

# Heritage & Buildings Newsletter





**Cover photograph:** During my career as a Church Organist, I never got anywhere near an instrument as spectacular as the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Baroque pipe organ at the Igreja da Santa Cruz (Church of the Holy Cross) in Coimbra, Portugal!

**Above:** A particularly Portuguese phenomenon is the use of blue and white “azulejo” tiles for the decoration (both interior and exterior) of churches and other buildings. This started in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century and the tiles play a role in climate control as well as their ornamental function. This example is from the Igreja da Santa Cruz, probably dating from the late 17<sup>th</sup> or early 18<sup>th</sup> Century.

**Rear Cover:** The Nativity Window at St. Martin, Desford, Leicestershire. This Grade II\* church dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> Century featured on this year’s DACs Conference itinerary as an example of a church which has been reordered by reorientation.

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If you would like any news items from your church, or an event you are organising, including in future issues of my [Heritage & Buildings Newsletter](#), please let me know. The deadline for inclusion in Issue #10 (Spring 2017) is February 20th.

Author’s Note: this Newsletter is produced in my spare time, and consists entirely of my own personal thoughts, reflections and opinions drawn from my work and my travels. It is NOT an official publication of the Diocese of Liverpool, Historic England or the Churches Visitor & Tourism Association and is not to be taken as such. References to third party publications or websites are for information only and no liability is accepted for the content of these or for the results of any action taken (or not taken) in reliance upon them.

Ian Simpson MBA CBIFM, December 2016

# Welcome!



It is a full year since the last edition of **H&BN** came out. For this I can only apologise – I have had my hands full with a few other projects, including the Restoration Project at my home church St. Agnes & St. Pancras, Toxteth Park. I didn't feel I could do the Newsletter justice within the limited time available so it had to go on the "back burner" for a while.

This issue has a strong local flavour as I report on one of my flagship projects which has recently been completed. This is the Roof Repair Fund-supported programme of works at St. Bridget with St. Thomas, Wavertree.

Two churches to the north of the Diocese, both Grade I Listed medieval buildings, also feature as I look back over some of the projects I've been involved in during 2016. I also want to share something of what I have learned about the value of using Unmanned Aerial Vehicles in surveying churches and the potential big savings that this technology offers.

Further afield we look at a stunning church in Coimbra, Portugal, and think about what we can learn here from that country's system for identifying and supporting the treasures of its national heritage.

As ever, if I can help you with any Heritage- or building-related matter don't hesitate to contact me by email [ian.simpson@liverpool.anglican.org](mailto:ian.simpson@liverpool.anglican.org) or by phone (0151 705 2127). The postal address is Diocese of Liverpool, St. James House, 20 St. James Road, Liverpool L1 7BY.

**Merry Christmas!**

Wishing you all a peaceful and blessed Christmas, and health, prosperity and happiness in 2017.

**Christ Church, Toxteth Park** (1874 by Culshaw and Sumners, Listed Grade II\*) has been awarded a First Round Pass by the Heritage Lottery Fund under the Grants for Places of Worship programme. The award is worth £21,900 and will allow the church to work up a scheme of major repairs to the roof timbers which are suffering from dry rot.

**All Saints, Edge Hill** (1812, architect unknown, Listed Grade II) has been awarded a Delivery Phase Grant by the Heritage Lottery Fund to allow the current phase of restoration work – coincidentally also to deal with damage caused by dry rot – to go forward and work will commence on site in January.

The LPW Roof Repair Fund-assisted project to refurbish the rainwater goods at **St. Bridget with St. Thomas, Wavertree** (1872 by E.A. Heffer, Listed Grade II\*) was completed in early November – see article in this Newsletter.

The first phase of HLF-funded building repairs at **Holy Trinity, Parr Mount** (1857 by W. & J. Hay, Listed Grade II), a project on which I have been working since my first day in post at the Diocese of Liverpool, was completed in October and the church was formally reopened by the Lord Mayor of St. Helens on October 18<sup>th</sup>. Such is the damage here caused by the inappropriate application of cementitious pointing in the late 1970s that at least another phase of work will be needed in the near future – this is a cautionary tale for anyone about to embark upon a project to repoint an historic building! As well as the structural work, the church now has refurbished kitchen and servery facilities, new toilets, a new heating system and an office to allow FINTRA, the Fingerpost Tenants and Residents Association, to be based in the church creating a single hub for the residents of this deprived former mining community.

**Heritage & Buildings Newsletter** is available online: if you have missed any back issues, or donated them to your local Doctor's surgery (they're more interesting than all those leaflets about revolting medical conditions!) you can get them from <http://www.iansimpson.eu> (Publications page) as PDFs.

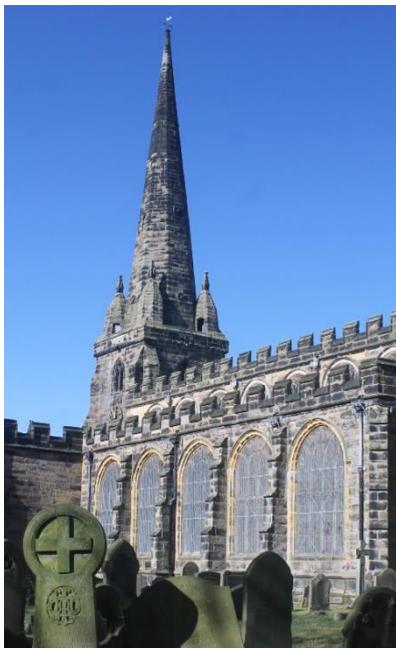
Don't forget - if you have any news you'd like to share with us, send it in to me - by email or post - by February 20<sup>th</sup>.

## Halsall's Weather Vane is Back!



A significant milestone in the £300,000 HLF-funded repair project at Grade I **Halsall, St. Cuthbert**, was reached on December 13<sup>th</sup> when the gilt weather vane was returned to its rightful place atop the spire, 126ft above the West Lancashire Plain. The first sign of the problems here came in November 2013 when the weather vane was seen wobbling alarmingly from side to side in the wind. It became apparent that the cross tree inside the spire had failed and that some major stonework repairs were required to the spire - all a long way up! Temporary work was done to make the spire safe and the weather vane was removed until the permanent repairs could be done. The weather vane was regilt and repainted whilst it was at ground level.

## Sefton's Wall Paintings Deciphered



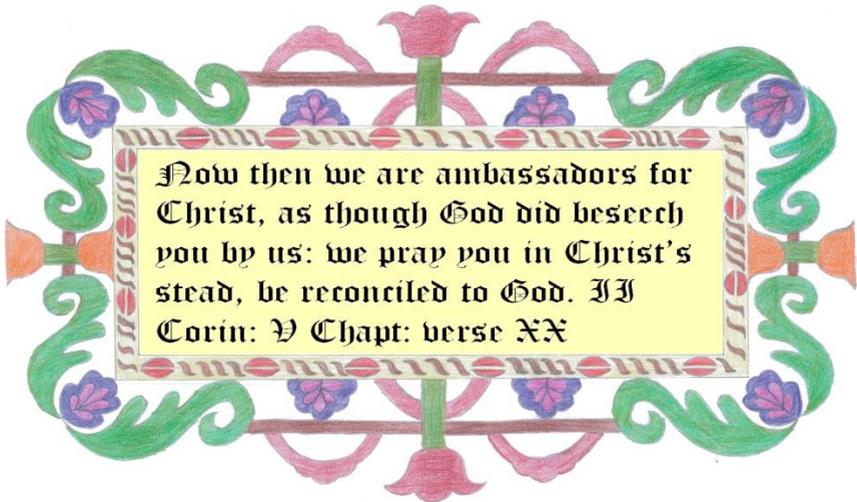
Sefton Parish Church is absolutely bursting with just about everything I find fascinating about ancient churches. Grade I Listed, it is one of the treasures of Merseyside. I've visited the church a few times to offer support and advice on subjects ranging from a roof leak to the condition of the boundary wall, but the most interesting project here (so far) has been to decipher the inscriptions within the spandrels of the north arcade.

These are almost certainly Jacobean, dating back to the time King James I decreed that the only appropriate form of decoration for churches was Scripture verses. During the years following 1611, many medieval wall painting schemes were painted over with Bible verses, and it may be that the verses here were applied over such a scheme.

The Georgians, as was their wont, plastered over the inscriptions (you can still see chisel marks which were made as a "key" for the plaster) and they were covered up – until along came the Victorians and uncovered them again.

Today, hardly surprisingly given their history, they are in a pretty poor state. I took some high resolution photographs and analysed them, taking out each colour layer in turn to be able to positively identify some key words. I used a searchable text version of the King James Bible to identify the verses and copied them into the original font.

My volunteer assistant Samira Etaat then created designs for the borders in which the texts sat, based on the remaining fragments of decoration. Four centuries on, we now know what the decoration of St. Helen's Church **might** have looked like when new.



*One of the spandrel inscriptions as it is now (above) and as it might – and it must be reiterated that this is speculative – have looked when new.*

I have been asked whether it would be a good idea to repaint the inscriptions now that we know what they said and how they might have looked. I do not believe this would be good at all. Painting over the last surviving scraps of 17<sup>th</sup> Century paint with modern material would be an act of vandalism and the result would have no authenticity. The inscriptions could however be recreated elsewhere within the church on boards as part of a historical display, or even projected on to the walls using lights. Either would be an acceptable alternative.

## Using “Drones” in Church Building Surveys



Earlier this year the late Alan Rickman’s final film “Eye In The Sky” tackled, in what I thought was a profoundly moving way, some of the ethical questions around the use of drones in aerial warfare. Drones have also featured in news reports recently; apparently some villains have been using them to fly contraband into prisons. In the Netherlands this problem is so bad that the police now use specially-trained eagles to bring down the offenders’ drones!

Drones - unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) - do have peaceful and legitimate uses too, of course. My first encounter with one on a church project was at St. Mary The Virgin, Waterloo, last year. A serious case of dry rot was affecting the tower and we needed to know what was the source of the water ingress causing the fungal outbreak. Scaffolding the tower would have been prohibitively expensive, and the sloping nature of the site meant that using a cherry-picker for high-level access was not an option.

Robinson’s Timber Preservation, which was leading the investigation, engaged Aerial Video TV to carry out a UAV survey of the church in the hope that this would yield some useful information. The church was surveyed inside and out (remember we are talking about a professional pilot here) and the resulting high-definition pictures and video footage revealed some of the church’s fascinating secrets. Not only could we see the source of the water ingress to the tower, but for the first time we could see the true complexity of the roof structure with some 35 slopes. Many of the valleys are completely hidden from view at ground level - and of course their inaccessibility makes for serious maintenance difficulties.



When I put together the application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the Restoration Project at St. Agnes & St. Pancras, Toxteth Park, I included a sum of £1,350 for the hire of a cherry-picker to inspect the roof and high-level stonework at close quarters.

When it came to actually doing the survey it turned out I was almost right with the hire charge (£1,425) but then the Council demanded £4,800 for a permit to close the road for a few hours! There was no way the project could stand this cost and so I decided that the next best thing to getting up there in person would be to commission a drone survey... at a cost of just £450.

The UAV's high definition camera relays live footage back to a control panel (the photo above really doesn't do justice to the quality of the image) allowing the surveyor to zoom in on areas of concern. All footage is recorded and screenshots can be taken to provide illustrations for reports, grant applications, etc.

As well as providing us with detailed images of exterior elements in need of repair, the UAV made a number of short flights inside the building to film the vaulted ceilings and stained glass windows. This material will be included in a smartphone app the church is launching as part of its commitment to the HLF's heritage engagement outcome.



In the right hands, the UAV is a very powerful tool for surveying otherwise inaccessible parts of church buildings. It is unintrusive and relatively affordable, and it gives clear pictures. It doesn't give any of the additional sensory information you can gain from going up on the roof though – for instance it is difficult to tell how loose a piece of stonework might be just from a picture.

Beware, this is not a field into which the well-meaning amateur or hobbyist drone pilot should be tempted to stray. The drones used in the surveys discussed above cost several thousand pounds and were flown by a qualified pilot. The Law says that anyone who wishes to fly a drone for any commercial purpose should have an appropriate class of pilot's licence and file a flight plan in advance of each operation. In addition, these drones are fitted with safety devices to prevent them from being flown into stained glass windows or other objects which could be seriously (and expensively) harmed in an accident.



## Repairs Completed at SBT



St. Bridget's Church (the "with St. Thomas" bit was added in 1996) was built in 1872 by E. A. Heffer as a chapel-of-ease to Holy Trinity, Wavertree. At that time, hard as it is to imagine now, what is now Lawrence Road was a semi-rural area although it rapidly urbanised and by 1890 had become a major centre for the manufacture of ships' ropes. The design is very rare for a British church – it is an Italianate basilica with round-headed windows and a tall western campanile. The interior again is Italianate, with a beautiful coffered ceiling and a mosaic reredos of Da Vinci's Last Supper by Salviati of Venice. The church is listed, Grade II\*.

Today the church serves a parish which has some of the worst levels of deprivation – particularly in terms of child poverty – in the country along with a highly transitory population including large numbers of students and recent immigrants.

In 2014 some potentially serious water ingress problems were noted in the church and upon investigation these were found to be the result of failures of the high level rainwater goods (gutters, hoppers and downspouts) together with some localised areas of roof damage and degraded pointing. An application was made to the Listed places of Worship Roof Repair Fund in 2015 and it was with great delight that SBT learned that it had been successful; an award of £99,500 was made towards a total estimated project cost of £119,452.

The project was put out to tender and the successful bidder was Heritage Conservation & Restoration Ltd., of Ashton-under-Lyne, which had previously worked on Listed Churches within the Diocese and completed these works to a high standard. Work started in July 2016 and for the next four months the church would be shrouded in scaffolding and hoardings, making it rather dark inside and prompting some locals to speculate whether, like so many other Liverpool buildings, the church was being turned into student accommodation!

The project team had some interesting decisions to make. For example, what colour should the rainwater goods be once restored? The various shades of green visible before the project started were all the result of years of fading in the sunlight and degradation due to atmospheric pollution and none really suited the architecture.



Thankfully we were able to find some undamaged patches of the original paint in normally-inaccessible places and from these three test patches were prepared of the closest shades of green available today. Once these dried we picked the "winner" which can be seen by anybody passing the church now that the scaffolding has come down.

God's provision is indeed marvellous. Whilst repairs to the rainwater goods and roofs proved to be less costly than initially envisaged, the clerestory window frames were found to be in a poor – even dangerous – condition and urgent repairs needed to be made. With permission from the Roof Repair Fund the "spare" money from the grant was allocated to pay for all eighteen frames to be made good.

The project was completed in early November, slightly later than envisaged due to the extra work on the window frames, but within budget. SBT now has the roof and rainwater goods it needs in order to be able to prevent water ingress and arrest the damage to the priceless interior.

## Coimbra's Igreja da Santa Cruz

In October 2016 I returned to Portugal for the first time in ten years. In the opening years of the new Millennium the country was my home although based on the south coast and with little spare time I never made it as far north as Portugal's third city Coimbra, home of one of Europe's oldest universities and (for those of us with an interest in such things) Portugal's only surviving trolleybus service. I'm delighted to have put this omission right at last!

In 1131 Coimbra became the capital of Portugal, which had only been an independent nation for three years, having liberated itself from the Province of Galicia and proclaimed the nineteen year old Dom Afonso Henriques its first King following the battle of São Mamede in 1128. The new capital needed a new and suitably prestigious monastery and so the Mosteiro da Santa Cruz (Monastery of the Holy Cross) was founded by St. Theotonius; although begun in 1131 it wasn't finished until 1223. King Afonso Henriques was buried in the Monastery in 1185, to be followed by his son and successor Sancho I in 1211. The burial of the country's first two kings here ensured a special status for the building which endures to this day. It is a National Pantheon and part of a World Heritage Site.



As with many "12<sup>th</sup> Century buildings", what we see today bears little if any resemblance to the original. As built, Santa Cruz would have been in the Romanesque style.

From 1507, on the orders of King Manuel I, the church was completely renovated and rebuilt under the Architects Diogo de Boitaca and Nicolau Chanterene. The new build exemplified the Manueline style (Portuguese Late Gothic) and no expense was spared - this was, after all the time when Portugal's trading power, international influence and wealth were at their height.

The Manueline rebuild took the best part of half a century. Highlights from this period include the superb rib-vaulting to the ceilings, the white and blue "azulejo" tiling and the tombs of Portugal's first two Kings, who were reburied in sarcophagi fitting the founders of what had become a great nation.



Those who are wondering where to find fantastic beasts need look no further than the superb pulpit which emerges from the azulejo tiling. The whole thing is exquisitely carved all over, presumably the work of Chanterene, but the creature which inhabits the base clearly owes more to Greek mythology than to the Christian tradition!



One of the real treasures of Santa Cruz is the superb Baroque organ, built between 1719 and 1724 and somewhat unusually sited about half way along the north wall of the nave. I should imagine this instrument is capable of producing some thrilling sounds. I have tried to find some more information about the organ but without success - there is apparently a guide book and history of the church but I couldn't find a copy anywhere, and there is very little material on the Internet either in English or in Portuguese.

This isn't an uncommon situation in Portugal. Whilst the Portuguese State takes its heritage seriously and (in spite of serious economic difficulties) devotes considerable sums of money to saving it and keeping it open to the public, interpretation material is often minimal and gives away little beyond basic details. Where it does exist it is often bilingual (Portuguese and English), or even multilingual, which is very much to be applauded. I can't help but think that, with the increase in tourism to Portugal in recent years, it would be a worthwhile commercial proposition to invest in better interpretation and a series of guide books of which the latter could be sold at a profit to raise useful extra funds.

At a time when we in Britain are looking afresh at how to ensure a sustainable future for our priceless religious heritage, it is worth reflecting upon practice in other countries and what we can learn from their example. The Portuguese system, in which the State takes on the ownership and management of the most important sites (Património Nacional), offers security and a guaranteed (limited) budget within a legal framework that is much tighter than our Listed Buildings system. It backs up the talk about how important these sites are with some real cash and ensures that day-to-day maintenance is carried out.

On the other hand, in the Portuguese system there is no distinction between religious and secular sites: church, castle and stately home all get exactly the same signage and publicity. There is no local community ownership, at least at an official level (some sites have local equivalents of what we would call "Friends Groups"), and there is no incentive to raise additional funds commercially. In some churches there is nowhere at all to leave donations!

This system offers very little to the churches (and other heritage sites) which aren't adopted as Património Nacional – although the same could be said about the position of non-Listed churches here in Britain which have very limited access to repair grants and no opportunity to reclaim VAT on repair costs.



66 the King of East and in memory of George Webster  
and of their infant children William and Jane

of Wall. Erected in  
also of George Wood

68 aged 68  
22 aged 9

also of Sophia his wife who died in 1835 aged 35  
this window was erected in 1868 by the children of George Webster