

TOWER PROJECT – The Story So Far:



LOTTERY FUNDED



Back in 2015 it was discovered that the stonework at the top of the tower was distorted and an estimate that the cost of repair might be £60,000 was provided. [Historic England](#) underlined the critical situation by placing the Church on the 'Heritage at Risk' register.

A major project to repair and the restore the Church was needed and this offered the opportunity to improve the interior environment of the church and in particular the heating and lighting. The outcome was to be a safe, warm and welcoming building, but at a cost of over £300,000.



In 2016 the Parish appointed [Nicholas Warns Architect Ltd](#) of Norwich to develop a project plan in two Phases. The First Phase, funded by the [Heritage Lottery Fund](#), sought to stabilise the tower and prop its roof. Similar work was undertaken in the under-croft beneath the

sacristy. A second Lottery grant together with smaller grants from Historic England and the [Southwold Trust](#) enabled the Second Phase to begin on 7 May 2019.

The initial phase of work concentrated on the Nave and included improvements to heating, lighting and access including some limited re-ordering including removal of the pulpit and restoration of the baptistry.



Work to reveal the extent of the damage to the tower roof began in July 2019. As more of the roof was revealed the extent of the problems increased. The concrete roof slab was cracked through in several places and the reinforcing mesh had clearly broken down to the extent that when the asphalt was removed movement



could be felt in the roof. Additionally, the ends of the steel beams were revealed to be corroded right through. The structural engineers took rapid action to install a crash floor beneath the roof and brace the tower with a scaffolding cage. This was dangerous work and the professional advice was that the roof and part of the top of the tower was ready to collapse. Such a catastrophe would have brought down more than 50 tonnes of rubble and steel into the sanctuary and through the roof.

Fortunately, the quick and excellent work of our contractors [S&L Restoration Ltd](#) of Norwich averted disaster and a new plan was made. The roof was completely removed, and the tower reduced by several courses of stone to a level where a new stone 'ring beam' could be constructed on top of which the top of the tower could be reconstructed, and a new roof installed. Work proceeded quickly and the tower works were completed in February 2020.



The new Tower roof incorporates a viewing platform from which the magnificent panorama of Sole Bay and the hinterland towards Halesworth can be seen. Interpretation will help visitors understand the history of the area and particularly its significance in the evangelisation of England in the 7th Century.

On a lighter note the removal of the pulpit brought an interesting discovery. A sealed glass bottle, clearly a 'time capsule' was discovered containing objects and papers including a copy of

'The Times' for 15 May 1923, presumably the date of the burial of the capsule, a letter on vellum in Latin giving the name of the 'anonymous' donor of the pulpit and a now faded photograph of Fr Henry St Leger Mason, first Parish Priest, who appears to be holding the capsule.



The interior of the Church is now largely complete including the opening up of the North Door which has been sealed since the 1960's; the installation of coloured glass in a selection of panes in the East Clerestory windows; a new floor for the baptistry and the refurbishment of the sacristy.

We expect to finish the project in the Summer of 2020 and remain enormously grateful to all our generous donors, both private and corporate and particularly to the Heritage Fund of the National Lottery who have provided £250,000, the All Churches Trust, Historic England and the Southwold Trust.

HELP US TO FINISH THE JOB

Costs and Fundraising: The total cost of the project is around £360,000 of which the Heritage Lottery fund has contributed £250,000. Other grants and donations account for around a further £60,000 but we still have a shortfall of at least £60,000. If you can help, please visit the website ['Giving' Page](#).

