car park field were full of families enjoying birds of prey, ice cream, stream dipping, archery, crafts, bell ringing, bake-off (which saw another young baker, 10 year old Flynn, taking first prize!), refreshments and plenty of opportunities to explore. It was lovely to see so many children making the most of the activities, while parents and visitors enjoyed coffee, cake and the chance to look around the newly restored building.

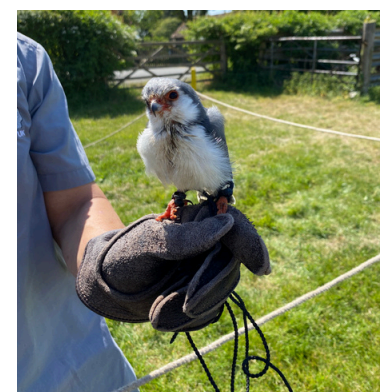
The event was another fantastic example of what can happen when our amazing volunteers come together. From setting up tables and welcoming



visitors to running activities and serving in the café, the day simply



would not have been possible without such an incredibly generous team effort.



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Activity Update /continued



Our **Games Night** returned too, bringing a relaxed evening of board games, conversation and friendly competition. Although quieter than some of our larger events, it created a lovely atmosphere and gave people the chance to enjoy St Mary's in a different way. We are continuing to experiment with timings and formats, including a daytime and family-friendly games event over the summer school holidays.



One of our most unusual mornings began in a somewhat wet and cold fashion (for June), when our ecologist, Richard Wren and moth enthusiast, Kate Smith led a fascinating **Moth Discovery** event. Special moth traps had been set overnight, and



visitors were able to see an amazing variety of moths up close, from beautifully coloured species to masters of camouflage. The event was a wonderful reminder that St Mary's is not only rich in built heritage, but also sits within a living landscape full of wildlife. It formed part of our wider environmental programme and helped visitors discover more about the biodiversity on our doorstep and linked perfectly with the national, "Love You Burial Ground" and "Count on Nature" week.



The previous evening we hosted our first ever **"Gin: A Story in Three Serves"**, a sociable and informative evening exploring the history of gin, different styles and the art of creating the perfect serve. Guests enjoyed live demonstrations by gin expert, Helen Murphy, a tasting challenge plus delicious canapés. There plenty of laughter along the way. The evening received excellent feedback and showed once again how flexible the restored space has become. Whether hosting concerts, talks, family activities, wildlife events or social evenings, St Mary's is now able to welcome people in many different ways.



Cornerstone Café has also continued to grow steadily since opening in April. Every Monday and Tuesday, the church is filled with the smell of fresh coffee and homemade cakes, and it has been especially encouraging to welcome visitors from beyond Stebbing as well as familiar local faces. The café is becoming a gentle but important part of the weekly rhythm of the building, offering a warm welcome in a very special setting.

With summer activities, Heritage Open Days and exciting community events ahead, St Mary's continues to thrive. To see what's coming next, visit www.wayforwardstebbing.org/Whats-On

