

West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust

Media Release



Weather vane flies again thanks to chapels project

The Weather Vane is flying high again above the Lye & Wollescote Cemetery Chapels building following successful conservation and repair by Ashmore Conservation Metal Smiths of Highley, near Bridgnorth.

This repair was made possible with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and a grant specifically for the repair of the Vane from the Society of Antiquaries of London, who award grants for the conservation of decorative features and monuments.

This ornate Weather Vane, dated 1878, was in reasonable condition, taking into account its age and probable lack of maintenance since its erection almost 140 years ago. The saying 'they don't make it like they used to' comes to mind, with the techniques in its manufacture being of forging and fire welding, and the copper section, fret-sawn out.

The Vane was gently dismantled and taken to the metal smiths workshop; treatment started with the top section, working down to the lower section, where it was wire brushed and emery clothed to remove loose paint and rust. Any major corrosion pitting was filled with mild steel and any cracks were built up using the same process. The copper wind catcher was cleaned and riveted back into place. The end result is a beautiful, intricately designed weather vane back in situ for another hundred years.

Images attached:

Repaired in-situ

Close up of the ironwork

Notes to editors:

About the West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust

The West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust (WMHBT) is a registered charity, established in 1985, with specialists in the field of building conservation giving their time on a voluntary basis to serve as Trustees and funds coming from membership subscriptions. WMHBT's purpose is to safeguard buildings within the West Midlands that are of historical or

architectural importance. Where this cannot be achieved by simply raising awareness to the issues, WMHBT will consider carrying out a conservation project itself. As a registered Building Preservation Trust, WMHBT is able to attract grants and low-cost loans to carry out the type of rescue scheme often necessary with 'Buildings at Risk' and in this way aims to cover the deficit in funding such projects.

Membership is open to anyone with an interest in safeguarding historic buildings. WMHBT organises a range of activities, focused on the West Midlands, which include a regular newsletter; specialist talks, events and visits to historic buildings; arranging public access (as appropriate) to buildings before, during and after repair; commissioning and publishing research into historic buildings; encouraging the involvement of schools and colleges in conservation projects; and disseminating information.

The first WMHBT project was 19-20 High Street, Kinver, South Staffordshire, a timber-frame building listed grade II. In the Staffordshire volume of 'The Buildings of England' series, the late Nikolaus Pevsner states that in Kinver High Street the best houses are numbers 17-20. To have lost an important building within that range would have been a tragedy, but when the WMHBT took the building over it was in a dangerous condition, with parts close to collapse. By that stage no-one was prepared to take up the arrears of maintenance because it would have cost more than the market value to put it right. As a result of the WMHBT project, 19-20 High Street has been transformed into a comfortable four-bedroom home and is now occupied by new owners. The high standards of the work were recognised by two awards: "The Carpenters' Award" presented by English Heritage in recognition of "the sensitivity of approach and excellence of craftsmanship"; and a "mention" by the Civic Trust for its "worthy contribution to the community".

The second WMHBT project was the grade II listed office building built as a living showcase by the former Harris & Pearson Company, firebrick manufacturers, in Brettell Lane, Brierley Hill, West Midlands. The building had been unoccupied for 13 years and was in a derelict state when acquired by WMHBT, with the costs of repair again being in excess of market value. The building was converted for modern-day use as prestigious offices and materials produced to interpret the associated heritage stories (see www.harrisandpearson.info). The project was a regional finalist in the RICS Awards, a national finalist in the Brick Awards, and was awarded a Civic Trust awards "commendation".

Both of the above projects were made possible by tremendous local community and local authority support and financial assistance from several sources, including primarily the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Architectural Heritage Fund.

About the Heritage Lottery Fund

From the archaeology under our feet to the historic parks and buildings we love, from precious memories and collections to rare wildlife, we use National Lottery players' money to help people across the UK explore, enjoy and protect the heritage they care about. www.hlf.org.uk @heritagelottery

About the Society of Antiquaries of London

Today, the Society (founded in 1707) encompasses a diverse Fellowship of more than 3,000 heritage professionals, a research library and museum collection at Burlington House (London), a historic house at Kelmscott Manor (Oxfordshire), a conservation and research grants programme, publications and public events programme. The Society's William and Jane Morris Churches Conservation Grant helped to fund this project. More information about our grants can be found online at www.sal.org.uk/grants. Connect with us on Facebook or Twitter (@SocAntiquaries) as well!



**SOCIETY OF
ANTIQUARIES
OF LONDON**

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Supporting information such as photographs and artists impressions are available on request.

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