

# 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.*

## Going for completion

The Friends has recently had the excellent news that the Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded a further £3.5 million towards paying for the completion of the interior. A generous anonymous donation has already allowed the contract documentation for this work to be prepared, so it should be possible to carry out the work in a single contract. This would have the advantage of allowing the works to be done in the most economical way and with the minimum amount of disruption to the users of the church.

It is a very considerable achievement that we have already managed to restore the exterior of this very large building – the nave is the height of Ex-

eter Cathedral, and its volume is half that of the vast nave of St Paul's Cathedral – in Tower Hamlets, the poorest part of London.

But now we quickly need to find the funds both to match the new grant and for works not covered by the Lottery grant: we need to raise a further £1.75 million. The gearing on our Lottery grant is very attractive and means that for every £1 you give the Friends can draw down £3 of grant. In addition, if you are a UK taxpayer we can claim an additional 28% from the Inland Revenue at no extra cost to the donor. Raising matching funds is always challenging, but with your help we will be able to reach our target and our goal of a restored Christ Church.

### Fitting out the interior

Architect for the restoration, Red Mason of Purcell Miller Tritton, has supplied these notes about the proposed works.

**STONWORK** The stonework will be cleaned and repaired and that behind the new panelling to the pedestals will be finished with three coats of dilute lime wash to stabilise it. The columns and capitals will be cleaned but left unpainted. The entablature of the aisle arcade is partly of stone and partly of plaster, and this will be painted.

**WALLS & CEILINGS** The existing plaster will be repaired and it and areas of new plaster will then be painted with oil bound distemper in a range of off-whites and light greys.

**WOODWORK** New joinery, including the gallery fronts, wainscotting to column pedestals and walls will be of *Quercus Roba*, 'English Oak', finished with linseed oil. All the joinery will be fabricated using traditional jointing techniques such as pegs to mortice and tenon connections, and iron nails and spikes.

**FLOOR** In the body of the church, a new floor of three types of Purbeck stone will be laid in shades

ranging from the colour of Portland stone to light grey. The sanctuary will have a Portland Whitbed floor with some Belgian black marble matching the existing steps.

**SERVICES** A new under-floor hot water heating system will be installed in the nave, aisles and sanctuary. Ducts will be incorporated for wiring, an induction hearing loop and with some provision for future services. Under-floor heating has been chosen as the only practical way of heating such a large volume and its thick walls, and it avoids having to thread pipes & ducts through architectural features. There will be new electrical services in all the main areas of the church, including the provision of appropriate light fittings.

**OTHER WORK** The two staircases at the east end of the church will be replaced and both taken down to the level of the crypt. This will provide a new means of escape from the galleries allowing them to be occupied by congregations or audiences. The memorials and monuments, the two most important of which are those to Edward Peck and Sir Robert Ladbroke will be cleaned and repaired: this is specialised, expensive work.

## Ways of giving

Payroll Giving is a unique and tax effective method for employees to support the Friends. It is simple and it gives us even more than a straight donation.

**HOW IT WORKS** If you are employee, your donation is deducted from gross pay *before* PAYE tax is calculated so you get tax relief at your highest rate of tax. Thus you would effectively increase the value of your contribution to us. In addition, the Government is adding 10% to all donations until April 2003.

So if you were to pledge £10 per month to the Friends, the cost to you through Payroll Giving at the basic rate of tax would be £7.80 but the Friends would receive £11; if you pay tax at the higher rate, it would cost you only £6 to give us the same £11 per month.

For the Friends, there is also the advantage that we do not have to reclaim the tax, as we receive the gross amount of the donation and this cuts down on our administration. We hope that many of our supporters will consider taking advantage of this scheme.

**HOW TO GIVE** If your employer already offers Payroll Giving, you authorise your employer to deduct regular charitable donations from your pay. Your employer then pays these donations to a Payroll Giving agency, approved by the Inland Revenue, which then distributes the money to the charity of your choice. For more information please contact the Friends' office or visit the Inland revenue website at:  
[www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk/payrollgiving](http://www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk/payrollgiving).

**SHARE DONATIONS** are another way in which you can support the Friends by giving shares. It is now possible to donate shares to a charity free of Capital Gains Tax as well as being able to offset the value of your donation against your taxable income.

In addition, many people find that they have small numbers of shares where the cost of disposing of them would often be greater than their value. We can put you in touch with Sharegift, an organisation that specialises in this.

## 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.

## 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

The Hon. Nicholas Assheton  
Mr & Mrs John Critchley  
Mr J E Dallas  
Mrs Mary Dufty  
Ian Fair  
Mr S M Gordon-Clark  
Mr J T Harwood  
Miss H F Hughes  
Mrs R Kingdon-Saxby  
Ms Valerie Browne Lester  
Mrs J M Roberts  
Mr Victor Rowland  
Sir Alastair & Lady Stewart  
Mr Philip Venning\*

*in memory of his great, great, great grandparents Thomas Mann and Ann Duncombe who were married at Christ Church on 7 July 1787 (and presumably heard the organ playing)*

Miss Iona Warwick  
Ms Caroline Welch  
Ms Jennifer White  
Rev Anthony Winter

### Gifts of between £100 and £200

Miss C J Apperley  
Artemis Trust  
Mr W T J Griffin  
Mr Christopher Hardy  
Mr R A Jeffery\*  
Mr Ian Lockhart\*  
McCorquodale Charitable Trust  
Mr Edward Salmon  
Mr Andrew Soundy  
Mr J Hickman  
Sainer Charity  
Sir Walker Carter Charitable Trust

### Gifts of between £200 and £300

Mr John C Peck  
Mr Lawrence Banks  
Mr C J Cazalet  
Mr G A Collens  
Modiano Charitable Trust

### Gift of £500

Cazenove & Co

\* for the Richard Bridge Organ Appeal

## Personal Column

*Valerie Browne Lester*

In the course of working on a biography of my great-great grandfather, Hablot Knight Browne (better known as 'Phiz', the principal illustrator of the works of Charles Dickens), I learned that he was of Huguenot descent and that his great-great grandparents were buried at Christ Church, Spitalfields. Their burial entries read as follows:

Burial. 1747. Oct. 30th. Eleanor Brown,  
Brick LaneW[oman]

Burial. 1747/8. Jan. 8th. Michael Brown,  
Brick LaneM[an]

These dates make them among the earliest parishioners to be buried at the then newly completed Christ Church, and they probably closely witnessed the construction of Hawksmoor's masterpiece from their home in Brick Lane.

Michael Brown was said to have been a maker of the wires used in the weaving of velvet, but until recently, precious little was known about his and Eleanor's Huguenot ancestry. It was believed that they had changed their names, probably at the time of their marriage, from a French name to the quintessentially English one, Brown. Family legend was divided into two camps about whether the original name was Le Brun or Brunet. Self-appointed family historians, Charles Gordon Browne and Algernon Sidney Bicknell, insisted that 'Le Brun' was correct; it seems they were determined to make a connection between Phiz's artistic talent and that of Charles Le Brun, the famous painter at the court of Louis XIV or, another famous painter, Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun. The Brunet faction pooh-poohed this idea, retorting that Charles Le Brun could certainly not have been Huguenot and still remain at Louis's court, and that Madame Le Brun was Vigée by blood and therefore outside the hereditary line.

I was determined to get to the root of the matter, and made several visits to the Huguenot Library, where I found myself following the trail of previous researchers, a trail that petered out with the burial at Christ Church of Michael and Eleanor Brown. No dates for Brown, Browne, Le Brun or Brunet's dates matched any of the records I consulted. I then decided to approach the issue sideways. I knew that Michael and Eleanor had cousins called Descharmes, and I guessed that Michael might have married a Descharmes. Bingo! Here is the entry from the Church of St Jean, Spitalfields, that I found with

the help of Stephen Massil of the Huguenot Library:

Marriage 25 Dec 1722: BRUNEAU, Michel, fils de Michel Bruneau et de Catherine Arret – Hélène Elisabeth DESCHARMES, fille de Jean des Charmes et d'Elisabeth Montrot; mar. par Mr Armand de la Chapelle, Min Sig. Hélène Elisabet Descharmes.

Therefore, Michel = Michael, Hélène = Eleanor and Bruneau = Brown. This entry, when combined with Michael and Eleanor's names and ages inscribed on a gold ring (it was on the ring that Browne first appeared with its 'e'), and my subsequent discoveries of Michel and Hélène's baptismal records finally solved the mystery of Huguenot surname of Phiz's ancestors. (His Christian name, Hablot, has no Huguenot connection, but that is another story.)

I visited Spitalfields for the first time in November 2001, wanting to see the church that had clearly played an important part in the early history of Phiz's family. I had no idea what the church might look like; I had never even seen a picture of it, so I gasped with pleasure and surprise at my first glimpse of the building with its 'almost overwhelming anthropomorphic presence', to use Richard MacCormac's phrase. And again as I climbed the steps towards the west door, I had no idea what I would discover in the interior. What I found pleased me immeasurably: a clearly deeply-loved church with beautiful proportions, in a buzzing state of restoration. It occurred to me what I was trying to do for Phiz, that is to pull him out from under the heavy penumbra of Dickens and Dickens scholarship to reveal him for the individual he was, had a parallel in the restoration at Christ Church where layers of Victorian obfuscation had distorted the beautiful lines of the building itself and were now being removed.

I am deeply grateful to Hosten Garroway who showed me around the Church and explained the details of the restoration, and to Eric Elstob who kindly let me see his house so that I could envisage what sort of building Michael and Eleanor Brown might have inhabited. I have learned so much already, but no biographer is ever truly satisfied and I am still trying to find out when the Bruneau and Descharmes families arrived in Spitalfields from France and where in France they came from. I would be most grateful to anyone who might be able to provide me with such information.

*Valerie Brown Lester lives at 2659 Carrollton Road, Annapolis, Maryland, USA; e-mail Hablot@aol.com*

## 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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