



Restoration of St Lawrence Jewry Church

Bakers of Danbury Ltd, building contractors known for their specialism in heritage restoration, recently completed an extensive restoration programme at St Lawrence Jewry Church, an architectural gem standing in the yard of the London Guildhall in the heart of the City of London.

Commissioned by The City of London Corporation, the objective of the 18-month project was to restore and modernise the church and ensure its preservation for future generations. The project marked the largest phase of work to the building since it was reconstructed by city architect Cecil Brown in the 1950's and, as a £4million conservation project, it was the largest and most ambitious restoration of a Christopher Wren church seen for many years.

Long-Standing History

With a rich history dating back to its original construction in 1136 in London's historic Jewish quarter, St Lawrence has endured through the ages. Its site has been used as a place of worship since the 12th century when a medieval church was founded there in 1136. It was destroyed in the Great Fire of London whereupon it was rebuilt by Christopher Wren in 1677. In 1940 it suffered a direct hit from an incendiary bomb during the Blitz and was once again restored, with architect, Cecil Brown undertaking its reconstruction in 1954.

Church Condition Prior to Works

Serving as the official church of the Lord Mayor of the City of London, St Lawrence Jewry has continued to stand proudly as a building of great architectural importance possessing a resilient history. However, its most pressing challenge now stemmed from its busy urban setting and natural decay over time.

The external walls of the church were suffering from heavy carbon staining and discoloration, commonly found on city buildings where carbon monoxide particles from traffic settle onto brick and stonework causing blackened staining. A pattern of defects known as "corrosion jacking" was also evident, caused by concealed iron cramps rusting, expanding and subsequently splitting and cracking the stonework.

With many of the finishes to the roofs, gutters, cupola and spire coming to the end of their serviceable life, water penetration was also becoming an increasing problem and was starting to enter the fabric of the building.



Restoration

With funding secured, a detailed research and investigation programme was undertaken. With Bakers of Danbury as the Principal Contractor, restoration works began in 2021.

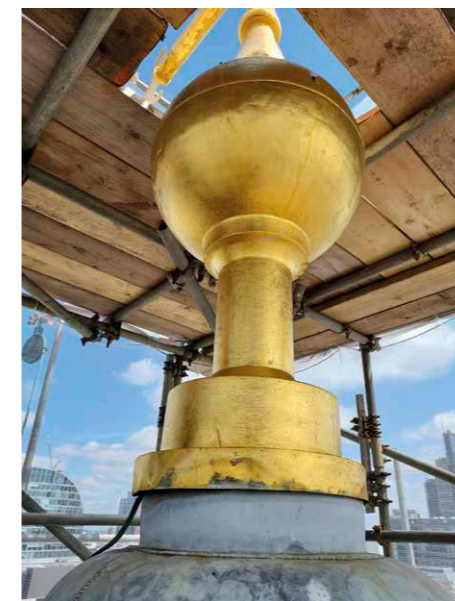
The initial phase focused on exterior renovations involving specialised masonry cleaning and repair of the Portland stone elevations, tower and carved stonework.

Roofing upgrades were a priority with re-roofing carried out to the large roofing area to the south-west of the main tower, to the Commonwealth Chapel and the vicarage apartment. Renewal of roof finishes, including structural reinforcement and thermal upgrade on the lead covered Nave, was imperative. Repairs were made to the timber framed, leadclad cupola and spire with replacement of lead gutters and downpipes. In addition, the 11 striking stained-glass windows by renowned artist, Christopher Rahere Webb (1886-1966) were overhauled, cleaned and repaired.

Internal enhancements involved the repair and structural strengthening of decorative fibrous plaster ceilings and repairs to the nave ceiling and Commonwealth Chapel. Upgrades took place to improve the fire rating. The final redecoration programme is testament to the stunning finish of the interior.

Phase two of the works involved further internal improvements. This included new mechanical and electrical installations, boiler renewal and heating system upgrades. Refurbishment of the vicarage & general office areas also took place.

Meticulous Repairs Ensure History Is Preserved



Mark Holland, Director at Bakers of Danbury and Project Manager for the renovation of St Lawrence Jewry, emphasises how, alongside the larger-scale renovations, it is also the meticulous repairs, skill and attention to detail applied to the historical features that are a captivating aspect and key to the success of a project such as this.

Weathervane Preserved

Illustrating this was the restoration of the weathervane. Sitting atop the tower,



the weathervane depicts a grid-iron, symbolising an instrument of torture which led to the martyrdom of St Lawrence. Its supporting pole is thought to be part of the WW2 incendiary bomb. On close inspection, possible only once the vast scaffolding was in place, it was found that the baseball which holds the weathervane upright had rotten. This was replaced and followed by meticulous cleaning and regilding, the weathervane was saved and restored back to its former glory.

“It's these challenges that make a project so special as we work to find a way to preserve and honour a building such as this. It was a joy to be part of this project and ensure its continued place in history.”

Illumination of the Christ the King Window

A final touch was the illumination of the Christ the King window. Unlit for many years, a discreet wireless switch was installed allowing for the resplendent window to be illuminated once more.

Gold Award

Bakers of Danbury proudly received the Gold Award at The City of London's Considerate Contractor Awards. The Gold Award recognises that requirements of the Code of Good Practice have been consistently exceeded. It reflects a spirit of pride, an awareness of the needs of the passing public and regard for the surrounding environment.

Mark Holland, expresses his gratitude and pleasure of working on such a historic and prestigious building.

“Working on historic buildings and uncovering and understanding their historical fabric is a real privilege often accompanied with unexpected surprises and unique hurdles. It's these challenges that make a project so special as we work to find a way to preserve and honour a building such as this. It was a joy to be part of this project and ensure its continued place in history.”



Clock faces restored

The restoration of the North, South, East and West clock faces in the tower demanded similar attention. Carefully removed and lowered to ground level in a cradle, the clock faces were transported to specialist clock restorers. There, the faces were resurfaced, and each Roman numeral regilded with fine gold leaf. With careful planning and onsite adjustments these magnificent clock faces and hands were then reinstated to their rightful place, proudly surveying over the City of London.