



## REPORT OF THE COUNCIL FOR THE YEAR 2008

### Activities during the year

#### *Events*

A number of church visits and tours were offered. Members were invited to join John Vigar's tours to a variety of Kent churches. Also available to members were visits organised by Robin Millerchip to Romney Marshes, Liverpool, the Isle of Wight, Ipswich and Middlesex. In addition, the Society organised a number of visits, including a walking tour of Norwich City Churches and another entitled 'Versions of Gothic', visiting churches and chapels around Chancery Lane. However other visits organised by the Society suffered from disappointing uptake, and had to be cancelled. The Council is giving careful thought its future policy for visits.

The Annual General Meeting was held on Wednesday 11 June 2008 at the Art Workers' Guild, Queen Square, London, WC1, in conjunction with a lecture 'A cathedral thrice rebuilt: Llandaff cathedral through the centuries', given by the Society's President, Dr Donald Buttress. The lecture was very well received by upward of forty members and guests, of whom some 30 remained for the AGM, and stayed for an informal reception afterwards.

The tenth annual Stephen Dykes Bower Memorial lecture (that for 2007) was postponed until April 2008 and was given by Colin Kerr, RIBA, the architect for the recently completed project for the conservation and re-planning of Hawksmoor's masterpiece, St George's, Bloomsbury. This event was held at the church, and was followed by a tour of the building and an informal reception

The eleventh Annual Conference, which was attended by some 80 people, was held at the St Alban's Centre, Holborn. It had as its title 'Welsh Churches, and dealt with a number of aspects of churches in the Principality, including nonconformist chapels, screens, and Victorian churches.

#### *Publications*

The Society's website continues to attract a good number of visitors.

An edition of the Society's Journal, *Ecclesiology Today* was published in July 2008 (no. 40). The guest editor was Richard Halsey, based on the theme 'further thoughts', where authors

were invited to write short articles revisiting their recent work. This led to a rich and diverse issue, which was very well received. A small first for the Society was to print the cover of the journal in colour. The second issue of the Journal for the year, for December 2008 (but not issued until Spring 2009, no. 41), contained a range of articles, including a discussion of a group of rural medieval churches in Whittlewood Forest, articles on the English squarson and the building accounts of a Victorian church in Berkshire, a report on Friends groups, and a review of the recent history of reordering in Roman Catholic churches in this country.

## **Membership and Administration**

### *John Henman*

After a long period of service to the Society as a member of Council, John Henman decided in Summer 2008 to step down as Hon. Membership Secretary. Many members will have known John, or will have had dealings with him, as he had been on the Council for approaching thirty years, and for much of that time had looked after membership matters. In 1981, when we believe he took over the role, there were 138 people on the membership list. Now there are well on the way to seven times that number.

So his efforts have been the foundation on which the Society has built and grown. He has dealt, steadily and uncomplainingly, with the accompanying growth in administration, and has been the all-important human face of the Society to those joining, and to the many members who have had subsequent queries. The Society's current good health owes a very great deal to his continued efforts, stretching over nearly three decades.

The Council are very grateful to John, and have expressed our thanks to him personally, and by way of a small gift. The Society is close to John's heart, and we look forward to continued close contact, not least to seeing him at many of our future events.

### *Other administrative matters*

At the close of 2008, there were 934 active individual members in the UK (either life or honorary members, or with up to date subscriptions), at 885 different postal addresses. This includes 17 Honorary members and 98 Life members. In addition there were something under 20 overseas members. Of our subscribing members, just 74 pay by cheque – a measure of our success in moving existing members to paying by standing order a few years ago, and encouraging new members to pay in this way.

Your Council continued to meet at intervals through the year. As always, the Council are grateful to those members who provide active support to the Society in so many ways: organising and attending events of various kinds, contributing to the Journal, and carrying out administrative tasks of one sort or another. The Council would particularly like to thank Brigid Ockelton for distributing publications, Valerie Hitchman for administering the Annual Conference and being willing to be co-opted to the Council as Acting Membership Secretary, Ruth Cooke for looking after our Gift Aid administration, and Phil Draper for continuing to provide the 'Church Crawler' section of *Ecclesiology Today*. We are grateful, too, to Mark Ockelton for his willingness yet again to inspect the Society's accounts.