

# News & Annual Report 2021



*Caring for Christian churches and chapels in Essex and East London*



*Spire repairs at Lambourne, St Mary and All Saints. © Alamy*

## Inside this newsletter

The AGM of the Friends of Essex Churches Trust will be held (via video conferencing) on Thursday, 20th May 2021 at 7.00pm.

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**2 Chairman's message**

---

**3 Events**

---

**4 Grants**

---

**7 2020 grant offers in full**

---

**8 2020 Ride+Stride**

---

**10 Summarised accounts**

---

**11 Treasurer's report**

---

**Legacies**

---

**The Friends of  
Essex Churches  
Trust 2020-21**

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# Chairman's message



**Jeremy Beale**

Coronavirus curtailed the Friends of Essex Churches Trust's activities during 2020 but within the restrictions that accompanied the medical emergency the Friends' committees and volunteers continued to try to assist those who care for our churches and chapels. Grants have been awarded, work has been carried out and we were lucky to have been able to hold one, very successful, fundraiser in July. Reports herein from the Grants and Events Committees give more detail; our Treasurer is able to report that our funds are in good health. Unfortunately there were no Study Days and no Gepp Lecture but these will return as soon as conditions allow.

The difficulties of 2020 are not over and the consequences may be far reaching.

The enforced closure of places of worship and the older age group who make up many congregations, and who are more vulnerable to coronavirus, has reduced church attendance significantly; it is likely this has speeded up changes that were in train even without a global pandemic. Smaller, often rural, congregations are being whittled away and the task of caring for buildings is becoming more onerous.

Therefore the assistance provided by this charity will become more necessary in the coming years. The knowledge and skills that our volunteers and members have will become invaluable. Vital in both senses of the word: more necessary, and also more life-giving. The work of preservation is our duty and pleasure, our response both to the times we live in, difficult but by no means exceptionally so in a wider historical context, and our response to what we have inherited – the buildings, both magnificent and modest, that we worship in. I look forward to the unfolding year and hope we will see more of one another in 2021.

**Jeremy Beale**

**Chairman – Friends of Essex Churches Trust**



**Floor repairs at Tiptree, St Luke.**

© James Bettley

# Events

Like the rest of the world, 2020 proved to be a bit tricky for the Events Committee! Our programme didn't quite follow plan, however there were a couple of brighter spots.

By kind permission of Mr and Mrs Eddis we had the most wonderful Garden Open Day at Horkesley Hall. Like most events held last year, the ever changing Covid-19 restrictions meant that its organisation was a bit last minute, but somehow we managed to squeeze it in between lock downs. Over 120 visitors enjoyed a sunny afternoon wandering in the beautiful gardens, there was much laughter and I am pleased to say a good sum was raised. A huge thank you to the Events Committee for baking the delicious individually wrapped cakes that were served with take-away teas.

The 2020 Gift Fair was sadly cancelled but we very much hope to see you this year at Hylands House, Chelmsford on Tuesday, 5th October – a bit earlier than usual so please put it in your diaries.



*The magnificent vista of Horkesley Hall.*

© Jo Pimblett

Our Christmas card almost sold out and featured The Adoration of the Shepherds from St Michael and All Angels, Copford. If anyone has a thought for a future Christmas card please do get in touch with us at [events@friendsofessexchurches.org.uk](mailto:events@friendsofessexchurches.org.uk).



*The Garden Open Day at Horkesley Hall.*

© James Bettley

We hope to rearrange the 'Gin and Gypsy Swing' evening as soon as circumstances allow and look forward to hearing the Djangoliers at Terling Church – how wonderful it will be to be out and about again. I am hopeful that we will have more events to report on next year, but in the meantime thank you for your support.

**Jo Pimblett**

**Chairman – Events Committee**

Email: [events@foect.org.uk](mailto:events@foect.org.uk)

# Grants

It would be wrong to say that 2020 was 'business as usual' for the Grants Committee, but in the most importance sense it was: we offered grants totalling £147,850 to twenty-two churches in Essex and East London, detailed on the accompanying list. In addition to that, Wendens Ambo, St Mary the Virgin, received £2,500 towards the cost of installing a roof alarm, from a separate fund administered by us on behalf of the Allchurches Trust. The beneficiaries were all Church of England churches, despite the fact that we welcome and encourage applications from Roman Catholic and Independent (Nonconformist) churches.



**Roof and spire repairs in progress at Barling, All Saints.** © Robert Brabner

In other respects 2020 was, of course, very different. We normally hold four meetings a year. The March meeting was held as usual, but the June meeting was cancelled, and the September and November meetings were held virtually. The June meeting was Lance Lepper's last as chairman, after two years in the post, and we are all very grateful to him for his hard work in that role. I am pleased to say that he remains on the Committee. At the same time two long-standing members of the Committee retired: Jill Cole, who had been a member since 2013, and David Lodge, chairman from 2007 to 2018. We shall greatly miss the many years of accumulated knowledge and experience that they brought to the Committee.

The other big difference in the way we went about our business was that we stopped visiting the applicants. Although this has not mattered in the sense that applicants provide a great deal of written information, and most queries can be dealt with on the phone, it is an aspect of the Committee's work that members enjoy, and a personal visit can help to establish a long-term relationship with the churches that is important for both parties.

It is hard at this stage to know how things will work out during the course of 2021. Nationally, it is already apparent that parish giving was considerably reduced in 2020, and this will have an effect on how much can be spent on church repairs and improvements in the coming months.



There is also a growing feeling, which may turn out to be unjustified, that many churches which have closed their doors during the pandemic may not reopen. Churches across the country were major beneficiaries of the Culture Recovery Fund in 2020, to the tune of £30m, but this was spread between 227 institutions and in the Diocese of Chelmsford only three churches received grants (Brentwood, St Thomas, £107,000; Leytonstone, St Andrew, £3,400; Walthamstow, St Peter-in-the Forest, £42,000). If parishes are in a position to embark on new projects – and repairs are always necessary, even if improvements can be postponed – the Friends will be needed



*Roof repairs at Colchester, St Peter.*  
© James Bettley



*Roof repairs at Good Easter, St Andrew.* © James Bettley

more than ever, working in conjunction with the regular national grant-making bodies such as the National Churches Trust, the Allchurches Trust, and the Garfield Weston Foundation.

A couple of 2020's grants, to Jaywick, St Christopher, and Nazeing, St Giles, demonstrate that, unlike some other county trusts, we do not confine ourselves to helping listed buildings or buildings over a certain age. Both these churches, 87 and 56 years old respectively, look more like church halls than churches, and they function as both. Our priority must be to keep church buildings operating not just as places of worship but also,

increasingly, as community buildings in the widest sense. That means keeping them in good repair, wind- and watertight, but also fully accessible and, as far as is feasible, comfortable and with up-to-date facilities. Our communities need our churches, and our churches need us.

**James Bettley**

**Chairman – Grants Committee**

Email: [jamesbettley@btinternet.com](mailto:jamesbettley@btinternet.com)

**Application forms for grants are available from John Bloomfield**

Email: [john.bloomfield@btinternet.com](mailto:john.bloomfield@btinternet.com),  
or download from the website,  
[www.friendsofsexchurches.org.uk](http://www.friendsofsexchurches.org.uk).



*Bell turret and external render repairs at Jaywick, St Christopher. © James Bettley*

# 2020 grant offers in full

## Repairs

Beneficiary	Repairs	Amount
Barling, All Saints	Roof and spire repairs	£5,000
Colchester, St Peter	Roof repairs	£10,000
Good Easter, St Andrew	Roof repairs	£9,000
Great Oakley, All Saints	Work associated with damp in tower, etc	£7,000
Great Sampford, St Michael	Timber repairs in tower	£1,500
Jaywick, St Christopher	Bell turret repairs and external render	£7,500
Lambourne, St Mary and All Saints	Spire repairs	£4,500
Little Bentley, St Mary the Virgin	Stonework repairs	£7,000
Newport, St Mary	Stonework repairs	£10,000
Pebmarsh, St John the Baptist	Roof repairs	£4,000
Roxwell, St Michael and All Angels	Buttress repairs	£5,000
Stanford Rivers, St Margaret	Buttress repairs	£3,350
Tiptree, St Luke	Floor repairs	£5,000
Walthamstow, St Peter-in-the-Forest	Major structural work	£10,000
West Hanningfield, St Mary and St Edward	Replacement of tower timbers	£6,000
Wethersfield, St Mary Magdalene	Roof repairs	£12,500
Willingale, St Christopher	Floor repairs	£1,500
TOTAL		£108,850

## Improvements

Beneficiary	Improvements	Amount
Great Chishill, St Swithun	Kitchenette	£10,000
Great Oakley, All Saints	Servery and improved access	£8,000
Myland, St Michael	Accessible lavatory	£10,000
Nazeing, St Giles	Facilities for church and local community	£6,000
Southend-on-Sea, St Alban	Accessible lavatory	£5,000
TOTAL		£39,000



# Ride+Stride 2020

We would all have liked to be out-of-doors and enjoying the early autumn sunshine on the second Saturday in September 2020. After weeks of confinement for all, anxiety for many and inactivity for some, a bracing bike ride should have been exactly what the doctors would have ordered. Especially in aid of the county's magnificent churches, most of which had been sadly closed since Lent.

When the pandemic struck in March, everyone hoped that its passage would be swift, and that life would quickly return to normal after a short period of confinement. I was shocked to find churches being closed at a time when spiritual guidance was urgently required, but worldwide the pressure was to discourage places where people might congregate and thereby pass on the virus. In the late Spring, it seemed that the statistics were becoming more favourable, and the hope grew that by the time of the Ride+Stride, we would be back on our bikes. Nationally, it was accepted that most counties would struggle to organise the usual Ride+Stride, so help was offered by the National Churches Trust to the organisers.

Sadly, we now know that it is taking a lot longer to get on top of this menace than appeared to be the case back in June and July. Although I received a clear message that many of Essex's regular cyclists were keen to shake off the sluggishness of the



*Improvements to accessible lavatory at Southend-on-Sea, St Alban. © James Bettley*

weeks when they had been prohibited from going out, I received a much more cautious message from the various R+S co-ordinators, churchwardens and vicars. There was an understandable concern that a stream of athletes would result in the need for an extensive cleansing operation, on the day before many of them expected to be tentatively welcoming a congregation for a service. Without a clear indication about which churches would be open (and, better still, able to welcome riders and striders in the usual way), it wasn't possible to advertise the information needed to enable participants to plan routes. Many of our regulars need to know where they can reliably plan for a 'pit-stop', and it was pointed out to me that a Ride+Stride without open churches would merely be another bicycle ride. The Ride+Stride National committee left the final decision to individual counties.

Although the Covid statistics for Essex looked better than many other parts of



the country, Southend and the East End of London (which falls into our area) were a significant cause for concern, and the primary factor in the decision not to proceed. Several die-hards (including me!) did elect to take to their bikes on 12th September 2020, probably encouraged by the decisions of neighbouring counties like Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire and Suffolk to take part, and it was, inevitably, a pleasant day for cycling.

However, **we must try to encourage more churches to open their doors in 2021** if the Ride+Stride is to return to its significance of earlier years. To this end, I am trying to contact as many churches up-and-down the county (of all Christian denominations) as possible to discover what reassurance is needed to enable them to be able to greet Riders and Striders. It is becoming sadly apparent that many of the county's churches will be in need of funds when the authorities finally allow them to reopen – what better way of getting this underway than having an open day on **11th September 2021**? By then, we will know the effectiveness of the vaccines, and should also be able to ensure that the guidelines in respect of hygiene and cleanliness can be complied with by those entering the churches. Ventilation should also not be a problem.

I can't end this report without a mention of the Rev Tim Hardingham, associate priest



*Improvements to accessible lavatory at Myland, St Michael.*

© James Bettley

of Wendens Ambo, St Mary the Virgin, for many years a loyal supporter of Ride+Stride. He participated this year, as usual, bicycling mainly across the border in Cambridgeshire. Sadly, on 25th October 2020, he was killed in a road accident near to his home, while cycling with his wife and two children. He will be sadly missed by all who knew him.

**John Pickthorn**

**Organiser – Ride+Stride**

Email: jeppickthorn@gmail.com

**THE 2021 RIDE+STRIDE WILL TAKE PLACE ON 11TH SEPTEMBER**

# Summarised accounts for the year ended 31st December 2020

## Statement of financial activities

Total 2019 £'000		Total 2020 £'000
36.9	Donations and subscriptions	27.4
20.0	Restricted grant for church roof alarms	–
62.5	Legacies	85.6
33.9	Fundraising – Ride+Stride	13.0
29.3	– other events	11.0
11.3	Dividends and interest	8.7
<b>193.9</b>	<b>Total income</b>	<b>145.7</b>
(2.0)	Governance and support costs	(2.1)
(0.1)	Ride+Stride – fundraising expenses	(0.1)
(14.6)	– returned to churches	(5.5)
(10.7)	Other events – fundraising expenses	(4.4)
(1.5)	Promotion of public interest in churches	(2.1)
(166.2)	Grants for work payable to churches	(147.0)
<b>(195.1)</b>	<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>(161.2)</b>
(1.2)	Net (expenditure)	(15.5)
25.7	Unrealised gain/(loss) on investments	(20.5)
<b>24.5</b>	<b>Net movement in funds</b>	<b>(36.0)</b>

## Summary balance sheet as at 31st December 2020

2019 £'000		2020 £'000
143.9	Investment – market value	163.4
381.4	Cash and deposits	303.3
0.6	Sundry debtors	2.6
<b>525.9</b>	<b>Total assets</b>	<b>469.3</b>
(180.0)	Undrawn allocated grants	(161.9)
(1.6)	Accruals	(1.6)
<b>344.3</b>	<b>Net assets Represented by</b>	<b>305.8</b>
324.3	General Fund (unrestricted)	288.3
20.0	Restricted Fund – grants for church roof alarms	17.5
<b>344.3</b>	<b>Total funds</b>	<b>305.8</b>

# Treasurer's report

The Covid-19 pandemic had, not unexpectedly, an adverse effect upon the Trust's finances for 2020. Fund-raising produced £39,200 less than in 2019 with donations reduced by £9,500. Fortunately legacies increased by £23,100 to £85,500 – one producing £74,000 as an initial payment on account arising from a property sale.

Grants to churches for building works were just as numerous. The combined total of Repair

and Improvement grants was slightly lower by £19,200 to £147,000. In addition, a further grant was made towards the cost of installing a roof alarm and that was paid over.

My thanks go to everyone who helped to provide funds in any of the various ways that were available.

**Harry Marsh**  
**Treasurer**

Email: [harry.marsh@talktalk.net](mailto:harry.marsh@talktalk.net)

## Legacies

We are always saddened to learn of the death of members, but sometimes the news is accompanied by donations taken at the funeral, a thought that is greatly appreciated. We have also, over the years, received some very generous bequests. We urge all our members to consider remembering us in their wills;

bequests to charity can reduce liability to Inheritance Tax.

Please contact the Treasurer if you would like advice on suitable wording:  
Canon Harry Marsh, 5 Vicarage Lane,  
Great Baddow, Chelmsford CM2 8HY  
Email: [harry.marsh@talktalk.net](mailto:harry.marsh@talktalk.net)

## The Friends of Essex Churches Trust 2020-21

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The Bishop of Chelmsford  
HM Lord-Lieutenant of Essex

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*Buttress repairs at Stanford Rivers, St Margaret.* © James Bettley



*Work associated with damp in tower at Great Oakley, All Saints.* © James Bettley



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