



**SOMERSET BUILDING**  
*Preservation Trust*

**NEWSLETTER**

September 2023

Dear Members

As you can imagine, this is not an easy preface to write following as I am in the giant footsteps of Russell Lillford, who led the Trust so ably for so many years. Never has the phrase “a hard act to follow” been more apt.

Russell was the co-founder of the Trust back in the early 1980s and over the past 40 years he used his extensive knowledge and love of architecture and conservation to guide the restoration of numerous “at risk” historic properties that as a result have been saved for local communities.

He was still giving us the benefit of his expertise from his hospital bed, in the final weeks of his life, in relation to our latest project – No 9 Fore Street, Chard.

I am so pleased that the negotiations to enable the Trust to lease this building had been completed and the initial survey work begun, before his death. The restoration of this wonderful old building had been a long-cherished ambition of Russell’s. He will be very sadly missed by everyone.

Members will get an opportunity to see inside part of No 9 Fore Street following our Annual General Meeting which is being held in Chard Town Hall on Tuesday 10 October.

Unfortunately, we cannot tour the whole building until work to remove asbestos from some upper rooms has been completed. However, it should give members an ideal of the historic importance of this fascinating building.

I hope to see you there.

Patrick Stow  
Vice Chair

## **AGM Reminder**

You should have received notice that our annual meeting will be held in Chard Town Hall on Tuesday 10 October at 12 noon. The short business meeting will be followed by a sandwich lunch and a limited tour of No 9 Fore Street.

If you wish to attend, please let our secretary Jane know **before 29 September**.

## Saving No 9

The initial surveys of 9 Fore Street have begun but progress has been hampered by the discovery of asbestos in a couple of the upper rooms.

Arrangements are now being made for a specialist contractor to remove the asbestos in the next few months.

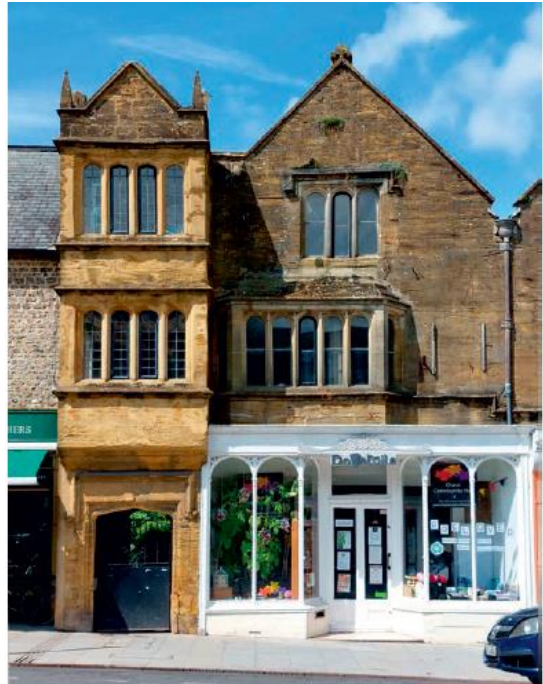
Once that is done, we can press ahead with detailed investigations, including a 3D laser survey and drone survey, that will enable us to draw up a programme of work to protect this historically important building and bring the whole of the property back into public use.

We have already agreed a new lease with the Chard Community Hub which uses the shop premises on the road frontage to provide space for local groups and a wide range of activities.

Much of the rest of the Grade 1 late medieval town house, known locally as the Old Courthouse, has been vacant and neglected for many years, leading to it being placed on Historic England's "At Risk" Register.

We are extremely grateful to the Architectural Heritage Fund and Chard Town Council for their financial support towards the preliminary work on this exciting project.

A Film Blog is being made to enable you to view the interior of the building and follow the progress of restoration work. The first two episodes have already been filmed. To view these, go to our website [www.sbpt.info](http://www.sbpt.info) and click on Latest Projects which will give you the link.



***Detail from the nationally important plasterwork in the Courtroom***

## Stansell awards

There was a surprise addition to the awards at the Trust's biennial ceremony to recognise outstanding examples of building, design and conservation – the Russell Lillford award.

This special prize was given to the team behind the on-going restoration of Tone Works to acknowledge the meticulously detailed research carried out before and during the work on this important early 19<sup>th</sup> century industrial complex on the outskirts of Wellington.

The award, presented by Russell's wife Sue Lillford to the team including Dr Joanne O'Hara, Somerset Council's Heritage At Risk programme manager, Architectural Thread and Corbel Conservation.

*Sue Lillford, presents the Award to Claire Fear of Architectural Thread, watched by Patrick Stow.*



Four projects were selected by our judges – conservation architect Jo Hibbert and SBPT trustee Adron Duckworth – to receive awards -

- Replacement of the top portion of the spire of St Thomas Church, Wells, toppled in a severe storm (Architect Alan Thomas and Sally Stachey Historic Conservation)
- The restoration of historic monuments in St Mary's Church, Nettlecombe, West Somerset (Architect Annie Evans and McNeilage Conservation)
- Conversion of The Stables, Venn House, Millborne Port (Studio Indigo and Ken Biggs Ltd)
- Creation of an Autobarn in the grounds of Springfield House, Nunney, near Frome (Bindloss Dawes Architects and GDW Buildings and Renovations Ltd)

More than 50 people attended the ceremony which was held at the Somerset Rural Life Museum in Glastonbury. The Trust is very grateful to Taunfield Ltd (the Stansell family company) for their sponsorship.

**Somerset Building Preservation Trust Charitable Trust No. 800904**  
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