



(left): Dignitaries climb the scaffolding to reach the tower and cupola; (right): examining the golden barque in the nave

# Close-up view of cathedral repairs

**OUR cathedral celebrated a significant milestone in its repairs programme with a 'topping off' ceremony.**

Essential repairs to the cathedral's tower and cupola have been ongoing since last summer, thanks largely to a special government grant. It has seen the cathedral shrouded in scaffolding for several months.

Dignitaries from the Royal Navy, Historic Dockyard, Gunwharf Quays, Ben Ainslie Racing and Portsmouth City Council were given the chance to see the repairs at close quarters.

They heard from architect Simon Ablett how the wet winter of 2013-14 had revealed problems with water inside the belfry. The problem was traced to rainwater penetrating the octagonal timber frame beneath the cupola and the leadwork covering it.

It resulted in a bid for £680,000 to the First World War Centenary Cathedral Repair Fund, which would pay for repairs to the cupola, as well as improving the stonework in the tower and around St Thomas's Chapel in the east end of the cathedral. The bid was successful and work began on the tower last July.

Guests were given the chance to climb the scaffolding around the cathedral tower for a close-up tour of work undertaken by Daedalus Conservation and RW Armstrong.

They saw how the contractors had been removing and replacing steel bars that were originally inserted in 1912 to try to support



Sir Paul Ruddock, David Brindley and Janet Gough on the cathedral tower; right: Sir Paul Ruddock unveils the plaque

the structure, but are now being completed.

And Sir Paul Ruddock, who chairs the First World War Centenary Cathedral Repair Commission, unveiled a commemorative plaque in the nave. It will ultimately be placed on the cathedral tower.

Among the guests were the Lord Mayor of Portsmouth, Cllr Frank Jonas; city council leader Cllr Donna Jones; Rear Admiral Richard Stokes, assistant chief of the Naval Staff; Commander Tim Ash, captain of HMS Warrior; and Helen Bonser-Wilton, chief executive of the Mary Rose Trust.

The £20m First World War Centenary Cathedral Repair Fund was announced in the 2014 budget and made available to all cathedrals in England. Our



cathedral and St John's RC Cathedral in Portsmouth were among 31 cathedrals that received grants for vital repairs to some of our most historic buildings.

Building work is expected to be completed later this spring, including the reinstallation of the iconic golden barque.

## Grant will help us to serve the community

WORSHIPPERS at a historic church in the Meon Valley are celebrating after it was awarded almost £190,000 in lottery funding.

The cash will help Droxford Church to become a community hub, hosting events for community, school and heritage groups. The £188,300 awarded by the Heritage Lottery Fund to the Friends of Droxford Church and Droxford PCC brings the total contribution to the project to £222,000.

This grant will now mean work can start on the first phase of the Community Hub and Heritage Project. Contractors have been appointed and five months of work is expected to start this month.

It will involve restoration of the church tower, roof and drainage systems, installing glazed screens in the north chapel to create a community room, and delivering a programme of activities to engage people with the heritage of the church.

The church is seeking further grant aid and private donations, so that work can start on an extension. This would enable a toilet, kitchen and office facilities to be built, which are needed to support a community cafe and other activities in the church building.

The Rev Tony Forrest, rector of the Meon Bridge parishes, said: "We're delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund has given us this support. The award will enable us to start work in April to restore this lovely Norman Church. Equally important, it will enable us to create a community room which can become the focus for social activities as well as heritage exploration."

"It will support sustainable community development, and enable us to serve our communities better, especially the isolated, the young and the elderly, in Droxford and the Meon Valley."

St Mary and All Saints Church is one of few grade I listed buildings in the Meon Valley and the only one in Droxford. It has been the centre of worship for the village community for nearly 900 years. The earliest and main parts of the church date from the middle of the 12th century.