

Leighton Library



Housing treasures The interior of Leighton Library



Local resource Dunblane's Leighton Library

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Conservation experts have been working on the distinctive stone feature on Dunblane's historic Leighton Library building.

The carved tablet, or cartouche, on the A-listed building's east facade was removed early November.

It is part of a restoration project estimated at around £460,000 at Scotland's oldest purpose-built library, built in the late 17th century.

Edinburgh-based conservator Graciela Ainsworth – who restored the statue of John Cowane at Stirling's Cowane's Hospital – took the cartouche to her workshop in the city to assess its condition to recommend conservation treatment.

The Leighton Library Trust has now applied for listed building consent 'to repair the cartouche removed from the east elevation and currently in storage and then, following repair, to reinstate the cartouche in the niche on the east elevation.'

It follows consent for its removal which was granted in 2021.

The latest application includes

a document from the conservator outlining how she aims to proceed with the work.

It states: "Proposed work to repair the cartouche and reinstate it in the niche on the external east wall of the Leighton Library.

"Carefully remove all ferrous fixings. Lessen the dark impervious sulphation layer. Lessen the cementitious residues, being careful not to disturb any early polychrome. Local consolidation and filling of the fractures on the back.

"Supply and installation of new non ferrous fixings, designed to suit the Cartouche and including sial marble repair at the head.

"Reinstallation of the cartouche

into the back of the niche. Removal of previous dark cementitious render at the back of the niche, and application of new lime-based render to finish."

Phase one of the library building's restoration focuses on its exterior, including removing cement harling and replacing it with lime harling, replacing the crowsteps on the south end, and ensuring chimneys, the roof and slates are secure, as well as renewing windows.

The second phase will involve the conversion of the ground floor room, known as the Undercroft, into a state-of-the-art exhibition and visitor area.

Fundraising for the restoration project is continuing.

Leighton Library honorary treasurer Chris Onslow said: "It has been many years since this wonderful, old and unique building was restored and the Trustees are keen that by restoring the fabric, the legacy of this treasure will be secured for many generations to come.

"We continue to raise funds for the building works, costing around £350,000, and are planning how to raise funds for phase two which we anticipate will cost around £110,000."

The Leighton Library collection - whose oldest book dates back to 1504 - has been taken into storage during the restoration of the building.

There are around 4500 books which include first editions like The

Edinburgh Edition of Robert Burns poems (1787).

The building and collection is managed by the Leighton Library Trust, which originates in a bequest by Robert Leighton who was Bishop of Dunblane between 1662-1672.

By spring 2021 the building restoration appeal had raised £172,000 with generous grants having been received from, among others, The Pilgrim Trust and the Swire Charitable Trust.

Anyone who wishes to discover more about the library or make a donation can contact the trust at www.leightonlibrary.org.uk

Conservator outlines plan for repair of carved tablet



Renovation The cartouche is removed from wall of Dunblane's Leighton Library which took place in November 2022