

Recent HCCPT-direct Grants

- St Philip's, Kelsall:** Grade II. Restoration of Ten Commandments and Lord's Prayer Boards, carried out by the Conservation Centre, Liverpool **Grant: £500**
- Brookhouse Green Methodist Chapel, Sandbach:** Access improvements. **Grant: £500**
- St Cross, Appleton Thorn.** Grade II. Safety repairs to boundary wall. **Grant: £500**
- All Saints, Runcorn.** Grade II*. Electrical repair work and emergency lights. **Grant: £1,250**



NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF HISTORIC CHESHIRE CHURCHES

(No. 10 - January 2008)

Last year Sir Roy Strong, former Director of the V & A, produced a book “**A Little History of the English Country Church**” in which he turns his attention to saving the English parish church. It was about 30 years ago that Sir Roy staged an exhibition at the V & A entitled “The Destruction of the English County House 1875 - 1975” it proved to be a turning point in the saving of these buildings. We must hope and pray that now that he has turned his attention to the English Country Church, which he believes is facing a very serious crisis; he could achieve the same results.

However, his concern would be that just preserving the church building in 'heritage aspic' like so many of his beloved country houses is not the answer. In his new book he suggests that whilst preservation is admirable, the word has begun to take on negative connotations. There must be a desire to move on to find a different term and solution in order to save the parish church. “Perhaps we need bodies whose names feature the word 'adoption' rather than conservation and preservation” suggests Sir Roy Strong. He feels that the Church's present problem could be solved by seeking to return buildings to the community with safeguards put in place for worship. This model would he believes challenge the local congregation and community to seek new ways of using the parish church so that once again it becomes the hub of village and community life.

In a similar vein Maev Kennedy writing in the Spring 2007 issue of the National Trust Magazine entitled “**Save our Churches**” suggests that saving churches is a task beyond the means of any single group or organisation. New money and new people are needed and lots of both. She suggests that most people expect our churches to last forever; to be a picturesque backdrop for weddings and christening photographs; to be the setting for Christmas Carols and the Harvest Festival. No thought is given to who is working hard to keep the brasses so beautifully clean, the roof watertight or the stained glass in good repair. It is normally a small group of elderly dedicated people who carry out these tasks.

Recently English Heritage produced some figures which suggested that the cost of repairing all England's 14,500 listed places of worship would be almost a billion pounds and that does not include thousands more of unlisted church buildings. Maev Kennedy predicts that the “trickle of churches becoming redundant will become a torrent; the Churches Conservation Trust will be able to save no more than a handful”.

It must be hoped then that the pleas of Sir Roy Strong to face the challenge of seeking new and imaginative ways of enabling our much loved church buildings to be 'adopted and cherished' by the community can be brought to fruition.

Strong, Sir Roy; *A Little History of the English Country Church* (2007) Jonathan Cape - £16.99.

For further information about Grants for Church repair and maintenance and details of the Annual Ride & Stride, please contact:

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Friends' Events 2007

In mid-May a group of Friends met in the picturesque village of Barthomley to visit the parish church of St Bertoline. Of Norman foundation the church was rebuilt largely in Perpendicular style in the late C15th, and it contains some notable woodwork and monuments. Our guide was Mr Mike Gresty who not only drew our attention to the architectural history of the building and its contents, but also entertained us with an account of the families who had managed and maintained it over the centuries.

Early in June a visit was made to the Union Street Baptist Church in Crewe where a small group of Friends' heard how the church had been established as a result of a small group of people initially meeting in the Coffee Tavern on Crewe Railway Station. Malcolm Riley, Deacon and Property Steward at the church, had undertaken extensive research into the 150 year history and had located original plans and other documents in the Chester Records Office, which he used to provide an interesting introductory talk as a background for the visit. At the end of the visit Malcolm's wife served a wonderful afternoon tea which was much appreciated by those present.

In July a large contingent of Friends gathered in the Parish Church of St Boniface in Bunbury, described as "a medieval church enshrining many treasures" where our local historian, Mr John Elsworth introduced us to the church and its treasures and to the people who had contributed over the years to its development. For the first time in seven years this visit clashed sadly with a funeral, but the combined expertise of John Elsworth and Churchwarden Barbara Croley ensured that the afternoon was enjoyed by all and proved to be an informative and entertaining event.

In September a party of 25 Friends visited St Lawrence Parish Church Frodsham. There has been a church on this site dating back over 900 years. Our guide for the afternoon was Mrs Midge Harvey, whose late husband had put together a set of cards which provided details of the many interesting aspects of the church and the changes that had been made over the years. The current church of which parts date back to 1180 underwent major rebuilding between 1880 and 1903 and this work was carried out by Bodley and Garner. A welcome cup of tea was served at the end of the visit.

Greater Manchester Churches Preservation Society

On Saturday 27th September 2008 the above Society will be visiting Marple Bridge, as part of its 2008 programme. The visit will start at St. Martin's Church on Brabyns Brow at 11.00am with a guided tour and time to explore on your own before moving across to the hall to eat lunch (bring your own lunch drinks provided) at about 12.30pm.

Then at around 2.00pm there will be a presentation on the Arts & Craft Movement in Greater Manchester which will last about one hour. The speakers will be Wendy and Barry Armstrong authors of the acclaimed handbook 'The Art and Crafts Movement in the North West of England' published last year. "Friends" of Cheshire Churches are invited to join this event for which there is no charge but those attending are invited to make a contribution to cover the cost to the host church of providing drinks etc.

Should you wish to join the Manchester Society for this visit you should contact the Reverend Brian Hartley on 01706 849 132 or E-mail: brian_hartley@tiscali.co.uk

Friends' Events 2008

Arrangements for this year have not yet been completed but we are thinking of including visits to St Mary & St Helen Neston, and St Leonard Warmingham. Other suggestions from Friends will be welcome. Full details of this year's visits will be sent out in time for Friends to register their interest.

Annual Ride & Stride Days 2007 & 2008

We were fortunate the weather for the 2007 event held on Saturday September 8th was excellent for cycling and walking, insofar as the gross sponsorship monies collected passed £20k for the first time, up 50% on 2006. Indeed, 4 churches collected over £1k each and one participant sped all over Cheshire on his motor bike raising £750 on his own! This was a truly remarkable achievement by all concerned and not only benefited the individual churches, which retain 50%, but the Trust's reserves were enhanced by c. £13k when one adds in the Gift Aid element. Overall the total collected by all the County Trusts across the UK was a staggering £1.6m., which is not bad for 6 hours endeavour, some Counties grossing over £100k so we have got a long way to go to catch them up!

Please note that **this year's event** will be held on **Saturday 13th September**, so please try and participate and tell your friends and congregations. We hope that with the assistance of **Just Giving**, individuals will be able to set up their own sponsorship pages via our website. This has several benefits in that sponsorship monies can be donated on line in advance of the event (thus saving organisers from chasing everyone), Just Giving do all the administration and they handle all the Gift Aid claims. They have so far helped over 4,000 charities raise over £222m.!

Please have a look at the link from their main page: <http://www.justgiving.com/hccpt>

NB: Don't forget that you can also make individual donations as well via this link.

Recent WREN-assisted Grants

St Mary, Nether Alderley: Grade I. Sizeable perpendicular church, with tower similar to Mobberley. Chancel in 1856 by *Cuffley & Starkey* with much restoration by *Paley & Austin* in 1877-8. Repairs to porch pinnacles. **Grant: £5,000**

Hood Manor Methodist Church, Great Sankey: Modern one storey multi-purpose building situated in shopping centre. Disabled access and toilets. **Grant: £5,000**

St Lawrence, Stoak: Grade II*. Fine, but little known building on ancient Saxon site, rebuilt in 1827 by *George Edgecumbe*. Restoration of chancel floor. **Grant: £3,000**

St Boniface, Bunbury: Grade I. See visit above, c. 1343, remodelled by *Pennington & Bridgen* in 1863. Reconstruction of north aisle parapet. **Grant: £5,000**

St Bartholomew, Great Barrow: Grade II*. Chancel dated 1671 built for Dean Bridgeman, with C 18 tower. Repairs and restoration of stonework **Grant: £3,000**

St Mary, Partington & Carrington: Grade II. New incumbent, Peter Geddes, is tackling a backlog of previous neglect. Disabled facilities. **Grant: £10,000**

St Mary, Acton: Grade I. Dates back to C13, with major restoration by *Paley & Austin* in 1897-8. Repairs to bell tower louvres. **Grant: £3,000**

All Saints, Daresbury: Grade II*. Internationally known for its connection with Lewis Carroll. Internal and external repointing, floor overhaul, window protections and repairs to wall monument. **Grant: £10,000**

St Michael, Coppenhall: Grade II. Early C 20 building notable for internal fine fittings and good stained glass, all transferred from earlier churches dating back to circa 1373. Reconstruction of font and floor repairs. **Grant: £5,000**