

Conservation Grants Scheme

Ashleigh Murray

The Irish Georgian Society is pleased to announce the fourth successful year of the Conservation Grants Scheme, which helps owners of historic structures to fund necessary works.

The London Chapter has made this scheme possible through funds raised from its activities and members' generous bequests. Although this should be the final year of the scheme, its importance is very much recognised and we hope therefore to extend the scheme beyond 2017, subject to available funding.

This year the €50,000 available was spread between nine successful applications, whose projects it was considered would really benefit from the Society's help. This year's projects are a particularly interesting group, including the conservation of a memorial column, the renewal of unusual decorative Cloisonné wall panels, and the restoration of a handsome Georgian doorcase.

We are delighted to provide additional funding to a local community group, The Tea Lane Graveyard Committee. This group cares for Tea Lane cemetery, Celbridge, Co. Kildare, which centres on the c.1820 Maunsell Chapel, built on the footprint of a 6th-century church. Other structures on this site include the 19th-century Grattan mausoleum and also the Conolly mausoleum, built in memory of William 'Speaker' Conolly (1662-1729) by his wife Katherine; she was also responsible for the erection of the Conolly folly, the well-known symbol of the IGS, on the grounds of their estate at Castletown House. A Conservation Management Plan for the cemetery is being admirably implemented. Following necessary repairs last year, which with we

assisted, the next phase is to ensure that all roofs are watertight.

Water ingress and the onset of damp can have a disastrous impact on historic buildings. This is understood at Stradbally Hall, Co. Laois, a late-18th-century country house that was substantially renovated in c. 1868 in the Italianate style by the English architect Charles Lanyon (1813-1889). Last year we assisted with the repair of striking decorative chimneystacks. The works this year involve the continuation of their roof repair programme with the repair of the lead valley gutters on the roof and portico, which are currently allowing water to penetrate the structure, damaging internal decorative plasterwork.

We are also supporting external repairs at the Old Parochial House in Monkstown, Co. Cork. This building was designed by Edward Welby Pugin (1834-1875), eldest son of the illustrious English architect Augustus Pugin (1812-1852), with the aid of Irish architect George Coppinger Ashlin (1837-1921). Moisture has always been an issue due to the location of this red-brick building by the sea. The owners have previously hosted a Brickwork Conservation and Repair CPD course and have undertaken low-level repointing of the brickwork. Grant aid is sought to complete the repointing works to protect the building from further water ingress.

The O'Brien column in Liscannor, Co. Clare, also suffers from water issues. Designed by J Petty Esq, the column

was erected in c. 1858 by public subscription in memory of Cornelius O'Brien, a local MP and improving landlord. O'Brien was also responsible for opening up the Cliffs of Moher to tourists by creating paved walks and erecting the c. 1835 O'Brien Tower. The c. 80ft fluted Doric column is an important landmark feature, situated on an impressive site overlooking Liscannor Bay and O'Brien's former home. The Follies Trust and the Friends of the O'Brien Column will carry out careful conservation of the structure, including stabilising its crowning decorative urn, which is in danger of collapse.

A number of churches require assistance this year due to a range of issues. St. Michael & All Angels, Sallins, Co. Kildare, is a late-19th-century church by the architect James Franklin Fuller (1835-1924). An unfortunate fire in 1947 destroyed internal timber features and also caused smoke damage. The works involve the removal of smoke staining to the decorative Cloisonné (enamelled copper) wall panels by Clement John Heaton (1861-1940), to reveal their beautiful colours and detailing.

External repair works are required at St. John's Church, Ballycastle, Co. Mayo. This c. 1810-1820 church was built under the Board of First Fruits and is attributed to the Irish architect John Bowden (d. 1822). The recent discovery of 'mud mortar', forming part of the original construction of the church's tower, has added a level urgency to the works.



01 & 02 Ballinrobe House, Co Mayo showing frontage without its windows and the entrance hall damaged by fire
03 Stradbally Hall, Co Laois **04** Tea Lane Graveyard, Celbridge, Co. Kildare **05** O'Brien's Column, Liscannor, Co Clare showing the damage caused to the surmounting urn

The Church of Saint John the Evangelist, Monasterevin, Co Kildare, was built in c. 1815 with a plan possibly inspired by the Board of First Fruits churches. Its fine iron entrance gate is thought to have been relocated from the Moore Abbey Demense by the Marquess of Drogheda. Aid is sought for the restoration of this ornate entrance; not only will this improve the appearance of the building, it will also enhance the streetscape due to the church's prominent location on the town's main street.

Townscape improvements are also proposed in Mountmellick, Co. Laois, where extensive repair works are proposed to the street-facing elevation of the Town Hall. This gable-fronted building was designed in 1863 by the architect William Caldbeck (1824–1872) and is located in the town centre.

Our funding also supports the restoration of the original entrance door of Ballinrobe House, Ballinrobe, Co. Mayo. Originally built for Captain Courtney Kenny (1702–1779), this c. 1740 seven-bay house retains plasterwork reported to be by the famous Lafranchini brothers. The house has remained derelict for some years and there is evidence of fire. The current owners are now working through a careful programme of repair to restore this beautiful residential building.

As demonstrated above, owners of historic structures face a variety of issues, which can naturally lead to financial pressures. We are, therefore, pleased that for the last four years this scheme has helped to fund essential works for the continued protection of these historic assets. It is very much hoped that we can extend the scheme beyond 2017, subject to available funding, to enable us to continue this particularly worthy cause.

Ashleigh Murray is Chair of IGS London and a member of the Conservation Grants Committee.