

# Appendix

## Work on the Church Spire 2015

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Since 1998, concern had been expressed in successive five-yearly inspections about the deterioration of the stonework of the spire. This has led to the building being included on Historic England's list of "Heritage Buildings at Risk in the London area".

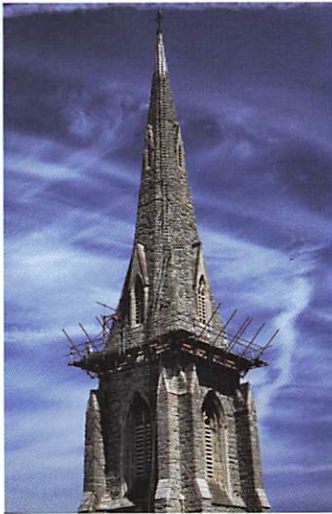
The spire is over 170 feet tall and is a major landmark in Clapham. It is largely constructed of Kentish ragstone, with a number of bands of York stone and the spire lights constructed of Bath stone. The tip of the spire was damaged during World War II by a barrage balloon, and was rebuilt in Portland stone in 1944.

In recent years, the condition of the stonework has continued to cause alarm. Close examination of the spire by steeplejacks confirmed the poor condition of much of the stonework. A protective fan was installed below the base of the spire to offer protection to church users and the public from falling stonework.

Due to the continuing deterioration in the spire stonework, the parish decided that major repair works were urgently required. The church applied in 2013 to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a repair grant under the "Places of Worship Grant Fund". The Heritage Lottery Fund confirmed the award of a first-round grant to the church in December 2013.

Thomas Ford and Partners were appointed as architects for the repair project following a competitive tender process. The design team was completed by the appointment of a structural engineer and quantity surveyor. Tender documents for the proposed repair works were issued to contractors experienced in conservation repair works in May 2014.

The first part of the contract consisted in the erection of a scaffold on the spire to facilitate detailed inspection of the stonework by the architect and structural engineer. PAYE Restoration Ltd was awarded the contract for erection of the scaffold which began in July 2014.



Following completion of the investigations works on site, the architect submitted the second-round submission to the Heritage Lottery Fund in December 2014, confirming the scope and costs of the repair works. The church received confirmation in March 2015 from the Heritage Lottery Fund of the second-stage grant approval for the spire repair works. The contract was signed with PAYE contractors and work on the spire repair began in May 2015

During the investigation stage, the architect found large areas on the spire where the ragstone walling had significantly deteriorated. A repair strategy was devised, which involved the removal of any loose sections of the face of the ragstone and of any sections of ragstone which were in exceptionally poor condition, with their replacement in new ragstone, matching the existing stonework.

Kentish ragstone is a distinctive, hard, sandy limestone. The stone has been used widely in the Greater London area and the South East of England throughout the centuries, particularly in medieval times. It was used on prominent historic buildings such as the Tower of London. The stone was also used extensively on church buildings during the Gothic Revival period in the nineteenth century when St Mary's church was constructed. In recent years it has been very difficult to source ragstone for repair of historic buildings but investment and expansion of the Hermitage Quarry in Maidstone has once again guaranteed supply of good quality ragstone for conservation repair works.

There are four York stone bands on the tower which are spaced at regular intervals on the spire. These bands perform a structural role in resisting the outward forces in the spire. The bands consist of sections of York stone which are connected by iron cramps. These cramps have rusted with time and have caused extensive damage to the York stone bands. The repair works involve the opening up and removal of the existing rusting cramps and their replacement with new stainless steel cramps. The badly damaged sections of existing York stone will be removed and replaced with new sections of York stone to match the existing ones.

The exterior stonework of the spire has been re-pointed several times since its construction. A sand and cement mortar mixture used for re-pointing in recent decades has exacerbated the deterioration of the ragstone. During the current repair work, areas of sound cement mortar will be retained, but damaged or loose sections will be removed and be re-pointed with fresh lime mortar. Lime mortar allows any moisture retained in the spire fabric to evaporate through the lime mortar join rather than through the adjoining stonework.

The existing spire lights are constructed of Bath stone. It was noted during the investigation stage, that a number of the capping stones that throw rainwater off the lights were badly eroded and needed replacement. As part of the repair works, the most badly eroded stones will be replaced with new Bath stone, matching the existing ones. Missing or badly eroded capping stones will also be replaced.

One of the conditions for receiving Heritage Lottery Fund grants is that knowledge gained on the local project be widely shared amongst conservation professionals and the local community. Thomas Ford and Partners have organised inspections of the spire by the following groups:

- AA Building Conservation Students
- Members of the Ecclesiastical Architects and Surveyors Association (EASA)
- Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) Scholars and Fellows
- The Clapham Society
- The Churches Together in Clapham Group

The work now undertaken will guarantee the spire's structural integrity well into the future and will allow future generations to continue to worship in this wonderful ecclesiastical building and to enjoy its rich historic heritage.

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# Acknowledgments

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I acknowledge my debt to the archivist of Clapham, Fr Jack Clancy C.Ss.R, who guided me through the holdings and pointed me towards many helpful books in the monastery library.

This project was originally commissioned by Fr Dominic O'Toole, then Parish Priest of St Mary's. To Fr Dominic, his successor Fr Richard Reid and the members of the Clapham community, especially Frs Michael McGreevy, Charles Corrigan, Beverly Ahearn, George Webster and Bro Thomas, I am indebted for their welcome and companionship, and especially for being the sources of the "living tradition" of St Mary's.

Apart from the church records of baptisms, marriages and the like, the *Provincial Chronicles* and the *Domestic Chronicles* of St Mary's were particularly helpful, being essentially an "observer participant" account of day to day life of the community and the church from the beginning.

The highly artistic design and arrangement of the contents of this book is the work of Anneke Calis of Tanika Design, Dublin.

**The following printed sources were particularly helpful:**

Kevin Callaghan: *The Glories of St Mary's Church, Clapham*. Redemptorists, Clapham, 2001.

A.G.Evans: *William Wardell: Building with Conviction*, Leominster, Herefordshire: Gracewing, 2011.

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