

NEWSLETTER

Bakers of Danbury

Heritage Builders Since 1878

January 2026

WORDS FROM THE MD...PETER SMYTH

Welcome to our latest newsletter and to the start of 2026! The new year is already off to a busy start, and to kick the year off, we're delighted to share a selection of our latest projects and company news with you. This newsletter is designed to give you a real flavour of what we do, the people behind the work, and the craftsmanship and stories that make our projects so special.

Recent storms and bad weather have really highlighted how important it is to support homeowners when unexpected damage occurs and I want to take this opportunity to shine a light on our Insurance Repair Department. Many know us for our heritage and conservation work but our insurance team plays a vital role in supporting homeowners affected by issues such as subsidence, impact damage, fire or flooding.

Working closely with policy holders, insurers and loss adjusters the team ensures every home is repaired safely, professionally and with minimal disruption. Recent projects have tackled roofs damaged by fallen trees, fire recovery and subsidence repairs all carried out with the same care and attention to detail that defines everything we do at Bakers of Danbury.

Alongside this work, we continue to collaborate with architects, surveyors and conservation specialists to preserve some of our most treasured historic buildings. We have some great projects to share with you, from a 14th century farmhouse to school improvement projects to Gothic architecture.

I hope this newsletter gives you a real sense of the work we do and the care we take in every project, whether for historical properties, churches, schools or residential homes.



HERITAGE | LISTED BUILDINGS | CHURCHES | RESIDENTIAL | NEW BUILDS

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PROJECTS IN FOCUS

Major Works Department...

The rebuild and restoration of St Michael & All Angels Main Hall

The team has now successfully completed the restoration and rebuild of the Main Hall at St Michael & All Angels Church in Gidea Park, an important community space within the church grounds. The hall suffered extensive fire damage in 2022 and has since been out of use. Our programme included demolition of the roof and elevations, the installation of a new steel portal frame on concrete foundations, and specialist curved steelwork to recreate the original domed interior features. New insulated cavity walls, external finishes to match the existing, and a fully modernised internal fit-out has completed the works with the hall now ready for the church and community to enjoy.

School improvements from heritage to modern-build

Our school improvement projects are a core part of what we do, spanning listed buildings to modern-build schools. Our work combines traditional craftsmanship with modern construction methods to create practical, safe, and functional spaces for pupils and staff. Projects have included, repairing and conserving masonry, heritage roofwork, and external detailing, alongside modern internal refurbishments all including new classrooms, welfare areas, toilets, kitchens, and accessible facilities. We also improve outdoor learning spaces with canopies, wet-pour surfaces, and improved circulation. In these busy school environments, we plan around term-time schedules, providing hoarding, segregation, and out-of-hours operations to minimise disruption. Across every project, we ensure high-quality workmanship, durability, and sensitivity to the building's character while meeting the practical needs of daily school life.

It's full steam ahead as work begins on two exciting new projects

Two new exciting projects are about to begin - the Royal Masonic School for Girls in Hertfordshire and the Museum of Power in Essex. The school is one of the oldest girls' schools in the UK with grand historic buildings and stunning grounds that have featured in movies including the iconic Indiana Jones! The Museum of Power is equally impressive. Housed in a former 1920's waterworks pumping station, it tells the story of our industrial heritage and is home to a triple expansion steam pumping engine which is in full working order. It's very impressive! We look forward to sharing updates as the projects take shape.

Heritage Special Works...

New beginnings at Holy Trinity Church, Colchester

Our work at the historic Holy Trinity Church in Colchester city centre is a true privilege. Having been closed for many years, our work is centred on the roof restoration, a technically complex project which involves traditional craftsmanship with modern engineering. The entire roof is being stripped, damaged oak rafters repaired, and salvaged original tiles re-laid wherever possible. Leadwork is being renewed to improve drainage, with breathable insulation installed beneath. Additional works include replacing deteriorated copings, repairing timber frames, and integrating modern materials. The objective is to restore this historical church so it remains both heritage-focused and sustainable for the future.

Historic farmhouse restoration deep in the Essex countryside

Farmhouse renovation projects are always a pleasure, allowing us to restore homes that hold many layers of history. We are currently working on two Grade II listed farmhouses, including one that dates back to the 14th century, both of which are in need of extensive restoration. The work involves timber frame repairs, old cement render removal, application of new lime plaster, large chimney stabilisation, and upgrading the key elements such as roofs, windows, doors, heating systems, electrics, and kitchens. These are significant projects requiring craftsmanship and heritage conservation skills, and we are thrilled to be bringing these homes back to life.

A proud project from our past: Bourn Mill

We're proud to showcase Bourn Mill in Cambridgeshire on our newsletter cover, a standout example of our work. This project restored one of England's oldest windmills, dating from Henry VIII's reign. The restoration included raising the mill to replace decayed oak trestle beams and rebuilding brick piers with lime mortar. Now fully operational, it's a perfect example of the unique projects we love bringing back to life.





Church Department...

Restoring a Gothic architectural gem

At St John the Baptist Church, Upper Holloway, the church team have completed the restoration of the South Aisle of this Grade II* Gothic Revival church designed by 19th century architect Sir Charles Barry, who famously designed the Houses of Parliament. Original stone dressings were recorded and replaced with hand-moulded copings and string courses in hot lime mortar, while structural repairs to the Crypt included new drainage and bespoke steel gates and railings. Coordinated across busy pathways, a main road, and an adjoining hotel, this project was particularly special, celebrating a building with a direct connection to one of Britain's most celebrated architects.

Vaults to coffee mornings - the reordering of Wendens Ambo St Mary's

At St Mary's Church, Wendens Ambo, Saffron Walden, we are bringing our heritage expertise to the re-ordering of the North aisle of this beautiful Grade I listed church that has been a place of worship for over 900 years. We are creating a new kitchenette, new toilet facility, and a social space for coffee mornings, community groups, and gatherings. Traditional lime-based materials are being used throughout, including limecrete with Glapor insulation, Savolit board, and thermalime, alongside conservation plastering. Victorian floorboards have been re-used, and archaeological discoveries, including the remains of an earlier porch and a vault with human bones, have added a fascinating glimpse into the church's long history.

Conservation in the Cathedral Precinct of St Albans

From major landmarks to carefully considered conservation, Bakers of Danbury brings the same attention to detail to every heritage project no matter how big or small. At the Deanery of St Albans Cathedral, a prominent Grade II listed late 17th-century Georgian former rectory, the team carried out a programme of works to the main entrance. This included restoring the original Georgian timber door, reinstating lost panelling and proportions, and introducing new matching stone steps and oak and steel handrails with brass detailing. Undertaken within the busy cathedral precinct, the works have revived the Georgian frontage of this classic building showing that it's the attention to detail that plays an important role in protecting our architectural heritage.



Bakers Joinery...

From hand-carving excellence to bespoke joinery

From Sandhurst Royal Military Academy, to heritage churches and cosy cottages, the joinery team continues to demonstrate their breadth of skill.

A standout project has been the hand-carving of regimental badges for Sandhurst. The badges featured the crests of the Royal Horse Guards and 1st Dragoons (The Blues and Royals) and the Gordon Highlanders, each individually hand-carved and hand-painted. We were privileged to also attend the academy to hand-carve the inscription panels, fit the badges and create a respectful, lasting tribute.



Elsewhere, the team has delivered a wide range of bespoke joinery and cabinetry work, including new kitchens, serveries, kitchen benches, storage cupboards with notice boards, oak gates, arched doors, church column display units and a roll-top sound desk. We have transformed a church entrance with three impressive sets of double doors, complete with frosted glass and antique brass ironmongery, and have carried out essential repairs to a weather-worn church porch.



Beyond churches, projects included a cottage oak porch with tiled canopy, new timber windows, front doors, internal panelling, and even a bespoke round window, proving there's truly no "standard" in joinery.

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OTHER NEWS

What's been in the news at Bakers?



Festive cheer and a year of giving back

Christmas celebrations and charity events provided a festive close to 2025. Throughout the year, we took part in a variety of activities from cake baking to wearing pink to festive Christmas jumpers. We were delighted to raise money for several charities including Home-Start Essex and Cancer Research, joining together to make a positive contribution beyond our day-to-day work and ending the year on a high note. We are looking forward to another year of giving back and supporting the people and communities in which we work.



It's time for a time capsule

We were thrilled to be part of a time capsule burial at St Mary's Church in Stebbing. Local school children were excited to attend, with Project Manager Adrian Ward on hand to answer their questions. The capsule was filled with carefully chosen items including photos of Stebbing Village and its congregation as well as drawings of famous people by the school children. The capsule was blessed by the Reverend before being sealed beneath the floor left ready to be discovered by future generations.



Gonna make you famous at Holy Trinity Church

It was very much our best foot forward when we welcomed Colchester Film Makers to the Holy Trinity Church site in Colchester to carry out a day of filming, capturing the behind-the-scenes work taking place. They filmed a key stage of the lead and roof work, hidden discoveries and the restoration techniques involved, with the finished film planned to be shown at Colchester Town Hall. We think our Site Manager should definitely be nominated for an Oscar worthy performance!

Hear from our valued partner company Pickford Builders...Insurance Building Repair Specialists

The team at Pickford Builders have had a busy few months, continuing to provide insurance-related building repairs. A key project has been the fire damage restoration works at a riverside apartment in Norwich. The project has involved a complete overhaul following the fire, including a new roof, new period sash windows, and a new kitchen and bathroom. They are now progressing with the internal reinstatement and getting the home back to its original state.

The team were also delighted to receive feedback from a client for their 'exceptional professionalism and dedication.' While the client expressed hope that they would not require such services again, they noted anyone finding themselves in a similar distressing situation would be more than fortunate to have the Pickford team managing their project. This feedback reflects the Pickford approach: delivering reassurance, expertise and care to every client.

New Starters...

We are delighted to welcome several new colleagues to the team, each bringing their expertise, valuable skills and enthusiasm to their roles across the business.

Stefan Moretta has joined the Church Department as Contracts Manager where his expertise will support the management of our specialist ecclesiastical works. Kieran Bristow has also joined as Contracts Manager in our Insurance team, strengthening our ability to deliver high quality insurance repairs to our clients. David McClement has joined us as Site Manager, bringing additional leadership and experience to support our on-site operations.

In our Joinery Department, we welcome Ben Reynolds, a highly skilled bench joiner and expert hand-carver who will be contributing to the production of high-quality bespoke joinery.

Training...

We are also delighted to welcome Liam Burley and Tate Hamilton-Cotteril who have both joined us as Site Apprentice Carpenters who are both developing their skills whilst contributing admirably to our heritage projects.

Our Bakers of Danbury Contracts Managers have all undertaken temporary works training, demonstrating competence, leadership, and due diligence in managing high-risk construction activities. Well done to them.

