



REPORT OF THE COUNCIL FOR THE YEAR 2020

Introduction

Covid-19 meant that 2020 was a little different from previous years. We had to learn new skills and find new ways to continue with our normal activities as best we could. However, much of the Society's normal activity is based around bringing people together in one place, and consequently both the summer visits programme and annual conference had to be postponed until 2021.

Visits

Our visits programme was brutally curtailed by the Covid-19 pandemic, which restricted physical meetings after 20 March. Shortly before the first lockdown, on 13 February, Dr Eleri Lynn, Curator of the Dress Collection at Historic Royal Palaces hosted us for a private visit to Hampton Court Palace. Dr Lynn gave us a rare opportunity to view the stunning Bacton altar-cloth (from St Faith's church, Bacton, in Herefordshire), which had been refashioned from a lost dress of Queen Elizabeth I. Its rarity is reflected in the fact that there is only one example of 16th-century dress fabrics in the Royal Collection. The visit also included a talk about and visit to the Chapel Royal.

Casualties of the pandemic were visits to the London Charterhouse, the Garrison Church and Pugin's St Paul's in Woolwich, a tour of two J.F. Bentley's London churches (by Peter Howell, author of a recent book on Bentley), a visit to Leeds Minster (led by Council member Chris Webster), and a walking tour of medieval churches in York (led by Rob Andrews). We hope to reinstate all or most of these events when movement and meeting restrictions allow.

Annual conference

The Society's conference – The Lay Experience of the Medieval Cathedral – was arranged to coincide with 2020 being designated as “The Year of Cathedrals and Pilgrimage” by the Association of English Cathedrals. Due to Covid-19, it was postponed and will now take place on Saturday 2nd October 2021.

Lectures

The Society's Council decided to postpone the **2019 AGM**, and the lecture normally held immediately after it, from April until 9 December, when it was combined with the **Twenty-third Annual Stephen Dykes Bower Memorial Lecture**.

For the first time, the lecture was held on Zoom and people were asked to register for the event using Eventbrite. 152 people attended – the highest attendance recorded for this event – which somewhat made up for the fact that we were unable to conclude the evening with our

customary pre-Christmas reception for members and their guests at the Art Workers' Guild in Queen Square, Bloomsbury.

The lecture was given by Becky Clark, Director of the Cathedral and Church Buildings Division for The Archbishops' Council, and Secretary of the Church Buildings Council and the Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England. Her topic was '*The Challenges of English Cathedrals in the 21st Century*'.

England's Anglican cathedrals have lived through multiple crises, including those caused by politics, religion, health, ideology, economics and war. The Covid-19 pandemic saw them closed entirely, an almost (but not wholly) unprecedented event. At the same time issues raised through the Black Lives Matter protests, as well as ongoing pressures around climate change and Brexit, compounded an already febrile atmosphere. In exploring and developing her view of these challenges, Becky Clark spoke persuasively about the extensive changes in society through which cathedrals have passed over past centuries, and posed a series of significant questions for her audience to consider. How have cathedrals responded to such crises in the past, and what can we learn today from the successes and failures of the past? How have the buildings, and the activities in them, responded to changing patterns of belief and worship during points of national pressure? And what can the wider world learn from studying the adaptability and endurance of cathedrals?

Given the events of the previous nine months and their impact on the life of English cathedrals, and the wider cultural changes of recent years, Becky Clark's lecture was extraordinarily timely. We were most fortunate that she was able to share her reflections about the challenges facing cathedrals with us so openly.

Publications

The Society sends out four **e-newsletters** during the course of the year, which are free to anyone who wishes to sign up. These newsletters advertise the Society's events, and draw attention to many other matters of ecclesiological interest, including events organised by other societies. Members are very welcome to suggest items for inclusion. There are about 1,500 recipients, of whom approximately 500 are members of the Society.

Members received two substantial scholarly publications in 2020: in May we published *Ecclesiology Today* 58, which contained five articles and eleven book reviews. The articles covered a range of topics: the City churches in the Victorian period (by Simon Bradley); the rediscovery of church plate designed by William Butterfield at Lincoln Cathedral (Carol Bennett); the 'unlucky' story of Holy Trinity, Kingsway, London (Andrew Saint); Arts and Crafts churches (Alec Hamilton); and bats in churches (Rachel Arnold, Ione Bingley, Claire Boothby, Honor Gay and Rosemary Riddell).

In December we published *Chancel Screens Since the Reformation*, based on papers from our annual conference in 2019, with the addition of an essay by Dr Peter Doll: 'Dividing it Unites, Concealing it Reveals: a Theology of the Chancel Screen'. The conference papers, by an impressive line-up of scholars, covered the surprisingly eventful history of the chancel screen from the sixteenth century to the twentieth. They comprised 'Chancel Screens on the Eve of the Reformation' (Lucy Wrapson); 'A comely partition betwixt the chancel and the church': English Chancel Screens from Elizabeth I to the Civil War' (Trevor Cooper); 'A Patristic Experiment: The Screens of Sir Christopher Wren's Churches' (Mark Kirby); 'A chancel without a screen is scarcely a chancel at all': The Oxford Movement, A. W. N. Pugin,

Camdenians, Ritualists, Evangelicals, and the Rood Screen' (John Roberts); 'Gallicans versus Romans: Squaring Medievalism with Trent' (Andrew Derrick); and "'A considerable devotional and artistic asset" or "an obstruction to worshippers"?' Changing Perspectives on Chancel Screens in the Twentieth Century' (Clare Price). This is the first of what we hope will become the annual publication of conference proceedings.

Practical constraints, in part due to the pandemic, meant that we only published one edition of *Church Crawler*, in Autumn 2020. This edition contained a personal feature on St Michael's church at Great Witley from member Brian Ferris, and illustrated by Cameron Newham's splendid photographs. This was preceded by a bumper eight pages of news.

Members continue to send items of news and interest to the editor Phil Draper, which are very gratefully received if not always used. Any members who have ideas for a feature or article that they would like to see in a future *Church Crawler* should contact the editor.

Ecclesiology Today 58 and the Autumn *Church Crawler* were the last to be produced by our designer Allan Holdsworth, with whom the Society has had a long and successful relationship. We are very grateful to Allan for his support over the years, and wish him a long and happy retirement. We have been very pleased to welcome Vera Fabiankova as our new designer. Vera designed the Chancel Screens volume in 2020 and will be producing future editions of *Church Crawler* and *Ecclesiology Today* for us.

Finances

The draft accounts for 2020 will be posted on the Society's website in due course.

Membership

Individual/Concession/Life/Honorary: 780, of which 92 are life-members.

Overseas membership: 11

The 38 new members who joined between 1/1/2020 to 31/12/2020 are:

Mr Michael Jack
Mr James Aber
Mr Mike Rigby
Rev Neil Fairlamb BA, B Phil. M.Th.
Mr Michael Lawrence
Mrs Suzanne Evans
Ms Anne Gwatkin
Dr. Andrew Jackson
Mr John Peverley
Mr Samuel Henderson
Mr Malcolm Horton FCA
Mr Simon Smith
Mr Darren Marsh
Mr Stephen Withnell
Mr Barry Wadson
Mr Chris Rycroft
Mr Arnold Benson
Mr Martin Woods
Mr Colin Canfield BSc (Wales) MA (London)

Ms Kirsty Hartsiotis
Mr Raymond Gregory
Professor James Stevens Curl FSA MRIA FRIAS
Mrs Ruth Sharville
Dr David Roffe
Ms Elizabeth Dobson
Miss Juliet Morris-Gell MA
Ms Eleanor Townsend
Mr Edward Day
Miss Rachel Arnold
Mr John Lumley
Mr Robert Andrews
Mr John Roberts
Mr Graham Naylor
Mr Alan Walker
Mr David Bissell
Mr Oddbjørn Sørmoen
Dr Rebecca Warren
Mr Mark Little

All of whom have received a new-members pack which included the latest edition of Ecclesiology Today.

Deaths

Three members have sadly left us this year so far.

They are:

Mr C Sparks of Folkestone, member since 2005
Professor John Potter from Surrey, member since 2017
Mrs Marian Gower from Somerset, member since 2002

Changes to Council members

There were no changes to the membership of Council in 2020. Shortly before the first Covid-19 lockdown, the Chairman of Council wrote to members seeking volunteers to take on three roles: Conference Coordinator, IT Coordinator and Visits Secretary. Understandably given the circumstances, no volunteers were forthcoming. Christopher Moore very kindly agreed to continue as Conference Coordinator *pro tem*, and Geoff Brandwood likewise took up the reins as Visits Secretary. The Council will return to this topic in 2021.

Other volunteers

As always, the Council is grateful to those members of the Society who provide active support to the Society in so many ways: organising and attending events of various kinds, contributing to *Ecclesiology Today* and *Church Crawler*, and carrying out administrative tasks of one sort or another. The Council would particularly like to thank Mark Ockelton for inspecting the Society's accounts.

The Council of the Ecclesiological Society, 27 May 2021

Details of the Society

The Ecclesiological Society is a registered charity, number 210501.

Registered address: c/o the Society of Antiquaries of London, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1V 0HS. General correspondence should be sent to: 68 Scholars Road, Balham, SW12 0PG. Email: admin@ecclsoc.org

Website: www.ecclsoc.org

Twitter user name: @Ecclsoc

The Laws of the Society describe its aims and how it is governed. They were last modified and approved by the AGM of 19 April 2012. The Society's affairs are administered by a Council, and the Laws describe how members are elected by the membership onto the Council or are co-opted onto that body.

Meeting four times a year, over the last year on Zoom, (more normally in central London), the Council has transacted a variety of business in pursuance of the aims of the Society. In exercising its duties, it has taken due regard of the guidance published by the Charity Commission, including guidance on public benefit. The Council normally meets at Church House, and the Society is grateful to the Church of England authorities for allowing use of their premises in this way.

The Council has reviewed the training received by new members of Council. As at present, it is intended that this training will draw as appropriate from the history of the Society, its Laws, its policies and the supporting evidence, its recent and planned activities, and general guidance on the responsibilities of a Trustee.

Members of Council are the Trustees of the charity, and at the end of 2020 they were as follows: Dr Paul Barnwell, Dr Geoff Brandwood, Nick Chapple, Trevor Cooper, Andrew Derrick, Phil Draper, Anthony Gilmour, Dr Mark Kirby, Christopher Moore, Becky Payne, Sarah Perons, Paul Velluet, Dr Christopher Webster, Graham White.