

**The Historic Religious Buildings  
Alliance**

***The Big Update***

Tuesday 10 June 2025

at St Marylebone Parish Church, 17 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5LT

**Programme**

Welcome to the 2025 HRBA Big Update.

As usual, the day is a mix of a variety of items. Those marked ♦ are briefer and more focused, typically ten to fifteen minutes or so; those with □ against them are more reflective, typically twenty minutes or more.

The event is not being recorded or live-streamed. Powerpoint presentations and videos will be placed on our website a few days after the meeting.

**We are grateful to Cathedral Communications for sponsoring this event, and to St Marylebone's for hospitality.**

9.30: St Marylebone Parish Church will open for tea, coffee etc.

**10.15: First Session (chaired by Trevor Cooper)**

- ♦ *Welcome from Trevor Cooper, Chair, the Historic Religious Buildings Alliance*
- ♦ *St Marylebone Parish Church – speaker to be confirmed*
- *What does heritage mean today? – Carole Souter*
- *Partners for Sacred Places: at the intersection of faith, heritage and community in America – Bob Jaeger*

11.35 (approx) Refreshments

**12pm: Second Session (chaired by Chris Catling)**

- *Measuring the immeasurable: the value of places of worship – Adala Leeson*
- ♦ *The Cherish project: reflections from half-way – Anne-Marie O'Hara*
- ♦ *Restoring Pugin at Nottingham Cathedral – Jane Hellings*

12.55 (approx) Lunch (hot buffet)

### 13.40 Third Session (chaired by Becky Payne)

- ❑ *Reusing cinemas as places of worship* – Kate Jordan
- ♦ *How to save a church: the inside story of the Headcorn Panthers* – Bella Mansfield
- ❑ *An Action Plan for Places of Worship in Wales* – Christopher Catling
- ♦ *Festival Churches: a model for growth* – Nigel Mills
- ♦ *Your Big Update*  
Open to any member of the audience, maximum of three minutes per person, updating us with news you want to share. No diatribes, no hard sell. Do you want to speak? – let us know before the end of lunch. The number of slots is limited, but we'll try and fit you in.

The following have already asked for three-minute slots.

- Sarah Crossland, the National Churches Trust
- David Knight, Church of England
- Martin Renshaw, Pipe up for Pipe Organs
- Peter Preston, Ecclesiastical Architects and Surveyors Association
- Anna Herbert, St Mary Magdalene Church, Newark

15.10 (approx) Short break

### 15.30 Fourth Session (chaired by Charlotte Dodgeon)

- ♦ *The Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme: whence and whither* - Trevor Cooper
- ♦ *One year in: the political outlook for religious heritage in 2025* – Lizzie Glithero-West
- ♦ *Walpole Old Chapel and its Friends: the story so far ...* – Jacquie Burgess
- ♦ *Who built Wigan's Churches?* – Will and Pat Sharp
- ♦ *The highs and lows of social media* – Rachel Morley

### Finish by 16.45

Please stay for cake and a glass of something sparkling as you chat over the day

The Historic Religious Buildings Alliance [www.hrballiance.org.uk](http://www.hrballiance.org.uk)  
Cathedral Communications [www.buildingconservation.com/](http://www.buildingconservation.com/)

**Jacquie Burgess** is a retired professor of Cultural Geography who has re-trained as an Early Modern Historian over the last 6 years. Having volunteered to help the local history group associated with the Chapel, Jacquie was invited to become a trustee of the Friends of Walpole Old Chapel (FWOC) when she completed her M.A. last autumn. FWOC was established in 2022 to prevent the sale of the chapel on the open market when the current owners – the Historic Chapels Trust - wind up as a charity. FWOC has looked after the Chapel on behalf of HCT and the two organisations are working together to conserve this unique seventeenth century Chapel which is Grade II\* listed and on the 'At Risk' register. FWOC will assume ownership of the Chapel next year. <https://walpoleoldchapel.org/>

**Christopher Catling** is the Secretary of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, Chair of the Llandaff DAC and a member of the Welsh Places of Worship Forum. He is well-known as a writer on heritage topics and an advocate for finding ways to keeping places of worship open, accessible and in community use. <https://rcahmw.gov.uk/>

**Trevor Cooper**, Chair of the HRBA, has had a long-standing interest in church buildings and their future. He wrote *How do we keep our parish churches?* and he jointly edited *Pews, benches and chairs*, looking at the history of church seating, and discussing its future development. He also edited *For public benefit: churches cared for by Trusts*, looking at the variety of Trusts caring for churches no longer needed for regular worship. He has been an external member since 2002 of the Historic England Places of Worship Forum and sat on Southwark DAC between 2003 and 2013. He was Chairman of Council of the Ecclesiological Society from 2000 to 2018. His historical research focuses on the interior of the English parish church after the Reformation. [www.hrballiance.org.uk/](http://www.hrballiance.org.uk/)

**Lizzie Glithero-West** has been the Chief Executive of The Heritage Alliance since 2016. Her previous career has been mainly in the civil service and she has expert knowledge of a wide range of policy areas including archaeology, heritage protection, museums and tourism. Lizzie has spent time as Private Secretary to Culture Ministers and the Permanent Secretary, as Head of Logistics at DCMS at the time of the General Election, and on secondment to English Heritage and to the National Museum Directors' Council. In 2014 she was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries. Lizzie is a trustee of the Egypt Exploration Society, a member of the Government's Heritage Council, and sits on a range of sector groups including the Historic Environment Forum and Steering Group, the Canal and River Trust's Cultural Heritage Advisory Board and the British Council's Cultural Diplomacy Group. Lizzie is a mum of two energetic little women and tries royal coto keep up with her academic interest in Egyptian Revival in her spare time. [www.theheritagealliance.org.uk/](http://www.theheritagealliance.org.uk/)

**Jane Hellings** has worked as a consultant in the cultural sector since 1996. She was Director of Fundraising and Communications for the Jesuits in Britain 2012-2019, since which time she has been working freelance, specializing in supporting churches and cathedrals with bids to The National Lottery Heritage Fund and other funders. She also works on behalf of the Heritage Fund, supporting grantees with project delivery. Jane has been working with Nottingham Cathedral to develop the Restoring Pugin project since 2021. <https://www.stbarnabascathedral.org.uk/heritage/restoring-pugin/>

**Bob Jaeger** co-founded Partners for Sacred Places in 1989 and currently serves as its President. He has overseen the publication of a recent study on the Economic Halo Effect of older sacred places, and the development of programs to help congregations with internal capacity building, capital campaigns, engagement with the community, and the shared use of space. He holds a Master's degree in Preservation Planning from Cornell University and an MBA from the University of Michigan. <https://sacredplaces.org/>

**Kate Jordan** is a Reader in Architectural History and Theory in the School of Architecture and Cities at the University of Westminster. Her research interests include modern and contemporary faith architecture, gender in architectural history and practice, and inclusive heritage. She is joint Principal Investigator on the RIBA-funded research project 'Moving pictures: reusing cinemas as places of worship in the diaspora'. <https://westminsterresearch.westminster.ac.uk/authors/j>

**Adala Leeson** is Head of Social and Economic Research at Historic England where she leads a small team of analysts undertaking and commissioning social, economic and environmental research. Adala and her team produce the [Heritage Counts](#) publication series which is a compendium of evidence considering the connections between heritage, the economy, society and the environment. Adala has worked closely with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to develop the [Culture and Heritage Capital \(CHC\) programme](#). She is a member of the CHC Steering and Working groups. Adala is the Principal Investigator for a AHRC/DCMS funded project developing a taxonomy for arts, culture and heritage. She is also a co-investigator on the AHRC/DCMS funded Caveat project developing economic techniques for culture and heritage valuation. Prior to joining Historic England, Adala worked as an Associate Economic Consultant for 10 years, advising public and private clients on economic development and regeneration programmes. She previously worked in academia as a researcher at the London School of Economics.

**Bella Mansfield** is a 54 year old charity worker and tutor. She has had a huge variety of jobs in the past, including 15 years as an investigative journalist, 10 years as a property developer, decades teaching English, Philosophy and Religious Studies and a few years in the entertainment industry. She now manages the Heart of Headcorn Cultural and Community Hub full-time as a volunteer, whilst writing her first novel. She lives in a multi-cultural communal household and her interests include analysing English accents, jazz singing, non-violent pest control and international relations. <https://heartofheadcorn.org/>

**Nigel Mills** has worked for the Association of Festival Churches (AFC) since 2024 as their Development Officer. The AFC is an independent charity established in 2020 to promote the Festival Church model and to provide help and resources to churches and Diocese who are exploring the idea. There are currently 350+ Festival Churches across the country with many more in the pipeline. The model is being widely adopted as a way of rejuvenating churches and parishes. Prior to the AFC, Nigel worked as a solicitor before moving to the Voluntary Sector where he worked for 20+ years as a bid writer, project manager and partnership builder. During this time, he came to understand that projects were generally more effective with local church involvement. In 2017 Nigel joined the National Churches Trust where he became Head of Church Support and had the privilege of working with some amazing churches making a real difference in their communities. <https://www.festivalchurches.org.uk/>

**Rachel Morley** became Director of the Friends of Friendless Churches in 2018. With a degree in engineering, Rachel went on to study Building Conservation & Repair at Trinity College, Dublin. In 2013, she was awarded Heritage Lottery funding to specialise in architectural stone and plaster conservation through the Institute of Conservation. Prior to joining the Friends, she worked in the conservation and development teams at the Churches Conservation Trust. She served as a Guardian and Trustee of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) for six years, is a judge for the John Betjeman Award for church conservation, and an assessor for the Architect's Accreditation in Building Conservation. Rachel's first book on English churches will be published by The Bodley Head in spring 2026. <https://friendsoffriendlesschurches.org.uk/>

**Anne-Marie O'Hara** has over 35 years' experience working in the built heritage sector, including as an Inspector for Historic England, a senior grants officer at the Heritage Fund, Head of the capital team at the Community Fund and Head of Projects and Property Planning at The National Trust for Scotland. Her last role involved leading a property-owning and managing charity and social Enterprise in Edinburgh. Two of the buildings she managed were formally churches. These provided affordable conference and meeting space for the third sector during the working day, accessible meeting, learning and activity space for the community out-of-hours and housed a local congregation who worshiped in the conference hall on a Sunday. A real house of good! Anne-Marie lives in Edinburgh enjoying her empty nest with her husband and cat.  
<https://www.nationalchurchestrust.org/get-support/cherish>

Sister and brother, **Patricia and William Sharp** grew up in Wigan and moved to London long ago. They've recently reconnected with the town and are researching the history of the churches, a number of which will close shortly. They are learning about the clergy, the architects and the wealthy donors. Using parish magazines, local newspapers and people's memories, they are also keen to capture something of the richness of parish life. Having focused initially on Church of England churches, they have realised how important Roman Catholic churches are in the town so are now including those, together with nonconformist chapels. Rather than writing a book, they've set up a website.  
<https://whobuiltwiganschurches.co.uk/>

**Carole Souter** is Chair and Trustee of The Heritage Alliance, taking up her appointment as Chair on 1 July 2024. She led the Heritage Lottery Fund (now the National Lottery Heritage Fund) as Chief Executive from 2003-2016, overseeing the distribution of billions of pounds of investment in culture, heritage and the environment. She has recently stepped down as interim chair of Historic Royal Palaces, having served in that role during the period of mourning for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, the Coronation of King Charles and Queen Camilla, and the commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, which was signed in Hillsborough Castle. Carole served from 2016-2022 as Master of St Cross College at the University of Oxford, a graduate College with students from all over the world. She also chaired the Board of Visitors of the University Museum of Natural History and, as a Trustee, the Planning Committee of the Oxford Preservation Trust. She chairs the Sulgrave Manor Trust, which cares for the ancestral home of George Washington in Northamptonshire, is currently a trustee of the Horniman Museum and Gardens and Oxford Preservation Trust, and is a lay canon of Salisbury Cathedral.  
[www.theheritagealliance.org.uk/](http://www.theheritagealliance.org.uk/)