

Portsmouth Catholic Cathedral: External Masonry Repairs (1 of 1 projects funded)

Awarded £79,800 in March 2015

The need

The previous round of repairs in 1999/2000 cost some £400,000, most of which was donated by the local Catholic community. Financial constraints meant that work to the stonework and brickwork on the lower-level areas around the perimeter of the building were omitted, as being more easily accessible in a later project without the need for complex expensive scaffolding. Much of the work originally intended on the north elevation was also omitted since the stonework there had not been as badly affected by exposure to wind and rain from the south-west as other areas. Since the last repair round this outstanding work had become seriously overdue: leaks and damage to masonry and threatened public safety and the integrity of the previous repair investment.

Outcomes

The repair works have left the building in a much better state of repair. Falling masonry (and the potential of this to cause serious harm) is no longer a risk. The project has ensured that the building can remain open and a safe place to worship.

Works completed and timescale

The works were completed by Chichester Stoneworks Ltd and included repairs and renewal of damaged exterior stonework, and refurbishment of plain clay roof tiles.



St John's Cathedral Portsmouth. Photo credit: Ana Dobeson.



Restored stonework. Photo credit: John Wingfield.

The Cathedral

St. John's Catholic Cathedral opened for worship in 1882, although the narthex and west porch were not completed until 1906. The last part to be built was St Patrick's Chapel in 1924. Architecturally it is in a 19th-century French Gothic style, with a curved apse and shallow transepts. It was originally designed by John Crawley to have a tall spire at the south-west corner, but the underlying geology made this impossible. Crawley died just as building started and his partner Joseph Hansom took over the project and modified the design. The church is built of Fareham Red Brick with Portland Stone dressings. In 1941 the cathedral was badly damaged in one of the major air raids on Portsmouth during the Second World War; extensive renovation of the Cathedral was begun in 1946 and was completed in 1950. The stained glass in the Apse, the Lady Chapel and the Blessed Sacrament Chapel date from this period.