

Number 3 Autumn 1995

# Columns

The Friends of Christ Church Spitalfields  
Registered Charity 276056

**Columns** is the supporter's bulletin for the Friends of Christ Church Spitalfields.

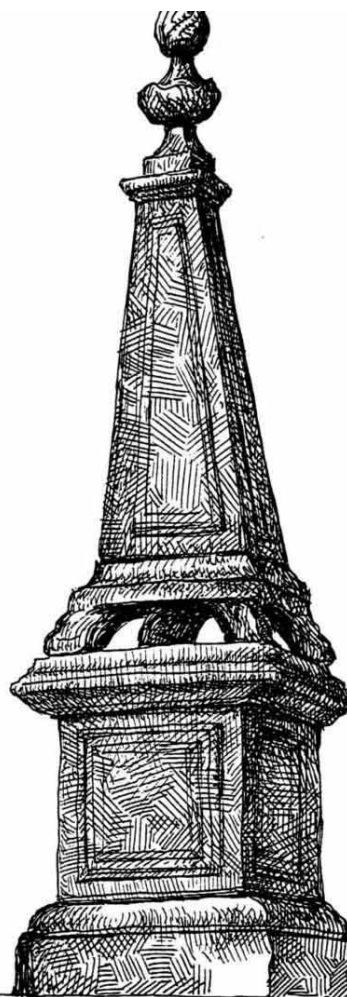
The Friends are leading the restoration of Nicholas Hawksmoor's church, regarded as one of the most important Baroque churches in Europe. This project will take several years.

Please support us by subscribing or making a donation. Use the coupon sent with this newsletter or telephone 0171-247 0165.

## A new setting for Christ Church

As a result of negotiations by the Friends, Christ Church Gardens, the former church burial ground which is still consecrated ground owned by the church, are to be improved and made more attractive to the general public. They will also provide a more appropriate setting for Christ Church which is, after all, the most important historic monument in the Borough of Tower Hamlets after the Tower of London itself. The work is being funded by Bethnal Green City Challenge, who have already provided the handsome riven York stone paving outside the church railings; none of the cost will be borne by the Friends' Restoration Fund, which is earmarked for the church itself.

Deidre Munro, the landscape architect for the project, is enthusiastic about what can be achieved to improve the quality of the gardens, especially on the more public, Commercial Street side, both to simplify the layout and to make it more accessible for local residents and office workers. 'One of the most special features in the gardens', she says, 'is the remains of an avenue of plane trees running from Commercial Street back towards Brick Lane, which are over 150 years old. They are all listed.'



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*The Nash monument in the Gardens, drawn  
for Columns by Spitalfields artist  
Ricardo Cinalli*

'We will be able to replace missing trees, and we will look to replace the existing trees when they become too old, so as to retain the avenue for the future. The trees that have survived have withstood storms and wartime blasts — some still have shrapnel embedded in them!'

The churchyard monuments will be retained, as an essential and an historic feature of the gardens. The Friends have also called on English Heritage to list the important 18th-century pyramid monument to members of the Nash family, *above*.

These plans come close on the heels of the announcement that the churchyard of St Luke Old Street, with its unique Hawksmoor obelisk spire, is to be landscaped. Plans are also being drawn up for landscaping around St George in the East, another near-neighbour Hawksmoor church which suffered during the blitz. The works at Christ Church will be completed by March 1996.

## Gifts

The Friends are grateful to the many individuals and bodies who are giving so generously to Christ Church. We value donations large and small; without them we will not be able to achieve our ambitious objectives.

We wish to thank the following who have all made generous donations (since the last issue of **Columns** and up to the time of going to press). If you would like a covenant form or would like to discuss giving to Christ Church, please telephone 0171-247 0165 and speak to us or leave a message.

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### £2,000 or more:

The Mercers' Company  
Stuart Heath Charitable Trust  
wedding guests of Mr and Mrs Martin Lane

### £10,000 or more:

Esmée Fairbairn Charitable Trust

## Lottery Bid

The Friends have submitted a 100-page plan to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the restoration of Christ Church. The bid is for a total of £1.9m, and includes topping-up the English Heritage grant to restore the external stonework, reconstruction of Hawksmoor's south steps (where there are now scaffolding steps down into the churchyard), reconstruction of the side galleries using the Georgian gallery fronts now in the church, and new heating and lighting. The Heritage Lottery Fund is administered by the National Heritage Memorial Fund, set up as a war memorial following the Falklands War. Eleanor Murray, Chair of the Friends' Trustees, said, 'Following the success of raising such a major grant from English Heritage, we are hopeful that the Lottery Fund will help us finish the task.' The bid will be decided by early 1996.

## Postcards

Two of Charles Maude's handsome photographs of Christ Church are now available again as a high quality black and white postcard. There are also two new colour postcards from photos by Jeremy Quin, in crisp light with a clear blue sky, showing the west front view from Brushfield Street and a closer, unusual view of the spire from the east end. The Maude cards cost £2 for 10, the Quin cards £1 for 4, inclusive of postage. Please make cheques payable to the Friends of Christ Church Spitalfields.

## Annual Accounts

The Accounts and Annual Report for the Friends for the year ending 31 January 1995 are now publicly available. If you would like a copy, an SAE with your request would be much appreciated. The accounts show a satisfying increase in income from donations as the appeal for the restoration gears up.

## Volunteers needed

We need volunteers to help in the appeal office during the week. Tasks are varied, but will include updating and maintaining our database, so some familiarity with computers helps. We will, of course, train volunteers in the use of our system. If you have spare time, for a day a week or maybe a day a fortnight, and could come in fairly regularly, we are anxious to hear from you, and will be delighted if you call.

Please telephone Kevin Skelding at the Friends' office at Christ Church on 0171-247 0165 if you can help in this or any other way.

## What will you leave?

As a Registered Charity, The Friends can assist in reducing the tax burden on your estate after you die. You will need to take professional advice on the details as the exact rules change regularly, but the Friends' trustees will ensure that all legacies received are spent prudently on this great building — a lasting memorial of the finest sort to those who have contributed either during their lifetime or after their death. If you would like a fact-sheet on tax-effective giving, including leaving a legacy towards the restoration of Christ Church, please write to the Friends' office enclosing an SAE.

## Thank You

The campaign to restore Christ Church relies on gifts of time, money and talents. Recently we have had cause to thank:

- NatWest Markets for the photocopying of this newsletter and IMRO, Bankers Trust and Lehman Brothers for copying literature.
- Eddie Geater and Lisa Gibson who have joined our team of office volunteers.
- Mr and Mrs Martin Lane, who invited guests at their wedding in Christ Church to give to the appeal in lieu of wedding presents.
- To members of the Hawksmoor Group who are leading our appeal in the City of London: John Alexander, Lawrence Banks, David Brewer, Alastair Brown, Eric Elstob, Peter Lerwill, Paul Manduca, Stephen Plunkett, Michael Macfadyen, Lady Mars-Jones, Sir Anthony Touche Bt, Robin Whaite.

## Personal Column

Lady Kennet

Each issue includes a personal appreciation of Christ Church. We are grateful to Lady Kennet (Elizabeth Young), who was one of the most significant and energetic individuals in the original drive from 1960 to rescue Christ Church and to re-evaluate Hawksmoor, for talking to **Columns**. This is an edited version of a fascinating conversation.

Somebody — I'm sorry, I can't say who — 'phoned me who had inside knowledge of the workings of the Diocese of London. Did I know that the church was quietly intending to apply for a faculty to demolish Christ Church Spitalfields? I did not, but I set to, ringing round to everybody I could think of who could help in protecting this wonderful Hawksmoor church.

Wayland [Lord Kennet] and I had first come across Christ Church when we were writing our book *Old London Churches* [1956]. We knew little about it, or about its architect, then, and could find few people who knew much either. It was in a sorry state — the congregation had moved out, the roof was in dreadful condition, and it was a 'dangerous structure'. The church seemed too big and too far gone, and nobody much appreciated it. So we set about helping people to appreciate it.

From all the telephone calls and letters, we were able to put together a committee to rescue Christ Church and Hawksmoor, of which I was secretary, with a list of sponsors that ranged from T.S. Eliot to Bud Flanagan, the music hall artist. John Betjeman was so supportive right from the start. Everybody knew about Wren, of course, but nobody knew about Hawksmoor then. We persuaded newspapers to run feature articles about Christ Church — *Vogue* even came, and photographed the 1962 Paris spring fashion collection outside the church!

I have moved on from Christ Church and Hawksmoor now — questions about defence and the Bomb occupy most of my time these days — but Christ Church has had a very special place in my life and among London's churches.

## Forthcoming Events

Two Guest Lectures, with very distinguished speakers, are planned.

On Tuesday **24 October 1995**, Dr Gavin Stamp, the noted architectural historian, will come to speak on **Hawksmoor in the 20th century**, with slides to illustrate his talk. Gavin Stamp is Chairman of the Twentieth Century Society and a well-known polemicist and broadcaster on architectural subjects.

On Tuesday **31 October 1995**, Andrew Mason, of Whitfield Partners, the architect for the restoration of Christ Church, will be lecturing on **Hawksmoor's Interior**. He will be speaking, again with accompanying slides, about the archaeological and documentary evidence on which the restoration proposals are based.

*Both lectures will take place in Christ Church at 6.30 pm. Tickets cost £5 each, £4 for Friends subscribers, in advance or on the door, space permitting.*

The dates for the **1996 Spitalfields Festival** are **5-26 June**, with several of the concerts focusing on Johann Sebastian Bach. Enquiries about the Festival to 0171-377 0287.

During the Festival, the legendary Dutch harpsichordist and interpreter of Bach, Gustav Leonhardt, has most generously agreed to perform a benefit concert in aid of the Friends' appeal for restoration funds, on **19 June 1996**.

After the huge success of the **bus tour** of Hawksmoor churches, in which over 100 people took part, while many others were disappointed not to secure tickets, we hope to arrange a repeat tour for Spring 1996.

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