



SOMERSET BUILDING
Preservation Trust

NEWSLETTER

March 2017

Dear Members

Another busy six months for the Trust has passed during which time we have had to say farewell to one of our long standing trustees. Derek Gibson retired from the Board after nearly 30 years of service. As I am sure many of you will know, he spent his career as an architect working mainly from Bridgwater and Taunton, and was a founder member of the Bridgwater Civic Society. Derek will be remembered by the Trust for his valiant efforts to safeguard the future of Halswell Park on the Quantocks. As chairman of the Halswell Park Trust he worked tirelessly to secure Mill Wood. Now after many years his vision is at last becoming a reality.

As one familiar face leaves the Trust we are delighted to be able to introduce a new one. Jane St John Webster joined the Trust at the beginning of March and her details are set out below. You will all have an opportunity to meet Jane at our first visit of the year to Barford House.

A new addition to the Newsletter is a focus on an individual Building at Risk. Every year Historic England compile a register of historic buildings and sites that are considered to be at threat. Each edition of the Trust Newsletter will highlight a particular building on the register and offer our help to securing its future.

Thank you for your continued and valued support and I look forward to seeing you next month.

Russell Lillford,
Chairman of the Trust



Our New Secretary

We extend a very warm welcome to Jane St John Webster who has taken over as the secretary of the Trust.

Jane has a degree in the History of Art and Architecture and an MSc in Historic Building Conservation. She worked for Alan Baxter Associates the structural and civil engineering firm that has been involved in a number of major conservation projects. Since moving to Somerset, she has worked with the South West Heritage Trust as a part-time volunteer. Jane takes over from Ann Manders, who will remain as our company secretary and treasurer, in a voluntary capacity.

Diary Dates

* Members will have a rare opportunity next month to visit the newly-remodelled Barford Park, a Grade II 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.

The Stansell Award judges said: "The whole building has been revitalised to make a comfortable, practical and delightfully crafted family house."



Members will be able to see for themselves on Friday, April 21. Final details and booking arrangements will be available shortly. **However, numbers will be limited so make sure you book early.**

* We are currently finalising a visit to Wrington in July to see Barley Wood House and gardens. The property has recently undergone substantial repairs by the YMCA and works to the grounds are underway. In the early eighteenth century, the House was the home of Hannah More, the writer, philanthropist, and social reformer.

FOCUS ON BUILDINGS AT RISK



The 16th century gatehouse at Cothelstone House

Members who visited Cothelstone House last summer will recall the splendid 16th century gatehouse that is Grade 1* listed. Unfortunately, the building is in such a poor state that it is included on Historic England's At Risk Register.

Our chairman has written to Taunton Deane Borough Council asking if the Trust can assist in any way to safeguard the long-term future of this historic building. We await a positive outcome.

Update.....Update.....Update.....Update.....Update.....Update.....

Abbey Farm, Glastobury

The new look Somerset Rural Life Museum at Glastonbury is expected to reopen to the public in June following the extensive restoration work that was managed by SBPT.

The repair and refurbishment of the Abbey Farm buildings was completed early last year and museum staff are putting the finishing touches to the displays ready for the public opening.

The late Victorian farmhouse has been remodelled with a lift installed to provide wheelchair access to all areas and a new multi- purpose centre created in the old farm courtyard that can be used by visiting schools and for conferences, meetings and community events.

The project was managed by SBPT in close co-operation with the South West Heritage Trust, Somerset County Council and the Friends of the Rural Life Museum. Major funding for the project came from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Viridor Credits Environmental Company and Somerset County Council.

Halswell Park

Work has started on the restoration of the Grade 2 listed Bath stone bridge which dates back to 1755 and was once described as: "One of the most curious and obscure garden buildings in the country."

The owner of Halswell House Edward Strachan purchased the adjoining Mill Wood in 2014 and is now restoring the parkland to its former glory.

Unstable sections have been dismantled and 10 tons of Bath stone are being used in the reconstruction. Missing stones are being replicated by stone mason Mike Orchard.



Work on the bridge is expected to be completed in July. You can follow progress with the blog on the website halswellparktrust.org.uk

Bishop's Barn, Wells

Limited works have recently started to the 15th century Barn. These repairs and improvements are largely confined to the existing kitchen, toilets, entrance doors and services. On completion it is envisaged that the Wells community should be invited to use and enjoy the building. Depending on the levels of interest and a sustainable business plan the Trust and the Wells Recreation Ground Trust, the owners of the property will fully investigate the possibility of comprehensive long-term works.

No.9 Fore Street, Chard

The Trust is continuing to work with South Somerset District Council and Historic England to secure the future of this important Grade 1 listed building in the centre of Chard. The late medieval town house is still largely intact and contains a first-floor courtroom with excellent original plaster work and a barrel-vaulted ceiling. As the property is now empty and vulnerable we hope that this year we can reach a situation whereby the absentee owner can be persuaded to sell and a detailed list of repairs and improvements can be drawn up and costed, as stage one in the process of safeguarding this remarkable building.