

December 2024



The Church of England
Diocese of Ely

CHURCH HERITAGE

News from the
Church Buildings Team

Alconbury



Old Weston



**Welcome to the newsletter from the Church Buildings Team,
giving a quick overview of key information and updates.**

All the information in this newsletter is correct at the time of writing.
If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact the team directly.



NEW TEAM MEMBERS

We are delighted to welcome two new members of staff to the Church Buildings and Pastoral Dept. James Ryder joins us as Church Buildings Adviser, working with Geoffrey Hunter and Sam Reeder to support DAC casework. James is working full time, whilst completing an apprenticeship with Strode College. John Morgan is continuing to support the team as a part time consultant.

Philippa Pearson has replaced Sally Gilson as the Pastoral Secretary. Sally retired at the end of October having worked for the Diocese for nearly ten years. We wish her a very happy retirement. Philippa works part-time on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. You can find her [contact details here](#).

Contact details for the Church Buildings Team can be found at the [end of this newsletter](#). Please remember that **all initial enquiries** about works to your building or churchyard, and queries about the faculty process or applying for consent should be directed to the Church Buildings office via dac@elydiocese.org



GOOD NEWS



St Giles' Cambridge: National Lottery Heritage Fund Success

The PCC of [St Giles' Church](#), in the centre of Cambridge has been the first to submit an application under the revised grants scheme, and the first to succeed.

This project will undertake repair works to the Grade II* listed church to address the threat of damp to parts of the roof, help to manage the collection and disposal of rainwater and help it continue to welcome visitors and run events.

The PCC have been awarded a grant of £216,667, which equates to 83% of the total project cost.

Inspiring Students at St Andrew's Soham

Summer 2024 saw another cohort of Foundation Learning Tier Y9 and Y10 students from Soham Village College participating in archaeological test pit digs in and around Soham, guided by Wessex Archaeology, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund as part of St Andrew Church Soham's latest building restoration project. Last year, professionals made a video; this year, the students took charge...[Soham Community Dig 2024](#)



If you're looking to apply to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for a grant of between £10,000 and £250,000, then their new introduction to the grants programme could help.

[YouTube Video](#)



Heritage at Risk Register Published

Last month Historic England revealed its [Heritage at Risk Register 2024](#). The Register gives an annual snapshot of the health of England's valued historic buildings and places. It helps to ensure they can be protected and continue to be enjoyed in the future.

As of June 2024, when the register closed for entries, 1 church from this Diocese had been removed and 3 added. There are currently 4 waiting to be assessed for the register, but we should focus on the positive - the church which was removed was All Saints and St Andrew's, Kingston thanks to repairs which took place in 2023 after years of fundraising.

More details: [news item](#) and [project summary](#).



Feature Church

St Peter's

Walpole St Peter's

[Explore West Norfolk Website](#)



MORE GOOD NEWS

Full House for Performance at St Neots Parish Church

The nave and chancel were transformed for three fantastic performances of Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat by VAMPS of St Neots.

Behind the scenes, the parish have been addressing some high level issues after concerns there might be death watch beetle in the ceiling timbers. Much to their relief, the investigations concluded that the church did not have an active infestation. There were logistical considerations in gaining access to the high ceiling of the nave, but it presented an interesting opportunity to see the timbers and carvings up close, and evidence of past damage and repair.

The PCC are currently working on replacing the louvres on the tower, another big piece of work, but it is already making a difference both aesthetically and with sound attenuation. [Church website](#).



Tips on Writing a Church Guidebook

Visitors to [St John the Baptist's church](#), Somersham, will find a new guidebook available to purchase. Produced by Alan Draper, who carried out extensive research into the history of Somersham, it is a simple yet thorough introduction to the church, with clear explanations and good quality photographs. A church guidebook is a great way to welcome and introduce first time visitors to your church. It provides useful information and interesting stories about the building, people and community. A good quality guidebook can be produced in-house at relatively low cost. The key part is knowing what to (and what not to) include and tailoring the content to a wide audience; a guidebook needs to be accessible to all, so don't assume the reader understands historical, architectural or liturgical terms. You can find [advice including a video and template](#) on our website, or if you are nearby, pop into Somersham church.

CHURCH BUILDINGS SUPPORT NETWORK

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Weds 15th January, 7:30pm - 9pm

THEME: Heating



Thank you to everyone who has supported the network during its first year. It has been a successful way to provide support and share experiences across the Diocese, in a friendly and informal setting. The delivery of this online network has now passed from Holly into the very capable hands of Samuel, our Church and Community Support Advisor. Samuel has been tasked with piloting a range of new approaches to support and training, and the continuation and development of the network will form part of this. Please contact Samuel if you have any queries, and for the link to join the session on the 15th Jan.

REMINDERS



Accessibility Audit

The beginning of the Church Year is a good time to undertake a periodic accessibility audit of parish buildings. Disabilities can be visible and invisible so there are some [checklists on the Ely Diocese website](#) that can help you through this process. The checklists expand on a document put together by the [Diocese of Oxford](#), which you can download if you would like something simpler. Don't forget that the accessibility audit should be applied to all buildings used for parish activities, not just the Church building. If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact [Sue Nelms](#) the Bishop's Advisor on Disability.

Make Sure You Know Your COSHH Essentials

A variety of harmful substances are found in our working environments – knowing how to control these safely is key to safety and protection from harm. If you work with hazardous substances, the [Control of Substances Hazardous to Health \(COSHH\)](#) website can help you understand the actions you should take to stay healthy.

Bust the Myths on Portable Appliance Testing

Portable appliance testing (PAT) is the examination of electrical appliances and equipment to ensure they are safe to use. There are many common myths about PAT - visit the [HSE website](#) for more information.

Safe Use of Ladders and Stepladders at Work

Ladders and stepladders are not banned under health and safety law. They can be a sensible and practical option for low-risk, short-duration tasks, although they should not automatically be your first choice. Visit the [HSE website](#) for guidance on staying safe when using ladders at work.

Faculty Consent and the OFS

If you have a problem or a question concerning the Online Faculty System (OFS), the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC), and/or a Faculty or List A/B application, call 01353 652729 or email dac@elydiocese.org and the Church Buildings team will help.

Reduced VAT on Energy

Did you know, charities and non-profit organisations (including churches) are entitled to a [VAT reduction](#), down from 20% to 5%, on energy used for 'non-business' purposes, as well as exemption from the Climate Change Levy. Visit [this website](#) to find out more.

Save the Date

Ride and Stride 2025 will take place on 13th September. More details for [Cambridgeshire](#) and [Norfolk](#). For other counties visit the [R&S information page](#).



MAINTENANCE MATTERS

Recommended Monthly Tasks

From [*SPAB's Faith in Maintenance Calendar*](#)

December

- Clear parapet and valley gutters of snow to prevent melt water rising above them and causing damp internally. Take care in icy conditions.
- Gulleys beneath rainwater pipes should be cleaned out regularly and drains should be rodded out if they overflow during wet weather. Remove silt and debris and ensure water discharges freely.
- Make sure that fire safety equipment has been serviced.

January

- Have the electrical systems checked by a qualified person at least once every five years.
- Smoke alarms should be regularly tested and cleaned. Remember to replace the batteries too!
- Clear parapet and valley gutters of snow (see above).

February

- Clear parapet and valley gutters of snow (see above).
- Make sure the tower, roofs and windows are bird-proof before nesting starts. Do not disturb bats.
- Check the condition of any ladders in the tower and ask the tower captain to ensure that the bells and bellframe are in good order.



RISK CALENDAR



Taken from [*Ecclesiastical Insurance's Church Risk Calendar*](#).

December – Happy Christmas

Christmas is a wonderful time of year, but special events and services, extra visitors and festive decorations in your church can increase the risks of accidents and damage. A little extra planning can help keep everyone safe.

January – Water Pipes and Heating

An escape of water can cause extensive and lasting damage. Check that your water pipes are lagged, the stopcock is clearly labelled, and your heating system has been serviced by a registered engineer.

February - Security

From theft to arson and vandalism, security is key. As every place of worship and its location is unique, a tailored assessment and response, reflecting the individual risks faced, should be undertaken.

FEATURE: AROUND THE WORLD IN 120 NATIVITY SETS



In mid- December last year, I spotted an advert for a nativity exhibition at St James' church, Hemingford Grey; I needed some more Christmas themed photographs for this newsletter, so it seemed like a good opportunity. It was a wet, cold and gloomy day when I set off for the church with my husband, a much better photographer than me, who was beginning to wonder why we were travelling over an hour to visit yet another church. But once we had arrived, we both agreed it was worth the journey!

Many of the 120 exhibits displayed in the church came from distant and unexpected corners of the world. One was as local as Ely, others from as far as Namibia or Abbottabad in India, but each one was strikingly different in its expression of its origin.



From hand carved and hand painted colourful sets, to knitted displays and simple yet expressive figures celebrating the birth of Jesus, they were crafted from a striking range of materials. Paper, bamboo, banana trees and even an old Christmas tree were beautifully utilised to convey the story of the Nativity. There were large sets, small ones made for dolls houses, musical displays and decorated spoons!

The sets have been collected over many years by Marjorie Carrier who was at the church with her daughter, to answer questions along with members of St James'. The exhibition, which ran for a week, received numerous visitors, including over 200 school children. [Watch a short video of the exhibition.](#)

This December you can see the exhibition at Girton and Hartford church:

St Andrew's, Girton: 3rd- 6th December

All Saint's Hartford: Details TBC



The exhibition is available to book for 2025. You need to be able to collect and return it to Wyton and it is recommended to have 6-8 people to set-it up.

Please contact Marjorie Carrier carrier_mj@yahoo.co.uk

In addition there is a knitted Bible stories exhibition which offers a walk through the Bible with 30 different scenes depicted. It's ideal as a culmination of an Alpha/Explorers course and can be shown at any time of the year.

Holly Robinson

GRANTS

Current Deadlines

December

- 1st - The Joseph Rank Trust
- 1st - Thalia WB Community Fund
- 4th - FCC Communities Fund
- 10th - Living Alongside Bats in Churches Grant
- 30th - Congregational & General Charitable Trust

January

- 7th - Veolia Environment Trust
- 24th - The Leche Trust
- 27th - Church Buildings Council (Wall Paintings)

February

- 1st - Cambridgeshire Community Foundation
- 1st - The Sharpe Trust
- 14th - The Idlewild Trust
- TBC - Cambridgeshire Historic Churches Trust
- 19th - FCC Communities Foundation
- 28th - War Memorials Trust
- 28th - National Churches Trust Small Grants
- TBC - Norfolk Churches Trust

Early March

- 1st - The Joseph Rank Trust
- 1st - Thalia WB Community Fund
- 4th - National Churches Trust Large Grants
- 5th - Mick George Community Fund

King Charles III Charitable Fund

The small grants programme will reopen for applications in early 2025.



Grants without Deadlines

- Archer Trust
- Barron Bell Trust
- Beatrice Laing Trust
- Beaverbrook Foundation
- Benefact Trust
- Bernard Sunley Charitable Foundation
- BIFFA Award - Community Buildings
- Church Buildings Council Conservation Reports
- Clothworker's Foundation
- Foyle Foundation Small Grants
- Garfield Weston
- Geoffrey Watling (Norfolk only)
- Jack Patston (Cambridgeshire only)
- Jill Franklin Trust
- John S Cohen Foundation
- LPWGS - VAT Reclaim
- Millward Charitable Trust
- National Lottery Community Fund: Awards for All
- National Lottery Community Fund: Reaching Communities Fund
- Paul Bassham Charitable Trust (Norfolk only)
- Rank Foundation Pebble Grants
- Round Tower Churches Society
- Schroder Charity Trust
- Steel Charitable Trust
- Swire Charitable Trust - grants under £25,000
- TASC Grants
- Tesco Bags of Help



The Steel Charitable Trust Changes Focus

The Trustees have agreed a new strategy. The Trust will now focus on just two funding streams, neither of which are likely to apply to church buildings projects. This new strategy is expected to be in effect for five years but will be kept under review. [More information](#).

Church of England: Updated grants directory

Are you looking for grants to help fund a local environmental project? The C of E's [online directory](#) has been updated and lists organisations which may be able to help.

For advice on grants whether it is for repairs or new works, please contact Holly. If you would prefer to search for grants and receive more frequent updates on funding opportunities, you can register for free with the following websites:

- [Support Cambridgeshire](#)
- [Hunts Forum](#)
- [Grants Online](#)
- [My Funding Central](#)
- [Funds Online](#)



GRANTS



The Future of the VAT Reclaim Scheme - No Decision Yet

The [Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme](#) (LPWGS) is due to expire at the end of March 2025. After the Budget, the DCMS advised that they were entering a period of business planning which will determine what happens with the LPWGS. They expect this process to take a number of months. In the meantime parishes are advised to do two things:

- 1) Continue to plan projects as if the LPWGS will continue, but include in your risk register details on how you would fill any shortfall if the scheme was discontinued. This could include local fundraising, applying for other grants or requesting a grant uplift from funders already committed to your project.
- 2) **Write to your MP, alert them to the potential threat of closure of the scheme.** This may be the first they have heard of the disastrous impact this would have on historic churches and the heritage sector in general. This will encourage your MP to make direct representations to Lisa Nandy, the Secretary of State at the DCMS.

An online tool and template letter have been created by the Catholic Church and the HRBA. The online tool sends an email to your local MP. It comes from your email address. It uses your postcode to find your MP's email address. It is already loaded with a template letter which is applicable to any place of worship; you can amend it or add to it if you want to. For example, after the first paragraph you could add a short paragraph saying who you are/where you're from, or something about your church. You may want to invite your MP to visit your church, or you might prefer to do that when you receive a reply (which you probably will).

We strongly recommend you do not comment on the timescales for making decisions about the LPWGS; the focus of the letter should remain firmly on the continuance of the Scheme. Be positive but concerned; please avoid sounding grumpy.

ACCESS THE ONLINE TOOL

Important Note: After inserting your details you press 'submit' - despite the name of this button, this doesn't submit the letter, it merely takes you to the template letter, and when you're happy with the letter you then submit it.

National Grid Community Grant Programme

Is your community currently being affected by National Grid Electricity Transmission construction or operational activity?

The Community Grant Programme is run by the National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) business. They own and maintain the high-voltage electricity transmission network in England and Wales. The programme is aimed at community organisations and charities in areas where work is impacting local people through operations and construction activities. They will fund faith-based organisations to undertake secular activities. [National Grid Grant Programme](#).

GRANTS

Living Alongside Bats in Churches Grant

Would your place of worship benefit from a small grant to help manage bat roost-related issues?

As a legacy of the Bats in Churches Project partnership, the Bat Conservation Trust, Natural England, Churches Conservation Trust and Historic England have come together to offer places of worship in England the opportunity to apply for the new Living Alongside Bats in Churches Grant Fund.

This is a small grant, up to £1000, aimed at supporting places of worship who are in need of help with their roost; for example, seasonal professional cleans, pew covers, catch trays, modern cleaning appliances and specialist heritage repairs of bat damaged items.

As part of the grant conditions, you will need to undertake a positive community engagement activity which will be inspired by nature. This might be holding a bat or other wildlife related event, holding a gardening for bats/wildlife day in the churchyard, participating in local or national wildlife festivals, or inviting the local school in to learn about the local wildlife. Some of the awarded grant can be used to fund an event or activity.

There will be two funding rounds each year. The first round of applications will close on the 10th January 2025. Please visit the [Bat Conservation Trust](#) website for more details and how to apply. The grant is funded by Natural England, and the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

CofE Receives £5 Million for Conservation from National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF)

The Church of England has been awarded nearly £5 million to fund a 'much needed' expansion in work to conserve cultural and historical heritage in parish churches.

The funds will be given over the course of five years through the existing [ChurchCare Grants](#) programme to help 'churches to preserve a range of features from stained glass windows to paintings, clocks, bells, organs and monuments.' The award will also enable the scheme also to fund grants for church fabric repairs of up to £25,000 that are linked to the conservation of an object – such as mending guttering if a leak is affecting wall paintings. The expanded scheme will not only give larger grants to more projects, but will include funding for specialist surveys and help existing conservation projects reach completion. [Read more about the grant award here.](#)



NEW JIGSAW PUZZLE

Just in time for Christmas, the Ely DA Jigsaw puzzle is available to purchase. Approx A2 and 1000 pieces. Cost: £25 plus P&P. Email: stepjigsaw@gmail.com
The jigsaw has been designed for The [Ely Diocesan Association of Church Bellringers](#) in aid of the Stretham Tower Enhancement Project. The tower is the home of the Ely district Ringing Education Centre which provides the district and beyond with support to teach students bell handling and ringing development. Find out more on [Facebook](#).



NEW INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE

Helping rainwater goods to cope with climate change

Getting rainwater away from historic buildings effectively is essential to keep them fit for purpose. Failed rainwater systems lead to water ingress, damaged structures and cold, damp interiors. [Historic England's new guidance](#) offers straightforward advice about helping buildings to cope with deluges due to climate change.

New CCTV policy template

The Information Commissioner's Office has updated its video surveillance guidance. As a result of this there is a new policy template for CCTV used for surveillance. [The CCTV page on the C of E's website](#) also includes links to the guidance relevant to live streaming, and helps readers understand the significant differences between their regulatory frameworks.



St Mary's, Doddington

Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill (2024)

This Bill, also known as Martyn's Law, has been introduced into the Commons. The Bill as now presented has changed since its earlier form and the scope of its impact on places of worship is reduced as a result. There is a helpful page of fact sheets which make clear some of the key features of the bill as it applies to churches. The headline change is that all places of worship are treated as subject to the standard duty unless there is charged entry. To be considered as standard duty a place must have a reasonable expectation of 200 people being present, below this the duty will not apply. The [Factsheets include guidance](#) on calculating capacity and the requirements to comply with standard duty.

Warm Spaces

As the cost-of-living crisis continues, many local authorities have been working with the voluntary sector and other organisations to offer a network of Warm Spaces across their area where people can visit for free, relax, stay warm and meet others in the community.

If you think your church could offer such a space, go to your local authority website and register.

Dealing with Damp in Document Storage

A PCC recently raised concerns about damp in the safe where they keep books and papers.

A Conservator offered the following advice:

There are various types of damp absorber available which would help to control the moisture level in the safe, for instance: [Proisorb Humidity Control Cassettes - Preservation Equipment Ltd](#)

But they don't last indefinitely, and are rather pricey.

There are cheaper alternatives which you could find in an ironmongers which might have similar effect, for instance: [Amazon.co.uk : moisture absorbers](#).

It depends partly on the likely cause of the damp. If the safe is simply in a damp church building, the air will always be damp and the safe will come to equilibrium with the surroundings, in which case moving them to a drier surrounding would be preferable. If the safe is particularly damp because it is set into a damp wall then it sounds as though the safe is not fully sealed on the inside, in which case, it may need to be lined in some way (e.g. treating the inside with a metallic paint) to stop damp seeping into the safe from the walls.



ENVIRONMENT AND NZC



The Story of a Smart Meter: Having the Energy to Challenge Your Electricity Supplier

Hugh West, of St Mary's Leighton Bromswold, has kindly shared his experience of dealing with a new smart meter and the church's electricity provider; he hopes it may help churches experiencing similar issues.

"There were a number of different problems we had with electricity meters...

With our old dial meter, the readings were either estimates, taken by ourselves or by a meter reader. In our case the meter reader had recorded the figures incorrectly. When we had an electronic meter fitted, we photographed the old meter as it was being taken out and when we looked at the 'closing' bill we found that what they charged us was not what was on the closing meter. The Energy Ombudsman ordered the electricity supplier to physically find the old meter and when this was done, we were proved correct. They had previously argued that they could not be wrong.

All the other problems were paperwork issues, the most relevant was that we had signed fixed period contracts. With the standard tariff being applied at the end of the contract, we found that they were varying the tariff even though we were on a fixed tariff.

The biggest problem, however, was that we were on a day-night tariff, as having no heating, most of our consumption is operating the floodlighting and our carpark style lighting. What was happening was that the meter was transmitting to the electricity supplier every 30 minutes, and they took just one reading for the billing which happened to be at the daytime prime rate. On the bills, the meter readings for both night and day were the same. However, at the start of each contract the first few invoices, which we normally checked carefully, were correct. The Ombudsman was able to get them to re-read their meter readings and issue us with the correct day-night split. Our daytime rate should have been about 17.3% and night-time 82.7% but they were invoicing us 50%-50%.

The next problem area was changes in the standing charges, contracted at a fixed price per day and then, after a few months, increased. Again, I should have noticed but I only carefully checked at the first few months of each contract.

The oddest error was that they operated an 'electricity calendar' which is longer than normal calendars. For example, we were charged from April 1st to April 30th a standing charge of 31 days but there are only 30 days in April! This was not corrected in the following month.

After the ombudsman has made their ruling, new invoices were issued and all the problems were corrected, giving us a credit of £1,400, plus a 'gesture of good will.'

As churches are encouraged to switch to Smart Meters, it is important to be aware of the potential issues you might encounter. From Hugh's experience, we would recommend that churches:

- take a photograph of your old meter as it is being removed to ensure you have a photographic record of the meter reading,
- monitor your bills to ensure that these match your energy contract arrangements and your usage - check that the rate per kWh rate and standing charge matches what you contracted for and there were no alterations during the period of the 'fixed' contract. You may prefer to continue to take your own readings to check that they are close to the invoice.
- contact the energy provider in writing so that you have a record of all related communications.

N.B. The Energy Ombudsman (who Hugh found to be very quick and helpful) needed everything in writing with a date stamp.

Thank you to Hugh for sharing his experience and advice.



ENVIRONMENT AND NZC

Caring for God's Acre: news of a New Network of Independent Florists

A new network of independent florists has created a [directory](#) to help the public find funeral flowers that are kinder to the environment. The directory can be used to find local florists who will avoid all plastics and floral foam. Additionally, a large majority of the flowers are locally grown.

[More information on the CfGA website.](#)

TRAINING AND EVENTS

Church Buildings Support Network: 15th January, 7:30pm - 9pm

[National Volunteers' Week](#): 1st - 7th June

[Love Your Burial Ground & Churches Count on Nature](#): 7th - 15th June

[HRBA's Big Update](#): 11th June

[Ride and Stride](#): 13th September

CONTACT DETAILS

Please contact Holly if you:

- have any problems with the links contained in this newsletter
- would like to be added to/removed from the mailing list for the newsletter
- have information for the next edition; cut-off date 17th February.

All initial enquiries about works to your building or churchyard and queries about the faculty process or applying for consent should please be directed to the Church Buildings office via dac@elydiocese.org

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We wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

