



**SOMERSET BUILDING**  
*Preservation Trust*

**NEWSLETTER**

April 2019

Dear Members

Our work to preserve the built heritage of Somerset has continued throughout the winter months and we have had a number of very constructive meetings with our partners and prospective funders regarding the restoration of the Bishops Barn at Wells, as detailed in the Update section of this newsletter.

As the days get longer, and hopefully warmer, our thoughts turn to our next visits to houses of architectural and historic interest that are not normally open to the public. We kick off with a visit to Nettlecombe Court in West Somerset. This will include a guided tour of this fascinating Grade 1 house and tea in the Medieval Hall.

Later in the summer members will have the very rare chance to visit Ven House, near Milborne Port, once described as “by far the grandest house in Somerset”. We will be sending out details of that visit in due course so please watch out for that. It is an opportunity not to be missed.

As you will see in this newsletter John Brunsdon, one of the founding members of the Trust, has now stepped down from the Board. We thank him for his work over more than 30 years and hope to see him at our events in future.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome Miriam Maddison to the Board. I am sure she will be a great asset.

Russell Lillford  
Chairman

**See You There ...**

Our first visit of the year – a guided tour of Nettlecombe Court, near Williton – has proved extremely popular with all the places being snapped up within days of the form being sent to members.



Details of our next visit – to the splendid Ven House, near Milborne Port (seen on the left) in June – are still being finalised and will be sent out to members shortly.

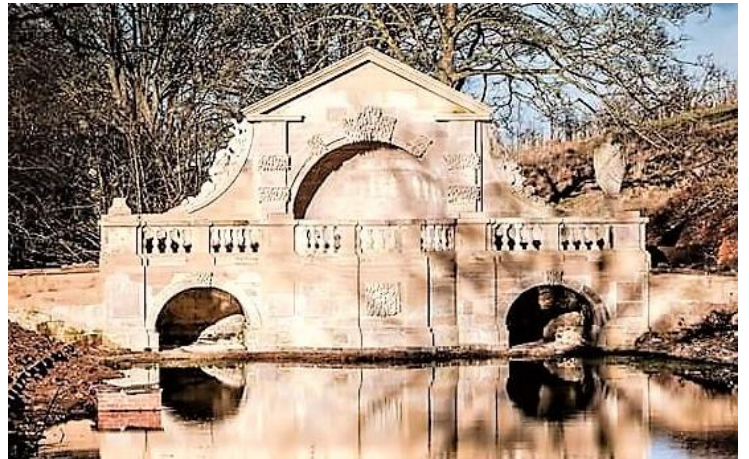
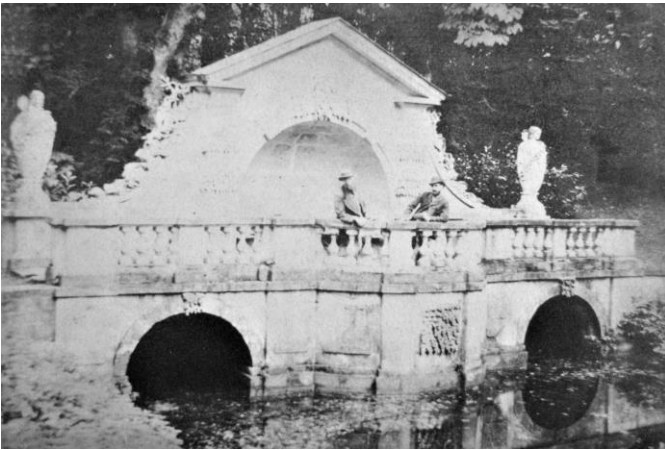
**Ven House is a private residence so please note numbers are limited so this visit will be restricted to members only and you are advised to book as soon as you receive the form to avoid disappointment.**

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

## **Bishop's Barn, Wells**

Progress on restoring this ancient barn is slow but we are continuing to work with our partners and the results are encouraging. Currently, a study is being carried out to improve the sound proofing and provide an effective heating system. This would allow greater use of the building in the winter months – without upsetting the neighbours. We will be re-submitting a bid for Heritage Lottery funding in due course.

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



This black and white photograph of the Bath Stone Bridge in Halswell Park taken around 1880 shows just how superbly it has been restored. Having not previously been able to find any photographic or painted images of the bridge in its pre-derelict state, the restoration team were very relieved to have the accuracy of their work confirmed when a descendant of an estate employee came up with this old photo.

Work at Halswell has continued to progress. Thirty ground source heat boreholes were dug over the winter months in order to provide sustainable heat and hot water to the property and the conservation team have now begun working on the interiors with one section due for completion by the summer. Works will also begin on creating a Tudor knot garden within the South Court garden this spring.

Halswell will be open to the general public on Sunday 16th June for an afternoon garden party, tickets £20 to include afternoon tea with live music.

The house, gardens, Mill Wood, Robin Hood's Hut and the Temple of Harmony will also be open for viewing on 14th and 15th September as part of Heritage Open days. Anybody wanting to join a full tour and lunch can do so on a variety of days via the Historic Houses Open to View scheme. More details can be found on all of these events at <https://halswellpark.wordpress.com/visits>

## Changes on the Board



John Brunsdon who has been a member of the SBPT Board since it was founded back in 1988 is stepping down.

During his 30 plus years on the Board John has taken a particularly keen interest in restoration projects in his home town of Glastonbury, including the regeneration of the Morlands site

A retired vet, John has served on both Mendip District Council and Glastonbury Town Council, is president of the local Conservation Society and a trustee of the Beckery Island Trust.

We have welcomed a new trustee Miriam Maddison who is a highly experienced executive and non-executive director and senior management consultant in local government and health sectors who, for the past five years, has run her own consultancy specialising in health, public health and social care.

## New Look Website

We are giving our website a fresh, clean format that will be easier to navigate and give access to a much wider range of information.

Users will be able to view our current activities and also access an extensive archive of material, including past projects and research documents.

The site will keep the same domain name – [www.sbpt.info](http://www.sbpt.info) – and we will let you know when it is up and running.

## Buildings at Risk

Many buildings are said to have had a colourful history but probably very few can match the 18th century mansion at Sandhill Park, Bishops Lydeard.

Built in 1720, it has been, in turn, a family home (for several generations of the Lethbridge family) a prisoner of war camp, military hospital, a residential home and school for children with a range of physical and learning disabilities and a fire museum.



Sadly, the Grade 2 listed mansion, constructed of red sandstone with Ham stone dressings, returns and quoins, is now a very sorry sight and a second plan to restore the building has come to a halt.

A local developer was given permission to build 28 houses in the grounds behind the house on the condition that the vandalised and fire-damaged mansion was restored and converted into apartments. However, work came to a stop last year when the firm undertaking the restoration work went into administration.

Consultants have now been appointed by the administrators to look at possible solutions.

Taunton Deane Borough Council, who are as keen as local residents to see the building restored and occupied, have put together a small team led by heritage at risk officer Dr Joanne O'Hara, to monitor progress.

Hopefully this long and very sorry saga will have a happy ending. We will let you know.

## A Reminder....

Membership fees for 2019 are now due so if you have not yet paid it would be appreciated if you would send a cheque for £10 to the SBPT Secretary Jane Boyd-Brent, Meadow Rise, Plud Street, Wedmore BS28 4BH. Better still you could make an annual standing order for 1st January each year. If you are unsure of your current membership status you can contact her by phone 07968083741 or by email [secretary@sbpt.info](mailto:secretary@sbpt.info).