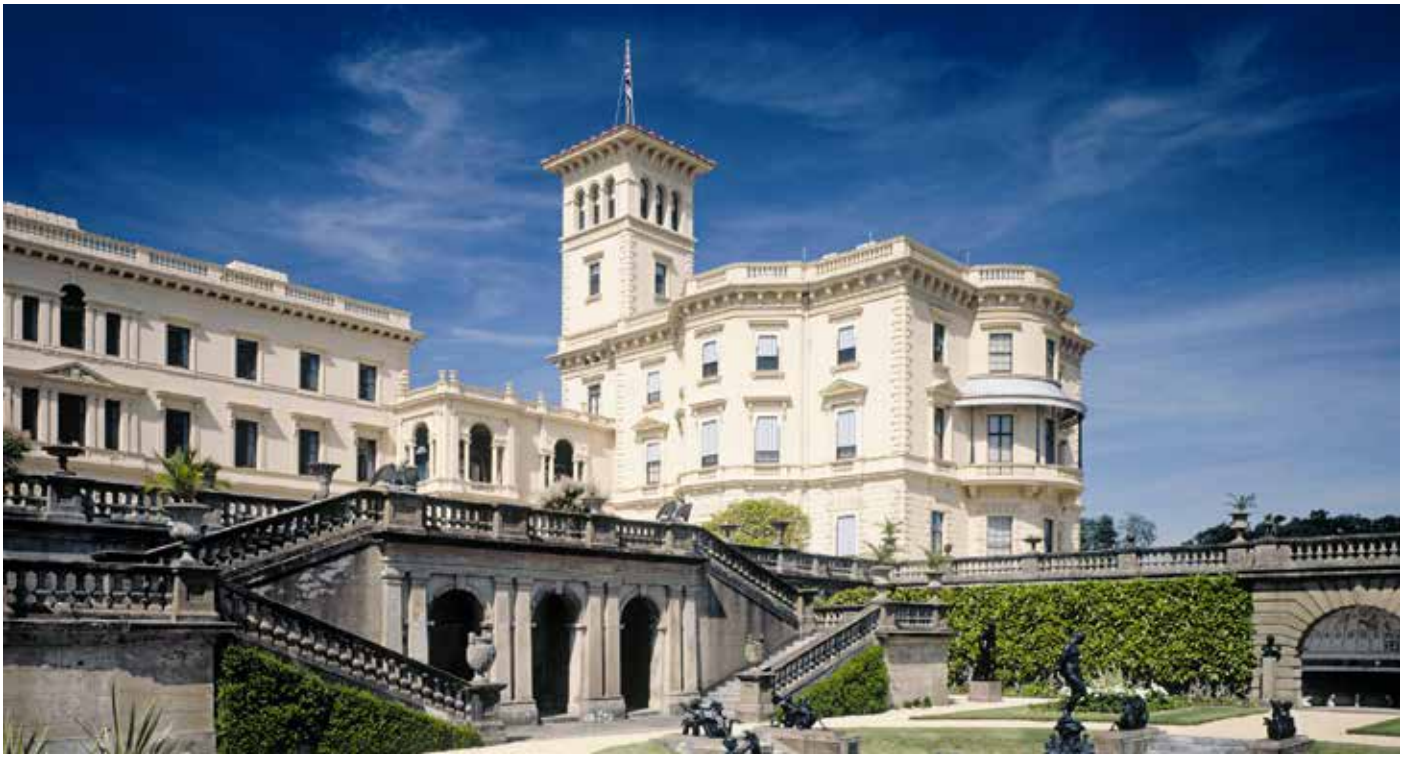
English Heritage continues to look after our roots

English Heritage exists to help people understand, value, care for and enjoy England's unique heritage.



They are probably best known for looking after the National Heritage Collection of historic sites and monuments and the guardianship of over 500,000 objects and 12 million photographs in public archives.

The collection ranges from prehistoric stone circles to a 1960s nuclear bunker and includes Stonehenge and Hadrian's Wall, Charles Darwin's diaries and the Duke of Wellington's boots. Taken together, over 400 properties in their care help to tell the story of England.

English Heritage is the government's statutory adviser on the historic environment. In the past it has received around three-quarters of its funding from the government in the form of Grant in Aid (GIA) but this was cut in the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review. Its funding agreement with Government provides the context and framework for its work and sets out its key activities for the money received.

Disappearing pubs will be the focus for an English Heritage-backed project beginning in Leeds. If the demise of the traditional pub is a much-lamented proposition, the precise age of the buildings in question is rarely seen as a key aspect of the downfall of the boozer.

Casting a gaze over 19th and 20th century pubs in Leeds, and backed by funding from English Heritage for sites the group defines as "severely threatened", a team from the University of Leicester is now looking to highlight important examples of endangered watering holes. Their aim is to assess the buildings, talk to owners and residents and enhance the appreciation of urban and suburban pubs.

"Across the country, the number of pubs has been falling steadily for over a century," explains Emily Cole, of English Heritage.

"Those dating from 1918-85 are, in particular, increasingly threatened with closure or demolition.

"They are therefore a high priority for English Heritage and this project in Leeds is one of a number we are carrying out to increase our knowledge of the architectural style and development of these pubs and their historical and social significance, and to gauge the level of protection that already exists or that it is felt that they deserve."

The results, which will be outlined at a public workshop in Leeds this autumn, will form part of a National Heritage Protection Plan for historic towns and suburbs. A second study is planned for Bristol.

Conservation body English Heritage has appointed Trevor Mitchell as its new Planning and Conservation Director for the North West of England.

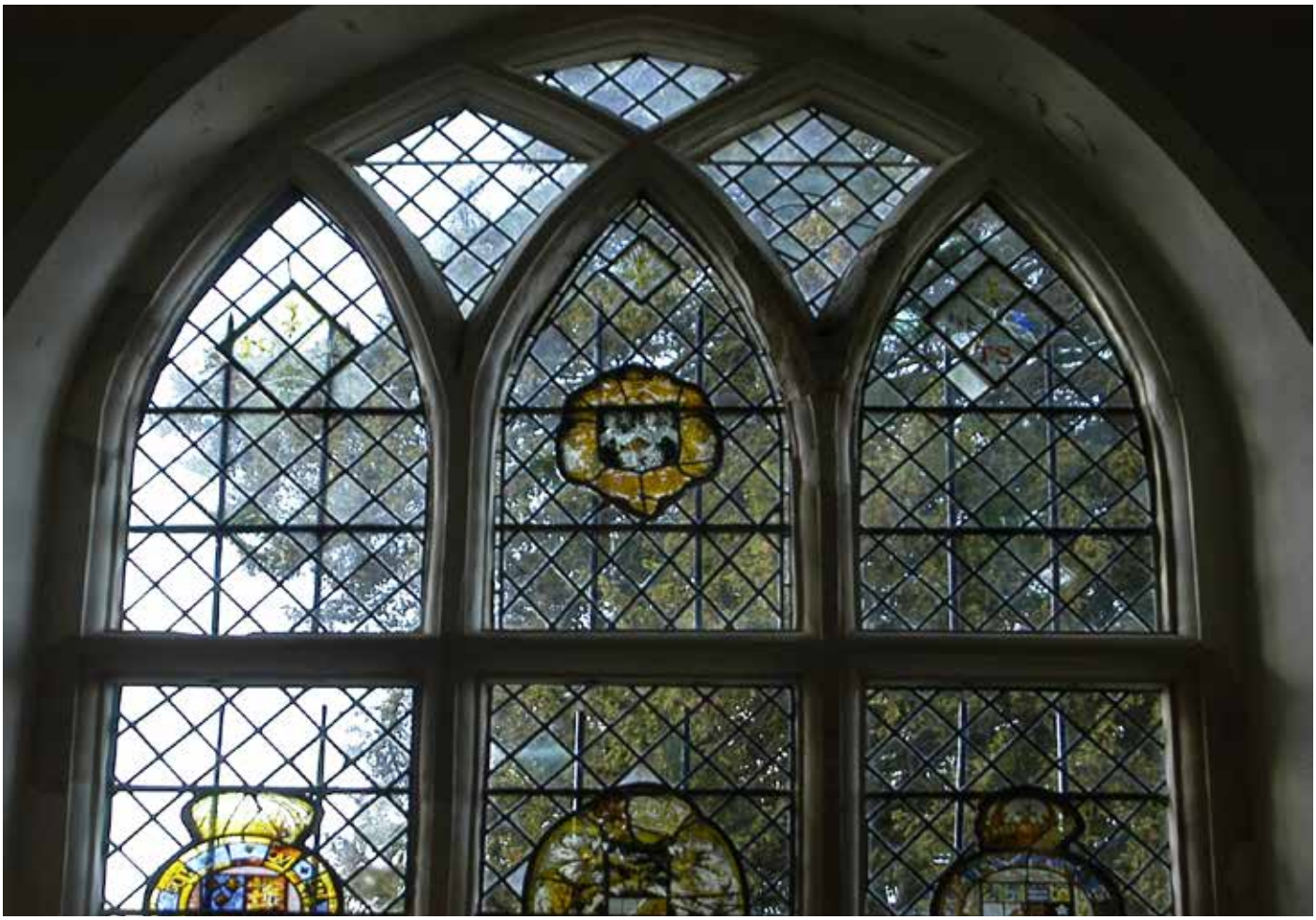
Mitchell has moved in to the new role from within the organisation, having served for five years as planning and conservation director in the Yorkshire and Humberside office.

In his new role, Mitchell will manage teams dealing with heritage at risk, development management and historic places, giving local authorities advice on issues including grant aid.

Trevor said, "This job was an offer I couldn't refuse. It is great to have a new challenge in an area of the country rich with historic built environment assets."

Mitchell has a Bachelors degree in the history of art and a Masters of philosophy in the history of architecture.

Prior to joining English Heritage, he worked giving development management advice



on behalf of bodies including the North West Civic Trust, the Victorian Society and the Georgian Group.

Mitchell said, "The particular thrust in the North West will be promoting constructive conservation – marrying 21st century development needs with the retention of the best of the past.
"Liverpool and Manchester are already embarked on regeneration and the whole region has plenty of unique heritage which finds itself in poor condition."

There has been a church in Theydon Mount in Essex since the Middle Ages, but in 1612 the parish records tell us that there were no services for two years. The new church, completed in 1614, was dedicated to St Michael, unlike its predecessor which was dedicated to St Michael and St Stephen. Most of the cost was borne by the Smyth family of nearby Hill Hall, and their initials can be seen incised in the brickwork over the entrance door. They used good quality bricks from their own brickfields just up the road, and incorporated some Renaissance decoration into the porch and tower. The chancel, however, was the responsibility of the Rector – not a wealthy man – who could only afford poor quality bricks.

The interior is a remarkably complete example of early 17th century work, retaining its original oak pews, panelling and black letter text on the south wall. The Creed and the Lord's Prayer are somewhat disguised by later memorials – to Sir Robert Hudson of Hill Hall, and to the Great War victims – which have been placed around them. The Ten Commandments over the chancel arch were regrettably painted out by an over-enthusiastic Rector in the 1960s. The roof timbers are original, but they were designed to have a barrel-vault plaster ceiling under them. This was removed in the 1920s, but it can be seen in an old photograph of 1903, as can a 19th century gallery at the west end which was taken down at the same time.

Stained glass windows that stayed intact through plague and a bomb blast have been painstakingly restored with funds raised by a church congregation.

The windows in St Michael's Church in Theydon Mount were made for Hill Hall house nearby, which was built in the 1560s by Sir Thomas Smith, a high-flying courtier of Queen Elizabeth I.

They were installed in preparation for a visit by the queen, but she cancelled her plans

when plague struck the area.

The heraldic panels stayed at the house until a parachute bomb landed nearby during the Second World War, when soldiers from the Royal Artillery were stationed there.

They were moved to the church for safekeeping and piecemeal maintenance has been done on them over the years.

Their latest restoration saw all the panels removed and taken to the workshop of stained glass expert Susan McCarthy at Auravisions in Saffron Walden.

There, she cleaned each piece with distilled water and restored some of the leading that holds the glass in place.

She said, "We do get mediaeval glass, but most pieces are fragments that have been cut out. It's very rare to find a whole window and you would never come across a mediaeval window with figures in it, because the Reformation took care of all those.

"The craftsmen at the time were very clever, considering they didn't have the same technology, at inserting little bits of glass inside larger bits of glass. If we find anything like that, we keep it. It is very rare to find mediaeval leading, so if we do, we put it in a protective steam while we're working on it."

She started the restoration in 2009 and was working on the stained glass in her studio with an apprentice until November.

As well as cleaning the glass, they replaced some of the leading that had been put in during the 20th century and placed a covering over parts of the glass to make sure it stays in good condition.
The glass was worked on while in a frame with a light behind it, to recreate the effect of the panel hanging in a window.

The congregation at St Michael's Church had to find about £10,000 for the glass restoration, which they did through fundraising events and by applying for grants.

The vicar at the church, the Rev Andrei Petrine, said, "Some members of the congregation were very passionate about the windows."

"They were very active and were there in the community raising funds and writing letters."

Ion Glass

Constructing a modern extension on a heritage building raises some interesting challenges, not just in relation to the design aesthetics but also to the physical interface between modern building technology and the centuries old techniques employed by the original builders.

A defined link between old and new can create not just a visual division but also a physical buffer between the harder more inflexible modern addition and the original heritage property. As a spokesman for English Heritage points out:

"Older buildings behave quite differently. They are likely to have more shallow foundations, be more flexible and breathable. If you build one directly against the other there will be a difference in movement."

The introduction of a glass link between the original building and the new extension overcomes the problem, allowing for a level of flexibility and movement between the buildings and, furthermore, without a requirement for deep foundations.

Glass specialists Ion Glass have worked closely with architects and builders on many heritage and ecclesiastical projects where the properties of glass as a structural material have played a key role in designs to modernise, improve and extend the building.

Typically the Church of St Thomas of Canterbury at Worting near Basingstoke had served the parish since 1848 but required a new community hall where parishioners could meet, hold church events and Sunday school workshops.

The Hall was designed as a separate building but nevertheless required access from the church. The project was complex, not least because the Hall was built over part of the graveyard and had to be constructed on concrete piles positioned by infrared survey to avoid disturbing the graves. It required approval from some five different organisations in order to obtain planning permission.

Ion Glass constructed a linkway joining the church to the new building entirely constructed in glass, including glass beams spanning into the old church wall to support the roof. This innovation use of structural glass creates a fully functional and modern link to the new building with minimal impact to the fabric of the church or disturbance to the graves below.

Ion Glass MD Peter Hazeldean says, "Incorporating structural glass into heritage buildings resolves so many difficult criteria. It meets current building requirements and modern functionality without either impeding the flow of light or obscuring the original architecture. We have developed minimal fixing techniques to make sure the fabric of ancient buildings is protected and detailed measurement techniques to ensure an accurate fit, even against uneven surfaces or around hand carved corbels.

"Each job is wholly bespoke and we provide site specific technical advice to ensure the best outcome. In some instances we recommend the use of structural glass beams such as the ones used at the Church of St Thomas or we can set the glass into bespoke stainless steel brackets or fixings – we enjoy the unique challenge of working in listed and heritage buildings to achieve exceptionally stunning and functional results!"