



Cambridgeshire Historic Churches Trust

# Autumn Newsletter

AUTUMN / WINTER 2025

## From our Chairman

**This year has been truly 'golden' and not just for those of us who have celebrated a rather big wedding anniversary. We have enjoyed [or perhaps endured] four heatwaves in the Summer with even more days of intensive heat than in the long hot months of '76.**

The Trust has provided a feast of activities starting with the Annual Conference at Wolfson on 5th April. In the many years that our events have been held, there can surely have been few that have matched the quality of the speakers and the vast tracts of Church history covered starting with the arrival of St Augustine and the emergence of the parish church through to the 21st century and 'Fresh Expressions'. So much good, interesting learning and all within the day's compass.

We will be back at Wolfson for the 2026 Conference on 11th April for which the working title is 'Church Furnishings'. Speakers are being identified and planning well underway. We have taken note of the comments, especially about catering arrangements, and we hope problems will be discussed and alleviated with the College. Do check our website early in the New Year for further details and book early to be sure of your place.

Four Summer Sunday afternoons were devoted to church tours; three churches on each Sunday and grouped in such a way that different parts of the county were covered. This means that the travelling distance between each church is relatively limited. There were some real gems among this year's crop. Who could forget the might and impact of Thorney Abbey or the very different churches of Grafham and Ellington but both with strong sunshine adorning the nave? We continue to be very grateful to David Stazicker for all his endeavours in arranging meticulously the Conference and the church tours and to our excellent lecturers without whom.....

David will continue his planning for both Conference and tours but would a willing member come forward to support him in the preparation of the church tours? He would welcome some assistance: suggestions as to which churches might be included is always welcome but some of the administrative liaison with incumbents or churchwardens [including the all important teas at the final port of call] would lift a burden from his shoulders. Do contact David, or Sue Holgate to learn more.

For the third year in a row members and friends joined us for Festal Evensong at Ely Cathedral on 26th June. We are thankful to the Dean and Chapter for agreeing to this and particularly to the Bishop of Huntingdon for presiding and preaching. Drinks in the Lady Chapel followed. If we plan another I believe we should steer clear of the last few days in June. In retrospect it seems unreasonable to hold our service in the same week as the Feast of St Etheldreda, and the Ordination Services for Priests and Deacons because of the burden placed on the Bishops, the clergy and the choristers. One or two members have suggested we might visit Peterborough Cathedral as an alternative, though it must be said it would prove quite a hike for many of our members. Having gone to and fro several times this Summer on deteriorating Fen roads, I can recall few worse. However, I will look further into a change if you wish.

By the time this is published Ride & Stride will be over for another year. It continues to be our principal source of fundraising and CHCT is most appreciative of the exertions of those who ensure that funds can be made available to churches in the county in need of help. We are all committed to continue Ride & Stride. To complement this you may have seen that we have a new fundraising idea, the Steeplechase [nothing to do with Aintree]. I stress this complements and in no way supersedes R & S. Sue Holgate circulated details in late August and we are indebted to Samuel Pedlar, a new and enthusiastic addition to the trustee board, for doing a great deal of work to get this off the ground. It may appeal - though not exclusively - to young people and families, an attraction being that it is not confined to a Saturday in September but is a year round opportunity to raise money. Why not give it a go ?

May I conclude by thanking all who work assiduously to support our aims and objectives: our trustees, and members of the executive committee, Sue Holgate, our administrator, and to all our members and supporters. We have achieved a great deal and there is much still to do.

With my very best wishes.

**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 an annual conference in the Spring and Sunday afternoon church tours in the summer.

Minimum annual subscription £25 for up to two individuals at the same address, £60 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.

## Finance Report

I am delighted to have been invited to join the Trustees and bring my financial background to help the Trust going forward.

By way of an introduction, I am a Chartered Accountant and have been in practice all of my working life. Having built a substantial practice over the last 30 years, I sold that in June 2023 and reduced my working time leading up to a full retirement in June 2025.

I now live in Haslingfield, just outside Cambridge and am a not very good bell ringer.

The Trust has a good level of reserves thanks to some legacies in the last couple of years and these are invested with the CCLA in a range of funds that have an ethical bias and hopefully will provide a stable base for the long term.

The full accounts for the year ended 30 June 2025 are in the process of being prepared so the following is a summary of the activity.

We had three main strands of income and for the year to 30 June 2025 around £18,000 came from investment income, around £15,000 from Ride & Stride (net of amounts paid to churches) and some £12,000 came from members subscriptions.

Grants for the year totalled £39,000 and there were £65,000 of new loans made.

The Trust has around £290,000 invested with the CCLA and £250,000 in a deposit account with COIF.

Paul Skipper FCA

## Subscriptions

It is quite a few years since the subscriptions were last increased and I hope that members will regard the modest increases as reasonable given the benefits.

From 1st January 2026, individual membership will be £25 for up to two individuals at the same address and £60 for corporate membership and for churches.

Historically, the subscriptions have been paid by way of standing order but this is not very efficient as changes will involve a lot of administration time. Please would you consider cancelling your standing order and changing over to use our Stripe account via the website to pay the membership? This may be done by going into our website [Cambridgeshire Historic Churches Trust](https://www.camhct.org.uk) where you can register and set up membership or log in if you have used the website before.

Then in future years we will advise you, in advance of the membership renewal and, assuming you have not cancelled the authority, we can simply take the membership direct from your card.

Should you wish to continue with payment by standing order, please can you make sure that it is increased before the payment is made on 1st January?

Many thanks.

Paul Skipper FCA

### CHCT Ride and Stride with Bear... (see page 4)



## Dates for your Diary

### Saturday 11th April 2026

Annual Conference at Wolfson College, Cambridge

- Church furnishings through the centuries – altars, fonts, textiles and plate
- details to be announced.

### Sundays 10th May, 14th June, 12th July and 9th August 2026

- Church tours - Itineraries to be announced later.

### Ride and Stride Saturday 12th September 2026.

# Grants Report

At our May 2025 Executive Meeting, (the last in the financial year 24/25), we had six grant applications and this took us to a grand total for the year of £39,500 in grant offers, (probably our highest ever), and £75,000 in Loan Offers. With such a high demand for our grants, we managed to offer grants to all eligible applicants but were finding our average grant, once £3,000 per church was now more often only £2,000.

Our grants and Loans for the current financial year 25/26 can be seen at <https://camhct.uk/grants/> and are reproduced in Fig 1.

**Recent Grants and Loans**

Church Name	Purpose	Loan amount	Grant amount
Etton, St Stephen	Re-roof Chancel	£10,000	£2,000
Maxey, St Peter	Re-roof South Aisle	£20,000	£2,000
Wicken, Methodist Church	Porch Roof Repairs	£3,000	£2,000
Orwell, St Andrew	Feasibility study for disabled access	£8,000	None
Chettisham, St Michael and All Angels	Rattle the Parson's Roof	Not requested	£2,000

Fig. 1

Can you spot what the four grants have in common? Yes, they are all roofs. Why? For those of you who have looked at our grant notes recently, you will find a new item, "Our Priority for grants", has been introduced in Fig 2.

**Application Process Menu:**

- + Eligibility
- + Criteria
- Our Priority for Grants
- + Grant amount
- + Loans
- + Procedure
- + Supporting documentation

**Choose your application method**

Complete the application form online by moving to Step two  
or  
download and complete a Word version of the application form and email it to: [grants@camhct.uk](mailto:grants@camhct.uk)

Fig. 2

Open this up and you will find our list of eight priorities; see Fig 3.

**Step one - Read the application notes**

- + Eligibility
- + Criteria
- Our Priority for Grants

From 1, (the highest) to 8, (the lowest):

1. Stolen lead replacement, leaking roofs, unsafe windows, decaying or unsafe masonry and faulty electrical wiring.
2. Rising dampness in floors and walls, including rainwater drainage upgrade
3. Provision of Toilets and Kitchens
4. Upgrade of Heating and Lighting
5. Monument restoration
6. Re-hanging of bells, repair of docks and major periodic reconstruction or repair of organs.
7. Re-ordering.
8. Surveys.

+ Grant amount  
+ Loans  
+ Procedure  
+ Supporting documentation

DOWNLOAD THESE APPLICATION NOTES AS A PDF

Fig. 3

It so happens that at our first meeting in 25/26 we had four "Priority 1" applications and were unable to offer a grant to any of the other four. However, Orwell, St Andrew although not grant eligible on this occasion, did ask to be considered for a loan and I am pleased to report that their PCC have decided to take up our loan offer and go ahead with a feasibility study to investigate ways to improve disabled access.

Heydon, Holy Trinity, were one of the casualties in our first of four meetings, sorry Heydon. They were looking to provide new services to the church as Part 1 of a two-part project to eventually build a new toilet extension. See Fig 4.

Plan shows location of sanitary, the Stage 2 toilet extension and the proposed route of the underground cabling.

10. Looking East, blue line shows outer walls of Stage 2 extension.

Fig. 4

We couldn't offer a grant this time but would be able to offer a loan and even support like this might encourage the Lottery to grant aid this very worthwhile project.

That's all on grants and loans for the moment, except to say that we have tried to make your applications simpler. You no longer have to print off the contract offer, sign it and post it back to me; a digital signature is now perfectly acceptable to us and saves on postage too!

Graham Pledger

## CHCT Ride and Stride with Bear the Ultra-Marathon Dog.

You may have met Bear on the summer tours. She's the brindle RSPCA rescue, who loves cake crumbs and church mice. After walking from St Peter's Ely to St Peter's Cambridge in 2024, she was ready for a bigger challenge. On 6th September she completed a 28 mile test-walk from Kings Lynn to Brancaster on the new King Charles III Way. She was ready.

What next? Ride and Stride, Saturday 13th September 2025! An early start, arriving at Ely Cathedral as the clock struck 4:45am.



The Ordnance Survey app's route to Peterborough Cathedral was underway. Out of Ely to Coveney and Wardy Hill in the dark, then across the fields to Mepal for sunrise.



Waterside paths and tracks led to Chatteris, passing huge maize silage (biofuel) stacks.

At the half way point a couple of farm-hands were surprised to see us, and more surprised to learn our route. They waved us off with a serious-faced 'do you know where you're going?'

It was then footpaths and a stretch of road to Benwick through a heavy shower, and on to Whittlesey. Bear ignored a well-meaning lady's 'I used to have a Staffie just like that... she must be soooooo tired', and impatiently tugged at her lead, energy to spare. Along the Hereward Way, over the Millennium Bridge, and then the riverside path to Peterborough Cathedral, arriving at 4:45pm, after exactly 12 hours.



A shared espresso con panna (panna = cream = Bear-food), a sardine dinner and then the train back to Ely. Angela's watch recorded 34.78 miles and 75,155 steps. Bear did many more while seeking water rodents, bouncing pheasants and chasing deer (no lives were lost).

100% of the £1,286.75 raised (including £183.75 Gift Aid) has been donated to CHCT. Suggestions for next year's super-route are eagerly awaited!

**Bear** (and Angela Walker).

## Steeple Chase

As a Ride and Stride committee we were looking at finding new ways for people to experience our churches. The Diocese of Ely and the CHCT have teamed up to design an online church trail themed around the English Civil War.

The English Civil War left a lasting mark on the nation, and many of its key figures had deep roots in Cambridgeshire. Their stories are woven into the fabric of the county's parish churches—from Major General John Disbrowe and the Earl of Manchester to the Lord Protector himself, Oliver Cromwell. Follow the trail through Cambridgeshire's churches and cathedrals to uncover the rich history of this turbulent era. Along the way, you can discover hidden architectural treasures, remarkable local tales, and connections to other notable figures such as T.S. Eliot.

You can drive the full route or choose to cycle or walk between different stops along the trail—exploring at your own pace, any time, and starting from anywhere. At the touch of a button, users can travel across Cambridgeshire either virtually or in person, across 13 churches and our counties 2 cathedrals. We hope the trail is interactive, informative and an opportunity to explore some of Cambridgeshire best churches in a fresh way.

Our hope is that this trail will be enjoyable for church crawlers both old and new, experienced and fresh faced, and we hope too it will be a new way to promote the work of the CHCT and raise vital funds for the churches that we support.

To follow the trail yourself simply click here to download the app and get started:

[at-creative.co.uk/churchexplorer-app](http://at-creative.co.uk/churchexplorer-app)

## Cambridgeshire Historic Churches Trust

Registered as a charity in England and Wales No 287486

### Trustees

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Nicholas Leigh-Smith (Vice-Chair)  
The Revd Canon David Pritchard  
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The Revd Dr Nicholas Thistlethwaite  
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### Executive Committee

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Paul Skipper (Hon Treasurer)  
The Revd Dr Lynne Broughton  
William Craven  
Graham Pledger (Grants Secretary)  
The Revd Canon Annette Reed  
John Farmer

### Administrator

Sue Holgate

[www.camhct.uk](http://www.camhct.uk)