

TRUST NEWS

Saving The Past For The Future



A 'HOT' BIKE 'N HIKE

The 2023 Bike 'n Hike was certainly hot in terms of the weather – let's hope it's hot in terms of fundraising for grants from the Trust and funding for churches that take part!

Certainly, things look hopeful. I write this only four weeks after the event (when sponsorship comes in up to three months after) and we already have two gold certificate winners for passing the £2,000 mark. Congratulations to St. James, Stanstead Abbots and St. Nicholas, Harpenden. St. John, Boxmoor's enthusiasm had no bounds, extending to painting the bike vivid yellow as the photograph shows.

The only downside this year, as sometimes in the past, is churches that are not open and show no acknowledgement of the Bike 'n Hike. It is understandable that it is not always possible to staff the church all day but an easily visible poster leading to the register of visitors and a jug of water with disposable cups (and biscuits as a bonus!) makes all the difference. Visitors then have a sense of being part of an event rather than just walking or cycling to churches.

Also, of course, the more churches that participate, the better. New additions are always welcome as is information about toilet facilities if the church is going to be open. Send any changes to your area organiser or to: bikenhike@bedshertshct.org.uk.

Photos and stories of how people take part are always welcome and we ask that they can be used for publicity of the event and the Trust. This year's Bike 'n Hike stories on the website include: heritage events; motorbiking in style and even St George of England with his Penny-farthing bicycle. Find these and more under "Your Bike 'n Hike Stories".

Thank you again to everyone who supports the event in any way.

Madeline Russell



The Seldon family, keen cyclists from Potten End with the bright yellow bike.



St Albans Abbey tour and snowdrop display

Book now for our guided tour of St Albans Abbey and see the fantastic show of snowdrops in the Bishop's garden.

Limited places.

Details and booking form inside.



FROM THE CHAIRMAN... THE WARMEST OF WELCOMES ON THE HOTTEST DAY

For some who planned to take part in Bike 'n Hike, the day was just too hot, and we respect their wisdom in opting out – we're just not used to such weather. Some set off early to cover as much ground as possible before the heat set in, and a few chose a different day for their effort. Well done, everyone, however you resolved the problem, and thank you for your support.

In previous years I have used the occasion to visit churches I have never been to, often places which are locked other than during services, or to go to churches which have something special planned. This year I decided to call on some of the folk who are in their own church to welcome bikers and hikers. I was impressed by the warmth of the welcomes I received and the gratitude with which the purpose of my unexpected visit was met.

I made a particular effort to include non-Anglican churches and chapels. I know that the Trust finds it harder to keep in touch with them, but they play a vital role in raising money which is the major source of the grants we award next year. Several of these were in Bedford, and had to be visited on foot, and it was a relief to sit for a few minutes in the shade. One church had a portable fridge full of ice-lollies to revive flagging wayfarers!

Over the years I have noticed how some churches arrange an activity on the day – tidying the churchyard, "autumn cleaning", minor maintenance, or a fund-raising event, alongside raising money for the Trust. It certainly makes good use of the hours we promise to keep the church open for bikers and hikers to sign in and take a breather – and

gives extra publicity to the Trust and what it stands for. This year the shade and the brief rest were more important than ever, and to be confronted with a locked door, instead of a friendly face, refreshment and access to a toilet, was more than usually disappointing. Some participants devise their route so that they can see inside particular churches, so please bear this in mind when planning for future years – and a cool drink is always welcome along the way.

My little pilgrimage to express the Trust's appreciation of all who work together to make this annual event such a success hardly scratched the surface of all the contributions for Bike 'n Hike 2023. But to those whom I did meet I repeat the thanks of the Trust to them and all their local supporters. I am happy to have this opportunity to express our thanks to Area Organizers for their vital co-ordination work, and to Church Organizers and local teams. Without you we could not achieve the financial support we give in Beds. and Herts. to maintain and repair the marvellous heritage of ancient and not-so-ancient churches handed down to us. On behalf of our Trustees, thank you all for your efforts and practical support for our Trust.

Malcolm E. Grant, Chairman



RESTORATION AT OLD WARDEN

The Trust recently awarded a grant to St. Leonard's Church, Old Warden, for work to the tower parapets, chancel and south aisle roof. The roof had been gently leaking for some time leaving a lot of damage to plaster in the south aisle and chancel. The architect was working on a specification for the works and a contractor was abseiling from the tower roof to inspect stonework when the north parapet collapsed inwards. Luckily no-one was hurt, but as a result, the stonework to the parapets was added to the job.

Contractors started in July and because of the extent of the work, with scaffolding both inside and out, it was agreed that the church should be closed for the duration. The contractors have done a marvellous job to protect the woodwork and other fittings for which St. Leonard's is famous, but it is a difficult time for the congregation with no church to worship in, made worse by the fact that the Vicar retired in May. Worship carries on with the help of the other churches in the benefice. The contractors have been very supportive and have allowed brave members of the PCC access to the scaffolding to see the work in progress as well as tools and metalwork which have been found from previous works. These items have been photographed and replaced where they were found. The secretary of the Old Warden History Society is delighted with what the project is revealing about the detailed history and evolution of the church building and a new guide book is being discussed.

The contract will not now be completed until after Christmas – it looks as if our celebratory service will also allow us to welcome the first signs of Spring!

Archie Russell



FRIENDS REMEMBERED: DAVID ALLARD, BEM

It was very sad to learn of David Allard's death in early September, aged 90. He was a staunch supporter of the Trust and was also our Events Secretary, a job he carried out with meticulous planning and grasp of detail. All who have attended or led our Church Tours have reason to be grateful to him.

David was by profession a banker and by strong conviction an ardent walker and protector of footpaths, a person deeply attached to his community and to the various clubs and societies with which he was involved. In the 1960s David was posted to Nigeria with Barclays Bank. On his return to the UK, he joined the Midland Bank and worked in Watford, Royston and then Cambridge, retiring in 1993.

David joined the Ramblers' Association in 1950, aged 17, and in 1983 he set up the Royston & District Ramblers' Club. At its 40th anniversary dinner this year, the Club expressed its great appreciation of David's commitment as an office bearer and of what he had achieved. David was also much involved in the Royston & District

Historical Society, and for 50 years was a Trustee of the Royston Community Association. During Covid restrictions he walked – in stages, backed up by public transport – the 195 miles of the Hertfordshire Way. He helped plan paths and signs for 69 miles of the Icknield Way and was devoted to ensuring footpaths remained open. Unsurprisingly, he became Footpath Secretary for eight parishes.

His outstanding work for Services to the Community in Royston was recognised when the Lord Lieutenant for Hertfordshire invested him at a ceremony in the Spring, with the British Empire Medal which David was awarded in the 2023 New Year Honours.

David will be much missed and the Trust sends condolences to his brother Chris and his sister Jenny.

Richard Genochio



FRIENDS REMEMBERED: ROBERT PHIPPS HART

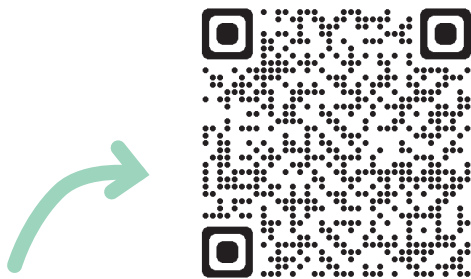
Colleagues and Friends of the Trust were saddened to hear of the death of Bob Hart. He retired last Christmas having been an Area Representative for Bedford for the last 20 years. A remarkable achievement which he discharged with care, diligence, and good humour.

From time-to-time Bob and I would go out together to visit a church which was applying to the Trust for grant aid, and it was always an education. Although we were both architects I had never worked on historic buildings. His knowledge and understanding of the problems faced by applicant churches was of inestimable help. I recall the time we went to the

thatched Congregational Church at Roxton. Bob did much to ensure a satisfactory outcome to keep this unique building in good order.

I have greatly enjoyed working with Bob, who had many other interests in and around Bedford. We also shared a love of singing, and on occasion he would join Biggleswade Choral Society as a soloist. He had a very fine bass voice. It has been a privilege to have known him and he is greatly missed.

Archie Russell



JOIN US - BECOME A FRIEND

Help us to save churches for the future, by becoming a Friend.

Use the QR code or see our website:

bedshertshct.org.uk/join-us/

Events Secretary wanted

With the loss of David Allard, the Trust seeks a new Events Secretary. The Trust aims to raise awareness of the significance of church buildings as centres of worship, examples of our built heritage and repositories of the history of their communities.

The Events Secretary helps Trustees with the organisation of events such as the Annual Meeting and Church Tours and includes: booking venues/transport/catering; receiving payments; organisation on the day.

If you could help the Trust in this way, please contact:

general.enquiry@bedshertshct.org.uk

BOOK NOW

CHURCH TOURS 2024



**“SEE MEDIEVAL WALL PAINTINGS AND
THE SHRINE OF BRITAIN’S FIRST SAINT.”**

ST ALBANS ABBEY AND SNOWDROP TOUR 2 MARCH 2024

Our next Friends’ event is a guided tour of St. Albans Abbey, followed by lunch in the Abbot’s Kitchen and a visit to Abbey Gate House to see the beautiful snowdrop display in the Bishop’s garden.

The cost is **£18 per person** which includes the Abbey fee and a small contribution for admission to the Bishop’s garden.

Numbers are limited to a maximum of 24.

We will assemble for the tour at 10.45am in the new Visitors’ Centre in Sumpter Yard, off Holywell Hill. Make your own way to St. Albans.

Lunch (extra cost) may be ordered on the day, or in advance via Ann, from a menu which will be sent with your booking confirmation.

If you would like to join us please complete the booking form and send it as soon as possible (30 January at the latest) with payment.

Your booking will be confirmed by email.

Booking form and payment details overleaf.

ST ALBANS ABBEY AND SNOWDROP TOUR

2 MARCH 2024

BOOKING FORM

I WOULD LIKE TO ATTEND THE
FOLLOWING CHURCH TOUR:

Tour £18 per person	
Saturday 2 March 2024 (Book by 30 January 2024 at the latest)	
No of tickets	Total £

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

POSTCODE _____

EMAIL _____

TELEPHONE _____

**Please enclose a cheque payable to Beds. &
Herts. Historic Churches Trust.**

Post this form and payment to:

**Mrs. Ann Banham, 3 Bury Farm, High Street,
Kimpton, Hitchin, Herts, SG4 8RH.**

Book by 30 January 2024 at the latest.

Places are limited so book as soon as you can to
avoid disappointment.

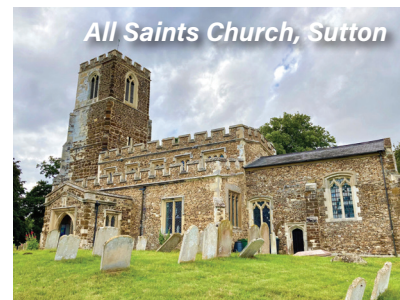
LIVING HISTORY IN BEDFORDSHIRE STONE

Two fascinating churches were visited in this year's Annual Meeting on 15 July. If you weren't there, you missed a treat. We were warmly welcomed to St John the Baptist Church, Cockayne Hatley, North Bedfordshire for our meeting followed by a talk about its history. The handsome building dates from the 12th century and is stuffed with the most amazing wood carvings, brought from Belgium by the Squire and Vicar in the early 19th century, looted it seems, by the French army from religious houses during the Napoleonic wars.

We then visited nearby All Saints, Sutton for an excellent afternoon tea, Evensong and an opportunity to look around. It wasn't just the history of the fabric which fired the imagination, but also the tale of a previous Rector, the Rev'd Dr Edward Drax Free, Fellow of St John's College, Oxford, instituted in 1808 and deprived of his living in 1830. In this time, he managed to offend nearly all his parishioners, local landowners, the Archdeacon, the Bishop of Lincoln and many others. It took a Herculean effort, led by Montagu Burgoyne, churchwarden, for him to be officially reprimanded and prised from the Rectory and church. Free used every legal obstacle he could to cling to his post, rebutting accusations through many courts. Finally, the Court of Arches, the Archbishop of Canterbury's highest, passed the Sentence of Deprivation, confirmed by the House of Lords.

What was it all about? The book, "Scandal in the Church" by R. Brian Outhwaite (Hambleton Press, 1997), tells the tale. Allegations included: "fornication and incontinence, profane cursing, indecent conversation, drunkenness, immorality, a lewd and profligate life. Neglect of divine service, using the church porch as a stable, and foddering cattle therein. Turning swine into the churchyard, refusing use of the church for vestry meetings. He sold the lead on the chancel roof (to pay debts), neglected to baptise divers children and refused or neglected to bury corpses, requiring illegal fees first". He kept pornography on view in the Rectory and had five illegitimate children. When he deigned to take services, few attended - sermons were rants about locals he disliked. On Easter Day 1825, he was accused of brawling during divine service. The church was locked for weeks on end. Little wonder most of the congregation decamped to Potton church or the Methodist church. A rogue in all senses who may not have added to Sutton's spiritual development but he did add to its history. See what you missed: why not come along in 2024? You never know what you may discover.

Terry Warburton MBE



NORTH BEDFORDSHIRE CHURCH TOUR IN JUNE

I was delighted to plan our first church tour of 2023 and it's no surprise that I was keen to visit some of the splendid churches in North Bedfordshire. Whilst we enjoyed fair weather on the day, there was snow on the ground when I first explored the route. Friends who join our tours want to explore interesting churches for a variety of reasons - interest in a particular style of architecture, monuments, how the church reflects the history of its community - so time for wandering round 'doing your own thing' is important.

Our first call was St. Peter's, Thurleigh with a welcome cup of coffee and an informative introduction from Richard Singleton, a Bike 'n Hike Area Organiser. St. Peter's is of Norman origin with 13th, 14th and 15th century enlargements. I particularly liked a splendid Norman tympanum with Adam and Eve, the Serpent and the Tree of Knowledge. On to St. Nicholas, Swineshead (originally in Huntingdonshire). This almost unaltered building with the tower and spire in Decorated style is at the centre of the village. Barry Morse gave us a warm welcome and brief talk. During repairs to the spire in 1969, the bells were stolen but were replaced by a new light ring of five in 1989.

The White Horse at Tilbrook provided a splendid lunch where our party took over the conservatory, and it was an ideal 'half-way' point. Refreshed, we made for St. Mary's Shelton. Mentioned in the Domesday Book, the church may well have Anglo-Saxon origins. Churchwarden John Wells spoke passionately about the "delightfully unrestored interior", a fitting description with its perpendicular screen, 14th century font, 16th century pulpit and wall paintings.

Finally, to St. Peter's Sharnbrook, which is also mentioned in the Domesday Book. It was mostly renewed in Perpendicular style, and organist Colin Scott gave a short presentation on its development. This was followed by an excellent tea before returning to Bedford.

I wish to acknowledge the help in coordinating the Tour given by our late Events Secretary, David Allard.

Archie Russell



Trustees

Chairman: Rev'd Canon Malcolm Grant *Secretary:* William Marsterson *Treasurer:* Trevor Groom

Trustees: Mrs Theresa Britt; Sir Timothy Clifford; Richard Genochio; Dr Christopher Green; Mrs Judith Howard DL; The Ven Paul Hughes; Jim May; Mrs Madeline Russell; Archie Russell; Rev'd Thomas Sander.

Trust News is published by Beds & Herts Historic Churches Trust www.bedshertshct.org.uk. Printed by Gpex www.gpex.co.uk

Order your Trust News digitally or contact the Editor: Katrina Grant - trust.news@bedshertshct.org.uk