



**Oxfordshire Historic
Churches Trust**

*Supporting Oxfordshire's
Churches since 1964*



ANNUAL REVIEW 2026

www.ohct.org.uk Reg. Charity No. 1168567

THE OXFORDSHIRE HISTORIC CHURCHES TRUST

Charity Number 1168567

Patrons	Marjorie Glasgow BEM, Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire The Rt Revd Dr Steven Croft, Bishop of Oxford The Rt Revd Gavin Collins, Bishop of Dorchester Sir Hugo Brunner KCVO The Rt Revd Colin Fletcher OBE Bernard Taylor DL
President	The Rt Revd Gavin Collins, Bishop of Dorchester
Trustees	Prof. Malcolm Airs OBE FSA FRHS Hilary CakebreadHall (Vice-Chair of the Trust & County Organiser for Ride and Stride to 20.1.2026) Dr Nicola Coldstream FSA (to 13.5.2025) Giles Dessain FCA (Treasurer to 16.9.2025; Trustee to 20.1.2026) Dr Stephen Goss (Chair) Richard Hughes (Secretary) Natalie Merry Dr Linda Monckton (from 10.2.2026) Cynthia Robinson (Trustee to 20.1.2026; Grants Officer to June 2026) Paul Sandford (Grants Officer from June 2026) Stephen Slack CBE George Wingfield Digby (Treasurer from 16.9.2026)
Other officers	Gillian Coates (Website Editor) Clare Fox (Events Administrator) Eluned Hallas (Data Manager) Phoebe Hart (Membership Secretary)
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Front Cover: C12 corbel supporting the roof in St Michael's, Cumnor (Grade-I listed)

FROM THE CHAIR

The Trust has had another busy year providing grants to the county's churches: according to our constitution, our role is to work for the benefit of both local communities and the wider public, to preserve and enhance Oxfordshire's historic churches used for public worship and their associated structures and contents. We provide financial help for the repair and practical enhancement of churches, chapels, and meeting houses in Oxfordshire regardless of denomination and including buildings dating from Saxon and Norman times through to the twentieth century.



Longworth, St Mary
(Grade-I listed)

13C-17C

David Booth Award: £35,000 for works to the tower & bells

During the financial year 2025-2026, we awarded grants totalling £350,200, considerably less than the record amount of £564,434 in the previous year. For a number of reasons, our reserves had risen to a level where it had been appropriate for a few years to overspend significantly above income, but, from now on, the Trust will need to balance its books and maintain annual grant-giving at between £300,000 and £350,000 until new sources of income can be developed.

In reducing our level of grant-giving, we have needed to reduce the maximum amount available for any one project. Whilst this leaves churches having to raise more funds from other sources, it is fortunate that most of the projects that we support are still being completed: our grants serving as useful 'seed-funding' for further fund-raising. Mindful of our underlying purpose of preserving the cultural heritage represented in the county's church buildings, we are giving a degree of priority to projects focused on preserving the historic fabric or on ensuring that the buildings are accessible and as comfortable and useful as possible: the future of our churches depends on their being well maintained and seen locally as a valuable asset. We have continued to support the smallest projects more generously in percentage terms, especially when that means

urgently needed maintenance can proceed without delay. Overall, our grants have covered close to 9% of the total costs of the work undertaken.

Operating with a lower level of reserves makes us all the more dependent on our annual income. We are grateful for donations from our Members and from a range of charitable foundations including the Cooper Trust, the Doris Field Trust, the Samuel Gurney Foundation, the Kilroot Foundation, the Lord Phillimore Trust, the Schuster Trust, and the Adrian Swire Trust; and we thank you all for your continued support.

A list of all grants and their purposes is given below (p. 9) showing the wide range of purposes that we like to support; included were four grants of £25,000 and a David Booth Award of £35,000 commemorating his exceptionally generous legacy. Legacies are a valuable source of income for the Trust: if you have not already done so, please consider remembering our Heritage Fund in your Will. This is an expendable endowment fund which we are building to produce regular investment income to secure the future.

Glympton, St Mary
(Grade-II listed)

12C-17C

*Awarded £25,000 for re-roofing
and the repair of damage due to
subsidence*



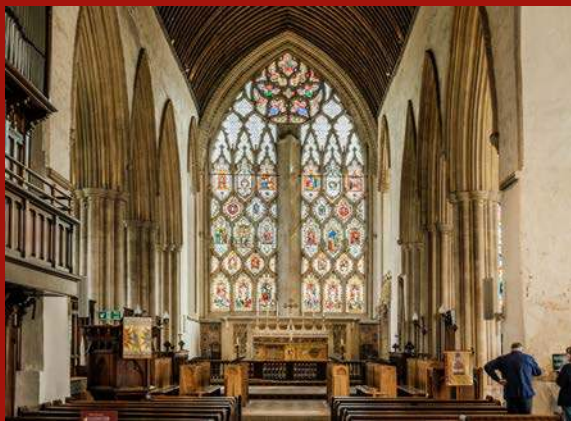
Our most important single recurrent source of donations is our sponsored “Ride+Stride”. In 2025, this brought in just over £91,000 (c.f. £89,281 in 2024). From this, £36,324 were passed according to participants’ wishes direct to their churches, bringing our total support to churches this year to £386,524.

Our grant offers are kept open for up to three years to give churches time to raise the other funds that they need and for the works to be started. Each year a few churches decide not to go ahead with their work, and, for this reason, just £8,962 in grants were cancelled in the year. Of course, churches which cancel their grants are welcome to apply again for new or updated projects.

MEMBERS' ANNUAL MEETING: LEAVERS AND THEIR SUCCESSORS

Our Annual Meeting for 2025 was held in Dorchester Abbey. We are grateful to the Rector who welcomed us and led Evensong, and to the local volunteers who gave us an overview of the building and then an excellent reception.

We noted that Dr Nicola Coldstream had stood down as trustee in May, and that three of our trustee-officers were due to step down in early 2026 having completed 10 years for the Trust: Hilary CakebreadHall as our Vice-Chair and Ride+Stride County Organiser, Giles Dessain as Treasurer, and Cynthia Robinson as Grants Officer. The meeting expressed its gratitude for the very considerable amount of work that they had done. We are delighted that Dr Linda Monckton has now joined the trustees (like Nicola, she is an expert in medieval architecture). Nicola is continuing with the Trust as Alternate Area Representative for the Chipping Norton. George Wingfield Digby has taken over as Treasurer, and Paul Sandford, a qualified architect, will become Grants Officer during the summer.



**Abbey of St Peter & St Paul,
Dorchester (Grade-I listed)**
The choir and east window 14C

At the time of writing, we are still searching for a new Ride+Stride Organiser.

Our thanks are also due to Norman Dawson and Alison Trowell, who have put in many years of work as Area Representatives for Abingdon and Wantage respectively, to Graham Collings who has taken on the full role for Abingdon (where he had been Alternate), and to Francis Brown who has joined us to succeed Alison.

Stephen Goss

RIDE+STRIDE – A REFLECTION AND THE FUTURE

August 2014 – I was driving through Sainte-Maxime and my phone rang, “Basil* here – have you got a minute? The Trustees were wondering if you’d take over running Ride+Stride...”. Maybe it was ‘vacation relaxed brain’ but I said yes and thus a new and privileged opportunity arose.

In 2014 it was all somewhat different – every aspect was paper-based and not many church coordinators used email, there was no website presence bar the date and all participation took place on the single R+S Day. Our wonderful Area Coordinators delivered significant quantities of forms, posters, stickers and more across the county.

But over the last twelve years we have embraced the more ‘internet’ world which most of us live in now, much can be done by way of registration, getting sponsorship using a fund-raising platform, checking church opening plans and choosing where to visit for your R+S by looking at our website. Importantly for those who prefer the more traditional paper-based event this has also been maintained.



In 2018, Bishop Steven, still relatively new to Oxford, led a R+S pilgrimage to churches in Oxford City by canal boat. As he retires this year, we record our thanks for his support for the Trust and for his interest in our work.”



*Basil Eastwood – Chairman
OHCT 2012 - 2017



To encourage new participants we have been developing some suggested routes for walkers and cyclists (and for those whose saddle is on a horse) – these have all been tried and tested by participants or us, and make planning a route simple – whether it is for first time or, as for many, an annual event.

Covid19 changed much for R+S, as it did for many events – but it also refreshed what and how we work and encouraged a more relaxed approach.

Above all, we need to continue to welcome new participants, embrace change, support each other, make it easy to be involved and remember that just under 1/3rd of the annual Grants expenditure is raised by R+S. R+S is a vital part of OHCT!

So as I write in June 2026 I want to thank everyone I have worked with over the last 12 years – it has been a most enriching and rewarding time.

Hilary CakebreadHall



Photos include: 2017 as Revd Canon Dr Edmund Newey, the then Sub-Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, lead a walking route around Oxford Churches. The Right Rev'd Bishop Gavin Collins, who regular cycles for Ride and Stride. Various participants showing off their 'vehicles' of choice.

GRANTS AWARDED IN 2025-26

		£
Appleton, St. Laurence	Re-order tower floor; electricals	1,000
Ashbury, St. Mary**	Replacement of failed lights	1,000
Banbury, St Leonard***	Guttering	2,000
Chesterton, St. Mary	Curtilage wall repairs	1,000
Church Hanboro', SS Peter & Paul	Rebuild spire\stonework repairs	23,000
Denchworth, St. James	Repairs to Belfry	1,000
East Hagbourne, St. Andrew	Stonework repairs	3,000
Glympton, St. Mary	Re-roofing work	25,000
Hampton Gay, St. Giles	Roof and tower repairs	25,000
Headington, St. Mary	Refurbishment/new doors	13,500
Henley on Thames, Sacred Heart RC	Installation of new heating	7,500
Kirtlington, St. Mary**	Emergency roof works	1,000
Little Coxwell, St. Mary**	Roof and stonework repairs	3,000
Little Tew, St. John	Water supply/access path	4,000
Littleworth, Holy Ascension	Feasibility study	1,500
Longworth, St. Mary*	Tower work/rehang bells	35,000
Oxford, St. Giles	Installation of new organ	15,000
Oxford, St Mary & St John, Cowley Rd	Tower repairs	25,000
Oxford, St. Thomas the Martyr	Restore clock/downpipe repairs	5,000
Oxford, The Oratory RC	Internal rebuilds and repairs	25,000
Radley, St. James the Great	Restoration of tombs/gallery	5,000
Rose Hill Methodist Church	Work to WC; kitchen; entrance	13,000
Rotherfield Peppard, All Saints	Replacement of organ	5,000
Shellingford, St. Faith	Upgraded services and temp. WC	7,200
Shilton, Holy Rood	Restoration of bells	5,000
Shrivenham, St. Andrew	Replacement of boiler	3,000
Sibford Gower, Holy Trinity	Creation of community space	9,000
Spelsbury, All Saints	Feasibility study	1,500
Steventon, St. Michael & All Angels	Stonework repairs	12,000
Stoke Lyne, St. Peter	Nave ceiling repairs	3,000
Stoke Talmage, St. Mary Magdalene	Extension for WC/kitchen	15,000
Sutton Courtenay, All Saints	Refurbishment of tower and bells	15,000
Swalcliffe, SS Peter & Paul	Conservation of window	7,000
Wallingford Baptist Church***	Roof work	2,000
Wallingford, St. Mary le More	Replacement of boiler	22,000
Watlington, St. Leonard	Refurbishment	6,000
West Challow, St. Laurence	External repairs/rehang bells	2,000
Total new grants offered		350,200
Less grants not taken up		(8,962)
	GRAND TOTAL COMMITTED	341,328

* David Booth Award ** Emergency Application ***Supplementary Grant

CHURCH TOURS IN 2025

RETRACE A CHURCH TOUR FOR YOUR RIDE AND STRIDE

If you are planning a route for your Ride and Stride this year, you might consider retracing one of our church tours: these are designed to take in churches of interest that are in easy reach of each other - and an excellent lunch stop.

SPRING TOUR

This year's Spring tour was led by Clive Fewins: we visited four fine churches to the West of Oxford all dating from C12/C13, though the fourth, St Nicholas at Fyfield, had been extensively rebuilt after a fire in 1893.

Having started at St Giles', Standlake, with its distinctive octagonal tower, fine carved corbels and a Victorian roof with beautiful wooden angels holding Signs of the Passion, we moved to St Michael's Stanton Harcourt. This is a veritable treasure house with a rare mid-C13 chancel screen, some early medieval glass fragments, the C13 Shrine of St Edburg, and the spectacular Harcourt Chapel with its many memorials, including two tombs displaying handsome effigies of knights (late C14 and early C15), and the standard borne for Henry VII at Bosworth Field.



St Giles', Standlake
(Grade-II* listed)
C12 and later

After lunch at the Harcourt Arms, we moved on to St Michael's Cumnor which boasts fine carved corbels (see the front cover), an impressive Jacobean pulpit and Clerk's Desk, excellent Victorian stained glass, an admirable wooden spiral staircase in the tower, and an imposing C16 stone statue of Queen Elizabeth I.

Our final call was to Fyfield, which, despite the devastating fire, preserves plenty of evidence of its former glory – beautifully carved stone and some fine monuments (see the back cover).

AUTUMN TOUR

Our Autumn tour was led by Elizabeth Knowles: we visited four very different churches to the South of Kingston Bagpuize. St John the Baptist is a relatively rare example in Oxfordshire of a Georgian Church. Built in 1800 to replace an earlier church, it has a simple, elegant design and displays many monuments from the original building.

St James the Great, West Hanney, has a tall, narrow Norman nave and a late C12 bell tower over the North transept. It has a Norman font and an Early English chancel arch with finely carved stone capitals.



**St Peter's,
Charney Bassett
(Grade-I listed)**

*Tympanum over an
internal doorway to the
chancel showing a figure
with two dragons
(late Saxon or early C12)*

After an excellent lunch at The Plough, West Hanney, our next stop was the small chapel of St Mary the Virgin at Lyford, modest and rubble-built, with a timber bell turret. We heard about its connections with the Yates, a local recusant family, and the arrest nearby of Edmund Campion and his Jesuit friends – the chapel is now a pilgrimage site commemorating his martyrdom. It also has two moving memorials to a local young man lost to a torpedo in the Dardenelles and to the crew of a WWII bomber which crashed nearby.



**St Peter's,
Charney Bassett
(Grade-I listed)**

*C12 carving round the
head of the south door.*

Our fourth church was St Peter's, Charney Bassett, whose C12 carved stonework, shown here, speaks for itself.

AUGUST EVENING CHURCH VISIT

Holly Kilpatrick's August evening church visit, was to St Denys', Northmoor. Though the west tower is a 15C addition, the body of the church is largely early 14C and has been remarkably unchanged since then. The roof rests on corbels carved with naturalistic foliage rather than the stylised forms seen later in the 14C. The church also has a beautifully carved 17C communion rail and some wall-paintings, though they are now quite faded. Afterwards, we adjourned for supper at The Red Lion.



**St Denys'
Northmoor
(Grade-I listed)**

*Early 14C
Tower 15C*

THE WOLFSON AND BLENHEIM LECTURES

At Wolfson, in July, our speaker was Fergus Butler-Gallie, the Vicar of Charlbury with Shorthampton. He spoke on the topic of his most recent book "*Twelve Churches: An unlikely history of the buildings that made Christianity*". He argued that buildings as diverse as the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, Hagia Sophia, and modern churches in Nigeria and the US can reveal how Christianity changes over time, responding to and overcoming the messiness of good and evil in the world.

For the 2025 Blenheim Lecture, Julian Munby, historian and archaeologist, gave an illustrated overview of the history of the carriage, from a Swedish Bronze Age rock drawing, through the archaeological remnants of a 500BC wagon and the surviving metal parts of Roman chariots, to a beautiful 14C illumination of a ceremonial carriage and then finally to the marvellously decorated coaches of Central Europe and Imperial Russia: a fascinating and undoubted *tour-de-force*.

BOOK REVIEWS

In the year, we published three reviews of books on churches and their architecture on our website. We are indebted to the Trustees who write these reviews and to our Secretary, Richard Hughes, our commissioning editor.

SOME OF THIS YEAR'S GRANTS



STEVENTON, ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS

(Grade-I listed)

13C with alterations in 15C and 18C. Attention is needed to dangerously decaying masonry on the south wall and tower

Awarded £12,000 for repairs

SHELLINGFORD, ST FAITH

(Grade-I listed)

12C in origin, with many examples of fine Norman work and an early 17C spire. It also has some notable 17C & 18C monuments.

Awarded £7,200 for installation of new water and electrical services in preparation for a later improvement of facilities.



HENLEY ON THAMES, SACRED HEART R.C. CHURCH

(Grade II listed)

Arts and Craft Gothic, built in 1936, with Pugin furnishings.

Awarded £7,500 towards the installation of a new air-source heating system.



WATLINGTON, ST LEONARD

(Grade-II* listed)

12C and 14C, with extensive 19C reworking. This church has much fine stonework and stained glass by Kempe.

Awarded £6,000 for a range of refurbishments including doors to facilitate disabled access



OXFORD, ST MARY AND ST JOHN, COWLEY ROAD

(Grade-II listed)

An imposing Gothic Revival church designed by Alfred Mowbray and built ca 1880 with the tower added some 10 years later. It has many fine fixtures and a good collection of stained glass.

Awarded £25,000 towards urgent structural work to the tower.

WHO MAY APPLY FOR A GRANT?

OHCT gives grants for repairs and practical enhancements to places of Christian worship of all denominations provided that they are more than 50 years old and open for regular public worship. Churches considering applying may wish to make contact with our Area Representative (see our website www.ohct.org.uk for details) who will be pleased to visit and advise on the scope of our grant support. The Council of OHCT meets three times per year to consider applications, though, in emergencies, grants may be awarded outside these meetings. In considering applications, the Council takes into account the applicant church's financial resources and its ability to raise additional funds.

The application form is short and simple and may be completed and submitted online.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Our income in 2025-2026 at £394,080 was close to the previous year's (£393,899); with the Ride and Stride income slightly increased for a second successive year to £91,265 from £89,281. Overall receipts from legacies and bequests were £52,091 (£54,263 in 24-25). Income from our investment portfolio increased to £197,274 from £191,813 despite sales of £390,000 in the second half of the year to meet our grant commitments.

The level of grants awarded this year, £350,200, was significantly reduced from £564,434 in 2024-2025. In recent years, the Trust's policy has been to spend considerably above its income so as to reduce the balance of reserves that had become inappropriately high. As a matter of policy, the Trust is continuing for the time being to overspend, though now by a much smaller margin as our reserves get closer to the target set by the Trustees.

Administrative expenses were essentially unchanged from those in previous years, at £28,962. Our principal costs are for IT infrastructure, publicity (mostly for Ride and Stride), and the annual audit. The Trust operates at a low cost due to a substantial portion of the administrative work being undertaken voluntarily.

The value of our investments at the year end was £5,715,298 versus £5,825,308 at 31 March 2025. This decrease of some £110,000 should be seen in the context of the sales of capital holdings (£390,000) mentioned above. This sale of capital was confined to the General Fund. By contrast, the Heritage Fund, an expendable endowment, was carefully preserved to produce income towards our expenditure: in addition, the Heritage Fund also achieved a healthy appreciation protecting its capital value against inflation. The underlying percentage increase in the value of all investments held at the year-end was 5.1%. The Finance Committee, whose members have a range of appropriate experience of investment management and charity trusteeship, made one significant change to our holdings during the year by selling one multi-asset fund in its entirety given its persistent under-performance against its benchmark. Virtually all the proceeds were re-invested in a less volatile multi-asset fund managed by another of our existing fund-managers. Our investments are now managed by four managers: Cazenove, Newton Investment Management, M&G and Savills (the latter a property fund).

Finally, I would like to thank the Finance Committee for their help and support throughout the year, and in particular my predecessor, Giles Dessain, for his on-going help during the handover of responsibilities.

George Wingfield Digby ACA

SUMMARY OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES IN THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT	Year to:	March 31 st 2025	March 31 st 2026
REVENUE			
Ride+Stride		89,281	91,265
Subscriptions & Donations		15,143	14,616
Trusts		40,275	36,344
Legacies for general use		46,500	12,373
Investment Income		191,813	197,254
Events and miscellaneous sales		3,125	2,510
General Fund Revenue: total		386,136	354,363
Legacies/gifts for the Heritage Fund		7,763	39,718
	Total Revenue	393,899	394,080
EXPENDITURE			
Grants awarded		564,434	350,200
Less grants not taken up		(3,960)	(8,962)
Parish share of R+S revenue		36,468	36,324
Stride administration		8,890	8,747
Administration		19,226	20,215
General Fund Expenditure (sub-total)		625,057	406,523
	Total Expenditure	625,057	406,523
MOVEMENTS IN FUNDS			
Net income/(expenditure)		(231,158)	(12,443)
Gains / (losses) on investments		(78,847)	273,326
	Overall Movement in Funds	(310,006)	260,883
BALANCE SHEET			
Investments		5,825,308	5,715,298
Current assets:-			
Bank Accounts		77,951	215,238
Gift Aid recoverable /Prepayments		1,264	463
(sub-total)		79,215	215,701
Less current liabilities:-			
Grants still to be paid		720,742	483,480
Accrued expenses		6,000	8,855
(sub-total)		726,742	492,335
	Net assets	5,177,781	5,438,664
Comprising:-			
General Fund		861,380	786,024
Heritage Fund		4,316,402	4,652,640
	Net funds	5,177,781	5,438,664
Movement in investments			
Starting balance		5,864,155	5,825,308
Additions at cost		40,000	6,664
(Disposals)		0	(390,000)
Gains/(losses) on investments		(78,847)	277,326
	Closing balance invested	5,825,308	5,715,298

Full Statutory Accounts and the Annual Report will be filed with the Charity Commission when they have been audited, and they will be published on the Trust's website in the Autumn.

MEMBERSHIP AND HOW TO JOIN

Membership of the Trust is an enjoyable and easy way of helping us to preserve Oxfordshire's heritage of churches, chapels and meeting houses. Members are asked to make an annual donation of at least £20 for individuals or £30 for a family (at one address), and they receive our newsletters with early notice of tours, lectures and meetings. To find out more and join, please visit www.ohct.org.uk/membership or email [email membership@ohct.org.uk](mailto:membership@ohct.org.uk).



St Nicholas, Fyfield (Grade-II* listed), Tomb of Sir John Golafre (d.1442) – in two tiers: above, the knight who served under Henry V, and below, as *memento mori*, a decaying cadaver

LEGACIES

Once you have considered your family and friends in your Will, a legacy gift is a lasting way of helping to protect the historic churches of Oxfordshire for the future. Anyone intending to leave a legacy to the Trust should seek advice from their own solicitor. We should like to encourage anyone making us a bequest to consider specifying that it should be held in our Heritage Fund, whose aim is to provide the Trust with a consistent source of investment income for the future.

Please see our website: www.ohct.org.uk/donate/legacy/