



News
for
Friends of Berkshire Churches

Berkshire Historic Churches Trust

March 2026

WELCOME to our first Newsletter of 2026. This year we are planning a full programme of events, starting with the ever-popular Englefield Lecture, which this year will be given by Dr Adrian Ailes. Tickets for this event are now available. Details of subsequent events will be provided in our next Newsletter.

Recent Grants by Berkshire Historic Churches Trust

❖ Grants paid:

Holy Trinity, Cookham : £5,000

for a new heating system and accessible toilet

St Mary, Hampstead Norreys : £9,000

for replacement of heating, lighting and electrical power distribution

St James the Less, Pangbourne : £1,000

for replacement of heating at the west end

St Clement, Ashampstead : £1,200

for replacement of under-pew heating

St Peter, Brimpton : £1,000

for specialist surveys to assess the condition of the spire

Thatcham United Reformed Church : £500

for repair of windows

St Mary Magdalen, Tilehurst : £1,300

for repairs to the Lady Chapel roof

❖ Grants offered:

St James, Barkham : £2,000

for repair of two stained-glass windows

Holy Trinity, Sunningdale : £15,000

for a major project to provide toilets, servery, meeting rooms & heating

St Michael, Sandhurst : £12,500

for re-shingling the spire and roof repairs - **illustrated on front page**

St John, Stockcross : £1,300

for installation of under-pew heating

St Stephen, Upper Basildon : £3,500

for external repairs

St Mary, East Ilsley : £8,000

for repairs to roof and walls

☞ The Englefield Lecture 2026 ☞



Elias Ashmole's Church Notes of Berkshire 1665-66

His other
Cabinet of Curiosities
by *Dr Adrian Ailes* FSA

Elias Ashmole is perhaps best remembered today as an antiquary and collector. His extraordinary collection of artifacts – his 'cabinet of curiosities' – was bequeathed to the University of Oxford, where it formed the basis of the Ashmolean Museum.

Less well known are the church notes of Berkshire, his other 'cabinet of curiosities', which he compiled during his visitation of Berkshire as Windsor Herald in 1665 and 1666. In these notes he recorded, and sometimes made drawings of, local monumental brasses, sculpted effigies of men, women and children, tombs, incised slabs, wall monuments, carved shields and badges, roof bosses and stained-glass windows. They form an extremely valuable record of these monuments and of the appearance of the interiors of churches in the mid-seventeenth century.

Dr Adrian Ailes was formerly Head of Early Modern Records at The National Archives and is currently an Honorary Research Associate at the University of Bristol. An authority on heraldry, he has lectured widely; his publications include an acclaimed edition of Ashmole's *Church Notes*, published by the Harleian Society in 2024.

in the **Long Gallery, Englefield House**, Reading RG7 5EN
(by kind permission of Lord Benyon)

at **7pm for 7:30pm on Monday 20 April, 2026**

Tickets £17 including a glass of wine

Book online at www.TicketSource.co.uk/Berkshire-Churches-Trust
or phone 01865 859973

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

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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 over £830,000 – 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.