



**NEWSLETTER**  
**FEBRUARY 2010, ISSUE 6**

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## Repair of Brill Windmill completed

The extensive repair of the Grade II\* listed windmill at Brill in Buckinghamshire, owned by Buckinghamshire County Council, was completed in the summer of 2009. The principal aim of the project was to make the mill structurally sound and water-tight, as it was in need of urgent repair.

The introduction of a structural steel frame in the 1960s served as an effective means of preserving the mill until the 2009 project was able to commence; with the majority of the historic timbers and machinery remaining in-situ, albeit that many of the structural timbers were severely decayed. The retention and adaptation of the steel frame introduced in the 1960s combined with bespoke repairs allowed the surviving historic timbers to be retained and preserved in one of the oldest surviving post mills in the country.



The works were informed by detailed historical research carried out by a specialist mill consultant. This allowed many elements, some unique to the windmill at Brill, to be reinstated, such as: the reconstruction of the roundhouse to an authentic design; the replacement of the missing tail ladder and the reinstatement of the rear doors to the buck; the repair of the original tailpole and the replacement of the missing cart wheel, and the renewal of the sails.

Where repairs were found necessary every endeavour was made to retain as much of the surface of the timbers as possible, including the evidence of decay; the centre and right-hand photos above show the repairs to the trestle of the mill. Retaining the surface of the timbers enabled graffiti and carpenter's marks to be preserved that would have otherwise been lost if more conventional carpentry repairs had been carried out. Some graffiti was identified as being scribed into one of the timbers by an evacuee during the Second World War. The repairs adopted at Brill enabled a "living" social and cultural link with the past to be retained.

Major funding of the repair project was secured from English Heritage and Waste Recycling Environmental Limited [WREN]. For more information about the project, including an extensive photographic record, refer to the following links:

[http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/brill\\_windmill/brill\\_restoration.page](http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/brill_windmill/brill_restoration.page)  
<http://brilltalk.brillvillage.co.uk/index.php?action=gallery;cat=1>

The interior of the mill will re-open to the public from this coming Easter, on Sunday afternoons from 2-5 pm.

## Thermal improvements - Church House, Hurley

Work was completed last summer on the repair and insulation of part of the roof and the tile hung gable elevation of this listed building near Henley. Both the wall and the roof were insulated with sheepswool between the timbers and woodfibre board outside to provide additional insulation, air-tightness and to minimise thermal bridging. Working from the “outside-in” allowed the internal finishes to remain untouched.

It was particularly satisfying for the repairs to be implemented and the thermal performance of the building to be achieved without detracting from the distinctive appearance and character of the building.

The photo on the left shows the gable prior to the commencement of works. The photo on the right shows the building upon completion of the works.



## Improving access - The Old Fire Station Gallery, Henley-on-Thames



Oxley Conservation was instructed by Henley-on-Thames Town Council, following an access audit, to improve the accessibility of the former fire station, now an art gallery. A new wheel-chair accessible toilet was installed, along with a new kitchen and boiler. The main gallery was opened up by the removal of a screen that had divided the space. Floor levels were rationalised and ramps upgraded to improve access to this listed building.

## Keeping out the water

Oxley Conservation’s quinquennial inspection of St James, Barkham highlighted that although the roof tiles on this church were in generally good condition, rainwater was entering the fabric of the building through defective copings, flashings and rainwater goods.

A programme of work was carried out last summer to address these defects before they caused major problems within the building. Future maintenance was also eased by providing access hatches from the tower and the vestry loft to allow inspection and clearance of hidden valley gutters.

The repaired copings and abutment flashings are illustrated below. The importance of simple repair and maintenance to keep out water should not be under-estimated



**A century of weathering**  
**Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Reading**

Urgent repair works are ongoing at the church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Reading, a Grade II listed church that serves a large and active congregation of the Polish Roman Catholic Church.

The repairs, funded under the English Heritage Places of Worship in England Scheme, are addressing high level masonry that is in a dangerous condition and problems of water penetration and associated dry rot.



*The north west stair turret; structural movement and severe weathering of stonework is the result of poor weather detailing to the stone roof of the stair turret. The deterioration of the supporting capitals has contributed to the movement of the roof.*



*An example of the severe deterioration of the stonework at the church.*



*Works in progress: the repair and consolidation of a capital to the west gable of the nave.*

**Sister Barns: Hertfordshire**

Issue 5 contained news about the repair project at the Grade II\* listed barn at Kingsbury Manor, a barn originally built for the Abbey of St Albans.

Oxley Conservation has recently been commissioned to inspect and report on the condition of one of the other surviving barns built for the Abbey of St Albans. The five-bay aisled barn at Croxley Hall Farm is Grade II\* listed and is reported as dating from 1396-1401; unfortunately this outstanding barn is on English Heritage’s Buildings at Risk Register.

Oxley Conservation is working with the owners, the local authority [Three Rivers] and English Heritage to find a satisfactory repair solution.

The photos show the similarity between the barn at Croxley Hall Farm and the barn at Kingsbury Manor; they could be twins!



*The barn at Croxley Hall Farm*



*The repaired barn at Kingsbury Manor*

## Another 14<sup>th</sup> Century Barn ! Bayllo's Manor Barn

Repairs are currently ongoing to the 14<sup>th</sup> century Grade II\* listed cruck framed barn at Bayllo's Manor in Harwell, Oxfordshire. Longstanding problems of water penetration and centuries of decay had resulted in the movement of the frame, which was putting the structural integrity of the barn at risk.

To reinstate confidence in the structural performance of the barn the three surviving cruck frames were realigned; which involved "jacking" the timber frame free of the brick and stone plinths to allow the frame to be adjusted and repaired. The frame was realigned as far as practicable and is now in the final stages of repair ready for re-cladding with new weatherboarding and tiles.



*One of the cruck blades in the process of being carefully realigned into an improved position.*



*Detail of the apex to one of the cruck cross frames, showing oak timbers over 600 years old in excellent condition*



*View of the barn in the process of repair that will prolong the life of this outstanding building.*



## Greys Court - getting ready for re-opening



The re-servicing project at Greys Court, a fine Grade I listed Mansion House owned by the National Trust, is finally complete following delays caused by the need to remove extensive asbestos.

The photo on the right illustrates an example of the 'chasing out' of a service run where concealed heating pipes were clad in asbestos.

The disruption caused by the asbestos removal has been made good and the contents of The Mansion House are in the process of being returned ready for the building to be open to the public again this coming Easter, with some areas being made accessible to the public for the first time.



## Recently seen – frost damage at Highmoor



The stone quoin to this buttress has suffered from frost damage during recent cold spells. The unusually cold weather has caused disruption to ongoing projects – with more bad weather predicted next week – can't wait for Spring !

## Separated at birth?



... feel free to insert the caption !

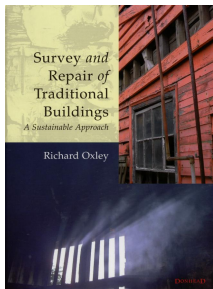
## Courses

Richard and Phil are running a day school considering the issues surrounding the improvement of energy efficiency in traditional buildings at the Weald & Downland Open Air Museum on **24 February** (suitable for CPD). For further details, please contact 01243 811464 or email [courses@wealddown.co.uk](mailto:courses@wealddown.co.uk).



Phil and Richard ran a bespoke course in a Grade II listed building, The David Hall, South Petherton near Taunton in South Somerset. The Hall was built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a church, it is now used as an active community centre. The course was organised by South Somerset District Council as a means of providing advice on the most appropriate ways of reducing energy use and running costs at the Hall. The course also involved raising awareness of appropriate energy efficiency measures for large public historic buildings such as churches, church halls and village halls.

The bespoke nature of the course, with much of the content focusing on this particular building, meant that it was a challenging but rewarding experience for both Phil and Richard, particularly as the delegates were encouraged to be pro-active in the workshop sessions.



## Donhead book of the month

First published in 2003, Richard's book "Survey and Repair of Traditional Buildings" was Donhead's book of the month in January. [www.donhead.com](http://www.donhead.com).

... and finally, Oxley Conservation wishes everyone a belated happy, healthy and prosperous 2010. We have a number of new and exciting projects in the pipeline which we hope to reveal in our next newsletter.