

# Columns

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*The Friends of Christ Church Spitalfields  
Registered Charity 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 in this issue to make a donation, or telephone the Friends' office on 0171-247 0165.*



*The South Steps complete: May 1999*

## Second phase of restoration completed

The Friends of Christ Church Spitalfields have now completed Phase 2 of the restoration: the rebuilding of the south steps; the cleaning and restoration of the south façade and of the gate piers and gates to the yard at the East End of the church. The project, with architects Whitfield Partners, main contractor Harry Neal (City) Ltd was completed very close to the budget of £660,000.

On 11 May the Archdeacon of Hackney, Clive Young, opened the steps at a public press launch which was well attended by both national and local press.

The Friends are very grateful to their major funders, the Heritage Lottery Fund, English Heritage, the Monument Trust, Spitalfields Market Community Trust and the London Borough of Tower Hamlets as well as for the significant donations from ING Barings, Spitalfields Development Group, the Stuart Heath Charitable Trust, Lloyd's Charities Trust, Guardian Royal Exchange, Schrodgers, Cazenove & Co and the many individual supporters who have enabled this. As most large grants from public sources now have to be 'match funded' by a proportion of private funds, these latter smaller private donations are vital.

Our architects, Whitfield Partners, are now working enthusiastically on the designs for Phase

3: the main restoration of the interior of the building. This will start in July immediately after the end of the summer music festival. This initial package of works, to be carried out over this summer and autumn, will be followed, during the year 2000, with a schedule that will include the reinstatement of the main church floor.

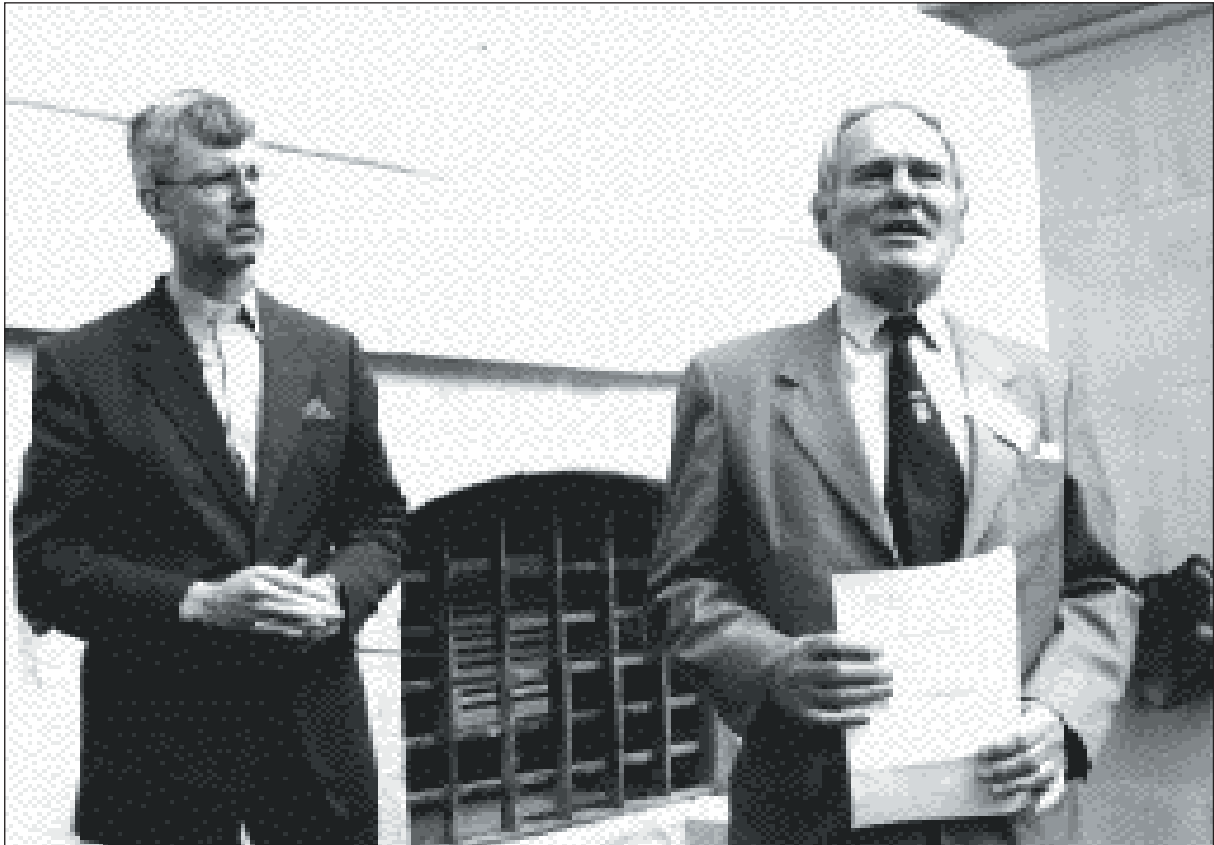
One of the first things to be done is to make ready the vaulted chamber in the middle of the crypt directly under the nave of the church. This will provide a temporary chapel to be used during the closure of the main church in 2000 and afterwards will serve as the parish's meeting room. The chapel in the crypt will be reached from a new entrance in the South West corner of the church, similar to that which has long existed in the North West corner and acts as the entrance to the Spitalfields Crypt Trust Project.

This year's work also includes building the first part of the reinstated gallery structures. This is the beginning of the reinstatement of the whole of Hawksmoor's galleries and involves erecting the main timbers and the gallery floors. The panelled fronts, which will go on later, are hung from these main timber structures. The reinstatement of the gallery structures at this stage is useful as it provides a temporary storage space for artefacts presently in the sanctuary, which needs to be cleared to enable the floor to be completed.

The programming of the work ensures that



*Guests at the opening admire the Steps and cleaned south façade*



*The Rector, the Reverend Paul Bowtell, and the Chairman of the Friends, Eric C. Elstob*

Christmas will take place in the church itself. At the end of 1999 the parish will move down to its temporary home in the crypt chapel and the restoration work will move to the next major stage: the installation of the floor, underfloor heating and galleries.

The estimated cost of finishing the restoration is £2.5 million of which £1 million has already been pledged in grants from major funders. As always, raising matching funding for the major grants is one of our most challenging tasks. This is often gathered in relatively small amounts from individuals.

We therefore repeat our appeal here! If you are able to donate, please consider covenanting the Friends of Christ Church Spitalfields or making Gift Aid donations. This way we can claim back tax as well.

For more details of how to do this and the benefits of the different types of subscription please contact the Campaign Director, Carolyn Fuest, at the Friends' Office: 0171-247 0165.



*All photos Hugo Clendenning*

*The Archdeacon of Hackney, the Venerable Clive Young who cut the ribbon to open the Steps*

## Recent Gifts

The Friends are grateful to the many individuals and organisations who are giving with such generosity to the Restoration Appeal. We value donations large and small.

The following have all made single donations since the last issue of *Columns*. Others have given but prefer to remain anonymous. We would like to thank them all for their support.

If you would like a covenant form or would like to discuss giving to Christ Church, please telephone the Friends' office: 0171-247 0165.

### Grant of £75,000

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

### Sponsorship of the Friends' Benefit Concert on 25 June

INVESCO Asset Management

### Donation of £5,000

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### Donations of £4000 or more

The Goldsmith's Company

Spitalfields Development Group

*continued on next page*

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 .....

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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 .....

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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 .....

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..... Signature

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

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Terry Farrell

**Richard Bridge Organ Appeal****Donation of £500**

South Square Trust

**Donations of £50 or more**

Dr C W A Murray  
Mr & Mrs R Jeffery

**Friends letterbox**

Among the various major works at Christ Church the Friends are constantly doing small jobs which help the church and its users. A family joke has been the letterbox, commissioned in 1993, and now finally installed as part of the restoration of the railings in Fournier Street between the Rectory and the church. The letterbox was badly needed. Indeed over the years letters have been mislaid or lost when they were delivered to the church hall; and if some Friends find that any of their cheques have not been cashed, this is the explanation. When the then Treasurer, Eric Elstob, held his fiftieth birthday party in Christ Church, with a concert of some of his favourite music, his present from his friends was the money to provide the letterbox, hence the date on it. So the problem of lost mail should cease. The Post Office have suggested that we change our address to:

The Friends Of Christ Church Spitalfields,  
The Old Vestry Room, Christ Church,  
Fournier Street, London E1 6QE.

**In brief**

**The clock:** Residents and visitors to Spitalfields will be pleased to know that with the aid of a grant from Tower Hamlets and donations from ABN AMRO, the Spitalfields Development Group and other local businesses, the workings of the church clock are being dismantled and overhauled by clockmakers Gillett & Johnston.

**Grade 1 listing:** There has been a recent 'Clarification and Amendment to the List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest' within Tower Hamlets: Christ Church has been re-graded from an ecclesiastical listing grade A to Grade I in the statutory list.

**Last bus tour this century**

There are some places still available for the last bus tour in 1999 of the six London Hawksmoor churches on Saturday September 25. The guide for this tour will be the historian and broadcaster Dan Cruikshank. To book a seat, send a stamped addressed envelope together with a cheque payable to 'The Friends of Christ Church Spitalfields' for £37.50 per place, the special price for paid up Supporters.

## Spitalfields: a recollection

*Fay Cattini lives in Spitalfields with her husband Jim. She has a long association with the many different aspects of Christ Church and was churchwarden from 1994 – 97. Fay currently works for the Festival. She is also a dedicated supporter of the Friends and gives very generously of her time and knowledge to help the Restoration.*

My family were Anglo-Indians who came to England after Independence and after a couple of short stays in Rest Centres, were rehoused in Spitalfields. It was about 1950, the year my youngest (of 7 children) brother was born. We were lucky, it was a fairly new Council flat and it had a bathroom.

The first thing we noticed was how densely populated it was. Little streets and even tinier side alleys – tiny houses, little one-room tenement blocks and huge tenement blocks, some with wonderfully grand names like ‘Charlotte de Rothschild Dwellings’. Rationing was still in force, and there were little shops *everywhere*. Restaurants in Spitalfields were unheard of (except for the fish and chip shop). Most streets were cobbled and the lamplighter still came round to light the street lights. It always seemed to be grey, I suppose because we all had coal fires. There were no gardens but yards. We played in the streets because no one had cars. Also people lived ‘over the shop’. At one end of Commercial Street was a police station with accommodation for unmarried policemen and at the other end was a police station with accommodation for married men. The doctor lived over the surgery, shopkeepers lived above the shop, the Market Superintendent lived in the Market and of course brewery staff lived in the brewery houses in Brick Lane and Wilkes Street. Who owned the ‘old’ houses, I don’t know (rumour had it that it was a ‘Rachman’ type landlord). Most of them were shops, workshops or multiple occupancy.

A big attraction for children in Spitalfields then were the huge bomb sites. Guy Fawkes night was wonderful as there were huge bonfires built on them. The smoke lingered for days afterwards. I remember Spitalfields being grimy but I don’t remember any rubbish lying about. Probably because most things were bought fresh and there wasn’t so much packaging as there is now and of course McDonalds hadn’t yet arrived!

The Brewery was the biggest work place in Spitalfields, although there were other places like cigarette and tea factories. I remember the women coming out of the Brewery wearing their clogs and funny nets over their heads, and the

lovely big dray horses lined up in Wilkes Street. The coopers were still there and apprentice coopers had to go through a strange initiation ceremony when they were put in a barrel and horrible things poured over them.

Because everything we needed was in Spitalfields, we rarely ventured outside, and then only if it was within walking distance.

When we came to live in Spitalfields, Christ Church was still in use as the parish church but I really can’t remember much about it except it was *big* and there was a pulpit with a sounding board and you had to look up at it. Then suddenly one week we were in the church and the next we were out and the church locked (so it seemed to me).

The church hall, 22A Hanbury Street, was used for everything – church, Christmas Bazaars (which began on Friday evening and then all day Saturday), clubs, Sunday School, the lot. I was very fond of 22A, it was a cosy place!

Spitalfields was then predominantly a Jewish area with a synagogue in almost every street. I loved school as a child because we had all the Christian holidays as well as all the Jewish ones and of course in winter on Fridays school finished early. By that time though all my friends were second or even third generation and very anglicised. School dinners were ‘kosher’ in that custard was made without milk, so that meat and milk were not eaten in the same meal. We were surrounded by Jewish and Christian philanthropy. The Brady Settlement, Ida Samuel Treatment Centre, Mildmay Mission Hospital, the Jewish Kitchen in Brune Street etc.

Spitalfields changed drastically in the mid-1960s when the government decided that it was time to sweep away the old and bring in the new. There was a massive clearing of small streets, alleyways and tenement blocks and in their place came big estates with massive blocks of flats (all with bathrooms). There was then no private housing in Spitalfields so if a couple got married and wanted to buy their own house, they had to move away and there was no Council ‘Sons and Daughters Scheme’ either so again people did not stay. Instead they were rehoused in Dagenham, Basildon or Harlow New Town. The 1960s also saw the end of grammar schools, George Green, Parmiters, Davenant, Central Foundation schools for girls and boys and Raines. The grammar schools were an important ladder up and out for east end children.

In 1966 the church roof was repaired and so the church was made safe. The Crypt was made into a home for ex-alcoholics and I went to the opening ceremony attended by Princess Alex-

andra. The crypt then was just a bare space, not the elaborate place it is now. When Eddy Stride arrived his brief was parish work. No one was really interested in the restoration of the church as it had been but how it could be repaired for use now. I remember visiting other churches to see how they had adapted their churches to serve the parish for worship and other uses. The maisonettes were built at the back of church for staff and an adventure playground in the church gardens. It was only later when the Friends were formed that it was seen that the church could be restored as both a parish church and a beautiful place, and there aren't many beautiful places left in Spitalfields.

Spitalfields Market expanded and took over most of Spital Square and Folgate Street. The houses were demolished to make way for a lorry park. Trumans also began to expand. All the houses in Brick Lane, Hanbury Street, Wilkes Street and Grey Eagle Street were demolished and in their place huge brick buildings were built. In the mid-60s there was a fire which totally destroyed the Bishopsgate Goodsyards from Shoreditch High Street to Vallance Road. It remained a derelict eyesore for many years.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, there was a growing awareness from outside that there was too much destruction in Spitalfields and what little that was left (including the church) had to be protected. I remember Sir John Betjeman visiting the Rectory. After he had gone, the Rector's wife found an old hat on the bannisters and put it in the basement with the jumble. A little while later there was a knock on the door and it was Sir John asking for his hat back.

I bought a book by Wesker and Allin called *Say goodbye: you may never see them again*. It was Council policy to designate the part of Brick Lane beyond Quaker Street as 'industrial' and so it was left to become run down and whole streets like the weavers' houses in Sclater Street were demolished. The last synagogue to be built was in Bethnal Green Road but it was not long after this that the Jews began to move out to more prosperous areas.

In the early 1970s the young people had a sponsored church clean because we wanted to have a concert in the church with a Christian rock band called The Sheep. The church then seemed to be used as a storage place and I remember it was full of mattresses and things. When the bellringers asked if they could sell the old bells and replace them, they collected newspapers to sell and when the paper market prices slumped the piles of newspapers rose in the church. The bellringers were very keen and taught a group of

local people. It was great fun but as soon as it got more complicated than Bob Major I was lost!

In the 1970s and 1980s the few remaining old houses were saved – not by local people but by people from outside – new immigrants. We knew the houses were old but these people knew they were 'historic!' and they had something which we didn't have – the knowledge and means to restore them. At the same time too a group was formed to begin to restore Christ Church – again people from outside.

I got married and moved away in 1975 a year before the first music festival. I thought like all those before me that I would never return but I did in 1981. I did attend some concerts during the time I was away – I especially remember Rostropovich. After the concert we all stood on the church steps and clapped him as he left and I got him to sign my programme book.

In 1981 we came back to Spitalfields, my husband said in 5 or 10 years time it would be *the* place to live! It was now Council policy to build houses rather than blocks of flats and our estate was the last built by the old GLC. Apart from the Abbey National estate, there was no private housing. In the 1980s there was little Council housing, all the new housing was Housing Association like Toynbee, Newlon, Springboard and Spitalfields Co-Op and it was all for large families. I was surprised at the changes that had taken place in just six years. There were hardly any Jewish people, except for a few old people, and the number of Bangladeshis has continued to grow and now spread into other areas. As well as the large mosque in Whitechapel, there are several smaller ones and nearly every Council community centre is used by them as a mosque school.

In 1989 the parish decided that instead of endlessly discussing the restoration from the outside, we should move back into the building and so we did. The church hall was turned into a community project. The old Market moved away and the Brewery was sold off and later closed.

The 1990s have been a time of a lot of grants for the church restoration which has gone on at a great pace. For the first time in many years, private housing is beginning to happen in Spitalfields. As well as new housing on the old Market site, there are many brownfield sites being developed.

Do I miss the old days? Of course, but so does everyone, no matter where they come from: it's a sign of getting old.

## Personal column

*Christopher Hawkesworth Woodward*

I can't match the late Sir James Stirling's implausible claim that as a student he cycled round London to visit Hawksmoor's churches: forty years ago I walked, and Christ Church was derelict. I now come to the vestry once a week and can watch the progress on the restoration.

While the work to the tower and spire completed last year was important to stabilise their structure, it only supplied further clues to Hawksmoor's intentions for the interior of the church. The work to the south façade and the installation of the steps reported in this issue of *Columns* has given us the suggestion of a brand new Hawksmoor building. Well, not quite yet. Those who relished the patina or dirt with which the façade was smeared will now be disappointed, but they still have the uncleaned north face to admire.

For me, the cleaning and careful patching has revealed three things. First, the beauty of the stone. Inigo Jones is credited with first bringing Portland stone to London for the facings of his Whitehall Banqueting House, started in 1619. He was trying to match the beautiful white limestone from Istria which he had seen used by Palladio for his urban palaces in Vicenza. Almost exactly one hundred years later, Hawksmoor used the same stone and, three hundred years later still, the tradition established by Jones continues, most recently in London in Dixon-Jones' elevations to Covent Garden Piazza, part of the extended Royal Opera House and themselves a homage to Jones' work. When it is first laid, Portland stone has the creamy appearance of that of the new south steps. Then salts start to migrate to the surface and stain it. Finally, after several seasons of rain, the parts facing the prevailing wind are washed white. Eventually the surface becomes eroded revealing the skeletons of the larger sea creatures who with their smaller cousins fossilised into the material with which we build.

The second revelation is of Hawksmoor's idiosyncratic method of architectural composition: the wild contrast between bold forms and their juxtaposition – of the tower and porch to the nave – and of the contrast between the extraordinarily fine articulations of, for example, the projection of about only three inches of the walls of the nave beyond the staircase housings, which sun and shadows can now articulate again, and the deep dark recesses of the row of circular windows.

Finally, Hawksmoor's use of decoration is

clarified. Not for him Wren's restless all-over fruit and garlands, when he could afford it. Decoration occurs much more as the Greeks did it: in small intense areas and set against a plain ground. The cleaning now allows us properly to see the finely carved dentils under the bed moulding of the main cornice, and appreciate the delicacy of the impost mouldings of the arches of the nave windows, both now set against what is on a sunny day a field of almost blinding powdery whiteness. If you haven't yet been, go and visit it, but if it's a sunny day you may need ski goggles.

*Christopher Hawkesworth Woodward is an architect and writer, and a volunteer with the Friends*

## Thank you

The campaign to restore Christ Church relies on the support of many people. We would like to thank the following people who have recently given us support in kind:

ABN AMRO  
Accountability PR  
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Herbert Smith  
Vail Printers  
Spitalfields Development Group  
Gooch & Webster  
Hugo Glendinning  
Eva-Lena Ruhnbro  
Kay Sinden  
Wendy Smith

We are particularly grateful to Fiona Ligonnet and Christopher Woodward who provide reliable and regular back up in the office. We are always looking for people to help us in the office during the daytime and regularly. If you think you might be able to help, telephone the office: 0171-247 0165.

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