

Newcastle Cathedral: Library Roof Repair (1 of 2 projects funded)

Awarded £155,572 in November 2014

The need

This project was to secure the roof of the Thomlinson Library, a 1736 extension to the cathedral by James Gibbs. The three-storey library is currently used as vestry, meeting room and Song School, used daily for rehearsal by the members of the choir.

Outcomes

The work included replacement of lead and external timber, gutters, downpipes and masonry, together with security measures on the adjacent choir windows. The whole library is now in good shape, with a watertight roof. Prior to the work the area required urgent attention; now there is no further work needed at present.



The Thomlinson Library. Photo credit: Purcell Architects.

Economic and social impact

The project used local contractors and supported traditional skills in stonemasonry. The improvements to the Song School benefit the choir, which recruits children from the local schools. The fund encouraged the cathedral to have more activities relating to the First World War than initially planned, including a successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for £10,000 to support their *Newcastle Heroes of World War One* project. This eight-month project used the cathedral's collections as well as complementary resources at the Northumberland Fusiliers Museum, Tyne and Wear Archives, Northumberland Archives and Newcastle Local Studies Library to research and share local First World War heritage. Guided by a recruited project historian, three schools took part in research visits to the cathedral, their local archive, the Northumberland Fusiliers Museum and see the 'Response' memorial in Newcastle. An exhibition brought this research together and incorporated each school's remembrance materials, and a webpage, social media and leaflet are being used to distribute the project's research.



Photo credit: Purcell Architects.

Works completed and timescale

The works were completed on schedule and an underspend of c.£20,000 was returned to the fund for reallocation.

The Cathedral

By the 15th century the successful merchants of the seafaring city of Newcastle had created the fourth largest parish church in England, with a beautiful open lantern tower. It became a cathedral in 1882. Internally it has some very fine memorials, and notable stained glass ranging from the fourteenth century to the twentieth. The cathedral is now developing a £6 million Heritage Lottery Fund-supported project to improve its urban setting and access by re-landscaping the south and east churchyards, transform the interior by removing pews and installing a new floor with underfloor heating, and convert the basement beneath the cathedral hall into new visitor facilities. As part of the project the cathedral will create new ways of interpreting its unique stories, including activities and events for schools, families, and for visitors both from the region and further afield.

Newcastle Cathedral: Crypt damp investigation (2 of 2 projects funded)

Awarded £25,000 in July 2016

The need

The application was for an investigation into the damp in the crypt and east end of Newcastle Cathedral and its causes and remedies. Water penetration at the ground level of the cathedral and rising damp was causing the deterioration of stonework and other materials, including some of the cathedral's rich collection of monuments and memorials. This was particularly evident at the east end and around the crypt on the north side of the cathedral, where increasing levels of damp in the crypt chapel threatened to spread to other areas. Flaking lime wash and the prevailing damp atmosphere meant that it was unsuitable for worship or public use.

The crypt is believed to have been constructed in the 14th century as a chantry or charnel house and fell out of use until it was rediscovered and opened up in 1824. It was found nearly full of rubbish and human bones, which were removed and reburied. In 1932 the crypt was adapted to its later use as a small chapel. The Cathedral Architect had monitored temperature and humidity, and despite dealing with local external problems it appeared that if anything the moisture levels are increasing.



The crypt space. Photo credit: Purcell Architects

Outcomes

The project has now been completed but the cause of the damp has yet to be fully identified. The project has helped progress the analysis and the Cathedral Architect is currently monitoring the situation.

Works completed and timescale

The work included analysis of temperature and humidity readings in the crypt from the beginning of the monitoring to date, desk research on events in the immediate vicinity in recent years including various leaking drains, and an archaeological evaluation undertaken by the Cathedral Archaeologist, David Heslop. This involved a small evaluation excavation beneath the paved floor to help understand the nature of deposits there and see if they were holding water. The aim was to help determine whether the damp problem is a result of water rising up from the underlying strata or coming downwards from ground under the adjacent street.

The Cathedral

By the 15th century the successful merchants of the seafaring city of Newcastle had created the fourth largest parish church in England, with a beautiful open lantern tower. It became a cathedral in 1882. Internally it has some very fine memorials, and notable stained glass ranging from the fourteenth century to the twentieth. The cathedral is now developing a £6 million Heritage Lottery Fund-supported development project