

*January 2015*

*Dear Member*

*Happy New Year and huge apologies for the late arrival of this newsletter, which was previously promised for the Autumn! It has now been a whole year since I took over the role of Secretary to the SBPT from Erica Adams and it has been a very busy year indeed. Erica has been a very hard act to follow and her help over the past year has been invaluable, I can't thank her enough for her ongoing support.*

*Highlights of 2014 have included the opening of Castle House by the Duke of Gloucester in April, a very enjoyable members' visit to Balsam House in Wincanton at the end of May, a visit to Lyng Court Farm and King Alfred's Monument at the end of August, the William Stansell Awards in September and the AGM held at Huntstile Farm, Goathurst followed by a visit to Halswell House.*

*On a sadder note one of our long standing trustees, Hermoine Hobhouse passed away last Autumn and Hilary Binding, a well known local historian who has provided assistance to the Trust in the past, passed away at the end of last year after a short illness. Both will be very missed.*

*The support of our members for the work the Trust carries out is very appreciated and, if you have not already re-joined for 2015, a membership renewal form is enclosed.*

*I am looking forward to an equally successful and busy 2015!*

*Ann Manders*

*Trust Secretary*

## **Membership Renewals**

A membership renewal is enclosed with this newsletter, many of you have already paid your renewal subscription by BACS, but some are still outstanding. If you have not yet renewed and wish to remain a member please return the form with your subscription to Ann Manders as soon as possible. Please also return the form if you have already renewed but wish to 'Gift Aid' your subscription or have a change of contact details.



SBPT Members Enjoying the Sunshine and Tea at Balsam House

## **Latest SBPT Projects**

The SBPT team are currently assisting with three important projects: we are working in partnership with the newly formed South West Heritage Trust to bring about a renovation of the Glastonbury Rural Life Museum, we are supporting South Somerset District Council in the aims to find a future use and restoration solution for the Old Court House buildings at Chard and we are supporting the new owner of Halswell House in Goathurst with the restoration of the house and parkland. Full reports on each project of these projects are included in this newsletter. The project to help restore the Bishop's Barn in Wells has been placed on hold until a decision about the re-structuring of the current management trust has been made.

### **Hermione Hobhouse**

Hermione became a member of the SBPT Board in 1991 and was Vice Chairman for many years, retiring in 2013. She was extremely well known as an architectural historian, was a member of the Royal Commission on Historic Monuments, Chairman of the Royal Albert Hall Fabrics Committee and for a number of years ran the Victorian Society. A highly regarded author, Hermione wrote extensively on her knowledge of eminent Victorians and historic buildings. Particularly well known was her biography of Prince Albert, *His Life and Work: Thomas Cubitt; Crystal Palace and the Great Exhibition*. Hermione was always a very enlightening presence on the SBPT Board and her practical contributions were very well received. Coming from a noted Somerset family her interest in Somerset and its historic built heritage was of great importance to her. She will be sadly missed by everyone.



### **Halswell House and Parkland Restoration**

During October, following our AGM, members were treated to a visit to Halswell House, now under the new ownership of Edward Strachan. During the 1990s the SBPT restored two key buildings at Halswell, the Robin Hood Hut (now managed by the Landmark Trust) and the Temple of Harmony, now managed by the Halswell Park Trust. Since that time the SBPT and HPT have been negotiating with various owners of the area known as Mill Wood which provides the setting for the Temple of Harmony to try and achieve solution to the declining historic environment. Over recent years our Secretary, Ann Manders had been a key campaigner for action which would lead to the restoration of both the structures and woodland at Mill Wood. During 2014 this area was purchased by Edward Strachan who invited Ann to join his restoration team on behalf of the SBPT. Financed by Edward, work on the restoration began last Autumn with the planting of 150 trees. This year's work will include archaeological investigations, structural surveys and listed building consents, the team plan to plant in excess of another 1000 trees and to bring about the restoration of the Bath Stone Ornamental Bridge (currently on the HE 'At Risk' register. Exciting times indeed!

The Temple of Harmony is open to the public on Sunday afternoons from Easter to October (see their website: [www.halswellparktrust.org.uk](http://www.halswellparktrust.org.uk)), and Mill Wood will be open on selected occasions. Dates to follow.

### **The Angel Awards recognise SBPT's Castle House Achievement**

The Angel Awards were the brain child of Andrew Lloyd Webber to reward the efforts of local people in saving their heritage. With Historic England providing match funding with that generously given by Andrew Lloyd Webber the Angel Awards were introduced in 2011.

The SBPT's superb Castle House, Taunton project was submitted for the 2014 awards and we were delighted to receive a Certificate of Commendation.

At the 2014 AGM, Ralph Clark, President of SBPT, presented the Certificate to Mike Foden who masterminded and project managed the Castle House restoration whilst he was Chairman of SBPT.

### **The Buildings of England. Somerset. Julian Orbach and Nikolaus Pevsner**

Many of our members will re-call that Julian Orbach gave a presentation at the 2013 SBPT AGM. His revised Pevsner guide to the buildings of Somerset: South and West was published in November 2014 by Yale University Press as a companion to Somerset: North and Bristol by Andrew Foyle and Nikolaus Pevsner published in 2011. This expertly revised and enlarged survey is the perfect companion to our beautiful region and is available from all good booksellers.

### ***The Angel Awards recognise SBPT's Castle House achievement***

The Angel Awards were the brain child of Andrew Lloyd Webber to reward the efforts of local people in saving their heritage. With English Heritage providing match funding with that generously given by Andrew Lloyd Webber the Angel Awards were introduced in 2011.

The SBPT's superb Castle House, Taunton project was submitted for the 2014 awards and we were delighted to receive a Certificate of Commendation.

At the 2014 AGM, Ralph Clark, President of SBPT, presented the Certificate to Mike Foden who masterminded and project managed the Castle House restoration whilst he was Chairman of SBPT.

### **WILLIAM STANSELL SOMERSET HISTORIC BUILDING AWARDS 2014**

During 2014 the SBPT once again hosted the bi-annual William Stansell Somerset Historic Building Awards, the winners were announced at a special ceremony at Castle House, Taunton during September. The panel of judges was headed by architect Paul Richold, of Architecton in Bristol and included Patrick Brown a SBPT Trustee and a retired conservation architect who was an Inspector of Historic Buildings for English Heritage.

The Awards are named after the late William Stansell, founder and Chairman of the Stansell Group. His great love was the conservation and repair of historic buildings. The main sponsor is Tauntfield Ltd (the Stansell family company) and the Awards were presented by Chris Winter, director of Summerfield Developments (SW) Ltd

#### **AWARD WINNERS 2014**

##### **Repair to medieval house - Court Farm, Preywater Road, Wookey.**

Entrant and architects: Harrison Brooks, 15 Portway Frome Tel: 01373 474398

##### **Tower restoration - St Michael's Church, North Lane, Othery.**

Entrant and architects: Beech Tyldesley, Heritage Courtyard, 17D Sadler Street, Wells. Tel: 01749 673565

##### **New build in a conservation area - Ferrum House, 23 Quaperlake Street, Bruton**

Entrant: Andrew Pennock, Ferrum House

##### **Repair and renovation - Durslade Farmhouse, Dropping Lane, Bruton**

Entrant: Hauser and Wirth Somerset, 23 Savile Row, London Tel: 01749 814068

#### **COMMENDATIONS 2014**

##### **Housing scheme incorporating part of the old building - former Wells and District Hospital (The Mews) 1-15, The Mews, Bath Road, Wells.**

Entrant and architects: David Brain Partnership, Ralph Allen's Townhouse, 2 Church Street, Bath. Tel: 01225 445055

##### **House restoration - 41 Swain Street, Watchet.**

Entrant and architects: Paul Upton, Friar Barton, Over Stowey, Bridgwater. Tel : 01278 734630

##### **Refurbishment of Priory Barn - Somerset Cricket Museum, 7 Priory Ave, Taunton.**

Entrant and architects: Stone and Partners, Saxum House, 4 Billetfield, Taunton Tel: 01823 337211

##### **Creation of small chapel inside church - St Peter and All Hallows Church, West Huntspill, Bridgwater.**

Entrant and architects: Annie Evans, Sowdens Fiddington Bridgwater Tel: 01278 732339

Our next event will be a presentation about the 2014 William Stansell entries by judge Paul Richold from Architecton and Russell Lillford the SBPT Chairman. This will be held on the afternoon of Thursday 12 March (booking form enclosed) and it is hoped to follow this up with visits to some of the winning schemes during the summer. More details to follow.

## Somerset Rural Life Museum

The SBPT are working in partnership with the newly formed South West Heritage Trust and Somerset County Council to bring about a complete renovation of the Somerset Rural Life Museum in Glastonbury with Russell Lillford chairing the project board. The SBPT have taken a lease on the building which will pass to the Heritage Trust on completion of the works. SBPT have been awarded approximately £750,000 from Viridor Credits toward a £2.3 million project. Other significant funding is being provided by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Somerset County Council, Garfield Weston, the Fairfield Trust, the Friends of the Rural Life Museum, the National Trust and private individuals.

Ken Biggs Contractors Ltd have been appointed main build contractors, a company with an excellent track record for delivering successful conservation projects in the South West, including the visitor centres at Tyntesfield and Wells Cathedral, and new facilities at the American Museum near Bath.

Work started just before Christmas and is progressing well, more details can be found on the Rural Life Museum website at [www.somersetrurallifemuseum.org.uk](http://www.somersetrurallifemuseum.org.uk).

### The Alfred Jewel

Earlier this year members enjoyed a visit to West Lyng Tithe Barn followed by a trip to King Alfred's Monument. We were all treated to a very informative presentation by Amanda Watmore who had been taken on the role of restoration architect for the barn and from Bob Croft, County Archaeologist. Following on from this visit it has recently been announced that the Alfred Jewel one of the most celebrated treasures from Anglo-Saxon England, is returning to Somerset for the first time in nearly 300 years.

The South West Heritage Trust has announced that, through the kindness of the Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford, the Jewel will be displayed at the Museum of Somerset in Taunton during the month of February.

The Jewel, which dates from the late 9th century, was found near North Petherton church in 1693. It is lavishly made of gold, enamel and rock crystal and includes the image of a seated figure. It also bears a famous inscription which translates as 'Alfred ordered me to be made'.

It has long been assumed that King Alfred the Great commissioned the Jewel, and that it may have been his gift to the abbey at Athelney which he founded in thanksgiving for his defeat of the Vikings in 878.

For more information please visit:

[www.museumofsomerset.org.uk/2015/01/16/the-alfred-jewel](http://www.museumofsomerset.org.uk/2015/01/16/the-alfred-jewel) or telephone: 01823 255088

### **No.9 Fore Street, Chard**

Nos. 7-11 Fore Street are a group of Grade I listed buildings in the main street of Chard. They stand opposite the Guildhall in the centre of the Town and date from the 1570's, following rebuilding after a fire. Whilst medieval traces of the earlier buildings survive the most significant structure is the so-called Court Room. This splendid building of c.1630 stands at the rear of No.9 Fore Street and is approached via a courtyard and passageway. The single first room lit by ten-light transomed windows to front and back, measures approx. 9 metres by 6 metres and has a complete scheme of naive and charming decorated plasterwork, to the barrel vault, tympana, frieze and overmantel. The east tympanum has two figures (Justice and Wisdom) between three scenes of the Judgement of Solomon, Shedrach, Meshack and Abednego in the Fiery Furnace, and Daniel in the Lions' Den.

At the request of South Somerset District Council, the Trust has joined with Historic England in a project to secure the future of these important historic buildings included on the *Buildings at Risk Register*. Detailed historical and structural surveys have been carried out by consultants over the winter and will now be followed by an options appraisal identifying possible ways and means of taking the project forward. For its part, the Trust is particularly concerned about the Court Room and is keen to bring this small building into a state that will permit regular public access, use and enjoyment.