



News

for Friends of Berkshire Churches

Berkshire Historic Churches Trust

April 2025

THE Royal County of Berkshire Churches Trust was established in February 1984. In the last 40 years, the Trust has given over £750,000 of grants to support essential repairs and improvements to church buildings in the County - a significant sum, but a fraction of the total cost of these works. The Trust has continued to make grants to support repairs and new facilities, and would welcome applications from any church in the county which is planning such work. We can now give small grants to help with the cost of professional services to develop a project, and can also suggest other potential sources of funding.

DETAILS of the 2025 programme of events will be circulated in the next Newsletter. The popular Englefield Lecture will be in the Summer, and we are also arranging a garden visit and a guided tour of the Dean & Chapter Archives and St George's Chapel at Windsor, exclusively for the Friends of Berkshire Churches. The Annual Meeting and church tour will be in late September. The annual Ride+Stride event, which raises funds for the Trust and for participating churches, will be on Saturday 13 September.

HELP!

Do you know someone who might be able to take on responsibility for the Trust website and social media? It could be useful experience for a young IT professional or student who would like to show work for the heritage sector and for charities on their CV — but we'd be happy to hear from anyone who might have relevant skills and some time available to help.

Please contact Peter Durrant for more information
chairman@berkschurchestrust.org.uk

The **Cover photograph** shows the East window, reredos, altar and fittings at St John, Stockcross, all designed by Ninian Comper in 1905



A message from our Patron, The Rt Hon the Lord Benyon PC, GCVO

Churches are so much more than places of worship. They provide a refuge from our busy lives and connect us with the history of our communities and those who have gone before us. Whilst bats in the belfry can be a mixed blessing, they remind us that our churches and churchyards also provide the interface between our spiritual needs and nature. In a secular world churches provide somewhere for every need. The Berkshire Historic Churches Trust is vital in keeping these places alive, weatherproof and accessible to all.

Having lived all my life in Berkshire and having been connected to so many communities, I see the huge burden on those communities with the repair and restoration of these remarkable parts of our heritage. We are privileged in this part of England to have spectacular landscapes in which buildings like churches are as intrinsic to that landscape as any tree, hedge or field. We cannot let them fall into disrepair and be unsafe to enter. To preserve and protect that heritage we rely on experts and those with the ability to access the eye-watering sums needed to preserve and protect these buildings for this and future generations. There has never been a more important time for the Berkshire Historic Churches Trust to exist and they need our support.

Richard Benyon

We are delighted that the Rt Revd Mary Gregory, newly consecrated



as Bishop of Reading, and Andrew Try, the Lord Lieutenant for Royal Berkshire, have accepted our invitation to become Joint Presidents of the Berkshire Historic Churches Trust.



Grants for churches

The 'Listed Places of Worship' grant scheme has been in place since 2001, and makes a grant equal to the VAT paid on eligible works to a listed church building. It is effectively the only financial support provided by the Government for maintenance of historic churches, and a key element in funding such projects; last year it paid out about £29 million. The Government has announced that the scheme will continue until March 2026; however, the maximum grant will be capped at £25,000, so that any project costing more than £125,000 will lose out. It is uncertain whether the scheme will continue after 2026 - the DCMS has appointed a consultant to report on its impact, and a Select Committee of MPs is also due to report on protecting built heritage, including funding and practical challenges.

THE Diocese of Oxford was awarded £177,000 by the Church Commissioners' Buildings for Mission Fund, to provide grants for small urgent repairs to church fabric. Projects with a value up to £20,000 are eligible, the grant being typically 50% of the cost; work should be recommended in the most recent Quinquennial Inspection report, and must be completed before the end of 2025. Any Anglican church in the Diocese can apply - there is still **over £100,000 available**.

For more information, go to <https://oxford.anglican.org/parish-support/church-buildings/minor-repairs-and-improvements-fund>

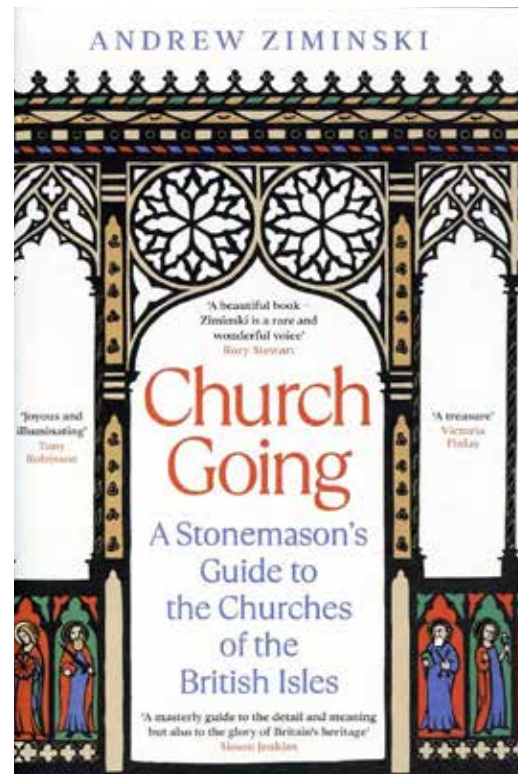


The House of Good

The National Churches Trust research, applying a wellbeing-based approach endorsed in HM Treasury's Green Book, demonstrated that UK churches together contribute **£55 billion** in social and community benefit each year, and save the NHS £8.4 billion a year.

The NCT has now developed a free tool which individual churches can use to calculate their social and economic value to their local community. The results will help churches to tell their story, and clearly show to local authorities, to MPs, and to potential donors how much the church contributes to local welfare and wellbeing.

The 'House of Good: Local calculator' is available online at www.nationalchurchestrust.org/local



BOOK REVIEW

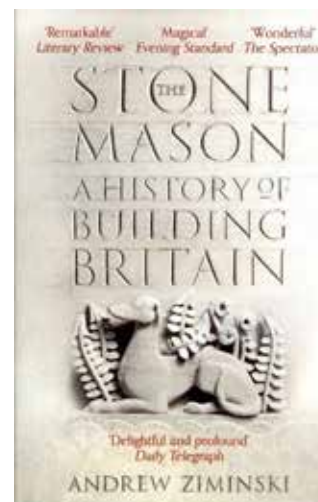
Andrew Ziminski is a stonemason and conservation expert, whose four decades of practical experience includes repairs to Salisbury and St Paul's Cathedrals, and especially the care of country churches in the west of England. He has also visited a large number of historic churches around Britain and Ireland. His deep understanding of the buildings, their materials and their construction shines through in the pages of this very readable book, as well as his respect for the mediaeval craftsmen and for the sacred spaces they created.

Reading this book is like walking around a building with the author. In 120 entries, each discussing a particular facet of a church building,

its setting and its fittings, Ziminski uses examples and anecdotes from his own experience of working on or visiting churches to explain and illuminate the subject—including many unusual and surprising items that might be found in a church. It is also well

illustrated with the author's own photographs and excellent drawings by his wife and daughter.

Whilst intended for people who are becoming interested in historic church buildings, but who don't have prior knowledge, this book should appeal to anyone who loves churches.



Church Going by Andrew Ziminski is published by Profile Books; ISBN 978 1 80081 868 2 (hardback, 2024) list price £25.

Copies are currently available from Postscript Books (www.psbooks.co.uk) for £14.99; they also have copies of his previous book, *The Stone Mason*, (2021) in paperback for £5.99



**Alyce Chaucer
Duchess of Suffolk
Her Life and Times**

Ewelme 16 -18 May 2025

A Festival of events and talks to mark the 550th anniversary of the death of Alyce, and to celebrate her extraordinary life.

Illuminating talks by leading experts

Spectacular Exhibition of Alyce's Life & Times

A Choral Concert of Medieval Music

Children's Maypole Dancing on the Green

Take a journey through time, to the tumultuous 15th century and Alyce's place at the heart of momentous events that shaped the future of England and left their mark on the village of Ewelme.

Tickets and further details available on the website: <https://alycechaucer.uk>
or scan the code



Recent Grants by Berkshire Historic Churches Trust

Grants paid:

- St Andrew, Boxford** : £10,000
for repairs to the tower roof and improved drainage
- St Peter, Caversham** : £500
for re-plastering after water damage
- St Mary, Fawley** : £500
for repairs to leadwork on the tower roof
- St Nicholas, Hurst** : £3,000
for a replacement heating system
- St John, Newbury** : £10,000
for improvement of access at the main entrance
- St Nicolas, Newbury** : £1,000
for a feasibility study of a major re-ordering project
- St John, Stockcross** : £1,200
for replacement of rainwater goods
- Thatcham Methodist Church** : £1,500
for renewal of a roof and installation of accessible toilets

Grants offered:

- St Mary, Beech Hill** : £500
for a specialist survey of remedial work required for a structural problem
- St Peter, Brimpton** : £1,000
for specialist surveys to assess the condition of the spire
- Holy Trinity, Cookham** : £5,000
for a new heating system and accessible toilet
- St Peter, Cranbourne** : £15,000
for re-roofing the nave and improving rainwater collection
- All Saints, East Garston** : £9,500
for repairs to the tower roof
- St Mary, Hampstead Norreys** : £5,000
for replacement of heating, lighting and electrical power distribution
- St Mary, Thatcham** : £900
for improvements to drainage around the walls

Berkshire Historic Churches Trust

Registered charity no. 288797

www.berkschurchestrust.org.uk

Patron: The Rt Hon Lord Benyon of Englefield, PC GCVO

Joint Presidents: The Rt Revd Mary Gregory, Bishop of Reading
Andrew Try Esq., Lord-Lieutenant of Berkshire

Vice-Presidents: The Lady Eliza Mays Smith • Erica Lady Harman
The Most Revd and Rt Hon the Lord Carey of Clifton
The Rt Revd Dom Geoffrey Scott OSB • Ian Pilkington Esq.
James Puxley Esq., CVO

Chairman: Dr Peter Durrant MBE DL chairman@berkschurchestrust.org.uk

Secretary: John Pritchard secretary@berkschurchestrust.org.uk

Treasurer: Eleanor Rice treasurer@berkschurchestrust.org.uk

Berkshire Historic Churches Trust was founded in 1983 to help with the costs of maintaining the historic churches, chapels and meeting houses, of all Christian denominations, in the Royal County, and to provide funds towards the provision of the facilities that churches need if they are to serve effectively as centres of their communities.

Since its inception it has given grants towards the costs of repairing or replacing roofs, towers, spires, stonework, windows, heating and lighting and installing toilets and kitchens.

All this costs money. To date we have given grants totalling £750,000 – but this is only a fraction of the costs of keeping our churches in good order, and new requests for help come in every year.

We are most grateful to the Friends of Berkshire Churches who pay a regular subscription to support the Trust.

Could you support the Trust with a legacy in your will?

Once you have considered bequests to family and friends, a legacy gift in your will would be a lasting way to help protect the historic churches of Berkshire for the future. We would be happy to discuss this - please contact the Chairman or Secretary.

The Berkshire Historic Churches Trust is a registered charity, and a legacy in your will is therefore exempt from Inheritance Tax; in addition, if 10% or more of the total estate is left to charities, a lower rate of Inheritance Tax will apply to other bequests.

You should consult your solicitor or professional will-writer about the appropriate wording of any legacy.