

NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release



From left to right: Completing new stone on east face of tower; Church Warden Neil Guttridge inspecting the work; The old Victorian ironwork after removal.
Images by Freeland Rees Roberts Architects.

REPAIRS TO HISTORIC HERTFORDSHIRE CHURCH NEAR COMPLETION

Cambridge-based Freeland Rees Roberts Architects are conducting final inspections to the historic Parish Church of St John the Baptists in Royston, Hertfordshire following a programme of extensive repairs to the tower.

Jeremy Lander, director of Freeland Rees Roberts Architects, was appointed Inspecting Architect and adviser to the Church in July 2006. At this time an English Heritage grant was already available to help conserve the tower masonry and an inspection was carried out from a cherry picker to assess the final extent of the necessary repairs.

“Iron ties put in the tower parapet by the Victorians were corroding”, explains Mr Lander, “and when the builders took the stones off we found that the stone itself was extremely thin so we have been replacing the iron with stainless steel and the stone with new Ketton limestone of a greater thickness. We have also been trying to deal with the damage caused to the fabric by the huge number of pigeons who live in the area!”

“Being born and brought up in Royston” Jeremy continues, “I am very pleased to be involved again in the life and work of the town. Our family still has close links with Royston and I am pleased to have renewed some old acquaintances while working on the church. The Church is a fascinating building, with some parts dating back to the 13th century. Although it was substantially altered by the Victorians, it still contains many elements of ancient fabric and is rightly listed Grade I.”

The Reverend Leslie Harman commented: “The Parish Church of St John the Baptist forms an essential part of Royston’s fabric. We take our responsibility for the church building very seriously and are pleased to have had so much support from the local community in raising the necessary funds. We are very grateful to all those who have contributed financially and with their time, towards repairing the tower. Freeland Rees

Roberts Architects' expertise has been invaluable to the project as has that of our builders, Bakers of Danbury."

Parochial Church Council Secretary, Neil Guttridge commented: "The first aspect of Stewardship at St. John the Baptist is the raising of funds to enable the church to function and carry out its commitment to God's mission within the community. In addition we have a responsibility to maintain the Church building, built, added to, and glorified by previous generations for the benefit of those who will worship here in generations to come."

The Church is the only surviving part of an Augustinian priory which dates from the latter half of the twelfth century. Royston Priory was dissolved in the Act of Suppression in 1536 but was purchased by the townspeople shortly after and in 1540, an Act of Parliament created the new parish of Royston and the church was dedicated to St John the Baptist.

Due to a lack of wealth in the parish, by 1600 the church was described as 'utterly ruined and fallen down'. During the nineteenth century, a series of major changes were carried out on the fabric including a new coating of plaster in the tower, the installation of an organ and gallery, and restoration work to windows and arches.

Between 1872 and 1875, the church began to take on its present appearance – the tower was encased in flint and the porch removed. The seventeenth century pews were replaced and, in 1891, the first major additions since the Dissolution were carried out, including a new chancel and an extension to the south aisle. A vestry was added at the west end in 1928, the nave roof was restored in 1951, a new organ built in 1978 and re-ordering of the chancel carried out in the 1980s.

Freeland Rees Roberts Architects are responsible for the inspection and repair of well over 100 parish churches in the East of England, as well as Norwich and Guildford Cathedrals and Kings College Chapel. Mr Lander is involved in a diverse range of projects, but his interests lie mainly in conservation and housing. He has worked on many listed buildings and is an Architect Accredited in Building Conservation.

Other historic building projects Freeland Rees Roberts Architects have been involved with include the refurbishment of National Trust Picture Galleries at Anglesey Abbey in Cambridgeshire; the conservation and relocation of Temple Bar to Paternoster Square, City of London (which has been awarded seven architectural awards in the past two years); the conversion of a former derelict gallery into new library facilities at Peterhouse, Cambridge (which was awarded a national RIBA Conservation Commendation in 2006) and numerous conservation and repair projects at Ickworth house, Suffolk.

For further information on Freeland Rees Roberts Architects, visit www.frrarchitects.co.uk.

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Notes to the Editor:

1. For further media information, interview or images, please contact Carri Crook, Carisma Communications on 01842 815910 or mobile 07704 920350; email carri@carismacommunications.co.uk

2. For further information on The Parish Church of St John the Baptist, please contact Neil Guttridge on 01763 241818 or the Revd Leslie Harman on 01763 243145.
3. Full background information and a history of The Parish Church of St John the Baptist can be found on www.roystonparishchurch.org.uk
4. Jeremy Lander is the son of former Mayor of Royston, Charles Lander and was educated at local schools, Greenway and Meridian. He was placed on the St Albans' diocesan approved list in June 2006. Jeremy joined Freeland Rees Roberts Architects in 1991, became a partner in 1994 and is now company secretary. He supervises students in professional studies at Cambridge University School of Architecture and is editor of Cambridge Architecture Gazette.