

# HISTORIC CHAPELS TRUST

## Newsletter

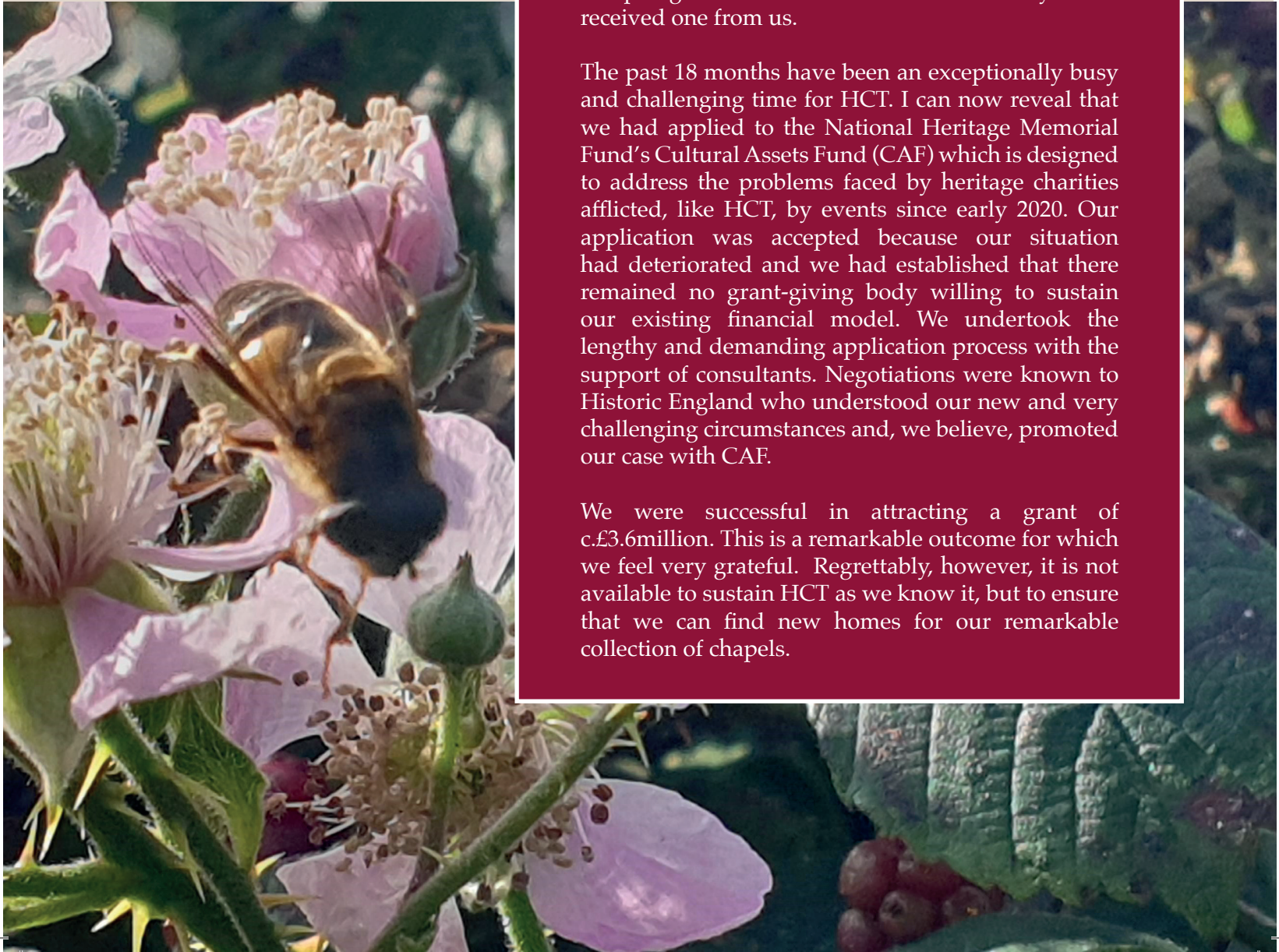
*Summer 2023*

### A message from the Chair

I hope this issue of the newsletter finds you well and I do apologise that it has been some time since you last received one from us.

The past 18 months have been an exceptionally busy and challenging time for HCT. I can now reveal that we had applied to the National Heritage Memorial Fund's Cultural Assets Fund (CAF) which is designed to address the problems faced by heritage charities afflicted, like HCT, by events since early 2020. Our application was accepted because our situation had deteriorated and we had established that there remained no grant-giving body willing to sustain our existing financial model. We undertook the lengthy and demanding application process with the support of consultants. Negotiations were known to Historic England who understood our new and very challenging circumstances and, we believe, promoted our case with CAF.

We were successful in attracting a grant of c.£3.6million. This is a remarkable outcome for which we feel very grateful. Regrettably, however, it is not available to sustain HCT as we know it, but to ensure that we can find new homes for our remarkable collection of chapels.





The money can be spent on the repair of some chapels which meet CAF criteria. That work will be carried out on our behalf via the Churches Conservation Trust (the CCT) with whom we have a long-standing strong working relationship, who will also be funded to manage the maintenance of the chapels for the three-year period of the grant. A new Conservation Project Manager, Kathryn Moore, has been employed by the CCT to oversee this area of work.

We have also been successful in completing negotiations with Historic England who understand that we face costs not covered by CAF and that our reserves are limited. They have agreed with our assessment that all avenues of long-term revenue funding have been explored and found wanting - so their further and exceptional grant aid is only to enable us to achieve the process outlined above.

Finding a long-term, sustainable solution to safeguard the future of the chapels is our primary goal. HCT no longer has adequate resources to do this and we believe that the chapels will be better cared for if we can find new, sympathetic custodians to take on their ownership and breathe new life into them.

This funding has meant that we have avoided the danger of immediate closure and all the chaos that would have brought

and that we can find the best long-term solution for the future of our chapels. However, this funding is restricted to repairs and the dispersals of the chapels. It does not cover any of HCT's core costs.

It is crucial that HCT remains viable in the short to medium term to manage the project, which is essential to protect our chapels. We are immeasurably grateful for the support that you give to HCT, especially over the last few years when times have been particularly difficult. I hope that you will, therefore, consider supporting our *Fund the Future of our Chapels* campaign, which will provide much needed funding to meet our essential core costs, which are difficult to raise from other sources, to ensure we can continue our work at this vital time.

This does not mean that activities at our chapels have ceased, as you will read on the following pages. St George's German Lutheran Chapel, for example, recently held a lecture by the esteemed author Will Self. It does mean, however, that we need to secure a sustainable long-term future for each chapel, if we are to avoid them being lost for good.

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*Chris Smith OBE, HCT Chair*

## Fund the Future of our Chapels campaign

Over the last three years we have been humbled by the generous support of our donors. Our Emergency Appeal, launched in 2020 in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, raised £20,000 and the following year our Fighting Fund raised an additional £10,000. This funding enabled us to care for our chapels at a time when income from events was significantly reduced due to the pandemic.

We are now asking for your help again. We are at a pivotal moment in the history of HCT. The funding we have received from the National Heritage Memorial Fund and Historic England has given us the all-important life-line we needed to undertake urgent repairs to our chapels most at risk and to carry out a process of finding a secure long-term future for them.

However, this funding does not cover any other activities and we do need to raise some match funding towards many of our essential core costs such as insurance, heating and lighting, while at the same time advising local communities about how they can help as well as keeping supporters up-to-date. Our resources have depleted significantly, especially in the last year. It is essential that HCT can continue in the short-to-medium term so that we can manage the transfer of our chapels to new owners better placed to care for them sympathetically. We therefore hope that you will make a donation to our Fund the Future of our Chapels campaign. A gift of any size will make a big difference at this crucial time. To donate please complete the enclosed form and return to Historic Chapels Trust, St George's German Lutheran Church, 55 Alie Street, London, E1 8EB or donate online at <http://easydonate.org/HCTE5>.

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*Vikki Thompson,  
HCT Fundraising Consultant*



## Shrine of our Lady of Lourdes

Local volunteers at the Shrine of our Lady of Lourdes, in Blackpool gave a warm welcome to a party of visitors from the Twentieth Century Society May 2022, who were touring significant twentieth century buildings in the North West. The group included local MP, Paul Maynard, who takes a keen interest in twentieth century buildings. The Shrine is also used by a local group of Old Catholics, who hold a service of worship once a month.



Photo's courtesy Steve Pilcher/HCT

## Chapel News

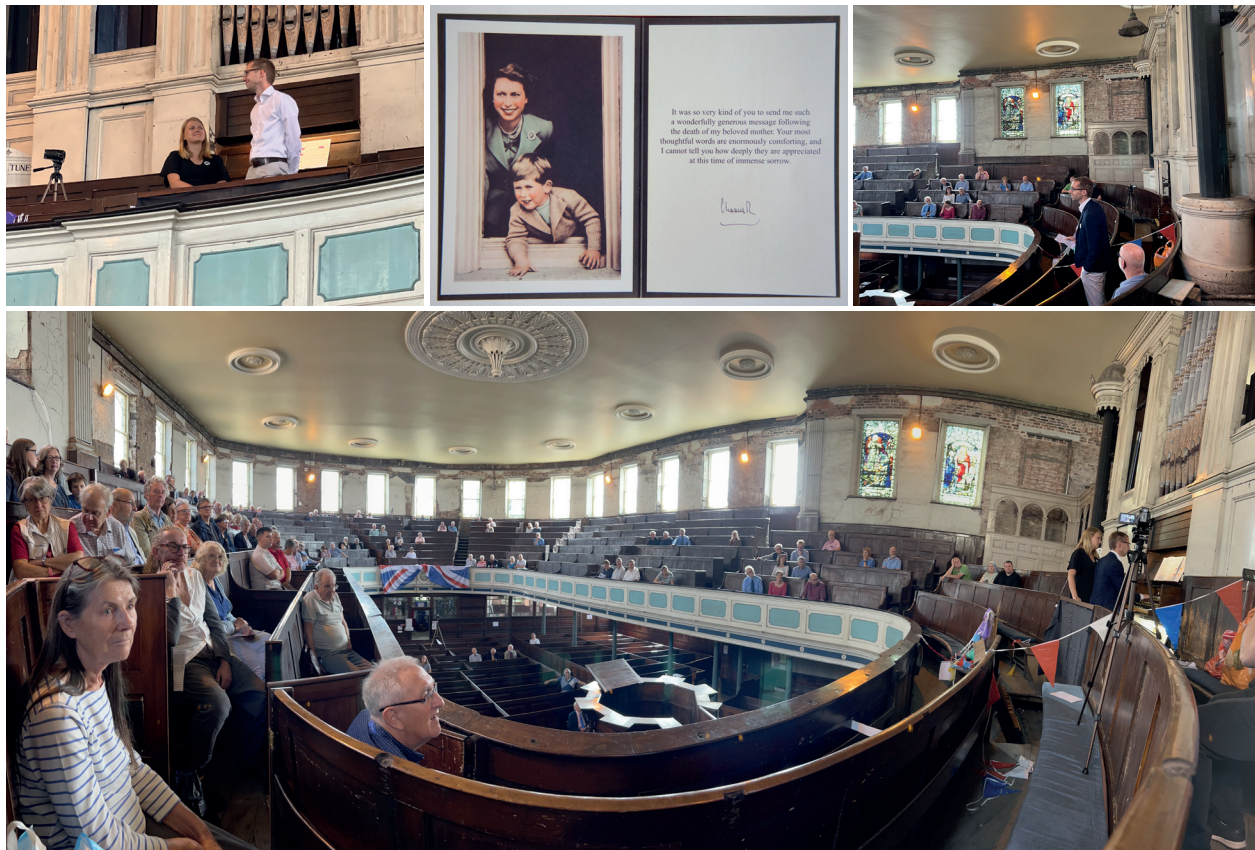
### Bethesda Methodist Chapel

During 2022 the Friends of Bethesda oversaw work to install some additional stops and a new pedalboard to the organ which they had funded themselves.

The organ in Bethesda continues to be a focal point for running events in the chapel. On 20th August 2022, the acclaimed Dutch organist, Gert van Hoef, was in Hanley and played to an audience of over 140 people in the chapel (even though there was a train strike), including local MP Jo Gideon.

The Friends of Bethesda continue to hold regular concerts and Open Days in the chapel. The 2023 series re-started on 1st April, with a visit from the Biddulph Male Voice Choir. Please visit <https://m.facebook.com/Bethesda> for details of future events.

Following the death of Queen Elizabeth II last year, the local committee sent a letter of condolence to King Charles III, who has visited Bethesda twice. It is very heartening to be able to show the reply that was received from the King.



Photo's courtesy Elaine Titley

## Petre Chapel

The major external repairs that were undertaken several years ago are settling down and weathering in well against the original stonework. Unfortunately, key members of what was the local committee have moved away from the area and the grounds are in need of volunteers to keep the undergrowth in check. Offers of help for will be most welcome. Please contact [hct@thecct.org.uk](mailto:hct@thecct.org.uk) with offers of assistance.



Petre Chapel, Photo courtesy Steve Pilcher/HCT



Todmorden in the Spring, Photo courtesy Steve Pilcher/HCT

## St George's German Lutheran Church

The Friends of St George's German Lutheran Church continue to host a diverse and fascinating variety of talks, concerts and Open Days. Highlights of 2022 included youth choirs from Germany and Denmark giving performances in August and October respectively, followed by the writer and commentator, Will Self, who gave a well-attended talk about the author W G Sebald in December 2022.

The 2023 season of talks is well underway. Ben Bradshaw MP visited in January 2023 and gave a talk about working in Berlin, as a BBC correspondent, at the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Subsequent speakers have included author and former Conservation Officer for Islington, Alec Foreshaw, who gave a talk in April about the many redevelopments that took place in the 1980s.

One of the St George's volunteers has commenced cataloguing a small collection of papers from the 1970s that have yet to be placed in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets' archive. One of the letters in the collection is from the second wife of Pastor Martin Niemoller. Apparently, he was due to visit St George's in 1977 to give a sermon. Niemoller is famous for speaking out against the rise of Nazism and is well known for the quotation:

*'First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out – because I was not a socialist.*

*Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out – because I was not a trade unionist.*

*Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out – because I was not a Jew.*

*Then they came for me – and there was no one left to speak for me.'*

As well as regular visits from Dietrich Bonhoeffer and the theologian, Karl Barth, this letter adds to the list of opponents of Nazism who visited or were involved with St George's at one time or another.

Visit [www.stgeorgesgermanchurch.org.uk](http://www.stgeorgesgermanchurch.org.uk) for further details of other talks and events in 2023.

## Wainsgate

The Friends of Wainsgate continue to host a range of concerts in the very atmospheric chapel set on the edge of Wadsworth Moor, approximately 900 feet above Hebden Bridge. These included 'Back in the Day', an event to remember Wadsworth's people and past, in March 2023. For details of future events visit: [www.wainsgate.co.uk](http://www.wainsgate.co.uk)

The Friends have also become a charity in their own right and are thus able to obtain Gift Aid on donations, and are better placed to seek donations from other charitable bodies. One very positive development has been the conversion of the existing toilet space into a disabled access toilet facility, which was fully funded by the activities of the Friends of Wainsgate.

Chris Barnett, a volunteer, has set up the Wainsgate Graveyard Project, which has a wonderfully well researched website. The project has two primary aims: first, to tell the story of the graveyard and second, to tell some of the stories behind the names and dates. He has produced a fascinating and detailed record of the burials adjacent to the chapel. It is an exemplar of how to address such a task as well as being a mine of information of social history of the locality.

You can view the project at <https://wainsgategraveyardproject.co.uk>

## Walpole Old Chapel

The local committee have continued to hold an interesting and varied programme of events in this delightful chapel, the result of the conversion of a farm dwelling in the 17th century. 2022 ended with the annual carols and readings by candlelight on 17th December 2022, the first time the event had been held for three years due to Covid restrictions.

The local committee were delighted to welcome The King's Singers to perform three concerts on Wednesday 14th June 2023, as part of the Aldeburgh Festival programme. Since 1968 the group, formed by graduates from King's College Cambridge, has become the "gold standard" of acapella singing. It is hoped that their concert would be the first of many that will be hosted for the Aldeburgh Festival and Snape Maltings.

Meanwhile investigation and recording work has taken place to open up a limited number of sections of the render to assess the condition of the timber structure behind, as a prelude to working up a programme of defective render replacement and, where necessary, repair of the timber frame construction. We are indebted to Kirstie Robins of Ptolemy Dean architects for co-ordinating and overseeing the works, along with a team of specialist contractors and consultants.

Walpole Old Chapel is also involved in a production of "Witchfinder", an innovative musical project inspired by the activities of "Witchfinder General" Matthew Hopkins during the 17th century. The play explores the themes of prejudice, difference and division in communities. Rehearsals took place in July and it is hoped that there will be live performances of it in the chapel later this year.

A new development in 2021 was the "local crafts and produce" shop in the chapel's vestry where visitors can buy pottery, stained glass, honey and lettering art cards by local makers who give a generous percentage of their takings to the chapel's funds.

Please visit Friends of Walpole's website - <https://walpoleoldchapel.org/> - for further details of the works to the building and future events.

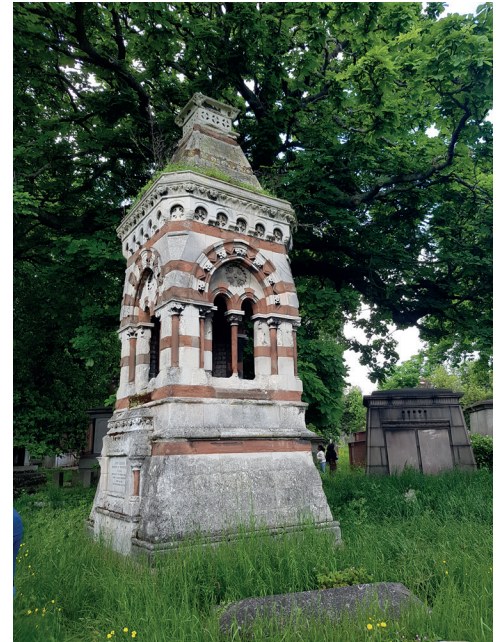
## Links between our sites

The Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery very kindly invited the Friends of St George's German Lutheran church to pay a visit to Kensal Green Cemetery on Saturday 20th May 2023 for a tour of the cemetery with a particular focus on graves with a German connection. The party were fortunate to have the benefit of very pleasant weather. The informative tour was led by Head Guide, Henry Vivian Neal and former HCT Director, Dr Jenny Freeman. One observant visitor spotted the tomb of John Gibson, architect of Todmorden Unitarian Church, in the Anglican section of the Cemetery. The tour ended with a visit to the Dissenters Chapel and the catacombs – and the visitors enjoyed tea and cake in the exhibition area.



Dissenters Chapel - Catacombs

Photo's courtesy Steve Pilcher/HCT



John Gibson tomb - Kensal Green Cemetery

## Todmorden Unitarian Chapel

The local committee, in collaboration with the CCT, completed a major refurbishment of the attractive Grade II listed Lodge that stands by the entrance gates to the grounds in 2022. The single storey building now has a couple resident in the building, and the rent helps pay towards maintenance and running costs of the church.

The church is a popular venue for weddings and also facilitates funerals. The local committee hosts a programme of events, which included an Arts Festival in June 2023.

Please visit: <https://todmordenunitarianchurch.wordpress.com> for further details.

Sadly, metal theft remains a problem, despite actions to tighten up transactions undertaken at scrapyards. In April 2023 observant locals at Todmorden reported that six lengths of lead on the ridge of one of the aisle roofs had been stripped off. A movement detector alarm system had been effective in successfully encouraging the vandals to cease their activities and leave the site, without stealing the lead. Local supporter, Nick Lunn, a very competent builder and steeplejack, was able to successfully retrieve the damaged ridge lead and re-instate it.



Some years ago the Historic Chapels Trust purchased the original Capronnier drawings for the stained glass at Todmorden Unitarian Church. These have now been housed in the West Yorkshire archive. The local committee have taken copies and are working up proposals to use them for exhibitions etc.



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