

St Hubert's, Idsworth

Significant Restoration Project to the East Window Completed

The sharp-eyed amongst you will have been aware of the building repairs which have been undertaken at St Hubert's Church during the months of July, August and September, 2019. The 'little church in the field' has been swathed in scaffolding which could be clearly viewed from either the roadside or the railway carriage.

Back in the summer of 2013, the South and West Walls had been rendered with a lime mortar and then lime washed. Now was the time to limewash these walls again and three coats were applied.

The major focus for the work project was the East Wall and Window. For some time, there had been serious concerns about the poor state of the 1913 window frame which had become very rotten. In addition, the condition of the East Wall was deteriorating: for generations, it had been covered in a cement render, thus trapping the moisture within the wall so that it had started to bulge in places.

As well as scaffolding the outer East Wall, the internal wall above the altar also required scaffolding so that the reveals on either side of the window depicting St Peter and St Paul could be safeguarded. The removal of the East window was always going to be a challenge and this work was supervised under the eagle eye of a Wall Paintings conservator who was able to secure the plasterwork. The original glass, including the stained glass roundel depicting the conversion of St Hubert, was carefully removed, retained and cleaned.

Once the window frame had been successfully extracted, the opening was shuttered and the work on removing the cement render to the outer East Wall began.

By early August, all cement render had been removed – a challenging task as the architect had stipulated that only non-impact tools be used in the process. In the end, only a small number of flints needed to be re-grouted.

With the old render stripped back, an interesting feature in the wall was discovered by the architect: set at regular intervals in two layers across the wall were sets of sandstone blocks in an inverted 'U' formation. The architect referred to these as 'Puglestones' and were the supports for the original wooden scaffold poles when the wall was built dating back to at least the time of the 14th Century Wall Paintings.

Once the new window frame was in place, the process of applying the three layers of lime mortar began allowing time for each coat to harden. This was followed by three coats of lime wash. The glaziers returned to install the glass before the final pointing and render around the frame, both inside and out, was completed by the conservator.

The project was made possible through a major grant from East Hampshire District Council's S106 Developers Fund of £50,000 which had been secured by the Idsworth Church Friends

Trust. The Headley Trust and the Hampshire and the Islands Historic Churches Trust contributed towards the East Window. The Idsworth Church Friends Trust provided further funds towards the overall cost of the project.

The buildings project was managed by the Idsworth Church PCC.

During the Patronal Festival Service at St Hubert's on Sunday 13th October, an act of thanksgiving for the restoration of the East Window was conducted by the newly appointed Priest-in-Charge, Rev Vickie Morgan and a plaque was unveiled to acknowledge the contribution of the funding organisations.

Andrew Callender

Chairman, The Idsworth Church Friends Trust

(Article written with additional information from John Bates, Treasurer, Idsworth PCC)