



## Heritage at Risk – Conservation Repair Project at St John de Sepulchre Funders update, December 2020

### Introduction

Norwich Historic Churches Trust cares for and preserves 18 grade I listed, medieval churches in Norwich, which are no longer used for religious worship. They form an inextricable part of the cultural character of the city, as well as the medieval fabric for which Norwich is so well known.

One of these churches, St John de Sepulchre, was in dire need of repair and had unfortunately been classified as 'Heritage at Risk'. Of most pressing concern was the condition of the south vestry which was in an advanced state of collapse, risking damage to the adjacent medieval chancel. Other critical issues were the collapsing south east buttresses of the chancel, structural issues in the transept, failing roof coverings and general poor condition of flint work.



*Photograph showing the poor condition of the vestry, which is propped, with a barrier to ensure public safety*

Funding provided by Historic England, Norwich Historic Churches Trust and other local funders enabled a repair project to go ahead, the aim of which was to secure the building for the long-term future.

### Achievements

Works started as scheduled in November 2019. Delays were experienced due to Covid-19 restrictions and lockdowns and NHCT took the decision to divide the project in to two phases. Phase 1 was completed in August 2020 and focussed primarily on works needed to repair the structure.

The main contractors have been Nicholas Warns Architects (conservation architecture), Medieval Masonry Ltd (restorations contractor) and Skillingtons Workshop (monument repair).

Works so far have included:

### Rebuild of the South Vestry

Total dismantle and rebuild of the south vestry (reusing historic materials) and the addition of a new roof. The vestry is no longer at risk of collapse which would have brought down part of the medieval chancel.



*New copings on the rebuilt vestry*



*General view of the completed vestry*

### Stabilisation of Transepts

Works to the ceiling of the north transept and general repairs to the south transept including the windows and poor stone work. Plaster repairs to the north and south transepts. These were previously unstable and causing risk to the church.



*Works to the inside of the south transept masonry*



*Nearing completion of the repair to the south transept*

## Buttresses

Repair and new stonework to all buttresses. The chancel buttress was previously especially unstable.



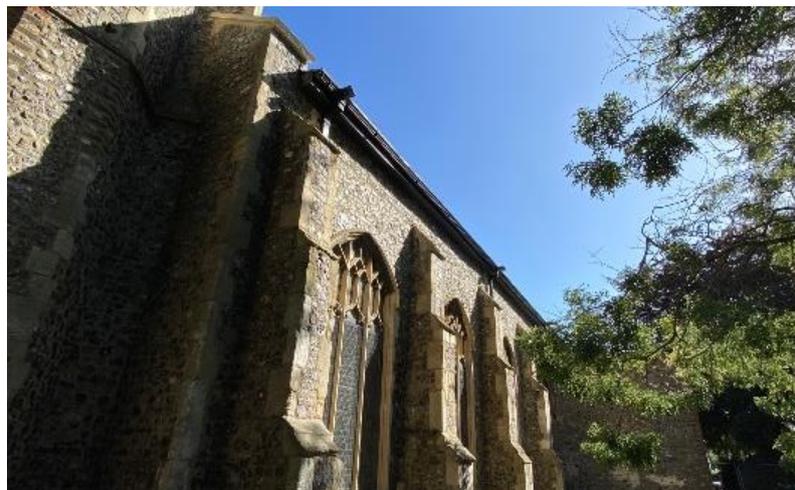
Buttress on south site under repair



Completed buttress with new stone

## Roof Repair, Coverings and Rainwater Goods

Repairs to the roof's lead and the installation of new felt roof coverings. Repair and improvement of all rainwater goods (gutters and gullies) at roof level. Re-leading of the rood stair turret.



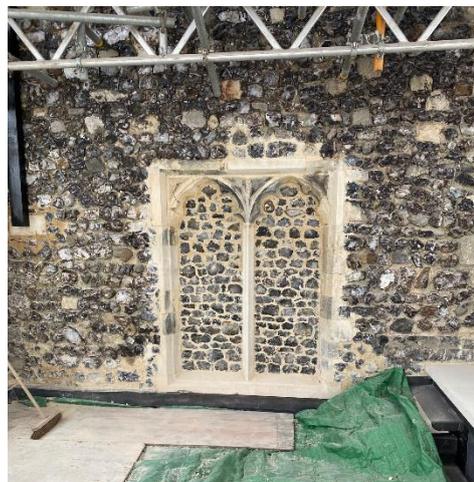
*Completed gutter renewal on south side of Nave*

## Flint Work, Window and Masonry Repair

General, extensive external masonry repairs including repair and stabilisation of window tracery. Flint repairs and renewal of the mortar using traditional techniques. Flint repairs offered opportunity for heritage skills training days using traditional hot lime mortar.



*New infill and stonework to the blocked chancel window*



*View of completed Chancel window infill flintwork*



*Completed repairs to north porch*



*Repair to flint mortar during a heritage skills training day*

## Conservation of Internal Monuments

Reconstruction and repair to three internal wall monuments dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, as well as a conservation clean.



*Before works started on the internal wall monuments*



*Completed rebuild and clean of wall monument.*



*Completed clean and repairs to wall monument on the North side of chancel*

## Next Steps

Phase 2 relates primarily to ground works outside the church including the excavation and installation of entirely new external drains and soakaways to prevent future rainwater damage, as well as paving and landscaping of the churchyard. This will require archaeological investigations.

## The Church going forward

This project would not have been possible without the support of our tenants whose hard work has seen St John achieve a new lease of life as a community ceremonies venue. Securing the church has meant it can continue to be used and, additionally, help to ensure that NHCT has the resources needed to carry out ongoing, regular maintenance.

Following the completion of the project, we will hold regular public open days to provide the opportunity for residents and visitors to admire and learn about the historic architecture.



THE PAUL BASSHAM  
CHARITABLE TRUST

