



## SPRING 2025 NEWSLETTER



**St Nicholas, Hintlesham**



# Suffolk Historic Churches Trust

Registered Charity No. 267047

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**As always, this Newsletter is also available on the Trust website  
under the “Latest Newsletters” tab**

## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

2024 was a year of returning to normal after the Queen's Jubilee with our popular Jubilee Grants scheme in 2022 and then all the razzmatazz of our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2023, which paid off in an exceptional level of generosity from our supporters. This support has allowed the Trustees to implement a materially higher level of grant giving in 2024/5, which I fear is all too needed with higher building costs and the Forth Road bridge nature of caring for over 500 mediaeval churches across Suffolk.

Two of our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary initiatives carried on into 2024. The first was the collection and publication on our website of Guides to Suffolk Churches. Our wonderful project volunteer Lynda Aldred has now uploaded over 800 guides for 455 churches and is hunting down the last 30 or so churches where we know Guides exist. I am pleased that use of the site is growing and that when you google any Suffolk church you are likely to find the link to our site appearing. If your church has published a new guide or detailed account of some aspect of the church architecture do get in touch and we will update your church record.

The second initiative was the distribution to the churches we have grant aided over the last 50 years of a celebratory plaque, customised to record the date and nature of our grant, or in most cases grants plural grants. I am pleased to say that we have photographs of our little blue plaque up in the porches of 470 churches and the photos are still coming in.

This time of year, we are at work plotting events for our annual Ride and Stride – this year to be held on Saturday September 13<sup>th</sup> - and for the accompanying Pedal & Drive vintage & classic car rally now in its seventh year. As ever we are grateful for all the help & support our Friends give us at our annual fundraiser.

All in all, I am pleased to report that your Trust remains active in supporting the upkeep of the churches and chapels of Suffolk, and the wonderful Church Wardens and Elders who look after them.

**Geoffrey Probert**

## **RIDE AND STRIDE – 13<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2025**

The 2024 Bike Ride Day proved another great success. Together with the Pedal and Drive close to £200,000 was raised on the day. It was a perfect day, a bit of a breeze, and not too hot! A good number of cyclists turned out, and the day was enjoyed by many participants. Colneys provided amusement with a group, including myself, of clowns on bikes around the Felixstowe round of churches! It raised a few eyebrows and certainly the profile on the day. Refreshments in churches were hugely appreciated.

We were extremely fortunate and grateful to have had Nick Robinson, the BBC journalist, as our celebrity for 2024. Our Ride and Stride was launched at the beautiful St. Bartholomew, Orford, together with a vintage car and bicycles.

The publicity campaign was a great success with some high-profile exposure to the local press and media. There were photo shoots, BBC Suffolk interviews on a Sunday morning, and plenty of profile on social media.

We have new Area Organisers in Hadleigh, Halesworth, and Ipswich.

We are keen to encourage participation, both in manning the church and fundraising for the bike ride. A number of Certificates of Thanks for both long service and fundraising efforts of £1,000 or more were presented over the year. In particular, there were presentations made at the Unitarian Meeting House in Ipswich and St. Clare, Framlingham.

2025 presents another challenge and we much look forward to your support again. Thank you for helping make 2024 such a success. Details of the 2025 launch will be announced soon.

**Simon Ronan, Chairman Ride and Stride**

## GRANTS COMMITTEE NEWS

The Committee considered a record seventeen applications at its meeting in October 2024 when grants totalling a record **£66,025** were awarded to the following:

St Mary of Grace, Aspall  
St Luke, Beccles  
St Mary, Brent Eleigh  
St John, Elmswell  
River of Life Church, Felixstowe  
St Lawrence, Great Waldingfield  
St Mary, Hawkedon  
All Saints, Hundon  
St John, Lound  
All Saints, Rede  
St Mary, Stoke-by-Nayland  
St Mary, Stratford St Mary  
St Mary, Walton  
St Peter, Westleton  
St Mary, Woodbridge  
St Mary, Worlingworth  
St Mary, Yaxley

In January 2025 grants totalling **£59,000** were made to the following eleven places of worship:

St Peter, Blaxhall  
St Mary, Coddenham  
Trinity Methodist Church, Felixstowe  
St Andrew, Great Cornard  
St Andrew, Great Finborough  
St Mary, Hadleigh  
St Helen, Ipswich  
Quaker Meeting House, Leiston  
St Nicholas, Little Saxham  
St Mary, Polstead  
St Leonard, Wixoe

In the year April 2024-March 2025 Suffolk Historic Churches Trust made forty-nine grants totalling £211,500.

**John Devaux DL, Grants Committee Chairman**

## PUBLICITY REPORT

More outstanding service certificates for church volunteers who have helped Suffolk Churches Ride and Stride event (originally known as a sponsored Bike Ride) have been awarded by Suffolk Historic Churches Trust.

The twenty volunteer Area Organisers across the county were asked to contact church organisers for their suggestions for worthy recipients. The latest certificate was presented by Simon Ronan, Suffolk Churches Ride and Stride Chairman to David and Vivienne Taylor at morning mass at St Clare's RC Church, Framlingham, for 37 years of supporting Ride and Stride, raising thousands of pounds for the Trust and their church.

"The Suffolk Historic Churches sponsored Ride and Stride has been an annual event for over 40 years," said Simon Ronan. "It is the sole fundraising event for the Trust and this year raised £193,794.02. The donations from this popular county event fund grants to churches of all faiths for repairs and maintenance. The Trust relies on volunteers to help with the fundraise and man the churches during the hours of the ride. As chairman of Suffolk Churches Ride and Stride, it gives me great pleasure to award certificates of long service for their dedication and kindness. It is a small token of our gratitude, but also an expression of the importance they are to our charity. Our churches are houses of prayer, but they also have a historic significance in our villages and towns and are an important part of our fabric."

The hundreds of supporters walking or cycling around their chosen route from over 500 churches that are open on the day, donate half their sponsorship to their chosen church, chapel or meeting house and the other half to the Trust to be given in grants to help preserve church buildings. Anyone is welcome to take part, not just church-goers. The next Suffolk Churches Ride and Stride is on Saturday 13th September 2025.



**Rachel Sloane**

## WINTER STUDY DAY – SATURDAY 22<sup>ND</sup> FEBRUARY 2025

The Winter Study Day held on Saturday 22nd February at Haughley Park was attended by Friends and Supporters of the SHCT, all lovers of churches and the history behind them. All present were welcomed by the Chairman of the Trust, Geoffrey Probert, who reminded us that the sole work of the Trust is to give grants to help communities with the upkeep of their churches, and that one day's fundraising in September (Ride and Stride/Pedal and Drive) raises around £200,000. That event started as a sponsored bike ride in Suffolk and has been copied across the country.

At the sell-out Study Day, those attending enjoyed a full programme of four fascinating speakers and a delicious hot two course lunch.

**Speaker: Dr Richard Hoggett “Changing Beliefs: The Archaeology of the East Anglian Conversion”.**



Richard's talk was based upon his PHD study and explained how archaeologists look for patterns from the artefacts discovered, often by metal detectorists, that can shed a light on the 'dark ages'.

He led us through stories of pagan kings who were converted to Christianity, of Raedwald and Sutton Hoo, Edwin of Northumbria, and Sigeberht who succeeded him as King of the Eastern Angles in 630AD, turning his whole East Anglian Kingdom, Christian. Missionaries came from Northern Britain and Ireland, including Bishop Felix who was given space within the Roman fort walls at Walton Castle as the centre for Christianity. The use of such buildings was a pattern repeated at Caister, Burgh and Dover and elsewhere.

Richard explained that the original churches may have been built of wood but were still important buildings, and rotten timbers can be found during excavations

of later stone churches that were built upon the same foundations. Bed-burial sites have also been found that reveal the importance of wealthy women in early Christianity, who were buried with jewellery such as pendants or chokers, with designs based upon a cross.

**Speaker: Peter Bloore “Medieval Chantry Colleges”**



Peter began by stating he believed that the Dissolution of the Monasteries' is over-stated, and that the dissolution of Chantry Colleges had a bigger impact, because of the loss of all the charity work they undertook.

Chantryies were built to commemorate the dead and were paid for, with a perpetual endowment, from wealthy benefactors who wished for prayers for their souls to be released from Purgatory so they could go into heaven. Although a community of priests lived there, they differed from monasteries as they didn't have to give up their wealth, and were popular as any donated money stayed local rather than going to Rome, the buildings could be 'branded' with the donor's heraldry, statues etc.

As well as the prayers, charity work such as running schools, alms-houses, hospitals etc. were part of their remit.

Usually built with a church, a gatehouse, quadrangle, cloisters, kitchens etc they were overseen by a dean, master or warden. Examples are Eton College, Oxford, Cambridge and Winchester and locally were Wingfield College and one at Mettingham.

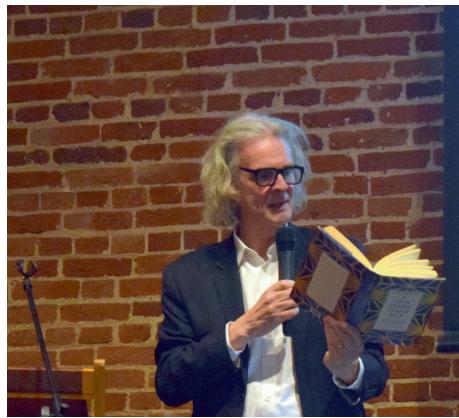
There were 78 surviving collages in the early Tudor period. Chapel Guilds and wealthy families also built Chantry Chapels within churches such as those at Lavenham, Long Melford (now the Lady Chapel) and Dennington.

‘The Little Dissolution’ as it has been called, is when King Henry 8<sup>th</sup>, when ridding the country of Catholicism, enacted the 1545 Abolition of Chantries Act and 90 colleges, 110 hospitals, 2,374 Chantry Guilds, the Chantry Chapels, Chapels of Ease, and alms-houses were sold or given to the King’s wealthy friends. Chantry churches became parish churches, private houses or were demolished.

The well-established charity work that was done by the Chantries ended, leaving the poor in desperate circumstances. It was in Elizabethan times that Charitable Foundations were created to replace that vital work... Framlingham’s Alms-houses are a good example.

Peter ended his talk by saying that Henry the 8th was responsible for “the greatest theft against the charity sector in England” and “stole from the church to give to his rich friends and stole from the poor to give to the rich”.

**Speaker: Peter Stanford “A journey around 20 extraordinary Christian sites in the British Isles”**



Journalist for the Daily Telegraph, Peter Stanford, is a proud ‘church-crawler’ and was commissioned to write a book about his travels and the churches he loves. He decided to choose twenty – one for each decade.

He thinks churches give us a sense of ‘otherness’, we can enjoy their beauty and they tell us about our history. He chose nine of his twenty churches to tell us about at the Winter Study Day. They included St Mary’s at Houghton on the Hill,

(a remote derelict church rescued by one man and revealed, during restoration to have amazing wall paintings), and All Saints, Brixworth in Northants with its huge Anglo-Saxon arches, (and possibly the location of the first meeting of Christian church representatives).

Another church he featured was the 18<sup>th</sup> century Heptonstall Methodist Church, which was once the oldest in the world in continuous operation, ran by two elderly ladies, but now sadly closed. The 19<sup>th</sup> century St Elizabeths, Reddish, was inspired by St Mark's in Venice and was built with grey marble brought from Italy by sea and river, before a procession led by elephants brought the marble to the site! It is now closed, looked after by one man.

Peter ended by asking why don't we value our history more... and saying that someone has to pay for it, or it will be lost forever.

**Speaker: Capt Richard Channon RN (rtd) "A history of St Mary's Stoke by Nayland and its recent major restoration."**



With images to show us the glory of St Mary's, Richard said that it is a grand church in architecture, size, its site on a hill and in its connections. It was a Christian church in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, was mentioned in the Doomsday Book, and was painted by John Constable.

He told us of its 13<sup>th</sup> century piscina, the tower built in 1439-1462 (with the first tower staircase in the buttress), the font dated to 1461, the 15<sup>th</sup> century carved oak door, and the eight medieval bells that were rehung on a steel frame in 1965.

After talking us through the wonderful tombs and monuments in the church, Richard brought us back to earth by telling the story of how they faced disaster in 2020 when a head stone fell from the top of an arch and the true state of the building was revealed, mainly because of poor repairs done in the past.

A bulging wall needed repairing and the roof re-slated all at a cost of £84,000, but gradually, as each lot of work was done, more problems were revealed, including the discovery that oak that had previously been replaced with soft wood.

Restoration work finished in August 2024 and had cost £591,585.

Along the way Historic England had put St Mary's onto the At Risk Register and a total of 23 charities (including SHCT), corporate donors and fundraising had raised the half million pounds they needed.

Then .... a final inspection revealed that the tower and nave roof needed work costing another £2 million! Now the fundraising begins again.

A sobering end to the day.

**Rachel Sloane**  
**Hon Publicity Officer**

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### **SPRING FIELD DAY** **10<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2025**

#### **Visits to Crowfield, Coddenham and Hemingstone churches**

Starting at All Saints, Crowfield at 10.30am followed by 11.30 at St Mary's Coddenham, William Dowsing's parish church and finishing at St Gregory's Hemingstone. Bring your own picnic lunch. No charge for the day but please bring cash and/or credit cards to make donations to the host churches! Booking via SHCT so the churchwardens and guides know how many to expect please.

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## JAMIE NORMAN'S GRANDFATHER

Not so much about a church as a churchman my great grandfather, Rev Henry Egan Desmond, 1823-1903. From Oxford to a junior chaplaincy in Newcastle during the cholera and typhoid epidemics of the late 1840's and thereafter, St George's Hanover Square, St John's Palmeira Square, Hove, a Naval chaplaincy at Southea and finally the Anglican church at Menton on the Franco - Italian Riviera. But remembered above all was his chaplaincy to the Brigade of Guards during the Crimean War when from the Sebastopol Heights with Lord Raglan and General Pelissier, commander of the French armies, he witnessed the battle of Balaclava. For his services he received from Queen Victoria the mezzotint below of Winterhalter's "The First of May 1851".



**Jamie Norman**  
**Trustee/Education Officer**

## HANDSOME HINTLESHAM HATCHMENTS!

What is a 'hatchment'? Is it: a) the birth of a chick; b) access to the attic; or c) a diamond-shaped heraldic memorial to a deceased person? Bravo - you got it right! 🙌

If you are passing through Hintlesham do pop in and see our two hatchments recently returned to Hintlesham church and looking very fine following an 8-month holiday in Cambridge being painstakingly conserved and restored (by expert, Polly Saltmarsh) from their former sad and sorry state. All this was made possible by generous grants from Suffolk Historic Churches Trust and the Church Buildings Council, together with fantastic support from the Friends of Hintlesham & Chattisham Churches: THANK YOU!

But whom do our hatchments memorialise? Well, one is to Frances Burrell, née Daniell, born in India to James, the 1st Baron Gwydyr, and Lucy, née Butler (ooh, from Butler to Baroness - pretty nifty! 😊) and died at Stoke Park in Ipswich in 1846; member of the extended Cobbold Family but not much else is known (by me!)...but the other hatchment: well now, that is to Capt. Heneage Lloyd who died unmarried aged 33 in 1776. His Papa was Sir Richard Lloyd, who bought Hintlesham Hall in 1747, and here is the thing: Heneage can be seen, as a young lad, alongside his elder sister, Lucy, in a painting by none other than the 'Sudbury Superstar', Thomas Gainsborough, on display at the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge. So there you have it: our hatchment is essentially an original Gainsborough....sort of....well, as good as...ok, but pretty close tho'...😊...😊. Come and take a look anyway and see if you can spot the heraldic tigers (clue: what, no stripes?!)

**Roger Luxmoore-Styles**  
Churchwarden



## **JIM SWINLEY**



James Gordon Balfour Swinley was born on December 1<sup>st</sup> 1929, the eldest child of the then Lieutenant-Commander Casper Swinley and his wife Jocosa, nee Carnegie. There followed another boy, Bill and twin sisters, Peggy and Patty. Jocosa came from a clerical family, three of her uncles were parsons, and she was one of the five daughters of William Hartley Carnegie, Canon of St Margaret's Westminster and Rector of St Margaret's from 1913 to his death in 1936. He was an influential figure in the life of Jim, his siblings and his many first cousins.

Jim went to Preparatory School at Pinewood near Swindon, where he became Head Boy. He was due to go to nearby Marlborough College, but it was 1942 and one of the darkest years of WW2 so, he decided that he wanted to follow his father into the Royal Navy and to apply to Dartmouth Naval College. Of the 400 applicants that year Jim was one of 45 who got a place and what is more with a scholarship. The war was over before Jim saw any active service. He spent the next decade in the Royal Navy, serving on motor torpedo boats, on ships and at Greenwich.

Jim met Sarah and they married when he had a few days leave three days after Christmas in 1957. Jim had planned to leave the Navy then but was tempted by a posting to HMS Ganges, the training college at Shotley. He loved the job and was good at it. He had all the right qualities; he could enthuse and quietly lead the cadets

through his own enthusiasm. He also had retained his optimistic youthful boyishness and knew just what boys needed in the way of adventure and individual interests. At his Thanksgiving Service we sang the last verse of 'Eternal Father, strong to save.' Which Jim told the cadets at Shotley to shout as it meant that the Sunday church service had ended and they could escape!

After Shotley Jim remained in the Navy which was a peripatetic life for Sarah and the 3 young children. He finally left the Navy in 1968 and the family settled in Sussex. He first worked in Human Resources for Rothschilds Bank but when they tried to convince him to transfer to the banking side it was agreed 'by mutual consent' that he should leave. He became Director of the Thomas Coram Foundation, a children's charity and art gallery in Bloomsbury. He enjoyed working with social workers, artists and educationalists in a left-leaning London Borough, but after seven years he felt that he had done all he could, and nearing 50 he was also tired of commuting, the time had come to move on.

He applied for the job of bursar at St Felix School and out of 200 applicants, to Sarah's delight, got the job. They brought Reydon Grove House where they lived happily for the next 35 years. It was a proper family home at last for them and their three children. A base from which they planned adventurous journeys with the children initially and later together.

Jim retired from St Felix at 60 and entered on the period in which he was happiest, that of devoting himself to causes and things he cared deeply about. As well as being secretary to the Suffolk Historic Churches Trust he was at various times, a trustee of St Barnabas, a charitable palliative care home in Southwold, treasurer of the Historical Society, committee member and some-time treasurer to the Fox Trust, chairman, and a driver for the Voluntary Help Centre, and chairman of Lowestoft Relate, where Sarah was a counsellor.

Jim became Secretary to the Suffolk Historic Churches Trust in 1990 and not only worked from home in Reydon but also housed the Trust's not insubstantial archive. Writing in the 1990 – 1991 Annual Report he recorded £200,000 allocated for grants (a fifty per cent increase on the previous year) as well as receipt of grants from Suffolk Coastal, Waveney, Mid Suffolk and Forest Heath District Councils. It is remarkable to read that in the year 1993 – 1994 District Councils increased their grants to the Trust although the County Council reduced what it felt able to award. A Gardens Open Scheme came into being during his time with the Trust, and of course the Bike Ride blossomed. In 1992 it raised £126,277 and Jim was able to record that since the inception of the Trust in 1974 grants totalling £1,522,550 had been awarded to Churches and Chapels in Suffolk. Jim was a great practical supporter of the Bike Ride and he continued to ride even with two new hips! Jim had suggested that as both hips needed replacing he would prefer that to be done

in one operation, a suggestion to which his orthopaedic surgeon agreed. The operation took place early in the year and when the application forms for the Bike Ride arrived he informed Sarah that he would partake as usual. Sarah however pulled the rug from underneath that plan by contacting everyone who had sponsored him previously and other family and friends asking them how much they would sponsor her to stop him. That ploy worked so well that the sum they raised was a personal record.

When Jim retired as the Trust's Secretary in November 1995 the Trustees decided that it was time for the Trust to have an office preferably somewhere near the centre of the county where not only would the work of the Trust be done but also the archive stored: the move to Long Melford ensued. Jim continued to assist the Grants Committee as their Secretary until 1997.

Jim made a very significant contribution to the reputation and success of the developing Trust. He earned the respect of local churches and chapels as well as forging good relationships with local authorities. Thanks to his commitment today's Trust has a solid foundation upon which to build.

As time passed the up-keep of a large house and garden, the latter being regularly open to the public for local charities as well as for the Trust, threatened to become too much for them and they wisely decided to downsize to a modern house in Wangford, where they joined in the life of the village.

The full church at his Thanksgiving Service testified to the Jim we all knew, loved and respected. His life was a life of service to his country and community. We sang the last verse of 'Eternal Father' as advised above. The service ended with the organist playing the sailor's hornpipe, before refreshments and the exchange of personal memories.

The SHCT is extremely grateful for the donation of £420.00 which was raised at Jim's Thanksgiving Service.

**Diana Hunt & Christina van Melzen**





