

Portsmouth Cathedral: Tower & South Transept (1 of 3 projects funded)

Awarded £594,783 in November 2014 and a further £22,000 in March/May 2016

The need

The winter of 2013/14 was one of the wettest in recent times and the tower of Portsmouth Cathedral, closed to the sea and exposed to salt-laden winds, suffered from considerable water leaking. The south transept plaster had also significantly deteriorated due to saturation of the wall with salt-laden water. Both areas needed urgent repairs.

Outcomes

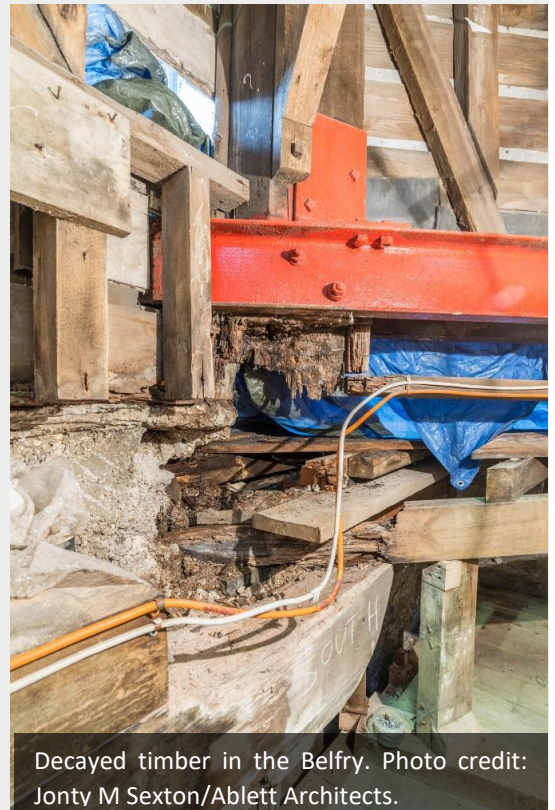
The tower and south transept are now much drier and also more structurally sound. Maintenance planning has improved; the alteration of the belfry platform and a safety cable externally has meant that the areas are easier and safer to maintain. Working on the projects has 'upskilled' the team in managing contractors and has increased the understanding of the building. They tendered for this work alongside another project and this saved money due to efficiencies with staffing and scaffolding costs by doing simultaneous work. Having stonemasons on site encouraged the cathedral to invest in other maintenance work at the same time, e.g. on the Cathedral House.

Economic and social impact

The tower works supported 15 to 20 jobs, including two trainees, in traditional skills such as carpentry, masonry and leadwork. The Cathedral Architect observed that the projects have been an important part of the workload for his company and their skills development. As part of the works two commemorative hoppers for water drainage were placed on the western elevation of the Tower with the dates "1914" and "2014", commemorating the centenary of the start of the First World War. The works generated increased interest in the cathedral's building history and there was demand for a series of six guided tours of the tower during the works, each with approximately 15 people. The architect gave a presentation about the works at a cathedral community evening which approximately 60 people attended. A live feed from the tower also allowed visitors to see work as it progressed.

Works completed

The transept works involved the removal of the internal plaster to the end transept wall and re-pointing. Tower lead was renewed, rotten timber cut out and decayed steelwork replaced and new rainwater goods installed. Costs increased and timescales were extended because of the discovery of extensive rot and corrosion at high level in the tower belfry, risking its collapse in a storm; the fund's Expert Panel allocated an additional sum from underspend elsewhere towards the c. £100,000 extra required.



Decayed timber in the Belfry. Photo credit: Jonty M Sexton/Ablett Architects.



Completed tower with new rainwater downpipes and hoppers. Photo credit: Jonty M Sexton/Ablett Architects

The Cathedral

Portsmouth Cathedral used to be part of the Winchester diocese and became a cathedral in 1927. The sanctuary and quire are 12th to 13th century and the tower is Jacobean. However the west end was only finally completed in the 1990s after long having a temporary infill put there during the Second World War. Known as the Cathedral of the Sea, it has a long association with the navy.

Portsmouth Cathedral: Repointing of Chapel (2 of 3 projects funded)

Awarded £86,053 in March 2015

The need

The exterior of the Chapel of St Thomas, the earliest section of the cathedral, dating to the 1180s, had at some stage been heavily repointed in modern hard cement mortar, giving a 'crazy paving' appearance. This outdated intervention was damaging the softer historic stonework by trapping water in the gaps that had opened up beneath the pointing, leading to damp and frost damage.

Outcomes

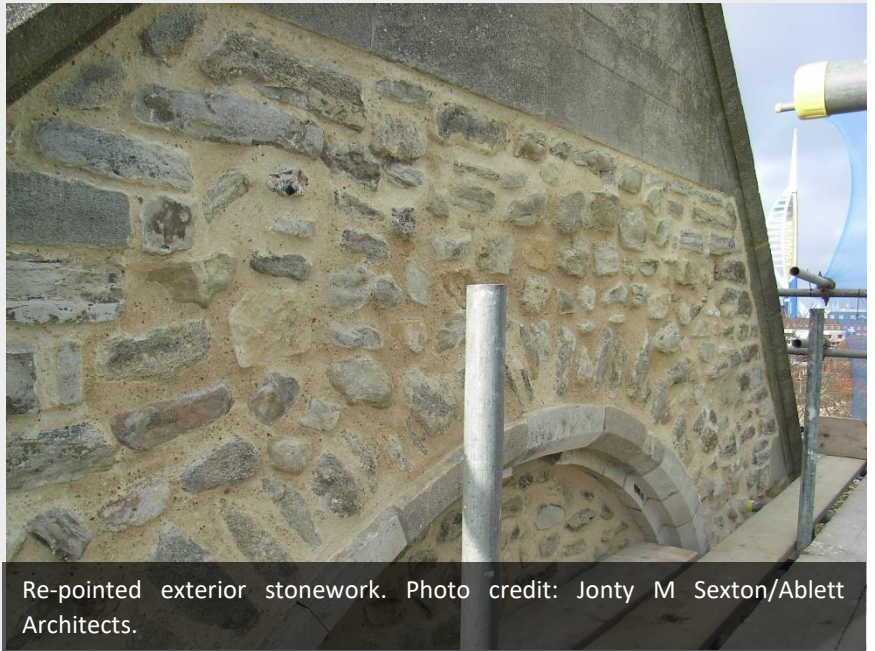
There is significantly reduced risk of decaying masonry, making the building safer, and reduced risk of damage to historic fabric. Working on the projects has 'upskilled' the team in managing contractors and has increased the understanding of the building. They tendered for this work alongside the tower project and this saved money due to efficiencies of simultaneous work with staffing and scaffolding costs.

Economic and social impact

This project supported jobs in traditional stone masonry. The Cathedral Architect observed that the projects have been an important part of the workload for his company and their skills development. The repaired east wall has conserved fabric and presents a more attractive face to the street.

Works completed

The works consisted of the repair and renewal of damaged exterior stonework to the Chapel and the removal of the 'crazy paving' wide and hard cement pointing to the whole elevation, as well as to the south elevation of the aisle. It also involved the refurbishment of the plain clay roof tiles and repair of the rainwater goods. It completes the repointing of the exterior of the cathedral, funding for which had not been obtainable in recent years.



Re-pointed exterior stonework. Photo credit: Jonty M Sexton/Ablett Architects.



The completed east wall. Photo credit: Jonty M Sexton/Ablett Architects.

The Cathedral

Portsmouth Cathedral used to be part of the Diocese of Winchester and became a cathedral in 1927. The sanctuary and quire are 12th to 13th century and the tower is Jacobean. However the west end was only finally completed in the 1990s after long having a temporary infill put there during the Second World War. Known as the Cathedral of the Sea, it has a long association with the navy.

The need

The poor condition of the metal-framed windows on the north side and their ferramenta (metal bars) had been noted in the 2011 Quinquennial Inspection and again in 2016; the location of the cathedral by the sea ensures that ferrous metal corrodes very quickly, expanding and causing splits and fractures to the stonemasonry into which the metal is fixed.

Outcomes

The stained-glass quire windows are repaired and cleaned and the other windows now can open and close. A number were jammed, due to extensive steel corrosion, and can now be used to help regulate temperature and air flow inside the building. Open stone joints have been pointed and the new roof flashings offer better protection against the weather. Working on the projects has 'upskilled' the team in managing contractors and has increased the understanding of the building.

Economic and social impact

This project supported six jobs in traditional skills such as masonry, leadwork and specialist glazing. The Cathedral Architect observed that the projects have been an important part of the workload for his company and their skills development. The repairs enhance the view of the cathedral from the north.

Works completed and timescale

The project consisted of the repair of the nine stained-glass windows to the north quire aisle, the windows of the north tower transept, all the remaining leaded light windows of the cloister and the cloister garth and

their corroding window bars. It also address various other north side repairs: repointing of open joints to the stonework and the parapet coping stones, new lead cover flashings to the cloister roof and a lead cover flashing and pointing to help protect the fine 17th-century north doorcase. Lead rainwater pipe fixings were inspected and some renewed. There were also some works to the nave flooring, which required repointing.

The Cathedral

Portsmouth Cathedral used to be part of the Diocese of Winchester and became a cathedral in 1927. The sanctuary and quire are 12th to 13th century and the tower is Jacobean. However the west end was only finally completed in the 1990s after long having a temporary infill put there during the Second World War. Known as the Cathedral of the Sea, it has a long association with the navy.



Decayed window and bars to the cloister. Photo credit: Ablett Architects.



Repaired St Thomas window in the quire. Photo credit: Ablett Architects.