

# Columns

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THE FRIENDS OF CHRIST CHURCH SPITALFIELDS  
REGISTERED CHARITY NO 276056

*The newsletter of the Friends of Christ Church Spitalfields who led the restoration of Nicholas Hawksmoor's church, one of the most important Baroque churches in Europe.*

*For the complete archive of Columns newsletters, please visit the Friends' website:  
[www.christchurchspitalfields.org](http://www.christchurchspitalfields.org)*

## AVE · ATQUE · VALE

The first edition of *Columns* in Autumn 1994 showed a picture of a steeplejack, suspended on a rope, checking the church spire to complete a pre-works damage survey. Today, nearly twenty-four years on, you are reading the 42nd and final edition of *Columns*, the newsletter to Supporters of the Friends of Christ Church Spitalfields. It comes a year after we reached the 40th anniversary of the Friends of Christ Church Spitalfields Trust and marks completion of our main task – funding and managing the £15m restoration of Hawksmoor's architectural masterpiece. This was only made possible by your extraordinary generosity.

Today, the church is a thriving place of worship, successful in drawing thousands of visitors from all over the world. Furthermore, its earnings from secondary uses, including event hire, are such that the future of Christ Church is secure.

So, with the Trust's objective satisfied, the charity will close in the coming months and any remaining funds will be paid to a charity or charities with objects consistent with the Trust's. We leave a substantial archive of the documents, drawings and images that informed and record the work of the many who collaborated on the successful restoration. We are grateful to the Bishopsgate Institute who are to curate and store the archive 200 m from the spire of Christ Church. This feels both fitting and reassuring.

The Friends' story began in 1976 with a concert to celebrate Christ Church's fine acoustic, and to bring public awareness to Hawksmoor's derelict architectural masterpiece. This marked the foundation of the Friends and their annual music festival. Fourteen years later the music festival became a separate body, now internationally renowned as Spitalfields Music, while the Friends concentrated on the restoration of the fabric.

Thanks to your generous support, the trustees were able to apply for major grants, the largest (£5.9m) from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The main restoration contract was completed in September 2004 to high acclaim, winning seven major awards, and by 2009 the further work to restore the church monuments and memorials was completed.

In 2009 a contract was signed with William Drake Ltd to restore the magnificent 1735 Richard Bridge organ and, after years of meticulous repair, renewal and reconstruction, work finished in 2016 with the

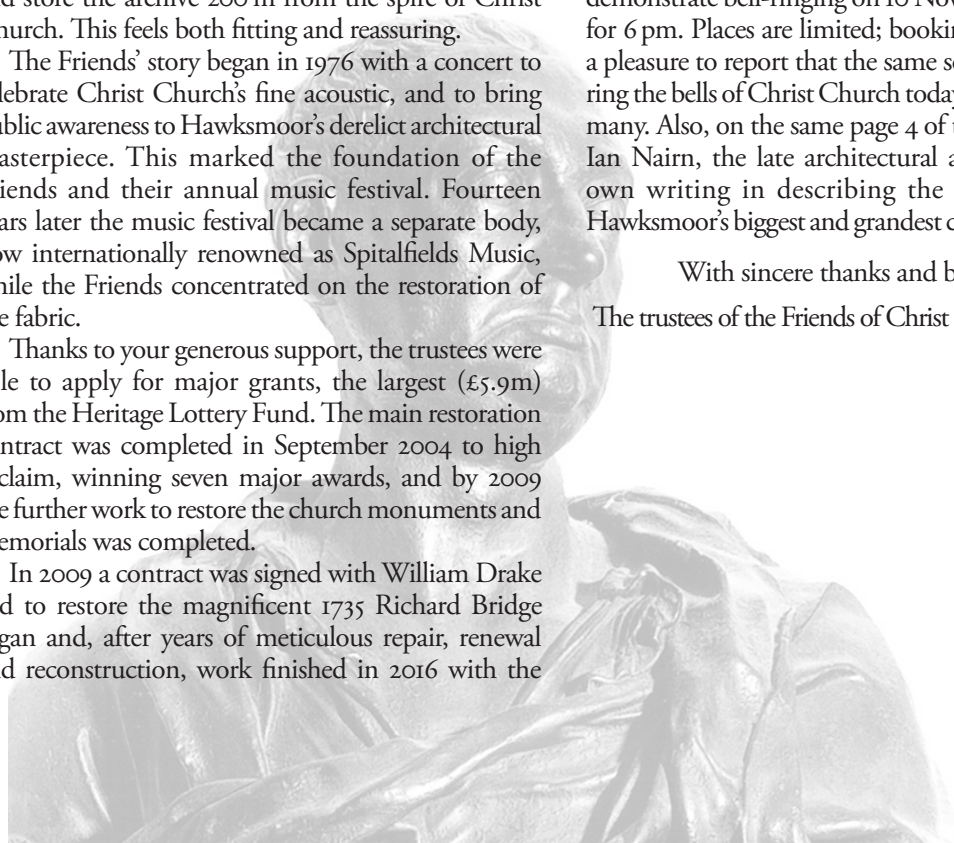
installation of the organ's final and unique rank, the Quintadena. The organ's inaugural gala recital by John Scott took place on a sunlit evening in June 2015 and frequent concerts continue to delight many.

By 2010, the Friends had also funded and managed about £500,000 of work to restore parts of the consecrated churchyard, the setting of the church. These works included reinstatement of the south steps and the south entrance to the crypt, as well as restoration of the Grade 2 listed Nash Monument and the fine Commercial Street railings. Since then, joined by the local amenity societies, the trustees have regretfully had to take legal action to protect the churchyard from destructive and unlawful building development. This action has involved lengthy hearings in the church courts. At the time of writing, those who want Spitalfields' consecrated churchyard, the setting of the Grade 1 listed church, to continue to be protected as a statutory public open space at the heart of this historic and crowded inner city area are challenging the lower church court's judgment that the unlawful building may remain.

In that first edition of *Columns* all those years ago, there was an announcement under Forthcoming Events: 'The Society of Royal Cumberland Youths will demonstrate bell-ringing on 10 November 1994 at 5:30 for 6 pm. Places are limited; booking is essential.' It is a pleasure to report that the same society continues to ring the bells of Christ Church today, giving pleasure to many. Also, on the same page 4 of that 1994 *Columns*, Ian Nairn, the late architectural author, quoted his own writing in describing the church: 'Mighty. Hawksmoor's biggest and grandest church'. This is true.

With sincere thanks and best wishes

The trustees of the Friends of Christ Church Spitalfields



## Organ bursary winner accepts permanent position

The restoration of the Richard Bridge organ was celebrated in June 2015 with a gala recital given by the late great John Scott IVO, Organist and Director of Music at St Thomas Church Fifth Avenue, New York and Patron of the Friends. The proceeds of the recital established a travel bursary for organ builders.

The first winner of the award was Mateusz Jabłoński, who has just completed a year's apprenticeship with William Drake Ltd. *Columns* met Mateusz with Joost de Boer, Managing Director of WDLtd, to talk about this experience.

**Could you tell us a bit about yourself and where you come from?**

I come from Kraków in southern Poland. I spent my childhood about 10km from Kraków and that is where I met my wife.

**People say it's quite beautiful – is it a medieval town? Was it messed about in the war or did it escape?**

It was lucky that the city wasn't destroyed during the war – it is a very beautiful city with many historic buildings. There are many medieval buildings, baroque churches and of course later buildings as well.

**Does it have a musical tradition, like, say, Leipzig?**

In Kraków, there are now a few organ festivals. It was the capital of Poland, and the king lived there. I went to the music school and studied performance, particularly church organ music. There was also the subject 'organ knowledge': the sound and mechanical elements of the organ and how it works led by a well-known Kraków organ builder Professor Lech Skoczylas. He gave me the opportunity to practise in his workshop where I stayed for several years.

**How did you get to hear about the bursary? Was there any connection with Drake's workshop before?**

Marek Matuszyk who made the bellows at Christ Church heard about the bursary and sent the details to Kraków University and that is where I heard about it.

**What have you learnt this year, and what's been the most interesting area you've worked in while you've been here? Or have you done everything?**

The most important thing that I have learnt is – patience – in making good work in organ building and learning the skills.

**What's the thing you most like doing?**

Woodworking, mostly, and things connected with the tuning – the 'voicing' of the pipes.

**The report of your year's experience described your making of a lot of the tiny little wooden bits: 'trackers'?**

Yes! 'trackers', 'stickers', 'backfalls', 'squares' and rollers.

**I can't think of any comparable craft activity – it's not like boat building, is it?**

It's somehow related to piano-making, and it's



S R B HUMPHREYS



Above: 1735 Richard Bridge organ: John Scott takes a bow at the end of the opening recital on 30 June 2015

Below: Racking in metal pipes: Mateusz Jabłoński working on the Westminster Abbey Song School organ as part of his apprenticeship year

perhaps a bit like clock-making. You have quite fine tolerances: it's engineering in wood. Different kinds of wood may be used with advantage; for instance the portion to be grooved may be of close-grained oak or mahogany and the other portion of straight-grained white pine. When properly made, this action is both light and silent.

Since October I have learnt to be very accurate in everything I do, and I like it so much.

JdeB: *Mateusz made amazingly accurate dovetail joints recently. I was once able to do that.*

MJ: Ha! I've had a very good teacher. The other skill I have learnt is 'tonal finishing': final preparation of organs for performance: tuning, voicing, and 'colouring' the sounds of the pipes and their relation to each other.

**What's the biggest organ you've played on?**

The biggest was in Kraków for a huge church with an eight or nine seconds' reverberation time. It was an organ that we'd built with Professor Skoczylas and it had 56 stops.

**Have you done any playing while you've been here?**

A very little bit, mostly while we're tuning or voicing.

**What do you most enjoy playing? What period?**

Baroque. Starting slightly before [J S] Bach and Buxtehude.

**Have you played the Christ Church organ?**

Yes, I played it, during tuning and did a bit of improvising. My opinion about the organ is that it's the best I've met here, in England. I like its amazing proud sound.

**Appropriately eighteenth century?**

Yes!

**What are your plans for the future?**

My most important plan is to be a very good employee and to continue working with William Drake Ltd as long as possible.

JdeB: *On every job you learn something new – that's what we offer.*

MJ: I'd like to thank the Friends very much for the bursary and my bit of organ building, and for the opportunity to work in England.

Since successfully completing his year long apprenticeship, William Drake Ltd has offered Mateusz a full time position as a fully qualified organ builder. *Columns* is delighted that it has been able to enable such a successful outcome by contributing travel money. *Columns* recommends to its readers the full account of Mateusz's year's apprenticeship with William Drake Ltd which can be found on the Friends' website.

The 1735 Richard Bridge organ continues to be maintained by its restorer William Drake Ltd.

Enquiries about future concerts should be directed to Gerard Brooks, Organ Curator ([www.gerardbrooks.org.uk](http://www.gerardbrooks.org.uk)) where it is also possible to buy his recent excellent double CD recording made at Christ Church: *A Giant Reborn*.



Above: View from the spire: steeplejack from Messrs. Harkness carrying out tower and steeple survey (notice the roof of the nave and Fournier Street far below), 1994

Below: Red (AD) Mason, project architect for the restoration, standing on the roof of Christ Church, indicates a crevice in the stone work on the sill at the foot of the large louvre on the east face of the tower, c. 1994

## In memoriam

Robert Chitham 1934–2017

The Friends are very sad to report the death of Robert (Bob) Chitham on 13 September 2017 at the age of 82. Bob remained a trustee of the Friends until his death and was the Friends' longest serving member and trustee.

As an architect in the Greater London Council's Historic Buildings Division (GLC HBD), he was present at the 1976 Save Britain's Heritage meeting held in the nave of Christ Church, then a derelict building, which led, there and then, to the formation of the Friends and the first concert of orchestral and choral music which grew into the Friends' annual music festival.

He contributed to the 1979 Architectural Design *AD Profiles* publication about Christ Church, the first authoritative publication drawing attention to the architectural and historic importance of the abandoned church. Bob set out the vision for a long-term research, salvage and restoration project. With great maturity and foresight, he had already grasped the complexity and compromises necessary to achieve modern day functionality, preserve significant modifications from the past and to reinstate some lost items such as the side galleries where they were fundamental to the integrity of the design and history.

Bob qualified as an architect aged 37 in 1972 after a career in the Navy, and then joined the GLC HBD. As Directing Architect at English Heritage from 1984, he published two significant books both still in print: *The Classical Orders of Architecture* in 1985, an accessible introduction to the basics of classical architecture and still the only significant modern interpretation of the subject in print; and the *Practical Conservation* series (by J & N Ashurst). In 1988, Bob moved to Chapman Taylor Partners where he continued working until summer 2017.

Bob also had many important roles outside Christ Church. He was past Chairman of ICOMOS UK, The International Monuments Trust and the Hereford Cathedral Fabric Advisory Committee. He also served on the Chelmsford Diocesan Advisory Committee, supported creation of the Association of Conservation Officers now the IHBC, and the Association for Study in the Conservation of Historic Buildings. He was among those who founded the Conservation Accreditation Scheme for architects, which he then chaired, and he chaired the working group that established BS 7913 which covers the care and treatment of historic buildings.

Bob was deeply respected and much loved, he provided wise and practical advice on all matters from team management to paint colours for the nave. Throughout his life, Bob made models as a pastime to demonstrate how finished schemes might look. His part nave model of Christ Church Spitalfields from the late 1970s – complete with Nicholas Hawksmoor figure for scale – informed many visitors during the entire award-winning restoration of 1976–2016.

Jonathan Balkind 1946–2018

Just before going to press the Friends received the very sad news of the death of Jonathan Balkind.

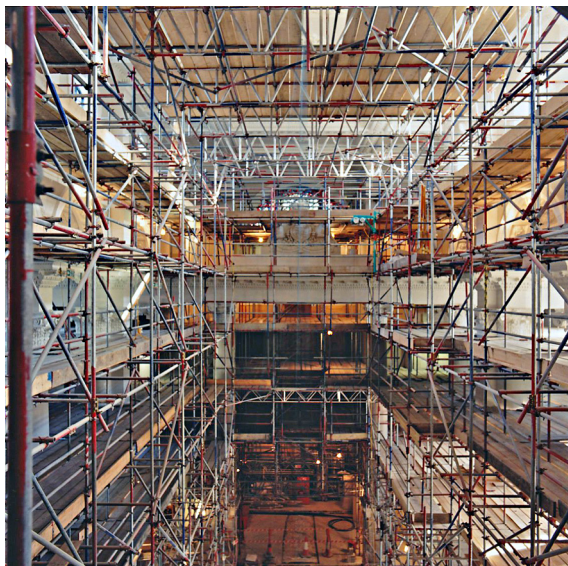
Jonathan was a giant among men with wide interests in music and architecture. He qualified as an architect in 1972 and worked for the GLC Historic Buildings Division. Historic buildings were falling down and still being demolished in post-War 'slum clearance' and urban road building. It is believed that he attended the Save Britain's Heritage meeting in Christ Church in 1976 and was the driving force behind the concert later that year which launched both the Friends and what would become the Spitalfields Festival.

Jonathan was Secretary of the Friends. In order to attract people to performances in the unheard of venue, Jonathan went through the London telephone directory and mailed expensive sounding addresses! Nothing was impossible for him including the staging of full scale operas in the derelict building and attracting the international star, Dame Janet Baker. This required the installation of a wc in the south-east corner: 'the Bakerloo'. The acclaimed performances raised profile but not money and the Trustees separated the Festival from the Friends lest losses from music undermine fundraising for architecture! However, Jonathan's inspired major music events were the renaissance of Christ Church.

Always seeking good but unloved causes which his skills could better, Jonathan served the UN for six years from 2000 administering international funds and combating corruption in war-torn Kosovo.



South aisle looking east: before restoration of window arches and gallery floors, c. 1974



## Help continue the Hawksmoor restorations

With the Friends' charitable objectives largely satisfied, it is intended that the charity's remaining funds will be paid to a charity or charities with objects consistent with the Friends' charitable object, including the Christ Church Spitalfields Foundation (Charity no.1091925). The Friends established the Foundation in 2000 to hold funds for the long-term upkeep and maintenance of the church as part of the church's Business Plan. This was a condition of grant aiding. Today, the Foundation receives income from the church's secondary uses and other sources.

The Hawksmoor Committee was launched in the early 1960s by Elizabeth Young and Wayland Kennet in response to a tip-off that the Diocese of London was contemplating demolition of Christ Church Spitalfields. The committee's influential sponsors included Professor Kerry Downes, the knights Nikolaus Pevsner, John Betjeman and John Summerson; Ian Nairn, and the architects Denys Lasdun, Alison and Peter Smithson, and Philip Johnson. Its purpose was 'to bring the architecture of Nicholas Hawksmoor before the public eye, and to ensure that money will be found to secure the future of his two great Stepney churches, Christ Church Spitalfields, and St Anne's Limehouse'.

Christ Church Spitalfields and its organ are now gloriously restored. Much has already been achieved at St Anne's Limehouse, but the church itself remains on Historic England's Heritage At Risk register. Led by the Rector, Revd Richard Bray and 'Care for St Anne's' chaired by Professor Michael Hebbert of University College London, they plan to make the church a fitting place of worship as well as a much needed resource for the wider Docklands community.

**Support the Christ Church Spitalfields Foundation:** (Charity no 1091925) – further information can be obtained from: [foundation@ccspits.org](mailto:foundation@ccspits.org)  
Telephone 020 7377 2440

**Support the restoration of Hawksmoor's St Anne's Limehouse** (Charity no 288889) – further information can be obtained from: [www.stanneslimehouse.org](http://www.stanneslimehouse.org)  
[enquiries@stanneslimehouse.org](mailto:enquiries@stanneslimehouse.org)  
Telephone 020 7987 1502

Upper: *The seven storeys of scaffolding in the nave needed to access the ceiling, 2002*

Centre: *Christ Church Spitalfields: view east along Brushfield Street, 2007*

Lower: *St Anne's Limehouse: view from south*

## Thank you

The Friends are grateful for the generosity of the many individuals and organisations who have supported the Restoration and Organ appeals. Some of our Supporters have generously contributed for the whole 40+ years of the charity's existence.

We have run two major projects, the restoration of the church and the organ with a small part-time office and a number of volunteers. Thank you to all our volunteers who have helped both in the office and at

special events. This help has been crucial to our success.

We would like to record our thanks to the Pidem Fund for its generous support of the organ restoration in memory of Michael Gillingham.

We take this opportunity to include our grateful thanks to those who have contributed by standing order and those who have chosen to remain anonymous.

**We would also like to thank the following for their recent donations:**

### Gifts of £30 and over

Jeremy Archer  
Primrose Arlander\*  
Mr R W Ayriess  
Miss P C A Butterworth  
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John Walton

### Gifts of £100 and over

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Mandeville\* *In Memory of*  
*Bruce Hylton Stewart*  
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Martin Gordon *In memory of*  
*Eric Elstob*

Mrs F Hugill\*  
The Sainer Charity\*  
Mr W Spencer  
Andrew Sulston  
David Wakefield\*

### Donations of £200 and over

Sir Peter Cazalet  
Dr J G Holdcroft\*  
Allan Murray-Jones  
Alan Nafzger\*

### Legacy of £5,000

From the estate of the late Hilda  
Taylor

*\*partly or fully for the Richard Bridge  
Organ Appeal*

*Nicholas Hawksmoor plaster portrait bust, probably by Sir  
Henry Cheere (private collection)  
Photograph by Lucinda Douglas-Menzies*



### Columns

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