

Church archaeology and the Society: a year in summary

*C*hurch Archaeology is the annual journal of the Society for Church Archaeology. Our first issue rides upon a tide of national developments in ecclesiastical scholarship, preservation and management. In November the Archbishop of Canterbury launched a new campaign to strengthen the partnership between Church and State in the protection of the English ecclesiastical heritage. In addition, English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund have established the Joint Scheme for Churches and Other Places of Worship to benefit those communities whose local environments are enhanced by an historic church building: launched in October, this scheme will have £20 million available in its first year. The 1400th anniversary of the arrival of St Augustine in England is being marked by England's Christian Heritage Year, a major tourist and conservation programme launched this month. A number of dioceses of the Church of England, and Cadw for the Church in Wales, are already funding archaeological surveys of churches, and reports arising from this work appear in this issue.

September 1996 saw the publication of a report by the working party on redundant historic chapels in Wales. Its recommendations were many and welcome: a census of chapels; the creation of a new trust to care for redundant historic chapels and advise on their conservation; a thematic listing survey of chapel buildings; maintenance of grant levels to chapels and the inclusion of CAPEL among the consultees for planning and listed building applications affecting chapels. The

Welsh Affairs Committee follow-up inquiry to its 1993 report on *The preservation of historic buildings and monuments* included consideration of ecclesiastical conservation and their deliberations are eagerly awaited. In 1995 the Ulster Historic Churches Trust was set up (see News section). In 1997 we look forward to progress on many of these themes, as well as a forthcoming Department of National Heritage review on ecclesiastical exemption.

The Society for Church Archaeology was formally launched at a well-attended conference in York in March 1996, and one of the papers given, Warwick Rodwell's 'Landmarks in church archaeology' is reproduced in this issue. Since the launch membership has continued to expand, reaching 271 in February 1997. At our first annual general meeting and conference, held in Oxford in late October 1996, members and guests heard talks from Julian Munby on 350 years of church archaeology in Oxford, John Blair on Anglo-Saxon minsters of the Upper Thames, David Miles and Glenn Foard on the management of church archaeology in Oxford and Peterborough Dioceses and Angela Boyle on the analysis of the supposed bones of St Chad, followed by a tour of Oxford churches. Several colleagues volunteered assistance in society administration, notably Robert Coleman who has agreed to act as Membership Secretary and Oliver Jessop as Events Secretary. Dr Paul Barnwell of RCHME offered to host our next annual conference in York, on 18 October 1997.

To the expected question – do we really need another journal? – the answer must be a resounding 'yes'. The provision of a forum like this is overdue. The former *CBA Churches Committee Bulletin* appeared, irregularly, over 15 years (No 1, May 1975 to No 27, 1990). The *Bulletin* included surveys, case studies, interim research notes and reviews, and provided the essential coverage that *Church Archaeology* intends to resume. Britain alone holds uncounted thousands of medieval churches, from great cathedrals to little (and often decommissioned) rural fanes. Many represent the last in a demonstrable sequence of buildings and there are sites that have been shown to date back to the middle centuries of the first millennium AD. Churches are the largest, readily identifiable, source of evidence we possess for the Middle Ages, and to it can be added the rich legacy, social, architectural and liturgical, of the Nonconformists and the largely understudied archaeology of other faiths. Of course, discoveries, analyses and surveys appear in other national journals, but not in a specific setting of 'church archaeology' in its widest sense – embracing the buildings of all faiths and denominations, their burial grounds, and settlement and landscape context. Since the late 1940s a specific interest in the siting, structures, fittings and interpretations of places of worship has become apparent in most of Europe. Germany and the Netherlands were early proponents of the subject with post-war excavations of church interiors, France has concentrated particularly upon the earlier phases of Christianity, and Scandinavian

research into wooden churches has been directly relevant to British research. *Church Archaeology*, while reflecting work in the UK and Eire, will be taking its place within an international context and contributing to that wider debate.

Our journal aims to reflect the broad scope of current ecclesiastical archaeology, and we hope that in our second and subsequent issues *Church Archaeology* will grow to become truly UK-wide and cover all types of places of worship and their burial grounds. Papers are particularly welcome from those working in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland – under-represented in the current issue – together with news for our round-up section, which we hope will grow to provide a gazetteer of church projects across the UK, together with a comprehensive list of new books. We would also like to encourage contributions from Eire.

These developments will depend on our members, so please do get in touch if you are involved in a field project or know of one taking place. Other aims for the future are a mini-review within the new books section, and an occasional series of papers on aspects of church archaeology abroad.

In its second year, the Society hopes to invest in promotional literature, to develop and refine the journal and to consolidate membership. To do this effectively we welcome your comments. In which areas should the Society express the voice of its members? How would you like to see the journal develop? How can the Society cater for its membership through dayschools and conferences? Please send any comments to the editor at the address given on the contents page. Potential contributors are encouraged to get in touch for informal discussion prior to submission of copy, and should do so

in any event to obtain our notes for authors.

The production of *Church Archaeology* has been a team effort. Christine Pietrowski's advice on design and technical matters was instrumental in enabling our first issue to set a high production standard. Members of the Executive Committee have offered much-needed guidance – notably Charles Thomas, Jez Reeve and Nancy Edwards. Charlotte Foster and Morag Cross were responsible for information gathering for the round-up section. I would like to thank all of these for their continued support and advice, and the contributors to this issue for their patience with the tight publication schedule.

Carol Pyrah
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