

# Columns

NUMBER II • DECEMBER 1998

*The Friends of Christ Church Spitalfields*  
*Registered Charity No. 276056*

*Columns is the newsletter of the Friends of Christ Church Spitalfields who are leading the restoration of Nicholas Hawksmoor's church, one of the most important Baroque churches in Europe.*

*Please support us by subscribing or making a donation. Use the coupon sent with this issue to make a donation, or telephone the Friends' office on 0171-247 0165.*

## Progress on South Steps

Recent visitors to Christ Church will have seen that scaffolding is now in place along the south side of the church in order to clean and restore the whole facade and the Rectory Yard Gate Piers. At the same time the magnificent double flight of steps into Christ Church from Christ Church Gardens is being rebuilt.

In early November the first delivery of stone arrived on site for the repairs to be carried out to the now surveyed and cleaned south elevation. The flights of stairs and landing to the South

Steps have been cast in concrete and work has started on building the flank wall to the steps. The whole structure of the steps is being built on a concrete raft above the new drains. The reinforced concrete vault that supports the landing over the new door to the crypt was cast in concrete on a mould of special density polystyrene. The concrete is of a particular mix in order to mimic more closely the whiter colour of Portland stone which is being used for the steps and the cladding.

This Phase II of the restoration of Christ Church is being partially funded with grant aid from the Heritage Lottery Fund, English Heritage and the Spitalfields Market Community Trust as well as a donation from the Monument Trust which is one of the charitable trusts of the Sainsbury family. We all deeply appreciate their generosity.

However the HLF and English Heritage grants are 'matching' grants and a quarter of the cost needs to be found from private sources. The Friends still need to find a further £65,000 to complete this phase of the work and are seeking donations both large and small from individual supporters in order to do this. It may seem surprising, but the gifts from individual subscribers, when put together, make a more than substantial contribution to the funding of what often seem impossibly large bills. It is the collective efforts of individuals that has brought us this far but we still rely on your generosity to enable us to draw

[This picture no longer available]

*Construction of the South Steps in progress: the stairs and landing cast in reinforced concrete*

## Open House sees record number of visitors to Christ Church

The chance to see inside Christ Church and to have a conducted tour by knowledgeable guides provided a big attraction at Open House '98 in September.

The opening was part of a European wide celebration of fine architecture funded in the UK by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. Across the capital, thousands took advantage of the opportunity of seeing inside more than 500 buildings of architectural interest which are normally closed to the public.

During the course of the weekend nearly 1,500 people came to visit Christ Church which is normally only open for Sunday morning services and between 12 and 2.30 pm during the week. Some were people who had always been curious to see inside, others were regular visitors and supporters who came along to see how the restoration work was progressing and to have the chance to hear informative lectures on different aspects of the building.

The Old Vestry Room which currently houses the Friends' office and which is not usually open to the public was of particular interest. This impressive room (what aspect of Hawksmoor's designs is not?) with its commanding views along Brushfield Street was where the parish clerks used to conduct their business and rule over matters of the day. Visitors were able to view old engravings of Christ Church; photographs and paintings of past rectors; to admire the oak panelled walls, the large fireplaces at either end of the room and the carved stone decorations to the circular hole through which the bells above can be raised and lowered.

Over the weekend the sale of postcards and early Christmas cards did brisk business alongside recruiting new supporters and selling the last remaining places on the following week's bus tour of Hawksmoor's six London churches. The Friends received over £900 in donations and postcard and refreshment sales.

Our sincere thanks to the many helpers who made this weekend such a success. Hostan Garaway and his son, Alan, for putting in so much extra time to make the floors shine and the windows sparkle for the visitors. To Eric Elstob, Peter Davies and Michael Gillingham for providing erudite and entertaining talks about the church and to Rodney Archer, Fay Cattini, Sarah Dyson and her family, Alan Eason, Alex Hislop, Stephen Humphreys, Eva-Lena Ruhnbro, Diana Sellars, Derek Stride, and Charlie de Wet for giving up their time to look after the visitors.

The feed back and thoughts from visitors has been enlightening and interesting. Here are some thoughts from a Mr A.B. Hazlitt on his impression of open day:

The steps, the columns, and then that spire ... Christ Church dominates your journey from Liverpool Street Station to Spitalfields. That spire ... it never quite seems to make sense. I would call it vulgar if I wasn't afraid that that was to commit some awful architectural solecism. But why did Hawksmoor build such a monstrous façade; was it a political or religious statement? 'Here is the Established Church, a religious arm of God's lawfully appointed secular power.' Perhaps.

But when you go up those steps, when your eyes rise from below floor level and you are drawn in through the portico and the narthex, a new emotion floods over you. Outside all is power, logic and dominance. Inside is a space that reflects the sweetness of the heavenly court. It is, indeed, a huge space, but it never dominates. Instead, the pilgrim, architectural or religious, is compelled to rest in a beautiful space.

This was for me the wonder of the 'open day'. The contrast between the stunning, but brutal, exterior, and the lovely, and temperate, interior. The two need to work together. Nicholas Hawksmoor must have expected that your physical journey up the steps and into Christ Church would be a journey of the spirit too.

## In memory of Donald Findlay

Friends of Donald Findlay will be very happy to learn that Donald will be remembered in Christ Church. Since his death earlier this year, we have received £6,591 towards the restoration of the organ. The first gifts arrived out of the blue but we have now opened a special fund in memory of Donald. Writing in 1997, Michael Gillingham said:

The Christ Church organ is a major instrument of national importance because of the survival of so much eighteenth century pipework and mechanism, of so much of the sympathetic work of 1852, and of its magnificent case. Restoration and reconstruction along the lines proposed would regain the unique disposition of 1852, while enabling the 1735 scheme to be used with integrity. The organ will be a major musical asset for the church and it is proposed to publish a full account of the history and restoration of the organ under the auspices of the British Institute for Organ Studies.

Eventually the restoration will cost £650,000 but to be successful in our grant applications we need to show 'own funds' to match. If you wish to make a contribution in memory of Donald, please send your cheque to 'The Friends of Christ

Church Spitalfields', indicating that you wish it to be allocated to this fund. The names of donors will be recorded in future issues of *Columns*.

The history and specification of the organ are described by Michael Gillingham in the Friends' leaflet *Restoring the Christ Church Organ*. If you would like a copy send a stamped addressed envelope to the Friends' office at the address on page 6.

## Spitalfields Winter Festival

Monday 14 – Wednesday 23 December 1998

The Festival is organising its third series of early evening candlelit concerts in December this year. As in previous years, choral music is strongly featured.

The Festival opens with the Gabrieli Consort & Players and their spectacular recreation of a Mass from St Mark's, Venice around 1600. The Choir of the London Oratory and the London Oratory Junior Choir, director Patrick Russell, have been invited to sing a programme of Christmas music including Britten's *Canticles* and works by Holst and Warlock. The soloist in this programme is the tenor Andrew Carwood, Director of Music at the Oratory, whose closing concert with The Cardinal's Musick in June 1997 Festival-goers may remember. Also invited are the Choir of St George's Windsor, director Jonathan Rees-Williams, with a programme of Tallis, Byrd, Bach and Stanley Glasser, and the City Chamber Choir, whose concert will include an element of audience participation.

The Festival provides many opportunities throughout the year for people to participate in music making. Brenda Rattray, who has already had great success through the Education & Community Programme in getting pupils in Tower Hamlets to sing, will, in December, turn her talents (and considerable charisma) on adults for the Festival's Singing Workshop. The Community Carol Service will also offer the chance to sing some familiar Christmas Carols.

This December will see the Festival's first winter solo recital; we are delighted that Michael Chance has agreed to fill Christ Church again with his wonderful counter tenor voice.

The full programme is now available. For more information or to join the Festival mailing

## Ways of giving

Covenanted gifts (in which the supporter promises to pay a sum of money to the Friends for at least four years) are always welcome as it greatly helps us in our financial planning and in addition we are able to claim back from the Inland Revenue the tax you have paid on the donation.

However, you can also make one-off donations through Gift Aid. The Friends will send you a Gift Aid form that is easy to fill in. We are then able to reclaim from the Inland Revenue the standard rate income tax paid by you on this amount increasing your gift by 23% at no extra cost to you. Under current legislation, gifts from individuals must be for a minimum of £250; for companies there is no minimum amount. Companies can use Gift Aid and offset the donation against their Corporation Tax assessment.

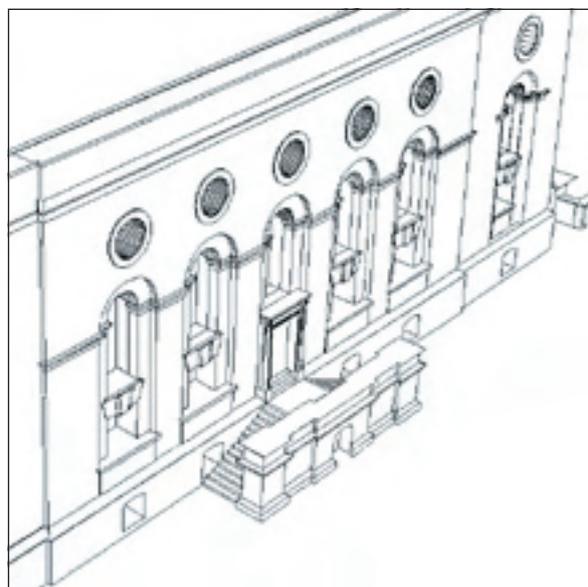
## Wanted

**Postage** If your company can assist by providing occasional postage facilities, please let us know.

**Press cuttings** We cannot afford to retain a press cuttings agency, so we rely on our Supporters to send us press and magazine articles. Anything about Hawksmoor and his buildings and, of course, about Christ Church itself, is of great interest. Please make sure to put the date and name of the publication on the cutting.

**Volunteers** We are looking for volunteers to help us in the office during the day for either secretarial or more menial tasks.

If you think you could help, please telephone the Friends: 0171-247 0165.



*The South Steps restored: drawing from a computer model  
by Christopher Woodward*

## Appeal progress

Thank you to all those Supporters who have recently given to our appeal.

### Donations over £500

Mr G.R. Nicholas  
The Worshipful Company of Pewterers

### Donations over £100

Sir Kenneth Bradshaw  
Ms B. Breeze  
Mrs A.M. Fraser  
Dr C.W.A. Murray  
Mr Michael Palin

*and a number of donors who prefer to remain anonymous*

Your gift will help the Friends unlock grant aid. For every £10 you contribute to the Friends appeal we can draw down £30 in grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage. Their generous grants must be topped up by gifts from our Supporters – people like you.

I enclose my cheque for £.....towards the restoration of Christ Church Spitalfields

I enclose my cheque for £.....towards the Donald Findlay fund, for the restoration of the Richard Bridge organ

Please send me.....leaflets about the restoration

of Christ Church Spitalfields to give to friends and colleagues.

Please send me.....Gift Aid forms

I have completed the Banker's Order form and Deed of Covenant below

Name .....

Address.....

.....

.....

..... Postcode .....

If you are a tax payer you can increase the value of your gift further still, and offset it against your

### Banker's Order

To: ..... Bank of .....  
..... Branch address

Re my account No .....

Please pay to the Royal Bank of Scotland plc of 67 Lombard Street EC3P 3DL, Sort Code 15-10-00 for the credit of the Friends of Christ Church Spitalfields Account No. 13075487 the sum of £ .....(insert amount) on ..... and each anniversary thereof until cancelled by me. This donation is in addition to\*/replaces\* previous standing orders, if any, in favour of the Charity.

..... Signature

..... Name (print)

..... Date

*\*delete as applicable*

### Deed of Covenant

To: The Friends of Christ Church Spitalfields.

I promise to pay you each year during my lifetime starting today, such a sum as after deduction of Income Tax at the basic rate amounts to £..... (insert amount) per annum provided that I may revoke in writing this deed of covenant at any time after the expiry of four years from today.

*Signed and delivered by*

.....

Date .....

Name .....

Address.....

..... Postcode .....

*Signed in the presence of*

.....Signature

Witness name and address:.....

.....

.....

**Thank you. Please return the completed page to: FOCCS, FREEPOST, London E1 6BR.**

## The Charities for the relief of poverty in the parish of Spitalfields

Although Spitalfields is not a medieval parish, it is now almost three hundred years since it was carved out of the ancient parish of Stepney, and endowed with its magnificent church. Over the years parishioners have left money to fund charities for various benevolent purposes; and we have identified no less than nineteen charities, still in existence, of which the Rector is *ex officio* chairman.

Mr. Edwin Ellis was the Vestry Clerk a century ago; and in 1894 he published an invaluable little book called *Christ Church, Spitalfields, Particulars of Parish Charities*. I have before me the 'Rectory Copy', as it says in bold handwriting, with *art nouveau* decoration on the cover, and held together with brown tape on the spine.

Ellis was clearly a keen historian; and did his research well. The oldest charity dates from 1592, when His Honour Judge Fuller left money to build alms-houses; but it is in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that the others were founded. Ellis seems to have been an efficient and businesslike clerk; and in those days the parish was relatively well-off.

The trustees have now completed a reorganization of all the eleven charities for the relief of poverty; and in October the Charity Commissioners approved their consolidation into the largest of them, the Charity of Dame Mary Baker, with total assets of some £35,000. But we shall keep alive the names of all the benefactors to remember them annually in a service in the church.

Looking into them has been fascinating, because thanks to Ellis's work the benefactors come alive across the centuries, as people with their individual characters and sympathies. Of Mary Baker herself we know little. She probably came from an old Spitalfields family; for although her will is dated 1870, two other Bakers father and son, both called John, had founded charities in the previous century. She left £5,000 of 3% Consolidated Bank Annuities, the interest from which was distributed in units of £5 to "poor and industrious parishioners"; a robust woman – beneficiaries were only eligible once in three years.

Our oldest surviving charity dates back to 1701 when Dame Prisca Coborn left her manor of Colville Hall to provide revenues "for the relief and support of such poor seamen's widows inhabiting within the parish of Stebonheath, alias Stepney". She had carried on business as a brewer at Bow; and clearly she made good beer, as well

as being a nice woman, for apart from various charities, she left almost four hundred legacies to friends, customers and her work-force.

Our most original charity was left by John Fabry, a good French name, in 1794 to provide pensions for six old, poor weavers and six weavers' widows. However the charity is best known as the "Cat and Dog Fund", because John Fabry was also worried about the future of his pets after his death; and the first call on the income was £10 to look after his cats and dogs for the remainder of their natural lives.

About the same time John Cobb, who lived in Wentworth Street, left £200 to supply bread to the local poor on St Thomas's Day and on Midsummer Day.

The French connection in Spitalfields is exemplified by George Fournier, who served his apprenticeship in the parish, presumably as a weaver, and kept happy memories of his youth here; for he left £4,000 in 1840, the income of which was distributed to the poor on his birthday, the 22nd of June every year. In his honour Church Street was renamed Fournier Street.

Alexander Truss in 1851 left his charity to pay pensions of £5 each to widows "of sober life and good character" in the parish on St. Thomas Day; but if they remarried the pension was cancelled. Truss was a self-made man, a velvet weaver, who lived in Brick Lane. Joseph Maydwell in 1863 also insisted on that high Victorian qualification among his beneficiaries, "the deserving poor".

Charles Digby was less demanding. His charity from 1872 made cash gifts at Christmas to the needy. Mary-Anne Meakin left her legacy to help poor silk weavers. Cheap imports from China in the nineteenth century had knocked the bottom out of the European silk industry. Robert Savage in 1885 simply made the poor of the parish his beneficiaries.

All these funds were invested by the original trustees in government bonds, the safest way to maintain the capital. But none of them could have imagined the great inflation of the twentieth century. Mary Baker's £5,000 would now be worth £160,000 if it had merely kept pace with inflation; for at the end of the last century Christ Church was unexpectedly quite a wealthy parish in the money of the time. Fortunately about twenty years ago the then rector, Eddie Stride, switched all the assets of the charities into the Charities Official Investment Fund, so that now we do have some funds available to help those in need in our parish.

*E.C.E.*

## Personal column

*Daniel McCurry*

The Friends still have £1.5 million to raise in order to complete the works, and I found myself reflecting on the fact that this is not the first time Christ Church has found itself short of cash. Hawksmoor's original design was estimated to cost £9,129 16s, but soon went massively over budget to £39,162 17s 6d. Luckily the Treasury footed the bill.

While designing a beautiful monument, Hawksmoor was also well aware of the fact that the church would have to achieve an income in order to maintain itself. The box pews that ran along each side of the isle were leased to wealthy local families leaving the paupers to occupy the cramped galleries, and the crypt was designed to be large enough to contain 1,000 burials, all paid for by people fearful of the body-snatchers.

Plaques hang on all parts of the church thanking wealthy patrons such as Mr Brushfield, who later went on to name Brushfield Street after himself, and Mr Hanbury who similarly named Hanbury Street after himself.

The turn of the century price list compiled by Revd. Charles Chard makes one wonder what share the organ blower got out of the 6d. per hour, for all his efforts. But the most entertaining account of the lengths to which the staff would go come from the Dickensian curate Chadwick, who describes the scene of carrying out a burial in the booming new 'metropolis' of Spitalfields, following a decision by the church elders to increase income by charging double fees for burials of non-parishioners. This policy eventually led to an astonishing 68,000 bodies being piled one on top of the other in the grounds of Christ Church. In 1843 poor Chadwick wrote:

Indeed, as my church extends along one side of another crowded street, I have had most inappropriate musical accompaniments, even during that part of the burial service which is performed within the church. My burial ground is partially exposed to the street at the west end also; and there, as at the east, it is liable to be invaded with sounds and sights of the most incongruous description. Boys clamber up the outside of the wall, hang upon railing and, as if tempted by the effect of contrast, take a wanton delight in the noisy utterance of the most familiar, disrespectful and offensive expressions. To this wilful disturbance is added the usual uproar of a crowded thoroughfare—whistling, calling, shouting, street-cries, and the creaking and rattling of every kind of vehicle—the whole forming such a scene of noisy confusion as sometimes to make me inaudible. On all of these occasions, indeed, I labour under the indescribable uneasiness of feeling myself out of place. Amidst such a reckless din of secular

traffic, I feel as if I were prostituting the spirituality of prayer, and profaning even the symbolic sanctity of my surplice.

So as we struggle to fill the church coffers and begin the campaign to restore the interior of Christ Church, please have pity on us poor fund raisers and give generously.

## Thank you

The campaign to restore Christ Church relies on gifts in kind and of time as well as money. We are very grateful to many people for this help in particular to Ashurst Morris Crisp for photocopying this issue of *Columns* for us:

To Herbert Smith and Linklaters and Alliance for photocopying our Christmas Card mail order forms.

To Paul Shannon of Harry Neil (City) Ltd for the use of the photograph on p 1.

To Charlie de Wet for permission to use Hugh de Wet's painting *Christ Church Spitalfields at Night* for this year's Friends' Christmas Card.

We are particularly grateful to our faithful office volunteers Fiona Ligonnet and Christopher Woodward who provide such reliable and regular back up.

---

Supported by the  
**Heritage Lottery Fund**



---

*Published by the Friends of Christ Church Spitalfields*  
Registered Charity No. 276056

*The Old Vestry Room, Christ Church, Commercial Street,*  
London E1 6LY Telephone 0171-247 0165