



**SOMERSET BUILDING**  
*Preservation Trust*

**NEWSLETTER**

September 2017

Dear Members

The highlight of the last six months has undoubtedly been the excellent visits organised by our new secretary. I feel sure that you will agree that for different reasons each visit was memorable and all were on warm sunny days. Thank you, Jane.

At Barford House we saw what had been achieved when a small country house is sold to new owners who have then developed the legacy handed down by the previous occupants and created a comfortable and imaginative family home surrounded by delightful gardens.

At Wrington we had the added pleasure of an informative illustrated talk on the life of Hannah More, before touring the house and gardens and finishing with a tea provided by the YMCA trainees based at the Beach Hotel, Minehead.

Finally, early in September a small group enjoyed the picturesque surroundings of Croydon House Farm at Timberscombe. This is probably the earliest brick building in West Somerset and it has been meticulously repaired and sympathetically extended, over a period of ten years, by one of our Trustees, John Prideaux and his wife Pippa.

Russell Lillford,  
Chairman of the Trust

***Update.....Update.....Update.....Update.....Update.....Update.....***

**Bishop's Barn, Wells**

Work on refurbishing the outdated kitchen and toilets is now underway together with some minor repairs to the roof and doors. The contractors are Ellis & Co. of Shepton Mallet and they anticipate finishing by the time of the AGM in October.

A very encouraging meeting has taken place to explore the future of the building with the Regional Office of the Heritage Lottery Fund. In June a visit was made to the Great Barn at Tisbury in Wiltshire to see the impressive works that have been undertaken to create a fine art gallery, a highly recommended visit for all members.

**Rural Life Museum, Glastonbury**

The Museum was formally opened by His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester on the June 13th. Members will have the opportunity to see the finish works and the exhibitions at the AGM (see details at the end of this Newsletter).

***Update.....Update.....Update.....Update.....Update.....Update.....***

## **Halswell House and Park, Goathurst**

The works to the exterior of the Elizabethan south and east ranges are now almost completed. This has been a marathon three-year project that started with the roof and entailed the complete replacement of the worn-out slates, repairs to timbers, renovation and replacement of all of the lead guttering and downpipes, installation of more appropriate chimney pots (each 5ft) - as well as the rehousing of old roof's numerous bats.

Over the last 18 months, all the exterior walls have been repaired, modern extensions dismantled and the facades re-pointed and re-rendered, while the old mullion windows have been refurbished and their leaded lights renewed. Imagined replacements for the long-lost stone finials have been carved by local sculptor Tom Waugh and are now in position - including the re-use of the remaining half of one of the four gryphons which stood guard over the gates of the house. At the same time, all the dry and wet rot has been treated and archaeology commissioned.

The large scaffold will soon be removed to reveal the completed exterior of the East and South facades, a revival of the hidden splendour of the Tudor and Elizabethan house. Works will then focus on the interior of the previously named Tudor Cottage, now to be renamed the Knot House, alongside a new Knot Garden. This has been designed by Halswell owner Edward Strachan with Simon Bonvoisin of Nicholas Pearson Partnership.



*Work in progress on the bridge in August*

Over the summer months a full restoration of the Bath stone bridge in Mill Wood has been taking place.

Ten tonnes of replacement Bath stone has been used in the work that included constructing a new pediment and coping stones (which had been previously lowered and replaced with concrete), rebuilding the apse to the rear (which had all-but collapsed), a complete re-build of the west side of the Bridge and extensive repairs/replacement of the south dam face.

In addition, the Bridge had been extensively repaired with concrete in the past, this was all carefully removed and replaced with lime mortar. A new balustrade has been commissioned and carved and its installation is currently underway. The pond walls in front of the Bridge have been rebuilt and the dam and water management will be reinstated in October. Landscaping works will continue over the winter months. More information can be found on the Halswell blog at [www.halswellpark.com](http://www.halswellpark.com)

## FOCUS ON BUILDINGS AT RISK



Tucked away off the main street of Chard, is a little-known gem of a building that, sadly, is now on the *Buildings at Risk Register*.

The late medieval town house is still largely intact and contains a first-floor courtroom with a barrel-vaulted ceiling and excellent original plaster work.

Known locally as The Old Courthouse, the building dates back to around 1630. Thankfully, the building escaped the “modernisers” of later centuries and retains most of its original features.

The first-floor courtroom room lit by ten-light transomed windows to front and back, has lavish decorative plasterwork depicting appropriate motifs with figures representing Justice and Wisdom and scenes from the Judgement of Solomon.

Unfortunately, the entire property, including the shop premises to the road frontage, have been vacant and neglected for some time and their deteriorating condition is giving cause for concern.

In the summer, a planning application was submitted by the absentee owners to the District Council for conversion to three residential units. We wait to hear the local authority’s decision and in the meantime, we have encouraged them to serve a repairs notice.

The Trust, along with South Somerset District Council and Historic England, is particularly concerned to secure the future of this remarkable historic building. All are keen to bring it into a state that will permit regular public access, use and enjoyment.

A view of the interior of the Old Courtroom with its barrel ceiling and rare decorative plasterwork.



For those members particularly interested in the fine early 17th century plasterwork in the Old Court Room illustrations can be found in *Decorative Plasterwork in the Houses of Somerset 1500-1700* by John and Jane Penoyre, 1993. Copies of this publication are available through the County Library Service.

## **We have enjoyed three very different visits this year.**

In April, 40 members toured the newly-remodelled Barford Park, a Grade II\* (two-star) listed house that stands in extensive parkland near Spaxton.

The Georgian country house, which dates back to 1710 was among the prize winners in the Stansell Awards last year, following a repair and conservation project carried out by the owners Donald and Bee Rice.



*Owner Donald Rice points out a detail of the brickwork*



*The chairman and secretary greet Dr Kerri Andrews outside Barleywood*

In a change to the usual format, it was decided to invite a specialist guest speaker to the visit to Barley Wood House, near Wrington, in July.

The 18<sup>th</sup> century property, which has recently undergone substantial repairs by the YMCA, was the home of Hannah More (1745 –1833) the writer, philanthropist and social reformer.

Our special guest was Dr Kerri Andrews, Senior Lecturer in English Literature at Edge Hill University, who is a world leading expert on Hannah More. She has published widely on women's writing and eighteenth-century literature, and is leading a project to publish Hannah More's surviving letters.

Our final visit was to Croydon House Farm, Timberscombe, the home of SBPT board member John Prideaux and his wife Pippa who have completed a truly remarkable restoration of this Grade II\* listed brick farm house.

Members were given a tour of the impressively conserved Interior and some of the 15 traditional farm outbuildings, one of which gained an SBPT William Stansell Award in 2004.

All of the visits ended with a delicious cream tea.



## And Finally .....

### What is the collective noun for a group of secretaries?

There were some amusing and very witty suggestions after this threesome was spotted during the members' visit to Barford Park.

Trust Secretary Jane St John Webster (on the right) had an opportunity to compare notes with two of her predecessors.

Erica Adams (centre) was the trust secretary for 14 years until 2014 when she handed over to Ann Manders.

Ann stepped down from the post earlier this year but remains the honorary treasurer.



Annual General Meeting of the SBPT will be held on Thursday October 19<sup>th</sup> at the Somerset Rural Life in Glastonbury, starting at 12 noon and will be followed by a sandwich lunch and tours of the newly-refurbished museum.

Members are invited to attend.