



Gloucestershire
Historic Churches Trust



Helping historic churches – our living heritage

Annual Review 2025

www.ghct.org.uk

Patron

His Majesty The King

President

Edward Gillespie OBE
HM Lord Lieutenant

Vice-Presidents

Dame Janet Trotter DBE

Sir Henry Elwes KCVO

The Right Reverend Rachel Treweek
Bishop of Gloucester

The Right Reverend Bosco MacDonald
Bishop of Clifton

Bishop of Bristol
Appointment awaited

The Reverend Nigel Coles
Senior Team Leader
West of England Baptist Association

The Reverend Steve Faber
Moderator, West Midlands Synod
United Reformed Church

The Reverend Dr Marcus Torchon
Chair, Bristol District
The Methodist Church

Grant Applications

The Trust's Grants Committee considers applications and awards grants in June and December.

To apply for a grant, go to
www.ghct.org.uk/grants/apply
or email grants@ghct.org.uk

*Turn to page 12 for the story
behind this year's cover*

The Council

Chair

Professor Patricia Broadfoot*
(from 10th June 2025)
Colin Senior* (retired 10th June 2025)

Vice-Chair

Jonathan MacKechnie-Jarvis*

Treasurer

David Kingsmill*

Secretary

Stephen Langton*
(retired 9th December 2025)

Chair, Grants Committee

Dr Ray Singleton*

Council Members

Naomi Buckler
Alick Campbell
Revd Canon Michael Garland
Marcus Green
Adam Klups
Jane Jenner-Fust
Lindsey McCullum
Sue Pearce*
Simon Ray
Ian Serjeant
*Trustee

Part-time Administrator

Sophie Manuel

Address for correspondence

FREEPOST GHCT

Email

administration@ghct.org.uk

Registered Office

Wenn Townsend, 5 Gosditch Street,
Cirencester GL7 2AG

The Aims and Objectives of the Gloucestershire Historic Churches Trust

*"The object of the Charity is to advance the Christian religion by the preservation, repair, maintenance, improvement, upkeep, beautification and reconstruction of churches in Gloucestershire..."
(From the Trust's Constitution)*

In practice the Trust aims to achieve this object through:

- ⊕ Making funds available to help places of Christian worship of all denominations in the Ceremonial County of Gloucestershire (which includes North Bristol) with repairs and improvements
- ⊕ Assisting those responsible for the care of places used for public worship which belong to a Christian religious body

We therefore aim to:

- ⊕ Maintain a large support base whose financial support will enable the Trust to carry out its work
- ⊕ Foster an informed appreciation of the history, architecture and beauty of our churches and chapels
- ⊕ Raise substantial funds through events, including the annual Ride+Stride event
- ⊕ Cooperate with other grant-making bodies which have matching objectives

We thank our supporters for helping to make all this possible. Indeed, there has never been a more important time to give to the Gloucestershire Historic Churches Trust. Please continue to help us help churches!



Chair's Report

This is my first report as Chair of GHCT. Since stepping into the role last June I've been delighted by what I've found: a charity that's energetic, effective, and powered by volunteers who care deeply about keeping our church buildings alive.

I must begin by thanking my predecessor, Colin Senior, whose leadership over recent years has shaped GHCT into the confident, capable organisation it is today. And my thanks extend to everyone involved – trustees, Council members, Ride+Stride participants, volunteers, donors, and all who champion our work across Gloucestershire

and North Bristol. GHCT is only as strong as the people who support it, and I'm hugely grateful for the commitment we see year after year.

But we can't simply admire what's been achieved so far. The landscape for church buildings is changing fast – and not for the better. A recent National Churches Trust survey paints a stark picture: more than 3,500 churches have closed in the past decade, and over 900 in England are now on the Heritage at Risk Register. Many congregations, especially in rural areas, are shrinking and ageing. Services are fewer, and the practical demands of maintaining historic buildings are becoming overwhelming. Rising repair costs, and the recent loss of VAT recovery, only add to the pressure.

All this means our support will be needed more than ever. Yet as a relatively small charity, we can't simply write bigger cheques. What we can do – and must do – is help communities rediscover the value of their church buildings and feel empowered to care for them. These buildings have always been more than places of worship; historically they were at the heart of community, learning, and mutual support. Many still are. Churches today quietly host foodbanks, debt advice, youth groups, warm spaces, choirs, addiction support and more – often where no other services exist.

GHCT intends to strengthen its ability to support churches not only financially but practically, helping them thrive as places of worship, heritage assets, and vital community resources. Your support - in whatever form it takes - is what will make this possible.

Professor Patricia Broadfoot CBE FAcSS

Events, and more Events ...

Over the past few years, GHCT has been offering more in the way of special events, and we have been very gratified by the results. In October 2025 we hosted a talk on Pilgrim Places of Gloucestershire, and earlier in the year a garden event at Woodchester Park House, to which we invited as many as possible of our recent donors.

For 2026, a more ambitious programme is planned. This will include spring and autumn talks, a 'Beaufortshire' Church-Crawl, and in association with Chorley's Auctioneers, a series of Antiques Roadshow-style events at churches.

We see our events as:

- a way of promoting our church heritage
- a way of promoting the work of the Trust
- a way of thanking our donors
- a way of raising additional funds for our churches

Our Events Group is in for a busy time organising and planning for future activities. We would welcome any help and new ideas – see p21.

▼ *At Woodchester Park House, June 2025*



Statement of Financial Activities

for the year ended 31 December 2025

	Income Funds £	Capital Funds £	Total Funds 2025 £	Total Funds 2024 £
Income				
Donations, Legacies and Charitable Activities				
Subscriptions & Donations	38,982	-	38,982	38,369
Legacies	-	92,928	92,928	61,896
Grant from Diocesan Funds:				
Stratton Davis Bequest	12,000	-	12,000	10,000
Ride & Stride event – gross income	29,270	-	29,270	32,616
Investments	93,098		93,098	87,214
Total Income	173,350	92,928	266,278	230,095
Expenditure				
Costs & Raising Funds				
Ride & Stride grants paid to churches	10,375	-	10,375	13,873
Other fund raising costs	11,614	-	11,614	9,952
Grants payable to Churches	117,000	-	117,000	125,500
Other support costs	14,383	-	14,383	9,575
Total Expenditure	153,372	-	153,372	158,920
Total Income less Expenditure	19,978	92,928	112,906	12,696
Gains on sale of investments - (Realised)		24,493	24,493	
Gains/(Losses) on Revaluation Of Investments (Unrealised)		138,791	138,791	81,658
	19,978	256,212	276,190	152,833
Net Movement in Funds for Year				
Total Funds brought forward	5,193	2,015,400	2,020,593	1,867,760
Transfer	-	-	-	-
Total Funds Carried Forward	25,171	2,271,612	2,296,783	2,020,593



GHCT Christmas cards

For the last few years, we have produced a traditional Christmas card, which is sent to our supporters with a seasonal newsletter.

Following a number of requests, we are now able to offer Christmas cards for general use, in packs of five.

Our 2025 card was the prize-winner in our first-ever photo competition. It is a striking picture of St Michael's, Bishops Cleeve, in a snow shower, taken by Terry Richer, a member of the congregation.

A range of cards will be on sale at GHCT events, or can be ordered by post: contact administration@ghct.org.uk



Your donations in action ...

Each year we focus on a few of the projects we have supported.
Here are four very different stories ...

St Mary's, Fretherne – the stark realities of a country church

In a small rural church, so much depends on a tiny handful of people willing and able to keep the show on the road. At least one person has to be able to apply for grants, and to have the resilience to cope with the disappointments.

St Mary's, Fretherne is a case in point. It's a handsome little church of 1857-66, but complex in plan, and richly decorated: a recipe for costly maintenance.

The church has been appearing on our grants agenda since 2017. Now, at last, repair of the tower and spire has started. Churchwarden Jane Cleaver explains...

"After seven grant applications to various Trusts, two of which were unsuccessful, a fruitless diversion into a full-scale bid to the Community Ownership Fund, scuppered by an early General Election, and three unsuccessful applications to the National Lottery Heritage Fund over three years, we were finally awarded a grant of £174,633 in 2025".



*St Mary's, Fretherne from the south-east.
For a fairly small church, the complexity
of the building is remarkable*

Soon after work started, the Government ended the Listed Places of Worship Scheme, which for many years allowed listed churches to reclaim VAT on repairs and improvements. So, at a stroke, 20% has been added to the cost of work, as it has for every other listed church trying to fund vital repairs.

In our view, Jane and her (very few) colleagues at St Mary's deserve a special award for their sheer dogged persistence. We salute them.

◀ *Patience rewarded... Sarah Whittle and Jane Cleaver hold the banner which publicises the much-needed funding for St Mary's*

Improvements at Stapleton

We recently agreed a grant of £10,000 towards new facilities at Holy Trinity, Stapleton. Here is the story, as outlined by the project team:

“We have a beautiful building, grade II*. The same grade as the Clifton Suspension Bridge! The listing describes it as “one of the best Victorian church buildings in Bristol.” It was built in 1857 to a design by John Norton, best known as the architect for Tyntesfield. But Holy Trinity is a building ... the church is the people who worship there. Within the last five years the congregation has more than doubled in size and there is now a thriving ministry with children.

“Our desire is to make the building fit for purpose. We have already replaced the roof – with generous help from GHCT. But the only loo is largely inaccessible, and there are no catering or meeting facilities. We have recently installed a new audio-visual system with a retractable screen. But much more is about to happen.

“Improvements to the entrance porch will enhance the approach to the church. Replacement of the woodworm-riddled pews with chairs will give a more usable space, and a ramp will give access to the altar dais. A meeting room, servery, and two accessible loos will transform the potential of the building.

“Our vision statement is: ‘Sharing the hope, light and love of Jesus.’

Our project will help give a better, inclusive welcome to all. And the more people we can welcome, the more will hear about Jesus’ love for them”.

➤ *The present makeshift arrangements for refreshments*



Stapleton Holy Trinity: the noble spire dominates the townscape



Our Cover Story ... Fixing a Cheltenham Spire

In last year's Annual Review, we illustrated the Leaning Spire of St Andrew's United Reformed Church, Cheltenham. The spire is a familiar sight for shoppers and visitors, near the Promenade and Montpellier. Work had begun in late 2024 on partial demolition and repair, not helped by rock-hard cement mortar, which meant more stone replacement than the architect had anticipated.

By the time our autumn talk took place at St Andrew's, the scaffolding had started to come down, and the quality of the stonework repair could be seen.

A month earlier, in September 2025, our intrepid Vice-Chair attended the topping out ... in a torrential rain shower! Our photo shows the contractors and the parish officers waving bravely at the drone camera, before beating a hasty retreat down the ladders. Needless to say, the rain eased off as soon as the 'drowned rats' emerged at ground level.



▲ *Cheltenham St Andrew's: spire repairs almost complete. In the distance to the left is St Gregory's RC church, with Cheltenham's tallest spire*

On a much better autumn day, the drone went aloft again. The straightened spire can be seen emerging from the remaining scaffolding. (And see our front cover for a bird's-eye view.)

The contractors and the church officers have done a brilliant job on this key conservation project, well organised and well-executed. We were very happy to help with a grant towards the work.

St James the Unusual

St James's, Postlip is, to say the least, a highly unusual church. It is very close to, but set well above, Postlip Hall, and surrounded by woodland. The Hall itself is a large Jacobean house which for the last fifty years has been owned and run as a co-operative commune, described as "a village under one roof".

St James's comprises a Norman nave and chancel, with a later bell-turret. For several centuries it was used as a farm building, until rescued and restored in 1890-91 by Stuart Forster, owner of Postlip Hall, who was a devout Catholic. The west gallery and the chancel are splendid neo-Norman work, dating from the restoration.



*Postlip Hall, with St James's perched above.
Beyond can be seen the rugged terrain of Cleeve Hill*



*Refreshments after the reopening service,
St James's Day, 2025*

Today it is part of the RC parish of Winchcombe, and there are services each month during the summer. There is no electricity, water or gas, and parking is by agreement with the Hall co-operative. So, an unusual set-up, but quite an experience, whether for the first-time visitor or for the regular worshipper.

In 2024 the chapel was in urgent need of repair, especially to the rainwater goods and the roofs. A number of nearby trees also had to be felled, in the interests of future maintenance.

The work cost some £27000, and the congregation came to us with a funding gap of £7600. We were able to make a grant of £1000. It was a special pleasure to attend the candlelit reopening mass, held on the feast day of St James the Great, 25th July 2025.



St James's by candlelight

Our Grants to Churches in 2025

Arlingham St Mary	Re-roof nave, chancel, vestry and boiler room £10,000
Ashleworth SS Andrew & Bartholomew	Repairs to weathervane and stone finial support £2,000
Avonmouth St Andrew	Install infra-red heating £1,000
Badminton St Michael & All Angels	Restore organ £4,000
Blockley SS Peter & Paul	Major re-ordering £10,000
Bromesberrow St Mary	Restoration of bells £4,000
Cam Quarry chapel	Re-surface car park and rebuild access to chapel £1,500
Charfield St John	Repairs to roof of bells tower £1,500
Cheltenham Emmanuel	Repair woodblock floor £500
Coalpit Heath St Saviour	Repairs to floor of ringing room in tower £1,000
Cotham St Matthew	Clean and repair organ £1,000
Daglingworth Holy Rood	Install infra-red heating and replace pews £3,500
Downend Christ Church	Repair chancel roof £2,000
Eastington St Michael & All Angels	Repair roof of nave and organ chamber £10,000
Easton Christian Family Centre	Replace roof, add cavity wall insulation, replace windows/doors £10,000
Framilode St Peter	Replace gravel path to church entrance £1,000
Hanham Abbots St George	Install new heating/lighting and PA system £4,000

Hawkesbury St Mary the Virgin	Construction of exterior toilet facilities £8,000
Henbury St Mary the Virgin	Repairs to parapet wall, flashing repairs £2,000
Hillfields St John the Divine	Refurbish existing toilet/kitchen facilities £4,000
Horfield Holy Trinity	Renew church path £1,500
Miserden St Andrew	Repairs to organ £1,000
Northleach SS Peter & Paul	Paint/refurbish rainwater goods £1,000
Painswick St Mary the Virgin	Install under pew and infra-red heaters £3,000
Rodmarton St Peter	Repair roof, limewash walls, rectify drainage £3,500
Soundwell St Stephen	Repairs to roof £1,000
Southam Church of the Ascension	Restoration of stone floor, pulpit and altar £2,000
Southrop St Peter	Replacement of bell frame and refurbish bells £2,000
Stanway St Peter	Install lead soakaway for roof drainage £2,000
Stapleton Holy Trinity	Install toilets, kitchen servery, and meeting room in nave £10,000
Stow-on-the-Wold Baptist Church	Remove pews, new flooring, replace rainwater goods, minor repairs £8,000
Stow-on-the-Wold St Edward	Repairs to roof, and improved rainwater disposal £2,000
Tormarton St Mary Magdalene	Repairs to chancel and vestry gables. (Top up grant) £2,000
Warden Hill St Christopher	Creation of new kitchenette and accessible toilet £3,500

Ride+Stride 2025

It was another successful year for Ride+Stride, which is a key fund raiser for GHCT and for the churches and chapels taking part in the annual event. In 2025 we raised £37015, of which £10,375 has been returned to participating churches. The top three fundraisers were St. John the Baptist, Coln St. Aldwyn (£2492), St. Peter, Southrop (£2250), St. Cyr, Stinchcombe (£1763). All three have featured among the top performers over a number of years, and we are hugely grateful to them.

In 2025, 91 churches and chapels registered to take part with teams or individual riders and striders, with organised special events, or by pledging to be open for visitors. These were listed on the website, which has been upgraded with interactive maps and church information to assist route planning or help choosing a new church to visit. Many more churches were open on Ride+Stride day. In addition to fundraising, a key aim for GHCT is to encourage visitors to churches to enjoy our heritage.

The total raised in 2025 was slightly higher than in 2024 showing support for the event remains strong. Increasingly, churches and chapels that are unable to field riders or striders hold a special event on Ride+Stride day, which can be a significant fund raiser for the church. To all who took part in any way, we say a big thank you.

We look forward to organising and publicising our next Ride+Stride event, which will be on Saturday, September 12th, 2026.

Top: The Stinchcombe team at Bibury

Bottom left: A hazard of R+S ... the Longhope team shelter from a shower

Bottom right: The team at St Peter's, Windrush





*All Saints, North Cerney: pulpit of c1480
and Flemish lectern, also c1480*

Our historic churches need YOU! Here are three ways you can help ...

Your donation will make a real difference: either a one-off gift, or a regular amount. Just Giving is a simple way to give, and if you can Gift Aid too, your gift will be worth 25% more. Or if you prefer, you can set up donations direct to our bank account. You can find the details at www.ghct.org.uk/donate

Or you could make a legacy to GHCT

The Trust is enormously grateful to those who have left the legacies that ensure that we can carry on supporting our churches in the future. If you'd like to know more about this way of giving, please turn to page 23.

Or could you be part of the GHCT team?

We rely almost entirely on the time and expertise of our volunteers. Will you help us to conserve our historic churches and chapels for future generations to enjoy?

Volunteering doesn't have to take up that much time. Here are a few areas where we can use your help:

- ⊕ **Events:** Our special events are a great way to promote the care of our historic churches. But they need to be planned, publicised and organised. Could you help us?
- ⊕ **Ride+Stride:** We need help with promoting and organising our annual fundraising event. (And you don't have to be a cyclist or a walker to help with Ride+Stride!)
- ⊕ **Grants follow up:** If you enjoy visiting churches, would you be interested in following up our grants? We need to know more about what difference they can make, and how we can be of more help to our churches.

These are just a few ways in which you could help if you have a passion for our churches. Please get in touch as we are sure we can put your enthusiasm and experience to work. Email us on administration@ghct.org.uk or visit www.ghct.org.uk/support/volunteer



Please remember GHCT in your will

After providing for those you love, leaving a gift in your will is a wonderful way to make a lasting difference to a cause you care about. A legacy to GHCT will help secure the future of historic churches and chapels in Gloucestershire and North Bristol, for the inspiration and enjoyment of future generations.

Over the years our churches have benefitted greatly from generous supporters who have remembered the Trust in their wills. These legacies have been credited to our endowment fund and, as that grows, they ensure that GHCT will have the resources to continue helping our churches long into the future.

When you are making your own will, please consider a bequest to GHCT, and thus to the hundreds of churches which we serve.

Leaving GHCT a legacy could be easier than you think!

You can amend your will easily by using the sample Codicil wording on our website at www.ghct.org.uk/support/legacies

Or you may like to know about the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) Legacy Service.

CAF offers a flexible way to leave one gift in your will to benefit as many charities as you like. You can revise your choice of charities at any time. CAF also offer advisors who can help you select charitable causes that are important to you, such as GHCT.

◀ *All Saints, Kemble: Millenium window by Mark Angus, 'The Water of Life'*

▼ *Huntley, St John the Baptist: luxuriant carving of nave capital, 1863*





A prayer for the work of the Trust

Heavenly Father, we thank you for all the churches
we serve where your word is proclaimed week by week.

We pray for all the people who look after them and
who use them to extend the work of your kingdom.

We thank you too for the generosity of all those
who have given money and effort to build up the funds
now set apart for the work of the Trust.

Grant us your wisdom in our decisions and your
special blessing on the congregations in those places
where our grants are being sought.

Amen.



We are grateful to all who have supplied photographs for the Annual Review.
A full list of photo credits appears on our website at www.ghct.org.uk

The Editor of the Annual Review is Jonathan MacKechnie Jarvis

Design Sugar Ink Creative



Gloucestershire
Historic Churches Trust



www.ghct.org.uk