



NEWSLETTER – SPRING 2021



Leiston Abbey

Suffolk Historic Churches Trust

Registered Charity No. 267047

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CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

As I write another Holy Week has passed some weeks ago and a whole year has passed since the lockdowns began. I do trust all our members have kept safe and well.

Unlike many charities your Trust emerges from the pandemic in rude financial health. Not just because of the prudent tending of our reserves by custodians past and present, but principally because of a sensational year for the Ride and Stride. In mid 2020 we hummed and hawed about whether we could safely proceed but held our nerve and went ahead. In the event we were lucky – 12 September fell between lockdowns - and our cyclists, and indeed our Pedal and Drive Vintage and Classic Car drivers, were delighted to turn out for one of the few events that had not been cancelled. And collectively they heard our plea on behalf of all those Suffolk churches and chapels who had suffered months of no church plate by raising sums we had not seen for over ten years. In all – hot off the press – £190,000 was raised. I salute all who turned out and supported us.

As ever, near a half of that went direct to the participating churches and the rest to replenish our grants war chest. On top of that we have received two very generous legacies. All critical as we strive to help our Suffolk churches and chapels at a time when the wider grants landscape for church buildings has become increasingly challenging. And I am pleased to say our Grants Committee have continued to work throughout and that the budget the Trustees have allocated to grants for 2021/2 reflects the stellar success of last year's Ride and Stride and is well up on the prior year.

Now we plan full steam ahead for the this year's Ride and Stride and Pedal and Drive - or Suffolk Churches Day as I like to call it - on 11 September 2021. We hope that those churches who were unable to help us last year will be welcoming us once more and that we can even beat last year's record.

I am sorry that our usual cycle of face to face events have not been possible but we hope to resume in the autumn. Meanwhile I trust that you have been enjoying the fortnightly 'Churches and Chapels Chat' newsletters (if you have not been getting them it means we do not have your e-address and we would be grateful if you could email the office so we do). You can read more about this from Rachel Sloane on page 5. Hopefully by the time I write my piece for the Autumn Newsletter normal business will have resumed and that I will be talking about forthcoming events where once again we can meet and enjoy each other's company.

Geoffrey Probert

As always, this Newsletter is also available on the Trust website under the "Latest Newsletters" tab

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

The administration of the Suffolk Historic Churches Trust is continuing to function during the COVID-19 pandemic, and correspondence, emails and telephone calls received at our office in Long Melford are being dealt with as usual. Our contact details can be found on page 2.

We are always happy to hear from members and supporters about Trust-related matters. In particular, we remain open for grants applications (details on the Grants tab of the Trust website – www.shct.org.uk).

With increasingly hopeful signs that the Covid restrictions are easing, the Trust will continue to keep its programme of events under review, and will be updating our members and supporters on developments, via the Trust website, social media and the Churches and Chapels Chat (see more about the latter opposite).

RIDE AND STRIDE

Last year, in spite of misgivings in view of lockdown, we decided to go ahead with the event, which is of course our main source of funding for our work in preserving our ancient Suffolk churches and chapels. We were encouraged in this decision by the positive and robust advice from the National Churches Trust. They circulated a guide containing sensible and practical steps to ensure that riders visiting churches observed safe distancing, avoided unnecessary contact and used common sense. Not all churches were manned and facilities and refreshments curtailed.

The response from our churches, riders and sponsors was extraordinary. Although numbers were down, those who did take part raised a total of over £158,000, which when Gift Aid is added exceeded £175,000. This is the best result since 2010. The burgeoning classic car rally added another £14,000. Suffolk continues to raise more than any other county in the kingdom.

This year, even if lockdown continues and our lives are blighted by Covid and uncertainty, there is no reason why the same enthusiasm and vigour shown by our supporters should not repeat the triumph. We will of course follow the official guidance and put safety and common sense first. We are planning to go ahead, but will not hesitate to cancel if necessary as the year progresses. As I write this, a blizzard rages outside, but spring is around the corner. I see sunshine ahead.

Patrick Grieve Ride and Stride Committee Chairman

A NEW WAY TO KEEP IN TOUCH...

Have you received the fortnightly 'Churches and Chapels Chat' yet? When the Trustees of Suffolk Historic Churches Trust met in November 2020 the impossibility of holding our usual events for Friends and supporters was discussed. The pandemic had meant we had not been able to hold spring or winter study days, Friends' meetings, organise any church visits or any speakers. All agreed this was a great shame. Geoffrey Probert, the Chairman of Trustees, then suggested that we create something to link us all online instead.

Should we film tours of Suffolk churches or do online lectures? What about arranging meetings on Zoom? Was everyone getting fed up of sitting, talking to a screen? All the ideas involved were either of doubtful benefit, had a high cost or took excessive time, if they were to be of a professional standard. Then Geoffrey had a brainwave Other people were already producing suitable material which we could make use of. For people who were stuck at home it would be a little glimpse at the outside world – and a chance to share Trust news too.

Geoffrey produced the first 'Church and Chapel Chat', as it was decided it should be called, and it was a fascinating 'letter' with photos and links to online content – his favourite church (St Mary's, Bures), cathedral (Canterbury video tour), music (some John Rutter) etc.

Most of the Trustees were willing to take turns producing the 'Chat' but felt that Geoffrey's original aim of a weekly version would be too much of a challenge, but that fortnightly was achievable.

Each 'Chat' has been very personal to the compiler and is very individual. There is always a link to an interesting place of worship - either local, national or international, and to some favourite church music, usually a hymn or two but sometimes other choral pieces. Details of a favourite book, a link to a recorded interview or website have been included... it is a very eclectic mix. One of the most fascinating things is the short introduction to themselves that each Trustee has been asked to include – it is fascinating to see how their interest in Suffolk churches came about.

'Churches and Chapels Chat' is emailed to everyone on our email list – the Friends, Ride and Stride volunteers and others. If you haven't yet received a copy, it is probably because we don't have your email address. Please let us know via shct@btconnect.com

Rachel Sloane Hon Publicity Officer, SHCT (mail@rachelstoane.co.uk)



St Mary, Westley

**(referred to in SHCT Trustee Tony Redman's
recent 'Churches and Chapels Chat')**

GRANTS COMMITTEE NEWS

SHCT Grants

Eleven grants were awarded during our Zoom meeting in January. A further thirteen grants were awarded in April. Meeting dates for 2021-22 and criteria for SHCT grants can be found on the Trust's website.

National Heritage Lottery Grants for 2021-22

As mentioned in the Trust's website, applications for grants ranging from £3,000 to £5 million have now re-opened to support the heritage sector to strengthen its recovery from Covid-19. While heritage at risk remains a priority, during 2021-22 NHL will prioritise heritage projects that meet one or more of six stated priority outcomes, of which one is mandatory. Every project is required to achieve the **inclusion** outcome i e "a wider range of people will be involved in heritage". Meeting this requirement may prove difficult and SHCT would be interested to hear of the experience of any church which applies to NHL for a grant during 2021-22.

Wolfson Foundation

As foreshadowed in the Spring 2020 Newsletter, the administration of the Wolfson Foundation funds for fabric repairs to Grade I and II* Anglican churches has moved to the National Churches Trust (NCT).

St Mary, Nettlestead is a recent Suffolk beneficiary. The church has received a grant of £17,500 from NCT to help fund re-roofing and other works of repair. A further £7,500 Fabric Repair Grant has been received from the Wolfson Foundation on the recommendation of NCT.

A grant of £10,750 was made to the church by the SHCT Grants Committee in January 2021.

The Taylor Review Pilot Evaluation

Following the Taylor Review into the sustainability of English Churches and Cathedrals - how listed places of worship could become more sustainable through regular maintenance and repair and wider community involvement - the Taylor Review Pilot was designed to address some of the Review's recommendations. The Pilot offered four types of support, including a Minor Repairs Fund providing grants for maintenance and urgent minor repairs, to listed places of worship in Greater Manchester (a predominantly urban area) and Suffolk (a predominantly rural area). Grants from the fund were capped at £10,000 per listed place of worship to contribute towards eligible works that had a total project cost of no more than £12,000. Although both a Minor Repairs Fund and a Major Repairs Fund had been recommended by the Review, there was no funding within the Pilot for a Major Repairs Fund.

The Pilot ran from September 2018 to March 2020. A total of 85 grant applications to the Minor Repairs Fund were received in Suffolk, of which 71 were approved. For most of the listed places of worship it was reported that without the Minor Repairs Fund the works would not have been undertaken for a number of years, if at all.

The Independent Evaluation (106pp) was published in October 2020. Unsurprisingly, it concluded that there appeared to be a high demand for both a Minor Repairs Fund and a designated Major Repairs Fund for listed places of worship.

Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme

This is a scheme which allows listed places of worship to claim a sum equal to VAT which has been paid on repairs and alterations.

On 24 February 2021 it was announced that the scheme will be renewed this year on the same terms as previously. It had been due to cease running on 31 March 2021.

John Devaux Chairman Grants Committee



**St Mary and St Lawrence, Great Bricett
(see Patrick Grieve's article on page 15)**

IT ISN'T JUST FOR CYCLISTS...

How does a church with few cyclists raise money on Ride and Stride Day (Saturday, 11 September 2021)? There are many other ways to take part in the event, and the Trustees and some Area Organisers have put their heads together to come up with some suggestions. **Remember half of your sponsorship money goes to your chosen church and half to the Trust to give out in grants.** In 2020, in the midst of the coronavirus nightmare, the county rallied round, took part cycling and walking, and even more money was raised than usual (around £190,000, including the associated Pedal and Drive event!)

Here are some ideas for 2021....

BIKES - with a difference!

Trustee Simon Tennent suggests static bike riders. "One in our village, who has vision issues, raises in excess of £200 every year and has done for many years".

E-bike riders are also welcome to take part in the Ride and Stride.

WALKING: Although the event started as a sponsored bike ride, increasingly people are choosing to walk their route, especially in our towns, where often several churches are quite close together. (Hence the title 'Ride and Stride')

SPONSORED SIGNERS: Across the county, some of those wonderful volunteers who sit in the church to sign in the riders and striders are sponsored for their time.

CLEAN UP YOUR CHURCH OR CHURCHYARD: If you are planning for your church to be open to sign in participants, why not get sponsored to do a job at the same time? (One pound per pew polish perhaps? A donation for each wheelbarrow of weeds?)

CAPT TOM INSPIRATIONS: Older or less mobile church members could be sponsored to walk up and down the aisle... around the church.... or down the church path.

MOBILITY SCOOTERS: A group of nuns in Felixstowe have taken part on their mobility scooters. Other scooter riders have been spotted in Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds, and elsewhere.

CHOIRS: We know of choirs that sing in each church as they cycle or walk around a town.

YOUNG AMBASSADORS: The Area Organiser for Colneys, Ian Angus, enrolled a couple of Young Ambassadors (aged 12/13) in his village who, with support from their mothers, took part in 2020 and raised £500 via a joint JustGiving page.

SHCT Trustee Simon Tennent adds: “I also believe that there are open spaces, country houses, etc where it should be possible to let under 10-13 year olds ride largely unsupervised. This will encourage them to take part on the roads in the future which must be one of our objectives. Perhaps we charge a fee to enter the ‘cycle area’ - £5 per child?”

SUGGESTED ROUTES: Ian Angus in the Colneys area has produced a leaflet with suggested routes, paid for by sponsorship from local businesses. In Ipswich, the new Area Organiser, Tessa Jordan, is planning a cycle and a walking route for 2021.

COMPETITIONS: Greg Spay, the Area Organiser for Woodbridge, has held a very popular Bake-off type competition for the churches which provide cakes for riders and striders.

Have a fancy dress competition for local participants.

CHALLENGES: If you have other churches in your village, estate or town, issue them with a friendly challenge – the winning church being the most churches visited or most money raised by participants.

Challenge the organisations who meet in your church hall to compete against each other. (Just imagine the party you could have when everyone arrives back at the hall – Covid allowing!)

Challenge your vicar, pastor or minister to take part by riding or striding.

The Trustees have already expanded the opportunities to get involved in what is THE day to raise money for our churches. We now have Pedal and Drive for Classic and Veteran cars which has gone from six cars in 2018 to 100 in 2020. This year we will also be encouraging runners to take part, inspired by Bill Hill from Brockley who raised £750 last year. If you have any other ideas, please let me know so we can share them with others. Let's try and beat 2020's amazing fundraising effort!

Rachel Sloane

PS. Please remind anyone collecting sponsorship via Just Giving to put on their page which church they are supporting, or we won't know who to send 50 per cent of the money to!



**The south porch at St Mary, Nettlestead
(see the Grants Committee report, page 7)**

Image © Simon Knott – suffolkchurches.co.uk

CHURCH RECORDING NEWS

Since the early 1970s the nation's churches have benefited from the detailed records of church interiors, fixtures and fittings compiled by volunteers working under the auspices of the National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies. In 2017 NADFAS was rebranded as The Arts Society which has decided that Church Recording does not meet its new objectives. However, you will be glad to know that the church recording volunteers decided to form an independent charity **The Church Recording Society**.

The Society will continue to promote the recognition of the rich artistic and historical heritage of places of worship. Each group works as a team, focusing on one church at a time. They record and research memorials, metalwork, stonework, woodwork, textiles, paintings, windows, libraries and documents. The participating church is presented with an illustrated book detailing each item and its history. Copies are also sent to national institutions and libraries. The Records provide a source of interest and pleasure to the church and the local community, especially those who are researching family roots or local history. They also provide vital information for the police and insurance companies needing to identify stolen artefacts.

Church Recording is very strong in Suffolk and at least seventy churches have been recorded; new volunteers are always welcome. Interested? You can find out more by taking a look at the CRS website – www.churchrecordingsociety.org.uk

Celia Stephens



Church recorders at work

GET YOUR DIGITAL CAMERA AND MOBILE PHONE READY!

In 2020 we launched the first Ride and Stride photography competition.

Many people walking or cycling around Suffolk's churches, on Ride and Stride Day, enjoy taking photos, so we decided we would set them a challenge. With a prize of a £100 voucher, the competition, although a last-minute idea, was a popular addition to everyone's enjoyment. The prize was kindly sponsored by a supporter and the winner was chosen by an independent judge.

We asked for a set of six photos (the entrance door of a church or chapel, a church tower or spire, an empty church niche, the sign for a non-conformist church, an image of a Biblical character, and a selfie) and the standard was very high. The winning set were taken by Abi Britten from Newmarket, who was cycling with her family around the Long Melford area.

Entry to the competition was free, but we asked that competitors were sponsored by family and friends on their journey. The Brittens raised money for the Trust and for Haverhill Methodist Church. (They visited 31 churches, cycled 35 miles and raised £238). Their winning photographs are on page 14.

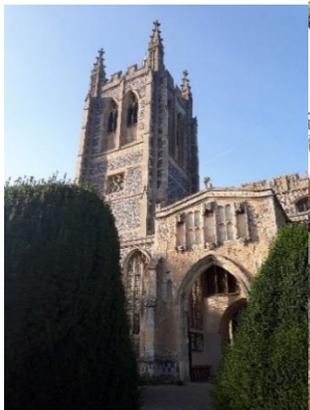
In 2021 we plan to repeat the competition with some new categories. The six photos taken on Ride and Stride Day 2021 will be of:

1. The entrance door of a church or chapel
2. A memorial plate, plaque or gravestone
3. A non-conformist church (i.e., not Church of England but Methodist, Baptist, Unitarian Meeting House etc)
4. A church window
5. A free choice... whatever you wish to mark about your day
6. We'd also love a selfie of you celebrating outside a church when you complete your journey

As there were some excellent individual photographs in 2020 there will be two prizes this year - one for the best set of images and one for the best picture overall. The submitted photos may be used for publicity for the Trust, encouraging others to support our work, and the photographer will be credited when any are used.

There will be an entry form and more details on the Trust website nearer the time - www.shct.org.uk. Good luck!

Rachel Sloane



BARE RUINED CHOIRS OF SUFFOLK'S ABBEY AND PRIORY CHURCHES

By the sixteenth century monasticism was already in decline, with fewer taking their vows, even as monastic wealth increased. Henry VIII resented their independence and opposition to his policies, in particular his divorce. Many abbeys and priories had become lax, venial and unpopular, and it came as little surprise when Henry VIII decided to seize their lands to supplement his coffers. His wars and building projects drained the Exchequer. Suffolk had fewer monastic houses than many counties, with only Bury St Edmunds being of great wealth. His chancellor Wolsey set about dissolving the smaller houses in 1524. Five such houses in Suffolk including Dodnash and Rumburgh were closed, and their endowments and land used to pay for his new college in Ipswich. Even the stone work was dismantled and reused. Later, after his fall, these resources, including the stone windows and doorways, were shipped to his new college at Oxford, Christ Church.

It was not until 1537 that Wolsey and his successor Thomas Cromwell proceeded to dissolve the remaining houses, about 40 in all, including the great abbey at Bury St Edmunds.

The lands were sold off, and in most cases the monks and nuns provided with pensions or employment as priests and chaplains. By a special decree, all abbey or priory churches or chapels were to be demolished to stop them becoming places of resort in the religious turbulence of the period. A few received special dispensation, and were allowed to become parish churches, and indeed the Benedictines had often provided chapels for the use of the parish. The five such parish churches are:

Rumburgh The complete priory chapel of the Augustinian Canons remains, isolated and run down. A unique atmospheric survival, with evidence of other priory buildings nearby.

Bungay St Mary's church, now redundant, incorporates the nave of the Benedictine nuns' priory church, with priory ruins in the churchyard.

Great Bricett The simple Benedictine nave survived, as it was seized by the crown in 1414 as the priory was an alien cell, directly administered by its parent church at Nobiliac, Limoges. It was given to King's College, Cambridge in 1448. Thomas Cromwell was too late.

Letheringham Part of the nave of the Augustinian Canons' church remains, with the Priory gatehouse nearby. An isolated and vulnerable place clinging on to being the parish church.

Redingfield A simple Benedictine priory church, a nave with no tower or aisles.

These are the only completely surviving monastic churches. However, many parish churches near monastic sites benefitted from materials taken from the dismantled buildings. Near where I live, Bruisyard's 13th century church has four fine windows of the 15th century. The priory was bought by Thomas Hare, whose son added in 1610 a chantry chapel using, it is thought, three of the windows from the priory church, and placing the fourth in the nave of the church.

The rich abbey at Sibton leaves today substantial ruins. The parish church was enlarged by the addition of a north aisle in the 16th century, and columns in the arcade are thought to have come from the abbey church, together with the fine north door. Many other examples of this are to be found all over Suffolk where abbey or priory churches once stood, lost and largely forgotten.

Fifty years after the dissolution, Shakespeare wrote in Sonnet 73 of "Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang". He would not have been alone in hearing as a child nuns' voices at Vespers.

Patrick Grieve

Note. For much of the information above I relied on Gordon Blackwood's **Tudor and Stuart Suffolk**; Carnegie Publishing. Also the new Pevsner on **East Suffolk**; Bettley Pevsner YUP.



Windows at St Peter, Bruisyard