



REPORT OF THE COUNCIL FOR THE YEAR 2005

Activities during the year

Events

As is customary, a varied selection of church visits and tours was offered. Members were invited to join John Vigar's tours during the year, including visits to churches in North, East, and South Kent. We also made available visits organised by the Churches Conservation Trust, to Kent and Essex. Two walking tours of churches were organised on behalf of the Society, one in Sudbury, the other in Norwich. An innovation was the introduction of what we hope will be an annual series of 'Focus Days'. The first of these was to see the work of the medieval glazier John Thornton at York Minster, and included a visit to the Minster and to the conservation studios of the York Glaziers Trust.

Three regular annual events took place in central London. The Annual General Meeting was held on 25 May 2005 at the St Anne's Church Centre, Soho, in conjunction with an illustrated talk by Dr Thomas Cocke on 'Finding the extraordinary in the ordinary: studying rural churches'. This stimulating lecture was well received, with upward of fifty members and guests, many of whom stayed for an informal reception afterwards.

The Annual Conference, which was attended by some 140 people, was held at the Royal Institution of British Architects in October. It had as its title 'Private chapels in England since the Reformation'. A fascinating set of lectures was presented on this somewhat novel theme by a team of expert speakers specialising in the history, use, architecture and furnishings of this building type.

In December we held the annual Dykes Bower lecture and reception at The Gallery, Cowcross Street, in conjunction with ICOMOS. The lecture was by Martin Stancliffe, RIBA, Surveyor to the Fabric, St Paul's Cathedral, and was entitled 'Preparing St Paul's for its fourth century'. The event was well attended, and formed a fitting end to the year.

Publications

The Society's Journal, *Ecclesiology Today*, again formed the backbone of its publishing programme. Two issues were distributed to members during the year, in January and September. As well as the familiar mix of news, book reviews and correspondence, its coverage included a numerous selection of short articles and reports on a wide diversity of subjects in the field of ecclesiology. No monographs were issued during the year.

The Society's website continues to attract a good number of visitors, with some two to three thousand hits per month.

Membership and Administration

Some 124 new members were welcomed into the society during the year. At the end of the year, the roll stood at 983, a net gain of 111, though this somewhat exaggerates the effective membership as about 60 members were in arrears of subscriptions, and from experience it is likely that a substantial proportion of these will have to be removed from the roll.

With great regret, the Council has noted the deaths of the following members during 2004: Reginald Adams, George Barlow, Colin Stuart Drake, Noel Mander, Peter Arthur Thomas and Rosemary Watts.

During the course of the year, Ian Watt left the Council, having become a postulant at Downside Abbey. We are grateful for his eight years of service to the Society. Keith Lovell and Sarah Brown were elected to the Council and Dr Paul Barnwell was co-opted. During the year our Hon. Treasurer, Sue Branfoot, was awarded her doctorate for her research into the restorations of Sir George Gilbert Scott. The Council continued to meet formally at about two-monthly intervals, to administer the Society (including, during 2005, a review of its disability policy), and discuss the development of its activities.

An innovation during the year was an occasional emailing both to members and non-members, advertising the Society's events and advising of other matters of interest. Our current estimate is that approximately one half of the Society's members probably have access to email, and steps are being taken to encourage more members to register their email address.

The Society has about one hundred Life Members, and during the course of the year we wrote to these, asking them to confirm that they wished to remain in membership. The warmth of some of the responses was gratifying. This was a useful housekeeping exercise, and one which we will probably repeat from time to time. We are grateful to our member Anne Willis for undertaking this work.

For many years Mrs Doreen Spurr has maintained the Society's mailing list, in the form of labels in a Word document. As members came and went, so labels were added and removed. The disadvantages of this approach have become clearer as the years rolled on, and during the year Mrs Spurr very kindly undertook the retyping of the entire name and address list into a database, a task which she carried out with remarkable accuracy. We are now able to help the printer by sorting labels into postcode order, and help ourselves by printing out our membership list in any order we choose.

As always, the Council are very grateful to members who provide active support to the Society in so many ways: organising and attending events of various kinds, contributing to the Journal, carrying out administrative tasks of one sort or another, and so on. In particular the Council acknowledges the assistance of Doreen Spurr, Anne Willis, Brigid Ockelton, and Ruth Cooke, the latter two for distributing publications and looking after Gift Aid respectively. We are grateful, too, to Mark Ockelton for his willingness to inspect the Society's accounts.