



## NOTTINGHAMSHIRE HISTORIC CHURCHES TRUST

raising money to  
grant-aid historic  
churches and  
chapels in  
Nottinghamshire

Newsletter Issue 7: Autumn/Winter 2017

### Chairman's Welcome

**T**his seventh edition of the Trust's Newsletter contains articles which neatly illustrate why it is important that we conserve our church buildings, in order that they can tell the stories of our nation's history.

The founding of the United States of America might have been very different if the religious dissenters in the north of Nottinghamshire had not felt the need to practice their religious beliefs in a way that was unacceptable in the England of the 16th century. Luckily, these otherwise relatively unexceptional village churches have largely been kept intact over the centuries and can now form a major backdrop for history lovers, especially those from the New World.

There are countless other illustrations of why these buildings are so important, and form the base to our inheritance, the 'paper' on which our history is written. The financial help that the Trust is able to give to these places of worship continues to be important as supportive congregations decline, and this neatly demonstrates the remit of the Trust.

While the annual Ride+Stride event continues to raise funds very successfully, and to produce stories of amazing feats of determination and grit (of which more in the next edition) we are working to broaden our base, to find a way to attract support via social media, and from those who value our built history and the connections it brings. In the face of government belt-tightening, and other more pressing priorities for public funds, the climate for raising the necessary income gets more difficult, while the need increases. Your support for the Trust's work is much appreciated, and if you would like to be more involved do please get in touch. We are open to all ideas.

**Richard Brackenbury** - *NHCT Chairman*



## The Beginnings of the Pilgrim Fathers in Nottinghamshire The Connection with Babworth & Scrooby Churches



**I**t is little known that the origins of the "Pilgrim Fathers" lie in the tiny north Nottinghamshire villages such as Scrooby, Sturton-le-Steeple and Babworth. The recent Friends' visit to Scrooby and Babworth learnt just how important this area in Bassetlaw was in initiating the voyage of the Mayflower to America.

400 years ago, this region was a hot-bed of religious controversy. In 1606, dissatisfied with the corruption and lapsed nature of the Church of England, religious separatists in the area broke away from the established church and its head, James I. These separatists wanted to commit themselves to a simpler kind of life

based on Bible teachings. Two of the leading lights behind the separatist movement were the Reverend Richard Clyfton and William Brewster. Clyfton preached at Babworth church from 1586 where he inspired the movement that eventually led to the Pilgrim Fathers. William Brewster was Scrooby born and bred and became the ruling elder of the group.

Brewster, with fellow separatist William Bradford from nearby Austerfield, would walk to Babworth to hear Clyfton's sermons, and the footpath to the church from their homes in Scrooby and Austerfield is known as the Pilgrims Way. The Pilgrims held Puritan Calvinist religious beliefs but, unlike other Puritans, they maintained that their congregations needed to be separated from the English state church.

Under the leadership of William Brewster, the 35 separatists from the area were so passionate about religious freedom that they risked their lives to flee the volatile political environment in England for the relative calm and tolerance of 16th–17th century Holland in the Netherlands. After living there for some years, as a separatist group, they were concerned that they might lose their English cultural identity if they remained in the Netherlands, so they arranged with English investors to establish a new colony in North America. Returning to England in 1620, they set sail in the ship "The Mayflower" from Plymouth, Devon, to the New World. There were 102 passengers, and the crew is estimated to have been about 30, but the exact number is unknown. This voyage has become an iconic story in some of the earliest annals of American history, with its story of death and of survival in the harsh New England winter environment. The culmination of the voyage in the signing of the Mayflower Compact was an event which established a rudimentary form of democracy, with each member contributing to the welfare of the community. Their beliefs in personal freedom, through the Mayflower Compact, were ultimately to influence the American Constitution, arguably the most important document in the Western World.

The present church of St Wilfrid, Scrooby, was built around the late 14th century, when the earlier 12th century building was probably replaced. It consists of a nave, chancel, south aisle and south porch. An unusual feature is the four-sided tower chamfered into an octagonal spire. The architecture is Perpendicular throughout, including the arcade on octagonal piers. The west window and that in the tower are the earliest, dating from about 1380; the east window is of the 15th century. A major restoration by C J Neale took place in 1864.



*St Wilfrid, Scrooby*

The present All Saints church at Babworth dates from the 15th and 16th centuries. It is principally built in the Perpendicular style with a chancel, nave, north aisle and low west tower.



*All Saints, Babworth*

The church was restored in 1859-62 with new tracery and roofs, followed by a further restoration in 1877-78 both by J L Pearson. The chancel and sanctuary contain furniture by Robert Thompson who was part of the 1920s Arts and Crafts movement. The items of furniture bear his famous carved mouse trademark.

Both churches have become places of pilgrimage, especially by American descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers. The first permanent location telling the stories of the Mayflower Pilgrims and Separatists opened as the Pilgrims Visitor Centre in nearby Retford earlier this year. As the 400th anniversary of the sailing of the Mayflower approaches, the Centre will help schools, visitors, and everyone living in and around Retford to understand the stories of the local people who shaped a New World.



## NHCT Grant Aided Restoration Project St Helena, Thoroton

The church at Thoroton is dedicated to the mother of the first Christian Roman emperor, Constantine. The earliest part of the church is the north arcade which dates from the 13th century. The south arcade is from later in the same century and the tower is a beautiful example of 14th century work and has, on the west front, a lovely ogee headed niche that may once have contained an image of St Helena. The church was restored by John Hakewill in 1869 after it had been struck by lightning the previous year.

By the 21st century the church had developed numerous problems, and the quinquennial survey in 2014 identified a number of major structural repairs that were necessary. The most urgent of these included repairs to roofs, lead flashings, guttering and down pipes and surface water drains, the repointing of various sections of the whole church and the resetting and replacement of eroded coping stones to the east parapet gable of the nave and of the south porch. The building was placed on the Heritage at Risk Register. The total cost of these repairs was £74,850 – a daunting amount for a village of some 120 people.



The church was fortunate in obtaining a provisional offer of a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to assist in these repairs but this was dependent on the church obtaining £14,000 from other grants and fund raising activities.



*New rain water drains being created*

After careful consideration of the works required the Nottinghamshire Historic Churches Trust was the first charity to indicate that it would be prepared to make a grant of £3,000 towards the work, and Thoroton Church believe that this greatly helped in the securing of other funding from other trusts and charities. The NHCT grant was made in March 2016, and the trust then secured further funding for St Helena's of £5,000 from the National Churches Trust in November 2016, making a total of £8,000 towards the total cost.

Work on the church started in November 2016; new surface water drains were dug, lead flashing renewed, some stonework was replaced, and eroded sections were repointed. The works were completed in April 2017.

Churchwarden Nick Finlay says: "The members of Thoroton Church are very grateful not only for the

financial assistance provided by NHCT but for the expertise and assistance provided by the Trust's Grants Administrator in obtaining additional funding from other sources. We believe that the restoration project has revived the interest of the local community in the maintenance and well being of the church and there is now a greater desire to ensure the future sustainability of the building not only as a place of worship but also as a valuable community resource."



*Lead flashing to the parapets was replaced*



## Make a Lasting Difference...

### Legacies and Wills

Some gifts are easily forgotten.

Others last for generations.

Leaving a gift in your will to the Nottinghamshire Historic Churches Trust isn't just a gift; it's an investment. Many of the county's historic churches, chapels and meeting houses are fighting a battle against the ravages of time. We need to make sure that they get the repairs and renovations they need to remain at the heart of the local communities. Leaving a gift in your Will helps the Trust to keep these precious buildings alive for future generations.

You're never too young to consider leaving us a legacy to ensure that future generations will enjoy our county's rich heritage of churches and chapels.

We welcome all legacies, however large or small, and we promise to use your gift to make a difference to the historic legacy of churches in Nottinghamshire.

To find out how you can keep Nottinghamshire's churches alive, please contact the Trust or visit [nottshistoricchurchtrust.org.uk](http://nottshistoricchurchtrust.org.uk)



## Friends of NHCT - Help Support the Work of the Trust

Over 70 Friends of NHCT were treated to an August afternoon packed with stories, facts and conjecture about some of the buildings and people involved in the events leading up to the sailing of the Mayflower to America 400 years ago. We visited Scrooby and Babworth churches in August, hearing from the experts about the buildings, the people, and the plans to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the sailing of the Mayflower - see the article on page two. Afterwards we enjoyed a relaxing and delicious tea at Babworth Hall on a balmy summer afternoon.

This is just one of the events which was offered to Friends of NHCT this year, and if you would like to join them, and thereby support the work of the Trust in helping to fund repairs and upkeep of our county's churches, please contact the Secretary or find an application form on the website [www.nottshistoricchurchtrust.org.uk](http://www.nottshistoricchurchtrust.org.uk)

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