



# The Educational Foundation of Abigail Bailey and Ann Levett



## Grant Application – School House gable end chimney restoration

### Summary

The Trustees of the Educational Foundation of Abigail Bailey and Ann Levett are seeking a grant of **£12,300** as a 63% contribution towards the costs of restoring the gable end chimney of School House to its original 1864 design.

In 2017, the exterior and grounds of School House were extensively refurbished with the support of the Foulger Trust. That refurbishment achieved a 54% increase in rental yield for the Village (even allowing for inflation) and improved the street scene at this important Village gateway. The Trustees believe that the newly restored chimney is also a significant improvement to the street scene, worthy of the same support. Many residents have commented on how much smarter the new chimney looks and are asking when the other will be restored too!

### Background

In May 2022 a storm dislodged a large slab of concrete render from the left-hand chimney of School House. Fortunately, it fell to the front of the house and embedded in the lawn away from the front door. Had it fallen to the rear it would have destroyed the tenant's car and injured or killed anyone nearby. The damage was easily visible through a drone inspection, which also showed possible cracks on the gable end chimney.



Drone footage of two chimneys showing loose render on chimney adjacent to Village Hall and cracks to render and flaunching of the gable end chimney. Notice the missing chimney pots and missing corbelling on the damaged chimney, still partially present on the gable chimney.

Ecclesiastical Insurance agreed to the emergency erection of scaffolding to prevent any further masonry falls and to allow the damage to be inspected. It was immediately clear that the render above the plinth had become completely detached and that there was a danger of further falls. It was also clear from this

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vantage point that the gable end chimney render was in a very poor condition below the plinth and that the flaunching around the chimney base was failing.

Michael Farrow (local stonemason) inspected the damaged chimney and explained that the wrong render had been applied during roof repairs in 1984. Minutes show that at the time, this was all the Trustees could afford. Concrete render does not allow stone or brickwork to breathe. Water then accumulates behind the render, eventually cracking it and blowing it off as it freezes. He recommended that all render be removed (above and below the plinth) to check the state of the underlying brickwork.

However, Ecclesiastical Insurance were only prepared to pay for the re-rendering of the chimney above the plinth in a “like for like” re-instatement (albeit using the correct lime-based render.) Rendering is not Michael’s trade and so we engaged A.J. Thurlow, who works on the rendering restoration of Woburn Abbey. Ecclesiastical Insurance agreed to his quote, and he repaired the render. The total cost of the repairs with scaffolding was **£3,950**. The insurance claim was **£3,697**, deducting our excess and the cost of the new chimney pots which were added to enhance the repair.



The result is functional and safe but clearly not aesthetically ideal. The Trustees therefore planned a two-phase refurbishment in 2023 and 2024:

1. Re-rendering the gable end chimney, above and below the plinth, replacing the failing flaunching.
2. Re-rendering the base of the previously repaired chimney below the plinth to match the rest.

An overall maintenance budget of **£5,000** was agreed for phase 1 to be undertaken in 2023, allowing a 25% contingency over the 2022 costs.

The project was initiated in May 2023 and quotes quickly exceeded the budget. Materials inflation since November 2022 had been 12% and it became clear that the cement flaunching down the roof parapets needed to be replaced by lead flashing. It made sense to do this whilst scaffolding was in place. The final

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quote for the repair and re-flashing works was **£6,493**, 30% above budget. In addition, our property agent then advised us that the scaffolding would prevent the tenants accessing their driveway for the duration of the repair. They would therefore be entitled to a 50% rebate on their rent for the 2 weeks duration of the work for the loss of amenity. The overall cost would therefore be **£7,134**. The Trustees agreed to draw down the balance from reserves on the grounds that they had a duty to keep the building in good order for the long term benefit of the Village.

### ***Phase 1 works – Re-rendering the gable end chimney***

Scaffolding went up in early September 2023 and work started the next week, with the removal of concrete render from above and below the plinth. Within 4 hours, an emergency situation had arisen. It was clear that the render was the only thing holding the chimney together. Water had split the bricks and dissolved the stonework, leaving the mass of the chimney perched on stonework less than 25mm thick. Movement could be detected.



Holes and cracks in eroded stonework and shattered brickwork

The immediate demolition of the chimney down to ridge level was ordered, to make the building safe.

Michael Farrow was able to survey the damage. He found that the stone was equally damaged below the ridge line, particularly on the gable end beneath what remained of the concrete render. Demolition of the chimney to slate level and the gable end to below the render line would be needed. The top coping stones on both sides of the chimney were also split where water had penetrated.

As the chimney is functionally redundant it could technically have been removed and the roof re-slatted. However, this would have been completely out of keeping with the Victorian design. Michael recommended rebuilding the gable in local stone, replacing the split copings and restoring the chimney to its original 1864 design. Chimneys in use often need repairs and their design can be compromised over time as cheaper materials are used and expensive features are removed. By the time of the last repair in

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1984, the chimney pots had already gone, and the 1984 repair removed the corbelling at the top replacing it with clay tiles.



1950s photograph showing poor chimney pot replacement



1983 photograph taken before corbels were removed and concrete render applied.

One concern was the stone plinth. Although structurally sound, it was badly eroded by water. However, it is integral to the design. Michael advised that the cost of cutting 8 new plinth stones would be prohibitive. This would be difficult to justify for a feature that would hardly be visible. Instead, he recommended re-using the existing plinth stones and covering them with lead to protect them against further erosion. This is a technique often used when restoring heritage buildings. This could not be done with the coping stones on the parapet because they were not structurally sound.

We agreed that Michael would undertake the work, charging us for labour and materials at cost with no profit element.

### **Result**

The result is a triumph of craftsmanship, clearly an enhancement to the property and street scene.



Completed restoration

## Phase 1 Costs

### Budgeted works (Incl. VAT)

Steadfast Roofing	Chimney pots	£216.00
A J Thurlow Plastering	Chimney re-rendering and roof re-flashing	£4,476.00
Prestige Scaffolding	Erection and removal of scaffolding	£1,800
	Rent rebate (2 weeks)	£642.50
	<b>Total</b>	<b>£7,134.50</b>

### Actual Works (Incl. VAT)

Steadfast Roofing	Chimney pots	£216.00
A J Thurlow Plastering	Partial chimney demolition and wasted lime materials	£1,920.00
Screwfix	Tarpaulin	£8.99
Wickes	Screws and washers to hold tarpaulin down	£11.30
Prestige Scaffolding	Initial scaffolding installation and rental (as planned)	£1,800.00
G & M Roofing	Supply and fit lead flashing to both parapets (was included in the original AJ Thurlow quote)	£1,015.20
Prestige Scaffolding	Lowering of original scaffold to allow complete demolition and Installation of hoist	£1,200.00
	Rent rebate for September	£514.00
Prestige Scaffolding	Lift scaffolding around chimney and raise the hoist	£900.00
	Rent rebate for October	£642.50
Prestige Scaffolding	Lower scaffolding to allow for pointing of the gable end and replacement of damaged slates	£840.00
Prestige Scaffolding	Hoist Hire – 2 months	£1,572.00
Michael Farrow Ltd	Stone, bricks, lead, lime, sand, slates etc	£2,300.40
Michael Farrow Ltd	184 hours labour (stone mason and labourer)	£6,177.60
	Rent rebate for November	£342.58
	<b>Total</b>	<b>£19,460.57</b>

Over 1/3 of the cost has been scaffolding and hoist charges. The changes to the scaffolding configuration added significantly to the cost but were unavoidable given the urgent change to the job. Similarly, had we planned rebuilding from the start, some of the abortive costs of the initial demolition could have been avoided. This being said, we have had excellent support from our contractors, who minimised costs wherever possible.

## Phase 2 – Dealing with the other chimney

Whilst the other chimney is structurally sound, the Trustees had planned to remove the concrete render from the base, replacing it with lime in 2024. However, it is now clear that the other chimney should be completely rebuilt to match. Sufficient heritage bricks have already been purchased and stored to ensure a match for the other chimney. This work will be planned for the next tenancy change to minimise rent rebate costs.

## Conclusion

The Trustees of the Educational Foundation are seeking a grant of **£12,300**, to cover the unbudgeted costs of the chimney and gable end restoration. They would ask that this application be considered at the next meeting of the Foulger Trust. In 1984 Michael was disappointed that the Trustees did not have the funds to rebuild the chimneys. Forty years later his legacy could achieve what he wanted.