

# Cambridgeshire Historic Churches Trust

# Spring Newsletter

2025

## From the Chairman

**We seem to have emerged from a rather strange winter and are now able to enjoy unbroken sunshine : those grim days of a month or so ago with lowering clouds and drizzle we can happily put behind us. Do I imagine it but do people now have a spring in their step and are keen to involve themselves in so much available to them out there ?**

I am sure that members of the Cambridgeshire Historic Churches Trust are no exception and I can assure you all that we are developing a splendid programme of events in the months to come.

The first is the Annual Conference at Wolfson College on Saturday 5th April. Once again David Staziker has put together an excellent team of speakers to examine how doctrine and practice shaped churches and their furnishings from the Anglo-Saxons to the present day under the title 'Belief, Liturgy and Structure'. Quite a lot to cover I am sure you will agree but it promises to be a fascinating day. By the time you receive this Newsletter, bookings may be closed but it would be worth checking with David Staziker at [events@camhct.uk](mailto:events@camhct.uk)

Many of you delight in our annual programme of church visits on four summer Sunday afternoons. The 2025 visits are in course of preparation and you may like to put the dates in your diaries : 11th May, 8th June, 13th July, and 10th August. Our 'regulars' know that the afternoons usually comprise visits to three churches grouped reasonably close together in which talks are given on the history and architecture of the building. At

the last of the three a tea is provided at modest cost. The visit in May is likely to comprise the churches at Fen Ditton, Teversham and Bottisham [though not necessarily in that order]. Further details will be available before long. Some gentle learning on long, languorous afternoons, what could be better ?

We are delighted that Ely Cathedral has agreed to our request that Evensong on Thursday 26th June should include aspects of our work. Last year many will remember the excellent address by the Bishop of Huntingdon, Bishop Dagmar, and we are most grateful that she has again agreed to lead the service. Last year scrolls were presented to those who had excelled in raising money for 'Ride & Stride' and we hope that similar presentations may be made this year. Do come if you can and enjoy a glass of wine with us after the service.

That reminds me Ride & Stride Day is on Saturday 13th September though of course fundraising exertions can take place before or after as well as on the day. All ages welcome from the very young to the more mature !

Finally may I welcome two new trustees, John Farmer and Paul



Skipper. They have formally made their declarations as trustees and are already contributing to the work of the Executive Committee. John has retired from the Bar at which he had an extensive practice in the courts of East Anglia; and Paul Skipper, an accountant who has taken over from Susan Pope in overseeing our finances. I have known both for many years and I commend them to you. Susan Pope has decided to devote her talents to her Cambridge college as it prepares to celebrate an important anniversary. We are most grateful to her for her stewardship and wise counsel.

If any members would like to offer themselves as trustees and believe they have skills which might benefit the Trust then please get in touch, either through Sue Holgate or have a word with me at Wolfson on 5th April.

With every good wish,

**Neil McKittrick**  
Chairman

The Trust is an independent charity whose primary task is to give financial help in the form of grants and interest-free loans towards the cost of repair and improvement of churches and chapels of all denominations throughout Cambridgeshire. Its funds accrue mainly from membership subscriptions and from the annual sponsored Ride and Stride. Members receive twice-yearly newsletters and other information about the Trust's activities including in normal times an annual conference in the Spring and Sunday afternoon church tours in the summer. Minimum annual subscription £20 for up to two individuals at the same address, £50 for corporate membership for churches.

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For our formal Annual Report and Financial Statements visit [www.camhct.uk](http://www.camhct.uk) or ask the Administrator for a printed copy.

# Grant Secretary's Report



• Cambridge, St Giles, S Scaffolding



• Bassingbourn, St Peter & St Paul, from East

In the Autumn 2024 Newsletter, I wrote about the new Lottery Grant and expressed hope that this would be easier than the old scheme to get funding for churches. One of the early beneficiaries of the new Lottery scheme has been Cambridge, St Giles, (also known as St John the Evangelist for the Romanians); they have received a generous sum of £216,000 to tackle high level gutters and windows. Scaffolding has now gone up and can now be seen from Castle Street. (See photo). Unfortunately, however, the Government Grant Scheme for claiming back VAT is now restricted and for this coming year, (until 31st March 2026), churches can only claim back £25,000 worth of VAT . There is also a national limit restricted to £23 million. With a likely VAT bill of £50,000, St Giles are now faced with an additional cost of at least £20,000.

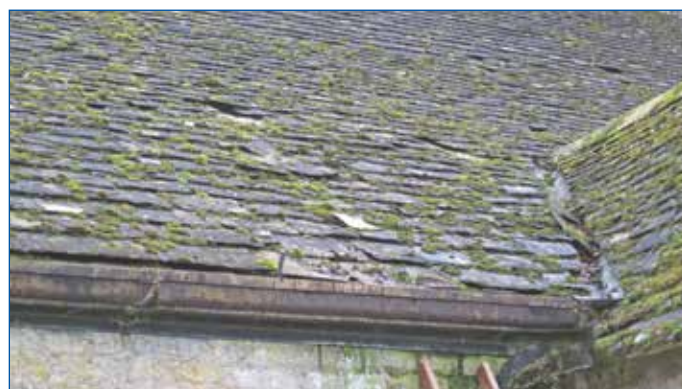
Also facing another unexpected VAT bill is Bassingbourn, St Peter & St Paul where the total project cost has been estimated at £834,000 and work has just started. (See 2 photos). The Building Project Treasurer said "The changes to LPOW were a real blow as nearly 97% of our VAT-able costs were confirmed as eligible for relief. The limited VAT relief from 1 April would have had a big impact anyway,

but the restrictions in place while the bats hibernate mean that substantial work on the new infrastructure, including kitchen and toilets can only start from April onwards. All of this does mean that we have to think about additional sources of funding - I estimate we will lose at least £75,000 that we would otherwise have been reimbursed, and this shortfall will need to be replaced. However, we have been greatly encouraged by most grant providers both before and since this announcement and we feel we have a good case to resubmit our application in May with updated funding and proposals (that includes drawing upon the CHCT loan, for which we are extremely grateful). We are determined that all the key features of the re-ordering will be completed. The finish date may be slightly delayed, but this is more because of the restrictions imposed whilst bats hibernate."

The re-roofing project at Morborne, All Saints will also now become a lot more expensive with the new VAT grant restrictions. CHCT had offered a grant back in 2021 for reroofing just the north slopes but the PCC could not raise the funds at that time and have now been advised to approach the Lottery with one large project. The collyweston slates are impossible to patch (repair and the roof has been leaking for at least five years. (See photo).



• Bassingbourn, St Peter & St Paul, from West



• Morborne, All Saints, defective roof





• *Croydon, All Saints, Chancel.*

Also delayed has been any work at Croydon, All Saints. It has been known for some time about the weak Chancel floor, (see photo), and the South arcade which is being racked by seasonal ground movement. Before going

to the Lottery, the PCC have been encouraged to seek an Historic England Grant to fund investigations. With an application made in early January, it is hoped that a decision from Historic England about this will be made soon.

More straight forward are the Quinquennial repair projects, a number of which have recently been funded. One such case is Marholm, St Mary the Virgin. (See 2 photos). The work here also included replacing the damp and stained internal plaster.

We have one grants meeting still to go this year, but have already offered some £30,500 in grants and £70,000 in interest free loans. As always, you can read about the full list of our grants and loans at <https://camhct.uk/grants/>



• *Marholm, St Mary the Virgin, gutters before*



• *Marholm, St Mary the Virgin, new Chancel gutter*

## Annual Conference and Church Tours

Our **Annual Conference**, as usual at Wolfson College Cambridge, is on Saturday 5th April on the theme of Belief, Liturgy and Structure – how doctrine and practice shaped churches and their furnishings from the Anglo-Saxons to Charles III. If you haven't booked already and you see this Newsletter by the deadline of 21st March, full details and booking arrangements are at <https://camhct.uk/event/belief-liturgy-and-structure-annual-conference-2025/>

Our **church tours** this summer are as follows :

|                           |                                  |                     |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Sunday 11th May</b>    | <b>Fen Ditton</b>                | <b>St Mary</b>      |
|                           | <b>Teversham</b>                 | <b>All Saints</b>   |
|                           | <b>Bottisham</b>                 | <b>Holy Trinity</b> |
| <b>Sunday 8th June</b>    | <b>Itinerary to be confirmed</b> |                     |
| <b>Sunday 13th July</b>   | <b>Barrington</b>                | <b>All Saints</b>   |
|                           | <b>Meldreth</b>                  | <b>Holy Trinity</b> |
|                           | <b>Litlington</b>                | <b>St Catherine</b> |
| <b>Sunday 10th August</b> | <b>Itinerary to be confirmed</b> |                     |

As usual, each tour will start at the first named church at 2.30 pm. At the third and final church our hosts are kind enough to provide us with tea and a WC is available. For those who wish to remain after the tour we either conduct our own short form of Evening Prayer or join the host church for their evening service if one is scheduled.

The May tour will be led by William Schenck, a longstanding Trust member and Ely Cathedral guide and the June, July and August tours by the Revd Dr Lynne Broughton. We don't charge for participation in these tours but we ask those attending to donate generously to the churches we visit.

## The Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme (LPWGS)

The LPWGS enables those who have had work undertaken on listed buildings used for worship to reclaim VAT charged on work, provided that the VAT was more than £1000 (or a single reclaim in one year of between £500 and £1000). This is an enormously important scheme as it enables those managing projects on historical churches to reclaim the additional 20% it paid in VAT. On major projects, the sums reclaimed have been very significant and enabled much more extensive work to be undertaken.

When the present Government came into office, it commenced a wide review of its expenditure to enable it to direct monies to the improvements to the public services it had identified in its manifesto. It was clear that the LPEGS was one of those heads of expenditure to be reviewed.

Following the Westminster Hall debate on 22 January 2025 Government announced that the scheme would continue for another year (to 31 March 2026) which was very welcome, but with two very significant caveats:

- 1 There was no assurance that the scheme will continue beyond that date (to be expected in the light of the continuing review and further unexpected major heads of expenditure), and
- 2 The amount to be reclaimed was capped at £25,000 per applicant with a total sum made available in 2025/6 for the scheme of £23 million.

Most schemes for repairs and improvement do not attract a VAT liability exceeding £25k and so will not be affected this year.

But major schemes, especially those that are already underway, are being undertaken on a phased basis or where significant sums have already been spent at the planning stage and where funding has been raised based on the former scheme will be significantly negatively affected.

In his article on 23 January 2025 in the Times 2 "Who will save our crumbling churches", Richard Morrison set out the possible consequences going forward and was clear that those who wish to protect our historic places of worship may well have to fend for themselves.

It is essential that organisations such as CHCT look to increase their income by increasing membership of both individuals and organisations and to consider other means of generating income. Clearly CHCT will have to work to generate more income to enable us to continue to make grants and loans to those churches in need.

**Nicholas Leigh-Smith**  
Vice-Chair

## An example of the value of a CHCT grant and loan

**The 2021 quinquennial survey of Marholm Church (av congregation 14) highlighted the urgent need for replacement of the lead lined parapet gutter on the South side of the Chancel roof-Cost £22,000 plus vat and architects fees so a total of £27,000 to be found in order to be able to instruct contractors to proceed even though we knew that under the current Listed places of Worship scheme we would be able to reclaim the vat element in due course on completion.**

Due to generous grants from the patron of the living, CHCT and local fund raising we raised nearly £20,000 but it was the loan (interest free over three years) of £5,000 from CHCT that gave us the confidence to start work before contractors charges increased.

Once the scaffolding was erected, it concentrated local minds to find the remaining money needed- nothing like plenty of dust and polythene sheeting on the pews to show we meant business!

The whole project took 10 weeks and was complete in time for Advent Sunday and the return of the bats to their favoured habitat!.

By mid February, we had received the vat from HMRC so on 1st March we were able to repay the loan in full to CHCT. In the event a three year loan was repaid after five months but the essential point is that at the crucial moment, the offer of the loan gave us the courage to sign the contract and complete the vital work before further damage to the fabric of the church occurred.

For this the parishioners of Marholm are exceedingly grateful.



## Cambridgeshire Historic Churches Trust

Registered as a charity in England and Wales No 287486

### Trustees

His Honour Neil McKittrick (Chair)  
Nicholas Leigh-Smith (Vice-Chair)  
The Revd Canon David Pritchard  
Paul Skipper (Hon Treasurer)  
David Stazicker  
The Revd Canon Simon Talbott  
Alison Taylor  
The Revd Dr Nicholas Thistlethwaite  
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John Farmer

### Executive Committee

Nicholas Leigh-Smith (Chair)  
Paul Skipper (Hon Treasurer)  
The Revd Dr Lynne Broughton  
William Craven  
Graham Pledger (Grants Secretary)  
The Revd Canon Annette Reed  
The Revd Tim Thompson  
John Farmer

### Administrator

Sue Holgate