



PRESS RELEASE

Delving into the past

February 22, 2017

Anyone who is interested in the history of Somerset should take a look at the latest programme of events from one of the county's charities.

Somerset Churches Trust is non-denominational and gives grants to churches, chapels and meeting houses to encourage use by the local community.

Grants cover not only repair to the main fabric of the building but also improvement works such as better access, kitchens and other facilities, including toilets.

Since the charity was founded in 1996 it has given almost £700,000 in grants.

As well as helping churches with grants, every year the trust organises a series of events, including church tours and talks.

This year the trust is running events that include a tour of Glastonbury Abbey, 20th century stained glass, a Benedictine tour of Bath Abbey, celebrating the 300th anniversary of the Society of Friends – more commonly known as the Quakers, and an organ recital at the Bishop's Palace in Wells.

The first event is a tour of three churches in South Somerset – St Peter and St Paul's in South Petherton, St Martin's in Kingsbury Episcopi and All Saints in Martock on Saturday March 18 starting at 12 noon.

This will be followed in April with the annual meeting, which last year when it was held at Downside Abbey proved so popular it was over subscribed. This year it moves to another equally fascinating religious site – Glastonbury Abbey, which was one of the most important abbeys in the country before Henry VIII closed them all down during the Reformation.

The annual meeting itself will be held in St Benedict's Church, Glastonbury on April 8, at 2pm, followed by a free tour of the abbey conducted by living history presenter the Rev Dr Mark Hutchinson, also known as Brother Dunstan.

Mark will give everyone a glimpse of Glastonbury Abbey's influence on churches and life in Somerset and beyond. Dunstan was one of the most famous brothers at the abbey who went on to become a saint.

In May there will another tour in South Somerset taking in West Coker, East Chinnock and Hardington Mandeville.

In June it will be the turn of churches in the Taunton area who boast 20th century stained glass windows and then in early July there is an invitation from the Long Sutton Friends' Meeting House to join in the 300th anniversary of the founding of the Quakers.

In late July there is a very special tour of the beautiful Bath Abbey with interpretation officer Oliver Taylor.

September sees the trust's main fund-raising event when people are asked to get sponsorship to walk, cycle or travel to groups of churches.

In November there is another tour based in South Somerset and in November a talk and organ recital in the Bishop's Palace chapel by Ray Willis, who plays the organ both in Yeovil parish church and the palace in Wells.

All of these events are free to members but everyone is welcome when there will be the opportunity to discuss becoming a member of the trust.

Full details of all these events can be found on the trust's website www.somersetchurchtrust.org or you can contact the organisation via email at somersetchurcheTrust@gmail.com

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