

Good news for Kirriemuir's only A listed building!

Fabric Repairs to St Mary's Episcopal Church, made possible by joint grant and other generous contributors

Press Release (15 May 2017)

Heritage Lottery Fund and Historic Environment Scotland enable Refurbishment

Thanks to a joint grant of £191,200 awarded to St Mary's Episcopal Church, Kirriemuir by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Historic Environment Scotland, work has begun to conserve Kirriemuir's only A-listed building on West Hillbank.

The overall project will cost around £250,000 and is made possible by a legacy from Alison Prain – a local teacher who was a lifelong supporter of the Church and the community – as well as generous grants from the Dalrymple Donaldson Fund, Scottish Churches Trust, All Churches Trust, Alan Evans Memorial Trust, and local fundraising.

The project will involve urgent roof and masonry repairs as well as internal work to restore the building to its former glory as intended by architect Sir Ninian Comper. St Mary's is an early example of the work of this renowned church architect. In Britain, Comper's work can be seen as far apart as Westminster Abbey in the south and Shetland in the north where he produced windows for St. Magnus Episcopal Church. Despite Comper's prolific ecclesiastical involvement, the church is one of only four he built in Scotland. As many local folk may know, the church also has associations with playwright and novelist, Sir James M Barrie, providing the venue for his funeral in 1937.

As well as important building repairs which include essential structural strengthening of the impressive West Tower, during the project St Mary's will take the opportunity to introduce local young people to traditional masonry skills. A brochure is also being designed to document the history of the church building.

Commenting on the work, Revd Canon Dr Robert Harley, Rector of St Mary's said:

"I am delighted that we have been able to start this project after several years of preparatory work by the Vestry and church members."

"These are vital repairs and we are pleased that with the expertise of a dedicated team of specialists our beautiful church can be preserved for the future generations of Kirriemuir and surrounding areas."

Responding to the news the Most Reverend David Chillingworth, Bishop of St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane and Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church, commented:

"I am delighted to hear the news of this grant which will help us to restore and sustain St Mary's. This is one of the most beautifully and architecturally significant churches in our diocese. The congregation and the wider church are determined to ensure that it continues to be at the heart of the community as a place of prayer – and of welcome and mission. We welcome this support which will help us to sustain it for the future."

It is hoped that the work will be completed by September 2017, in time for a Re-dedication and Thanksgiving service at the Harvest Festival on 15 October 2017.

END

NOTES TO EDITORS

Please find attached a photograph

About St Mary's Episcopal Church, Kirriemuir

St Mary's Episcopal Church is situated in the Diocese of St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane and is part of the Scottish Episcopal Church and the worldwide Anglican Communion. There are two regular weekly services on Wednesdays and Sundays.

St Mary's is the only Category A listed building in Kirriemuir, its listing indicating the building is of 'national importance'. There is a connection with author James Matthew Barrie (1860-1937; most famously author of Peter Pan) who was born in Kirriemuir and who's funeral was held at St Mary's in 1937. There is a stained glass window dedicated to J M Barrie's family.

The church was designed by Sir J. Ninian Comper (1864-1960; of Bucknall & Comper, London) for the episcopal faith and constructed from 1903-05, and was consecrated in 1904. It replaced an earlier Classical-style church built in 1795-7 on The Roods which had burned down in 1902. St Mary's is one of the oldest congregations in Kirriemuir dating back to the 17th century. The old St Mary's was one of the first churches built for the episcopal faith in Scotland following repeal on the penal statutes in 1792.

Comper was a renowned ecclesiastical architect, born in Aberdeen in 1864, with a long career starting in the Victorian Gothic Revival and extending into the mid-20th century. The church has significance as Comper's only fully completed design in Scotland. Despite Comper's prolific ecclesiastical involvement, the church is one of only four he built in Scotland, and fifteen in total over the course of his 70 year career. Other significant Scottish examples are St Margaret's Convent Chapel, Aberdeen (1891) and St Margaret's, Braemar (1895-1907). The architect's father Rev John Comper had been a lay curate and first school master at St Mary's and he is commemorated with a stained glass window in the church designed by his son.

The building consists of chancel, nave, and tower, and on the North side four simple arches and piers without capitals separate the nave from an aisle containing windows at its two ends. A 2-manual tracker organ by C & F Hamilton of Edinburgh (1906) is placed above the entrance in the South wall. Its case is part of the design by Comper. In 2012 the organ was awarded a Grade 1 Historic Organ Certificate by the British Institute of Organ Studies.

About the Heritage Lottery Fund

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) aims to make a lasting difference for heritage, people and communities across the UK and help build a resilient heritage economy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. www.hlf.org.uk Follow us on facebook HLFScotland and twitter @HLFScotland

About Historic Environment Scotland

Historic Environment Scotland provides a wide range of grants and funding for projects to protect and promote the historic environment of Scotland.

For further information, images and interviews, please contact:

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