



## **St Hubert's Church, Idsworth.**

### **Report on fabric repairs, July – October 2019**

#### **Background**

St Hubert's is a Grade 1 listed building within the South Downs National Park, standing in splendid isolation in the middle of a field. It is an Anglican church and the building was first recorded in A.D. 1053, with earlier origins.

*Aerial view, east window hedge side*



It was originally dedicated to St Peter and St Paul and rededicated to St Hubert following the discovery of its medieval wall paintings. The chancel has three beautiful medieval wall paintings, dating from c1330. There is one large painting on the north wall and two portraits on either side of the east window. The paintings were discovered in 1864 and excited considerable interest. In addition there is the remainder of a post-Reformation text on the south wall of the nave and a modern fresco on the arch above the nave.

*Interior of chancel showing 14<sup>th</sup> century wall painting*





*St Peter and St Paul, either side east window*



The Quinquennial Report of 2016 highlighted a number of urgent repairs to make the church watertight and prevent further deterioration of the building and its precious wall paintings. Major urgent structural repairs were needed for all windows, the north and east walls and the chancel fabric. The church is in an elevated position and takes the brunt of the wind and weather. The east wall was particularly vulnerable and its large window liable to collapse. A temporary exterior screen was installed on to the east window in late 2017.

*East window exterior, before and after temporary protection added*



Detailed specifications for the urgent repairs to the east wall and window were drawn up by the architect and included; complete replacement of the window frame, re-leading of the window panes, cleaning and replacing of the stained glass, conservation of the block stone surrounds, removal of the concrete rendering, re-pointing of the flint wall and re-rendering and lime-washing of the east face. The specifications also included rendering and lime-washing of the south and west walls and repairs/replacement of gutters.

The estimated cost of the specific repairs to the east wall and window was £60,000. This estimate did not include other work detailed in the specifications.



It was decided to concentrate on fundraising to repair the east wall and window as a matter of urgency, with applications made for a number of grants. The sum raised by the Friends of St Hubert's from external funders was £54000.

**East Hants District Council** - £49,999, Section 106 Developer Contributions  
**The Headley Trust** - £4000, for the new window frame

In addition the **Hampshire and Islands Historic Churches Trust** provided funding of £3500 directly to the PCC. This enabled the preparatory work for the project to be completed by the architect.

The Friends of St Hubert's and the PCC committed to further funding of £10,000, ensuring that lime-washing of the south and west walls could be done while the scaffolding was in place and any further remedial work on the wall paintings framing the east window could be completed in due course.

The work to the east wall and window, including the professional services of a wall paintings conservator and stonemason, was completed on time and to budget. The St Hubert's Friends Trustees and the Parochial Church Council are most grateful to the funders, without whom the work would not have been possible.

### **The building project July-October 2019**

The building work for the east wall and window commenced on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2019 and was completed in early October.

The removal of the east window was the most challenging part of the work and was supervised at all times by the paintings conservator. The original glass, including the stained glass roundel depicting the conversion of St Hubert, was carefully removed, retained and cleaned. The window opening was then shuttered and the cement render was removed from the east wall. This was also challenging as the architect had specified that only non-impact tools could be used in the process.

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 'v' formation. These were '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 14<sup>th</sup> Century wall paintings. The wall was then rendered, given three coats of limewash and the glass installed before final pointing around the window frame, inside and out, was applied by the conservator.

While some internal remedial work remains to be done on the east wall paintings, the building project overall was completed to budget and to time helped by excellent weather conditions during the course of the repairs.

A service of rededication of the new window was held on 13<sup>th</sup> October. At this service a plaque was unveiled, listing the donors who had so generously funded the project.



*Plaque unveiled on 13.10.19 listing project funders*



## **Photographic timeline of the project**

*July 2019, scaffolding in place, new window frame ready*





*July 2019, work begins to remove old window*



*August 2019, east window removed and temporary boarding in place*





*Interior views of new window, re-leaded with original glass replaced*





*Exterior view, new window east wall*



The Friends of St Hubert's, November 2019