

Church Chancel Saved!



We at St. Paul's Church, Woodhouse Eaves are now breathing a collective sigh of relief. Having been granted a generous sum by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to help to restore our church chancel, we have had a fascinating (and messy!) few months as the restoration work was carried out using a mixture of very old, traditional techniques and amazing new technology.

We have been able to afford to save our chancel, with its totally inadequate foundations, with the support of the HLF - and thus National Lottery players - plus local donors and charitable donations.



During the course of the work, it became increasingly obvious that the damage to the chancel and vestry walls was more extensive than some of us had realised, and that the repairs have been carried out in the nick of time! For example, daylight was visible through the very thick stone wall of the chancel as the temporary filling materials were cleared out in the area of the biggest crack. However, the works are now in their final finishing-off stages, and anyone visiting the church will be able to see our new and secure building but with very little evidence at all that the work ever took place!

The Technology

Surprisingly, the work to prevent further subsidence was carried out above ground rather than below. Channels were bored through the walls and steel poles in the form of "Cintec Anchors" installed to prevent further subsidence (... this technology has also been used on a pyramid so we are in good company)! Stainless steel "straps" to the main body of the church are now supporting the wooden beams of the chancel roof, and the Cintec anchors are doing the same thing for the walls. No further movement of the chancel should occur as a result of these new additions.



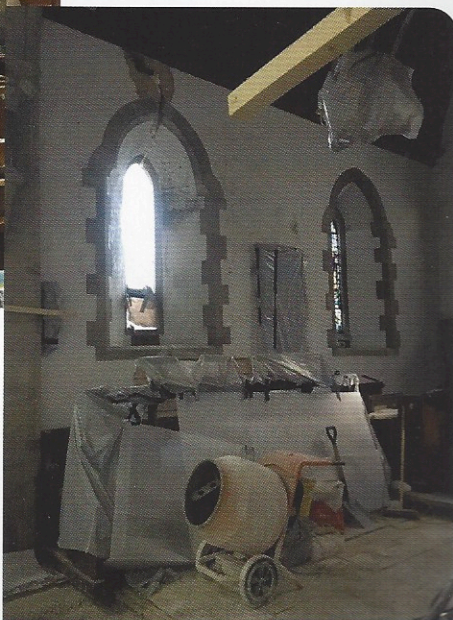
PHOTOS: top to bottom

The scaffolding arrives in August

The scaffolding and protective sheeting and fencing in situ around the chancel

Plastic "canopy" protecting body of church from dust

The Chancel as a work site



Redecoration

Needless to say, during the repair works the church has been filled with dust. The large patches of mould that appeared on the chancel walls following water damage sustained during the drilling of the channels in the walls were very dramatic and very alarming, but fortunately redecoration has removed all evidence of them. The plastic sheeting "tent" used to protect the body of the church from the worst of the dirt, damp and cold was pretty successful, despite requiring repair after a large lump of plaster tore part of it down early on! The scaffolding is down and the chancel has dried out. The Cintec anchor points are all hidden under stone plugs and the floor tiles are nearly all laid.

ST. PAUL'S, WOODHOUSE EAVES CHANCEL REPAIR AND HERITAGE PROJECT

A mixture of old and new

Great care has been taken to retain and improve the craftsmanship of the original structure of the church. Replacement sandstone blocks have been hand-carved by a stone-mason and traditional lime plaster has been used to fill the deficits on the interior walls. The horse-hair of the original 19th century plaster has been replaced with 21st century synthetic fibre to hold the lime together. The repointing outside the church was with mortar colour-matched to the original, and the roof tiles were replaced using copper nails just like the originals. Portland limestone with shell forms visible in it has been used to extend the chancel forward to enable the installation of a wheelchair-friendly ramp. The mosaic-style tiling to the chancel floor has been extended using Victorian tiles rescued from the original church floor.

Heritage exhibition

The next phase of the project is to plan the heritage exhibition. This will focus on a variety of aspects relating to the heritage of the church and the community it serves, and will run for three months from June 2018. At the exhibition, the winning photographs from our exciting photographic competition will be on display: this free-to-enter competition has several different age groups and valuable prizes on offer. Visit www.stpaulsheritage.com for further details and information too on our upcoming events and the exhibition itself.

Please do come and see our newly-restored church and find out about its heritage - we challenge you to spot the residual signs of the repairs in this glorious building!

We hope to see you soon, a warm welcome awaits all.

Sue Young, St Paul's Heritage Project



PHOTOS: Left to right

The crack below window with wires to be mortared in for strength

Mould and the crack above a Chancel window

The restored Chancel once again in use in December