



## Chairman's Welcome



**A**s I write, the County is recovering from storm Babet which has affected so many families and communities. The unpredictability of where the floods hit, and the ferocity with which they came, has produced many challenges for now and for the future. Our thoughts go out to all who have been affected as they seek to return their lives to some sort of normality.

The storm has also had a highly significant impact on our church buildings, and if not the result of flooding externally, then coping with the sheer volume of water involved being discharged into valley gutters and hoppers, many of which just cannot cope. Seeing how we can try and improve and help safeguard our heritage in the future remains quite a challenge, but one that the Trust looks to help financially, where it can.

Storm Babet also re-enforces the need for due diligence in maintaining and clearing hoppers, gutters, especially those hidden ones, and of course gullies. Water entering a church through the roof and valley gutters will affect stonework, plaster and any historic paintings and will take years to dry out. So, if you are involved with a church or happen to be out walking and notice an issue at one of our historic churches, do take the opportunity to contact them and help reduce potential damage.

Returning to climatic matters but with a much happier outcome, the Ride+Stride event took place on what was the hottest day of the year, and water here was a very valuable asset, in particular for the cyclists! It was great to take part and to appreciate all those who were involved in welcoming visitors to their churches. It is too early to know how much has been raised to support the work of the Trust, but it is not too late to support our main fundraising event, so please contact the Administrator Margaret Lowe if you wish to contribute.

The summer highlight was certainly the reception at Welbeck Woodhouse, and we were very grateful for the kindness and welcome offered by Mr William Parente and Mrs Alison Swan Parente, who provided a unique opportunity to see the interior of this special house, set within the impressive grounds of the Welbeck Estate, the seat of the former Dukes of Portland.

In September, the Friends were expertly led by Dr Chris Brooke as he shared the history and archaeology behind two contrasting churches, Brough Chapel, which had been used as a store for unused icons and furniture from Diocesan churches, and All Saints at Barnby-in-the-Willows - a delightful gem at the end of this peaceful village.

As we look towards 2024, do let us know if there are any churches you would like to visit, and I trust you will enjoy this Newsletter.

**Graeme Renton** - *Chairman*

## Summer Party 2023 Welbeck Woodhouse, and Visit to St Winifred's church at Holbeck

**T**he Trust's Summer Party 2023 took the form of a Reception held at Welbeck Woodhouse, by generous invitation of Mr William Parente and his wife Alison, long time supporters of the Trust. We felt sure that the end of July would produce a fine summer evening, and the wide terrace to the south of the house, overlooking the Carburton valley and lakes, would be a perfect place for a summer party. We were therefore more than a little disappointed when it started to rain as the week began, and continued more or less until the Saturday afternoon of the party. The terrace idea was out. The Parentes took the bull by the horns and arranged for much of the furniture in the reception rooms to be moved elsewhere, leaving room for our guests to mingle.

A hundred and forty-eight people drove up the mile-long Wedding Drive through dripping trees and rain puddles, to enjoy delicious canapés and wine in the splendid rooms of this 1930s house. Our hosts were welcoming, the trustees chatted to old friends and people new to the Trust, and many enjoyed a talk by trustee Margaret Bennett-Samuels on the landscape architect Humphry Repton, who designed the amazing vista which we should have been gazing over from the terrace.

Many people had taken the opportunity earlier to visit St Winifred's church at Holbeck, the Welbeck Estate church built during the First World War by estate workers, largely those too old to go to war. Dukes of Portland and other family members are buried in the churchyard. The church was built in the neo-Norman style to a design approved by the architect, Louis Ambler, and includes features from Portland family estates in Scotland as well as Welbeck. It has much to interest Friends of Nottinghamshire Historic Churches Trust, and is rarely open these days. Many of the stained glass windows were designed by Herbert Hendrie (1887 - 1946) in the style of his work in the Liverpool Anglican Cathedral.



*The charming church of St Winifred's at Holbeck.  
Built 1913-1919 for the Duke of Portland*

Dr Chris Brooke and architectural historian, Clare Hartwell (editor of the revised Nottinghamshire Pevsner volume) were on hand to share their considerable knowledge with our guests.

Despite the day being unseasonably cold and wet, in true British spirit, we didn't let the weather spoil our party!

## Friends' Visit Brough Chapel and All Saints' church, Barnby-in-the-Willows

On a surprisingly balmy September Saturday afternoon some forty Friends met at Brough, now just the remnants of a village on the old Fosse Way. Once everybody had found the chapel, now hidden by undergrowth and a massive chestnut tree laden with conkers, we were treated to one of Dr Chris Brooke's always informative talks on the



archaeology and history of the building. St Stephen's was built in 1885 as a mission church to the parish of South Collingham, and doubling as a school room (the date being the possible explanation as to why one of the windows has a stained glass portrait of General Gordon of Khartoum). Brough was once a much larger and more important place than it appears today, and is on the site of Crococalana, a considerable Roman settlement of archeological importance. Great numbers of Roman coins have been found here; they were so common at one time as to be denominated 'Brough pennies'.

The chapel is tiny, without an aisle and built in brick, with lancet windows. It has a simple interior with arch-braced timber roof and an 1886 wrought iron screen to the chancel area. There are two exquisite Christopher Whall windows of the Virgin of Southwell and St Hugh, dedicated in 1914, and it is hoped that they will be moved to Southwell Minster in due course. Other glass includes depictions of Saints Margaret and Agnes.

We then moved to All Saints at Barnby-in-the-Willows - what a contrast! This ancient site has had a church on it since at least Domeday, perched on the banks of the River Witham, with a footpath through the churchyard to a (modern) bridge over the river to Lincolnshire. The solidity of the ancient stones was calmly reassuring, the carved pew heads telling of local characters over the centuries, the lovely, plain glazed east window giving a soft and comforting light to the wide and welcoming chancel. A most striking feature was the chancel tracery, odd combinations of circles, segments and triangles, described by Cox as 'peculiar and puzzling' and as 'quite the most extraordinary piece of church architecture in Nottinghamshire'. The tea was jolly good too! We were warmly welcomed, and it is hoped that the Friends' small financial contribution will help towards their plans for installing a toilet in the churchyard.



# Race against time for historic Nottingham church bells to ring for King's Coronation



*St Mary's church in Nottingham's Lace Market District*

What is now known as the Lace Market was once the centre of Saxon and Viking Nottingham. There is mention of a church standing here in Domesday Book. The present Grade 1 listed church is around 500 years old, and is a striking Nottingham landmark, standing in a prominent position above the city. The bell tower houses a ring of twelve bells and the sound of their peels has rung across Nottingham for countless weddings and special occasions. The oldest bell of the current set dates back to 1595.

In May 2022, a team of bell ringers was hard at work practicing in St Mary's tower. One of their members had stepped outside to have lunch and when they looked up at the tower, to their horror, noticed that the wall

next to the tower was moving in rhythm with the ringing. The movement of the heavy bells in the tower was actually shaking the gable end of the south aisle of the church. Emma Jones, the captain of the bell ringers at St Mary's, said "We decided it would be safest to stop ringing."

After structural engineers surveyed the tower and walls, it was deemed unsafe to continue any bell ringing, and the bells of St Mary's fell silent. It was decided that the south gable end wall needed to be restored and strengthened, with the work estimated to cost in the region of £200,000. The work would require the rebuilding of the upper gable of the south transept wall, including some carved replacement stones, along with carefully stripping back and relaying of the lead roofing to enable the wall to be re-tied into the roof structure. Stainless steel tie-bars, or cramps, would also need to be incorporated into the stonework to provide additional strength as the walls are rebuilt.

Sadly, while this work was being done, our Queen Elizabeth died, and St Mary's wanted to mark this singular event by tolling the bells, as would be customary for such an important moment. However, this would have been dangerous to the structure of the church (and to the ringers) so it was decided to toll just the tenor bell. The bells were also still silent on Christmas Day 2022, when normally their joyful sounds would have echoed across the city and beyond.

The repair bill that the church now faced was daunting, but through a combination of grants and fundraising events, enough was raised to start the work. Now there was time pressure to complete it so that the bells could be rung to mark the historic event of the crowning of a new king, Charles III. Early in 2023, Tower Captain Emma Jones was hoping that the work could be finished in time: "To have a coronation is unusual in itself, but we haven't had a coronation for a king since George VI in 1937. St Mary's is such an historic site, so we need to get the bells ringing for such an historic occasion."

As May 6th approached (the day set for the Coronation) the scaffolding was in place and work was underway, but not yet completed. However, the repairs which had been done by May, along with the supporting scaffolding, meant the bells could be rung without putting the Grade 1 listed church at risk. And indeed the bells rang out loud and clear in celebration of the crowning of our new monarch, King Charles III.

St Mary's vicar, Revd. Tom Gillum, said "It's brilliant news that we now have enough funds to complete the repairs and ensure the bells will ring for the King - and hopefully for another 500 years. We couldn't have succeeded in raising these funds without the incredible support shown by all those who have donated."

The Trustees of NHCT are delighted to have supported St Mary's with a grant towards the required building works. The Revd. Tom Gillum added "Every contribution goes such a long way to ensuring our community can continue to enjoy and celebrate with the beautiful bells of St Mary's."

**Andrew Paris** - *Trustee*

## From our roving reporter...

It would turn out to be the hottest day of the year, but what a brilliant cycle run we had, visiting seventeen churches over thirty five miles on the bike while enjoying some stunning scenery! The cycle run commenced in Attenborough, travelling through

Chilwell, Bramcote, Lenton and on to the Meadows, Sneinton, West Bridgford and up the hill out of the city to Plumtree, before chilling for a short time at Keyworth with a snack lunch ...whew !



After lunch the journey continued west to Bunny and Bradmore, and on to Barton-in-Fabis before cycling east in some welcome shade alongside the river Trent, and finally returning via Beeston and Chilwell. It was brilliant to be on good cycle paths for the majority of the day.

Every stop was greeted with a warm welcome, plenty to drink and some wonderful cakes! Thinking back, it must have been a close run challenge between losing weight through good exercise, and adding it with the calories on offer with all those cakes! What a privilege it was to be able to thank teams of helpers, all of whom were delighted to greet visitors and to share what was special about their lovely churches.

The architecture on offer was wide ranging and very impressive. Just a few highlights from the trip include St Mary's, Attenborough dating back in part to the 11th century with some delightful carvings around the stone capitals, and a variety of stained glass to admire. A brief stop at the Old Bramcote Tower to explore what is left of the original 14th century church, with excellent displays to explain its past history. Next to St Michael and All Angels church with a very prominent spire, built in 1861 to become more central to the expanding Bramcote village, replacing the old church on the hill.

A further "inspiring" church was the Grade 1 listed St Mary's in Keyworth, set above the village square, which has recently had new glazed doors fitted to allow visitors to see more of the interior as they approach the church, and although much altered through Victorian times, it is well worth a visit.

St Mary the Virgin, Bunny is an amazing 14th century Grade 1 listed church, which is sometimes referred to as the Cathedral of the Wolds due to it being the largest church in the county south of the Trent. Historic monuments, an impressive nave with some amazing columns, and an unusually long chancel are just some of the highlights here, although I write with concern for the condition of the chancel roof, and many of the windows are in a perilous state and urgently require funding to repair. And finally, another prominent spire, clearly visible in the Trent valley, belongs to the 14th century St George's, Barton-in-Fabis which has an impressive medieval interior including some period stained glass, as well as monuments and memorials to the Sacheverell family.

It is such a privilege to look round these and so many of the other churches in our county, whether on foot, bike or car, so why don't you put the date of Saturday 14th September 2024 in your diary to join the Trust on our next sponsored Ride+Stride event - it's a great day out!

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