



CONNECTING COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE AGES, CCT'S LITTLE CHURCH OF NORTH STOKE IN WEST SUSSEX WAS REDEDICATED IN DECEMBER 2007, IN A SERVICE RUN JOINTLY BY THE LOCAL ANGLICAN AND CATHOLIC BISHOPS. A COMMUNITY-BASED FRIENDS GROUP NOW HELPS KEEP THE CHURCH OPEN.

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ANNUAL REVIEW

2007–2008



The Churches Conservation Trust is the national charity which cares for historic churches that are no longer required for regular worship by the Church of England. After English Heritage and The National Trust, we care for and keep open more historic buildings than any other heritage organisation.

Our aims are to:

- conserve the buildings in our care
- encourage and enable community use of those buildings
- devolve responsibility, management and ownership where appropriate and practical
- enhance our resources in innovative ways through our work with volunteers, through fundraising, and by building partnerships

This year we received a total of £5.39 million, of which £4.07 million was spent on the repair and conservation of 340 beautiful historic churches. 1,370,000 people visited these buildings.

The Trust has 36 staff and over a thousand volunteers.

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PUTTING CHURCHES AT THE HEART OF COMMUNITIES

People are at the heart of the work of The Churches Conservation Trust. The buildings we care for were created by the communities of the past; they were the setting for some of the most important turning points of their lives. And today they depend on a growing army of volunteers and visitors – as well as conservation work by some of the most highly skilled craftspeople in the country.

These two areas – conservation and community – are profoundly intertwined. A church that is rarely open, however well-maintained, can look abandoned. It can fall into a negative spiral, becoming a target for vandalism and a ‘sink’ for the resources of those responsible for it. It is a wasted asset.

Yet an open church, actively supported by its community, by contrast, can generate a virtuous circle of unlocked potential. Whether as a venue for events or as a local attraction, it can generate a range of economic and social benefits. It encourages engagement and social cohesion; it brings income, in the shape of jobs, investment, visitors. An open church – even one no longer used for regular worship – can nourish the community in which it sits. It can help put the heart into a place.

This, then, is the case made in this year’s Annual Review: that churches are about people. These buildings stood for generations at the very core of community life. They are perfectly placed to reinvent this role for a different era. Churches are created by communities; their future – and the work of the Trust – depends on them.



Loyd Grossman

Loyd Grossman OBE FSA
 Chairman
 The Churches Conservation Trust

Crispin Truman

Crispin Truman
 Chief Executive
 The Churches Conservation Trust

Engagement with a local community can transform the prospects of a church. In urban and rural areas alike, local people have turned buildings that were rarely opened into local attractions, injecting much-needed cash and enthusiasm into the fabric itself.

Engaging COMMUNITIES

Historic churches are anchors for the communities in which they are set. Many have been at the heart of one specific settlement and its concerns for a thousand years or more. Trust churches remain consecrated, but a wide range of activities are compatible with that. Across the country, the Trust is developing projects that keep its buildings active and open, building links with communities as it does so.

SMALL THINGS, BIG IMPACT St Mary's, Redgrave, Suffolk

The Trust's priority has to be the external fabric of its churches. It needs others to help with new facilities. So although this grand Suffolk church's two-year, £480,000 conservation programme, completed in December 2007, was 'core business' for us, we needed local people to stimulate wider use of the building.

So the CCT was delighted that there was already an active Friends organisation, set up when the church's closure was threatened. 'We didn't want to see the church become redundant under any circumstances', says Bob Hayward, Chairman of the Redgrave Church Heritage Trust. 'Our relationship with the CCT complements our role perfectly. We can do things the Trust is not empowered or funded to do. It's a very nice working relationship.'

Redgrave is a special place: its magnificent Decorated and Perpendicular architecture is filled with a nationally important collection of monuments and hatchments, including some of the most significant works of the London-based Baroque sculptor Nicholas Stone.

Yet even Bob was surprised by the impact of one of the Friends' most apparently simple contributions to the church: the installation of toilets – at a cost of £42,000, raised entirely by the Friends – which was completed just in time for a concert by jazz singer Elaine Delmar. 'We've uncorked something', Bob says. 'People have so many reasons to be interested in a church that are not to do with religion. Having toilets in the building transforms the potential audience for events there. You don't realise the impact they create until you've done it.'

'Our relationship with the CCT complements our role perfectly ... it's a very nice working relationship.'

Bob Hayward Chairman of the Redgrave Church Heritage Trust

The toilets – and associated works that have been built up over the last two years, such as secure parking, a mini-kitchen, and a small removable stage – give the church an extraordinary flexibility of use. All have been installed to a high quality of design, making them both attractive and inconspicuous within the historic fabric.

This is vital, as – while concert audiences will require a range of facilities – ordinary visitors will want to enter a church that retains its unique atmosphere. This church's capacity – some 280 people – has been reached on several occasions since it reopened, replicating the kinds of audiences its builders might have expected on Christmas day, Palm Sunday or Corpus Christi. For some aficionados, jazz is every bit as effective a salve for the soul.



1 Akenham
A traditional cream tea, followed by Evensong, marked some 50 years since the Friends of Friendless Churches saved this simple building from demolition; it was later vested in the Trust.

2 Waithe
Completion of a £350,000 conservation programme was celebrated at St Martin's, Waithe, on 14 July 2007. Here conservation contractors and members of the Friends committee receive the key to the church.

4 & 5 Redgrave
Jazz singer Elaine Delmar performs before the backdrop of Redgrave's resplendent Curvilinear east window. 789 such events occurred in Trust churches this year.

6 Waterloo
Anglo-Saxon life in Sefton, Merseyside, was recreated in a local history event organised by the Friends of Old Christ Church, Waterloo.

3 Edlesborough
The use of Trust churches as film locations is a growing source of income. Here, St Mary's Edlesborough, Buckinghamshire, is shown filled with a small army of extras and a few Hollywood 'names' for romantic drama *Made of Honor* (sic), released in 2008. A conservation expert was contracted specifically to ensure no damage to the fabric resulted.

CHURCHES NEED FRIENDS

Comparable stories could be told across the country; indeed catalysing and building on such initiatives is one of the roles of the CCT's national network of development staff. So at St Mary's, Sandwich, the Friends group has also installed toilets, making the church an even better venue for concerts and other events. This building is now open all the year round; St Peter's in the same town is also an active venue for events and exhibitions. Between them, the two buildings make a major contribution to local cultural life.

'I was christened in that church. I felt good about helping.'

Simon Lucas
Bridgnorth Delicatessen

Sandwich's medieval churches have the advantage of their town location: this is not the case at St Michael's, East Peckham, in the same county, which sits in an isolated location overlooking the Weald, some three miles from the nearest village. Yet in spite of its location on the Greensand Way, St Michael's was for many years kept locked. After the CCT called a public meeting in 2005, a Friends' group was formed, with membership just £5 a year. Undergrowth was cleared; regilding of the 1704 weathercock ensured the church was visible for many miles. The church was reopened in the summer of 2007, and is now open at weekends throughout the year and every day throughout the Summer, when it attracts some 200 visitors a week.

Elsewhere, a formal agreement has been made between the CCT and Westcott House, the theological college next door to All Saints, Cambridge. This enables the college to use the church, ensuring that its day-to-day management is taken care of while keeping the building open to the public. In Herefordshire, meanwhile, a network of volunteers is ensuring all nine churches in the county are open all year round. At Old Christ Church, Waterloo, Merseyside – a magnificent Victorian church with a landmark tower – the popularity of events run by the Friends has led to their seeking to improve amenities still further.

Such developments benefit everyone involved, cementing local networks while helping Trust churches. But their significance is wider than that: they contain the seeds of solutions to major issues facing the Trust.

LOCAL PREVENTION, LOCAL CURE

‘Churches and the work of faith groups are crucial to many local communities, particularly in remote areas, and play a key role as both places of worship and as community centres and cultural attractions that can boost the local economy’, says Bryan Gray, Chairman of the Northwest Regional Development Agency. Bryan has helped the Trust, with the National Churches Trust and various local bodies, to put together an innovative partnership, seeking to take this local potential to new levels.

A 2005 study by the NWDA revealed that faith communities in the region generate around £95 million each year to wider society. Now, using a template developed with the CCT, the Churches Trust for Cumbria will work across the county’s 550 churches. Only four of these are vested in the Trust, but many suffer from isolated locations and falling congregations, the very kinds of situation that could lead to redundancy in the future.

‘The Churches Conservation Trust has played a valuable part in establishing this important partnership.’

Bryan Gray Chairman, Northwest Regional Development Agency

The aim, Bryan says, is to ‘support churches and congregations in addressing the challenges facing their buildings and communities’. The Churches Trust for Cumbria will deal with a broad range of issues, from extending the use of church buildings to examining the legal constraints affecting their use. It will be managed by a small, full-time team and supported by a body of trained volunteers. ‘The Churches Conservation Trust, working with regional partners, has played a valuable part in

establishing this important partnership for Cumbria’, Bryan adds.

South Yorkshire, too, has been a focus for innovation. Here recent history has mitigated against their having an effective future and led to a number of churches being vested in the Trust. By the early years of the decade, the Trust had acquired five churches in the area; several had almost been forgotten by their local communities.

The Churches Conservation Trust’s first vesting was the medieval St Peter, Edlington, South Yorkshire. Grade I listed, it is a fine combination of late Norman and Perpendicular. Yet by the early 2000s the local Civic Trust was unaware that the organisation cared churches in the vicinity. By the time of its vesting, the diocese had distributed St Peter’s furnishings around its other churches and the building was left unroofed. For years it was a target for vandalism and barely anyone visited; very occasionally, services were held.

The church sits between two contrasting communities: the affluent rural village of Old Edlington, and the mining settlement of New Edlington, left rudderless over twenty years ago when the Yorkshire Main colliery closed. In spite of the fact that the church’s roof was replaced and the building’s structure secured during the 1970s and 1980s, both communities had come to think of the church as permanently closed, a place local people could do little to help.

In 2006 a new post was created, co-funded by the Trust, the Tudor Trust and the Henry Smith charity, to develop community engagement with the Trust’s five South Yorkshire churches. Progress has been particularly dramatic at St Peter’s, where partnerships have been forged in both local communities – and with the local comprehensive school in particular. This school, just a quarter of a mile away, had never organised a visit to the building; now one student has even written a young person’s guide to the church. The local residents’ association has helped organise imaginative events there; the Trust has supported these, for example by bringing such figures as Loyd Grossman and Diana Wallis MEP, deputy leader of the European Parliament, to open them. Volunteers now open the building at weekends in good weather, and a range of educational and social events is being organised, drawing together people from the two very different Edlingtons.

Similarly, although it is surrounded by urban dereliction, St Oswald’s church in Kirk Sandall has a high place in the affections of the local community. Given a focus by the formation of a Friends group in Spring 2007, a programme of open days and services is now being strongly supported, both by the community in the immediate area and the wider population of Doncaster.

NATIONAL POTENTIAL

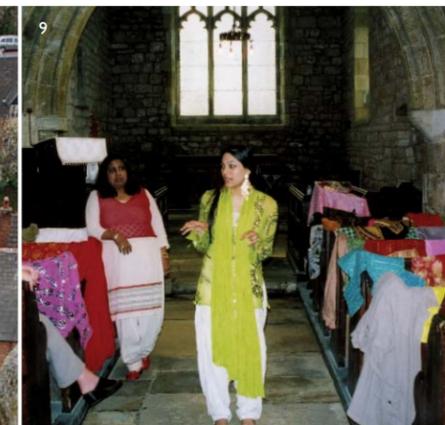
Work in South Yorkshire has a wide agenda: it is a pilot project, assessing the costs and benefits, the pitfalls and strengths, of such work. A focus on young people has led to residential opportunities with Cathedral Camps at Ireby in Cumbria and St John’s, Cadeby, as well as Holy Trinity Old Church, Wentworth, both in South Yorkshire. The key to such initiatives is finding new ways of engaging local volunteers: young people, for example, can learn valuable crafts and trades skills while helping conserve churches; local authorities can take on substantial responsibilities through Local Management Agreements.

As the year drew to a close, the Trust won an ambitious bid to develop such partnerships on a national stage. The youth volunteering charity, ‘v’, the Tudor Trust, the Henry Smith Charity, Goldsmith’s Company Charity and LankellyChase Foundation are between them funding a three-year project that will focus specifically on building the capacity of young people and new audiences to engage with and support Trust churches – and themselves – through volunteering. The prospects are exciting. Likewise, and in a separate initiative, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport is supporting a partnership that will explore and develop the economic potential of church tourism.

As the Trust’s first vesting, in 1971, just two years after the organisation was formed, the rebirth of Edlington and other South Yorkshire churches, and their potential to be an example to others across the country, embody many of the concerns the organisation will face in 2009, our fortieth anniversary year.

Such projects are strategic in nature: on the one hand, they seek to exploit the regenerative potential of the buildings in the Trust’s care, especially as many redundant churches are in communities that are isolated from public services. On the other, they seek prevention as much as cure: a church that is in use is one that does not need to be vested in the Trust in the first place. Here, one of the year’s significant steps was the passing of the Pastoral Care Measure, which empowers us to work with the Church Commissioners on seeking solutions to a building’s future before it is vested in our care. It is hoped that our fortieth year will see such ideas bear fruit in many locations across the country.

For more information on the work of Friends groups throughout the country, go to our website: www.visitchurches.org.uk.



DRUMMING UP SUPPORT

‘It was absolutely terrifying, obviously – and enjoyable.’ This was the verdict of Simon Lucas, just one of the people of Bridgnorth, Shropshire, who turned out to abseil down the tower of St Leonard’s church on 29 March 2008. ‘I am glad I did it, and would do it again. I was christened in that church. I felt good about helping,’ said Simon. The event he describes was a sponsored abseil that raised some £1,283 for the CCT. Something of a first for the organisation, it was also a pilot for a series of fundraising events planned for the Trust’s fortieth anniversary, which will be celebrated in 2009.

These will include sponsored church-crawling bicycle rides and hospitality events at Trust churches, as well as promotion of Building Futures, a strategic focus on fundraising for six key churches – St Leonard’s, Bridgnorth; St Leonard’s, Colchester; All Saints, Cambridge; St Peter’s, Preston Park near Brighton; Holy Trinity Old Church, Wentworth, and Holy Trinity, York. The campaign was launched in September 2008.

Such initiatives are only the most recent fruit of a fundraising drive that has been gathering strength since the Trust created its first Development & Communications department in 2007. Over 500 people have already joined the Trust’s first Supporters’ scheme, founded in August 2006, generating some £18,780. Every penny of such donations goes towards vital conservation work, freeing up CCT funds for equally urgent work elsewhere.

Such successes are a testament to the generosity of our Supporters. Membership starts from as little as £30 a year; benefits include discounts on Trust-organised hospitality events, bi-annual newsletters and volunteering opportunities.

For more information on how you can contribute, visit www.visitchurches.org.uk

7 Paul Stephenson, Head of Development & Communications, far left, with abseilers on the tower of St Leonard’s, Bridgnorth.

8 Abseiler descends the tower of St Leonard’s, Bridgnorth.

9 Dancer from Kiran Arts, Doncaster, during a cultural diversity festival at St John the Baptist, Throapham.

10 The Friends of St Peter’s, Sandwich, with Development Manager John Vigar, marking the retirement of the church’s keyholder, Sheila Harrison, whose son continues to help.

11 Pupils from St Augustine’s Roman Catholic school went angel-spotting in St John’s, Stamford, as part of an innovative ecumenical festival run by Churches Together on 11 July 2007.

12 A group of children from nearby Saltfleetby primary school became honorary members of the Friends of St Botolph’s, Skidbrooke, on 31 January 2007, as part of the unveiling of the church’s new interpretation board.

13 A group of children from Tower House School, London, discovered the life and times of Hannah, Prophetess of York at a performance in Holy Trinity church, York.

Regenerating cities



By turning some redundant urban churches into catalysts for regeneration, the Trust is transforming the prospects of some of its most challenging and important buildings – and of the people who live around them.

English cities often feature enormous churches, many of them Victorian, sitting in communities that can no longer sustain the function for which they were designed. Such areas today may be dominated by communities with a very wide range of faiths; they can also be significant centres of economic and social deprivation.

Such buildings, then, pose an enormous challenge – and an enormous opportunity. Left unused, they swiftly become emblems of local decline. Yet they have the potential to provide a forum for public life and centres for a range of community services. The search for bold solutions to such challenges has become a key focus for Trust resources.



SERVING ALL SOULS

'Wow! That was what I thought when I first walked in: why haven't I ever been into this building? It was absolutely fantastic!' That was the reaction of Inayat Omarji to his first look inside All Souls, Crompton, in Bolton, Lancashire.

This Victorian giant dominates a landscape of former cotton mills and workers' terraces. Vested in the Trust in 1986, it has been locked for most of the last twenty years; meanwhile the area has become home to a significant Asian community. Now local people of all backgrounds have come together to transform the church into an innovative one-stop shop for the entire community – while preserving its impressive interior.

'The church sits in the heart of the Crompton ward and the Halliwell community. It serves many thousands of people from different denominations, backgrounds, cultures and religions', comments Inayat. Barbara Ronson, Bolton's former Mayor, agrees: 'You're looking out at between 70,000 and 100,000 peoples' homes when you look out from the tower – a good half of Bolton.' It is an area in need of improved public services – and All Souls, it seems, is the perfect venue for a solution. 'It can become the hub of this community', says Cliff Morris, Leader of Bolton Council. The idea is to construct two large 'pods' within the building, which will then become state-of-

the-art offices and meeting rooms. They will house a wide range of services from childcare facilities to jobseekers' support services, as well as interactive exhibitions on the church and on the area's many faith communities. As well as the new community centre, the pods will have public walkways with spectacular views of the building's interior and stained glass windows. All historic features of the building will remain intact, apart from the pews. The church remains consecrated and occasional acts of Christian worship will be held in the sanctuary.

'It can become the hub of this community.'

Cliff Morris, Leader,
Bolton Council

the CCT and the All Souls Crompton Community Centre have put together an ambitious Heritage Lottery Fund bid and in June 2008 we were delighted to hear that the first stage of this money had been won. This grant of some £265,000 will be backed up by £80–90,000 in matched funding from the Trust. Should the resulting designs and listed buildings consents be successful, the Lottery may grant a further £3.3 million and the All Souls Crompton Community Centre will be born.

'This is a fantastic result for Bolton and the local community,' says Inayat, who is Secretary of the project committee, of the announcement; 'We are really excited that we will be able to meet the needs and aspirations of local people.' Subject to gaining the grant for the second phase, work will begin on site in 2009–10 and the project should be completed in 2011.



The building's adaptability owes much to the vision of its original patron, Thomas Greenhalgh. Soon after the parish was created, in 1879, he commissioned celebrated architectural practice Paley and Austin to design a church with no internal obstructions, so that all its congregation could see and hear. The result was a colossal, well-lit, aisleless nave – 16 metres wide, with seating for almost 800 – and a small but elaborate eastern apse. The enormous redbrick Perpendicular tower dominates the Bolton skyline; indeed, it is something of a landmark for walkers on the nearby moors.

'Wow! That was what I thought when I first walked in.'

Inayat Omarji, Secretary,
All Souls Crompton Community Centre

As local priest Bill Baldwin points out, the faith dimension of the project may be very different from that envisaged by the church's builders, but there are significant continuities too: 'The church provided in the time of Great Depression the soup kitchens, food parcels and all the rest of it... I'm absolutely delighted that that's going to continue, albeit in a different way, into the 21st century.'

Barbara Ronson sums up the project's exciting potential: 'This could be a showcase, not only for Bolton, but for the nation.' Indeed it could. The HLF grant is a small but significant step towards the regeneration of All Souls in its new role, as a community facility for all the souls of Bolton, as well as one of the CCT's most significant vestings.

A FUTURE FOR URBAN CHURCHES

The project is a beacon for the future. There is no better solution to the problem of an abandoned urban church than that it become a living centre for those who live near it. In 2007 the Trust created a new post, Major Projects Manager, with a brief to seek sustainable community uses for about ten priority churches in urban areas, and to work with local people to deliver them in ways that respect the CCT's aims, the church's fabric and former function, and ongoing public access to the building.

The key is to understand what people want, otherwise projects become irrelevant and unsustainable. This can mean creating new structures within the fabric, or it can involve less radical solutions. Either way, buildings that were once the heart of city communities can be brought back to life.

For more information on Bolton and other regeneration projects, go to our website:
www.visitchurches.org.uk

OTHER URBAN CHURCHES

ST MARY-AT-THE-QUAY, IPSWICH

With its dockside location and spectacular double hammerbeam roof, St Mary's is evocative of the wealth and piety of a late medieval mercantile community. Today it is marooned in traffic; it has long since lost its congregation, and suffered bomb damage in 1940–42. However, since 2003 it has been open once more as an arts venue, most recently as the base for artist-led alternative visual arts group Key Arts, who use it for studio and exhibition space.

Key Arts have strong support in the town, but lack the resources to create a long-term future for St Mary's, which needs some £700,000-worth of conservation. Among other problems, salt is leeching into the limestone columns, causing their mouldings to disintegrate.

Now East Suffolk Mind, the mental health charity, have ambitious plans for the building. They are hoping to turn it into a 'well-being centre', a focus for their work throughout the region. If business and funding plans currently being developed are successful, St Mary's will have a sustainable future – one that still involves the arts – and its new users will enjoy a unique working environment.

ST JAMES, TOXTETH

The story of this church embodies the twists and turns of recent history. Built in 1774–75, the building featured revolutionary use of structural cast iron, and served one of the first truly multicultural parishes in England. The church closed after a road scheme, never in fact constructed, put its future in doubt. The diocese now sees the building as an ideal location for a new missionary project, reaching out to communities across a wide area of Liverpool. Toxteth may yet attain the rare distinction of being re-vested in the Church of England.



1 Inayat Omarji with a model of the innovative 'pods' that will sit within All Souls, Bolton.

2 Paley & Austin's grand eastern apse at All Souls, Bolton.

3 All Souls, Bolton, amongst the terraces of a former mill community.

4 Key Arts event at St Mary-at-the-Quay, Ipswich.

Conserving CHURCHES

Painstaking conservation work underpins all the Trust's activities, preventing precious buildings falling into disrepair, and keeping traditional crafts skills alive.

When in 2007 she began work on the exquisite altar frontal from Skelton-cum-Newby church, textile conservator May Berkouwer was impressed. 'It was particularly attractive', she says, 'a very strong and distinctive design.' Closer inspection revealed workmanship carried out with an extraordinary finesse.

To take just one example, a ribbon of embroidered birds each sitting within a scroll of foliage ran across the upper fringe of the frontal. These tiny creatures functioned purely as decorative edging, yet several distinct types of stitching, and various kinds of gold wire and thread had been used to create each of them.

Scores of sequins, every one held in place by a wire coil, evoked the feathers of each tiny wing. The bird's long tails were formed using a pattern of herringbone stitching made of twisted gold thread. Laid couched stitching, in which long stitches are held in place by large numbers of near-invisible tiny top stitches, created the scroll design, while laid bullion gave body to the beak and legs. In many places, individual pieces of gold thread were wrapped for strength around longer stretches of fine silk, a painstaking process.

Yet the frontal's appearance was radically different from that intended by its likely designer, William Burges. Shades of dark grey and black dominated many areas: this turned out to be tarnished threads of gold. Yellow padding – for example to give body to the birds' wings – had been chosen for its invisibility under the gold thread; now it burst from behind the stretches of grey, creating distracting chlorine blotches. And hundreds of pearls had been lost from the scrollwork that embraced the little animals.

May and the CCT were faced with the curator's most familiar headache: where does conservation end and restoration begin?

After careful thought – and much testing – it was agreed that the gold could not be brought back. But May and her team succeeded in masking the bright yellow padding by applying a fine silk crêpe, dyed to a matching grey tone. Deprived of its bursts of leaking yellow, the frontal instantly 'read' more easily and was also less fragile to handle. And in a more radical intervention, a perfect (and surprisingly economical) match for the missing pearls was found in Swarovski crystal pearls, which were installed on the missing sprigs of embroidered foliage. Precise documentation recorded which of the pearls were original and which were modern replacements.

This was just one operation on a large object, every inch of which required careful attention, but it was a crucial one: the frontal's legibility to the modern viewer had been hugely enhanced, without compromising its original fabric.

'The result was both very satisfying and very different', says May. But it was not just the conservation process that impressed; it was the original conception. 'A fortune had been spent on this one fitting. There was so much emotion in the whole thing.'

'There was so much emotion in the whole thing.'

May Berkouwer
May Berkouwer Textile Conservation Studio

The emotion was all too real. The frontal was only one element in the decoration of the church of Christ the Consoler, Skelton-cum-Newby, built in 1871–76 as part of an extravagant outpouring of grief and religious emotion. The church sits on the estate of Newby Hall, where lived Lady Mary Vyner, whose son Frederick had been held to ransom and murdered while travelling in Greece.

No expense was spared in the result, surely one of the greatest works of Burges, celebrated for such elaborate projects as Castell Coch in Glamorgan. The frontal, which hung over the high altar of a building that grows in elaboration as one moves east, would have been one of the focal points of the church.

The interior of Christ the Consoler is wonderfully rich and colourful. Every detail here repays attention: from the carvings on the organ case, to the richly coloured sculptures over the chancel arch. And yet, for all its splendour, one cannot forget the tragic circumstances out of which the church was built.

Conservation of the Skelton frontal was just one part of an £11,000 programme to conserve some of the most precious fittings of the North Yorkshire church. It illustrates the care, skill and thought that is fundamental to the work of the Trust. Elsewhere, conservation work is less glamorous but no less essential: our buildings, often ancient, are exposed to the elements and require constant maintenance if they are not to deteriorate rapidly.

Major structural issues can arise. At St Petrock, Parracombe, on the edge of Exmoor, medieval construction materials had begun to leach from the tower, partly because of the interaction of salt-laden storms coming off the Atlantic with the unwise use of cement mortar to make repairs in the 1950s. As a result, the walls of the tower were full of internal voids; in heavy rain, water streamed out of them. Such a situation could threaten the very structure itself. Works here have taken two seasons, and £117,000 has been spent, but the result is that this homely structure, with its unique collection of 18th-century fittings, is now secure. Other crucial works have been carried out, for example, at Milton Mausoleum, Nottinghamshire, and St Mary Magdalene, Battlefield, Shropshire (see page 10).

But conservation does not exist in isolation from the modern world; nor is it a passive activity, simply preserving a building in aspic. Two contrasting stories give a hint of its significance for the communities in which these buildings are set.



The exquisite Gothic Revival church of St John the Baptist, Avon Dassett, sits on the edge of a Warwickshire village, but has long been locked. It was as a result of a £702,000 programme of conservation work, almost complete as the year ended, that the local community was awoken to the significance and potential of the building. 'It is amazing that an investment of this size has been allocated to a small village, and one has to admire an organisation that attracts funds of this size', says parish councillor Lily Hope-Frost. As a result, villagers are exploring ways of using the church for a range of activities. 'We are actively trying to engage the community in formulating a programme of activities which could be held in the church', says Council Chairman Jill Burgess.

At the other extreme, All Souls, Haley Hill, is one of the most impressive Victorian churches in the country, yet it remains accessible by keyholder only. The church stands next to the Halifax mill of its builder, Edward Akroyd, who commissioned it in 1856. For many, All Souls is the finest ecclesiastical work of George Gilbert Scott, who went on to design Akroyd's own house, with its gardens – now a museum and public park – and an adjacent model village for his employees. The resulting townscape is an evocative memorial to Victorian industrialist paternalism, with the church itself in a commanding presence above the town.

'One has to admire an organisation that attracts funds of this size.'

Lily Hope-Frost
Keyholder and Parish Councillor, Avon Dassett

The quality of work and sumptuousness of detailing throughout the building is breathtaking; the craftsmen employed form a roll call of the era's most celebrated names: Skidmore metalwork, Hardman stained glass, Minton tiles, Clayton and Bell painted decoration. Yet not everything here is a Victorian arcadia. Tower blocks and a flyover intrude on the scene. Some £350,000 was spent on reroofing and reglazing work in 2007–08 alone, making the building watertight and reversing damage caused by vandalism to some 20 stained glass windows. The church was redundant for ten years before it was vested

1 In January 2008 parishioners climbed the tower of St John's, Avon Dassett, in celebration of the completion of conservation work there.

2 View of the organ, Christ the Consoler, Skelton-cum-Newby.

3 May Berkouwer at work on the altar frontal from Christ the Consoler, Skelton-cum-Newby.

4 Conservation of the exquisite Burges-designed altar frontal at Christ the Consoler, Skelton-cum-Newby, was a painstaking process.

in the Trust; it was only secured after a rescue mission by SAVE Britain's Heritage who set up a Friends group that attracted strong local and national support. The works carried out this year merely finish making the building watertight and cannot prevent future vandalism.

Trust staff are currently exploring ways in which the church could be used more often. But it stands in a highly vulnerable location on the edge of Halifax, and for the time being it remains locked, apart from a couple of annual open days or by contacting the keyholder. Works at Haley Hill have been impressive; and its location near both the town centre and a public park suggests a building that could become a major asset for the area in which it sits. The CCT is in discussion with Calderdale Council about ways of bringing life back to the church. Meanwhile, it embodies the situation the Trust is in: a dependence on the core activity of conservation, but also on working with local communities.

For more on Skelton-cum-Newby, Haley Hill, and other conservation projects, go to our website: www.visitchurches.org.uk

5 Interior of St Petrock, Parracombe, where works have saved the tower.

7 Twenty vandalised or damaged stained glass windows have had to be repaired at Haley Hill.

6 Linda Walton, glazier, of Design Lights (Stained Glass) Ltd inspecting a finished window for Haley Hill, Halifax.

8 Haley Hill, Halifax, boasts one of the most lavish Victorian parish church interiors in England, yet it usually has to be kept locked.



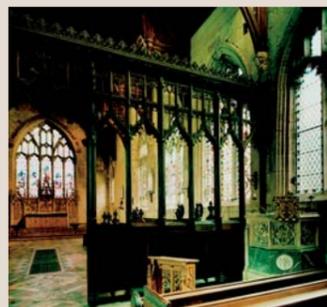
SAVING CHURCHES

MILTON MAUSOLEUM

This neo-Classical monument was built by the fourth Duke of Newcastle in memory of his wife, who died giving birth to twins, both of whom also passed away in 1822. It sits on a hilltop in Markham Clinton in the Nottinghamshire countryside from which it casts an imperious eye over the nearby A1. Work this year finally secured the dangerously unstable cornice and pediments at a cost of over £183,000.

ST MARY MAGDALENE, BATTLEFIELD

Over £100,000 has been spent in the past year on this evocative building, the church of a small chantry college founded on the burial site of those who died in 1403 at the Battle of Shrewsbury. Much of the funding went on crucial maintenance; but the experience of visitors – and the building's ability to host events – will be hugely enhanced by the sophisticated lighting system that has been installed.



A church without a community is a church unwatched. Deterioration can be rapid, and this year has been hastened by the appearance of a new menace: metal theft.

The threat IS GROWING



Incidents of theft or vandalism at Trust churches were reported on average once a week in 2007–08. Not eligible for insurance, the Trust must bear the full cost of this itself; some £161,000 had to be spent on the lead theft problem in this year alone. And the situation is only likely to worsen.

Prices of lead and copper have reached an all-time high, thanks to spiralling demand in developing countries. Lead prices have increased sevenfold since 2002; scrap value has increased in parallel. Audacious attempts at theft have resulted. The impact on the fittings within, as water is suddenly able to pour into a church, can be disastrous, and immediate.

No Trust church has been hit as hard as St Peter, Deene, Northamptonshire, which lost almost all its roofs in a series of five separate thefts in 2007, some of which took place on consecutive days. The losses to a building like this, which contains rich Victorian decoration and a matchless collection of family memorials – all hugely sensitive to water – are serious in the

extreme. At this Northamptonshire church, the Victorian organ was about to undergo conservation; water damage sent the cost of the resulting works spiralling. Indeed the total cost of making permanent repairs to St Peter's will be in excess of £68,000.

Deene is in an isolated location and not overlooked; it is perhaps the most dramatic example, but by no means the only one. From Kirk Sandall in South Yorkshire to Chilton in Suffolk, serious thefts have occurred: in both these cases the hole created was directly above an important monument. The damage at Edmondthorpe, Leicestershire, cost £10,000 to repair; the building's plight was featured in the *International Herald Tribune* on 3 April 2008.

The Trust is acting to protect its churches. It has increased its existing contingency funds, which inevitably takes resources away from other important works. It is investing in Smartwater, a product that, when painted on vulnerable areas, gives them an invisible, unique and traceable code that cannot be erased. Modern security

systems can also send SMS messages to key contacts to warn of problems – perfect for isolated churches with no electricity. Other, more traditional security systems are also being tightened up. Yet there is no substitute for day-to-day surveillance by local residents and keyholders. Lead theft looks like being a serious problem for some time to come; it is also the most dramatic example of how profoundly a church needs its community – and how urgently the Trust needs donations.

For more information on lead theft, go to our website: www.visitchurches.org.uk.

1 At Parson Drove, Cambridgeshire, thieves were interrupted stripping the aisle of its lead.

2 Half a lost aisle roof at All Saints, Saltfleetby, Lincolnshire.

3 Water pouring directly onto the interior at Stretton-le-Field, Leicestershire, after theft of metal from the roof.

4 The Crane monument at Chilton.

5 Headlines highlight the issue.

WHAT WE Need

Without additional funds, important and highly skilled projects such as these will remain on our wish list.



Organ repairs (1) St John's Chapel, Chichester

£150,000 to £175,000

The organ in St John's Chapel is of national importance, having been designed and built by George Pike England in 1813. Regarded as the best organ builder of his day, no unaltered examples of his work survive. Standing prominently in the east gallery, acting as a focal point of this early 19th-century 'preaching house', it was enlarged and rebuilt by the Victorians, retaining the original pipework. During essential repairs after vesting to eradicate dry rot, the organ had to be dismantled and the original pipework was safely stored. If funding can be secured, it is proposed to rebuild the organ to its original specification, in a new case based on the surviving original designs. It would be the only organ of its type and period in the country and would attract organ scholars from across the world.

Conservation of monuments (2) St Mary's, Badley, Suffolk

£9,000

Conservation of two 18th-century monuments in this much-loved church; both are to members of the Poley family.

Wallpainting conservation (3) St Peter's Preston Park, nr Brighton

£60,000

These early 20th-century wallpaintings are in a perilous state; it is hoped to engage members of the local community with the conservation process itself. Toilets are also needed so the church can be used for public events.

Conserve the Saxon tower (4) St Andrew's, Bywell, Northumberland

£30,000

Dating from about 850, this tower is a magnificent example of Saxon building. However, the masonry is in need of sensitive repair by a conservator to halt decay and ensure its future survival.

Joinery work to pulpit and pews All Saints Old Church, Skelton-in- Cleveland, North Yorkshire

£30,000

The 18th-century pulpit and box pews are in need of careful repair by an experienced craftsman. Revealed, their original glory would once again enliven the whole church interior.

Textile conservation All Saints, Cambridge

£8,000

The sanctuary textiles at All Saints, like the church itself, were designed for High Church Tractarian worship by G F Bodley. They are in a dilapidated state of repair. The project would complete the conservation of All Saints, which after some 25 years' work is becoming one of the Trust's more spectacular attractions.

Reinstate lead on a church roof

£40,000

£40,000 will replace the lead stolen from a single aisle of a medium-sized village church. This figure will include scaffolding to provide safe access to effect repairs as damage to the roof structure usually occurs when lead is removed in a hurry.

Training volunteers

£2,000

This sum would enable 50 volunteers to travel to a regional training course.

OUR Performance

The Trust evaluates how well it is doing through a number of targets agreed with our sponsor bodies. The table below summarises our performance against these numerical targets in 2007–08.

OUR TARGET	WE ACHIEVED	COMMENTS
CONSERVATION AND REPAIR		
To ensure that 95% of our churches are safe and weathertight	98%	1% increase on last year
To ensure that repairs start on churches newly vested in the Trust within an average of six months	100%	On target and in line with last year
Some churches we take on are in a very poor state of repair; but we endeavour to have them open to the public within two years	1 year 3 months	Ongoing project at Imber is expected to be finished in 2008

OUR TARGET	WE ACHIEVED	COMMENTS
ACCESS		
To increase visitors to Trust churches by 3% each year; that is, to attract just over 1.3 million visitors	1,369,397	13% increase on last year's revised figure of 1,211,572
To ensure that 95% of our churches are open to the public	98%	3% above target; and a 1% increase on last year
525 public events in our churches (the target is almost 21% higher than that for the previous year)	789	50% above target
Draw 15,500 visitors to churches holding special events (typically Heritage Open Days, but also National Archaeological Days and The Big Draw)	14,821	96% of target
275 visits by educational groups	318	16% above target; increase of 9% compared to last year
Review recommendations on disabled access in at least six churches	11	Almost double the target
Six joint church trails established	19	Last year's result was three
Five churches with active volunteers or Friends groups	6	Local involvement continues to increase

Investing IN THE TRUST

Developing our organisation to protect our churches, widen our reach, and attract further funding.

During the year, the Trust received £5.39 million in income to repair and maintain the 340 historic churches in our care, improve facilities and access, and pay for our staff and the running costs of the organisation.

A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE

In the year ending 31 March 2008, grant-in-aid from the **Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)** and the **Church Commissioners** provided essential core income, together accounting for 80% of the total. The Trust is grateful for this essential contribution to its work.

The Government conducted their Comprehensive Spending Review in a climate of tightening public spending. The Trust made a strong case for additional help and was successful in gaining a one-off increase of £100,000 (or 3.3%) from 2008–09. The additional money is to be focused on preventive support for historic churches at risk and on managing the size of the Trust's estate. Our DCMS grant will remain at this level until 2011–12.

Subsequently, in July, the General Synod of the Church of England approved the Church Commissioners' Funding Order for the Trust which matches the Government's raised commitment for the next three years. The Commissioners provide 30% and the Government 70% of the Trust's statutory grant, as can be seen from the chart opposite.

The increase represents a vote of confidence in the Trust's work from its main sponsors and is gratefully received. However, our statutory grant will again be frozen for the following two years and the increase does not make up the 25% cut in real terms which the Trust has experienced since the freeze in 2001. As conservation repair costs in particular rise at a pace well ahead of our income, we are having to work increasingly hard to increase voluntary and independent sources of support.

OTHER INCOME

Overall income in 2007–08 was £86,000 lower than budgeted because of a shortfall in project grant income. This is an area where the Trust is keen to improve its performance and to that end we are creating a new Trusts and Foundations post.

Thanks to increased demand for use of our churches as film locations, we received 30% more rental income than budgeted; legacy and bequest income of £76,000 was also ahead of target and higher than previous years' totals. These sources of income, however, fluctuate from year to year and the Trust will continue to invest resources to attract both these and other sources of income.

Despite a decrease in overall reserves (see opposite page), the interest the Trust received from its investments increased by £7,000 in the year, benefiting both from rising interest rates and continued careful management.

PUBLIC BENEFIT

The public benefit which results from the Trust's work is highlighted by our 2007–8 results against numerical measures. Full details are given on page 13. Most impressively:

- The Trust received almost 1.37 million visitors to its churches – 5% more than target and 13% more than the corrected figure for last year;
- The number of public, community and arts events held in Trust churches increased from 512 to 789, exceeding target by 50%;
- School and adult education group visits increased by 9% in the year, to 318.

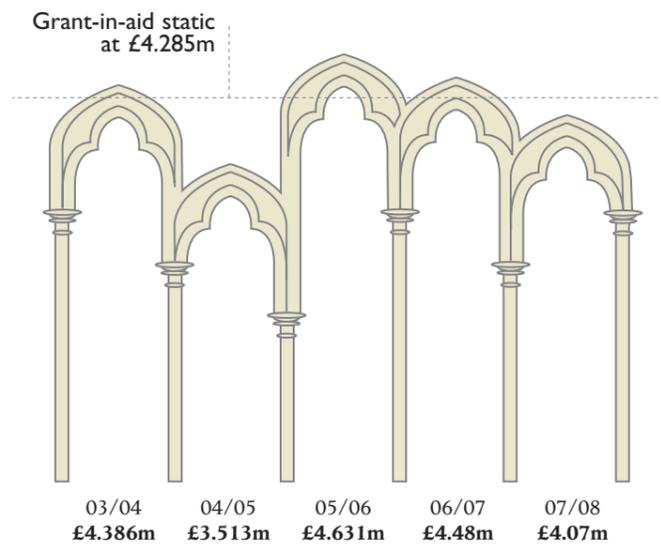
Such figures highlight the public benefits that result from the work of the Trust.

OUR MAIN AREAS OF EXPENDITURE

Historic Church conservation and repair

Church repairs and conservation in 2007–08 accounted for £4.07m or 75% of the Trust's total spending. All church repairs were completed on budget and to a high standard. Nevertheless, due to insufficient funds, some projects were postponed and a substantial amount of work remains to be done (see 'What we need', page 12).

COMPARATIVE COSTS OF CONSERVATION AND REPAIR SINCE 2003



Community use, education, tourism and volunteering

In 2007–08 the Trust spent over £1.1m on initiatives to promote community use, public access and engagement with and volunteer involvement in its buildings. This expenditure is likely to be maintained at least at these levels, as revitalising our churches and putting them back at the heart of communities grows in importance. Such activities can bring other benefits, including earlier identification of maintenance issues, improved signage and the potential for increased income. The Trust is also engaged in a small number of complex projects at its large, urban churches to find new community-led uses that will secure their future. Expenditure on all these areas made up 20% of costs in 2007–08.

Fundraising and publicity

Expenditure on fundraising increased to £177,000 – from just under to just over 3% of the total. With grant-in-aid remaining constant and in an increasingly competitive fundraising environment, this investment allows us to put in place the building blocks for more diverse and sustainable income in years to come. The financial benefits from this are expected to begin to arise in 2008–09 and subsequent years.

THE TRUST'S RESERVES

At the time of going to press, the Trust is one of many charities adversely affected by the financial situation of the Icelandic banks. For the past three years we have held a deposit account with Kaupthing, Singer and Friedlander who went into administration in early October 2008. For efficiency of cash management, the balance on this account was being reduced; at the date of administration it stood at £420,000. To reflect the high degree of uncertainty in the outcome of the Trust's efforts to reclaim this money, the Trust has written down its net assets by this amount.

We are working with the relevant bodies to recover these deposits. The loss of this amount of money would result in a number of important projects not going ahead in future years. However the strong position with which we ended 2007–08 means that work for 2008–09 can continue as planned.

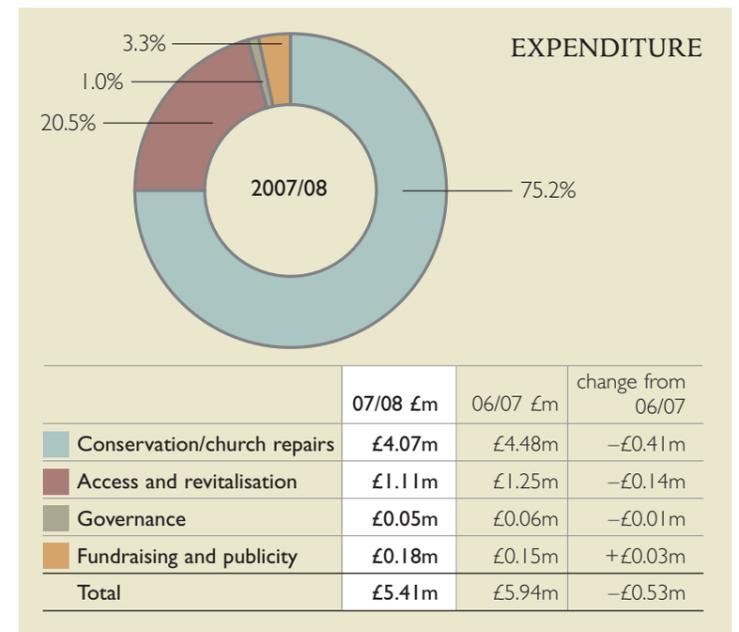
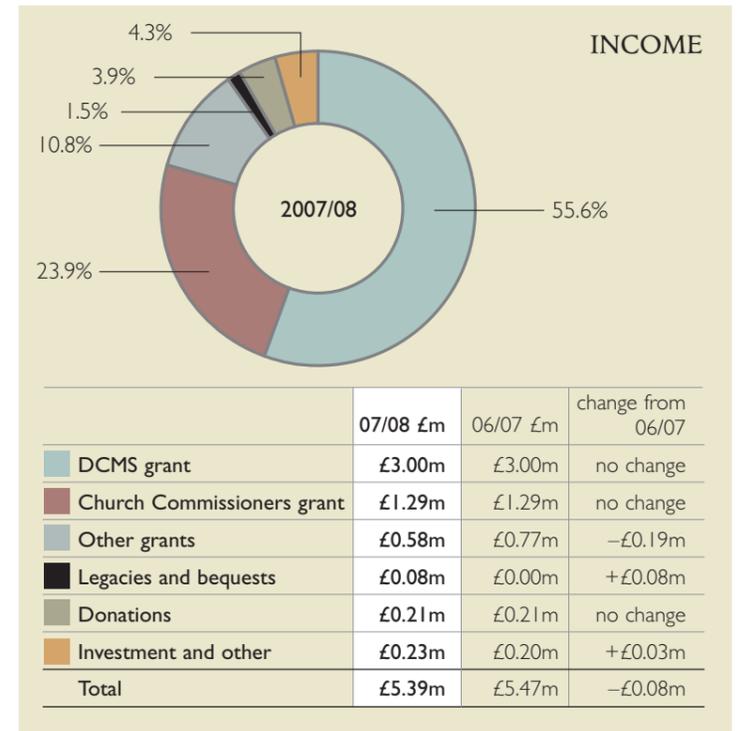
In the year, the Trust's total reserves decreased by £493,000 to £1.25m, with the majority being restricted reserves which, under the terms by which they were given, can only be spent on specific churches. The bulk of the decrease is due to the write-down in net assets referred to above.

During the year, Trustees adopted a new reserves policy aimed at increasing its free, unrestricted reserves to £400,000. These are retained to allow response to unforeseen events and provide a cushion against a shortfall in non-statutory income. We will be commencing 2008–09 with 'free' reserves of £183,000 (or £100,000 lower than the previous year). The Trust's three-year grant-in-aid settlement means that it is prudent for the level of unrestricted reserves to be lower than they would be for a charity operating without Government or Church support.

SUMMARY OF THE TRUST'S FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES IN 2007–08

These are not the statutory accounts but a summary of the information relating to our statement of financial activities and balance sheet. The full statutory accounts can be obtained by visiting our website, www.visitchurches.org.uk or by writing to our head office.

The summary financial statements of The Churches Conservation Trust were approved by the Trustees and the Accounting Officer on 30 October 2008 and signed on their behalf by Loyd Grossman (Chairman of Trustees).



The expenditure figures exclude the £420,000 referred to in the Trust's reserves.

Independent auditors' statement to the Trustees

We have examined the summarised financial statements of The Churches Conservation Trust.

This statement is made solely to the Trustees, as a body in accordance with the terms of our engagement. Our work has been undertaken so that we might state to the Trustees those matters we have agreed to state to them in this statement and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Trustees as a body, for our work, for this statement, or for the opinions we have formed. The Trustees are responsible for preparing the summarised financial statements in accordance with the recommendations of the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice 2005.

Our responsibility is to report to you our opinion on the consistency of the summarised financial statements with the full financial statements and Trustees' report. We also read the other information contained in the summarised annual report and consider the implications for our report if we become aware of any apparent misstatements or material inconsistencies with the summarised financial statements.

We conducted our work in accordance with Bulletin 1999/6 'The auditors' statement on the summary financial statement' issued by the Auditing Practices Board for use in the United Kingdom. In our opinion the summarised financial statements are consistent with the full financial statements and the Trustees' report of The Churches Conservation Trust for the year ended 31 March 2008.

PKF (UK) LLP Registered auditors, London, UK, 2008

GRATEFUL Thanks

Our principal sponsors are the Church Commissioners and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. We are very grateful to them for their support.

We would also like to thank the following local authorities and other grant-giving bodies, whose generous support has enabled us to carry out a number of important projects:

Trusts and foundations

- The Alan Evans Memorial Trust
- The Bayfield Charitable Trust
- The C S Roe Charity
- The Collier County Community Foundation
- The Colyer-Fergusson Charitable Trust
- The Henry Smith Charity
- The Kempe Trust
- The LankellyChase Foundation
- The Michael Marks Charitable Trust
- The National Trust
- The Pilgrim Trust
- The Pitstone Church Committee
- The Royal Automobile Club
- The Tanner Trust
- The Trefoil Trust
- The Tudor Trust
- The Wyss Foundation
- The Zochonis Charitable Trust

Friends of churches

- Friends of Albury Old Church
- Friends of Battlefield Church
- Friends of St Mary's, Bungay
- Friends of St George's, Esher
- Friends of St Andrew's, Hove
- Redgrave Church Heritage Trust
- Friends of St Mary's, Sandwich
- Friends of St Mary's, Shrewsbury

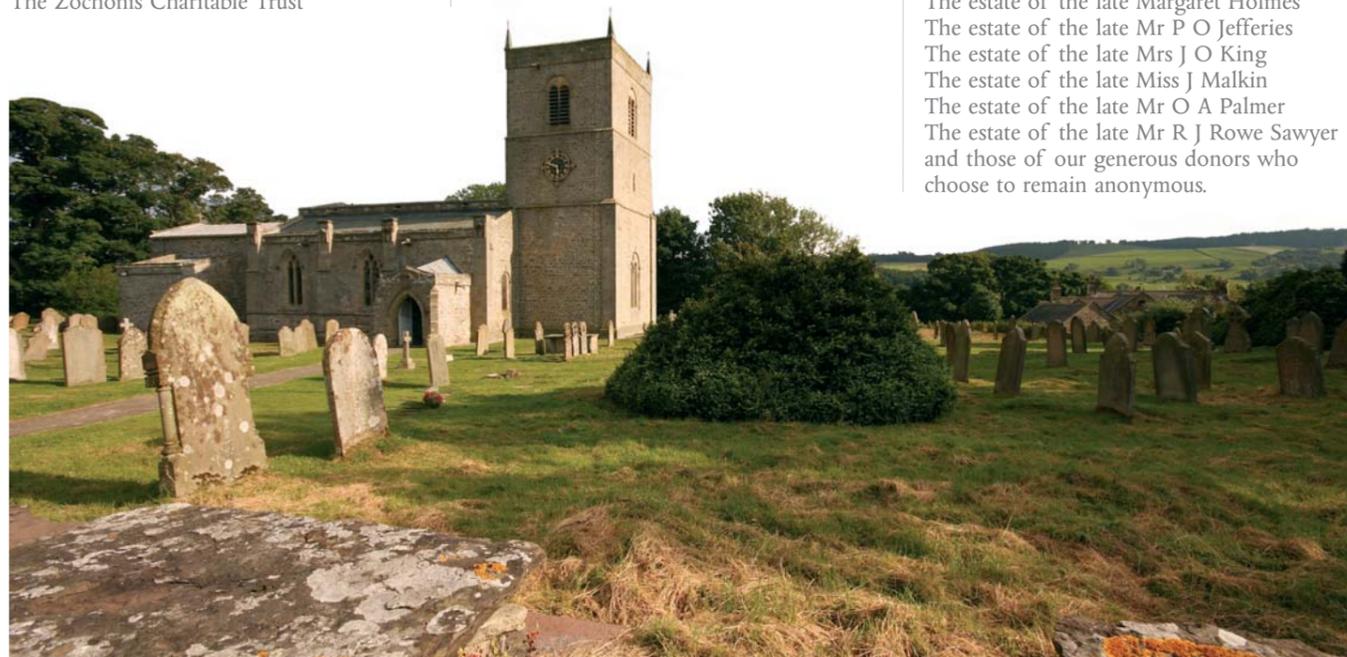
Other organisations

- Albury Old Parish Church
- Cards For Good Causes
- Heritage Lottery Fund
- The Ministry of Defence

Individual donors

Without individual donations, we simply would not be able to maintain so many churches. We would particularly like to thank the following for their significant contributions in 2007–08:

- Mr W R Aldwinckle
- Mr D W Bond
- D L Booth
- Miss G Cave Browne Cave
- Ms M Chandler
- Mr A Clark
- Mr R Frederick
- Mr R Fulford
- Miss L Gibson
- Mr G Hale
- H G Jago
- Mr J Proudlock
- Mr A Smith
- Mr M Tighe
- Sir John & Lady Timmins
- Mrs C J Trower
- Sir John Zochonis
- The estate of the late Dr D Bearpark
- The estate of the late Margaret Holmes
- The estate of the late Mr P O Jefferies
- The estate of the late Mrs J O King
- The estate of the late Miss J Malkin
- The estate of the late Mr O A Palmer
- The estate of the late Mr R J Rowe Sawyer
- and those of our generous donors who choose to remain anonymous.



Photography: May Berkouwer; Annette Fry; the *Crosby Herald*; Jason Robinson and Eddie Brown (Bolton); Jonathan Slack (Redgrave: <http://www.slack.co.uk>); Paul Heyes; Tower House School; Paul Barker; Brian Clark; Tim Charlson; Chloe Cockerill; Tony Fox; Gabriella Misuriello; Sally Porter; Neil Rushton; Roger Simmons; Dawn Whitton; John Vigar. Above: Holy Trinity, Wensley, North Yorkshire by Graham Moore. We apologise to any photographers we have been unable to identify.

Written by Jon Cannon Designed by evolvedesign.co.uk Printed by Empress Litho

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as at 1 November 2008

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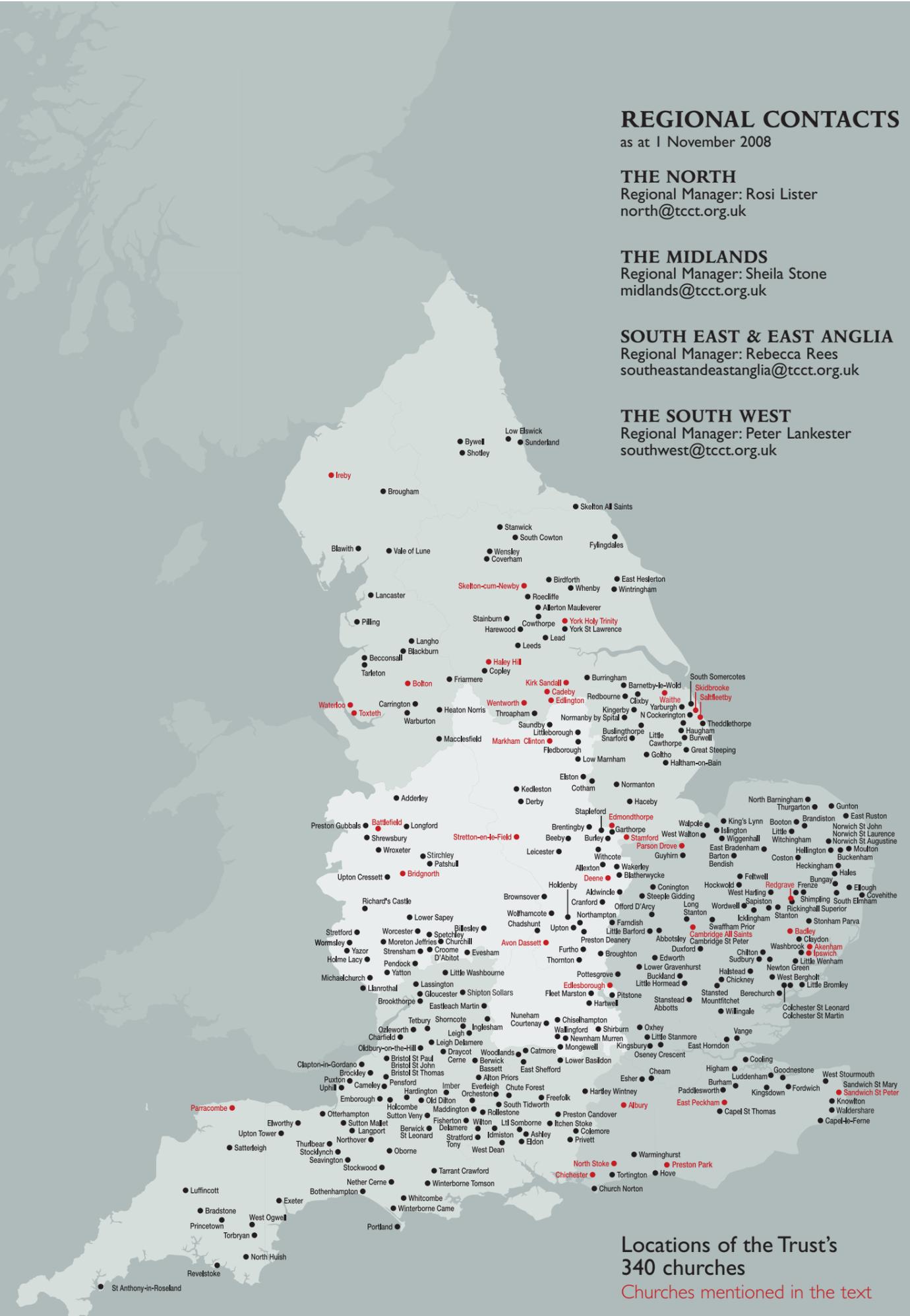
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Locations of the Trust's
340 churches

Churches mentioned in the text