

March 2024

The scaffolding has gone and now it's time to tidy up



At long last the scaffolding has been dismantled and the final bits of exterior pointing have been done, revealing the exterior in its splendid, restored condition. The pavement fencing has now gone and the two parking spaces outside restored for public use. The doors have been varnished and painted and we just await the original oak door from the opening just along the wall of the Manse garden, which is undergoing restoration. This and the fine gothic main doors at the top of the forestair were donated to the library in 1923 by Mrs Stewart of Aultwharrie.

Passers-by will notice a board over what was an old doorway into the Undercroft, seemingly bricked up around the time of WW2, when the Undercroft became an air-raid shelter. When the Undercroft is developed, it is planned that this will be the main entrance to it. The picture below shows what lies beneath (the gaps have now been filled for weather protection)



THE LEIGHTON LIBRARY RESTORATION NEWS



"...the fabrick of the house, its furniture, and every thing as it stands now in verie good order,"

Bishop Douglas 1691



Harling

Now the building has taken its place again as an attraction in the Cross, several people have been asking if it will be re-harled. There is an expectation from Historic Environment Scotland and the Planning Authorities that it will, although this will not happen for at least twelve months, to allow the walls to properly dry out.

An account from 1791 records payments of 10 shillings to Hally, a slater, for repairs to the roof, as well as half a hundred slates and six firlots* of lime, suggesting ongoing maintenance requirements to lime harling, as well as the roof slating. Also in the 1791 minutes, some of the books on the west wall were damp, the keeper reporting this was owing to the failure of the harling on that wall; the Trustees instructing this be repaired the next summer by James Hally or Peter Smith.

*For centuries a measure of grain in Scotland. A firlot was first standardised as a measure in 1617 and was "21 pints and a mutchkin of the Water of Leith" for level measures (c 35 litres, for wheat, pease, salt) and about 50 litres for heaped measures (for oats, barley and malt). Disappeared after the Weights and Measures Act of 1824.

This might be useful if you are in a quiz team: *Four pecks make a firlot and four firlots make a boll*



With the installation of new heaters and a dehumidifier, it is very pleasing to note that the relative humidity in the Library Room is dropping to the levels the books need. We will continue to monitor, to ensure the desired RH is consistent.

The lath and plaster walls have been painted, the new lighting is great and a general clean up is about to begin. We shall be applying a coat of Renaissance Wax to all the presses, which, in addition to providing protection and bringing out the wood grain, will present a hostile environment for woodworm. Renaissance Wax is a glass clear micro-crystalline wax polish developed for the British Museum and is widely used by curators for its protective qualities. It is Ph neutral. It can even be used to protect old photographs, statues, armour and vintage musical instruments.

Funding

Whilst we are enormously grateful to our benefactors to date, we still need to raise funds to complete the restoration, given the upcoming costs this Spring of returning the cartouche and the eventual lime harling in a year's time. Lime harling also needs refreshing every five years or so. Please consider donating towards this – there is a JustGiving link on our website – or spread the word to anyone who might support us

www.leightonlibrary.org.uk

“...the funds belonging to the library must necessarily be much reduced by what has been done in repairing the library, and will, in all probability be almost exhausted before the work shall be completed ...” (Trust Minutes, 3 Feb. 1818)