



# The Friends of Mount Athos

(Registered Charity No. 1047287)

## Newsletter No. 28: April 2018

We are sending you your copy of the Annual Report for 2017, which we hope you will enjoy reading.

### **The 2018 Summer Conference: Saturday 16 June at St Anne's College, Oxford**

The day will start with a celebration of the Divine Liturgy at the Orthodox Church of the Holy Trinity and the Annunciation (1 Canterbury Road, Oxford OX2 6LU) at 9.00 am. All members and their guests, Orthodox and non-Orthodox, are warmly invited to attend. The church is only five minutes' walk from St Anne's College where coffee will be available in the **Tsuzuki Theatre Foyer** from 10.45 am. Proceedings will begin at 11.30 am.

Our first speaker will be **Sister Theoktisti** of the Holy Monastery of St John the Forerunner near Larissa. She will speak about life in, and the work of, the monastery, and about the restoration work carried out to the 16<sup>th</sup> century church of St John the Baptist, and its important frescos (to which FOMA contributed). Her talk will be illustrated.

Sister Theoktisti, who is English, will be known to many members. She spoke at our Madingley conference in 2013, and has previously participated in several of our pilgrimages. In 2004, FOMA members stayed at the Monastery during our pilgrimage to Greece, and numerous individual members have visited it since. The sisters have built it up from a ruined state over the past 25 years, and today it stands out for the quality and extent of the construction work carried out, its ecologically-friendly practices, and the excellence of its organic produce.

In the afternoon, **Professor Dame Averil Cameron** will give a lecture on Byzantine Christianity. Professor Cameron is professor emerita of Late Antique and Byzantine History at the University of Oxford, and was formerly the Warden of Keble College, Oxford, between 1994 and 2010. She is also Chair of the Oxford Centre for Byzantine Research and President of the Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies. She has written numerous books on the history and culture of Late Antiquity and Byzantium, including religious and ecclesiastical history. Her latest, *Byzantine Christianity – a Very Brief History*, was published last year.

Our last speaker **Frances Jennings**, who will give an illustrated talk about the society's 2017 pilgrimage to Northern Serbia.

Before lunch, there will be a book launch: Graham Speake's *A History of the Athonite Commonwealth* will just have been published. It focuses on the lives of outstanding holy men who have been drawn to the Mountain, absorbed its wisdom and its prayer, and returned to the outside world to spread the results of their labours and learning. Metropolitan Kallistos has kindly agreed to introduce the book, and the author will be available to sign them. Copies will be on sale at a discount.

A buffet lunch is available in the college and must be booked in advance (price £20.00). It is followed by the official business of the AGM itself and as usual there will be elections.

Metropolitan Kallistos, Dimitri Conomos, Simon Jennings, and Peter Lea will have reached the end of their terms of office and offer themselves for re-election. Two new members, Rev Douglas Dales and Dr Nicholas Fennell, have been co-opted onto the committee during the year, and have indicated their willingness to stand. Any other nominations should reach the Secretary in writing at least one week before the meeting. Guests are welcome at the AGM but may not vote.

The committee is sorry to see the retirement of John Arnell, Frances Jennings, and Michael Naldrett. John has been a stalwart member for many years, and developed the Footpaths Project from its inception, as well as leading it until recently. His common sense and organisational skills will be much missed. Frances and Michael, each in their own way, have made valuable contributions to the work of the committee. We thank them all.

After tea there is a further opportunity to join the Orthodox community at 1 Canterbury Road for a Vespers service at 5.30 pm. The service will last about two hours and the languages used will be primarily English and Greek.

Attendance at the AGM is free. The charge for attending the rest of the day (including coffee and tea) is £12.00 each (students £6.00). Completed forms and cheques (payable to The Friends of Mount Athos) should be sent as soon as possible to Frances Jennings, 18 Warwick Street, Oxford OX4 1SX.

### **Project for the restoration of footpaths and wayside shrines and fountains**

This May another expedition, the eighteenth, will spend a fortnight on the Mountain. The list for this year is already full, but the project leaders will soon be assembling a team for next year. Any members who are interested in volunteering should contact them at [fomafootpaths@gmail.com](mailto:fomafootpaths@gmail.com).

### **Pilgrimage to the Monastery of St John the Baptist, Tolleshunt Knights**

This year's pilgrimage will take place on 30 June 2018. Both Orthodox and non-Orthodox members and their families and friends are warmly welcome to join it. Those who are interested should contact the organiser, Dimitri Conomos ([dimitri2609@gmail.com](mailto:dimitri2609@gmail.com)).

### **Pilgrimage to Crete**

This year's pilgrimage, to western Crete, will run from 20 October to 28 October 2018. Some spaces are still available, so anyone interested should contact the organizer, Dimitri Conomos, as soon as possible.

### **FoMA Travel Bursary**

Qualified graduate students, working towards a higher degree or diploma at UK institutions of higher learning, may apply for a FoMA Travel Bursary of £500. Applicants should be engaged in, or willing to become engaged in, a project with a specifically Athonite context. Applications, accompanied by the names and addresses of two referees, should be addressed to me at 58 Manor Road, Woodstock OX20 1XJ.

**Peter Lea**  
**Secretary**