

Columns

Number 7 Autumn 1997

The Friends of Christ Church Spitalfields
Registered Charity 276056

Columns is the supporters' bulletin 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.

Use the coupon sent with this issue to make a donation, or telephone the Friends' office on 0171-247 0165.

Progress in stonework repairs

The First Phase of stonework repairs-to the tower and spire of Christ Church-is well under way and the scaffolding has now come down from the spire which again dominates the local skyline. Stonemasons Cathedral Works Organisation are now carrying out structural repairs to the tower, many of them now invisible. As well as extensive repairs to the Portland stone surfaces the structural repairs include the threading of stainless steel tie rods through the masonry at the base of the spire to stabilise its structure. Inside the West end of the church which supports the tower two huge arches between the tower staircases and the church have been rebuilt. The masonry was held in place by giant steel props during this work. Long, and in some cases deep, cracks in the brick structure of the West end of the church have been filled with gallons of lime mortar under pressure and new brickwork has been painstakingly pieced into the cracks. The movement which caused these cracks is believed to be old and the structures to have stabilised; but because of the weight of the 220 feet tower of the church the cracks needed to be filled to ensure the weight is spread as evenly as possible avoiding points of high stress. The golden ball at the centre of the weather vane, the crowning glory of the spire, measures over 6ft in diameter and is made of copper. This was found to have

holes in it and was filling with rainwater. So it was removed, repaired and regilded and replaced, an unexpected extra cost of £4,000 which is only partly covered by grants negotiated by the Friends.

Where damage to the spire is particularly bad new blocks of Portland limestone are being cut in. All the main cornices are having their upper surfaces dressed with lead so that rainwater is thrown off the masonry and does not find its way into joints. Fire breaks are being inserted into the tower and bell-ringing chamber so that in the event of fire its spread is contained: the tower has suffered twice in its history from fire damage, once very severely, following a strike by lightning.

A less happy discovery was that the nave parapets of the church were built of rubble and faced with thin Portland stone slabs-not the solid limestone as previously believed. The Trustees therefore took the expensive decision, with advice from our architects and Quantity Surveyors that they should be rebuilt. The additional cost will be in the region of £170,000. A substantial part of this cost will be met from grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage, but matching funding will need to be found from Supporters gifts.

Honours

Michael Gillingham, a founder member and Trustee of the Friends, has been awarded a CBE for services to church conservation in the Birthday honours list. Michael is also Chairman of the Advisory Board for Redundant Churches and Vice-Chairman of the London Diocesan Advisory Board. Francis Carnwath, Chairman of the Spitalfields Historic Building Trust, also received a CBE. These honours follow the CBE recently awarded to compose Judith Weir, Artistic Director of the Spitalfields Festival. The Friends warmly congratulate them all.

Help fight junk mail

If you are receiving *Columns* and do not wish to do so please let us know. Equally, if you are moving please let us have your new address so we can update our records.



Chairman of the Friends Eric Elstob (right) chats with Lord Rothschild, Chairman of the Heritage Lottery Fund, at a reception to celebrate the Friends 21st anniversary. The celebration was attended by fifty of the Friends' most generous Supporters, founder members and Trustees. The Heritage

Lottery Fund is the largest single donor to the restoration of Christ Church. Speaking on a visit to Christ Church last year, Lord Rothschild said the £2,411,500 Heritage Lottery Fund grant to Christ Church was the largest the Fund had made to a parish church, and would probably prove to be the largest

Forthcoming Events

Wednesday 17th September *All Souls College Oxford and Blenheim Palace*, with the emphasis on Hawksmoor's extensive work at both and with privileged access at All Souls. £45 including return coach from London, lunch in Oxford, notes guide and admissions (£40 for those who have given £15 or more to the Friends appeal in the last twelve months). Phone 0171-247 0165 to check availability.

Saturday 20th and Sunday 21st September *Open House* in greater London again sees hundreds of buildings which are not normally open to the public or are normally closed at weekends open to visitors. Christ Church will be open 10-5 on Saturday, but only 1-5 on Sunday. Open House is going from strength to strength and we expect well over 1,000 visitors at Christ Church over the weekend.

Monday 6th October The Friends' day visit to *Easton Neston and Drayton House* is full.

Wednesday 12th November 6.30pm *Hawksmoor's Oxford*. Illustrated lecture in Christ Church by Roger White, curator of the exhibition at the Heinz Gallery, see below, concentrating on the extraordinarily grand schemes by Hawksmoor for the redevelopment of the centre of Oxford as baroque acropolis. Roger White is well known for his erudite but accessible style. Tickets £6 from the Friends office.

Thursday 13th November 6-8pm A Friends' evening Private View with refreshments at the Heinz Gallery, exhibition *Nicholas Hawksmoor and the Reconstruction of Oxford* at which Hawksmoor's drawings for his Oxford scheme will be gathered together for the first time in a public exhibition. The lecture-see above-is an ideal prelude to this event. Numbers are limited so please send £10 per person to book a place.

17th to 23rd December *Concerts by Candlelight*, organised by the Spitalfields Festival in Christ Church. Phone Festival hotline on 0171-377 1362

Who's Who

The Friends of Christ Church Spitalfields is managed by a board of Trustees who are responsible for achieving the charity's objects. The Trustees are:

Eric Elstob (Chairman) is a founding Trustee, Eric has lived in Spitalfields for 25 years and is an investment manager in the City

Lawrence Banks Deputy Chairman of Robert Fleming and Co., and Trustee of the Hereford Mappa Mundi Trust and of the Chelsea Physic Garden

Revd Paul Bowtell, who has been Rector of Christ Church Spitalfields since 1991

Alastair Brown (Treasurer) is an accountant and Managing Director of a specialist courier company

David Cade recently retired as a Partner of Arthur Andersen Accountants; and is Chairman of the Spitalfields Festival

Bob Chitham, a founding Trustee, is a Partner of Chapman Taylor Partnership and was formerly Chief Architect to English Heritage

Peter Davies, a surveyor in private practice, is the Friends point of contact with the professional building consultants

Michael Gillingham is principal of an international antiques dealership, Organ Advisor to the Diocese of London and the lead Trustee for the restoration of the Richard Bridge organ at Christ Church.

Derek Stride is a teacher working in Tower Hamlets and a member of the Parochial Church Council of Christ Church.

Christine Whaite is a capital risk analyst specialising in eco-efficiency

The Friends operations are run by three staff, all part-time:

Roland Jeffery, Campaign Director, who coordinates the Friends' work

Alex Heslop, who recently joined as Campaign Assistant

James Tait, who is the Book-keeper and Donorbase Manager

The work relies on a team of volunteers who help in many ways. At present our volunteers are: Ceri George, Fiona Ligonet, David Rush, Diane Sellars & Christopher Woodward. If you would

like to volunteer occasionally or regularly in the Friends office please contact us.

The professional team of building consultants are:

Architects: Whitfield Partners

Quantity Surveyors: Cook & Butler Partnership

Structural Engineers: Hockley and Dawson

Mechanical & Electrical Engineers: Hilson Moran Partnership

Planning (CDM) Supervisors: Chapman Taylor Project Services Ltd.

Support from America

The Friends of Christ Church Spitalfields is now registered with CAF America to help our US Supporters make tax efficient donations to us. With the benefit of donations via a body registered with the IRS, Supporters in the USA can offset donations against their tax liability. If you would like further details about tax efficient donations by US residents please contact us.

Our Supporters

Columns is the Supporters' bulletin of The Friends of Christ Church Spitalfields. We ask our Supporters to give us £15 a year, more if they can manage it, but to save costs we do not send reminders. We rely on all our Supporters to match grants from English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund. We hope you enjoy reading about the restoration of Christ Church in *Columns* and will want to continue to receive it. We hope too that you will want to continue to support the restoration of Hawksmoor's great church.

Thanks to:

Natwest Market for reproducing this issue of *Columns*

Eric Elstob for generously hosting the Friends 21st anniversary reception

Spitalfields artist Hugh de Wet for permission to reproduce his painting as the Friends 1997 Christmas card

Shearman & Sterling, IMRO, Herbert Smith, Natwest Markets and Foreign & Colonial for photocopying our literature.

Personal Column

Colin Amery

The author was one of the founders of the Spitalfields Trust. In between 'writing and sitting on committees' he works for the World Monuments Fund in Britain.

It was like a glimpse of ancient Rome. I will never forget the very first time that I was able to see inside Christ Church. The stone glory of the exterior was familiar but the church was always, tantalisingly, locked. The combined efforts of my friends Mariga Guinness (a pioneer resident of Elder Street) and Dan Cruickshank opened the vast doors and we walked into a columned paradise. Well, architecturally it was heaven; but the reality was a huge mountain of old mattresses, dirt, dust and the quiet cooing of pigeons that we had reluctantly disturbed.

This was the 1960s when the congregation worshipped in the church hall in Hanbury Street. The roof of Christ Church had been repaired and the centre for alcoholics was in the crypt but it didn't look then as though Hawksmoor's masterpiece would ever be restored.

I was especially struck by the power of the great columns which soared the full height of the church with no sign of the galleries. We climbed up near the organ and came face to face with the encrusted plasterwork. This wasn't picturesque decay, this was brutal vigorous genius.

It was proposed - by Mariga of course - that we should attempt to go up the tower and spire. There was no light on the stone spiral staircase, and from time to time your foot crushed the bones of a dead bird. There were spy holes in the stonework - pinpoints of light that lead us on. Bells, louvres, a sense of confusion and a lot of darkness, but we made it and I like to imagine we saw the whole of the City spread out below with the silver ribbon of the Thames glinting in the dying sunlight and St. Paul's dome holding the skyline together. That day it was grey and cold and gloomy. Christ Church's stone needle surveyed the random fires of burning rubbish in Spitalfields market round which the dark figures of ragged tramps hugged themselves to sleep. Majesty and misery met. There was nor even a promise then that the angels and Friends of Christ Church would come to the rescue.

But they did, and Hawksmoor smiled.

Christmas Cards

The Friends Christmas cards are now available from the office in packs of 10 with envelopes at £3.99 per pack. The cards this year feature a view of Christ Church from the painting by Hugh de Wet, by kind permission of the artist. It is a mysterious and powerful image, showing the church against a deep red sky just after sunset, illuminated by floodlighting. There is a 15% discount for orders of 10 or more packs, if ordered at the same time. Stocks are limited and our cards normally sell out, so order early for Christmas.

What will you leave?

Leaving a legacy to the Friends, a registered charity, is a way of supporting the The Friends which will not cost you a penny during your lifetime. Bequests may be left to the Friends Fund for restoration works or to the Upkeep Fund from which only income is spent. Bequests to the Upkeep Fund therefore continue to give indefinite benefit, year after year, to assist the in maintaining Hawksmoor's great church. If you would like to discuss remembering the Friends in your will please contact us in complete confidence. As a registered charity, bequests may help reduce duty payable on an estate; but please note we are not permitted by law give tax planning advice.

Annual accounts

The annual accounts of the Friends and their sister charity Christ Church Spitalfields Restoration Trust for the year ending 31st January 1997 have been audited and are available free of charge from the Friends office. An A4 sized stamped addressed envelope would be appreciated.

*Published by the Friends of Christ Church Spitalfields
A Registered Charity
The Old Vestry Room, Christ Church, Commerical Street,
London E1 6LY
Telephone 0171-247 0165*