



ST FAITH'S KELSHALL: NEW PORCH AND SOUTH AISLE ROOF THANKS TO BHHCT'S GENEROUS GRANTS

So where do we start? A question that always arises on perusal of the Architect's latest Quinquennial. It's tempting to improve the interior, but without a weatherproof exterior the interior won't survive, so it was to the roof and gutters that the Architect directed us.

Our delightful rural church located on the chalk escarpment in North Herts on the Hertfordshire Way is open at all times. Despite being a village of barely 160 inhabitants, St Faith's has a regular 9am Sunday service, is well attended and church events well supported. Projects in the last ten years include: installing a water supply and drainage; new kitchenette and WC; new nave roof and French drains, and more. The community was used to fundraising and had accumulated enough reserves to attract potential grant awards.

Our volunteers ensure good gutter maintenance which drew attention to dips in the South Aisle gutter behind the parapet where something was clearly amiss, and there was longstanding staining of the wall beneath. Clearly water had penetrated the lead and there was evidence that the timber gutter supports had rotted. A project was initiated, permissions and tenders obtained and grants sought towards the repair cost; £65,000 for gutter and lead replacement, including the porch and associated works.

The Church has always supported the Beds and Herts Historic Churches Trust-achieving gold or silver certificates for Bike' n Hike, and been a beneficiary of its grants, so the award of £10,000 got us off to a really good start. Other grants offered match funding and the timing suggested we could recover the VAT under the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme.

Work started and the gutter stripped. Sure enough the timber support had rotted but, worse still, water had seeped beneath the South aisle roof, rotting a sole plate supporting the whole length of the roof. The PCC faced £19,000 + VAT of additional expense and a delay in completion. BHHCT again came to our rescue with a grant for £6,000 and this together with help from St Albans Diocese enabled us to meet over half of the cost. The scaffold was completely covered so that work would be unaffected by weather. The South Aisle roof was supported while the rotted beam was replaced and gutter levels re-established, then stainless steel gutters and new lead were fitted. By this time the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme was due to close. It was a mad scramble as everybody sought to get invoices in, but St Faith's was able to reclaim half the VAT total of £17,000 by the time the scheme closed. The promptness of BHHCT's grant payment was critical in overcoming a cashflow predicament.

Despite additional repairs, work was completed within the three month programme, and in time for Easter. Under Architect David Llewellyn's supervision and St Faith's Project Manager Peter Gartside, Rob Ellis of RE Construction carried out timber work and Kevin Smith of Conservation Leadwork all lead and stainless-steel sheeting. Updating the Smartwater and CCTV security arrangements was an integral part. Such a project is beyond the ability of a small rural church to fund and we are very grateful to BHHCT and our other generous Grantors.

Kelshall PCC



Before and after: The weatherproofed scaffolding helped speed up the job, and the finished project with new gutters and roof.

More dates for your diary

July 18

Annual Meeting at St Mary's, Pirton

September 12

Bike 'n Hike

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

2026 is our Trust's 35th anniversary year and we can be proud of what has been achieved over that time. We have given £4.8 million in grants awarded and have raised over £3m through the Bike 'n Hike, some 40% of which has been returned to churches as their share of the sponsorship money (the rest being Gift Aid).

So what about our next 35 years? What does the Trust need to do to continue its success in a changing world, a world where the preservation of our church buildings is becoming ever harder and more expensive?

We brought together everyone actively involved in the work of the Trust at a conference in January to address just those questions. The Archdeacons of Bedford and Hertford also attended and gave their valuable insights. It was a constructive time and provided many ideas about possible ways forward and how we may need to change to keep up with the way the world now works.

A real problem at the moment is a shortage of volunteers to help our work in various ways – with grant work; organising the Bike 'n Hike; and helping with publicity, especially social media, and events. We discussed how we might spread the load and how we might make better use of technology. We are already looking at online applications for grants, without it being too complicated and without losing the personal touch when things are not straightforward. Some changes to the way the Bike 'n Hike is run are detailed elsewhere.

On a more positive note, our Endowment Fund now stands at £580,000 and there are still pledged legacies from our Jubilee Campaign which will add to that figure. As with other charities, legacies are an important source of income and very gratefully received. The current interest from the



Endowment of some £25,000 a year increases our grant-giving capability.

We still await more details of the Places of Worship Renewal Fund which is being set up by the Government instead of the Listed Places of Worship VAT reclaim scheme. What we know so far is that £92 million has been allocated, in equal instalments, over the four years that the Renewal Fund will run. It is being funded by DCMS; is for England only; is for listed places of worship; and will be administered by Historic England. The criteria for applying will be critical.

The Trust is, of course, interdenominational – our work supports any place of public, Christian worship – and it would be good to increase our links with non-Anglican denominations. We are also pursuing links with organisations that are interested in our churches and chapels as central to our communities and their history. If anyone can help and would like to know more, please contact me.

Finally, please note that our Annual Meeting this year is on Saturday, 18th July at St. Mary, Pirton, starting at 2.30pm, and I hope as many Friends as possible will attend. The meeting will be followed by tea and Evensong, when our preacher will be the Archdeacon of St. Albans, The Venerable Charles Hudson. Invitations, with copies of the Annual Report, will be issued in due course.

Madeline Russell
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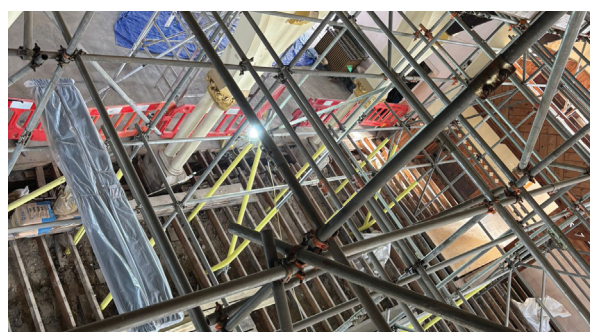
SAWBRIDGEWORTH EVANGELICAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

The Trust was pleased to grant aid Sawbridgeworth Evangelical Congregational Church to support the undertaking of a major refurbishment to provide a more welcoming, accessible and energy efficient space whilst maintaining key items of heritage interest.

The present church was opened in 1863, with a separate classroom block added in 1912, partially funded by Samuel Ryder, the man behind the Ryder Cup golf tournament.

The current project involves removing pews and a sliding partition wall to create a single, more flexible space; an energy efficient underfloor heating system; secondary glazing over the existing leaded light windows; improved energy efficient LED lighting and improved wheelchair access. To be even more sustainable, good-quality timber is being re-used!

When completed, the refurbishment will enable the church to do even more for the community than it does now as well as creating a more suitable space for worship.



Traditional plasterwork in progress at Sawbridgeworth.

2025 BIKE 'N HIKE – A BUMPER YEAR!

Thank you to everyone who supported our Bike 'n Hike last year. You responded to the challenge – the target of £110,000 – and the final total is **£110,191**.

Over £45,000 has gone back to the churches who took part. Every penny of the rest will be used for grants for churches across Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire.

The other amazing news is that **eleven** churches, more than ever before, have gained **Gold Certificates** for raising over £2,000, with special thanks to St. Peter Berkhamsted for going even further and raising £3,786 – a challenge to us all!

Our congratulations also to: St. Mary Magdalene, Barkway; St. Andrew, Hertford; St. Mary, Hertingfordbury; St. Mary, Northchurch; St. Leonard, Old Warden; St. Mary, Reed; St. John the Baptist, Royston; St. Mary the Virgin, Therfield; St. Mary Magdalene, Westoning; and All Saints, Willian.

Of course, we need to continue to raise similar sums – and more – to support our church building heritage so, after the Trust Conference, we had a meeting of Area Organisers to discuss how we might run the event differently since there is a lack of volunteers to take on the Area Organiser role.

As a first step, we will be making some changes to Bike 'n Hike 2026. The concept of the event is not changing – the idea is to visit as many churches and chapels as you can, in whatever sensible way you can, and the money raised will continue to be split between the Trust and the individual churches chosen by the participants. So we continue to help churches to raise funds for themselves to use in any way needed.

To simplify things, much of the documentation, including the Sponsor Form and the List of Churches, will only be available to download from the Trust's website. Some documents will continue to be printed and circulated: posters, which will include the website address; badges; remittance forms and the register of visitors. Further copies of the remittance form and register will be available to download from the website.

The other noticeable change will be to the List of Churches. We have decided to add non-participating churches in a separate list for each Area. Cyclists, walkers and others very much value those churches that put up a poster to signal their participation, have the Register of Visitors available and a jug of water. Even better if the church is open – being able to see inside churches is an encouragement to take part. However, for some time, we have encouraged people to note on their sponsor forms any churches they pass which are not 'open' – they all count towards the total visited. This change to the List will formalise the position.

As ever, we love to hear from you and to share your Bike 'n Hike stories. Take pictures and send them to me at bikenhike@bedshertshct.org.uk if we are allowed to share them online or in our publications.

Madeline Russell



St Peter's Berkhamsted topped the fundraising chart with £3,786.

Get ready for Bike 'n Hike 2026 on Saturday 12 September.

Sign-up details will be published on our website or see your local church organiser.

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CHURCH GOING WITH ANDREW ZIMINSKI

Seventy people packed into the Roecroft Centre in Stotfold on 21st March to see Andrew Ziminski - stonemason, conservator and author. And what a treat his talk was!

Andrew began by saying a little about his 'Life in Ruins'. He started early by bunking off from school to help restore a building at the Weald and Downland Museum in Sussex and thereby found his future.

Having trained as a stone conservator, Andrew went on to set up Minerva Stone in Somerset. He has been awarded Fellowships by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and the Society of Antiquaries and is a consultant to the Salisbury Diocesan Advisory Committee.

Turning to 'Church Going', Andrew has spent 40 years working on our places of worship - from parish churches to cathedrals. Stonemasons have the advantage over architectural historians of working 'face to face' with stonework and practising the same craftsmanship that created our historic churches and chapels. A stonemason and conservator spends many hours in a building so gains a deep understanding of its character, history, small details and secrets. Andrew's special appreciation and intimate knowledge of churches shone through.

Andrew is fascinated by what the buildings tell us about their use, history, beliefs and traditions - what they mean. And what the messages left to us - such as by the amazing graffiti in All Saints, Leighton Buzzard - tell us.

The talk covered places of worship in his beloved Wessex and some examples in Beds and Herts. But it extended across the British Isles and beyond to Scandinavia. As well as being a stonemason, Andrew is clearly a great explorer of churches and chapels.

The presentation told us a lot we didn't know while being thoroughly entertaining at the same time. Andrew's searching mind, passion and sense of fun could only inspire us to get out and visit our amazing places of worship, look at them anew and enjoy them even more.

Andrew answered a host of questions at the end of his talk before signing his wonderful books *The Stone Mason, A History of Building Britain and Church Going, A Stonemason's Guide to the Churches of the British Isles*.

So, thanks to Andrew for his brilliant talk and to Revd. Bill, Alison and others from St Mary's Stotfold for hosting the event and encouraging everyone to visit their church. And of course, to those who came and had a great afternoon while supporting the Trust.

David Bevan



Andrew Ziminski stonemason, conservator and author.

JOIN OUR TEAM!

We are looking for more voluntary help in the following areas:

- **Publicity - raising the profile of the Trust and use of social media**
- **Fundraising - including help with our major fundraiser, the Bike 'n Hike**
- **Grants - liaising with and supporting church applicants**
- **Encouraging and widening our group of Friends, both individual and corporate**

Please contact: chairman@bedshertshct.org.uk explaining your interest and how you would like to help.

Contact us

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