

The monuments are four outstanding marble memorial sculptures of international importance which draw visitors from all over the world. Two of the monuments were created by Roubiliac and are considered to be surpassed only by his monument to Lady Elizabeth Nightingale at Westminster Abbey.

St Edmund’s Parochial Church Council and the Buccleuch Living Heritage Trust are leading the project, and have appointed The Prince’s Regeneration Trust (PRT) as project manager to oversee the conservation work. PRT will also manage the delivery of an ambitious programme of activities to improve access and heritage interpretation, create a new learning and outreach programme, and engage the local community.

Restoration work has now begun, starting with the cleaning of the most recent monument, dedicated to Lady Elizabeth Montagu Duchess of Buccleuch.

Ros Kerslake, Chief Executive of PRT, says: "These monuments are a hidden gem in the heart of Northamptonshire, but the marble has now reached a worrying state of deterioration. It is a huge relief that the HLF has provided the funding and that the work can now start. The setting of these sculptures, a medieval church in a quiet Northampton village, makes the experience of seeing them even more special and unique. It is our responsibility to make sure these internationally-important monuments receive the care and attention they deserve."

Vanessa Harbar, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund East Midlands, welcomed the works: “These four monumental

statues are considered masterpieces of exceptional significance, spanning the Georgian era from 1749 to 1829. Two of them are designed by Louis Francois Roubiliac, widely considered the greatest sculptor in England in the 18th century. Problems with the monuments were first highlighted in the 1970s, it is great news that appropriate preservation work has now commenced. HLF is delighted to play our part in ensuring Northamptonshire can share these magnificent pieces of craftsmanship with future generations."

Creating training opportunities is also a key aspect of the project. PRT is currently recruiting to fill a digital media work placement to record the progression of the project and a restoration work placement.
The restoration placement is to work alongside conservation and restoration professionals at Skillingtons, who have been commissioned to carry out the work.

Conservation Manager, Paul Wooles, says that so far the cleaning on the first monument, dedicated to Lady Elizabeth Montagu, is going well, "I cannot believe how well the figures are coming out with just one application of poultice. In 49 cases out of 50 you'd find you're left with areas where you have more stubborn ingrained dirt. But that's not the case here. It might be something to do with the quality of the marble, but even so, it's very surprising. Maybe when we come to the other monuments we'll become unstuck, but this has been very successful."

This monument is also affected by sugaring – when the internal structure of the marble starts to become granular and powdery. To prevent this, a solution is applied to try to halt the sugaring process – this is known as consolidation. After that the Skillingtons team will repoint defective joints in the monument. Paul says, "We had to do some emergency consolidation several years ago, because the monument seemed to be going into self-destruct mode... since then the sugaring on Elizabeth seems to have stabilised. However, there now appears to be sugaring on the monument to Mary Duchess of Montagu, so we're here just in time really."

The team will face its biggest challenge when working on the oldest monument (dating back to 1752), which is dedicated to Sir John, the second Duke of Montagu. The iron work which supports the marble is corroding, which means Skillingtons will have to dismantle the monument carefully, repair its structural core and then reassemble it like a complex jigsaw puzzle.

The work on the monuments is estimated to be completed in December 2014.

Notes to editors

The Prince's Regeneration Trust supports and strengthens communities by rescuing and reusing important British buildings at risk of being lost forever through demolition or decay. Our priority is to work in areas of deprivation, places which will benefit most from the economic regeneration and growth we deliver.

PRT variously acts as adviser, consultant facilitator and principal, working in partnership with communities, developers, local authorities and other public bodies throughout the UK. Redundant buildings are given a viable, new function which keeps them at the heart of their communities and assists with the wider economic regeneration of their local area. PRT encourages sharing learning and experience through its projects.
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The **Buccleuch Living Heritage Trust** is an educational charitable trust formed in 1984, by the 9th Duke of Buccleuch. Independently of the Estate, it administers the educational and public access to the four great historic family homes of

the Duke of Buccleuch: Bowhill House and Country Estate, Boughton House and Gardens, Drumlanrig Castle in Dumfriesshire and Dalkeith Palace in Midlothian.

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