

Reg

Conservation Grants Scheme

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The Irish Georgian Society (IGS) is delighted to announce that we have completed a fifth year of the Conservation Grants Scheme, which has been funded by the Irish Georgian Society London since 2014. Although last year was to be the final year of the scheme, its importance is very much recognised and London has, therefore, extended it by a further year, due to part funding received from our American Chapters. The €50,000 available funding this year was distributed among thirteen successful projects, which ranged from small landmark structures to large country houses.

We are pleased to support the boathouse on the grounds of Lexlip Castle, Co. Kildare, which belongs to the Hon Desmond and Penelope Guinness. Lexlip Castle was originally built in 1172 (rebuilt in 1837) by Adam de Hereford, a follower of Strongbow. The boathouse structure was erected in the late-18th century and represents the expansion of the estate as part of a gentleman's residence. The domed boathouse roof with its striking brick chimney is a distinctive feature that was originally clad in copper. The works involve the revival of this important landmark structure with the reinstatement of a metal roof, in addition to other repair works.

Assistance is also being provided to the repair of another landscape structure, the seven arched bridge in Co. Meath. This stone bridge is believed to have been erected in the late-17th century or early-18th century and likely functioned as a pack-horse bridge to allow the carriage of aggregate from Bearmount Quarry to Trim. Funds will support the restoration of the stone arches, which will be undertaken by Scurlogstown Olympiad, a community organisation.

A number of other notable organisations also require assistance. The independent charitable organisation, Dublin Civic Trust is restoring two adjoining townhouses in Dublin city centre. In 2016, this scheme supported the reinstatement

of missing windows at 18 Upper Ormond Quay, while this year the Trust is restoring and part reinstating a Rococo cornice that originally served a double-height space in the adjacent 67 East Arran Street (c.1760–1770). This space, now subdivided, is believed to have been a retail floor, designed for the display of high-status goods.

Financial support is also being offered to Irish Landmark Trust, a non-profit organisation that is currently converting the unoccupied gate lodges of Saunderscourt, Co. Wexford, to short term holiday use. The main house was erected in the late-17th century but abandoned in c. 1809 and demolished in the late-19th century. However, two late-18th-century gate lodges connected by a triumphal arch survive, which fell into disrepair as early as c. 1809.

Undertaking initial investigations and assessments of historic buildings is vital before any works take place. Two-staged funding is proposed at the 18th-century Bantry House, Co. Cork (remodelled in the early-19th century). The artificial-stone capitals of the pilasters decorating the building's exterior are to be inspected to support conservation recommendations, followed by the appropriate restoration of these important features. At the former Christ Church, Rathcormac, Co. Cork, a Conservation Assessment and Condition Report of this 1775 church with its 1828 vestry will be produced, to establish the significance of the building and inform the conservation approach.

Several other church buildings require help this year. Abbey Leix Old Church, Co. Laois, is a c.1750 church (later extended) on the site of a pre-Reformation church that is one of the few surviving indicators of the relocation of the town further northeast by the first Viscount de Vesci (1735–1804). A limcrete floor is proposed to address damp issues affecting the effigy tomb of Emma, Viscountess de Vesci (d. 1884). Other churches are undertaking window repairs, including the 1809 Ardahan Church, Co. Galway and St Carthage's Cathedral, Lismore, Co. Waterford, a major religious site dating from the early Christian era.

The repair of an oriel window is required at Myrtle Grove, Youghal, Co. Cork, a rare example of an

unfortified 16th-century Irish house. This window faces the medieval St Mary's Collegiate Church and is where Sir Edmund Spenser is said to have written the 'Faerie Queen'. Works will also take place at another early building, the c. 1680 former hunting lodge of Ballyarthur, Ballanagh, Co. Wicklow, where it is necessary to extensively repair a gable wall.

Furthermore, we are also pleased to support the c.1750 Bridge House, Westport, Co. Mayo. Previously we helped with roof repairs, while this year works include the repair of ceilings and floors. Ceiling repairs are also required in the impressive entrance hall of Curraghmore,

Portlaw, Co. Waterford. This country house was continually developed since medieval times and comprises a classical c.1755 house incorporating earlier fabric.

As demonstrated above, this important scheme helps owners of historic structures to fund essential works, which can often incur financial pressures. Therefore, we would like to thank all our London members and our friends in America for making this year's scheme possible. It is very much hoped that, subject to available funding, we can extend the scheme beyond 2018 to continue this particularly worthy cause.



01 Entrance of Myrtle Grove, Youghal, Co. Cork (Image courtesy of Bord Fáilte). **01** Lexlip Boathouse, during conservation works. **03** Bantry House, Co. Cork. **04** Abbey Leix Old Church, Co. Laois. **05** Saunderscourt Gate Lodges, Crossabeg, Co. Wexford. **06** St Carthage's Cathedral, Lismore, Co. Waterford.