



## CURRENT HIGHLIGHTS IN THE SOUTH WEST

English Heritage supports others in managing the historic environment in a number of ways. It can be through strategic initiatives which help us understand the challenges of managing heritage assets better, through providing grant aid for repairs, and through building skills and capacity.

Here are a few current highlights to give a flavour of what we do in the South West.



St Odolph Pillaton  
© Richard Downer

### What a Difference a Year Makes for Storm-Damaged Cornish Church

St Odolph's Church has recently gone ahead with its first service since the Cornish grade I listed building was severely damaged by a lightning strike at the beginning of 2013.

During a snow storm on the evening of 21st January, the north-east pinnacle of the Pillaton church was struck by lightning, destroying the pinnacle tower and sending huge boulders of granite both through the roof and onto the ground, many quite some distance from the building.

A great deal of work was undertaken to enable the church to reopen for services. English Heritage Inspector for Historic Buildings and Areas in Cornwall Francis Kelly visited the church soon after the strike to assess the damage and offer advice, coinciding with the Archdeacon.

"When we arrived on site it was quite a scene of devastation. There was a good deal of damage at the back of the church, with holes in the roof and smashed pews. Substantial restoration work and making good of collateral damage was needed. It was truly heartening to see the way in which everybody was keen to work together to return the church to its former glory."



Damage to the roof of the church  
© Richard Downer

Each stone that could be found from the 'exploded' pinnacle was pieced back together like a huge puzzle, but even with the benefits of present day technology, reinstating the larger blocks at the top of the tower was a challenge.

Francis explains: "Tall corner pinnacles are a feature of Cornish church towers. The sheer engineering skill of the masons responsible for setting the pinnacles up in the first place, before the benefits of modern machinery, is a wonder in itself. Reinstating the pinnacle in 2013, even with the aid of complex scaffolding and modern lifting gear, proved no mean feat, all the more so as a result having to take into account the distortions caused by time and the effects of the lightning strike.

It was indeed a demanding project and we are pleased that the church's confidence and ours in the architects, Le Page Architects has proved so very well founded."



The carefully reconstructed tower pinnacle - St Odolph  
© Richard Downer

Simon Crosbie from Le Page Architects has been heavily involved in the project, and was grateful for the expert advice from English Heritage. "Francis came and met us on site almost straight away after the strike. He was unbelievably helpful, and his advice and confidence in the team was immediately transferred into physical work, and so meant the repairs could start immediately."

With the green light from English Heritage, months of hard work have taken place to reinstate the pinnacle, repair the roof, pews and interior, and make St Odolph's a safe place again. The first church service was able to go ahead on Remembrance Sunday 2013, and Simon was pleased to attend, sharing that it "was a lovely service and wonderful to see the congregation back in their church again."

Also present was local parishioner and Chair of the Fabric Committee Tony Rowe, who has worked closely with the restoration project and is delighted with the progress that has been made.



Remembrance Day Service at St Odolph  
© Richard Downer

"Remembrance Sunday has always been a major event in the life of the people of Pillaton and it is most fitting that our first service was a full church on that Sunday. It has been a joy to observe the teamwork and expertise that has been displayed throughout the remarkably short time that it has been taken to restore the church... Everyone seemed to want to do their individual and collective best for the 'old girl' - and they have done her and the village proud."

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