



SOMERSET BUILDING
Preservation Trust

NEWSLETTER

March 2021

Dear Members

After months of successive lockdowns, at last we are beginning to see a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel.

I know how anxious everyone is to return to “normal” but I think we are going to have to be patient for a little while longer until we see how the easing of restrictions plays out. Our main priority must be to stay within guidelines and keep everyone safe.

However, we are optimistic that we may be able to arrange an interesting visit for members later this summer. We do have a venue in mind but, as you will appreciate, it is still too early for many places to take firm bookings. As soon as we are in a position to finalise the details, we will let you know.

Despite the challenges, our work has continued in the background advising various organisations on preservation and restoration projects, some of which are detailed in this newsletter.

We are continuing to invite entries for the Stansell Awards although whether we will be able to hold a presentation ceremony this autumn or have to postpone it until 2022 will depend on the ever-changing Covid regulations.

I'm very sorry to have to report that John Brunsdon, one of our founder trustees and staunchest supporters, has died. John took a keen interest in architectural conservation, particularly in the Mendip area, and members will remember him from our visits to various houses which he invariably attended. He will be greatly missed.

May I repeat how much we appreciate members' continued support during what has been a very difficult and frustrating year for everyone.

We look forward to seeing you before too long. In the meantime, please stay safe.

Russell Lillford
Chairman

A reminder...

The best way to keep up to date with our activities, is to look at our website www.sbpt.info .

The site is easy to navigate and gives access to a wide range of information, including past projects and research documents.

John Brunsdon

It was with great sadness that trustees learned of the death of one of our founder members and most committed supporters.

Retired veterinary surgeon John Brunsdon was a man of considerable energy – until recent years he walked up Glastonbury Tor every day – and possessed a delightful sense of humour.

John was a member of Glastonbury Town Council for 44 years and twice served as Glastonbury Mayor in 1980 and 1983. He also served for many years as a Mendip District Councillor and County Councillor.

He was a member of the Mendip Conservation Advisory Panel and took a particular interest in architectural conservation.

In November 2001, he was awarded the MBE for conservation services in Glastonbury and received his award at Buckingham Palace from the Prince of Wales.

John was also a National Trust Tor warden and served as President of the Glastonbury Conservation Society. In recent years he had been advising on the restoration of footpaths in and around Glastonbury.



John cuts the cake with former secretary Erica Adams to celebrate the Trust's 20th anniversary in 2018

Tone Mill

Members will have been pleased to hear that Tone Works, on the outskirts of Wellington, has been given a £348,000 grant by Historic England to fund the first phase of work to restore the former cloth finishing works and give it a new role in the community.

Tone Mill, which dates back to 1796, was part of the Fox Brothers textile company and a major employer in Wellington. When the works closed in 2000, most of its traditional textile machinery and equipment remained in place, with part-processed pieces of cloth still on the machines.

SBPT's former chairman Mike Foden and secretary Erica Adams set up a charitable trust and initiated a feasibility study with the aim of saving the buildings and finding a new role for them. Unfortunately, despite all their hard work, the plan had to be shelved, due to a lack of support from various external organisations.

This new grant, part of the government's Cultural Recovery Fund, has revived ambitions to preserve this important example of the county's industrial past.

It is planned to turn it into a resource for local groups and, taking advantage of its proximity to the River Tone, create a wildlife-rich environment.

Sandhill Park

The long and sorry saga of the vandalised and fire-damaged historic mansion at Sandhill Park, Bishops Lydeard, looks set to continue for a little longer.

Talks involving Somerset West and Taunton Council and the administrators, are still going on. The SBPT has been included in some of these discussions and has offered advice on aspects of the project.

We hope that these negotiations will result in a resumption of work to give a new lease of life to the Grade 2 listed building which dates back to 1720 and has such a long and colourful history.

Bishops Barn

The 15th century tithe barn in Wells, thought to be one of only 200 great barns remaining in the country, is set to be returned to the local community.

Mendip District Council has voted to transfer the barn to Wells City Council. This will require the permission of the Charity Commission which has said it would look favourably on the request.

The SBPT is supporting Mendip's application. It is felt that the more local management structure offered by Wells City Council is the right solution for the Barn's future.

The barn, a Grade 1 Listed building and Scheduled Ancient Monument, was gifted to the citizens of Wells in the late 19th century for community use. It came under the control of Mendip District Council with the reorganisation of local government in 1974.



Stansell Awards

Our plans to hold a special ceremony to mark the 20th anniversary of the launch of the Stansell Awards sadly had to be postponed. We are hopeful we may be able to stage the awards this autumn although it will depend on the national Covid guidelines.

The new closing date for entries is May 7 2021. Those projects that had already been entered for the 2020 event do not need to re-apply.

If members know of owners, developers or organisations who have undertaken projects in the last three years that might qualify for an award, please contact our secretary Jane or download an entry form from the website.

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