

St Mary's Totnes Heritage Trust

Update from Lynne Birch, the Trust's honorary secretary, on recent events and developments

- In June the trustees held a special launch at St Mary's Church to inform members of St Mary's and St John's congregations of progress. Steve Jones and members of the Trust explained some of the various activities and initiatives that are taking place and there was an opportunity for everyone to ask questions.
- In July a meeting was held at St Mary's for people from the church and the town who had expressed an interest in actively helping. This was very well attended and the trust received offers of help with media coordination, writing grant applications, heritage research and project team assistance. Everyone who attended signed up to become trust members.
- The major permanent exhibition which is to be mounted in the North Aisle is going to be an exciting and enticing installation for local people and visitors to find out about the heritage of the church, the history of the town and the restoration and reordering of St Mary's. It is hoped that this will be in place in October and the floor map of the town, which is being funded from local businesses in the town, should be laid soon after.
- Acceptacard: St Mary's is the first church in the diocese to have Acceptacard installed. This will be set up to accept card donations of £3 and will be positioned alongside the North Aisle exhibition.
- The Heritage Lottery Fund application was submitted in August. Its completion has been a mammoth task and thanks are due to all the people who have helped with this and worked so hard. The HLF in Exeter has been extremely encouraging. They are particularly impressed with the innovative use of the church for events such as the Sea Change Festival and have looked over and approved the completed application forms. The application process has been revised this year and its effect on funding for church restoration projects has yet to be tested. We await the outcome at the end of the year.
- Plans for a fundraising programme locally are underway and the trust is seeking someone who would be willing to coordinate the programme on its behalf. We have lots of ideas and willing helpers but we do need someone to bring it all together. On 7 December the Totnes Chamber Orchestra is giving a concert in the church for the trust and on the evening of Friday 13 December Bob Barsby is holding his hugely successful annual Christmas concert at St Mary's of which half the proceeds will go to the Heritage Trust.
- A major US fund raising initiative is under way, headed by trustee John Anderson working closely with local archivist Jill Drysdale who is researching local family links with US citizens. This is very exciting and innovative and could have the potential to bring in a lot of funding. More on this scheme in future bulletins as it develops.
- The "*What's Your Story*" project is coming along slowly. We are collecting special memories of St Mary's from members of the church and the community. The ones we have had so far are very interesting and inspiring and the plan is to run a massive timeline of people's memories from early and mid 20th century right through to present day. Please do let us know if you have a memory you want to share. We are planning to be available on several occasions in the church in the autumn for people to come and chat to us about their memories.
- Local residents who live near the church are receiving a letter and brochure informing them about the restoration and reordering.