

# **ST JAMES'S CHURCH, WEST LITTLETON: TOMBS AND MEMORIALS CONSERVATION PROJECT**

## **FINAL REPORT**

### **INTRODUCTION**

St James's Church lies in the small village of West Littleton on the border of Wiltshire and Gloucestershire. The church is Grade 2 listed and has a particularly fine 13<sup>th</sup> century turret and bellcote. The village of West Littleton and its church are not only a source of great pride to the villagers but also give much pleasure to visitors to the area who enjoy country walks along the well posted and maintained footpaths. There is a footpath through the churchyard which allows passers-by to spend a few moments of quiet contemplation inside this beautiful little church.

The Project is fully documented on our website:

<http://www.stjamesmonuments.org>

We have 3 bound albums containing photographs and a record of the project.

### **BACKGROUND**

The church contains four 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century marble wall monuments with the earliest commemorating the death of the Reverend William Alsop in 1750. In the churchyard there are nine listed chest tombs which flank the path to the church door. It had been clear for a number of years that the memorials and tombs were deteriorating with some becoming "at risk". The Quinquennial Report submitted in November 2007 confirmed the need for action.

In April 2008, the PCC, with the advice of the Church Architect, decided to initiate a programme of work using approved conservation techniques. The PCC recognised that there was an increasing demand for safe access to heritage items in and around churches, especially in rural areas where many come to appreciate the countryside and learn about village communities. It was decided that the project would be linked to an initiative to provide access to the heritage through an archival and historical display in the church, through a dedicated website and through links to local schools and groups.

As a first step, a full Conservation Report was commissioned. This is at:

<http://www.stjamesmonuments.org/StracheyReport.pdf>

## **AIMS**

The aims of the project were:

- To ensure that this important collection of memorials and tombs is preserved for the future and made safely accessible to the local community and visitors to the church.
- To provide an opportunity for education and training to preserve a range of important heritage skills.
- To provide opportunities to those who wish to learn about the history of a small village community through study, interpretation and participation.
- To extend these opportunities to those who do not normally have the chance to visit and learn about such sites.
- To increase public awareness and knowledge by providing a well documented site, including displays and leaflets together with website access, as a basis for learning about these important aspects of our heritage.
- To research the family history of those commemorated on the memorials and those commemorated on and buried in the tombs and to enable others to learn about such history

## **EVALUATION OF AIMS**

### **Conservation Work**

The contract for the conservation work was awarded to Nimbus Conservation in May 2010 after a tender process supervised by the Church Architect. The main works were carried out between 19 July and 12 September 2010, with some final sculpture work to the Frankcom memorial completed during November. The completion certificate was issued in December and the final retention released after a further inspection in May 2011. The repairs had been subjected to a particularly hard test during the severe winter and came through unscathed.

Full details of the work are contained in the Conservation Works Report submitted by Nimbus in December 2010. Available at:  
<http://www.stjamesmonuments.org/WestLittletonWorksReportFinal.pdf>

## **Education and Training**

The conservation work provided a framework in which to make heritage skills, history, social history, archaeology, architecture and art history relevant to a wide range of ages and interest levels. This was achieved in association with our partners. Particular highlights were:

- The partnership with Marshfield Primary School which allowed the School to develop a cross curricular enrichment programme and the enhancement of the Creative Curriculum through a challenging key Stage 1 and 2 programme involving around 80 pupils. This allowed the children to learn through their own experiences and to appreciate the importance of this heritage and its preservation. The programme of conservation work brought the project alive and allowed the children to feel part of this important part of our heritage and its preservation. During one site visit the children had the opportunity to learn about the various aspects of the work by listening to and watching the conservators. Several had the opportunity for hands on experience under the guidance of the conservation team. Hopefully, some children will have been encouraged to consider conservation as a future career. Several curriculum requirements have been met including those for history, the environment, conservation, artwork, literacy and numeracy. Project funding enabled the School to be supplied with digital signage equipment and specialised history software which has allowed the children to continue their active interest in the history and heritage surrounding St James's Church. This equipment will provide opportunities to involve the local community more widely and engage their support in the ongoing learning programmes. Further details of the School's involvement including photographs and a video are at: <http://www.stjamesmonuments.org/HeldProgram.php>

Details of the equipment provided for the School are at:

<http://www.stjamesmonuments.org/CotswoldSDF.php>

- We invited a student from the Stonemasonry Department at Bath City College (Joseph Ghinai) to join the Nimbus team for the duration of the conservation work. Joe proved to be a first class and enthusiastic member of the team and was rewarded with the offer of a formal work placement with Nimbus on the conservation project at Tyntesfield. This was accepted whilst Joe continued his studies for a Level 2 Diploma in Masonry and a Level 3 NVQ in Heritage Skills. It was a pleasure to have Joe at West Littleton and we hope that his experience has helped him on his way to a successful career in conservation and heritage. Joe (in the striped T Shirt) can be seen at work in the video at: <http://www.stjamesmonuments.org/WorkInProgressWeek4.php>

## **Learning about history**

Through our partnership with the Marshfield and District Local History Society we were able to offer opportunities for those wishing to learn about the history of a small village community and its church. During a visit on the evening of 2

August 2010 over 50 members of the Society and their guests attended an on-site presentation. Details and photographs are at:  
<http://www.stjamesmonuments.org/HeldProgram.php>

### **Extending opportunities**

We hope that our programme of visits during the conservation work has helped to spread the word to those who would not normally have the chance to visit and learn from such sites. The many casual visitors who pass through the churchyard are now able to pick up a booklet, see the displays and further their interest through the website. The website will attract interest from many people who might not previously have had the opportunity to learn about the conservation and importance of our heritage.

Our booklet is at:

<http://www.stjamesmonuments.org/WestLittletonBookletFINAL.pdf>

### **Increasing public awareness**

We believe that the programmes above, together with the website, booklet, historical trails and displays in the church, have increased significantly the public awareness of our village history, the church and its heritage, and the importance of preserving this heritage for future generations.

Our Churchyard Trail is at:

<http://www.stjamesmonuments.org/ChurchTrail.pdf>

Our Village Trail (for young people) is at:

<http://www.stjamesmonuments.org/VillageTrail.pdf>

### **Researching family history**

We were fortunate to have Ann Ballard, a keen genealogist, as a member of our team. Her work has generated considerable interest in the local area as people have come forward with information. This work is ongoing and can be followed at: <http://www.stjamesmonuments.org/Genealogy.php>

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

### **Marshfield Primary School**

The partnership with Marshfield Primary School has been a great success as described above.

### **Marshfield and District Local History Society**

This partnership has worked well with a very successful site visit as described above. We had hoped for some demand for specialist workshops but these have not been forthcoming. However, the foundations are in place and we may well see renewed interest in the coming months. There is also scope for

a lecture based on the results of the genealogical research once it is complete.

### **National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies (NADFAS).**

We held discussions with our local branch (Kington Langley) and identified a need for more people to be interested in Church Recording. The project offered an opportunity to encourage this interest and to build up numbers. However, the Church Recording group proved to be heavily committed and to date have not had the capacity to do any work or training at St James's.

### **Cotswold AONB Voluntary Wardens**

We have certainly contributed to the aims of the Cotswold AONB Voluntary Wardens by providing a well documented site of historical and heritage interest for walkers and other visitors. With the interest created by our website and interpretive trails, there is now the possibility that the Wardens may use the village and church as the basis for a themed walk.

### **Ramblers' Association**

We have provided the opportunity for ramblers and walkers to stop and learn about the history and heritage and its significance, through the displays in the church, by seeing the conservation work, and through talking to Project Team members whilst the work was in progress. See Wickwar Ramblers Group visiting the church <http://stjamesmonuments.org/WorkInProgressWeek6.php> under the Miscellaneous tab. We hope that this experience can now be opened to the wider audience reflected by the membership of the Ramblers' Association including younger members and those from the city of Bristol. Our project has provided an added attraction for walkers from the Cotswold Way which passes nearby. Links to our website on sites dedicated to ramblers help to widen this interest.

### **THE PROJECT TEAM**

The Project Team consisted of one professional adviser (the Church Architect) and 11 volunteers who put in an estimated 2800 hours of work during the 3 year project.

Supervising Architect

Mr Paul Richold BArch BSc RIBA of Architecton, Bristol

Project Coordinator

David Adams (a churchwarden)

Deputy Project Coordinator

Alan Young (member of the PCC)

Financial Officer

Michael Horgan (PCC Treasurer)

Publicity and Display Coordinator

Sally Young

Researcher and Archivist  
Christine Gryspeerdt

Website Designer and Manager  
Alan Creighton

Volunteer Coordinator  
Carolyn Adams

Genealogist  
Ann Ballard

Photographer  
Peter Ballard

Adviser  
Maurice Wayne

Historian and expert on walled graves  
Gwynne Stock

## **DONORS**

Our donors were:

The Heritage Lottery Fund  
The Ibstock Cory Environmental Trust  
The Leche Trust  
The Church Buildings Council  
The Gloucestershire Historic Churches Trust  
The Woburn Trust  
The William and Jane Morris Fund  
The Tormarton and West Littleton Parish Council  
The St Andrew's Conservation Trust  
The Francis Coales Charitable Foundation  
The Allchurches Trust  
The Cotswolds Conservation Board Sustainable Development Fund  
Mrs Rosemary Landreth

Further details at: <http://www.stjamesmonuments.org/Donors.php>

## **ACCOUNTS**

The project came in slightly under budget leaving a small surplus as a reserve to set against any future work on the tombs and memorials.

Total Receipts:	£47,894
Total Costs:	£46,493
Surplus	£1401

A summary is at: <http://www.stjamesmonuments.org/DonorsStatus.php>

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This project would not have been possible without the generosity of our donors and the support of the villagers of West Littleton and many from our neighbouring villages of Marshfield, Tormarton and Cold Ashton. The members of the Project Team put in many hours of work and Nimbus Conservation, guided by the Church Architect, did a wonderful job in conserving the tombs and memorials. We have achieved most of our aims. The local community, especially Marshfield Primary School, has been closely involved in the project. Many visitors now have the opportunity to appreciate the heritage and history of our village and church not only through visits but also from our comprehensive website which tells the story of the project through words, pictures and video. The website costs have been underwritten for a minimum of 10 years, so it will continue to be a well documented source of information for many years to come. We have also produced 3 high quality bound albums of photographs telling the story of the project. These are available to view on request. We can be contacted at: [info@stjamesmonuments.org](mailto:info@stjamesmonuments.org)

David Adams  
Project Coordinator

West Littleton, 30 June 2011