

Historic Religious Buildings Alliance

a group within the Heritage Alliance

ANNUAL REVIEW
for 2021

Distributed to members
March 2022

We bring together those working for a secure future for historic religious buildings

OUR YEAR

It is no secret that Covid-19 has put enormous pressure on some congregations, particularly those which were small in numbers to start with and had a substantial proportion of elderly people. Anecdotal evidence suggests that in a good many cases the numbers attending weekly worship has dropped by approximately one third, though this varies enormously.

This is bound to lead to further pressure on sustainability. This will make HRBA's mission even more important – to bring together those working for a secure future for historic religious buildings.

Despite these general difficulties, one recent encouragement has been DCMS announcing it would continue to fund until the end of March 2025 the **Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme**, which allows congregations of listed buildings to recover the cost of VAT. HRBA sits on the Stakeholders Group for the Scheme, and we were delighted with this decision. The significant grants from the **Culture Recovery Fund** have also been extremely welcome.

As the pandemic has ebbed and flowed we have continued to produce our **e-newsletter** every month, reaching more than 1700 people, and to build our social media presence, with some 1150

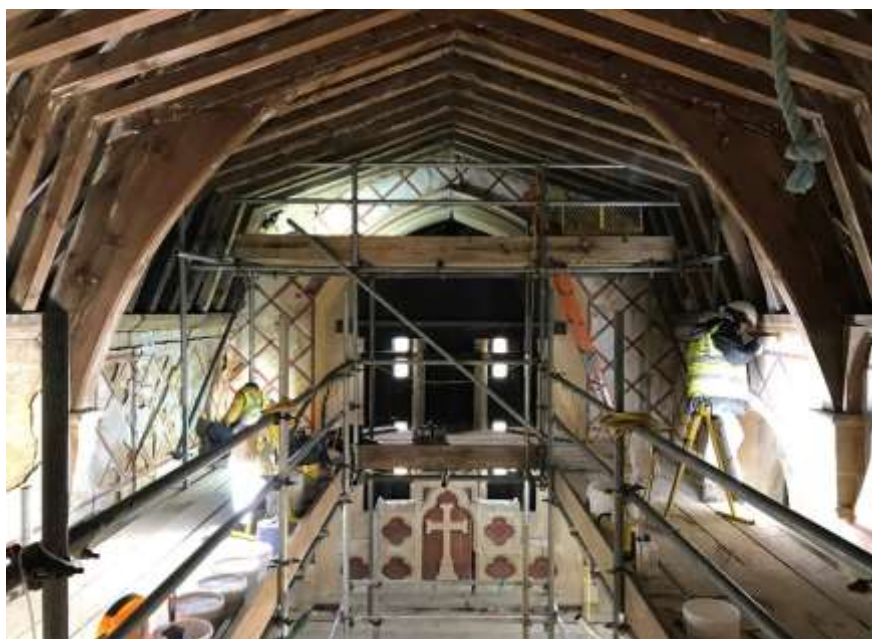
followers on **Twitter**. During the pandemic we also began a new monthly series called **Roving Reporter** – 'stimulating stories from those looking after historic religious buildings' – which has ranged from articles about a gilded weathervane to a church journeying towards net zero.

We have continued our tri-monthly **Members Briefing Meetings** by Zoom. Cyberspace, has, of course, allowed participation from a wider geographical spread than our previous London-based meetings.

For all that, in December 2021 we did try to organise a face to face Briefing, but very regretfully had to cancel this and revert to Zoom – though as one of the speakers tested positive on the day itself then managed to find

emergency online replacements at half an hour's notice, this turned out to be a blessing in disguise. We are now thinking carefully about the way we should hold these meetings in future.

We held our annual **Big Update** by Zoom, in March 2021. The day had 25 separate segments, lots of videos, three computer models of church buildings being demonstrated in real-time, 20 participants from as far away as Norway, and four of us collaborating to operate the kit, backing each other up in case of drop out. The day was very well attended, and a great success, but did stretch our resources, and we are looking forward to an in-person event on 27 April 2022. (With bubbly and cake.)





During the year we contributed to one relevant Government consultation, on the proposals for a new **Duty to Protect** from terrorist attacks. Along with others, we felt the proposals were disproportionate and their impact had not been thought through, and we are pleased that these concerns were acknowledged in the Government's response document.

In 2021 and continuing into 2022 we have been working in partnership with **two important research projects** run by the Centre for Christianity and Culture at the University of York. One has been examining the **impact of Covid-19** on places of worship (churchesandcovid.org). This led to a further initiative, exploring **what information is needed by places of worship** to help sustain them, and the best way of providing it. This includes enhancing the existing online knowledge portal, *Crossing the Threshold* (you can find the current version by googling).

Currently we have an in-house project to **summarise the most important reports** on the future of historic churches from the last decade. There is a great deal of information available: we hope to make it more accessible.

With this *Review* comes the **annual subscription reminder**. Our members – you – are vital to HRBA's work, keeping those of us involved in its day to day activities in touch with what is happening, guiding our thinking, and giving us credibility when we speak to other bodies. We hope you will want to stay a member, part of the wider movement to ensure a secure future for historic religious buildings.

VOLUNTEERS

HRBA is run entirely by volunteers – ten of us at the moment, plus Trevor Cooper as Chair.

Keri Dearmer, joint newsletter editor

Charlotte Dodgeon, policy

Janice Gooch, social media

Lucy Jacob, joint newsletter editor

Johanna Louw, marketing

Donna McDonald, membership

Susan Miller, *Roving Reporter*

Becky Payne, development and operations

Eleanor Scott, one-off projects

Katherine Wallis, copyediting

During the course of the year, **Diana Coulter** finished a six year stint in the membership role – we are grateful for her work in this crucial job.

CORPORATE MEMBERS

(2021)

Allchurches Trust
 Arthur Rank Centre
 Association of English Cathedrals
 ATS Heritage
 Baptist Union
 Berkshire Hist. Churches Trust
 Buckinghamshire Hist. Churches Trust
 Cathedral Communications Ltd
 Catholic Church in England and Wales
 Central Council of Church Bellringers
 Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture
 Church Commissioners, Pastoral and Closed Churches
 Church in Wales (Property Services Department)
 Church of England, Cathedrals and Church Buildings Division
 Church of Scotland (General Trustees)
 Church Recording Society
 Churches Conservation Trust
 Churches Trust for Cumbria
 Churches Trusts Forum
 Churches Visitors and Tourism Assocn
 CLAS (Churches' Legislation Advisory Service)
 Devon Hist. Churches Trust
 Diocese of Ely
 Diocese of Hereford
 Diocese of London
 Diocese of Norwich
 Diocese of St Albans
 EASA
 Ecclesiastical Insurance Group
 Ecclesiological Society
 Friends of Friendless Churches
 Historic Churches Scotland
 Jewish Heritage UK
 Maintain our Heritage
 Methodist Church Connexional Team
 National Churches Trust
 Norfolk Churches Trust
 Northamptonshire Hist. Churches Trust
 Norwich Hist. Churches Trust
 Oxfordshire Hist. Churches Trust
 Pugin Society
 Purcell
 Scotland's Churches Trust
 Somerset Churches Trust
 SPAB
 Staffordshire Hist. Churches Trust
 Suffolk Hist. Churches Trust
 Twentieth Century Society
 URC (United Reformed Church)
 Victorian Society
 War Memorials Trust
 Yorkshire Synod, URC

HRBA'S ROLE

We bring together those working for a secure future for historic religious buildings regardless of faith group or denomination.

We are the only group doing this across the UK.

Aims

Our aims are:

- To share information and best practice regarding historic religious buildings.
- Where appropriate, to act as a channel for communication with government.
- To act as midwife to projects involving more than one faith group or denomination.

Scope

Our scope is all listed places of worship in GB and NI, of whatever faith group or denomination.

In GB there are approximately 20,000 listed places of worship, of which about 60% belong to the Church of England (CofE). The CofE is supportive of the HRBA and is an active member.

Most other listed places of worship are churches belonging to the Church in Wales, the Church of Scotland, the Catholic Church, the Methodist Church, the Baptist Church and the United Reformed Church. The Churches Conservation Trust and the Friends of Friendless Churches also look after a substantial number. Other listed places of worship are looked after by other faith groups or smaller Christian denominations, or by dedicated Trusts.

Structure & Governance

HRBA is a self-financing part of the Heritage Alliance, reporting to the Chief Executive, Lizzie Glithero-West and through her to the Trustees.



HRBA HISTORY

The HRBA began life as an informal group meeting from time to time for discussion and update. Its existence was formalised in 2008/9 when it became part of what is now known as the Heritage Alliance.

At that time it started a quarterly newsletter to a small number of recipients.

Further changes came in 2011 when it set up a formal membership scheme for organisations and begun a free monthly e-newsletter available to all.

Further structural change came in 2012 when individual membership was made available. Since then it has developed and expanded its activities in various ways.

ROUTINE ACTIVITIES

Free monthly e-newsletter and *Roving Reporter*: The newsletter is well regarded and provides an important service to those engaged with historic religious buildings; sponsored by Luke Hughes & Co., it is now sent to more than 1,700 recipients.

They also receive the monthly *Roving Reporter*, which introduces people to stimulating ways in which historic religious buildings can be used.

Social media: Our Twitter account alerts people to a very wide range of news.

Ad hoc briefings etc:

On an ad hoc basis we produce briefings and publications and circulate our members with updates on emerging topics. Occasionally these lead to projects being developed by one or more of our members.

Members Briefings: Every three months we organise a meeting for members, with speakers. These bring people up to date and encourage sharing of best practice.

Big Update: Once a year we organise an all-day meeting, The Big Update, with a range of speakers that is open to members and non-members.

Consultations: We respond from time to time to government initiatives where appropriate. We are members of the LPWGS stakeholders' group.



ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustrations were kindly provided by our member, the Friends of Friendless Churches (FoFC).

Page 1: St Denis, East Hatley, Cambs – plaster conservation underway

Page 2: St Philips, Caerleon, Gwynedd; received by FoFC March 2021

Page 3: St Helens, Barmby on the Marsh, Yorkshire – received by FoFC 2020, £280k repairs from Culture Recovery Fund

Page 4: St Peters, Wickham Bishops, Essex – making new windows © Adrian Powter

If your organisation would like to contribute a set of photos next year, please let us know.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

We are run entirely by volunteers, so there are no employment costs. Subscriptions help to pay for travel expenses, general running costs, special projects, and accommodation and infrastructure services (kindly provided by The Heritage Alliance).

Please note we will acknowledge corporate membership on our website, unless you tell us otherwise.

Sole Traders, who pay a higher subscription than Individual Members, benefit from being able to publish on the HRBA website their contact details, a website link, and information about their activities (up to a maximum of fifty words).

SUBSCRIPTIONS: PAYMENT OPTIONS

Your invoice for the 2022 subscription will be emailed to you (covering one year from April 2022).

Please pay either by PayPal (following the instructions on the invoice) **or by BACS**. If by BACS, please let us know that payment will be made this way and give **reference: 'HRBA' and invoice number**. BACS payments details are: *Bank Address:* CAF Banks Ltd, 25 Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent ME19 4JQ. *Account name:* The Heritage Alliance. *Sort Code:* 40 52 40 *Account Number:* 00013268

In case of difficulty, please contact Donna McDonald at email: hrbmember@theheritagealliance.org.uk

We hope you will continue to support us, not least as a vote of confidence in what we are attempting to do.

The Historic Religious Buildings Alliance
Postal address: currently (March 2022) we are moving offices from Lavington Street. Please email us before sending anything through the post.

Email: hrb@theheritagealliance.org.uk

Twitter: [@hrballiance](https://twitter.com/hrballiance)

Web: www.hrballiance.org.uk