

Holy Trinity at Norton Malreward in North East Somerset was named as the winner of Somerset Churches Trust's prestigious £5,000 Playfair Prize at a ceremony in Wells Town Hall on Friday, 30th October. This small village church, Grade 11 Listed, is an extraordinary example of what can be achieved on a modest budget to bring an ancient building into 21st century life.

The Playfair Prize is awarded for...*'encouraging change and renewal and for enabling church buildings to play a fuller part in their community.'* Twenty four churches and chapels, large and small, urban and rural, from all over Somerset entered. Holy Trinity, in the small village of Norton Malreward in the north of the county, was declared the winner from the shortlist of six. Chairman of the judges, Julian Orbach, announcing the winner, declared... *'all six shortlisted candidates were inspirational and it was a hard task to narrow them down. The judges in the end settled on the one where much was achieved with very little, because we should care very much 'de minimis' and if the smallest of congregations can be encouraged by example, the Playfair Prize will have achieved much. The prize therefore goes to Holy Trinity Norton Malreward.'*

The budget at Holy Trinity was £25,000 with which the project - the opening up of the south aisle, the moving of the organ to allow for space to accommodate a servery and disabled loo, and the installation of an audio/visual system - has brought this little church right back to the heart of its community. It is an inspiration to so many churches and chapels wondering how to keep their buildings alive in the 21st century. 'I am totally amazed,' said Lay Reader Margaret Masding, who master-minded the work at the church, 'I thought we would be too small to win! It was a team effort and we are thrilled and encouraged.'

The six finalists were St Cuthbert's, Wells; St Peter's, Evercreech; St Andrew's Blagdon; All Saints, West Camel; St Luke's, Bath; Holy Trinity, Norton Malreward.

The Judges, Lord Carey, (former Archbishop of Canterbury and Bishop of Bath and Wells), John Goodall (architecture editor of Country Life), Alison Pollard (National Churches Trust) and their Chairman, Julian Orbach (Pevsner historian and writer) all spoke at the Prize Giving and each confessed that any of the six would have been a worthy winner.

Speaking after the presentation Lord Carey paid tribute to the Trust and said, "Holy Trinity Malreward, the winner of the 2015 Playfield Prize, is an inspiring example of what a tiny country church can achieve! The imaginative development is a marvellous example of the work of the Somerset Churches Trust and its contribution to the mission of the Church".

David Sisson, Chairman of the Trust, is delighted with the winner. 'It is so encouraging to see what can be done on a small budget and, although praise must go to some of our larger churches who have made strides in opening up their buildings for both congregations and community, Holy Trinity's achievement will be hugely encouraging to the smaller churches that are the treasures of our county.'