

Building Faith 2012

Gloucester Diocesan Advisory Committee for Faculties and the Care of Churches
Working with the parishes to care for our churches



Tirley transformed after 2007 floods



Five years on from the disastrous floods of 2007, the transformation of St Michael's, Tirley is complete. The church has been flooded many times in the past, but the 2007 disaster was the worst in living memory. The widespread damage to floors, fittings and walls enabled a radical re-planning for a more versatile and less vulnerable church.

The new stone floor is disabled-friendly, and allows seating to be reconfigured at will, making the church more useful for the wider community. Everything has been done on the assumption that further flooding will take place sooner or later. For this reason a new gallery has been provided at the west end, which will keep the organ safe, and where vulnerable furnishings can be stored at short notice.

The new work was designed by Neil Birdsall, for many years architect at Tewkesbury Abbey. The new gallery is of contemporary design, with stainless steel supports and a beautiful serpentine frontal, boldly carved with words from Psalm 24: "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods". The timberwork and the lettering are by Tim Jeffree of Prinknash.

The radical reordering was welcomed both by the DAC and by other consultative bodies as an imaginative and courageous response to the devastation of the floods. The quality of the design and execution of the new work is a credit to all concerned.

More churches go green

Following last year's zero carbon church at Withington, six more churches took the plunge in 2011 and had solar panels put on their roofs. Some went it alone and put together the proposals themselves, whilst others joined the Ecochurches SW project, a partnership between the dioceses of Gloucester, Exeter and Bath & Wells, established in 2010 with the aim of helping churches to install solar panels by offering a possible financing solution.

Our Churches Officer, Natalie Hill, worked alongside the Department of Social Responsibility throughout the Ecochurches pilot projects, helping to establish processes and get the faculties through to completion and installations took place prior to the Feed In Tariff (FIT) change in December. Although there has been a great deal in the press about the FIT changes making solar projects less profitable, the cost of panels has reduced significantly, whilst energy bills continue to rise.

Even with the reductions to FITs, renewable energy remains a worthwhile prospect both in setting a good example to surrounding communities but also in making sensible use of parish finances.

At the start of 2012 the diocese submitted a bid to the Local Energy Assessment Fund (LEAF) and was awarded over £50,000 to undertake a desk assessment for solar potential on all remaining churches in the diocese, as well as a series of energy audits across a wide range of church buildings. This work will be complete by the end of March 2012 with the results published from mid-April.

We hope to be able to show that energy improvements do not have to be expensive to make a real difference, and that every church, even the Grade I-listed and medieval ones, can do something. Following this, we hope to undertake further energy monitoring work and issue our first Energy Saving Benchmark certificates later this year, which will give church buildings a rating A-G (much like your fridge!) and help to show whether churches are getting best value from the energy they use.

If you would like more information on any of the projects or initiatives mentioned above, please contact Natalie (contact details overleaf)



This picture and right: Photovoltaic panels on the roof of Winchcombe church, which are invisible from the ground



A visible array of panels on the unlisted St George's, Tuffley



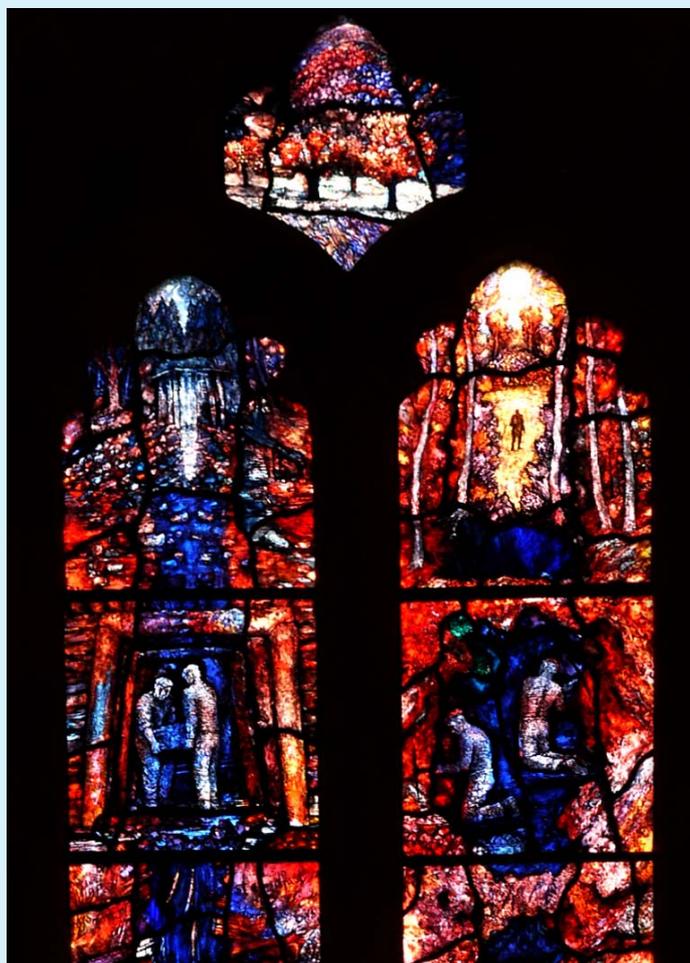
New art in old churches

Downpipes, loos and heating systems are among the staple fare of any DAC, but it's not all like that. Commissioning works of art to go into our churches is a more exciting prospect, but quite a daunting one: the results will be there for posterity to criticise, and there is only one chance to get it right.

Preparing a brief and selecting an artist are critical to success, but if you have never been involved in such a project, how do you know where to start? The Church Buildings Council has helpfully prepared an illustrated paper on the subject, *Commissioning new art for churches: a guide for parishes and artists*, which can be downloaded from the Churchcare website www.churchcare.co.uk.

Abenhall Church, isolated in the rolling Forest of Dean countryside, may seem an unlikely place for a major art project. The new Free Miners window by Tom Denny was in many ways a copybook commission, with the most careful thought given to the brief and the working up of the ideas. It was welcomed with keen anticipation by the DAC, and the results should be seen by anyone who enjoys contemporary stained glass.

Gloucestershire has for many years been a centre of the creative arts, and it is good that our churches provide many outlets for the generosity of donors and the skill of artists.



Right: This detail of the upper part of the window shows scenes above ground in the Forest, men working in a mine gallery and two kneeling miners at work in an iron mine

The DAC's year 2011

A total of 103 faculties were forwarded to the Registrar during 2011, a significant drop from 2010. Early indications for 2012 suggest that the reduction was a temporary one. The figure in any case reflects the DAC's policy of avoiding the need for a formal faculty where possible, but retaining detailed scrutiny where this is likely to be helpful. What of the larger cases? In 2011 the DAC recommended seven cases involving expenditure over £100,000, comprising a total of £1.8 million worth of work. Clearly, the situation is by no means one of retrenchment.

On the other hand, anecdotal experience from around the country suggests that economic pressures are causing a marked slowdown in certain areas, such as overhaul of pipe organs. 2011 also saw some fine building conservation firms going out of business, and there must be concern for continuity of the skills on which our buildings depend.

The DAC welcomed Bishop Michael to its meeting in December 2011. Members welcomed his desire that the

Committee should seek to be more proactive and to forge closer links with parishes. A particular concern will be to work with newly-arrived clergy, who may find themselves responsible for large groups of church buildings.

Our long-standing DAC Roadshows have been succeeded by Church Check-up days, with an emphasis on maintenance problems. Aimed at churchwardens and fabric officers, they help early detection of problems and swift remedial action.

During the year, Michael Hill resigned from the Committee after 11 years loyal service. Our parishes are well served by DAC members and consultants. As an example, one of our technical advisers ended 2011 by spending a cold afternoon examining the heating system at St Mary's, Berkeley. He e-mailed five pages of achievable recommendations for improvement and energy saving to the parish the same day. Our parishes and their churches benefit from this sort of commitment, and we do not take it for granted.

Planning permission: isn't the church exempt?

People often think that because the church operates the faculty system, planning permission is not needed. In fact, that is not true and there are a number of instances when both planning permission and faculties are needed. Examples when planning permission may be needed include building new structures in the churchyard, extending the church, adding solar panels, modifying the churchyard walls, fences and gates, carrying out extensive excavations or landscaping, or altering the external appearance of the church building. If you are unsure whether the works you are proposing might need planning permission, we would recommend checking with your local planning department as early on as possible in the development process.

Get your church guidebook written for free!

A new simple-to-use website has been set up to help put churches in touch with enthusiastic volunteers offering their research and writing skills for free. www.churchguides.co.uk invites churches wanting new guides to register and then matches a building with a willing volunteer. New writers are being added all the time, and if anyone is interested in putting themselves forward as a volunteer writer you can register for this on the website too. Churches benefit from getting a well written guide for free, whilst the writers benefit from further experience and naming credits on the publication. As many of the writers are students, this is particularly useful for their CVs, so if you are interested please do register.

Urgent news on VAT

In an unexpected move, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in the Budget that approved alterations to listed buildings would no longer be zero-rated for VAT. This change is due to come into effect from 1st October 2012, but between now and then interim measures will be brought in which will ensure that VAT at the standard rate of 20% will apply to all works. Only in cases where a contract with a tradesperson was signed prior to 21st March, or where 10% of the work has already been carried out, will the zero rate apply. However, after a tremendous amount of campaigning by the Church Buildings Council and others, the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme (LPWGS) will be extended to incorporate works of alteration, having an additional £30m added to the annual grant fund for at least the duration of this Parliament. This will mean the LPWGS grant fund will be increased to £42m a year, and as of October 2012 monthly pay outs will be re-introduced. It is expected that this increase in the grant fund will enable those submitting applications to reclaim 100% of their VAT, rather than the variable rates which have caused difficulties over the last year. For more information please see www.churchcare.co.uk and www.lpwscheme.org.uk

DAC members

Henry Russell *chartered surveyor* chairman
David Ball *architect* vice-chairman
Dr Steven Blake *art historian, national amenity societies*
Alan Brooks *architectural historian and stained glass*
Christopher Catling *diocesan archaeological adviser*
Revd Dr Christopher Collingwood *liturgy*
Nell Credland *facilities for the disabled*
Peter Gilbert Scott *architect*
John Goom *architect*
David Haigh *archaeologist, local authorities*
David Harley *services engineer*
Revd Canon Neil Heavisides *liturgy*
Ven Geoffrey Sidaway *Archdeacon of Gloucester*
Revd Pauline Smith *textiles and liturgy*
Ven Robert Springett *Archdeacon of Cheltenham*
Alan Strickland *bells*
Robert Tolley *architect*

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www.gloucester.anglican.org/buildings/churches/

Consultants

Revd Tom Clammer *liturgy*
Ursula Falconer *art conservation*
Ian Fox *organs*
Matthew Fulford *sustainability*
Julian Gibbs *furnishings, art and landscapes*
Michael Hill *architectural historian*
Sinclair Johnston *structural engineer*
Perry Jones *legal matters*
Dr Sarah Staniforth *fine art and sustainability*
Sir George White *clocks*

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