



# SOMERSET CHURCHES TRUST

2017 Annual Report and Accounts  
for the year ended 30th June 2017





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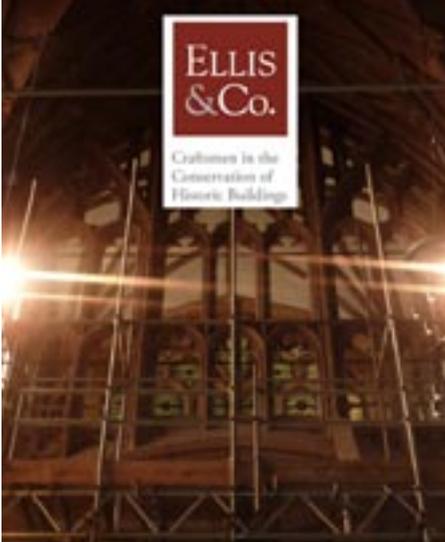
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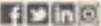


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## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2017

It is my sad responsibility to inform those members who do not already know, that the Trust founder and former chairman Hugh Playfair died peacefully on 21st December 2017. Our thoughts are very much with Bridget and his family.

Tributes to Hugh's outstanding contribution towards the preservation and enhancement of Christian places of worship in Somerset from William Newsom and Jane Venner-Pack are on pages 4–5.

Beside this loss my own report feels rather hollow. Last year we were looking for new Trustees and a new Chairman, and I am delighted to report that we have been very successful in both areas.

Our new Chairman is **Dr Axel Palmer**. Axel is a Lay member of the Bath and Wells Diocesan Finance Group, a former Churchwarden and Parish Council Chairman. Professionally, he has a banking background, specialising in insolvency and litigation. He holds a PhD in Economic Crime, writing and lecturing at Bristol Law School on fraud, bribery and corruption. His wide experience and close connection with the Diocese will be of great benefit in helping to fulfil the Trust's mission.

To find additional Trustees a small working party was set up led by William Newsom, as a result of which we have some new, well qualified Trustees who can carry the work of our Trust forward. We welcome Father Peter Clarke, Bob Croft, The Venerable Simon Hill, Archdeacon of Taunton, Andrew Stebbings and Anthony Sutcliffe.

**Father Peter Clarke** is a Roman Catholic Priest, he is Chaplain to Leweston School and acts as a locum for a total of 18 churches across Somerset. During his Anglican days, he was a member of the Diocesan Finance Committee, on the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) and a Prebendary at Wells Cathedral. **Bob Croft** is Head of the unit of Historic Environment and Estates Manager in Somerset Records office. He is a long-standing member of the DAC and active member of Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society. **The Venerable Simon Hill**, Archdeacon of Taunton will help maintain and cement our important links to the Diocese and DAC as well as bringing his practical experience and understanding of the challenges which parishes face. **Andrew Stebbings** lives in Somerset and is a partner in a leading firm of London lawyers, he is currently winding down to retirement. He is actively involved in the running of two significant charitable trusts. **Anthony Sutcliffe** is a retired Chartered Surveyor, having practised in the UK and abroad and is a governor of his local primary school. He has been churchwarden and has a keen interest in church buildings.

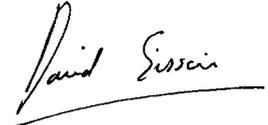
However, we sadly say goodbye to Jennifer Beazley, who stands down as a Trustee. Jennifer was a founding member of the original Trust, and has served for over twenty years. As a member of the DAC with an expertise in church decoration, she added a most helpful dimension to our discussions on grant allocations. Jennifer will continue as grants assessor for north east Somerset.

More movements have been that Sarah Newsom and Gill Hawkings have retired from their posts as Trust Secretary and Membership Secretary respectively, both of which have been taken on by Jim Allwood, whose former role as Grants Secretary has been filled by Anthony Sutcliffe. Our heartfelt thanks to all of them.

Another major change is that Chris Hawkings will no longer be organising Ride+Stride. Chris has done a great job over several years and latterly we have seen an encouraging

upswing in the revenue from this, our main fund raising activity. His report is on pages 8–9. We are still looking for a replacement: there is a small sub-committee working on this, but anyone interested in helping please contact Philip Skelhorn (see back page).

Finally I would like to pay tribute to, and thank all those who helped me during my term as Chairman. It has been a privilege. I can take a modest sense of satisfaction in having played a small part in ensuring that our churches have remained open, in the words of our founder Hugh Playfair, ‘for worship, pilgrimage, visitors and community’.



*David Sisson,  
Past Chairman*

## HUGH PLAYFAIR

### TRIBUTES FROM JANE VENNER-PACK ...

It is hard to put into words the magnitude of Hugh’s gift to us in the inspiration, building and guiding of the Trust. Nor, indeed, his legacy to us, his vision of the future of our churches and chapels as described in his own words... ‘a glorious and sustainable future in which the buildings, made fit for today’s purpose, are shared with the community’... but remain... ‘a sanctuary for worship, prayer and reflection’.

In 1996 Hugh, then Chairman of the Diocesan Advisory Committee, organised a series of meetings throughout the county to discover the need for support for Somerset’s beautiful Christian buildings. He was always anxious that the Trust should be ecumenical and this was reflected in the like-minded people who became Trustees and officers, (and in the early name ‘Friends of Somerset Churches and Chapels’). Membership grew quickly to around five hundred, largely through Hugh’s tireless work and enthusiasm in spreading the word. He was a marvellous ‘networker’. His initiation of annual programmes of ‘church crawls’ and talks brought members together and made us all aware both of the beauty of the buildings and of their value to the communities they served.

Hugh was a member of a distinguished Scottish family with its roots in St Andrew’s- hence his well-known love of golf! His career as a schoolmaster had taken him to teach at Marlborough College, in Australia where he met and married Bridget, and back in England before retiring to Somerset. History was his subject; his knowledge of the architecture and history of church buildings was immeasurable and reflected in much of his writing, articles and booklets, but especially in his beautiful book on stained glass, ‘Jewels of Somerset’, which he wrote and produced to be sold for the Trust.

Softly spoken, kindly and yet determined, Hugh made many friends who shared his interests. He will be greatly missed. It was his joy and comfort that the Trust is still strong and moving forward, helping, inspiring and encouraging the ‘sustainable future’ of buildings that might otherwise become irrelevant to their towns, villages and communities.

We owe him a great debt. Our thanks are due for his vision and his life, and our love and sympathy go to Bridget, his children and grandchildren.

## ... AND WILLIAM NEWSOM

Hugh was born in December 1935. In 1960 at the age of 25 he was appointed to the teaching staff of Marlborough College where he remained until 1969. These two dates are approximate. I myself became a pupil at Marlborough in January 1965. I don't recall being taught by Hugh. However, he was a notable character, being a senior figure in the CCF (Combined Cadet Force). I clearly remember him on parade being very upstanding, marching ahead of his troop on Field Day.

Thereafter, we went our separate ways.

45 years later in 2012 I attended a fundraising dinner in Cadbury Court in aid of St Michael's, North Cadbury. There was a seating plan for dinner and I found myself alongside a place marked 'Hugh Playfair'. So I turned to the gentleman and said "That's an interesting name, there was a teacher at school with that name, are you related?", to which he said "I am that man", and we had a good laugh. Over dinner I revealed amongst other things that I was newly retired and also that my late father had been Chancellor of the Diocese of Bath and Wells (and two other dioceses) and I expressed an interest in ecclesiastical architecture.

At that point Hugh latched onto me and very rapidly I became a Trustee of Somerset Churches Trust and of St. Andrew's Conservation Trust. Those appointments have opened up a whole new life for me in my retirement. Hugh and I became close friends and we entertained each other in our own homes. At Trustees' meetings, I observed that when Hugh spoke there was silence; everyone listened carefully to what he had to say. He was held in very high regard in both trusts. A real expert in the field.



*Hugh at the Playfair Prizegiving, 30 October 2015*

I visited Hugh in the hospice and last saw him on 7 December. At a previous visit, I had given him a reference book on Somerset. I asked Bridget whether he was enjoying reading it, but she warned me that his concentration was not good. However, as soon as I sat down, Hugh proceeded to tell me that he had been studying the book and had spotted two errors (relating to the facts about Compton Pouncefoot). We had a very jolly conversation about a lot of things and he encouraged me to overrun my allotted half an hour slot (MAXIMUM in Bridget's email!). He was spot on to the end and that is how I will remember him.

## TREASURER'S REPORT

During the 12 months to 30 June 2017 our income was £33,440 (£33,255 in 2015–6). General expenditure was £3,109 (£2,460 in 2015–6) and grant payments made amounted to £53,100 (£31,300 in 2015–6). Exceptional expenses of £6,305 were paid in 2016–7 (correcting an overpayment from HMRC to which the Trust was not entitled). Grants approved but not paid at 30 June 2017 amounted to £35,100 (£55,700 in 2016). The Trust's total funds, after deducting grants approved but not yet paid, came to £55,389 (£54,815 in 2016).

### Highlights of the year to 30 June 2017

- The Ride+Stride event in September 2016 (with its tax relief) raised a net £9,243, a substantial rise from £5,970 in 2015.
- Our income from other donations was slightly higher than in 2015–6 at £5,111.
- Membership subscriptions (with tax relief) were £259 lower than in the previous year, at £17,010.

The surplus of income over expenditure for the year, before grants paid, amounted to £24,026 compared with £23,121 last year.

	2014–5	2015–6	2016–7
Total of grants awarded during the year	£25,800	£57,700	£36,500
Total of grants paid during the year	£19,500	£31,300	£53,100
Grants awarded but not yet paid	£28,300	£55,700	£35,100
Number of grants awarded	9	18	15
Average amount of grant awarded	£ 2,867	£ 3,260	£ 2,433

No trustee received any remuneration or other benefits during the current (or previous) year. During the year we paid £160 to cover travel expenses outside the county incurred by the Management Committee.

### Balance Sheet

Net funds rose during the year from £54,815 to £55,389, see below:

	30 June 2016	30 June 2017
Unrestricted funds ( <i>where there are no limitations on how the money can be spent</i> )	£66,295	£52,688
Designated funds ( <i>reserved as an 'emergency fund'</i> )	£20,000	£10,000
Endowment fund ( <i>a fund that we cannot spend, but whose income can be spent on grants to churches in the Axbridge Deanery</i> )	£24,220	£27,801
Provision to repay to HMRC an amount to which the Trust was not entitled	£6,305	£0
<b>Total funds</b>	<b>£110,515</b>	<b>£90,489</b>
Grants approved but not paid	(£55,700)	(£35,100)
<b>Net funds at 30 June</b>	<b>£54,815</b>	<b>£55,389</b>

### Full Trustees' Report and Accounts

A copy of the Trustees' Report and Accounts will be found on the website: [www.somersetchurchestrust.org](http://www.somersetchurchestrust.org) or can be requested from the Treasurer.

*Tony Davies, Treasurer*

## RECENT GRANT AWARDS

Following the 2015–16 financial year, which saw a record-breaking amount given to churches in the County, as a direct result of a policy decision to reduce the Trust's reserves, 2016-17 settled down to a lower, but still appreciable level. In all, £36,500 was awarded to 15 churches, with a further £12,500 of National Churches Trust grants applied for.

Place Name	Dedication	Offer Amount	Date of Grant Decision	Type of Work
Long Ashton	All Saints	£ 1,000	17th Oct 2016	CF
East Pennard	All Saints	£ 1,000	11th Jul 2016	CF
Newton St.Loe	Holy Trinity	£ 3,000	8th Apr 2017	R
Winsham	St. Stephen	£ 2,000	17th Oct 2016	R
Wiveliscombe	St. Andrew	£ 3,000	23rd Jan 2017	CF
West Quantoxhead	St. Etheldreda	£ 4,000	23rd Jan 2017	CF
Leigh-on-Mendip	St. Giles	£ 3,000	23rd Jan 2017	CF
Taunton	St. James	£ 1,000	11th Jul 2016	R
Pilton	St. John the Baptist	£ 1,000	11th Jul 2016	R
Staplegrove	St. John the Evangelist	£ 3,000	17th Oct 2016	CF
Pitcombe	St. Leonard	£ 2,500	11th Jul 2016	CF
Templecombe	St. Mary	£ 5,000	8th Apr 2017	R
South Barrow	St. Peter	£ 3,000	11th Jul 2016	CF
Wells	St. Thomas	£ 1,000	17th Oct 2016	R
Batcombe	The Blessed Virgin Mary	£ 3,000	17th Oct 2016	R

### National Churches Trust grants sponsored by The Somerset Churches Trust

Bradford-on-Tone	St.Giles	£ 4,500	17th Oct 2016	R
Enmore	St. Michael	£ 3,000	23rd Jan 2017	R
Martock	All Saints	£ 2,000	23rd Jan 2017	R
Swainswick	St. Mary	£ 3,000	17th Oct 2016	R

R = Repair CF = Community Facilities

After a relatively brief stint of two years as Grants Secretary, I have now handed the reins onto a fellow former Chartered Surveyor, Anthony Sutcliffe, until recently the Churchwarden of his local church in Ditcheat.

*Jim Allwood, former Grants Secretary*

## GRANTS AVAILABLE FOR ROOF ALARMS

We are delighted to be able to announce that the trust has been awarded £30,000 from Allchurches Trust to enable us to give grants to churches to help towards the installation of roof alarms, providing protection against theft of lead. We can grant up to £1,000 per installation including systems that are already in the process of being put in. The grants are on condition that churches must be members or become members of Somerset Churches Trust, that the alarm is approved by insurers and is maintained for at least 5 years.



Applications will be dealt with on a first come first served basis. For an Application Form please go to the Grants page on our website: [www.somersetchurchestrust.org](http://www.somersetchurchestrust.org).

Please print off and complete the form and either send the completed form to us as a scanned email attachment to: [somersetchurchestrust@gmail.com](mailto:somersetchurchestrust@gmail.com) or post it to our grants secretary, Anthony Sutcliffe, Ditcheat Hill Farmhouse, Ditcheat, Somerset, BA4 6TL.

## MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT

At the time of writing, the Trust has 119 family members, 227 individual members, 235 church members and six corporate members, making a total of 587. Since taking over from Gill Hawkings, I have had great fun manipulating the membership database (some people call me an 'Excel nerd'!) so I have a clearer idea of where subscriptions are coming from (or not in some cases!).

I should stress, as Gill did last year, that a number of members are still paying the old rates of membership, which were revised from July 2012 to be: individual membership £20, family membership £30, churches £30 or £60 depending on size on congregation; and corporate £100. If all those members increased their payments to the current minimum, it would produce a lot of extra money to be used for grants.

Please also review your Gift Aid status. Personal tax allowances have increased and you may no longer be able to gift aid subscriptions or you may now be able to gift aid some which you couldn't before. Either way, please let me know.

To save administration costs, it is useful to be able to contact members by email. At present, we have only 140 emails for the 383 individual and family members. It would be hugely helpful if members could keep me up to date with addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses etc.

*Jim Allwood, Membership Secretary. Email: [jim.allwood2013@gmail.com](mailto:jim.allwood2013@gmail.com)*

## RIDE+STRIDE REPORT



### Results for 2016

For the event held on 10th September 2016 the final total raised amounted to £12,907 and represented a significant increase over the amount raised in 2015 of £9,349. After returning

the 50% refunds to churches the net amount to our funds was £9,243 compared with £5,970 in 2015. An increase of over 54%!

Increased participation in the 2016 event resulted from a joint letter from the Bishops of Bath and Wells and Taunton which was sent to every PCC encouraging them to take part. This resulted in almost 70 churches responding with many confirming that they would have refreshments available. This initiative was repeated for the event held on 9th September 2017 with even better results. We had 115 places of worship on the list of participating churches. So far we have received over £17,000 in sponsorship, with a further £3,000+ due from Gift Aid tax relief on that sponsorship.

## Prospects for 2017

I am delighted that we seem to have turned a corner and after many years of reducing income we are now increasing the amount raised each year. This is our main fund raising event and makes a significant contribution to the amount we have available for grants to churches.

My goal has been to try and reverse the decline in our income from this event and having achieved this after nine years of being the Ride+Stride Coordinator/Administrator I am now standing down from this rôle. During this time Ride+Stride has raised £139,000 in total for churches and I am very proud to have been a part of this. We have a small sub-committee looking at the future of Ride+Stride in the county and I wish them well.

Every year I have asked someone who has participated in the event to write about their experience. This year our new Chairman, Dr. Axel Palmer tells us about his day, followed by an unusual Ride+Stride in Africa by William Newsom.

*Chris Hawkings.  
Ride+Stride Administrator, 2017*

## BRAVING THE ELEMENTS FOR RIDE+STRIDE

Ride+Stride is a sponsored bike ride or walk in which people all over England walk, cycle or ride on horseback or even mobility scooters between churches, exploring and enjoying the countryside from Cornwall to Northumberland. The money they raise helps to save historic churches, chapels and meeting houses for future generations by helping to fund urgent repairs and the installation of modern facilities.

The idea is to visit as many places of worship as possible open nearby and also get sponsored for visiting them. The sponsorship money raised is shared 50/50 between Somerset Churches Trust that helps historic churches, and the individual church walker's or rider's choice: in my case, St Michael's, Compton Martin.

The day was damp, very damp. Who could be blamed for deciding that this was not the day to venture out into the Somerset countryside? Well, some very hardy people did just that. As Trust chairman, I thought I should dust down the bicycle from the garage, inflate the tyres and hope that the old adage of 'riding a bike' was true. Whilst the thought of touring around Wells or the Levels might have had some superficial attraction, I could not resist the brilliant 'East Mendip Churches Heritage Trail' so professionally put together by Graham Harris.



*A windswept Chairman's  
'selfie'*



*Axel, bike and lycra!*

As living proof of the warning by a celebrated Olympic cyclist that men over 8st should not wear lycra, I started at Chantry, to discover that the intrepid, and great supporters of the Trust's Ride+Stride, Bishop Peter and Jane Hancock had been there not 30 minutes before. Mercifully, my visit (including welcome refreshments) coincided with the heavens opening – I was not so lucky between Great Elm and Mells, at which time my lack of pre tour cycle maintenance became evident as some much needed ('Granny cog') gears gave up. Upon sober reflection, I should have noted the areas where the contour lines were rather closely bunched!



*Holy Trinity, Chantry  
Chantry is a Thankful Village: all its men returned from World War I*

The East Mendip trail is very well put together and is away from main roads. I do wish to pay tribute to the organisers and Churchwardens in each parish for their terrific commitment in being present in each of the twelve churches. The welcomes were very warm and pride in the church buildings very evident and embodying the Trust's strapline of 'keeping Somerset Churches and Chapels alive.' We all have an interest in promoting greater access to churches and this East Mendip initiative is a positive contribution for which all involved in each parish should be rightly proud. Such commitment is greatly appreciated especially on a somewhat climatically miserable day.

The 'acid test' is would I do it again? It was good fun, an enjoyable day. What I will do next time is get a group of people together so that it would not be a lonely journey. This will also enable us to raise more sponsorship – not just for our local parish church but provide vital funding for Somerset Churches Trust: this is our main source of income for grant-giving. Clearly, some bicycle maintenance will be appropriate, not to mention training. Lycra? Well, maybe, what do you think? Roll on 8th September 2018!

*Dr. Axel Palmer*

## CLIMBING KILIMANJARO FOR RIDE+STRIDE

I have had Kilimanjaro in my sights for many years. It is a truly iconic mountain rising high above the plains of Africa. This year an opportunity to climb it arose – over the dates when Ride+Stride would be taking place. I had not been thinking of seeking sponsorship for charity. However, I was shocked by the news that 'my hero', Hugh Playfair had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. As members of SCT will know, he was the founder Chairman of the Trust back in 1996, then known as Friends of Somerset Churches and Chapels. Also, my first boss at work, Richard Caws had died of pancreatic cancer 20 years ago. Tragically, it remains a killer. I therefore decided to raise money for both Pancreatic Cancer Research Fund and Somerset Churches Trust as part of Ride+Stride.



*William ready for the hard climb, with Kilimanjaro in the background*

The highlight of the trip was witnessing sunrise from the summit (from the rim of the volcano), which I regard as one of the natural wonders of the world.

Summit day started with us being woken at 11.00 pm (yes, pm). We were sleeping under canvas at high base camp (Barafu Camp) at 4,600 metres altitude. The summit of Kilimanjaro is at 5,895 m (19,340 feet), some 25% higher than Mont Blanc, the highest mountain in Europe. Kilimanjaro is the highest mountain on the continent of Africa. What makes it remarkable in the context of sunrise, is that it is a free standing mountain, meaning that it is not surrounded by other mountains. Kilimanjaro is an extinct volcano that last erupted 350 million years ago. Although I have climbed many big mountains around the world, I have never seen anything quite like Kilimanjaro.

Summit day was day 6 of an expedition that started on Monday 4 September 2017 when we entered Kilimanjaro National Park at the Machame Gate (1,800m). Day 1 was a trek through rain forest, day 2 through 'moorland', day 3 through 'semi-desert' and days 4 and 5 through 'Alpine Desert'. Acclimatisation and altitude sickness are big issues on a mountain of this size. The best way to cope is to sleep at altitude, which we did. The nights of days 3, 4 and 5 were all spent at around 4,000 metres.

On summit day itself, we departed from Barafu Camp at midnight. The main reason for departing at that hour is to catch the sunrise at the summit (also allowing enough time to cope with queues on some of the more constricted sections of the route). As we climbed, we were lit by a bright shining moon that was directly overhead. It was a clear night with many stars twinkling in the sky. It was also very cold such that the canvas of my rucksack froze. We had been warned about not letting our water bottles freeze, so I added a mineral supplement to mine and placed it in a special inner pocket of my rucksack that held it close to my back. That did the trick.

Initially, the night sky was very black. However, as we progressed ever upwards, the colours changed through various shades of grey. I then became aware of the horizontal line of the horizon in various shades of white, yellow and pink. It was an absolutely straight line uninterrupted by other mountains or lesser hills. We were looking across the plains of Tanzania. Furthermore, we were so high and the view so wide (over 180 degrees) that we were able to observe the curvature of the earth at either end of the view. I have never seen anything quite like it before.

At 6.30 am, my group of three reached Stellar Point, the first place on the rim on the crater. I turned round to witness the tremendous sight of the sun itself rising. Initially, there was the usual red glow as the sun rose behind the horizon. There suddenly I saw a tiny flame of red. This grew larger very quickly. Within two minutes, one could see the curve of the top of the sun. All the while, the horizon was a sequence of changing colours, more yellow, more pink and then the red of the sunrise itself. It was truly magical.

Through this endeavour, I raised good money for my two chosen charities, which goes to show that Ride+Stride can encompass any activity, whether cycling, walking, driving, baking or mountaineering, whether locally or further afield.



*Made it!(Did we ever doubt he would?)  
William at Kilimanjaro's summit.*

*William Newsom*

## Have you considered leaving a legacy to Somerset Churches Trust?

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### *Please leave a gift in your Will to Somerset Churches Trust*

#### WHY SHOULD I LEAVE A GIFT TO THE TRUST IN MY WILL?

You would be helping to ensure that the good work of Somerset Churches Trust to keep Churches open and alive for the community can be continued for the benefit of future generations. Your legacy, however large or small, will make a tangible difference to the Trust's ambitions for the future to help Churches in Somerset.

#### HOW WOULD THE MONEY I LEAVE TO SCT BE USED?

Unless you specify otherwise in your Will, the Trust would invest any legacy money so as to provide an income to support its future work. SCT seeks to build up an endowment that would be managed by independent financial advisers. If however, you would want your bequest to be deployed in some other way, such as for making immediate grants to Churches, you should specify this in your Will.

#### HOW DO I LEAVE A GIFT TO THE TRUST IN MY WILL?

It is very straightforward; it is done either when updating your Will, or at any other time via a simple codicil, the wording for which SCT can provide.

#### WHAT TYPE OF LEGACY SHOULD I LEAVE?

You have the choice in your Will either of leaving a specific sum of money or of leaving a percentage of the residue of your estate after specific bequests and costs have been met. In the context of the tax advantages referred to below, you may prefer the latter.

#### DON'T FORGET, THERE ARE TAX ADVANTAGES TOO

Subject to advice from your Independent Financial Adviser, the level of Inheritance Tax payable reduces from a marginal rate of 40% to 36% when you leave 10% or more of your net estate to a registered charity. That means that the net cost to your other beneficiaries from leaving 10% of your estate to charity is effectively zero.

If you decide to leave SCT a legacy, we would love to hear about it (in confidence).

Your decision is private and confidential. However, for the purpose of our confidential records, it would be very helpful to receive a brief note of any bequest to SCT. To do so, please use the contact details below.

#### WHO DO I CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION?

For further information on how to include SCT in your inheritance planning, please contact **William Newsom** on **01963 441533** or by email to **somersetchurchestrust@gmail.com**. He will be very happy to provide draft wording and talk you through the simple process.

***None of the above constitutes legal, taxation or other professional advice by the Trust.  
On all such matters you should seek your own independent professional advice.***

## BENJAMIN FERREY 1810–80

### **3rd in the series of Somerset church architects, sent in by Hugin in August 2017**

Benjamin Ferrey was honorary Bath and Wells diocesan architect from 1841 until his death in 1880. He was born in Christchurch, where his father of Huguenot descent was a well-to-do draper and sometime mayor. After attending Wimborne Grammar School he went to London in 1825 to study under Augustus Charles Pugin working alongside his more famous son. He stayed there until Pugin died in 1832. The hours were long, rising at 6 a.m. and working until 8 p.m. six days a week, but there were compensations such as a visit to Paris with Pugin in 1827. From an early age he was passionately fond of drawing especially of old buildings and became one of the best draughtsmen of the day. In his early twenties he toured Europe and in 1832 he joined the office of William Wilkins where he worked on plans for the National Gallery. This gave him an insight into Classical architecture, for until then he had been immersed in the Gothic style favoured by the Pugins.



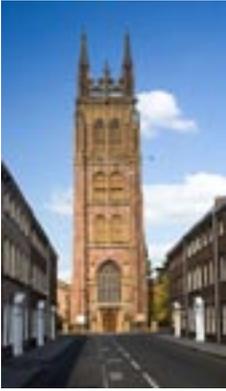
In 1834 he set up his own office in Bloomsbury with Thomas Larkins Walker, who had been a fellow pupil with Pugin. The practice thrived and in the middle decades of the 19th century he became 'one of the best employed and best liked architects of his day'. He married his first wife Ann Lucas in 1836 with whom he had a son Edmund and two daughters. He married again in 1872. In 1839 he was elected a Fellow of the RIBA, twice becoming Vice-President. He wrote many papers for the Institute and was awarded a Royal Gold Medal in 1870.

Writing about Victorian Gothic architecture, Charles Eastlake wrote of him, 'One of the earliest, ablest and most zealous pioneers of the modern Gothic school' adding that his work 'possessed rare charm of simplicity without lacking interest'. With High Church leanings, his forté was ecclesiastical architecture, especially Gothic churches which he built and restored along the lines of the Ecclesiological Society, for which he was a preferred architect. He seems to have been popular and a safe pair of hands, and in both his work and his character he was polite, even-tempered and unassuming.

In an obituary he was described as 'a close adherent to precedent rather than a bold originator ... his style is characterised more by elegance than vigour'. But he had his critics. The controversial Dean of Wells, Johnson, thought him 'rather a bungler'. Pevsner is unenthusiastic about some of his work. Hambridge St James he describes as 'very dull – the best thing about the church is the two splendid cedar trees by its side', but they are no longer there. Buckland St Mary he thought 'a noble incongruity'. More recently in 2007 the late church architect Alan Rome wrote of him as 'the excellent Benjamin Ferrey'.

He died at his home in London, where he mostly lived, and was buried in Highgate Cemetery. He was succeeded as honorary diocesan architect by John Dando Sedding.

Although he did a prodigious amount of work in Somerset it is only a small proportion of the total, for his parish was nation- if not world- wide. Some of his best known work in Somerset can be seen in Wells Cathedral, especially the West front dating from 1870



and in the Bishop’s Palace and Chapel. He was responsible for the meticulous rebuilding of Taunton St. Mary’s church tower (left) and the building, rebuilding, restoration and other work on at least forty parish churches in Somerset. Among these good examples include Buckland St Mary in the Decorated style (right), Castle Cary in the Perpendicular style, Corfe in the Norman style (below right) and Yeovil Holy Trinity (no longer a church) in the Early English style. Other builds and rebuilds include Chipstable, Enmore, Henton, Lufton, Othery, Wanstrow, West Hatch, West Lydford and Wookey Hole (with his son Edmund).



Restorations include Babcary, Dowlish Wake, Glastonbury St Benedict, Huish Episcopi, Street and Stoke sub Hamdon (with his son Edmund). Pevsner regarded restorations at Corston, Kelston, Keynsham and Publow as rather heavy-handed. So many Somerset churches owe their very existence to the genius of Benjamin Ferrey.

My thanks to Dr. Francis Burroughes for considerable help with this short piece.

*Hugh Playfair*

## NORTH PERROTT ROOF BLESSING

In last year’s Annual Report we featured the repair to the roof of St. Martin’s Church, North Perrott.

On 27th May 2017 a joyous Service of Thanksgiving was held, led by the Associate Vicar of the Wulfric Benefice, Revd. Jonathan Morris, and the Bishop of Bath and Wells, the Rt. Revd. Peter Hancock, who preached. Everyone who had helped in obtaining grants, overseeing the project and controlling the finances, was thanked for their dedication and hard work over five long years.



A wonderful tea was much enjoyed by all those who had crowded into the little church, and afterwards we went outside to witness the vicar and the Bishop atop the newly repaired roof as it was blessed.

*Rowena Wallace*

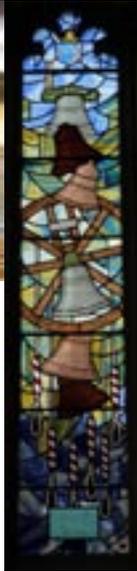
# A PICTORIAL LOOK BACK AT OUR VISITS IN 2017



*Ss Peter & Paul, South Petherton, 18th March*

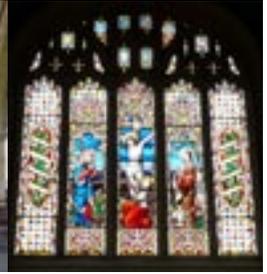
*Above: interior*

*Right: Centre pane of a window in memory of bellringers Reginald (1907–88) and Phyllis Beale (1912–2004)*



*St. Martin, Kingsbury Episcopi, 18th March*

*Left: interior Right: East window*



*Left: St. Benedict, Glastonbury, 8th April: preparing for the Annual Meeting*

*Below: Glastonbury Abbey, visited afterwards*



*All Saints, Martock, 18th March*

*Left: font and Nigel Burrell figures Right: organ*



*Left: St. Martin of Tours, West Coker, 20th May: plaque in north aisle*



*Blessed Virgin Mary, East Chinnock, 20th May*

*Left: interior with pulpit*

*Right: window in north-east nave*





Blessed Virgin Mary, Hardington Mandeville,  
20th May

Above: exterior

Right: Memorial window to Edward and  
Elisabeth Rendall, 1929



St. Mary, Stoke St. Mary, 15th  
June: window by Reyntiens



All Saints, Trull, 15th June

Above left: rood screen Above right: pulpit c1500



St. Giles, Bradford on Tone,  
15th June

Memorial window to Hugh  
Easton, Artist in stained glass,  
1906–1965 and James Easton,  
Engineer, 1796–1871



St. Michael, Milverton,  
15th June Above:  
tower Right: interior

Left: Bath Abbey, 18th  
July  
metallic butterfly mobile,  
capturing many colours





*URC Chapel, Middle Lambrook, 14th October: interior*



*former URC Chapel, Stoke sub Hamdon, 14th October*



*Baptist Chapel, Montacute, 14th October*



*Ray Willis at the organ of The Blessed Virgin Mary North Petherton.*

## AUTUMN TALK, 24th NOVEMBER

We ended our 2017 programme with a most successful talk and organ recital by Ray Willis at The Bishop's Palace Chapel in Wells on Friday 24th November with everyone joining in a rendition of The Old Hundredth to demonstrate the development of church music down the ages.

Ray Willis is not only the organist at the Bishop's Palace Chapel but is also one of the Bath and Wells Diocesan Committee Organ Advisors, organist at Yeovil Parish Church and Musical Director to the Exeter University Choral Society. Ray took time out of his busy schedule to explain to us and to demonstrate with organ pieces how church music has developed and the important part it plays in the church liturgy.

The chapel was filled to capacity and Ray got us all on our feet to sing 'All people that on earth do dwell' starting very slowly and in unison and finally with the last verse sung at a modern tempo with full harmonies on the organ to demonstrate how the interpretation of music in churches has developed over the centuries. Members of the trust love looking at church buildings but Ray's talk made us realise that it is music that brings those buildings to life.

A request from a member of the audience resulted in an impromptu performance of the toccata from Widor's Fifth Organ Symphony in F – an unexpected and thrilling end to a great talk and recital.

We then retired to the great entrance hall in the Palace for a glass of wine and the chance to warm up by a roaring log fire. Christmas didn't seem that far away.

*Chris Hawkings*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to our **advertisers** for their support, and especially to **Ellis & Co.**, who have very generously covered the postage costs of this Report; to **Roger and Dorothy Bark**, for supplying most of the photographs; to **contributors** of articles; and everyone who arranged our **programme of visits**, last year and for 2018 (see separate Events leaflet, enclosed).

If you have any interesting articles for next year's Report, please email:

**rowena@directoffset.co.uk** or **phone 01458 272844**

If you have ideas for places to visit in 2019, please email us at:

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# Renny Heritage

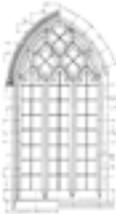
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## THE COVER PHOTOGRAPH

by Roger Bark, is of the Long Sutton Quaker Tapestry, subject of a talk on 8 July 2017 during their Tercentenary Weekend, and one of our Visits last year.