



News

for Friends of Berkshire Churches

Berkshire Historic Churches Trust
July 2025

As the first event of 2025 for the Friends of Berkshire Churches, a group much enjoyed a visit to the gardens of Haines Hill, on a baking hot afternoon in June, followed by tea and cake, by kind invitation of Lucy Zeal, who is one of the Trustees.

It has unfortunately not been possible to arrange an Englefield Lecture this year - this will resume in 2026. Information on the remaining Trust events for 2025 will be found on the following pages.

At the Trustees' Meeting in June, Jim Barnes-Phillips retired after more than 30 years as a Trustee, 17 of them as Treasurer. The Trustees unanimously voted to appoint Jim as a Vice-President of the Trust. Catherine Haig also resigned after 10 years as a Trustee, and Marion Elly as Membership Secretary. We are very grateful to all three for their significant contributions to running the Trust.



The National Churches Trust is conducting a survey of all churches, to obtain updated information on their condition and activities; this will provide valuable data to help explain to politicians, the media and the general public the vital role of churches in their communities, and the challenges they face.

The survey is online at www.nationalchurchestrust.org/survey and closes on 13 July; please encourage your church to participate.

The Church Commissioners provided £177,000 of funding to the Diocese of Oxford under their 'Buildings for Mission' scheme, to help meet the cost of urgent minor repairs. This has now all been allocated, with five churches in Berkshire receiving grants. Grants have also been made from the Church of England Boiler Hardship Fund to support churches moving from oil or gas boilers to a low-carbon heating system.



Don't forget the annual Ride+Stride event - this year on Saturday 13 September - which raises funds for the Trust and for participating churches.

Cover picture: Boulton's Lock Sunday afternoon, by Edward John Gregory (c.1895). [Lady Lever Art Gallery, Liverpool]

Recent grant offers by the Trust

Barkham, St James

The church at Barkham was entirely re-built in 1860-1 to a design by JB Clacy of Reading; transepts and a larger chancel were added in 1887. The church is listed Grade II.

The three-light east window was made by James Powell & Sons, of Whitefriars Glass Works, in 1861, and was reset in the enlarged chancel. This is a particularly fine grisaille design, based on C13 windows in Salisbury Cathedral, constructed using cast and pressed glass quarries - a technique invented by Powell. This results in thicker and heavier glass, which is now causing severe problems of strength and stability, with cracked quarries and decayed leading.

The three-light south transept window, which is glazed with pale amber cathedral glass, is also in urgent need of conservation.

The work on these two windows will cost about £19,000; the Trust has offered a grant of £2,000.



Pangbourne, St James the Less

Apart from a C18 brick tower, the church was rebuilt in 1864-6 to designs by WH Woodman of Reading. Some fine monuments were transferred from the old church. It is listed Grade II*.

Electric under-pew heating has recently been installed, to replace a failed oil-fired boiler, and it is now planned to fit Far InfraRed radiant heaters to warm the open area at the west end of the nave. The Trust has offered a grant of £1,000 towards the cost of £10,000.

Sunningdale, Holy Trinity

A church was built at Sunningdale in 1840, to which GE Street added a chancel in 1860. In 1887-8 the nave was rebuilt on a larger scale, with aisles, transepts and a central tower and spire, to designs by John Oldrid Scott. The church is planning a major re-ordering, inserting a mezzanine floor at the west end of the nave to create a 'small hall', meeting rooms, café area, office, creche and accessible lavatories, with new heating by air source heat pumps, at a cost of £1.75 million. The Trust has offered its maximum grant of £15,000 as a small contribution to this.

Our River Thames

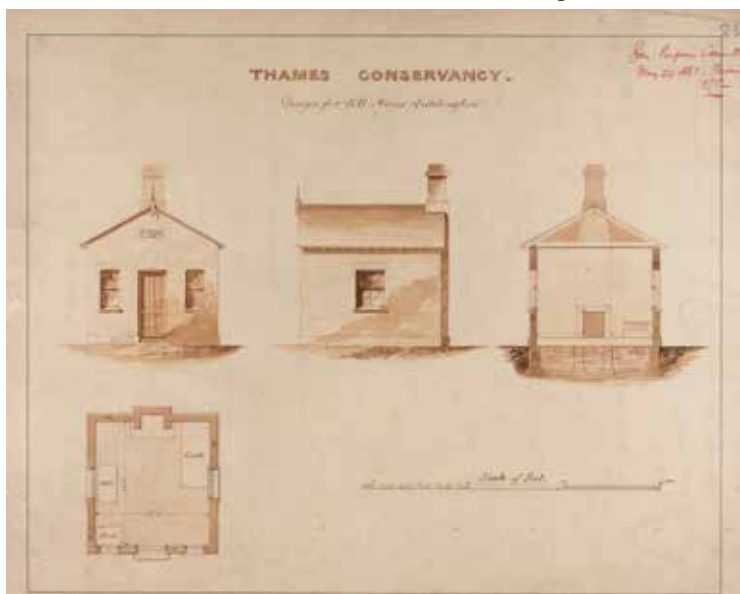
Exhibition at the Royal Berkshire Archives, Reading



'Our River Thames' tells the story of local people and the River Thames. Starting with archeological finds from the neolithic period (on loan from Reading Museum) the exhibition traces the early history of the Thames and attempts to manage the river. There is a particular focus on the work of the Thames Navigation Commission and Thames Conservancy, who together

were in charge of river management from 1771 to 1974.

Other trades of the Thames are showcased along with those who have drawn inspiration from the Thames for artistic work. It culminates in looking at the various leisure opportunities the Thames provides with records from current clubs. There is a focus on individual stories throughout the exhibition, including audio clips, specially recorded for this exhibition, of four individuals talking about their specific connections to the Thames.



We have arranged a special visit to the exhibition for the Friends of Berkshire Churches, with an introduction by Ruth King and Hannah Pomeroy, who have curated the exhibition, and ending with tea and cake.

Thursday 24 July 2025 at 2 pm

Royal Berkshire Archives, 9 Coley Avenue, Reading RG1 6AF
Tickets £15

Book online at www.TicketSource.co.uk/Berkshire-Churches-Trust by 18 July, or phone John Pritchard (01865 859973) to reserve your place



Annual Meeting and Church Tour



The 2025 Annual Meeting will be held at Cranbourne St Peter, built in 1849-50 to the design of Benjamin Ferrey, and restored in 2006-7 after a fire which destroyed the organ and some fittings. The Trust has recently offered a grant towards renewal of the roof.



After visiting other churches in the area, we will end with tea and Evensong at Hurst St Nicholas (which received a grant from the Trust towards their new heating system).

Sunday 28 September 2025 at 2pm

Details and booking arrangements will be in our next Newsletter

Ashmole's Church Notes for Berkshire, 1665-6



The celebrated antiquary, Elias Ashmole, is best known as the founder of the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford. He was appointed as Windsor Herald by Charles II, and conducted a Visitation of Berkshire in 1665-6 to register and regulate the coats of arms of nobility and gentry, and record pedigrees. As part of this work, Ashmole made extensive drawings and notes of the monuments, effigies, carved shields, and glass of the many churches he visited, which provide a unique record of items that have often been lost, altered or moved.

These 'church notes' have now been transcribed by Dr Adrian Ailes FSA, with extensive footnotes, and published by the Harleian Society in November 2024 (New Series vol. 23; £45).



Visit to St George's Windsor

Construction of the new chapel of St George at Windsor started in 1475, taking several decades to complete: it is a masterpiece of late mediæval architecture, home of the Order of the Garter and burial place for kings and queens - most recently Queen Elizabeth II. It contains stunning carved stonework and C15 stained glass, and heraldic banners and stall-plates of the Knights of the Garter.

The Dean & Chapter Archives contain documents relating to the history of the Chapel, the properties it once owned, and the Order of the Garter, including maps, plans, photographs, accounts, deeds and correspondence, and over 6000 rare books. We have arranged a guided tour of the Chapel and a visit to see some of the treasures in the Archives, ending with choral Evensong in the Chapel for the feast of St Edward the Confessor.



Monday 13 October 2025 at 2:30pm

Details and booking arrangements will be in our next Newsletter

Berkshire Historic Churches Trust

Registered charity no. 288797

www.berkschurchestrust.org.uk

Patron: The Rt Hon Lord Benyon of Englefield, PC GCVO

Joint Presidents: The Rt Revd Mary Gregory, Bishop of Reading
Andrew Try Esq., Lord-Lieutenant of Berkshire

Vice-Presidents: The Lady Eliza Mays Smith • Erica Lady Harman
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Secretary: John Pritchard secretary@berkschurchestrust.org.uk

Treasurer: Eleanor Rice treasurer@berkschurchestrust.org.uk

Berkshire Historic Churches Trust was founded in 1983 to help with the costs of maintaining the historic churches, chapels and meeting houses, of all Christian denominations, in the Royal County, and to provide funds towards the provision of the facilities that churches need if they are to serve effectively as centres of their communities.

Since its inception it has given grants towards the costs of repairing or replacing roofs, towers, spires, stonework, windows, heating and lighting and installing toilets and kitchens.

All this costs money. To date we have given grants totalling £750,000 – but this is only a fraction of the costs of keeping our churches in good order, and new requests for help come in every year.

We are most grateful to the Friends of Berkshire Churches who pay a regular subscription to support the Trust.

Could you support the Trust with a legacy in your will?

Once you have considered bequests to family and friends, a legacy gift in your will would be a lasting way to help protect the historic churches of Berkshire for the future. We would be happy to discuss this - please contact the Chairman or Secretary.

The Berkshire Historic Churches Trust is a registered charity, and a legacy in your will is therefore exempt from Inheritance Tax; in addition, if 10% or more of the total estate is left to charities, a lower rate of Inheritance Tax will apply to other bequests.

You should consult your solicitor or professional will-writer about the appropriate wording of any legacy.