

From the postbag :

Notts

Dear Mr Arbuthnott and Members of the Preservation Trust,

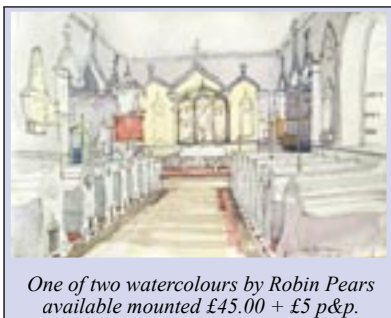
I happened upon Shobdon Church quite by chance, and was absolutely awe-struck by its beauty, having never seen any church like it. I enjoy journeying round the English countryside and happening upon little gems, - none so wonderful as Shobdon. I hope the enclosed helps - I know as a fundraiser myself - every penny really does help. I hope you reach your target.

Yours sincerely,

Lucy Stirling

Letters like this give great heart to people who have willingly shouldered the job of caring for our historic churches. It is, of course, a labour of love. We sense though that compared with the past the years ahead are going to be a great deal more difficult for them.

The fact is that English Heritage is getting very overstretched, as cathedrals and churches everywhere become increasingly unable to cover their costs, with smaller and ageing congregations, and ever-growing demands on its limited resources. Our Olympic Games in 2012 is going to soak up a huge chunk of funds currently available to historic buildings. This



One of two watercolours by Robin Pears available mounted £45.00 + £5 p&p.

continues over ...

Shobdon Church Preservation Trust

Belgate House, Shobdon, Leominster, Herefordshire HR6 9NJ

E-mail: info@shobdonchurch.org.uk www.shobdonchurch.org.uk

Reg Charity no.1100957

Newsletter generously sponsored by Sun Valley Hatchery



**Shobdon
Church
Preservation
Trust**

*Protecting the fabric
of this building of
national importance
for future generations*

Patrons

Lawrence Banks Esq. CBE
Mrs Sophie Blain
The Earl of Darnley
Sir Thomas Dunne K.C.V.O.
J.P. H.M.L.
Phillip Dunne Esq. MP
Sir Simon Jenkins
Mrs Patricia Kluge
Lady Diane Nutting O.B.E.
The Rt. Rev. John Oliver
Sir John Smith C.H.
Sir Roy Strong
Viscount Windsor
Lord Walpole D.L.

For the Diary

We are planning two occasions for enthusiasts of the church, or the simply curious, to visit Shobdon on days when Tim Bridges, an authority on the churches of Worcestershire and Herefordshire, will be on hand to give guided tours and a talk about the church. Afternoon tea will be served. It would help if were to tell us if you would like to come, but essentially you just turn up on the day.

**The dates are:
19th April and
18th October
2007, from
2 - 5 p.m.**

means that in future years we simply will not be able to take for granted that EH will ride to the rescue when our church starts to crumble and we need urgent help.

As far as Shobdon goes there is important, if not urgent, work to be done on the church. The main roof was given a huge makeover some three years ago, but the funds did not stretch to renewing the transepts. There is movement. They are now letting water in, with obvious damage to the plasterwork, and who knows what to the structure. Our building committee and architect John Wheatley put together a compelling (we thought) case to English Heritage, but this was turned down. We are now seeking a fuller and more expert diagnostic report to strengthen our cause, and will apply again.

God, we are told, helps those that help themselves. SCPT exists as an insurance, in an increasingly secular world, so that this remarkable building can be preserved for future generations. It relies on donations and legacies, occasional grants from charitable trusts, and from fundraising events. We hope you may be moved, as Lucy Stirling was, to help us when and as you can, or simply to remember us in your will.

Shobdon Chairs

This year we commemorate the centenary of the birth of John Fowler, who with Sybil Colefax, founded the eponymous London interior design company. He was a great admirer of Shobdon Church, and it was his inspiration for the interior of the Clermont Club in Berkeley Street. To mark this event, C and F have commissioned copies of the wonderful carved gothic chairs found in the Bateman pew of the church. One has been put on display at the V and A, and so far eight have been ordered, with C & F generously donating a large part of the proceeds to Shobdon Church.

If you would like one (or more) of your own, you should contact Sibyl Colefax and John Fowler. at 39 Brook Street, London W1K 4JE. 0207 7493 2231. They are surely a snip at £1,939.



Shobdon Festival of Food and Drink

One of the main events of the year has been Shobdon's now well-established Food and Drink Festival, held in late June. This year, the Teale family, the event's moving spirits, had based it round the church, and very well it worked. The programme again featured celebrated local soprano Clementine Lovell (remember Sir Bernard, of Jodrell Bank fame - she is his granddaughter), and the church was packed for a lively evening of song. Over the next two days, over forty stall-holders delighted a constant stream of visitors with a selection of goodies, from olives, sun-dried tomatoes, home cured bacon, smoked foods, local beef and lamb, jams, honey and much else to wine, cider, beer, mead and other exotic beverages. There was a ceilidh in the marquee on Saturday, and live music throughout. It raised a substantial amount for the church.



Art in a Barn

It was followed in September by Art in a Barn, hosted in the barns at Belgate House, by the Arbutnott family. Six local artists, Susie Arbutnott, Alison Cooper, Charlotte Cripwell, Peter Cripwell and Maggi Denaro, and photographer Bob Anderson, had combined, as part of Hereford Art Week, to sell their pictures, and thereby make money for SCPT and St Michael's Hospice in Hereford.



It was launched with a private view, which was extremely well-supported (we had over 250 guests including the Lords Lieutenant of Herefordshire and Worcestershire) and with donations, sales of tickets, raffle and the rather surprising auction of a giant puffball, brought in a substantial sum.

After a busy week, some fifty works of art had been sold, and well over £5,000 raised for our two charities.

Building Committee News

Yet again we have been unsuccessful in our Repair Grant Application to English Heritage. As in the previous two unsuccessful attempts, the reason given was that our case was not considered to be as urgent as some others. This is extremely disappointing; the applications are time consuming and costly to prepare but, as everyone is aware, the total English Heritage budget for church repairs is far too small.

The Building Committee met our architect John Wheatley on August 25th in order to plan our strategy for the coming months. From what we know for sure and which was emphasised by our structural engineer and previous architect in 2002/3, the transepts and sanctuary areas of the building are badly affected by wet and dry rot, as well as active wood-boring insect activity. We justified our application this year to the extent that we could be sure about that situation, basing our evidence on previous reports and the Quinquennial Inspection carried out by Mr. Wheatley earlier this year.

However, without detailed investigatory work, we could not be sure as to the extent of the problem(s) nor could we estimate accurately the cost of the remedial works. English Heritage who are insistent that all

necessary investigations are carried out before they will make any grant, normally fund the cost of this preliminary work. That would have happened, had we been successful in getting through the first stage of our application. This investigatory work is likely to cost around £4,000.00

We now feel that we have to approach English Heritage once more. We and English Heritage need to be fully aware of the risks to the building that were left in abeyance at the conclusion of the phase 1 works in 2003 and any subsequent degradation.

Shobdon Church is a Grade 1 listed building of national importance. Nothing can be done to it without English Heritage's approval. Therefore, our architect will be meeting their architect and structural engineer in order that they may advise us how best to proceed. We believe that by close co-operation with English Heritage professionals, it may yet be possible, at an early date, to carry out specialist investigations that would strengthen any future grant application. We will, of course, try to get English Heritage financial support for any agreed investigation.

Editors note. Failing this it will be funded by the SCPT.

Christmas Cards

Once again we are offering the ever-popular Shobdon Church Christmas Cards for sale. This year's features an original watercolour by John Piper of the Church, (right) painted in his typical striking and whimsical style. Also available with the Dod watercolour. These attractive cards (15cms by 21cms) are available with a Christmas greeting or Blank for your own message. The offer includes envelopes and postage and packing. Prices are 25 for £30, 50 for £50, 75 for £75 or 100 for £95. Please send your cheques made out to the Shobdon Church PCC to Andrew Gilliat, Garden House, Shobdon, Leominster, HR6 9LZ (tel. 01568 708364).

