

## **A BRIEF FOR A CONSERVATION CONSULTANT FOR THE CONSERVATION AND INTERPRETATION OF ALEXANDER POPE'S GROTTO**

**July 2021**

### **Introduction**

The project is the conservation element of the restoration of Pope's Grotto, which includes the re-design of the entrance to the Grotto, design and installation of lighting and interpretation to the Grade 2\* Listed grotto. The work, which includes extensive cleaning and re-fixing of minerals, is to be carried out in accordance with best conservation practice and to the approval of Historic England.

This project will result in conservation of the Grade II\* Listed Building Pope's Grotto, for the benefit of the public and will advance public education in heritage and culture. It will result in the Grotto being removed from the Heritage At Risk register.

The estimated value of the conservation works is £181,500 ex VAT

The client has successfully applied for a grant from National Lottery Heritage Fund, and will make a formal application for funding from Historic England once the Supervising Architect and Conservation Consultant have been appointed. Details of the grants schemes can be found on the websites of the two organisations. There will be no scope for increasing the sum awarded, the tenderer must therefore establish the extent of the works to avoid additional works being added.

### **Our organisation**

Pope's Grotto Preservation Trust (PGPT) aims to restore the Grade II\* Grotto, the last remnant of Pope's Villa and gardens, conserving it for future generations. We will enable a wide range of people to experience and learn about Alexander Pope's contribution to culture, literature and garden design in the 18th century. Alongside the conservation works, we will be carrying out a programme of activities to engage the public, providing opportunities for formal and informal learning and volunteering. Our Trustees hold Open Days and specialist tours of the Grotto, participate in London Open House; publish newsletters distributed to 2,200 people on our database; fundraise; and are active on social media. All Trustees are very experienced and actively involved in the project. We work closely with Strawberry Hill House and others to widen our offer to the public.

## **Project Governance**

Pope's Grotto Preservation Trust is leading the project. We work in close partnership with Radnor House School, as owners and in whose grounds the Grotto is situated. A consultant Project Manager appointed by PGPT will be the main point of contact. A project steering group includes representatives from Historic England, the local conservation officer, Radnor House School and all Trustees of PGPT.

The Conservation Consultant will be expected to work with the Project Architect, attend project team meetings, be responsible for the selection of Conservators and the supervision of their work.

## **The project**

The aim is to restore and conserve Alexander Pope's Grotto, a Grade II\* listed structure in Cross Deep, Twickenham. Pope's Grotto is described by Historic England as 'of outstanding national importance'. The Grotto has been placed on the Heritage At Risk Register - what was once a famous landmark in Pope's time is now badly in need of conservation. Smothered in centuries of dust and grime, the minerals and fossils that remain on show are becoming detached or missing and are cast into shadow. An inappropriate later addition of a cement floor creates damp and conceals the beautiful natural brick underneath. Recent water penetration is causing further deterioration of the Grotto placing it at greater risk. The Grotto is unique as the last remaining element of Pope's famous Villa and Gardens. It is the last building of the Arcadian Thames group to undergo restoration and is key to the collection. The minerals it contains are listed in a contemporaneous account and many are still present.

The overall project consists of restoring the North Chamber and Central Corridor of the Grotto; new lighting and interpretation including a virtual reconstruction' of Pope's Villa and gardens, and the surrounding area of Twickenham in 1740. The entrance will be sensitively re-designed to invoke the sense of the Grotto as it was intended, whilst recognising the needs of the school's practical use of the space. The project builds on our successful restoration of the South Chamber in 2017 for which we raised £100,000 and produced an audience development plan and fundraising strategy.

## **Historic context**

Alexander Pope lined his grotto with minerals obtained from friends and colleagues from Britain and overseas. The minerals were recorded by his gardener John Serle in 1745, and although over 300 years many have been lost, with help of a careful survey by members of the Geological Society of London we have located some of them. Significant among them are 2 basalt 'joints' of the Giants Causeway given by Sir Hans Sloane, mother amethysts, alabaster, Bristol diamonds, quartzes, serpentinite, ammonites and corals. The minerals are so arranged to suggest a mine. Cleaning (in the South Chamber) has revealed a myriad of colours and textures and the conservator describes it as "A three dimensional work of art".

## The Brief

Building on the work accomplished in the pilot project:

- Review the documentation by Donald Insall Associates, Odgers Conservation and Taylor Pearce, and the digital survey by Plowman Craven.
- Arrange access for inspection
- Prepare a conservation method statement
- Write a specification for the repair/conservation/cleaning/ removal of rusting fixings where deemed necessary/ and any finishing treatments.
- Consult with local authority and English Heritage regarding any statutory permissions.
- Collaborate with the Architect to ensure the supervision of all work on site.
- Enable members of the public to have taster training sessions on cleaning and conservation of minerals.
- On completion ensure Conservator produces a Conservation Report within 3 months of Practical Completion.
- With PGPT and Radnor House School produce a 10-year costed Maintenance and Management Plan.
- Liaise with: Architect, Pope's Grotto Preservation Trust and Radnor House School Head (owners)

**Timing will be very important because of the limited window for the work to take place on site: School holidays 7 July – 31 August 2022**

The current timetable for the project is as follows:

August 2021	Appointment of Architect, Conservation Consultant and QS
October 2021	Completion of design and specification
November 2021	Variation to Listed Building Consent (if required)
December 2021	Appointment of Conservators
July 2022	Work on site begins
August 2022	Work on site ends

### Selection Process

The successful tender will be selected on the basis of:

- Price 35%
- Relevant skills and experience 20%
- Understanding of the brief 15%
- Quality of method statement and approach 15%
- Availability to meet the timetable for the project 15%

Visits to the Grotto before submitting tenders will be arranged.

Interviews will be held in August 2021 (date TBC).

## **How to apply**

You are required to provide the following details:

Method Statement:

- Please set out how you would approach this piece of work (ideally no more than 4 sides of A4).
- Ensure you give precise details of who will be carrying out the work (you may include a brief CV for each individual carrying out the work).

Fee Proposal:

- Please provide a fee proposal which distinguishes between project development work (method statement, specification, maintenance plan) and project delivery (liaison with statutory consultees, supervision of works, reporting).
- Include a breakdown of how your proposed fee would be allocated both within your own practice and including any allowances for other professional input.

Give details of similar relevant work you have carried out and project references from 2 similar commissions.

Confirm your availability for carrying out this work, working to the proposed timetable.

Provide your practice's environmental policy.

### **Project team contact:**

Victoria Northwood  
Heritage Project Manager  
Pope's Grotto Preservation Trust  
vnorthwood@gmail.com  
07940 839177

### **Attachments to the brief (available upon request)**

Donald Insall Associates' Listed Building Consent 2015 materials including drawings, condition survey and Conservation Management statement

Taylor Pearce Phase 1 Conservation Record

Odgers Conservation Phase 2 Indicative Costs

## **Appendix 1: Project Background**

Alexander Pope's Grotto, 1719-1744, is one of the most significant buildings of the English Landscape Garden Movement, being the creation of its most famous exponent. A key figure of the Age of Enlightenment, Pope's influence extended throughout the arts; "As the foremost poet he had a profound effect on changing attitudes to the natural world." (Mavis Batey, 'Alexander Pope the Artist and the Landscape') His garden and the view of the Arcadian Thames at Richmond in which it lay was the inspiration for the English gardening style which was later developed by Capability Brown and others. Although not the first in the country, it is known to have influenced the design of subsequent grottos such as Painshill in Surrey.

The Grotto has long been valued by local residents of Twickenham, heritage organisations, garden historians and enthusiasts, and admirers of Pope worldwide. Its riverside site has been compromised by the construction of 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings and the shimmering effects of light described by Pope have vanished. Since the 1990s, efforts have been made to achieve a restoration of the grotto, with the establishment of Pope's Grotto Preservation Trust in 2004 and the work of Anthony Beckles Willson succeeding in keeping the issue in the public eye and in the minds of successive owners. A development grant from English Heritage secured the services of Donald Insall Associates who in 2005 provided a 3-level proposal for its restoration.

An ambitious but unsuccessful Heritage Lottery Fund main grant bid was lodged in 2009. With the arrival of new owners Radnor House School, an incremental approach to the conservation project was agreed because the grotto's site beneath the school with consequent limits to public access made it challenging to fund through conventional routes. With small grants from HLF Resilient Heritage, Historic England and charitable trusts, the grotto's gates and statuary were conserved, a digital survey of the grotto was made, a fundraising strategy and audience development plan produced and the minerals identified and mapped. A pilot project carried out on the South Chamber in 2017 now demonstrates the standard to which the grotto will be conserved, establishes a design for its lighting and reveals part of the underlying brick floor.

A grant to complete the conservation of the Grotto was awarded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund in September 2019, and match funding will be sought from Historic England.

Angela Kidner and Victoria Northwood for Pope's Grotto Preservation Trust