

## Building Committee Report

After three unsuccessful attempts to obtain English Heritage backing for a repair grant under the "Repair grants for places of worship 2005-2007" at last we have broken through the first stage barrier. On 10th August, we heard from English Heritage that it had been agreed that our application should be taken forward to detailed assessment.

Since then, our architect John Wheatley, has spent a considerable amount of time with the E.H. architect for this region, assessing the evidence that we have so far as to the condition of the East End of the building and in particular, the stability of the parapets that are leaning inwards to a point of structural instability. The scope of the necessary comprehensive investigatory work is now clearly defined and will be put to the E.H. Finance Division for approval to proceed.

### *What does this mean?*

It means that our chances of obtaining a grant are now good but not assured. It means that following the investigation, there would be enough information for tenders for the work to be obtained. It probably means that the costs SCPT has already incurred by commissioning a preliminary structural survey which was carried out this summer, will probably be refunded (all preliminary survey work is normally paid by E.H.). The reason that we felt compelled to commission that basic survey work at our expense, was that it was felt necessary to be able to prove to E.H. that Shobdon was an urgent case and not one that could continually be written-off as being "not as urgent" as some others.

If and when EH do approve a grant for a repair scheme, they will be aware that the PCC and the SCPT already hold quite substantial funds. We believe that most of this money either cannot or should not be used for the works that are hopefully going to be grant aided by E.H. The scope of any work to be grant-aided under the Repairs to Places of Worship scheme is limited to essential high level work – effectively just keeping the water out and the building from falling down...

Shobdon church, thanks to its unique interior, needs a great deal of expensive maintenance and restoration to that interior; conservator-led investigations into its original colours and materials are just one example. The PCC has a ring-fenced sum of just over £30,000 earmarked exclusively for redecoration, and the SCPT, whilst sitting on a considerable amount of money, has a moral if not legal obligation to preserve not only the exterior of the building but its interior as well. It is the interior that visitors from all over the world come to see and marvel at. We may well have to negotiate with E.H. so as to keep a balanced judgement as to how much of the existing funds should be used in "local support" of any grant-aided work backed by E.H. For sure, E.H. will seek to reduce its own contribution as much as it possibly can.

Our thanks go to John Wheatley, who has done an enormous amount of work in assisting us to make the grant applications and for overseeing the preliminary structural survey. His reward will come from fees generated by actual work; to date he has largely worked for nothing.

## Shobdon Church Preservation Trust

Belgate House, Shobdon, Leominster, Herefordshire HR6 9NJ

E-mail: [info@shobdonchurch.org.uk](mailto:info@shobdonchurch.org.uk) [www.shobdonchurch.org.uk](http://www.shobdonchurch.org.uk)

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## MOMENT OF TRUTH

*"If Shobdon leaks, if the plaster drops off, who will be sorry ?  
If the paint peels off, who will bother to maintain the scheme  
of colour ?" (Geoffrey Grigson 1953)*

The purpose in setting up SCPT some six years ago, was to establish a fund that we could draw on in some moment of great need. We have dipped into our pot from time to time, for surveyor's reports and architects fees, as we have tried to identify potential problems before they became real ones.

Well, now we know we have a real one. Eight years ago, the roof was stripped to the bare bones, as the trusses were spreading and were actually pushing out the walls on which they sat. This was rectified at considerable expense, but the cost was met from a large EH grant, and grants from a number of charities. There were not then funds, nor seemingly an immediate need, to restore and re-roof the transepts. It is now clear that the lead is badly perished, and water is coming in through our lovely plasterwork. The wall plates have rotted, and the parapet walls have canted over. All this now needs urgent attention before irreparable damage is done.

EH turned down our first approach. With the Olympics looming, and so many calls on its resources, it is becoming much more picky. Our most recent appeal to it has met with a better response, but whichever way it jumps, we are urgently going to need money.

We have a very active, but very small, parish, who pull out all the stops just to pay the diocesan share, and for all the routine parish expenses, which means that Shobdon can go on being a place of worship – something we would all feel was deeply important.

Geoffrey Grigson was, I think, appealing to people like us, who have a real enthusiasm and love for this uniquely wonderful building. We would be so grateful for anything you can give, either now, or perhaps as a legacy, to help in the preservation of this gem.



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  
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The Rt. Rev. John Oliver  
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## For the Diary

### Church Tour

We will be having the second of our church tour days on October 18th. The format will be slightly different, with Tim Bridges offering talks at 2.30 and again at 3.30, but otherwise there to point out features of interest and answer questions.



### Cashmere Sale

We are holding a sale of top-quality Scottish cashmere here at Belgate on Thursday December 6th, in aid jointly of SCPT and the Hereford Renton Appeal. Wonderful answer to the problem of what to get the mother-in-law. From 10 a.m. to 3.30pm.

### Antiques Roadshow

– Sotheby's have kindly offered to run an Antiques Day and Evening on Friday June 27th at Shobdon Church in aid of SCPT. A marquee is being generously provided by the Shobdon Food and Flower Festival, and there will be valuations during the day, and a more formal roadshow style event in the evening, with dinner.

## Shobdon Festival of Food and Flowers

The third so far, and by far the best, with a profit of over £10,000, with half earmarked for parish funds. The forecast was dire, and typical of our torrid summer, but God took a hand, and sent a warm, and even sunny, weekend, and the people came in thousands. There was a non-stop programme of cookery demonstrations, music, dancing, singing, over seventy stands and stalls selling everything from sun-dried tomatoes and olives to lumps of Herefordshire beef. Highlight of the weekend was surely the flower festival in the church, with stunning floral displays in all the windows and in the nave. Even the evenings were filled – A concert by Shobdon and Pembridge schools on Thursday, a very lively Rock and Roll concert on Friday and acclaimed Soprano Clementine Lovell sang to a full house on the Saturday.



## Three Chairs!

There was never going to be a rush to buy the replicas of our wonderful chairs, produced by Sibyl Colefax and John Fowler to celebrate the centenary of John Fowler's birth – not entirely surprising at £1,600 each. However, they did sell, and in sufficient numbers for Roger Jones from C and F to be able to send us a cheque for £2,500. We are truly grateful to them all for their generosity. It is still possible to order the chairs, an example of which is on display at the showroom in Brook Street.

## Church Tours

We had a very good turnout for the first of our Shobdon Church days in April. Tim Bridges, who has written several highly regarded books on church architecture, was on hand to show people round and answer questions, and tea was provided by Pam and Ray at the Visitor Centre. We had over forty visitors, who all seemed to appreciate the experience.

## Special offer Christmas Cards

Once again we are offering the ever-popular Shobdon Church Christmas Cards for sale. Featuring either an original watercolour by John Piper of the Church, (right) painted in his typical striking and whimsical style. or 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 now 25 for £25 (were £30), 50 for £35 (were £50), 75 for £50 (were £75) or 100 for £60 (were £95). Please send your cheques made out to the Shobdon Church PCC to Andrew Gilliat, Garden House, Shobdon, Leominster, HR6 9LZ (tel. 01568 708364).



## Sir John Smith CH R.I.P.

It was with great regret that we learnt of the death in February of one of our greatest supporters and an original patron of SCPT. John Smith had led a truly varied and extraordinary life.



He had been part of a dive-bombing raid on the Tirpitz, was a highly regarded banker, member of parliament, Lord Lieutenant of Berkshire and much else. His great interest in life, though, was the rescue and preservation of buildings of originality and unique character, and they ranged from Martello towers and garden temples to gun batteries and dockyards, and he was the driving force behind the recovery and restoration of HMS Warrior. This led to the foundation of the Landmark and Manifold Trusts, which preserved and gave generous financial help to buildings in need. Shobdon Church was right up his street, and his Manifold Trust was one of our greatest benefactors.

We were very much encouraged by his interest, and hugely flattered when he and Christian, well into their eighties, motored all the way from Maidenhead to be with us at our first Patrons Lunch at Shobdon Court. They had a nightmare journey, with the usual high turnout of tractors and trailers once they crossed the Herefordshire border, but it was just as if they had just popped down the road, and they were quite charming to all. Great man.