
ST. MARY THE VIRGIN AND HOLY TRINITY, COWES

DIOCESE OF PORTSMOUTH



FROM THE BISHOP OF PORTSMOUTH

The Rt. Revd Christopher Foster

The Isle of Wight represents a significant part of the Diocese of Portsmouth and as an island enjoys distinct advantages alongside significant challenges. It is without doubt a beautiful environment and for many offers a delightful way of life. Alongside this the Island faces challenges which the Church seeks to address through its community engagement, schools work, pastoral ministry and outreach. We believe an excellent priest can play a significant part in helping resolve these.

In the coming years the Church on the Island will need to find new ways of working and it will be essential for Clergy, Readers and other ministers to work more collaboratively with cluster and deanery colleagues. A process is underway to consider merging the two Island deaneries which will enable a whole Island approach to mission planning. Churches will need to become more involved with their communities seeking to proclaim the love of Christ in a rapidly changing world.

As a Diocese we are developing a framework of Ministry for Mission that strives to enable everyone to hear and experience the transforming power of the Gospel. We want to affirm that all baptised Christians have gifts and a vocation, that all ministry is collaborative, that we should work together as clergy and lay people across parish boundaries and with ecumenical partners. It is at the heart of our thinking that we are, or should be:

- *called for growth*
- *trained for growth*
- *structured for growth*
- *supported in growth.*

I hope to appoint a priest who will relish the challenges and opportunities presented by this post and who will be committed to working collaboratively. He or she will need to find the right balance of valuing the traditions of both Churches with the need of working together to develop a wider mission for the various communities they serve. In this step change the new parish priest will have my and our support in looking out to the community and cluster.

+Christopher

We hope you will feel that God is calling you to Cowes for the next stage of your Ministry. We are sheep in need of a shepherd who will continue to draw our two parishes together. We will offer you a warm welcome into our community, support in nurturing with you the growth of the Kingdom here in Cowes and the promise of our readiness to embrace change while at the same time valuing our traditions.

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for considering St. Mary's and Holy Trinity, Cowes for the next stage of your Ministry. These two parishes share a vicar, and together constitute the greater part of the small town of Cowes (the remainder being St. Faith's parish which is now cared for by the Rector of Northwood). St. Mary's and Holy Trinity, St John the Baptist, Northwood, All Saint's, Gurnard and St Faith's Cowes, with the addition of St James' East Cowes and St. Mildred's Whippingham form the Medina Valley cluster. St. Mary's and Holy Trinity belong to the West Wight Deanery. Each parish has representatives on the Deanery Synod which meets three or four times a year. Our CMS missionary links are David and Heather Sharland, with whom we keep contact. Both parishes support the work of Christian Aid each year, as well as the Isle of Wight Food Bank.

WE OFFER our new incumbent:

- Distinctive parishes of friendly and willing people keen to develop with you the Kingdom of God in Cowes, with ideas for doing so.
- Church buildings on both of which there has recently been substantial expenditure and on which no major repair expenditure is currently anticipated.
- Surroundings of consummate beauty and real unspoilt countryside, all within two and a half hours from London.

WE HOPE to find a vicar and spiritual leader who can provide:

Person specification:

- Inspired leadership in organising us and the resources of our two parishes, including learning more about our Christian faith, praying together and studying the Bible together.
- The gift of a sense of humour and the ability and experience to communicate with us and those whom we would like to inspire to join us, including those finding their way into the Christian faith and church community, the elderly and younger people and their families.
- Strong pastoral gifts, an understanding of the value of diversity in styles of worship, a passion to develop the Christian family in Cowes and a background and experience which will enable him or her to do so.
- An understanding and appreciation of the importance of music in worship and in the life of the church and community.
- An enthusiasm for working closely with colleagues in the Cowes cluster and wider Deanery.
- Organisational skills.

Role Specification:

- A desire to engage with other Christian denominations within the town.
- A special sensitivity for ministering to the housebound and those living in care homes, enabling others to fulfil their own ministry.
- A commitment to young people, schools and youth groups and organisations.
- Determination to maintain a high profile in the community, being involved in events and organisations in the town as well as the church.
- An understanding of and respect for the important part played in the lives of many by boats, sailing and the sea.



Above: The harbour at West Cowes looking towards the Solent.

COWES AND THE ISLE OF WIGHT

Our astonishingly beautiful Island lies five miles off the south coast of England, and Cowes, to the west of the River Medina with a population of about 15,000, is at its northern tip. Many people speak appreciatively of life on the Island as being fifty years behind the times, and certainly it is different from the mainland. People have time to talk, there is a very strong community spirit, and appreciation of the beauty with which, through God's good grace, we are surrounded. As in the north of England, Islanders speak their minds: we are all Islanders together and proud to be so, and Islanders always have time to pass the time of day with each other. Our famous pedestrianised High Street will be a great asset to our new incumbent in getting to know parishioners: after a week or two he or she will be known to everyone in the town.

Fast passenger ferries reach Cowes from Southampton in twenty-five minutes every hour during the day, and more frequently during rush hours. Vehicle ferries go from East Cowes to Southampton and Yarmouth to Lymington, and more frequently from Fishbourne to Portsmouth. The fast passenger ferry to Southampton connects with a free bus service to the railway and coach Stations and to the shopping centre.

Newport, the County Town, with its recently-created Minster and modern hospital, is four miles from Cowes, reached by a bus service every eight minutes.

One of the great blessings of life on the Island is the relative safety here for children. Cowes has three Primary schools and one of the Island's Secondary schools, Cowes Enterprise College, is in magnificent brand-new buildings in the town close to St. Mary's church. Close by in Carisbrooke is Christ the King, a joint Church of England and Roman Catholic secondary school with an excellent reputation, while in the independent sector, there is the Priors School in Whippingham as well as Ryde School. Many Island teenagers go to the excellent Brockenhurst Sixth Form college, easily reached from Cowes by the Red Jet high-speed catamaran and then by train, while in Newport is the Isle of Wight College which offers Further Education.

Historically this has been a community reliant on boat and shipbuilding, farming and sea-borne commerce and the start of the aircraft industry. Products are now sophisticated hi-tech aircraft composite structures, electronics and computer - based control systems for international customers while retaining the more traditional skills and products for local and UK markets. Cowes is well served by a comprehensive Medical Centre employing 8 Doctors, 6 Nurses and provision for minor operations, dentistry and allied services. There are three supermarkets, convenience stores and a wide variety of "High Street" shops, and a branch of Waitrose across the Floating Bridge in East Cowes.

Cowes itself is, of course world-renowned as the sailing centre of northern Europe, and most employers in the town are in some way involved in the yachting industry, though the largest single employers are BAE Systems in Cowes and GKN in East Cowes..

Social and Sporting needs are well catered for. There are 5 Yacht Clubs offering everything from Ocean Racing to Dinghy Sailing and within a wide range of income. There are a number of sports clubs e.g., Soccer, Rugby, Cricket, Golf, Fishing, to name but a few, each providing for children as well as adults.

There are theatre groups, and opportunities to follow such pursuits as Music, Drama and a variety of leisure activities.

Both churches are members of Churches Together in Cowes, which includes representatives from all 9 Christian churches in the town. CTIC is actively involved in young people's ministry, currently with a part-time Community Youth Worker with a mandate to assist the Cowes churches, running Rock Solid (with substantial volunteer assistance from Holy Trinity in the past) and Discipleship groups, together with a worship band available to the Cowes churches. It is hoped that there will be an opportunity to employ from September an intern to assist the Cowes churches with youth work; CTIC also holds monthly prayer meetings and prayer breakfasts, and future mission activities are planned, including the annual Holy Cowes outreach during Cowes Week, for which in the past parishioners have baked cakes and volunteered their services.

The two parishes are fortunate in sharing the services of Mrs. Gill Murray, a very able but now retired Lay Reader who has lived in Cowes for many years and has Permission to Officiate.

All reasonable expenses incurred by the vicar are shared between the two parishes on a 70/30 basis. The two parishes have agreed that both would benefit from the services of a Parish Administrator shared between us who could identify ways in which the two parishes could work more closely together.

We are aware of the pockets of real poverty that exist on the Island, and a few years ago a Cowes firm offered accommodation for the first Food Bank on the Island: both parishes immediately began enthusiastic support of it.

Cowes is well served by a variety of Hotels, Restaurants and Public Houses satisfying all levels of social activity. The high point of Cowes sporting and social calendar is Cowes Week, which starts on the first Sunday in August and is attended by sailors and yachts from around the world, with shoreside entertainments attracting sailors and visitors. The Week culminates with the spectacular Friday Night Fireworks Display.

THE VICARAGE.

Built in the 1970's the property is in a quiet location adjacent to St. Mary's church and within easy walking distance of Holy Trinity as well as shops, ferries, buses and schools. The accommodation consists of 5 bedrooms, bathroom and shower room on the 1st floor and kitchen, 2 reception rooms, study and cloakroom on the ground floor. The property is centrally heated. There is a manageable-sized garden with separate garage and parking for two cars. The property is now the subject of refurbishment.

In summary, Cowes offers an attractive place in which to live and work.

Websites

You will find more information about life on the Island at the following links:

www.iwight.com

www.wightlink.co.uk

www.hovertravel.co.uk

www.redfunnel.co.uk

www.visitisleofwight.co.uk



ST. MARY'S PARISH

St. Mary's church is situated on a prominent site over-looking Cowes town, the Harbour and marina, and on the edge of Northwood House and Park - once the ancestral home of the Ward family who were patrons of the church.

The church has been part of the Cowes Town community for over 350 years. West Cowes Chapell was founded in the Commonwealth period. Dedicated by the Bishop of Winchester in 1642, the Parish became part of Portsmouth Diocese in 1927.

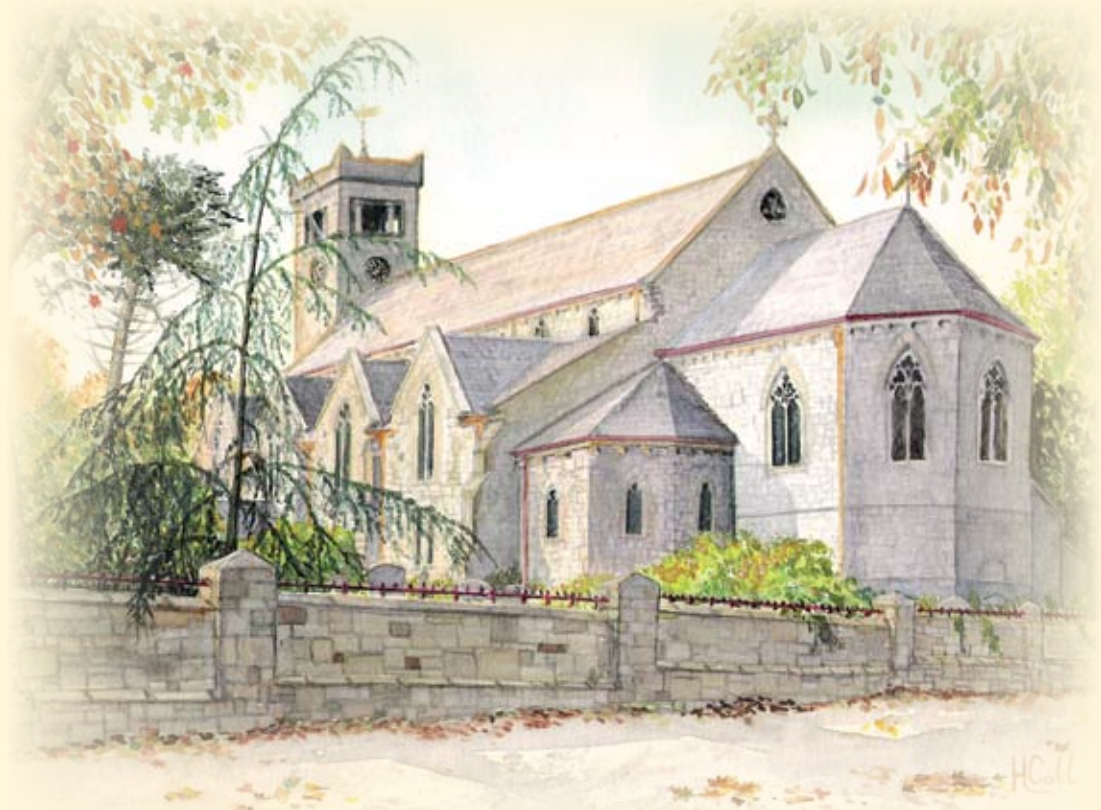
The previous incumbent had an excellent relationship with Cowes Town Council and all civic services are held at St. Mary's which is the principal seat of worship in Cowes. The present building was built and extended by the Ward Family as part of the Northwood House Estate. This included the tower designed by the famous Regency architect John Nash.

The main building now dates from the Victorian era with a further extension in early 1900. The existing hot air central heating has been supplemented with the installation of oil fired central heating.

English Heritage consider the Church to be of particular importance and the Building is Listed as Grade 2*.

St. Mary's has good music acoustics and the organ is a fine example of a Father Willis Organ.

The building is popular with musicians for the quality and response of the acoustics.



Above: St Mary's Church, reproduced with kind permission from a painting by Heather Cobb.

Church Maintenance

The 2008 quinquennial survey found the building to be very well maintained with the comment “one of the best on the Island”. The 2013 survey found only minor problems. The Church has a strict policy of identifying and correcting any minor problems before they develop into serious ones. Restoration work was carried out on the Tower in 2005, and in 2006 the north side and the chancel were reroofed at a cost of £300,000.

The churchyard was closed in 1856. An area of the churchyard has been reserved for the interment of ashes and a Memorial Stone was raised in 2012 to record the names of the deceased, when requested by relatives.

Among the many memorials, the earliest known is to Thomas Densham, (1667) and has now been relocated in the church to protect it from the elements.

The Council is responsible for grass cutting and strimming, the flower beds and shrubs are tended by members of the congregation and local volunteers.

St. Mary's Parish Room

The large Parish Room was built in 1974 and has direct entry to the Vestry and the main body of the church; it was modernised in 2006 with a new kitchen, additional toilets including one for the disabled, and baby changing facilities, and a separate area for flower arranging. The water main was renewed in 2012, replacing the original unreliable one. This was jointly funded by the proceeds from the 2012 Flower Festival and the Friends of St. Mary's.

The Parish Room is used to run 'Messy Church' for the children on the 4th Sunday of the month, at the same time as the main service. It is in regular use by the wider community, Adult Arts and Craft Group, Children's Art and Craft Group, Rainbows, Birthday Parties, and Wakes, University of the Third Age (U3A), Cowes-Deauville Twinning Association, and for the first time in 2014 the church and parish room will be used for parts of the Isle of Wight Literary Festival.



Above: St. Mary's Parish Room.

We also have a portable piano and the Parish Room is in regular use each week for music rehearsals for the St. Mary Singers, a 40 strong (SATB) Group directed by our organist. It is also used by the Cowes Concert Band and the Bob Howarth Big Band, local schools and the Cowes Rotary Club for their Christmas Concert.

All these groups, and other Island Bands use the church as a venue for their various performances. In 2013 a Pantomime was performed in the church - "A Lad in a Manger" - this was produced and directed by a young member of the congregation and friends from Cowes Amateur Dramatic Group.

The Church has hosted several special events, namely Radio Solent's Christmas Carol Service which attracted several hundred people, a Polish Choir and a London-based Choir making a return visit to the Island after singing at the wedding in St. Mary's of two of their members with Island connections. The North-West American Girls Choir who were touring the UK and Europe in 2013 also performed in the church. During the Flower Festival there were evening performances from the Quaynotes Barber Shop Group, Isle of Wight Youth Orchestra and from the Phoenix Jazz Trio with Kate Cuzner international classical and jazz flautist.

In 1992 Rick Wakeman performed his "Gospels" with Ian Lavender narrating. The Cowes Amateur Operatic & Dramatic Society have performed 'Godspell' and 'Murder in the Cathedral', the Milton Keynes Sinfonietta have given a performance, also the Tonna Welsh Male Voice Choir.

The very active Flower Arranging Group works on a Rota to decorate the church, as well as providing flowers for weddings and funerals.



Above: Concert at St Mary's.

FRIENDS OF ST. MARY'S CHURCH.

The Friends was set up as a registered charity in 1999 with the sole purpose of repairing and maintaining the church building. Membership was sought in the Cowes area because the church is a prominent landmark in the town, and is often used for Civic Services. The appeal was spread to those who had been married in the church or had their children baptised there. The immediate major repairs required were the roof over the organ, the John Nash Tower and the roofs over the nave and gallery on the north side. The huge costs involved were partly covered by grants from English Heritage and from various other resources and the church reserve funds. The work listed was completed by the end of 2006. Since the founding of the Friends, with a large variety of events, they have raised over £60,000 and regularly contribute to the maintenance of the church.

Worship and Ministry.

The pattern of worship at St. Mary the Virgin is as follows:-

First Sunday in month	
8am	Holy Communion BCP
11am	All Age Worship
Second Sunday in month	
11am	Holy Communion CW
Third Sunday in month	
8am	Holy Communion CW
11am	Morning Praise CW
Fourth Sunday in month	
11am	Holy Communion CW (Messy Church in Parish Room)
Fifth Sunday in month	
11am	Holy Communion (Joint celebration with Holy Trinity alternating between the churches)

Baptisms are normally held on the first Sunday of the month.

Wednesday: 10.30am Holy Communion with homily.

Coffee and biscuits are served at the end of each main service, and also after the Wednesday Service of Holy Communion.

The Sunday attendance at 8 am is normally around 10 - 14 and at 11 am between 30 and 45. Wednesday morning attendance is usually between 11 and 16 (more in Lent). On special days - notably Christmas, Easter, Remembrance Sunday and during Cowes Week - extra services are held.



Above: Altar cross at St. Mary's.

At present Common Worship Order One is used. Music tradition is important at St. Mary's. We currently have 10 regular Choristers at our Sunday Services, singing an Anthem at all but one service per month. We use 'Hymns Old and New' and a mixture of traditional and modern hymns sung to our beautiful Father Willis organ, and our Candle Light Christmas Service is 'Not to be Missed', the atmosphere and acoustics are appreciated by our many visitors. Music is provided by a loyal organist supporting the choir. On special occasions (eg. Weddings, funerals), the choir may be augmented by other singers, and for certain services Holy Trinity's choir is invited to combine with St. Mary's.



Above: St. Mary's pulpit.

Robes are worn by the clergy at all services.

There are several special services during the year. The main Remembrance Service for the town is held at St. Mary's and the church is used by local schools on special occasions such as Harvest, Christmas and Easter. The local primary and secondary school classes visit the church in connection with their curriculum.

Our previous incumbent visited both primary and secondary schools. There are retired priests living within and outside the parishes who assist where they are able, including taking home communions, taking services and visiting, assisting with Advent/Lent groups, etc. A retired Reader also takes home communions and continues to assist in various ways, including overseeing pastoral, Julian and healing home groups, helping to run Advent/Lent courses, preparing the weekly pew notes and the bi-monthly joint magazine with Holy Trinity.

Lay involvement in assisting in worship has been encouraged; readings and intercessions are normally conducted by lay people at St. Mary's, with bell-ringing also shared.

Lay people help to administer the chalice in both churches. A large number of church members give of their time and talents in many ways, from being on the coffee rotas to being part of the flower rotas and a 'meeting and greeting' rota at the main services. There is also a church cleaning rota and a team of pastoral visitors who visit those who require visiting.

The average number of 'Occasional Offices' per year in St. Mary's for the last two years has been: Baptisms 17, Weddings 15-19, Funerals 27.

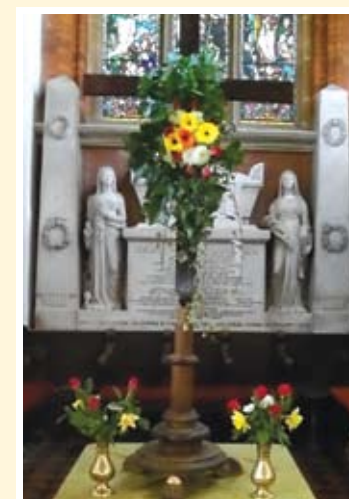
Administration and Finance.

St. Mary's PCC has 9 elected members, plus the usual statutory ex-officio members. The Electoral Roll has recently been revised and the number on the roll as reported to the APCM was 83.

FINANCE	2011	2012	2013
INCOME Stewardship, Non	£	£	£
Stewardship and Collections	33,075	36,122	27,569
Charity Collections	97	65	460
DONATIONS & GRANTS	3,815	21,025	4,417
ACTIVITIES INCOME Includes Hall hire,			
Church Hire, Fund raising Photocopying	14,807	14,176	17,335
INVESTMENTS Bank Interest	66	119	109
Gift Aid	2,990	7,686	1,214
Wedding/Funeral Fees	3,167	4,117	3,703
Compensation from courts	141	199	105
TOTAL INCOME	58,167	83,508	55,018
EXPENDITURE			
CHURCH and Hall BUILDING Maintenance	2,874	15,225	9,250
CLERGY & DIOCESE	584	161	30
ADMIN, Telephone & PARISH SHARE	40,933	50,095	30,289
CHARITABLE GIVING	686	778	1,882
Utilities and Insurance	8,896	9,570	9,272
Refunds (Overpayments)	2,347	400	510
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	58,097	73,024	54,556
Assets at Bank	15,117	20,601	21,064



Flowers at St Mary's.



The number of regular Gift Aid declarations via the Stewardship Giving Scheme was 44 and 306 one-off declarations were also made during 2013. The total Missionary and Charitable Giving for 2013 was £1,900. St. Mary's supports Christian Aid each year as well as the Isle of Wight Food Bank.

The Annual Parish Share for St. Mary's in 2013 was £39,340, the highest in the West Wight Deanery. The trend of the past three years has been for the parish to continue to pay its way with regard to the day-to-day bills, and try to pay as much of the Parish Share as it is able. Expenditure has been reduced as much as possible: however with ever-increasing costs and Parish Share, the parish has been unable to catch up on its shortfall to the diocese, following its major building work in 2005/6 which saw all of its reserves used up.

Below: Altar at St. Mary's during the 350th anniversary celebrations.





Above: Holy Trinity Church.

HOLY TRINITY PARISH

WHO WE ARE

Though situated close to St. Mary's, Holy Trinity's traditions are very different, and it is one of the strengths of the two parishes that between them they can offer services to suit a broad spectrum of tastes within the Church of England. Holy Trinity's traditions are evangelical. Our congregation is drawn from the more mature age group of the community, many having been born and brought up within the Christian faith, and loving the symbolism, reverence and ritual of traditional services but who are desperate to grow in their faith and become a truly missionary church of our time, taking the Word of God out into the community.

We recognise that we face a danger in that old age can be unattractive to young people so that our existence may be keeping them away! However in recent years a number of younger people from all over Cowes have joined our congregation, attracted by such activities as our annual Pets' service, for which Holy Trinity is now known throughout the Island, our Nativity on Christmas Eve, which always packs the church and our monthly service of All-age Worship, when music is provided by our Instrumental Group.

The annual Pets' Service is responsible for the acceptance at our weekly services of dogs, and every Sunday we have a few who bring their owners along to church and from whom we never have any trouble. The Sunday School, held at the time of the Sunday services, had been very successful for a number of years, but six years ago closed due to a lack of young people.

Holy Trinity this year in March is hosting the Women's World Day of Prayer organised annually by CTIC. CTIC also organises Christian Aid Week, with special events and the Flag Day in the town, and Holy Trinity has always been very active in the house-to-house collection in this important outreach.

WHAT WE HAVE

Holy Trinity Church was built in 1832 to be a “place of worship on Cowes foreshore for sailors and seafarers” and is situated close to West Cowes Castle, the Clubhouse of the Royal Yacht Squadron. The building, which is listed Grade 11, and has the benefit of being free of columns, was later enlarged by the addition of an apse to contain the chancel. It has some magnificent stained glass windows, and in 1882 the fine organ built by Gray and Davison was installed. We have a very talented organist and the church has superb acoustics, having been used for organ recitals, concerts and visiting worship bands, and has been the venue for the BBC’s Songs of Praise. Over the years Memorials to Flag Officers, Members of the Royal Yacht Squadron and others have been erected on its walls. The building is prominent in the view of Cowes from the sea, and is well-known to sailors for the sound of hymn tunes which are played on its carillon of eight bells before services on Sunday mornings. While frequently referred to as “The Squadron Church”, Holy Trinity is the parish church for the western end of the town.

Over the last two years there has been an extensive programme of structural measures to stabilise the building, together with expenditure on window mullions, all paid for out of reserves, and a successful appeal in 2013 raised the funds for the installation of new toughened glass doors for the two entrances.

The churchyard has a spectacular view over the Solent and is kept mown by the Council as well as cared for by a part-time gardener with members of the congregation helping to keep it looking beautiful. Centrepiece is the National Fastnet Memorial, a sculpture fashioned in stone brought from the Fastnet Rock and erected to commemorate the lives of those tragically lost at sea in the 1979 Fastnet Ocean Race, and this results in a close relationship with the prestigious Royal Ocean Racing Club, based in London. It is also the setting for several functions, including the Easter morning sunrise Holy Communion service (followed by hot cross buns in the church room), summer barbecues and the Dog Show, which in particular attracts non-churchgoers onto the premises.

The church is always beautifully decorated and uplifted by our team of very talented and artistic flower arrangers who every week surprise us with God’s wonderful handiwork in fantastic floral displays.

The church room adjoining the back of the church is not only used by the congregation for fun and fellowship, but has in past years housed a Mums & Tots group, and has been used by a music group as a place to practise. It is where the Lent lunches and monthly Big Buffets are held. The church is open on Wednesday afternoons in the summer months for a cup of tea and a friendly chat, for a listening ear, or as a place for quiet prayer.

The Royal Yacht Squadron is an undoubted asset to the parish of Holy Trinity. From a financial point of view the Squadron makes a substantial annual donation to Holy Trinity funds, on most Sundays Squadron Members and their families attend Holy Trinity services, and the Squadron Pavilion, gardens and other facilities are generously made available for use by Holy Trinity for fund-raising and other events. The Vicar of Holy Trinity is always invited to be Honorary Chaplain of the Royal Yacht Squadron, of which the Bishop of Portsmouth is an Honorary Member. The Admiral, H.R.H. Prince Philip, has usually attended Regatta services at Holy Trinity during Cowes Week. Recently the Royal London Yacht Club has extended to the Vicar the same invitation, and we look forward to developing similar relationships with other Yacht Clubs in the town.

Holy Trinity Parish is not large, and many houses in it are second homes for Londoners, or are occupied by those who are not regular churchgoers. In addition there are people who have lived in the parish, or have been touched in some way by Holy Trinity and wish to keep contact with us. Few who live in the parish do not recognise the contribution Holy Trinity makes to the community; those on the recently reorganised and rejuvenated list of Friends of the Fabric receive regular Newsletters and contribute generously to appeals. We maintain a parish Website at www.holytrinitycoves.org.uk

FINANCE**	2011	2012	2013***
Income	£	£	£
Donations/Grants	67267	48341	41195
Activities Income	7696	5342	4395
Investments	854	917	727
VAT recovered	8517	9301	TBC
Total Income	84334	63901	46317
Expenditure			
Church building*	50926	54221	16672
Clergy/Diocese	1208	1515	389
Admin + Parish Share	22118	23332	28287
Charitable giving	586	1141	1972
Fundraising costs	3318	3460	2438
Total expenditure	78156	83669	49758
Surplus/Deficit -	6178	-19768	-3441
Bank totals	134975	115418	109279

* The recent high levels of expenditure on the church building have been the result of a now completed programme of restoration works.

** For any further financial details please contact the PCC.

*** Subject to audit.

N.B. Holy Trinity has always paid its full Parish Share.



Above: wedding at Holy Trinity.

WHAT WE DO

Services at Holy Trinity take place at 0930, and are as follows:

1st. Sunday in month:

0930 Holy Communion (BCP)

2nd. Sunday in month:

0800 Holy Communion (CW),
0930 Morning Praise (Morning Prayer) (CW)

3rd. Sunday in month:

0930 Holy Communion (CW)

4th. Sunday in month:

0800 Holy Communion (BCP)
0930 All-age Worship

5th. Sunday in month:

1030 Joint Celebration of Holy Communion
with St. Mary's alternating between the two churches.



Above: Children's nativity.

Except at the 0800 services, there are rarely fewer than 30 in the congregation. Holy Trinity has a small choir which leads the singing every Sunday except the fourth (and is available for weddings etc if requested). On the fourth Sunday both the choir and the organist are given the day off (although all usually attend the service) and music is provided by the Instrumental Group which was formed about twenty-five years ago as a temporary measure and has been maintained ever since to provide music at the monthly service of All-age worship. It consists of a core of amateur adult musicians supplemented by young players who tend to bring relations to swell our congregation.

On a good day the Instrumental Group numbers about twelve, and were the first winners of the competition for Church Instrumental Groups when they were introduced as a class at the Isle of Wight Music Festival. The All-age Worship service is an informal and uplifting service with congregation participation - a "go with the Spirit" service and screens for the songs and powerpoint presentations are much enjoyed. All services are followed by hot/cold drinks in the church room (we became a Fairtrade church in 2009), which is a great opportunity to get to know any newcomers, and each other.

The Royal Yacht Squadron Carol Service is held before Christmas each year, and is attended by about 150 Members and their families. Lessons are read by Flag Officers, Staff Members and cadets of the Cowes Sea Cadet Unit T.S.Osborne, with which both the Royal Yacht Squadron and Holy Trinity have close links. In recent years the Royal London Yacht Club has held an annual carol service also at Holy Trinity.

Cowes Week, the famous annual Regatta Week in August each year, is of course the high point of Cowes' summer. The town is packed with international sailors and crowds are shoulder-to-shoulder in the High Street. During the Week Holy Trinity stages an exhibition and is manned and kept open daily for refreshments and lunches by our very dedicated and highly competent catering team and their assistants. With its magnificent viewing point for the racing and Friday fireworks it is a hugely popular venue and used to the best possible advantage; in recent years a barbecue has been held before the Fireworks. Two special seafaring services are held on the Sunday, which the Mayor, local town councillors and dignitaries attend. The Bishop usually preaches at at least one of them, the Sea Cadets form a guard of honour and lessons are read by representatives from Trinity House, local yachting organisations and clubs, seafaring charities, etc. In the past Royalty has attended these two services, and at both the church is packed.

Below: Holy Trinity Instrumental Group.





Above: H.R.H. Prince Philip is a regular visitor to Holy Trinity.

Throughout the year our very active Social Committee meet to organise fund-raising activities including the Summer and Christmas Fairs. For weeks before these events, members of the church are baking delicious cakes to sell. Superb meals are cooked by Holy Trinity members in the kitchen at the church and served in the church room adjoining it. At the Summer Fair we run a Dog Show, and Father Christmas makes an appearance at Christmas. Pancakes are served on Shrove Tuesday, monthly lunches in aid of charity are held and a major event in the autumn is the Harvest Supper with an auction for charity of harvest produce.

Quite recently Holy Trinity has introduced a Supper and Film Club on a Thursday evening in each month. The scheme has got off to a good start: about fifteen sit down to a simple but delicious meal, cooked by our catering team and afterwards watch a DVD together. It is an opportunity to invite one's friends and introduce them to the church family in a relaxed and non-threatening atmosphere.

Holy Trinity is the only church in Cowes which organises a "Nativity" on Christmas Eve when the collection is usually given to the Children's Society; afterwards, refreshments are served.

St Mary's are invited to all events at Holy Trinity and we share a joint Pastoral Group, which visits the elderly and bereaved in the parishes, distributes Welcome packs to new parishioners, and maintains a list of birthdays of people in both parishes to whom birthday cards are sent.

Two monthly house prayer groups are held jointly - the Julian Meeting (for silent prayer) which is ecumenical and open to all, and the Healing Group, where a bible passage is studied, followed by discussion and prayer.

Holy Trinity has also enthusiastically supported the work of the Street Pastors since they were introduced to the Island five years ago, with one member of the congregation immediately volunteering for training, and another member becoming a Prayer Pastor. In October 2013 Holy Trinity hosted a lively Street & School Pastor prayer meeting.

We try to make a point of encouraging newcomers to Holy Trinity into offering to help in some aspect of Holy Trinity life so that they will have an opportunity to grow in faith and exercise the ministry which we know is theirs by baptism and calling. We and St. Mary's have agreed that both would benefit from the services of a Parish Administrator shared between us who could identify ways in which the two parishes could work more closely together. We believe that much can be done to spread the Word by encouraging the use of our church for baptisms, weddings and funerals. Baptisms bring people who do not normally attend church to Holy Trinity and as these are held as a part of our regular Sunday worship, the layout of the church gives us opportunities for meeting parents, godparents and guests over coffee before they leave.

We have no firm objection to the re-marriage of divorcees, though we would want our Vicar to be completely happy with the intentions and attitudes of such couples for the future. Holy Trinity is admirably suited for weddings: many guests arrive by ferry, so have little need of car-parking, and receptions can be held in one of the surrounding yacht clubs, a short walk away. Needless to say such baptisms and weddings bring a considerable income to Holy Trinity by way of Donations and Gift Aid, quite apart from fees.

WHERE WE WOULD LIKE TO GO

First and foremost is the need to ensure that the light of the Holy Spirit continues to burn at Holy Trinity. We feel God has created a small but intense flame here, but that none of us who tend it are getting any younger, and although parishioners are broadly well-disposed towards Holy Trinity, there is in the parish a lack of zeal which needs firing up. With only 54 people on the electoral roll, the core congregation is small and its loyal members diverse in outlook and standing but very active and well-integrated within the community. Holy Trinity has so many blessings in the form of its prominence on the waterfront, the beauty of its interior which will soon be visible from outside through the new glass doors, its strong bank balance and the support and encouragement it receives from the Royal Yacht Squadron: although parishioners display many Christian virtues and one does not have to go to church every Sunday to be a Christian, the plain fact remains that if nobody goes to church, the church will die.



Above: Some Holy Trinity members in the churchyard.

Since the closure of Solent Middle School in the reorganisation of education on the Island we have lost the only school in the parish, because although the buildings are now occupied by Gurnard Primary School, this obviously owes allegiance to All Saints, Gurnard. But we believe our long history of maritime connections gives scope for developing better links with sailors visiting Cowes, and it has been suggested that a boat blessing service at the start of Cowes Week and/or before yachts depart for the Fastnet Race (held every two years at the end of Cowes Week) would be a memorable way to bring the church to the heart of the sailing community. During the summer several hundred yachts visit the marinas, and it should be possible to attract to Holy Trinity more of those on board them. We already have close links with T.S.Osborne, the Cowes Sea Cadet Unit. Also in Cowes is the 2nd. Cowes Sea Scout Group, of which Uffa Fox, the legendary yacht designer and builder was once Scoutmaster. Occasions at Holy Trinity could be tailored to suit them.

Yacht Clubs in Cowes have for hundreds of years formed the centre of the community. They run the Regattas on which much of the economy of Cowes is based, and attract literally thousands of visitors to Cowes for events such as the Round the Island Race, run by the Island Sailing Club. Even a small proportion of those racing round the Island would immensely increase Holy Trinity's congregation, but we currently have no links with any clubs except the Royal Yacht Squadron and the Royal London Yacht Club. We believe there is great scope for development here.

Apart from young people, statistics show that old people will form a higher and higher proportion of the population in the future. In Holy Trinity Parish there may be no schools, but there are no less than four Care Homes and sheltered housing schemes, where people have entered a stage in their lives in which they are open to new experiences. They may not have been churchgoers all their lives, but there is no reason why they should not become one now, and perhaps all that is needed to attract them to our services would be the organisation of lifts. Sadly Holy Trinity is also much in demand for funerals. This ministry is vital with our ageing population; when people are hurting and grieving, this is the time when the church can show them God's love.

We believe that all of these represent opportunities for spreading the Kingdom in Cowes, and that God is waiting for the right person to lead us in making use of them.

In writing this Profile we sincerely feel it fairly reflects what Holy Trinity is - and aspires to be - and we pray that someone sees our potential and will enjoy with us the journey we all want to make.

Holy Trinity Mission Statement and Aim:

To promote within the community a church where all ages are welcome and where together as a parish church, we can join in worship and fellowship in the Lord's name.

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