



Chairman's Welcome

Welcome to this sixth edition of the Nottinghamshire Historic Churches Trust newsletter. The last few months have seen the normal round of events but against a background of an increasingly challenging climate, in every sense of the word.

I wrote my last "welcome" on the morning of the Ride+Stride annual bike ride held by County Trusts across the country to raise funds. It was a grey and rainy day and, as anticipated, the weather had a negative effect on the number of people actually taking part. Happily however, the amount raised in Nottinghamshire held up extremely well and we still achieved funding of around £19,000. At that level, this event is the single most important source of funds for us. Keith Goodman organised this virtually single handedly and massive thanks are due to him.

So much for the climate, literally. As to the economic climate, the position becomes even more challenging. As I write this, the government has announced that the Grants for Places of Worship Fund, effectively a targeted subdivision of the Heritage Lottery Fund, is to be brought to an end. All applications will now have to compete with all other demands on the HLF main fund, itself predicted to be a diminishing pot. All this of course tightens the purse strings yet tighter for those of us keen to help preserve our Christian places of worship. We have just converted the Trust to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. The new Registration Number is 1171623. Apart from this you should not notice any change. The name, the objects, the trustees and the bank account details remain as they were.

This newsletter gives a very good idea of the range of what we do. In whatever way you can, please continue your support. It matters!

Richard Brackenbury - *NHCT Chairman*



Friends Visit to St Barnabas Cathedral, Nottingham

In March we organised a very enjoyable visit to St Barnabas Cathedral, Nottingham for around fifty Friends of NHCT. Dr Jenny Alexander led the group around the church pointing out the cathedral's interesting architecture and vibrant Gothic Revival decorations.



Dr Alexander and Friends admiring Pugin's decorated chapel

The cathedral was built between 1841 and 1844, costing £15,000 (equivalent to £1,350,000 in 2015), and was first consecrated in 1844, fifteen years after the Catholic Relief Act ended most restrictions on Catholicism in the United Kingdom. A substantial amount of the cost was paid by the important Catholic Earl of Shrewsbury. The architect was AWN Pugin who was also much involved in the design of the interior of the Houses of Parliament. St Barnabas was built in the Early English Plain Gothic style, although in contrast, the Blessed Sacrament Chapel was richly decorated.

Pugin was retained as architect by Rev Robert William Willson, then priest in charge of Nottingham. In 1842 Rev Willson was named as Bishop-Elect of Hobart, Tasmania, and had to leave the work in Nottingham before completion. Due to ill-health, Bishop Willson returned to Nottingham and was buried in the cathedral in 1866. His remains were exhumed earlier this year and returned to Australia.

The tour of the cathedral was followed by an excellent lecture by Dr Jenny Alexander on the life and work of AWN Pugin. The afternoon was rounded off with tea, coffee and delicious homemade cakes.

NHCT Grant Aided Restoration Project

The conservation of the Upton wall paintings

The number of surviving wall paintings in Nottinghamshire churches is comparatively few. The finest example is at Blyth which has the largest Last Judgement (or 'Doom') painting in the north of England, which dates from the 15th century. However there are a handful of fragmentary medieval, and a few post-medieval murals, and one unusual example is to be found in the north chapel at St Peter and St Paul's, Upton.

The Upton scheme comprises a central 'angel' figure set within the spandrel of a double niche and copious traces of stylized foliage in blue on the surrounding walls; it is most probably of the early to mid 19th century. Above the central figure is a window and above this an inscription, now very hard to read, which, like the foliate ornament, spills round onto the side walls of the chapel; it may possibly be an abbreviated version of Luke 1:28, part reading 'Hail, highly favoured...!'

The Trustees were concerned at the condition of the painting as it was unclear how much had been, and was being, lost. Consequently, a special trustees award was made to the parish to meet the cost of professional investigation and conservation, principally of the central figure but also parts of the surrounding decoration.

In 2016 Hirst Conservation were invited by the parish, following receipt of a faculty, to undertake the work. The painted scheme was found to have been overpainted and the condition of this paint varied greatly across the area,



The Upton mural 'angel' figure before (above) and after (below) conservation



Conservation work in progress on the Upton wall paintings

it was therefore important to remove this later overpaint to determine the condition of the mural beneath. It was discovered that the early scheme is actually quite well bound and the main work required was to mechanically remove later layers, the whole process taking around two weeks.

The central 'angel' figure is now much clearer and cleaner and we know a great deal more about its condition. There remains much foliate painting and text which is still hidden, but this is apparently stable for the time being. During the work some damp ingress was discovered which the parish is in the process of addressing with the assistance of a further grant from the Trust.

One intriguing find relates to the niches below the 19th century scheme, where failed render appears to be revealing a yellow ochre pigment, perhaps part of a much earlier painting... But that will have to wait for another day!

The church is normally open during daylight hours and Friends are encouraged to visit and see the newly conserved painting.

9th September 2017

RIDE+STRIDES
for Churches

Ride+Stride in Nottinghamshire

The Ride+Stride this year took place on the 10th September. Unfortunately, heavy rain throughout the day meant that riders and striders got very wet. Those that I met during the day were cheerful in spite of the weather and very, very appreciative of those churches that were open and providing them with much needed sustenance and encouragement. Well done to all who took part - whether cyclists, walkers, welcomers and caterers.

This year the amount raised through sponsorship was £15,366. Gift Aid received was £3,262 making a total overall of £18,628. Half of the amount raised through sponsorship was returned to the rider's own church and the rest was contributed to the Trust to enable it to continue making grants for the maintenance and repair of churches in the county.

This year 220 churches took part and we appreciate those who were not able to open their churches or who did not have members who could take part but who, nevertheless, pinned the signup sheet on the church door, but we still need feet and wheels on the ground as this is how the money is raised.

Four churches raised over £1,000 - Chilwell Christ Church, Inham Nook, St. Barnabas, Edingley, St. Giles and East Markham, St. John the Baptist. The number of riders who used Just Giving was encouraging. Riders/striders raised £3,262 by this method. This was a considerable increase over last year's figure of £1,044 and clearly shows how efficient this method is for getting sponsorship.



Derek Langdon and his sister on their pre-war tandem



Super Cyclist - Martha Pudney

There were 14 riders who struggled on through the downpours and visited 20 or more churches with the top prize going to Michael Woolley, Carlton, St. John Methodist and Andy Guy of Norwell, St. Laurence who both visited 34 churches. Particular mention must be made of the riders from Inham Nook, who were riding in memory of Ray Woods, their previous contact person who died during the year. Ray was motivator, encourager and "spurrer-on" of his riders for many years. He would have been delighted that one of his riders, Martha Pudney, aged only 7, cycled to 10 churches in the pouring rain. She received a special certificate from her church.

Robert Hill from Greasley rode again - still fit enough to visit 15 churches at the age of 80. He was supported by his daughter and grandson who both rode. Between them they raised £360. Robert is representative of a goodly number of riders in their 70s and 80s who set off each year up hill and down dale - hoping for more of the latter than the former. Derek Langdon cycled, along with his sister, on their pre-war tandem and they visited 14 churches. No aluminium and carbon fibre for them. Good old British steel.

We hope that you enjoyed the Ride+Stride this year. Please let us have your suggestions, comments or pictures. The date for 2017 is 9th September. Book it now! There is a distinct possibility that the weather will be fine. Have the sunblock ready.

Keith Goodman - NHCT Ride+Stride Organiser

Church Funding and Tourism



Scrooby St Wilfrid - a church with strong Pilgrim Fathers' connections

Earlier in this newsletter, I have written about the increasingly challenging climate for fund raising. This immediately leads to the need to look at other sources of income, beyond dwindling congregations, if creeping disrepair or closure are to be avoided. Amongst the possibilities is tourism

It is a commonplace that a large proportion of our Grade 1 listed buildings are churches. Equally, a significant proportion of the population is now engaging with the heritage sector - the National Trust membership standing at over 4 million is testament to that. The challenge for all of us, who are already committed to helping, is to find ways of harnessing that interest beyond the small, but significant, minority who have always liked visiting churches and cathedrals. An obvious first step is to try to widen that initial group. The Southwell & Nottingham Church History Project is an excellent example of where academic research listing all churches in one

highly user-friendly and accessible place could be used to promote more visits.

The Churches Conservation Trust, which looks after redundant but still consecrated churches, has recently hit the headlines with developing the idea of camping in churches. They have created the concept of “champing” and are pleased enough with the results to have even gone to the trouble of trademarking the name! Their initial pilot scheme has proved so successful that it is being extended to a much wider group of the churches in their care.

However, it seems to be stories of “real people” that attract the popular imagination and Nottinghamshire, with its links to the Pilgrim Fathers as but one example, needs to find a way of building on those stories to help increase visitor numbers. The challenge is putting those wishes in to reality.

Richard Brackenbury - *NHCT Chairman*

Friends of NHCT - Help Support the Work of the Trust

Why not join the Friends of Nottinghamshire Historic Churches Trust? Your modest annual subscription would go towards the grants which the Trust makes to historic churches in the County which are in need of help with repairs. Sometimes these grants are the catalyst that sets the ball rolling for the church fundraisers; sometimes they are just what is needed in order to reach the target for urgent repairs. And sometimes, when there is something really special that requires funding, a one-off Friends grant can be made.

In return for a subscription the Friends receive three or four guided visits each year to groups of churches or places of historical ecclesiastical interest, plus preferential rates for the annual Summer Party (at East Bridgford Hill on Friday 16th June this year, with entertainment from The Bridge Singers) and any concerts or events which the Trust might arrange. We are a motley band of enthusiasts, some just enjoying an afternoon in new and pleasant surroundings; some with specific passions such as brasses, murals, memorials, mysteries. Some with local knowledge (often fascinating) and some with a passion for history. And don't forget the teas!

For application forms see the website www.nottshistoricchurchtrust.org.uk or contact the Secretary.

The Trust can be contacted via:

The Secretary, Mrs Anthea Moat on 01909 472324 or email: nhct@hotmail.co.uk

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www.nottshistoricchurchtrust.org.uk

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