



Chairman's Welcome



A warm welcome is extended to all our readers of the Newsletter as I take over from Richard Brackenbury as Chairman of NHCT. I would first like to thank Richard for all his hard work and leadership over the past 10 years and I do hope that I will be able to see continued progress for the Trust over the forthcoming years. I believe we have had a very positive summer as the country continues to return to a new normal following such a difficult 18 months.

The Ride+Stride took place as usual on the second Saturday in September and for those who took part, we were privileged to enjoy a great day out in excellent weather. There was a very warm welcome at the churches I visited across Nottingham and you could feel the relief in being able to open up and use their churches and chapels once more.

Thank you to all those who took part and we are already beginning to plan for next year. If there is anything that you could do to help, please speak to Margaret Lowe.

Participants met up again at Winkburn Hall, but this year to celebrate after the event rather than the usual July gathering to collect the paperwork for churches and those taking part; a good number attended.

Our Summer Party, also held at Winkburn Hall, was a successful and happy event with 77 guests able to enjoy the beautiful settings. We listened to two very stimulating talks given by Dr Chris Brooke and Prof Michael Jones on the history of St John of Jerusalem Church and the link to the Knights Hospitaller, and again enjoyed meeting and sharing a glorious evening together.

Our Friends' activities have restarted with church visits being planned for later next year. These events give us an important opportunity to find out more about the wealth of our churches and chapels and to encourage new Friends to join.

We have been developing our Marketing Plan and it is exciting to see how we can spread the support about the Trust. A big thank you to Cameron Bonser, Andy Platt and the team who have been working on this and our website. Do visit the site www.nottshistoricchurchtrust.org.uk and see our regular updates as well as Instagram and Twitter.

Thank you to the Trustees for all their support and to Maureen, Margaret and Anthea and their vital input to our work and activities, and of course a big thank you to all of you for contributing to the funding of this important work through a very challenging 18 months.

Graeme Renton - *Chairman*

Grant Aided Project Restoration of Wellow Church Clock Face

The original clock at Wellow is attributed to Richard Roe of Epperstone who made wooden framed clocks between the 1650s and about 1710. We know that Wellow had such a clock in 1699 and indeed, the one now in the nave, which is in a wrought iron case known as a 'birdcage', is probably the one made by Roe. The technical details are: it has a wrought iron movement of side by side construction, and measures approximately 19in wide by 13in deep by 24in high. It has "two-trains" - going and striking - and has an early form of anchor escapement. The original hands and pendulum are present, and the stone clock weights are stored in the case.

This original clock was removed from the tower by the bell contractor in 2003, when the new bell frame installation was fitted and an electronic clock system made by the Tempus Company installed. By 2019 the Tempus clock system was proving to be unreliable and was replaced by a more reliable electronic clock system by Time Assured of Mansfield. This should have a life of 20-30 years and will then need to be replaced with the next generation of electronics - a pale shadow of the early clock by Richard Roe!



The clock face, St Swithin's, Wellow

Moving outside the church, the dial can be seen on the west face of the tower. In 1953 local craftsmen from the village constructed a new clock dial made from a mild steel sheet, painted blue, and fitted with gilt lead chapters and minute markings. Sometime in the 1980s the dial was repainted and regilded.

In 2019, after 66 years of use, severe corrosion of the dial between the mild steel and the lead dial attachments led to oxidization of the attached chapters with the result that the clock hands caught on the attachments and stopped the clock. In 2020 the old dial was removed and replaced by a stainless steel dial of identical shape and size to the original and was painted blue with the chapters and hands regilded to match the 1953 dial. The existing hour and minute hands made from copper were reused and also regilded. The Trust awarded a total grant of £1200 towards this work.

Robin Hutchinson - DAC clocks advisor

Friends of the Trust Visit and Summer Party



*Reredos at Worksop Priory designed by
Sir George Gilbert Scott c.1855*

In August more than fifty Friends of the Trust met for the first time in almost two years to visit churches and enjoy scrumptious teas. Most of all, though, it was such a pleasure to be able to chat with others, join in with group conversations, and catch up with people actually face-to-face. There was a frisson of excitement as we gathered in Worksop Priory to hear from conservator, Michelle Pepper, about the conservation of the remarkable Blind Arcade in this impressive building, where one always wishes the stones could talk.

Onward then to Retford to see what Michelle had achieved, bringing to life the beautiful Sir Ninian Comper reredos, housed in St Michael's church for perhaps the last hundred years. The mystery of its journey there remains just that.

After the success of this visit, we are working on the next one, hoping that the Covid-19 restrictions allow us to continue to enjoy these uncomplicated, refreshing outings which are so welcome after the restrictions and challenges of the past 18 months.

On a very mild, late summer evening in September the Trust's Summer Party was held at Winkburn Hall. It was a most picturesque setting, and even a flock of sheep wandered by in the background to add to such a lovely bucolic scene!

After a wonderful buffet the Friends and supporters of NHCT took the short walk to the church where Professor Michael Jones explained the connections between Winkburn, its church and the Knights of St John. Winkburn had originally been given by King John to the Knights of St John of Jerusalem soon after the creation of their order in the eleventh century, and had remained in their hands until the mid-sixteenth century. This accounts for the church's extremely unusual dedication to St John of Jerusalem. A talk by Dr Chris Brooke on the church itself followed; Dr Brooke has studied it for many years and described some of the history and architecture which he has discovered. He also told of the many quirks and unexplained oddities of the church, such as the height difference between the arch out to the south porch and its corresponding archway on the outside.



NHCT Summer Party 2021 at Winkburn Hall

It was a very pleasant evening, both entertaining and informative, and so good to be able to catch up in person with colleagues and old friends. We are greatly indebted to Richard Craven-Smith-Milnes for his kind and generous hospitality to NHCT. We were so very lucky to have such wonderful weather, allowing us to be largely outside for the party.

Grant Aided Project

Restoration of the Sir Ninian Comper Reredos, Retford St Michael

During the past 18 months, and despite the pandemic and the lockdowns, Friends will be heartened to hear that two major conservation projects funded through the Trust and the Friends were allowed to go ahead, and did so successfully. Both were carried out by Newark-based expert conservator, Michelle Pepper, who has undertaken several precious object restorations in churches which were also funded by the Trust.

The first project took place at West Retford, St Michael's church. A painted wooden reredos sits behind the altar to the north aisle chapel. It is painted and gilded with a scene depicting the Adoration of the Magi, and is by the famous church architect Sir Ninian Comper. It dates from the early 20th century and may be the reredos which was described in December 1935 as "panelled oak given by the family of the late Mr & Mrs Hurst". It was apparently brought to St Michael's from an unknown church in Lincoln. Despite attempts to discover which Lincoln church it came from, and why, all research to date has drawn a blank.

The reredos comprises panelled boards with the principal scene - the Adoration of the Magi - set centrally with four canopies, trefoiled and ogee-headed, above, and pierced quatrefoils set within the spandrels. Below the main scene are five openwork, trefoiled blind arches within which coloured, painted decoration and text have been placed. To the right and left of the main scene are two large canopied panels, gilded, with red, green, and black painted detail within. In each of the four corners of the reredos are further gilded, trefoiled canopies, within which are contained the painted and gilded symbols of the Passion. In the main scene, the background to the Blessed Virgin Mary comprises richly gilded cyma reversa decoration within which are contained fleur-de-lis. The whole is framed with barbers' pole decoration. The stencilled frieze at the top is an apparent later addition, probably when the reredos was moved to Retford; this is evident as the frieze has been cut in places to fit and was clearly from some earlier use.



The Comper reredos, West Retford, after restoration

On initial inspection it was clear that there were some small areas where the paint was missing completely, having flaked off the surface or been damaged. There was quite a lot of ingrained dirt, all caused by general dust and smoke from candles, etc. over the years. Part of the upper right panel was found to be loose.

The dirt was removed and dust was vacuumed up, and ingrained dirt was lifted off the surface using special conservation detergent and cotton wool. One problem became obvious at an early stage, the paint had a very thin 'ground' on which to sit and this meant extra care had to be taken not to lose any further paint as it was so thin. Finally the upper right panel was fully stabilized. The reredos is once again clean and stable and has been protected by a layer of Paraloid B72, a conservation polymer that safely isolates the surface from the environment.

The second grant-aided restoration project was the former reredos at Worksop Priory, now forming a painted and gilded blind stone arcade adorning the north wall of the north transept. It is in rich Decorated style and is the work of Sir George Gilbert Scott c.1855 - we will cover this restoration project in the next newsletter!

Dr Chris Brooke - NHCT Trustee

RIDE+STRIDE for Churches



Ride+Stride is a great day out for friends and family while also raising money for some very good causes!

mornings and scarecrow festivals. He also visited some "wild card" churches attracting extra 'points' for him. These tend to be little known churches hidden away in the countryside, adding mystery to the day's outing.

A huge thank you to all who were involved this year whether organising, riding or striding . If you have the opportunity to encourage new churches to take part in 2022 that would be much appreciated. If you had not considered taking part before, do visit the website for more information, and **keep Saturday 10th September 2022 free.**

What a privilege to raise money for the Trust while enjoying some stunning scenery and an amazing variety of church and chapel buildings, each one celebrating its architecture in a unique setting - a grand day out !

The sponsorship forms and information about the event will be available next summer on Nottinghamshire Historic Churches Trust's website www.nottshistoricchurchtrust.org.uk or available from Margaret Lowe, the Ride+Stride Administrator, at info.nhct@gmail.com or 07757 800919.

Graeme Renton - NHCT Chairman (and Ride+Stride Enthusiast!)

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www.nottshistoricchurchtrust.org.uk

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It was really good to be back in the saddle once more and what a great day with ideal weather in which to enjoy the ride and with less Covid restrictions than 2020. Altogether some 90 cyclists and just over a dozen walkers took part, with 190 churches and chapels involved; to see so many supporters on the way was such a positive contrast from last year.

There was a real buzz experienced in many of the 20 churches that I visited, very keen to welcome visitors, and what a spread of cakes put on by them. For me a challenge to burn off more calories than consumed during the day!

Visiting the amazing, recently restored Evelyn Gibbs wall paintings at St Martin of Tours in Bilborough (the restoration had been funded in part by an NHCT grant), and the monuments in nearby All Saints Strelley were two particular highlights. All Saints had also received funding from NHCT a few years ago to improve the church's facilities. It was good to visit two churches which had not taken part in Ride+Stride before, and for the opportunity to encourage continued participation.

We know of one regular rider supporting this event who cycled 40 miles, visiting 18 participating churches, some of which were putting on their own events like coffee

