



# Conservation Trainee

Job description

*May 2023*

## Background

Nottingham's Roman Catholic Cathedral was designed by Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812-1852) and completed in 1844. It was consecrated as the Cathedral of the newly restored Catholic Diocese of Nottingham in 1851. At the time of its completion it was the largest Catholic church to have been built in England since the Reformation.

In his short life Pugin was one of the most influential champions and exponents of Victorian Neo Gothic architecture and decoration. His influence on George Gilbert Scott and William Morris is well-documented. His fame was assured through the design of the Elizabeth Tower (Big Ben) and his work on the Palace of Westminster. The Cathedral at Nottingham was one of his proudest achievements.

Pugin's 1841 design for Nottingham was a large stone built cruciform building with spire, ambulatory and chapels. He designed the exterior in the Early English style, shorn of architectural detail in order to devote budget to the lavish internal decoration of a Mediaeval church. At this time Pugin was working with Minton on the revival of the lost craft of encaustic tile-making, the results of which are in evidence at Nottingham. Here Pugin developed his vision of the importance of the chancel and screen to the sanctity of the Mass, which in turn influenced the Oxford Movement and the development of Anglo-Catholicism. However, his dark stained glass combined with a rich but dark colour scheme (dark Prussian blue to ceilings and strong green ground on walls) resulted in an unworkably dark interior and his decorative scheme has been covered over by many subsequent paint layers. The most recent paint layer is 30 years old and redecoration of the entire interior is now overdue.

The Cathedral fabric is generally in a sound condition, having invested in lighting, roofing and drainage upgrades within the last 5-10 years. The last Quinquennial Inspection was undertaken in 2018 and the most recent fabric survey in 2020. There remains a problem with condensation, the causes of which have been extensively examined. Limited but unavoidable rising damp is exacerbated by a lack of ventilation. The Cathedral's heating and ventilation system has never been effective. The windows cannot be opened and it is believed that down draughts create condensation.

The Cathedral Church of St Barnabas is the mother church for the diocese which encompasses Leicestershire, Rutland, Lincolnshire, most of Derbyshire, and most of Nottinghamshire, with rural, coastal and inner city areas. The Cathedral's 150 ft spire is an iconic landmark in the city centre Wellington Circus Conservation area. Derby Road, which was open fields when the cathedral was built, is now a busy city centre street, ten minutes' walk from the Castle or the main shopping centre, and five minutes from the Old Market Square. Nottingham Playhouse Theatre and the Albert Hall concert and conference venue are adjacent. Wellington Circus, a gated green space, is situated to the rear.

The Cathedral is particularly associated with three famous Nottingham characters:

- Graham Greene, the novelist, undertook his conversion journey and was received into the Catholic Church at Nottingham Cathedral in 1926.
- Bishop Willson was a Catholic priest and social reformer working in Nottingham in the first half of the C19. He was responsible for building the Church of St Barnabas for his growing congregation, which was later consecrated as the Cathedral. He later became the Bishop of Hobart, Tasmania

where he was well known as a social reformer. His remains were removed from Nottingham Cathedral and reburied in Hobart in 2017.

- Ven. Mother Mary Potter established a mission to the poor in Hyson Green in the 1870s with the support of Bishop Bagshawe. She established a school and visited the sick and dying. Her Order, the Little Company of Mary, was authorised as an Institute of Pontifical Rite by Pope Leo XIII in 1886. The Little Company of Mary still serves the Cathedral and wider community in Nottingham and has established a small museum to tell her story. The cause for her canonisation was established in 1988 when she was declared Venerable by St Pope John Paul II. The NHS health and social care centre in Hyson Green is named the Mary Potter Centre in recognition of the legacy of Mother Mary.

The Cathedral has a capacity for 700 worshippers. The Cathedral is also a parish whose congregation numbers 475 (parish mass count 2021, 759 in 2019). Annual attendance is around 90,000 at mass and 15,000 casual visitors. The Cathedral is open 7am to 7pm and offers daily Mass and all the sacraments, as well as five Sunday Masses. The new diocesan Director of Music has established a choral project in seven of the city's Catholic schools resulting in wide participation and two excellent choirs which sing at Cathedral services.

Congregation numbers and income have declined sharply during the pandemic, although Masses went online. But, as with all city centre parishes whose original congregations have mostly been displaced by shops and offices, the numbers attending and the impact of the building itself has been changing over recent years. There is a strong desire to reconnect the Cathedral with the wider city, as a landmark, as a heritage attraction, and as an oasis of peace and tranquillity, for the whole community.

### Discovering Pugin Project and Restoring Pugin Project

The Cathedral began the journey to restore the original Pugin interiors in 2018, as the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary was approaching. A grant of £75,000 was received from the National Lottery Heritage Fund with significant in-kind contributions from Nottingham Trent University. The purpose of the project was

- Carry out paint research to develop understanding of the building and the survival of Pugin's scheme
- Establish causes of damp
- Create an interactive 3D model to be used at events
- Run a series of events for stakeholders and the general public
- Undertake audience research and engagement.

The main outcomes of the Discovering Pugin project were as follows:

- Surveys failed to uncover the Pugin paint patterns but found the base paint layer, and they were able to confirm the Blessed Sacrament chapel decoration was by Elphege Pippet working for Hardman & Company in the 1930s.
- The student-led research project with non-users identified a strong desire for a place of peace and sanctuary among the wider non-church-going community.
- While response from schools was disappointing – there was little about the Pugin story to appeal to those targeted – many new audiences such as students, families and older people were engaged with the paint research process at events.

The Discovering Pugin project was completed in March 2020. In Spring 2021 consultants were engaged to explore further the strategic needs of the city and the sector and Eskdale Restoration were again engaged to test different areas with the aim of finding some of the original Pugin paint

scheme. This project succeeded in finding several areas of the original Pugin patterns below 7-9 paint layers and recommended further research.

In the summer of 2022 the Cathedral submitted a bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for **Restoring Pugin** – a scheme to restore the Pugin paint scheme to the east end, working **in partnership with Nottingham Trent University and Culture Syndicates** to achieve the following goals.

The aims of the Restoring Pugin project are as follows:

1. To restore the east end of the Cathedral to Pugin's original vision for it as a neo-Gothic masterpiece
2. To improve the skill base of the paint conservation sector by offering paid traineeships to two trainee paint conservators
3. To explain the science and art of historic paint research and conservation to a wider public via a series of events to different audiences
4. To put the Cathedral on the heritage map of Nottingham so that the story of Pugin and the beauty of his work can become better known
5. To promote heritage career options to young people from communities who would not normally consider them, with a focus on neural diversity and inclusion
6. To develop a VR experience to explain the changing paint schemes of the Cathedral to a wide audience, with a focus on neural diversity and inclusion
7. To develop a video game experience exploring the impact of different conservation interventions
8. To train volunteers in visitor engagement and event management skills
9. To attract a wide range of new visitors to the Cathedral
10. To be an active partner in Nottingham and county heritage events and initiatives.

The project was awarded a grant for the development phase of the work in September 2022.

Key audiences for this project are:

- Existing congregation, volunteers and users of the Cathedral including Friends of the Cathedral
- Current and new residents of Nottingham including recent migrants, families with children with SEND, young people with mental health conditions in particular those exacerbated by the pandemic, socially isolated people,
- Secondary schools in Nottingham with higher than average SEND pupils and those in areas with poor social mobility
- Young people studying or recently qualified in paint conservation
- Young people studying at NTU and the University of Nottingham
- People working in Nottingham
- Visitors to Nottingham, staying with friends and relatives and international tourists staying in the area

Job Description	
Position Title: Conservation Trainee	
Hours: 37.5 hours per week	
Salary: £ 10,519.50 (£10.42 p/h - increase to £11.46 p/h from 6 <sup>th</sup> April)	
Responsible to: Lead Conservator, Cliveden Conservation, Restoring Pugin	
Contract length: 26 weeks	
Deadline to apply: 9 am 8 <sup>th</sup> January 2024	Interview dates: tbc
Employer: Culture Syndicates CIC	
Start date: asap	Location: Nottingham Cathedral
Funding: National Lottery Heritage Fund	

### *Overall purpose of the post*

We are seeking to offer opportunities for two suitably qualified people to undertake paid work experience on this unique paint research and restoration project. Your primary role will be as a Conservation Trainee on the delivery of the Restoring Pugin project in partnership with Nottingham Cathedral, Culture Syndicates CIC and Nottingham Trent University, who are responsible for developing the digital elements of the project including environmental monitoring.

The purpose of the role is to support the professional paint conservation team to uncover and document up to seven historic paint layers within the east end of Nottingham Cathedral. The original decoration (1844) is of AWN Pugin but was covered shortly after its completion because it was unworkably dark in an era before artificial light. We now want to restore the original scheme. Integral to the role is engagement with the public.

The trainees will be employed by Culture Syndicates but will be managed on a day to day basis by the Lead Conservator (yet to be appointed). A Workforce Development Coach will be responsible for pastoral care and performance management and will offer non-conservation-related training e.g. in health and safety, communications and mental health awareness.

This role will be based at Nottingham Cathedral and may require some travel within Nottingham. Some financial help is available by negotiation for travel.

### *Your core activities for this project will include:*

- Supporting the Conservator in undertaking a detailed investigation of all historic paint schemes in the three eastern chapels and ambulatory to inform and allow a conscientious painted recreation of the 1844 AWN Pugin decorative schemes.
- Supporting the Conservator in undertaking a less rigorous investigation of decoration in the retrochoir, nave, crossing, transepts and aisles to allow the creation of a reasonably accurate digital model by NTU to create an immersive VR recreation of Pugin's Cathedral internally.
- Supporting the Conservator to progressively remove paint layers in test areas totaling approx. 1-2 sq meters in each area from walls ceiling and roof timbers.

- Supporting the Conservator to make tracings/records of all patterns and colours/pigments found sufficient to create an archival record of each scheme in turn.
- Supporting the Conservator to produce full-sized coloured drawings of designs/pattern repeats of all key parts of the original AWN Pugin Scheme. Key design elements onto internal elevation drawings in conjunction with the Conservation Architect.
- Supporting the Conservator to produce full-size stencils to allow recreation of repeating design elements and other design information to inform/facilitate the recreation of the original designs or identify gaps in found information.
- Supporting the Conservator to provide an interpretation of the likely Pugin design for the other parts of Cathedral interiors based on more limited investigation work to inform the creation of a digital model of all interiors by Nottingham Trent University.
- Contributing to the preparation of final reports and records of all found schemes for depositing in the Diocesan Archives and in the Nottinghamshire County Archives.
- Contributing to a range of public engagement and consultation activities – to include up to 4 events at which you will be required to speak (with others) about the paint analysis process, the story of AWN Pugin, and your own career path and ambitions. These might be “conservator in action” sessions, guided tours or talks on-site or off-site to specific groups including children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), and students including those from paint conservation and heritage crafts courses.
- Working with volunteers, including those with SEND, and offering them informal training about your role and career path.
- Writing at least one article/blog or video about the paint research project for the Cathedral website.
- Posting regularly on the Cathedral's social media about the project.
- Assisting the Conservator in making a photographic record of the work in progress.
- Collaborating to produce video content and/or be interviewed by others seeking to promote the project.
- Undertaking training for mental health awareness, safeguarding and site safety.
- Attending mentoring and professional development sessions
- Supporting data collection for the project evaluation process.

Person specification		
Qualities	Essential	Desirable
Qualifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Higher degree in a relevant paint conservation discipline</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bachelor's degree in a relevant subject</li> </ul>
Skills & abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good verbal and written communication for a range of audiences</li> <li>Good team-working and interpersonal skills</li> <li>Works well independently whilst following guidance: able to prioritise and achieve deadlines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Video editing, digital media and/or the ability to use photoshop and other editing platforms.</li> <li>Proficient in social media and enthusiastic to develop the project's online presence</li> </ul>
Characteristics & Attributes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adopts a positive attitude and willing to assist others even when busy</li> <li>Flexibility: available for range of tasks</li> <li>Understanding of and commitment to principles of equality, diversity and inclusion</li> <li>You will understand and empathise with Christian values</li> </ul>	
Other Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ability to be based for 6 months in Nottingham/ travelling daily to Nottingham Cathedral.</li> </ul>	

## To apply

Please submit your CV and a 500 word supporting statement about why you would be suitable for this opportunity to

[office@culturesyndicates.co.uk](mailto:office@culturesyndicates.co.uk)

by

9am Monday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024