



## Chairman's Welcome



I introduced the last newsletter as the "Lockdown Newsletter". Whilst we are no longer under such formal restriction, life still has a long way to go before returning to "normal". In some ways, it is perhaps more difficult to manage, given the muddled messages we receive. Maybe this is how it is going to be for a while! However, happily, many people seem to have found a number of positives in the last few months; whether more quality quiet time, or time spent with children or grandchildren, avoiding the commute, or simply appreciating the beauties of nature more than before, a more restricted life has had its upsides.

Like many other organisations, NHCT quickly adapted to current circumstances. We held our first "Zoom" meeting of the Trustees, and as matters stand, both our AGM and Trustees' meeting next month will be held in this way. September will also be a critical month for the Trust as the Ride+Stride will take place on 12th September. There is more of that below, but the event has always been vital to our financial well-being and is even more so this year.

Many charities have been badly hit by recent events. You will know of the 1200 redundancies announced by the National Trust as a particularly stark example. Due to the nature of our organisation, operating as we do with low overheads, we have not seen such a dreadful decline but nevertheless, funding is particularly pressurised. That is why I especially want to thank you, our friends and supporters, for your continued membership. I fully appreciate that the Summer Party and our church visits have not taken place, but your practical and moral support is hugely important to the continuation of the Trust. Those thanks are particularly extended to Anthea Moat and Maureen Hallam who continue to provide stalwart help in particularly difficult circumstances.

Hopefully, many of you will be able to take part in some way in the Ride+Stride next month. If so, I hope you have a wonderful day, and that the weather repays all the effort that has been made to date by the organisers, Graeme Renton and Margaret Lowe, and by you, on the day!

**Richard Brackenbury** - NHCT Chairman



To all walkers, riders, and anyone who enjoys exploring locally, the annual Ride+Stride for Churches will be held this year, albeit with rather fewer opportunities to actually explore churches themselves because of social distancing restrictions. Compliance with church rules will mean many churches will not be open or able to put on events or refreshments for visitors. However, those taking part will still be able to tick off the churches they visit by taking a photograph if the church does not have the official register pinned up anywhere and is not open to welcome them.

The event is a major fundraiser for the churches who sign up as well as for NHCT. For those who haven't taken part before, the idea is that people get sponsored to visit churches by some form of 'people power' - horse riders have been known, and all forms of bicycle from penny farthings and historic tandems to racing bikes and children's, as well as walkers and runners. Churches that sign up to take part receive half the sponsor money raised by their 'team' and the rest goes to NHCT. Doing this with family and friends can be a great day out, especially in these strange times, and many of our churches are particularly in need of income due to being closed because of the pandemic.

To register as a participant or to request a sponsorship form and a list of participating churches, or indeed to register your church as participating, please contact the NHCT Ride+Stride Organiser, Margaret Lowe, on [info.nhct@gmail.com](mailto:info.nhct@gmail.com) or ring 07757 800 919 or go to [www.nottshistoricchurchtrust.org.uk/rideandstride](http://www.nottshistoricchurchtrust.org.uk/rideandstride)

# Looking Back at the Very First Friends' Visit (2008)

How many recall the very first church crawl trip we held on 19th July 2008 to West Markham, Egmanton, and Ossington? Here is a brief reminder of the main delights each has to offer.

## West Markham, All Saints:

The lovely two-celled church, a mixture of herringbone stonework, render, and brick, sits inside a circular graveyard which implies early origins. The west gable is highly unusual for Nottinghamshire being timber-framed with a little weatherboarded turret above. Inside the 17th century porch are two stone benches, one of which has the battered remains of a medieval cross slab. The main doorway is Norman, or Transitional, say c.1200 with a wooden door perhaps contemporary, which leads into the aisleless nave. You are greeted immediately by the extraordinary tub font, decorated with crude human figures, and almost without doubt dating from around 1180. To the west is an ancient ladder now no longer in use, which once gave access to the bells. There is 17th century pulpit and contemporary, or slightly earlier, benches, and an alms box of around the same period. Of the monuments the best is of a priest of c.1100 with angels supporting his pillow.



## Egmanton, Our Lady of Egmanton:

The church has a unique dedication which came about, legend has it, from a woman witnessing a vision of Our Lady in what is now Lady Wood. As a result Egmanton is a pilgrim church and many small crosses throughout the building bear witness to those holy travellers. The fabric of the building ranges from the 12th to the 15th centuries but the most significant features came into being in 1896-8 when Sir Ninian Comper created a new Rood Screen and loft, pulpit, and an organ case in a remarkable medieval revival style. The screen is complete with a cast-iron spiral staircase, canopy, and beautifully carved rood. The organ case is modelled on Freiburg im Breisgau Cathedral. All is sumptuously painted and gilded, and was restored by Michelle Pepper between 2004 and 2014 with major grants from the Trust.

## Ossington, Holy Rood:

Ossington church has a fascinating history, first recorded in the mid-12th century when it was granted to Lenton Priory. However the Knights Hospitaller who were already there challenged their right to the advowson. By 1204-6 the Hospitallers certainly held the presentation of the church and had a preceptory nearby. By the late 18th century the manor was held by the Denison family and on the death of William Denison in 1782 his younger brother Robert commissioned a new church in his memory. The medieval building was demolished and in 1784 the architect John Carr rebuilt in neo-Classical style, complete with mausoleum to the east for William. The mausoleum had to be demolished in 1838 due to instability, but the church otherwise remains much as Carr designed it. However, glimpses of its predecessor still remain in the form of the remarkable wall monument of 1602 to William Cartwright and his wife with their twelve children kneeling below, and a tomb-chest with fine brasses to Reynald Peckham, who died in 1551, and his wife, but with the surprise of a large 14th century female figure on the reverse side, so the brasses are clearly palimpsests, reused from an earlier memorial. Of Carr's church the best monuments are those to William and Robert Denison by the sculptor Joseph Nollekens, 1782 and 1785. Finally, all Friends who were there must recall the delightful little barrel organ, designed by Robson and Son of St Martin's Lane, Charing Cross (organ builder to William IV) of 1836.

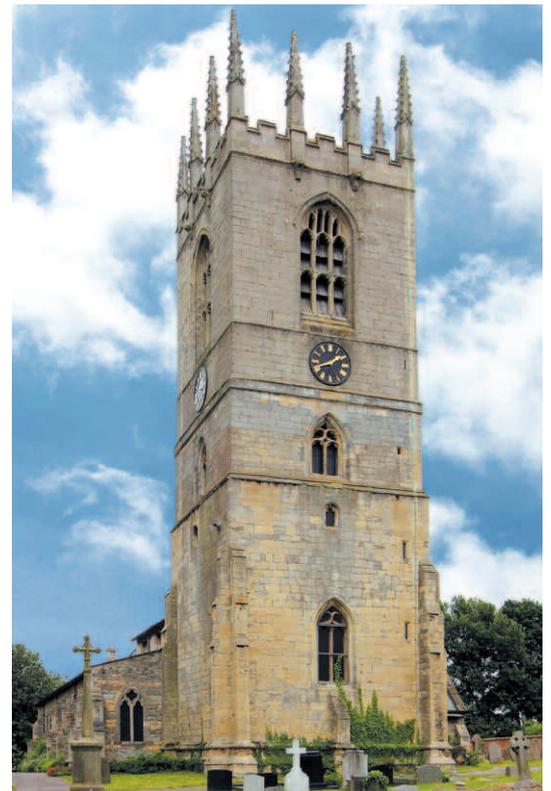


# The Church of St Peter and St Paul, Sturton-le-Steeple

## The Pilgrim Fathers and a Nottinghamshire Landmark

It is 400 years since the Mayflower set sail from Plymouth carrying families from Nottinghamshire amongst the pilgrims. The Scrooby and Babworth separatists, Richard Clyfton and William Brewster, were discussed in our Autumn 2017 newsletter, but the role of John Robinson of Sturton-le-Steeple is less well-known. Robinson was born into a wealthy local farming family and educated at Cambridge University. He married Bridget White at Greasley church in 1604; the names of two of their children, Mercy and Fear, reflect their Puritan beliefs. After being ejected from a Norwich curacy, Robinson returned to his birthplace, becoming involved in local separatist activity. With close links to Clyfton, Brewster and to John Smyth of Gainsborough, he eventually moved to Leyden with the others. Although he did not sail in the Mayflower, he was a key leader in the Leyden separatist church, and an important figure in the movement until his death there in 1625.

So to the church of St Peter and St Paul at Sturton, boasting one of the most impressive towers in the county, visible for miles around. It is crowned with twelve tall, graceful pinnacles, and beneath are large bell-openings with transoms. Smaller openings below relate to a mid-fourteenth century bell stage, showing how the tower was aggrandised, probably in the late fifteenth century. After all this promise, it is disappointing to find that the rest was almost completely rebuilt after a fire in 1901, but careful examination shows that more of the church known by Robinson survives than first appears. It was rebuilt by Charles Hodgson Fowler, but it had been thoroughly restored before the fire, in 1870 by Ewan Christian. This had involved completely rebuilding the north and east walls, as well as much other work. Interestingly, Hodgson Fowler tried to bring it back to its appearance before 1870. In doing so, he scrupulously preserved what evidence remained of the early building. This includes the north wall of the chancel, which has a Norman window and bits and pieces of carving, probably from a doorway. In addition, the west respond of the north arcade is preserved, work of the turn of the twelfth and thirteenth century, carried forward in spirit by Fowler.



*The impressive tower of St Peter and St Paul's church at Sturton*



*Monument to Dame Frances Earle, who died circa 1687*

Some monuments survive as well, showing that there were interesting aristocratic connections. There is an

early thirteenth century effigy of Lady Olivia Montbegon, but the most important is that to Dame Frances Earle, who died circa 1687. It is of an ambition rarely seen in Nottinghamshire at this time, a standing figure within a classical architectural setting 'like a Roman matron' as Pevsner said in 1951. Sooty, broken and blackened, it is crying out for cleaning and restoration, a worthy project for the future.

**Clare Hartwell** - author of several revisions of Pevsner's *Buildings of England*

(Photographs by Dr Chris Brooke)

*For Robinson, see Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 'Robinson, John' by K. L. Sprunger*

<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/23847>

*published online on 23 September 2004 and 28 September 2006.*

*The revised Pevsner Architectural guide, Nottinghamshire by Clare Hartwell, Nikolaus Pevsner and Elizabeth Williamson is published on 20th September 2020.*

# Graeme Renton

## Profile: Trustee and Chair of the Grants Sub-Committee



Graeme joined the Nottinghamshire Historic Churches Trust, as a trustee in 2005. He subsequently became chair of the Grants Sub-Committee and he has been heavily involved in Ride+Stride over the past eight years.

Graeme was born in 1956 and grew up in Edinburgh where he went to school, and subsequently to Edinburgh University where he graduated in 1980. He joined the international architectural practice of BDP in Preston and then moved to Nottingham in 1981, initially to work on the QMC, but subsequently on projects across the East Midlands. Graeme soon came to specialise in historic buildings and especially listed church buildings, among them St Peter's, Clayworth, St Mary's, Edwinstowe, St Lawrence's, Gotham and St Michael's, Linby. Clayworth remains a favourite because much has changed but it remains both a place of worship and a celebration of art. He is keen to

stress that his work has also included modern churches as with the Grade II listed St Paulinus, Ollerton, where he designed a modern extension to meet the needs of an expanding community. He looks after around 50 churches and he takes the view that all churches are part of our heritage, whether redundant medieval buildings, or multi-purpose buildings like St Barnabas, Inham Nook, where Graeme designed a sympathetic extension 20 years ago.

Graeme has been on the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) for many years. He believes it plays an important role in assessing what needs to be done in conservation terms, and that the Southwell DAC is particularly fortunate in the range of skills brought to meetings by its members.

Graeme spent 39 years with BDP, travelling almost daily to their offices in Birmingham, or to oversee projects in London, including the Royal Albert Hall. Over time his conservation work took him to projects in London, Manchester, Sheffield, Glasgow and Aberdeen. He also worked on Lancaster Castle and the private Chapel of the Savoy as part of the Duchy of Lancaster's Estate. In November 2019 he finally parted company with BDP when he took retirement, but this gave him the opportunity to practice under his own name with work closer to the East Midlands and predominantly with churches. There is time now for some gardening and pursuing interests in wood, especially marquetry and sculpture, wildlife, walking and cycling, as well as regular visits to Scotland.

Graeme has become hugely knowledgeable through his career especially in relation to the repair and conservation of churches. As such he is a most valuable asset to the Nottinghamshire Historic Churches Trust, and in semi-retirement he continues to sit on the DAC, and to take a practical interest in providing churches with finance, encouragement, and assistance in the main challenges that they face.

He is currently President of the Ecclesiastical Architects and Surveyors Association in what has been an interesting but challenging year. Graeme will be leading a slightly revamped version of the Ride+Stride on 12th September, which will go ahead despite the coronavirus situation.

**Professor John Beckett** - *NHCT Trustee*

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