**Conservation award for repair projects at places of worship announced
WWI memorial pipe organ project at Tenterden Methodist Church, Kent named winner**

The SPAB’s (Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings) 2020 John Betjeman Award for excellence in conservation at places of worship of all denominations and faiths drew a range of impressive entries in the England & Wales category.

This year’s winner is Tenterden Methodist Church, Kent for the exemplary repair of a war memorial pipe organ. The judges agreed that the project conserved a practical war memorial in a very touching and appropriate way. They were entirely persuaded that a conservative approach to fabric repair had delivered a wonderful result, with the instrument now playable again, and all periods of its repair history still legible.

Alistair Curtis, who repaired the organ, said “ I understand that organs are not the usual focus for this award so I’m delighted that my work on the WWI memorial pipe organ has been recognised by the John Betjeman Award. I particularly enjoyed playing the repaired organ for the judges, as this is what the instrument was intended for”

St Andrew in Trent, Dorset was also highly commended for the conservation of spire stonework. The judges commended both the approach taken to the work, and the finished result.

Although later in the year than usual, due to the disruption caused by the pandemic, the judges managed to visit all shortlisted projects in October. With risk assessments and safety measures in place, face coverings and hand sanitiser at the ready, and abiding by social distancing and restrictions on the number of people who could meet, they were able to visit all shortlisted sites.

The John Betjeman Award is always made to the building rather than to an individual, so this is a chance for a whole community to celebrate the quality of work completed in its building. Faith buildings are a heartening symbol of community so the SPAB was delighted that it was able to continue with the award this year.

The competition honours the poet, writer and broadcaster Sir John Betjeman, marking his contribution to heritage and culture. The award takes the form of a certificate featuring an image of Inglesham Church in Wiltshire, a favourite church of Betjeman’s and the subject of an early SPAB campaign by the SPAB’s founder, William Morris. This striking image was created for the SPAB by artist and friend of Betjeman, John Piper.

***Notes for editors***
**Short listed entrants were**: Tenterden Methodist Church, Kent – war memorial pipe organ repair; St Margaret of Antioch, East Wellow, Hampshire – repair of the south door; St Andrew, Trent, Dorset – conservation of spire stonework; St Alfege, Greenwich, London – repair of external masonry
**Covid-19 note:** due to Covid19 restrictions in Ireland, the judges there are unable to visit their shortlisted projects and will instead be making their assessments remotely. We look forward to reporting the outcome of the first John Betjeman Award for Ireland in due course.