

Restoration Highly Commended 1997  
St. Giles Church  
Totternhoe

The use of hard renders on the soft Totternhoe limestone since the turn of this century was a major factor leading to the level of repairs necessary on this church in Totternhoe, Bedfordshire.

It is work which has been going on for 15 years, the most recent part of the programme being to rebuild parapets of the tower, north nave and aisle and carry out repairs to the tower and south porch. Totternhoe stone is not very durable unless the top of it is protected, so Stoke Ground Bath stone was used for cappings, weatherings, belfry windows, pinnacles and the tower parapets.

The tower parapets had been rebuilt around the turn of the century in brick with an extremely hard rendering. There were severe cracks which had allowed water through. As well as the damage to the fabric of the building, there was a danger of the rendering falling off in large sheets. In consultation with English Heritage it was agreed that all parapets should be replaced in stone. It was possible to use the same Totternhoe stone as the original church because the quarry re-opened in the 1970s for repairs to Woburn Abbey and had since been used for the repairs to many churches.

The new Totternhoe stone was treated in four sides with a mixture of linseed oil and turpentine when fixing. The 200mm ashlar were bedded in a 1:2:9 mortar of OP cement, lime putty and stone dust or silver sand with 5mm joints (as in the original work).

The crocketed pinnacles have been re-carved to the original patterns as most of them were not, in fact, natural stone and had decayed badly. On the east nave parapet a pattern of flint work let into the Totternhoe has been painstakingly reinstated. To make sure the original pattern was reproduced, rubbings were taken before the flint was dismantled.

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