

Restoration project



Collection Books are packed to go into storage

Upgrade for historic library

Restoration work on Dunblane's landmark Leighton Library is underway.

The grade-A listed building at The Cross, which dates from the late 17th century, is Scotland's oldest purpose-built library.

Fundraising for the restoration project, estimated at around £460,000, is continuing.

The collection has around 4500 books and includes first editions like The Edinburgh Edition of Robert Burns poems (1787).

Its oldest book dates back to 1504.

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."

"The Trustees are pleased that the hard work by the Leighton Library executive group has finally come to fruition.

"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 books have been taken into storage by removals group Doree Bonner. They include the Atlas of the Americas - printed in 1776, the year of the American Declaration of Independence - which recently underwent a £4000 restoration.

Phase one focuses on the building's 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 is the conversion of the ground floor room, known as the Undercroft, into a state-of-the-art exhibition and visitor area which, Mr Onslow said, would "provide greater access and enjoyment for all visitors to the library."

Edinburgh-based conservator Graciela Ainsworth - who restored the statue of John Cowane at Stirling's Cowane's Hospital - last week removed the ornamental feature (cartouche) on the side of the building during phase one and took it to her workshop "for review and

then to recommend a course of conservation treatment."

Also involved are Edinburgh architects Tod and Taylor and contractors Gillies and Farrell Masonry Ltd of Bridge of Allan.

The Leighton Library was completed in 1687 following the death of Robert Leighton (1611-84), who was Bishop of Dunblane between 1662 and 1672.

The bishop had expressed the wish in his will that his books be left to Dunblane Cathedral.

Money was also set aside to construct a building to house the collection.

The building and collection is managed by the Leighton Library Trust, which has its origin in Robert Leighton's bequest.

By spring this year 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



Painstaking The cartouche is removed from the library's wall



Conservation Workers start removing decorative stonework from library wall



Cartouche Conservator Graciela Ainsworth and colleague Derek Cunningham undertake work to remove the decorative feature



Renovation work The space the cartouche occupied at Dunblane's Leighton Library