

£4.9million to restore the heritage treasures of St Bartholomew's Hospital

11/01/2023



Visitors stand in front of The Pool of Bethesda painting. Credit: Matthew Andrews

This Heritage Treasures Day, we have awarded £4.9million to Barts Heritage to enable the historic buildings of St Bartholomew's Hospital to be restored and rejuvenated.

Thanks to the National Lottery funding, the 'Sharing Historic Barts' project will address urgent repairs to historic spaces situated in the Grade I listed North Wing of the hospital, including the 18th-century Great Hall. It will also provide a public programme with heritage and wellbeing at its core.

At the heart of the project is the conservation of a breathtaking heritage treasure – the spectacular Hogarth Stair, painted by William Hogarth.

A heritage treasure

The walls of the grand staircase are adorned with sweeping canvases painted by Hogarth that depict two Biblical stories – The Pool of Bethesda (1736) and The Good Samaritan (1737) – featuring figures approximately seven feet high. The canvasses will undergo specialist cleaning and conservation in order to remedy structural issues caused by the wooden ‘stretcher’ framework behind.



Close up of The Good Samaritan. Credit: Matthew Andrews

We're thrilled that our funding will be used to conserve these unique examples of Hogarth's work and revitalise the stunning stair Hall...

Eilish McGuinness, Chief Executive at The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Eilish McGuinness, Chief Executive at The National Lottery Heritage Fund, said: "Our annual Heritage Treasures Day gives us the chance to celebrate some of the most wonderful heritage across the UK, including the historic buildings of St Bartholomew's Hospital, and particularly the Hogarth Stair, which is truly a treasure to marvel at.

"We're thrilled that our funding will be used to conserve these unique examples of Hogarth's work and revitalise the stunning stair Hall for more and more people to appreciate and enjoy when visiting the historic buildings."

An interesting history

Having been born nearby, Hogarth was displeased to discover that Italian painter, Jacopo Amigoni, had been approached to provide the artwork for the staircase. Hogarth then offered his services free of charge, and set about creating these devotional paintings.

The paintings were Hogarth's first history paintings, and unlike anything else he had previously attempted, either in scale or subject, the paintings show the ideals of care and healing on which the hospital was founded. The characters portrayed in *The Pool of Bethesda* are thought to be patients from the hospital, many of whose conditions are recognisable to the trained eye, and the painting is still used as an educational tool today.



Close up of *The Pool of Bethesda*. Credit: Matthew Andrews

Activities and skills development

As well as repairs and conservation, the project will provide a public programme including cultural and educational activities and skills development, such as:

- therapeutic artmaking courses responding to onsite art and architecture
- sensory heritage walking tours
- mindfulness activities
- skills development within conservation work through placements, apprenticeships and volunteering opportunities

Share your heritage treasures

The annual Heritage Treasures Day takes place on 11 January. It is a social media moment to share inspiring projects, and highlight the UK's rich and diverse heritage, such as the Hogarth Stair. Get involved by sharing your heritage treasures on social media using the hashtag [#HeritageTreasures](#) and tag [@HeritageFundUK](#).

Discover the [virtual backgrounds](#) we've released this year featuring stunning heritage treasures across the UK for you to download.



[Opening the main stable doors for work to begin on the three-year project. Pictured left to right: Chelsea Pensioners, James Little, BEM and Carol Knight. Grainge Photography](#)



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