



# PRESS RELEASE

## **Launching a year of historic delights**

February 2016

From beautiful stained glass windows to the most important Benedictine monastery in England – that is just part of what's on offer in this year's Somerset Churches Trust events programme, which is launched this week.

It includes a series of tours of churches and chapels across the traditional county of Somerset.

The trust is a non-denominational charity giving grants to churches and chapels.

These cover not only repairs to the main fabric of the building but also works such as better access, kitchens and other facilities including toilets, that will help improve community use.

Since it was founded in 1966 the charity has raised more than £600,000 which has been given in grants to over 300 churches and chapels.

The events kick off with a tour on March 12 of three churches which were finalists in the charity's prestigious Playfair competition held in October.

The tour ends with a visit to the winner of the £5,000 prize - Holy Trinity in Norton Malward. It also includes St Luke's Church in Bath and St Andrew's in Chew Magna.

On April 9 the trust is holding its annual meeting, which is open to non-members, and this year is being held at the magnificent Downside Abbey in Stratton-on-the-Fosse.

The abbey, which was built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, is a grade I listed building, and was described by the famous art and architectural historian Sir Nicolaus Pevsner as “the most splendid demonstration of the renaissance of Roman Catholicism in England”.

The visit includes a tour of the building which has the largest monastic library in Britain with a collection of 450,000 books.

And in July there is a stained glass tour of churches in Bath and Frome led by Hugh Playfair, an expert on stained glass windows and founder of the trust.

Across the year there are nine events that include visits to churches and chapels from as far apart as Taunton, Hinton St George, Crewkerne and Stoke St Gregory.

These also include the charity’s main fund-raising effort in September called Ride and Stride.

People are asked to help raise money by getting sponsorship as they walk, cycle, ride a horse or drive a car round a group of churches and chapels.

There is more information about all these events on the website [www.somersetchurchestrust.org](http://www.somersetchurchestrust.org) (follow the links to events).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT MAXINE IRVING PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER ON 01278 787199.