



Windows and monuments

More than £250,000 was distributed by the Church of England last year to support conservation projects in parishes, including work to preserve wall paintings, baptismal fonts, stained glass windows and rood screens.

A total of £255,585 has been awarded for 123 projects in 34 dioceses – with the number of grants up 20% on the year before - to help churches maintain and preserve significant cultural and historical items, including paintings, doors, chairs, clocks, and organs.

The grants, from donated funds, including major funder, the Pilgrim Trust, were distributed by the Church of England's national Cathedrals and church buildings team, alongside ongoing advice and guidance.

They include grants for the conservation of monuments, including £2,000 for the restoration of a baptismal font first installed in 1500 in the village church of Nettlestead St Mary in the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich.

The font (first slide in image gallery below) featuring ‘quite extraordinary carvings’, was repaired after being blown apart in 1940 when German bombers returning from a raid ditched bombs in the area. The font has since suffered water damage from a leaking - now repaired - roof.

Parochial Church Council member Maureen Gardiner, who heads fundraising for the church, said the conservation grant had paved the way for more grants to be awarded towards its repair and restoration. The restoration of the font, including removal of grey cement used to patch it up after 1940, will take place later this summer.

“It was made in around 1500 and has some quite extraordinary carvings including St Catherine clutching her wheel. For more than 500 years, despite various depredations, the font was completely untouched until 1940 when it was blown apart.

“By some miracle, despite grey concrete being used to patch it up, it is still in use today.”







The funds also include £35,000 for conservation of church organs, including £7,500 at St Anne's Church, Aigburth, in the Diocese of Liverpool, for its Grade II* listed Henry Willis organ.

The organ, built in 1913, is described as the 'last of its kind' having survived two world wars and an arson attack by suffragettes.

Organist Joe Wakefield, who is leading a fundraising campaign to restore the organ, described it as a 'stunning' and 'unique' part of the heritage of the country.

"We will be preserving historic cultural heritage, not only of the community, but of the country.

"Now we have conservation grants we hope that this will pave the way towards more funding," he said.

The programme has also funded £24,000 worth of grants for the conservation of stained glass in churches including £9,000 for St Michael-le-Belfrey for medieval stained glass windows. (See pictures in gallery of images, above. Credit: Barley Studio, York)

The awards further include more than £30,000 to fund work towards the conservation of wall paintings in churches.

St George's Trotton in the Diocese of Chichester has received grants worth £1,300 for technical surveys to enable the church to move forward in a project to clean and conserve its 14th century wall paintings.

At St Mary the Virgin Church in Stogumber, in the Diocese of Bath and Wells, a £5,000 grant has been awarded for structural monitoring and emergency conservation work of a monument to Sir George Sydenham, who died in 1597. Julian Spicer, churchwarden and lay worship assistant at the church, said the grants had enabled the church to stabilise the tomb and monitor the wider situation through a 3D computer model of the interior of the church.

"The tomb is now stabilised and we will be in a position to make a plan after monitoring over the next three or four years," he said.

"The church is held in very great affection by the wider village – it is not just the immediate congregation that cares about this – we are very well supported by the wider community."

Emily Gee, Director of Cathedrals and Church Buildings for the Church of England, said: "Many of these special features that have been conserved have been cherished over generations and remain deeply significant to their local communities, as well as of being of national historic interest. These remarkable wall paintings, stained glass, clocks, bells, furnishings and monuments are carefully maintained and looked after by teams of dedicated volunteers in church congregations.

"Most projects will have been advised by our national Cathedral and Church Buildings team, and some will have been visited. We remain on hand

to provide advice and guidance to these parish churches.

“We are delighted that we were able to increase the number of grants by 20%, as well as the coverage across England. With the help of our respected and much appreciated funders we were able to fund 123 conservation projects across 34 of the 42 dioceses.”

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Trotton images courtesy of Peter Martindale Conservation.

Nettlestead font photographs courtesy of Skillington Workshop Ltd.

Notes to Editors

The 2023 grants programmes for Conservation and Conservation Reports were funded by donations from the Pilgrim Trust, The Radcliffe Trust, the Anglican Parish Churches Fund, The Oswald Allen Fund, the Gunnis Fund and the Goldsmiths’ Company.

The Pilgrim Trust provided £193,967 in funding for this programme. The Pilgrim Trust is an independent charitable trust that was set up in 1930 to support the urgent and future needs of the UK. The Trust gives around £3 million in grants each year to charities and other public bodies that focus on preserving the UK’s heritage or bringing about social change. Its aims are to improve the life chances of the most vulnerable and preserve the best of our past for the public to enjoy.

The Radcliffe Trust is one of Britain’s oldest charities, founded in 1714 by the will of Dr John Radcliffe. The Radcliffe Trust continues his charitable bequest through the support of music, and heritage and crafts.

The Anglican Parish Churches Fund was established in 2012 and supports the conservation, repair and enhancement of church buildings of the Church of England, the contents of such church buildings and their churchyards.

The Oswald Allen Fund supports the conservation of books in parochial libraries of the Church of England.

The Gunnis Fund supports the preservation of monuments and tombs and tablets erected between 1660 and 1860 in English cathedrals and parish churches.

The Goldsmiths’ Company trains and supports jewellers and silversmiths and allied trades, protects consumers by testing and hallmarking precious metals and works with charitable, educational and cultural partners to help improve life chances.

Without the generous support of our funding partners we would not be able to help the thousands of volunteers that look after some of England’s most treasured heritage, found in our parish churches.

