**Report to Warwick Town Council 3rd April 2023 – St Mary’s Christmas Tree Festival**

St Mary’s Church in Old Square has had a Christmas Tree Festival every year for over ten years, including a “digital version” during the 2020 pandemic. We wanted the Festival to be bigger than ever in 2022 and with the help of the Town Council we achieved that goal.

Over fifty Warwick schools, charities, businesses, and community group submitted entries. Each had a five-foot decorated tree, supplied by Hinton’s Nursery, to showcase their organisation. The display opened on Victorian Evening and ran for ten days. The Mayor and Father Christmas chose their favourite trees on the first Saturday and awarded the winners and runners up with special certificates.

A variety of “wraparound” events surrounded the Festival with adult and children’s choirs, brass band entertainment from Occasional Brass, and handbell ringers. We also had a fund-raising dinner concert based on the music of Flanders & Swann which attracted 120 people. Special sessions were run for local nursery schools, special needs schools and care homes. Warwickshire College ran a student photography assignment using the Festival and we even had dog friendly sessions in support of the Guide Dogs Association!

The finance from Warwick Town Council paid for the publicity which enabled us to attract over 5000 visitors to the Festival, and to the town centre over the Christmas period. Many of our exhibitors have commented on the positive economic impact they saw during the period of the Festival. Visitors came from the local area and farther afield, drawn by the eye-catching website, posters, and leaflets paid for by the grant. We are very grateful for the support we have received and are currently planning the 2023 Festival. Any organisation that wishes to consider submitting an entry can find details at [www.stmaryschristmas.org.uk](http://www.stmaryschristmas.org.uk).

The St Mary’s Christmas Tree Festival Team