

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 form on the back of this issue to make a donation, or telephone the Friends' office on 020 7247 0165.

Preparations for the new floor

Christ Church has been shut for March, and the Parish is worshipping in the crypt chapel. This has been to allow the architects for the restoration, Whitfield Partners, to make a survey of the levels of the floor of the nave. In a new building the floor depth and structure would be known, but the exact construction of the floor of Christ Church is not, so it has been necessary to take up some of the bricks which make up the existing floor and to take level surveys to establish the details. This has entailed carefully removing bricks to reveal the tops of the vaults to the crypt and measuring these against the known level of the original stone floor. This is being done ahead of the main building contract to ensure that there is sufficient depth above the top of the structural vaults for all the new electrical services, necessary in any building today, to be hidden below the new stone floor. The finished level of the new floor is determined by that of the existing floor in the vestibule; the upper surfaces of the vaults cannot be removed: all that can be removed is some of the brick infill between them.

Visitors to the church may have noticed that the stone pedestals to the columns widen at the current floor level. This is the top of the column rising from the crypt level; the extra width was probably allowed so that any corrections to the setting out could be made before the columns in the church were erected. As this part of the building has not been touched since the church was first built interesting objects have been found: pieces of old shoe leather, fragments of twine and clay pipes and a complete clay pipe with handle which might have been put there deliberately by one of the labourers.

Some minor but essential works are being done outside the church and are being 75% grant aided under the London Borough of Tower Hamlets Conservation Scheme with matching funds being provided from the Friends. These include work to finish the programme for rebuilding the south steps. The



Mohammed Jamal from Chanton Engineering using a theodolite to survey the levels of the upper surfaces of the vaults of Hawksmoor's crypt exposed in the recent excavations of the nave floor.

garden shed of the playground building which abutted the new steps has been removed so that the whole of the south steps can now be seen from Christ Church gardens. Wheelchair users will now be able to go right round the outside of the building. The Friends have made good a shed on the other side of the playground building to house all the garden maintenance equipment. Work is also being done to conserve the fine Nash monument in the church gardens and the railings to the monument which were probably removed in the Second World War.



Arts Minister at Christ Church

Baroness Blackstone, the Arts Minister, chose Christ Church as the location for the launch of a new government initiative. This grant scheme will reduce the VAT on repair to places of worship. The grant scheme is non denominational and will affect listed buildings used as places of worship by all faiths. It means that organisations will be able to claim back 12.5% of the VAT spent on repair works to these buildings. Until the scheme has been running for a while, it remains to be seen how quickly applications will be processed and the effect that this will have on an organisation's cash flow, as the client will have first to pay the full 17.5% and then reclaim the difference.

The Rt Hon Paul Boateng, MP, Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Rt Rev and Rt Hon Dr Richard Chartres, Bishop of London and Patron of the Friends of Christ Church Spitalfields, and Rt Hon Baroness Blackstone, Arts Minister.

Christ Church stands to benefit by approximately £150,000 on the work to the interior. This is a smaller amount than our readers might have envisaged. This is because much of the work on the inside of the building, for example the floor and heating, is already zero-rated. Unfortunately, it seems that there are no plans at present to reduce the VAT liability on the professional fees. As no responsible restoration work can be done without architects and engineers this would be an area that could be of immense further benefit.

All change

The Friends held a campaign appealing for foreign coins that were to become obsolete with the change to the Euro. Many people contributed and the Friends would like to thank all those who did, especially law firms Herbert Smith and Ashurst Morris Crisp who held their own internal campaigns on behalf of the restoration, and Spitalfields Organics and the Market Coffee House who kindly acted as collection points for people's coins.

Eric Elstob writes: Christ Church, Hawksmoor's amazing edifice in Spitalfields on the north east edge of the city, has received over £2,000 towards its restoration in coins of the old European currencies, and all the short change which lay in people's desk drawers after their holidays. The coins weighed over 3 stone (or 18 kilograms for those who prefer metric). Counting them was a study in twentieth century monetary and political history. There were some old pennies, big and solid with a king's mistress as Britannia, and which lasted as legal tender for over 300 years, as well as the short-lived new half pence which replaced them, a tiddly-wink

which lasted just over three. Inevitably there were several bank notes which had gone stale; but more surprising was the number of governments which had dishonoured their specie, the old French ten franc coins and the Spanish 100 pesetas were the most common examples. The time-honoured method of renegeing on a currency by inflation has been replaced by fiat. Inflation had certainly taken its toll: Belgian 50 centimes, Portuguese 50 cents, Italian 10 liras were among the victims.

The most memorable coin I found was a French 2 franc piece in mint condition struck in silver and dated 1916. Some young soldier must have had it in his trouser pocket when he came home on leave from the Western front. One hopes, with no great confidence, that the lad survived. Today the coin itself is worth 2 centimes.

The Second World War produced its own currencies, like 1 and 10 franc coins in aluminium bearing the title 'Etat Français', minted by the Vichy government but still in circulation long after the war ended. There were two Dutch coins minted under the occupation, titled only 'Nederlands' with a fine *art deco* sailing ship on the obverse; no queen's head for she was in exile in London.

Coins came from exotic corners of the globe, a 20p from the Falkland Islands, diverse dollars from Central Africa and, a sure sign of the liberation of Eastern Europe, forints from Hungary, crowns from Bohemia. Złoties from Poland, both the old currencies destroyed by the communist inflation, when there were no goods to buy so prices appeared not to move, and the new sounder currencies of open markets. Coins do indeed reflect their countries. It will be sad to lose the prettiest, those Irish coins with the harp on the obverse and different animals on the reverse. The dour Swiss francs will be with us for some years yet. The new Euro looks surprisingly like the German mark, even if it is worth twice as much.

Changing the coins has been entertaining. Each country seems to have had different rules; even using the old currency was difficult. The young Frenchman whom I paid for a tank of petrol with French coins did not take kindly to 'toute cette ordure'. Putting my bag through the X-ray machine at Heathrow sent the alarm off the scale and left me with some explaining. At the local banks, however, when I explained that it was all for charity, cashiers were tolerant, as were even those behind me in the queue. So it is good to know that some of M Zero has gone to a specific good cause, rather than to general deflation by getting lost.

Thank you

The campaign to restore Christ Church relies on the support of many people. We would like to thank Ashurst Morris Crisp for printing this issue of *Columns* and for other printed material. We are also grateful for the help with printing from Herbert Smith.

We would like to thank those who come and help both in the office and at special events. We are particularly grateful to Fiona Ligonnet and Christopher Woodward who provide reliable and regular back up in the office throughout the year.

Back up

The Friends Office is run with a small number of staff in order to keep our overhead costs to a minimum. We need volunteers for work in the office, which might include help with the mailings, and also at our special events. Please contact us if you would like to become involved. If you or your business could help with postage facilities this would help enormously with our mailings.

Please contact the Friends office by telephoning: 020 7247 0165.

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. We would like to thank the following for their recent donations, and those who prefer to remain anonymous.

Gifts of between £50 and £100

Dilettanti
Brian Cleave (*in memory of his great-grandparents, Lecore, who were married in Christ Church in the 1870s*)
Christopher Hardy
Mrs L P Heller
Mr & Mrs Lawrance Hurst
Michael Manser*
Harry Mathews*
Nicholas Monck
Mr Mark Revelle
Ms Diana Reynell
Dr C Tadgell
Mr Roderick Thomson
Mrs Donna Vinter

Gifts of £100

Anon
John M Clay
T F Jackson
Mrs Diedre Munro
Mrs Pauline Pinder
R Pryor

Gifts of between £150 and £200

Anon
Martin Bagrosky
Mr & Mrs Andrew Barker
Mr & Mrs W B Harris
R Prescott

Gifts of £250

Ashurst Morris Crisp
G A Collens
Fergus Partnership Consulting Inc
Mrs Jacqueline Linsley

*for the Richard Bridge Organ Appeal

Dates for your diary

The next **Bus Tour of Hawksmoor's London Churches** will be on September 14 2002. The guide will be William Palin, Assistant Curator at Sir John Soane's Museum. To book, use the form enclosed with this issue of *Columns* or contact the Friends' office for details and booking form.

The 2002 **Spitalfields Festival** will take place between June 10 and 28 and welcomes old friends and new for three weeks of music. For information:
Telephone: 020 7377 0287
Festival Hotline: 020 7377 1362
E-mail: info@spitalfieldsfestival.org.uk
Web site: www.spitalfieldsfestival.org.uk

How to support the Friends

To become a Supporter of the Friends of Christ Church Spitalfields please make a donation of a minimum of £20 p.a. (£25 for overseas). Supporters receive the Friends' quarterly newsletter *Columns*. They also receive advance notice of lectures and other special events that the Friends organise.

Your gift will be matched by Lottery funding at a ratio of 1 to 3. £20 donated to the Appeal enables

the Friends to do £80 of restoration work. In addition, if you are a UK taxpayer, we can now claim a further 28p for every pound you give us. Please sign the declaration below.

You can give money in two ways: by cheque (banker's or CAF), or by banker's Order. Banker's Orders allow us to plan with more certainty and help keep down our administrative costs. Please complete the appropriate part of this page.

I enclose my cheque for:

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towards the restoration of:

- Christ Church Spitalfields
 The Richard Bridge Organ
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