

FRIENDS OF SOMERSET CHURCHES AND CHAPELS

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED

30th JUNE 2013





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Chairman's Report



As you read this in the New Year FSCC will have been re-launched and re-named **Somerset Churches Trust**. This became our official title on 1st January 2014.

Those of you who were able to come along will have enjoyed the splendid evening in Wells Town Hall at the end of November when, under our President Lady Gass, Lord Lieutenant of Somerset, the new look Trust was well and truly launched. At that event we also launched The Playfair Prize, named in honour of Hugh Playfair, and inspired by his book, *Keeping Somerset Churches Alive*. It will be awarded in 2015 to the church or chapel judged to have made most successfully changes that have allowed the building to play a wider and fuller part in the life of its community. For full

details please consult our new website: **www.somersetchurchestrust.org**

So why all these changes? After sixteen years of consolidation, the Trustees felt that we needed to modernise, and try to raise our profile within the County. Our new name gives us better identification with the National Churches Trust with whom we are affiliated and moves us in line with other County Trusts, most of whom use similar shorter titles. Our new name and logo are also more easily promoted as a 'brand' in a rapidly changing world, where charities in a sense compete for donors. Additionally to meet the challenge of promoting our work we have modernised and upgraded our web-site. Do visit the site at **www.somersetchurchestrust.org**. Behind these easily stated changes lies an enormous amount of work, much of which fell to Jane Venner-Pack and Angela Dudley. Heartfelt thanks go to both.

While the re-launch has been a major thrust of activity this year we have however continued to do the things for which the Trust was founded, namely giving grants and raising an understanding about our Christian places of worship in Somerset. Our programme of visits was as usual enjoyed by a good cross-section of members, once again drawing on the rich seam of Somerset churches with which we are blessed. Our winter talk was of special note, when over 90 members packed into Wells Museum to hear Jill Channer, a renowned Architectural Glass expert, lead us through this fascinating topic. This also gave a useful platform from which Hugh Playfair was able to sell copies of his book *Jewels of Somerset*. Copies are still available; do contact Hugh at Blackford House, Blackford, Yeovil BA22 7EE.

One side effect of the re-launch has been Gill Hawkings' Herculean efforts in updating all our membership and subscription records. While membership numbers decreased, subscription income has increased! Thank you, Gill, for your hours of valuable work.

In the New Year we will be canvassing for members, so if you know like-minded friends or neighbours, could you play your part and encourage them to join?

But we would not be the strong supportive Trust which we are today without all the work and contributions from those who are the Friends of Somerset Churches and Chapels. It has been *your* membership and subscriptions which have enabled the Trust (by whatever name) to support so many Somerset communities in their stewardship, repair, restoration and upgrading of their churches, for now and for future generations.

With very best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'David Sisson'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line underneath it.

CHAIRMAN

Grant overview for the year

We had a dearth of applications in the later part of 2012 – only 5 for the July and October meetings – with one very honest church stating that they had raised enough funds and therefore didn't need to take up the trust's grant offer. However the first two meetings of 2013 made up for the shortfall, with a total of 14 churches coming forward with requests for grants during the financial year between 1st July 2012 and the 30th June 2013. The Trustees were able to offer grants totalling £25,000 to 9 of them. Unfortunately, we did not have so much to give as in the previous two years, due to reduced income from the Ride and Stride, and we tried to spread our giving fairly between those applications that were eligible. Although the Trust has now offered grants to the sum of £549,600 in total, we could give far more if we could only increase our funds through membership and donations.

Thanks again to the generosity of the National Churches Trust (NCT), we have also been able to give additional grants to selected churches for small scale repairs – to the tune of £12,000 within our own financial year – allowing us to direct our own funds towards the inclusion of community facilities within the church structure.

A large number of churches are beginning to make use of this new direction and out of the grants awarded, nearly half were for internal works to provide facilities for community use.

Place name	Dedication	Offer Amount £	Date of Grant Decision
Biddisham	Holy Trinity	2,000	2-Jul-12
Horsington	St John the Baptist	6,000	2-Jul-12
Minehead	St Andrew	3,000	2-Jul-13
North Petherton	St Mary the Virgin	5,000	8-Oct-12
Middlezoy	Holy Cross	3,000	14-Jan-13
Binegar	Holy Trinity	1,500	20-Apr-13
Glastonbury	St Benedict	2,000	20-Apr-13
Larkhall, Bath	St Saviour	1,500	20-Apr-13
Weston-in-Gordano	St Peter & St Paul	1,000	20-Apr-13
Total as at 30th June 2013		25,000	
NCT grant awards			
Weston Bampfylde	Holy Cross	5,000	2-Jul-12
Binegar	Holy Trinity	2,000	20-Apr-13
Larkhall, Bath	St Saviours	3,000	20-Apr-13
Weston-in-Gordano	St Peter & St Paul	2,000	20-Apr-13
Total of NCT grant awards		12,000	

Please help us to give more, by encouraging everyone you know to become members and take advantage of our wonderful events calendar. We are still one of the most active county trusts when it comes to church crawls, talks and events – even if we can't all take part in the annual Ride and Stride!

ANGELA DUDLEY, GRANTS SECRETARY

Treasurer's Report

This Treasurer's Report covers the 12 months ended 30 June 2013. During this period our unrestricted (general) income amounted to £36,582 (2012, £29,573) and general expenditure £3,746 (2012, £2,468) Grant payments amounted to £60,390 (2012, £48,500). Grants approved but not paid at 30 June 2013 amounted to £21,500 (2012, £56,750) and total funds after deducting grants approved but not paid amounted to £71,354 (2012 £65,054). Total income, including designated and endowment funds amounted to £37,519 (2012, £34,854) .

TOTAL INCOME

	2013	2012
Subscriptions	£17,523	£14,821
Donations	£5,078	£7,295
Ride & Stride	£9,216	£9,782
Publications and events	£4,607	£1,581
Deposit interest and investment income	£1,095	£1,375
Total	£37,519	£34,854

It is pleasing to note the increase in subscriptions of £2,700 which reflects the efforts to increase recurring income. General donations increased by £2,000 offset by the donations of £4,250 received in 2012 to cover the printing of *Jewels of Somerset*. This book was printed in 2013 and contributed to the increase in publications income.

GENERAL EXPENDITURE

The major expense items include the cost of reprinting *Keeping Somerset Churches Alive* of £1,300. This book enjoys a steady demand. Other printing costs of £976 (2012, £1,327) include the cost of printing the annual review, membership leaflets and annual programme. Postage continues to be a significant cost, largely the cost of posting the annual review, and amounted to £547 (2012, £450).

No trustee received any remuneration or other benefits during the current or previous year. Surplus of general income over expenditure for the year, before grants paid, amounted to £32,836 compared with £27,105 last year.

GRANTS PAID TO CHURCHES

There has been a substantial increase in grants paid during the year, from £48,500 to £60,390, reflecting the policy agreed last year of paying down our general reserves. Grants approved by the Trustees but not paid at 30 June 2013 amounted to £21,500, a decrease of £35,250.

BALANCE SHEET

Net funds increased by a modest £6,500.

	2013	2012
Unrestricted funds	£41,846	£68,543
Designated funds	£31,500	£35,670
Endowment fund	£19,508	£17,591
Total funds	£92,854	£121,804
Grants approved but not paid	(£21,500)	(£56,750)
Net funds at 30 June	£71,354	£65,054

A copy of the full Trustees Report and Accounts can be found on the website or requested from the Treasurer on payment of £3 to cover the costs of printing and postage.

PAUL HEAL, TREASURER

Ride and Stride Report

When we set out on our cycle ride or walk to raise money for the Friends of Somerset Churches and Chapels I think we often forget that we are taking part in a much larger country-wide event. We are one of 34 County Churches Trusts supported by The National Churches Trust (NCT) that take part in this major national event on the same day every year.

Nationally some 20,000 cyclists and walkers take part visiting more than 8,000 places of worship, which are open on the day out of Britain's 47,000 churches, chapels and meeting houses. In 2012 over £1,250,000 was raised with £30,000,000 having been donated since the event began. This is a significant contribution towards the cost of maintaining our ecclesiastical heritage.

This national event started in Suffolk in 1982 when Judith Foord from Aldeburgh, who was sitting in the bath at the time, came up with the idea of a sponsored bike ride for Suffolk. From the start Judith planned for the ride to become even bigger as, for cyclists living on the Suffolk border, it made sense for churches in adjoining counties to become involved too.

In the first year the Suffolk event raised £58,110 and in 2012 the total raised in Suffolk alone was over £150,000. Nearly every county is now involved and for the first time churches in London are also taking part under the auspices of The County of London Trust. FSCC first took part in 1997 when £12,600 was raised. The amount increased each year to reach a maximum of £35,108 in 2001. Since then, apart from the odd blip, the total sponsorship collected on behalf of FSCC has steadily declined.

For the event held on 8th September 2012 the final total raised amounted to £14,941 and continues the downward trend of recent years. (2011 – £16,095). After returning the 50% refunds to churches the net amount to FSCC funds came to £9,216 (2011 – £9,782).



Rood screen, St John the Baptist, Bathwick

with its ornate rood screen decorated by Comper, to the simplicity of The Quaker Meeting House in York Street. Two other gems were the starting point of Bath Elim Church where it was possible to see the incredible domed roof normally hidden from view above a false ceiling and the finishing point of the magnificent Georgian St Michael's Chapel Within, in the courtyard of St John's Hospital almshouses.

For the event on 14th September 2013 in addition to the locally organized rides and walks we repeated the Ten Towers cycle route visiting the churches in the Cheddar Valley and also introduced a new walking route – The Bath Walk. Fourteen places of worship, a number of them not normally open, were included in the route and 40 people took part. A wonderful variety of buildings was open from the ornate, such as St Mary's Roman Catholic Church in Julian Road and St John the Baptist Bathwick



Above the false ceiling at Bath Elim Church, showing the domed roof



*Some walkers outside St Michael's Chapel
Within, St John's Hospital almshouses*

Colin Parfitt from Blagdon brought along the whole family to take part. Here is his account of the day.

"In previous years on Heritage Open Days, our family have met and explored together many interesting buildings in Bristol not normally open to the public. This year, having seen the publicity for the walking tour of Bath churches taking place on 'Open Door'" day, and organised as part of the annual Ride and Stride event, the family agreed to take part. We assembled at Bath Elim Church, five of us; grandparents, daughter and two grand daughters, enjoying welcoming coffee served by the friendly members of Elim, whilst we awaited the remainder of the party: second daughter, son-in-law, and third grand daughter, whose train from Salisbury had been delayed due to the large numbers of people visiting Bath for a home rugby match and the University Open Days.

Quickly we were all registered, and following an interesting guided tour of Elim, viewing the Georgian parts not normally open and which are awaiting restoration, we set off on the well detailed trail route of various Bath churches and chapels. Everywhere we went we were welcomed by members of the 'home' teams who were pleased to answer the many questions we had about the design and history of their fascinating buildings.

It must be confessed that we did not visit all of the churches which were available on the tour, as we spent too long, perhaps, enjoying a leisurely lunch together in one of Bath's restaurants. However we all agreed that those we had visited were of great interest and that hopefully next year we would be able to complete the course."

A lot of work goes on behind the scenes at a national level to help and support Ride and Stride. A National Standing Committee comprising members from various county trusts meets four times a year to agree on the format, review the legal and insurance situation, collate statistics and look at ways of encouraging participation and sponsorship. The NCT provides a great deal of help, particularly with wider publicity and in creating a 'national awareness' of the event. For 2013 they created a dedicated Ride and Stride website which featured our own Bath Walk and a link directly to our own site.

A sincere thank you to everyone who took part and to all who sponsored walkers and cyclists.

CHRIS HAWKINGS,
RIDE AND STRIDE COORDINATOR

Membership Secretary's report

In my report for 2012 I said that the total membership of the Friends was 792. This year I have taken over the records of the Membership Treasurer and in amalgamating the 2 sets of records discovered that many of those whom I had recorded as current members had not in fact paid for some time. The actual paying membership now stands at about 650.

In checking the records I also found that a number of people who were paying were not included on my data base – that has now been rectified. That error explains why a number of you reading this report are now hearing from the Trust for the first time for a number of years – I am sorry that you have not been kept informed about our activities for some time.

May I remind those members who pay by cheque that they should send me a cheque each year around the renewal date of **1 July**. We do encourage payment by banker's order, so if you would like to set up a banker's order, removing the need to remember to send a yearly cheque, please contact me for a form to complete and return or download one from our website.

In the meantime please invite friends and family to become members. They can either download an application form from the website **www.somersetchurchestrust.org** or contact me; my full details are on the back of this report.

GILL HAWKINGS

Email: gillandchris@hawkins.freeserve.co.uk

Parish Churches – the real museums of England?

Sir Simon Jenkins has commented that the parish churches in England are the country's true museum, encapsulating in their buildings and contents a thousand years of history.

Hemington Church between Frome and Radstock received a grant from the Trust in 2007. To a casual visitor the church is a pleasant medieval building with a handsome early 16th century tower and 17th century pews but there is much more to it on careful and informed inspection. High on the North wall of the nave below the wall plate are two cupboard doors. These give access to bee hives which have been in use within living memory. The honey is said to be the perquisite of the rector!

At the West end of the South aisle where it abuts the tower there is evidence that the corner was used as a 'fives' court – not unusual. There are the remains of the fixing for a wooden shutter to protect the window. A sundial is painted on the parapet of the South wall. Its date is indeterminate but the gnomon is of a shape used in the 17th century. It is calibrated to 'Bristol time' which was 20 minutes later than Greenwich. Local time was often used prior to the need for a single national time when scheduled transport required accurate timetables.

The distinguished architectural historian, the late Dr John Harvey, who retired to Frome, pointed out that the wave moulding on the tower arch was rarely found east of Bridgwater, which may indicate a group of West Somerset masons built the lower stage of the tower. The upper is some 20 years later, and of a design similar to other North Somerset towers.

The weathercock on the tower consists of a golden disc from which issues a flowing tail. It has been suggested that it was put up at a time when Halley's comet made one of its predictable appearances and represents it.

A mid 19th century watercolour of the church by W H Wheatley which hangs in the church shows that the East end of the South aisle was divided off by rectilinear panelling that still

exists next to the South door to exclude draughts and in the vestry. Another drawing by Wheatley in the Brakenridge collections of the Somerset Archaeological & Natural History Society shows the exterior of the church with a humble porch. It has been replaced by a 'decorated' style gothic porch, reputedly an early work of Sir Gilbert Scott who sometimes stayed nearby at Norton St Philip and was friendly with the rector.

The author of this note is indebted to Mr Peter Simper J.P, the churchwarden at Hemington for his assistance. He is deeply interested in the building and its contents which indeed endorse Sir Simon's comments.

GERARD LEIGHTON

Churches should be sold off! What nonsense!

In November 2010 *The Spectator* and the *National Churches Trust* held a debate in London with the motion *Church buildings are too expensive to maintain – they should be sold off*. After several emotional speeches the motion was defeated, 217 to 22 votes.

The upkeep of any church, especially a rural parish church, is a huge burden for the congregation and the community in which the church is situated. Understandably there is gloom, talk of doom and even of closure. But it need not be so for nobody wants to see their local church closed. There is another more optimistic view. Church buildings should not be regarded as millstones round our necks but rather as beacons of light and opportunities and challenges for a bright, sustainable future.

Of course dwindling congregations find the church building a burden. We live in a secular age and in the last hundred years the State has taken from the Church responsibility for welfare and education, two reasons for the decline in popular, practical interest in the Parish Church. Furthermore many communities have built church or village halls. Sadly the fully pewed Victorian church, organised for worship only, abandoned the Medieval tradition of using the nave for secular community occasions – meetings, plays, courts and so on.

But we can dream of a more glorious and sustainable future in which the building is shared with the community to which it properly belongs. It will require vision, enterprise and cash. The building can be made fit for purpose in the 21st century – remaining a glorious sanctuary for worship, prayer and reflection; returning the nave to the Medieval tradition of community use and involvement; and enhancing and displaying its role in local history and heritage display with its considerable artistic and architectural splendour.

Most churches can achieve such an uplifting transformation with appropriate and sensitive reordering. Pews, not necessarily all of them, can be replaced, a servery and loos put in, and a gathering space created. Worshippers will continue to worship. Perhaps all Christian churches could share the historic building? The community will be able to enjoy the facility – to hold coffee mornings, meetings, plays, concerts, or, more adventurously, house a shop, library or post office. There are precedents for all of these activities. Finally the general public, visitors and tourists, will be able to admire the craftsmanship and skill of generations of builders, artists and benefactors in the so-called 'Museum of Britain', for there are wonderful things to admire – architecture, furniture such as fonts and pulpits, memorials, stained glass, embroidery and so on.

Therein lies the challenge and the vision of a brighter future. It is already being met in many churches, for the future can be both bright and sustainable. *'Where there is a will there is a way.'*

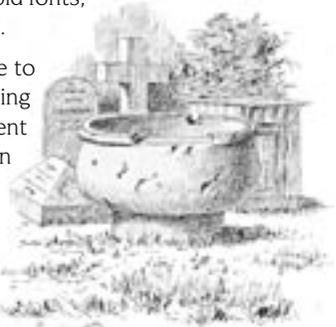
HUGH PLAYFAIR

Somerset's Ancient Church Fonts

In the 1880s a young man in his 20s, a product of the Victorian era, son of the vicar of West Harptree, set out on a modern-day crusade. His quest was to record all of the ancient church fonts in Somerset before they were lost to the ravages of over-zealous Victorian architects, builders and clergy. That young man was William Harvey Pridham. Pridham witnessed the effect the 'late architectural blight' known as the Gothic Revival had on Somerset's churches, and the ravages of the Victorians' enthusiasm to do away with the old to make way for the new. Many churches had been thoroughly modernised and dozens of ancient church fonts had been replaced by new, less attractive versions. Fortunately, in Somerset Pridham found that only 85 out of the 481 ancient parish churches had lost their old fonts, whereas counties such as Berkshire had lost over 50 percent.

Pridham, who had an excellent eye for detail and was able to execute perspective drawings, set about measuring, describing and recording as much detail as he could for every ancient font in the county of Somerset that he could find, visiting on his bicycle. These medieval treasures were often the only survivors of the Gothic Revival.

He was so thorough and driven in his quest, that when he visited a church or chapel that had lost its ancient font he made enquiries to try and discover it, or its fate. At Abbots Leigh he found the ancient font unceremoniously placed in the sexton's garden. Other fonts were found in gardens, churchyards, a chapel in a near-by castle, a mission church, a belfry, and even in a farm yard. A font at Aller was used to house some goldfish. One font had been buried under the floor of the nave by order of the architect who renovated the church! Sadly many of his searches for fonts were fruitless, leaving Pridham exasperated. He spared no criticism of one act of vandalism he personally witnessed at Wincanton, in September 1888, when a local builder unearthed part of the 13th century font, only to destroy it: *While intelligent people were rejoicing over the recovered treasure, the contractor sawed it up in order to use the material in repairing the pseudo-Classic South doorway, and save his pocket to the extent of half-a-crown. While we continue bravely sending Missions to the heathen beyond the limits of Wincanton; surely the money need not all be sent away.* But he also convinced over a dozen clergymen, on finding discarded ancient fonts belonging to their parishes, to have them restored to their parish church.



Shepton Mallet font
Illustration: WH Pridham



Lullington font
Illustration: WH Pridham

Pridham recorded a significant part of the work of Somerset's medieval craftsmen who carved and chiselled the fonts. At Lullington he drew what he thought was 'one of the finest fonts in the Kingdom', and at Dowlish Wake he drew one of the oldest in the county.

In 1899 Pridham offered his notes to the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society based at Taunton Castle, but held on to his drawings for another eight years before selling them to the Society for 100 guineas. Pridham worked on finishing his drawings and agreed to sell his eight volumes to the Society, which he was pleased to do as it meant his work remained 'on its native heath'. The Society also purchased the copyright in Pridham's notes and

drawings, but they remained in their library, unpublished, until now. *Somerset's Ancient Church Fonts* can be ordered through the Society's website at £26 including postage and packing at <http://www.freewebstore.org/sanhs/index.htm> or by sending a cheque for £26 to SANHS, c/o Somerset Heritage Centre, Brunel Way, Norton Fitzwarren, Somerset, TA2 6SF.

Pridham's crusade to record Somerset's ancient fonts in case any were lost by 'fire, accident or wilful design' was a lonely one, but, accompanied by his two foot rule and plumb line, he left an unique record of an important aspect of the county's past, and went on to record over 1,200 fonts across southern England.

ADRIAN WEBB
SOMERSET ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY



Publow font
Illustration: WH Pridham

Into the future... legacies

At the time of writing, the Trust has been helping churches and chapels in Somerset for almost eighteen years and grants have been made to over 300 Christian buildings, keeping roofs, walls, windows and floors in good repair. Over the last year a number of these grants have also been made to support work that, by improving access and facilities, will, literally, keep a building 'alive' and able to play a significantly wider role in the life of its village or town. This is the future for so many of our beautiful churches and this is what your membership has helped, and is helping us to achieve. **But there is much more still to do.**

Legacies play a very important part in our funding and we are extremely grateful to be remembered in this way. **Can you help the Trust into the future?** If you have particular connections with or deep affection for Somerset's wonderful heritage of churches and chapels, a legacy will help us to continue to care for them for years to come.

Important tax advantages can be gained by leaving part of your estate to a registered charity. You will need to add specific wording to your will, leaving your bequest to: **Somerset Churches Trust (Registered Charity No. 1055840).**

For more information and a form of wording speak to your personal solicitor or contact the Trust Treasurer at: somersetchurchestrust@gmail.com or write to him: Paul Heal, Culberry Farm, East Pennard, Shepton Mallet BA4 6TT.

One of the thank you letters received

Dear Mr. Heal

I write to thank Somerset Churches and Chapels for the grant of £7,500. The cheque for this amount has arrived safely and it is with delight that I can report we have completed the roof repair and associated works.

Yours sincerely,
Diana McEwen
PCC Secretary, St. Peter & St. Paul, Wincanton

Can a church or chapel near you win the £2,500 'Playfair Prize'?

The purpose of the Somerset Churches Trust's *Playfair Prize* is to promote the greater use of places of Christian worship, and to encourage change and renewal that enables church buildings to play a fuller part in their community.

It will be awarded to the project, completed between 1st January 2005 and 31st March 2015, that in the opinion of the judges best fulfills these aims. The Prize will be awarded in November 2015.

Further information and Entry Forms are available:

to download on our website **www.somersetchurchestrust.org**

or from Jane Venner-Pack, Stones Cottage, Station Road, Blagdon BS40 7TD.

Tel: 01761 463699. Email: somersetchurchestrust@gmail.com

Review of the year's activities

The year's activities began with a popular and fascinating talk in February from Jill Channer, MA, FSA, FRSA, IHBC on stained glass, held in Wells & Mendip Museum. This was followed in March by the first visit of the year, to Berrow and Burnham-on-Sea, and in April the Annual Meeting was at Christchurch, Clevedon. This is a newly refurbished building, funded largely through the sale of the Methodist church just down the road, enabling the Anglican and Methodist churches to fully combine as one church. A wonderful tea was served in their splendidly large room.

A fascinating tour of three of the 40-odd churches and non-conformist chapels in Bridgwater was brilliantly organised by Andrew Butcher in May with masses of background information; if you missed this, you really did miss out! Very sadly, Andrew suffered a heart attack in June. We miss him hugely, and send our very best wishes for a full recovery.

In June Jane Venner-Pack organised a tour of four Mendip churches: Wrington, Butcombe, Blagdon and the tiny chapel of St. Hugh, Charterhouse. July's tour was to Ilchester, Limington, Mudford and West Camel, where they had installed a servery and gallery in 2008. On a walking tour in Frome in August we visited Rook Lane Chapel, now a creative centre and architects' offices, Christ Church and Holy Trinity.

September's Ride and Stride report is on pages 6 and 7.

On a wet and windy day in October we started at St. Mary Magdalene, Exford, which the Friends last visited in July, 2006. We then drove further west to St. Luke, Simonsbath, where we were greeted by Robin Ashburner, a long-time resident of the area and larger-than-life character. His story of imaginative and successful fund-raising was a model for keeping the church alive and at the centre of the community. Finally, we visited St. John, Cutcombe, not seen by the Friends since June, 2002. The warden, Gill Langdon, proved to be a warm and informative guide to the church and also organized a generous tea at the village hall in nearby Wheddon Cross, and sent us home feeling how lucky we are to have most of Exmoor within the county boundary.

RE-LAUNCH AS SOMERSET CHURCHES TRUST, 28 NOVEMBER 2013

Our Celebration at the Town Hall in Wells on 28th November was a very successful and happy evening. Lady Gass our Patron, who becomes our President from 1 January 2014, the Abbot of Downside and Tessa Munt MP were among the hundred and twenty guests who filled the

hall to its capacity. Chairman, David Sisson talked about the change of name of the Trust and, while celebrating its achievements in its first eighteen years, he expanded on its mission for the future.

We were fortunate in our choice of main speaker for the evening. Under the theme...A perspective on the 21st century Parish Church: continuity and change', Dr John Goodall, historian and Architectural Editor of Country Life magazine, gave some very encouraging and sensible advice to custodians of church buildings. "Above all," he said, "don't be in a hurry. You are just a microcosm in the past and future of what is, after all, a public statement of Christian life." He advised against allowing vanity projects and that committees should engage the whole neighbourhood in thought and planning for the future since the parish church transcends the ordinary claim of ownership. Consideration should be given to what has and hasn't worked in the past and what is the building's practical potential. Also, think what could go wrong – taking out the pews won't necessarily make a more flexible space, "You'll still need storage for those new chairs!"

Some of the best re-ordering he had seen in churches were those executed on a very small budget because they had been planned over a longer time and the place's needs had made themselves known as the project progressed.

In summing up, he said: "You can expect no support from our ancestors or posterity, so cherish what you have and appreciate its strengths."

The Trust now supports work that not only keeps church buildings in good repair but also enables greater use of buildings by their whole community through the addition of facilities such as meeting space, serveries and toilets, and easier access.

The evening also saw the launch of The Playfair Prize, named in honour of the Trust's founder, Hugh Playfair. It will be awarded to the church or chapel which has best completed works to enhance and extend the use of its building to its wider community during the period 31st March 2005 to 31st March 2015. Dr Goodall has agreed to be one of the judges.

PHOTO GALLERY OF THE YEAR'S ACTIVITIES



St Mary, Berrow



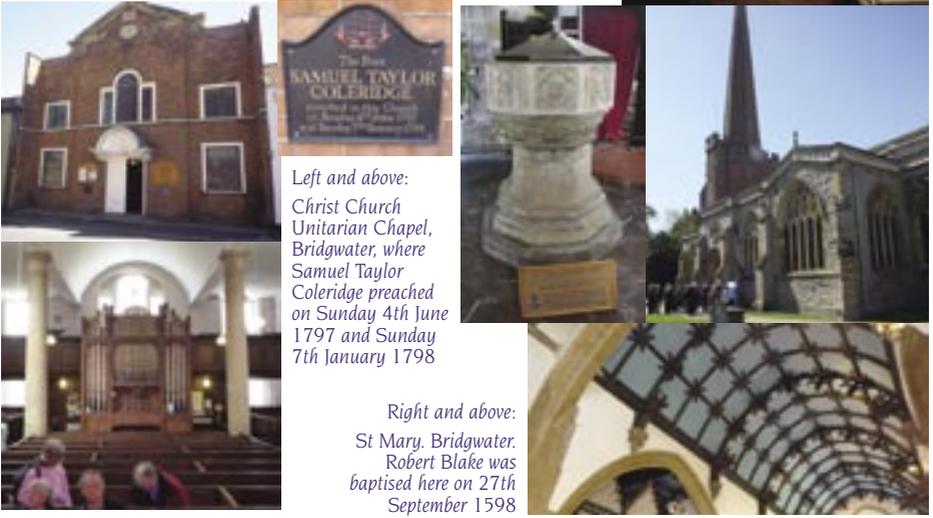
Our Lady and The English Martyrs, Burnham



Above and right: St Andrew, Burnham



Bridgwater Baptist Church



*Left and above:
Christ Church
Unitarian Chapel,
Bridgwater, where
Samuel Taylor
Coleridge preached
on Sunday 4th June
1797 and Sunday
7th January 1798*

*Right and above:
St Mary, Bridgwater.
Robert Blake was
baptised here on 27th
September 1598*



All Saints, Wrington



St Michael and All Angels, Butcombe



St Hugh's Chapel, Charterhouse

Above: St Andrew, Blagdon, undergoing internal work



St Mary Major, Ilchester



Above: Blessed Virgin Mary, Limington

Left: Blessed Virgin Mary, Mudford



All Saints, West Camel. The carving is Saxon and the servery and gallery completed in 2008.



Rook Lane Chapel, Frome, now architects' offices and a centre for the arts



Holy Trinity, Frome



Above: Christ Church, Frome



Exford, St Mary Magdalene

**RE-LAUNCH OF FSSC AS
SOMERSET CHURCHES TRUST,
28 NOVEMBER 2013**

Below: David Sisson, Chairman of FSSC; Lady Gass, Lord Lieutenant of Somerset and Patron of FSSC; The Abbot of Downside, The Right Reverend Dom Aidan Bellenger, one of the founding trustees.



Above: Jane Venner-Pack, FSSC Trustee; Gary Fawcett and Gareth Davies of Brewin Dolphin, main sponsors of the event; Dr John Goodall, Historian and Architectural Editor of Country Life magazine, guest speaker.

Above: St Luke, Simonsbath

Above: St John, Cutcombe

Programme of Events for 2014

Do join us on some or all of our events this year – but please book in well beforehand.

FEBRUARY: FRIDAY 21ST, 7PM

TALK

WELLS AND MENDIP MUSEUM, 8 CATHEDRAL GREEN, WELLS BA5 2UE

Wells Cathedral embroidery guides, experts in this field, will be giving our winter talk, entitled *The Embroideries of Wells Cathedral past and present*. Refreshments will be provided, and *booking is essential*. **Write with s.a.e. and cheque for £10 payable to Somerset Churches Trust, to David Sisson, Providence House, Sexeys Road, Blackford, Blackford, Wedmore BS28 4NA. Tel: 01934 713617.**

MARCH: SATURDAY 8TH, 2PM

CHURCH TOUR

STOKE SUB HAMDON, MUCHELNEY AND LONG SUTTON

Meet at Stoke sub Hamdon, St Mary, TA14 6QL; then to Muchelney, St Peter and St Paul, TA10 0DQ, painted wooden ceiling, working 140 year old barrel organ; then to Long Sutton, the Friends Meeting House, TA10 9ND, classical simplicity; and finally to Holy Trinity, TA10 9HS, carved wooden pulpit and screen, also in Long Sutton. Tea here – donations. **Book with John Beauchamp, tel: 01934 713313, email: studio@b2architects.com**

APRIL: SATURDAY 12TH, 2PM

ANNUAL MEETING

FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE, 36 HIGH STREET, STREET BA16 0EQ

The last AGM under the FSCC title is where the first was held in 1996 – do come!

Tea at 3.30pm – donations. Attractions include Clarks Shoe Museum and Clarks Village.

Book with David Sisson, Providence House, Sexeys Road, Blackford, Wedmore BS28 4NA. Tel: 01934 713617.

May: Saturday 31st, 10am

Bath Churches Tour

An all day event and part of our Annual Ride and Stride Fundraiser. Meet at St John's Hospital, Chapel Court, Westgate Buildings, Bath BA1 1SQ. Coffee, tea and biscuits served from 10–10.30am. We will then visit their Chapel of St Michael Within, Magdalen Chapel Holloway, Quaker Meeting House, Bath Central United Reformed Church, St Mary's RC Church and Elim Pentecostal Church. There will be a talk at each location at a given time. Make your own way between churches. *Booking is essential*.

Write with s.a.e. and cheque for £15 (minimum) payable to Somerset Churches Trust to Chris Hawkings, 3 Glastonbury Road, Wells, Somerset, BA5 1TW. (Please advise if you wish to Gift Aid.) Final details of the tour will be sent out on booking and will be available on our website.

JUNE: SATURDAY 21ST, 2PM

CHURCH TOUR

CHURCHSTANTON, OTTERFORD, BIRCHWOOD, BUCKLAND ST MARY

Meet at Churchstanton, SS Peter and Paul, TA3 7QE; formerly in Devon, with Devon Perpendicular side aisle, Cornish font, box pews and west gallery. Otterford, St Leonard, TA3 7EE; the site rather than the architecture is its striking feature. Birchwood, TA20 3QQ; a Victorian mission church still in use. Buckland St Mary, St Mary, TA20 3SL; 'a noble incongruity' says Pevsner; the gift of a rich and sorrowing Victorian rector. Tea at Buckland at 4pm – donations.

Book with Robert Dunning on 01823 282929.

JULY: SATURDAY 5TH, 2PM

CHURCH TOUR

BROOMFIELD, GOATHURST AND SPAXTON

Start at Broomfield, All Saints, TA2 8HW, a lovely medieval church with its original wagon roofs with decorative angels, but of particular note are its very complete set of bench ends of 1561.

Then to Goathurst, St Edward's, TA5 2DE. Of particular note are the very fine monumental sculptures in the north chapel. Finally, to Spaxton, St Margaret, TA5 1DA, another medieval church with, again, a fine collection of carved bench ends. Tea at Spaxton – donations. Car sharing is recommended as the lanes are small and narrow.

Book with Rob Harding, Tel: 01179 240333, email: robhardingbristol@gmail.com

AUGUST: SATURDAY 2ND, 2PM

CHURCH TOUR

KINGWESTON, KEINTON MANDEVILLE, WEST LYDFORD, BARTON ST DAVID

Visit four very different rural churches. Start at Kingweston, All Saints, TA11 6AZ, late 13th-century style by C. E. Giles in 1855. Next to Keinton Mandeville, St Mary Magdalene, TA11 6ES, Grade II. Then to West Lydford, St Peter, TA11 7DH, rebuilt 1844–6 to designs by Benjamin Ferrey. Finally, to Barton St David Parish Church, TA11 6BU for tea – donations.

Book with Wendy Eitzen on 01458 850011 or email eitzen@firenet.uk.net

SEPTEMBER: SATURDAY 13TH, 10AM–6PM

RIDE + STRIDE



This is our main fund raising event. Raise money by getting sponsored to cycle, walk or drive* to as many churches as you can either on the main event day of Saturday 13th September or on any day from Saturday 6th to Sunday 21st September. Make up your own route or join one of the organised routes. This year we will be repeating the successful 'Ten Towers' cycle route through the beautiful Cheddar Valley starting at St Mary's Church, Wedmore, BS28 4AA, at 10am. Create your own webpage to raise sponsorship at <http://www.justgiving.com/somersetchurches>

For more information visit our website: www.somersetchurchestrust.org or contact the Ride and Stride Coordinator Chris Hawkings, Tel: 01749 672327, email: chrishawkings@hotmail.co.uk

** You must check with your motor insurer that you are covered for this event.*

OCTOBER: SATURDAY 18TH, 2PM

CHURCH TOUR

BROADWAY, ASHILL, STAPLE FITZPAINE

Start at Broadway Church, SS Aldhelm and Eadburga, TA19 9RX (off A358 Ilminster–Taunton road), c15 font and Jacobean pulpit. Then to Ashill, Blessed Virgin Mary, TA19 9LZ, Norman chancel arch, early effigies. Finally to Staple Fitzpaine, St Peter, TA3 5SW, fine Perpendicular tower. Tea here – donations.

Book with Simon Colledge, 13 Middle Path, Crewkerne TA18 8BG. Tel: 01460 75815. Email: simoncolledge@hotmail.co.uk

November: Friday 21st, 7pm

Talk

Wells & Mendip Museum 8 Cathedral Green, Wells BA5 2UE

Illustrated Talk by Dr. Julia Wood, Wells City Archivist, who will delve into the City Archives. Not to be missed! *Booking essential.* **Write with s.a.e. and cheque for £10 payable to Somerset Churches Trust, to Chris Hawkings, 3 Glastonbury Road, Wells BA5 1TW.**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our generous advertisers, including Chedburn Dudley and Benjamin + Beauchamp for kindly franking various mailings; Roger and Dorothy Bark, who supplied most of the photographs, including the cover picture of a window at St. Mary, Berrow; Chris Hawkings for photos of the Bath Walk; contributors of articles; and all who arranged such a splendid programme of visits – very many thanks to you all.

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