

Millions For War Memorial Restorations In The West



Ashton Keynes War Memorial

Requests for help to restore war memorials have flooded in to the trust dedicated to their protection as the nation commemorates the 'war to end wars'.

Communities across the land recognise the aging monuments need special care, and the Western Daily Press is spreading the word that the War Memorial Trust's expert advice ensures restoration is carried out in the right way with the right materials.

The Government has given the trust £3 million in extra funding for repair, conservation grants and advice to commemorate the centenary of the First World War.

Figures show an upsurge of enthusiasm to ensure monuments are in good condition for the next hundred years.

From January to November 2014 the trust received 600 pre-application inquiries compared to 500 for the whole of 2013.

General inquiries were also well up for the same period with 979 compared with 792.

The average caseload per month of 400 different memorials being worked on compares with 340 per month in 2013.

A total of £137,585 has been given out under the small grants scheme to 123 projects in three of four assessment rounds, compared to £106,717 to 90 projects in the whole of 2013.

Frances Moreton, director of the trust said: "We want to encourage people to record the condition of their local war memorial on War Memorials Online and help build the national picture of the condition of war memorials for the First World War centenary, and we are also urging those wishing to restore to get your applications in to get your share. Grants are available for up to £30,000 at up to 75 per cent of costs depending on the project."

The Western Daily Press' campaign, Your War Memorial Needs You, is backed by our region's Lords Lieutenant. If you are concerned about your local memorial take a look at www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk and see if it is already listed. People are encouraged to upload a photograph and information on memorials, whatever their condition.

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The site is a fascinating place for anyone interested in local history. The range, size and location of memorials is enormous.

It is easy to search for an individual town or village, but why not put your county's name in as the search term and see what wonderful imagination those commemorating those lost lives have shown.

In Somerset alone there is a church clock (at East Chinnock), a Garden of Remembrance (at Dunster), and Cadbury Camp Iron Age Hill Fort at Tickenham, one of a number of properties of landscape or heritage value acquired by the then National Land Fund as a memorial after the Second World War, and later transferred to the National Trust.

If you are proposing work contact the War Memorials Trust at www.warmemorials.org – and let the Western Daily Press know too. We want to highlight the problems and celebrate the progress.

The historic war memorial at Ashton Keynes in Wiltshire is one of more than a dozen across the West Country to have benefited recently from a War Memorials Trust grant.

It is unusual in being created from the shattered pieces of one of the village's four ancient preaching crosses, all of which are thought to have been erected in the 1400s.

The cross, in the churchyard, was restored and converted to a war memorial during the First World War, the work being financed by public subscription.

On July 25 1917, in the presence of the Bishop of Bristol, the Rev. George Nixon and the local vicar, the Rev. M. J. T. Milling, the memorial was dedicated to the men of the Parish of Ashton Keynes who fell, and would subsequently fall, in the First World War. In later years, the memorial was also dedicated to those who died in the Second World War.

The cross is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, adding to the responsibilities of its guardians.

The stone had become heavily encrusted with lichen and algae, which was not necessarily damaging the health of the stone but was obscuring the lettering. In 2012 the parish council was considering its restoration to celebrate the Queen's jubilee.

It approached the War Memorials Trust which in 2013 offered a grant of £934 towards the conservation. Parish councillor Ron Thomas explained great care is needed in the removal of lichen, moss and algae to avoid damaging stone.

The trust advised on the gentle methods to be used. The pointing was also in very poor condition and in places had been carried out using a cement mortar. This was carefully removed using hand tools only and the memorial was re-pointed using a colour-matched lime mortar of hydraulic lime and soft sand. Any fractures, voids or gaps in the stonework were plugged using a lime grout. The cement joints on the shaft was left in place as the surrounding stone was still sound and the removal of the mortar would be likely to cause more damage. The village is proud of the result and looks forward to guarding the monument for many years to come.

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