



The Churches Visitor and Tourism Association

Members' Newsletter

SEPTEMBER 2015

Welcome to the **Autumn Edition** of CVTA's bi-monthly Newsletter. The first thing to tell you is that the date and venue for this year's **Symposium and AGM** has at last been fixed – St. Chad's Church, Shrewsbury, 10.00 for 10.30am through to 4.00pm, on Saturday 14 November. Every year we take the AGM 'round the country': last year we were in Yorkshire and then Bristol, this year we are going to the West Midlands. The fee for the day to include initial tea/coffee and then lunch is likely to be £25.00. The suggestion is being floated that some might like to make a weekend of the event with visits to a number of local churches on the Friday afternoon, followed by a meal together in the evening. All those coming for both the Friday and Saturday and Sunday if you choose to make a weekend of it, will need to book their own accommodation. Booking forms and details of the exciting programme being planned will be on the CVTA website www.cvta.org.uk as from the end of the first week of October, and will be e-mailed out to all members and to those with surface mail at the same time. For the moment please simply put the date and times in your diary.

The national gathering and AGM of the **Small Pilgrim Places Network** will take place this year on Saturday 10 October from 10.30am to 4.00pm at Holy Cross Church, Cromer Street, Kings Cross, London, WC1H 8JU with the theme of 'Tourist to Pilgrim : Opening up Sacred Spaces.' The Revd. Nigel Lacey will speak of his Church Tourism Project, and Canon Alan Hargrave, Canon Missioner of Ely Cathedral will speak on developing a Small Pilgrim Place within the Cathedral. For details contact 0208 769 8509 or enquiries@smallpilgrimplaces.org To book contact Liz Urben on the above number or l.urben@tiscali.co.uk by 3 October if possible.

Andrew Duff writes that a big HLF funded churches regeneration project is underway across 18 churches in the **North East – 'Inspired Futures.'** Further, as part of the 'Spirit in Stone' churches heritage and visitor development project six new church heritage trails have been produced 'as the output of a process of working with groups of local volunteers, providing training on understanding your heritage, heritage guiding, visitor welcome, and how to create new interpretation materials. As a result of this, some groups are forging ahead with further local research and producing new church guides, displays, etc. under their own steam. Two of the trails are in Northumberland – one for the Bamburgh-Warkworth coastal area, and the other for a less well-known area around Bolam and Kirkharle (west of Morpeth). There are

also trails for Newcastle, Sunderland, Hartlepool and Darlington. Andrew adds: We hope that these will help to encourage visitors to spend more time exploring the 'hidden gems' to be found in these areas. For more information follow the link: <http://inspirednortheast.org.uk/page/useful-information/spirit-in-stone-project/1032/>

A note from **Christopher Jones - Leicester Photo Design**. Christopher writes: 'We are completing aerial work at Somerby Church with its links with Lord Tennyson, and Crowland Abbey, plus undertaking photographic work in Leicester Cathedral associated with Richard 111s new resting place.' He informs that he is now able to offer aerial photography and video with the use of their UAV (drone). His e-mail address is sales@leicesterphoto.com

Renewal of Membership. Those of you who are members of CVTA but did not renew your membership during July and the early part of August, will have received reminders. Those of you who pay by BACS and had not done so by the end of July will also have received reminders since evidence of BACS payments is only recorded on bank statements received after the end of the month in which they were received. We have just received the bank statement for August payments, so 'thank you' to those who paid then. As the renewal reminder letters stated, CVTA relies totally on subscriptions from members and on donations. We receive no grant funding from any ecclesiastical or government source. It is therefore vital we receive subscriptions. One of the issues Trustees are considering is a 'members only' area on our new website, so watch this space!

Earlier in the summer I attended a meeting of the **Tourism Alliance**, a national umbrella lobbying and information gathering and supplying organisation which draws together representatives of some of the big-named commercial tourism and visitor attractions, and some of the smaller charitable organisations which provide sometimes a nationwide service, and sometimes very localised opportunities for visitors and tourists to discover, be informed, relax, and seek re-creation. The meeting was addressed by government representatives from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG), and the Home Office. It was a very informative and inspiring occasion - not always the case with Civil Servants! Two messages came across loud and clear: the first was about increasing numbers of visitors and tourists showing added interest in the local, less media advertised 'attractions', and the second about the 'reception' visitors receive. I immediately translated both of these into 'churches visitor and tourism association speak' and recalled the message I find myself constantly proclaiming about the openness of church buildings to visitors and tourists outside the times of regular services. Some of the speakers went on to focus not merely on individual 'attractions' but also the communities in which they are set and of which they are a key component - in our case, church buildings geographically within localities, and/or church buildings within particular historical times, and/or church buildings in association with particular people or events, both historical and contemporary. And then that 'welcome' visitors and tourists do or do not receive once they have entered the church building, a welcome which when they leave makes them say 'that was a good place to be in!'

My wife and I were recently in Banff in Canada, an astonishing place nestling in the foothills of the Rockies. The town was heaving with tourists, especially Japanese! In the High Street there were three very prominent church buildings. All had large notices outside giving times of Sunday services. All had their doors fast shut outside those service times. How tragic! Why does the Church not want to share the Good News about God and his Christ through open church buildings at all times? Had doors been open, we will never know how many would have come inside, some doubtless out of curiosity, some out of genuine seeking. How many are being shunned by churches which refuse to welcome people in, other than on their own terms? And Jean and I were not in Banff for a Sunday!

The **Next Edition of the Newsletter** will be produced towards the end of November, **after** the Symposium and AGM in Shrewsbury. It will contain reports on the contributions. If you have any items for the Newsletter please send them to canonjbrown@mac.com by 23 November. Thank you.