



Stonemason, Sarah Klopper

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Conservation a Priority for Routes to Roots' Historic New Home

Two skilled professionals enlisted to help preserve the heritage of the former Baptist church in Hill Street, destined to become a permanent hub for Poole's rough sleepers and vulnerably housed

Poole homeless charity, Routes to Roots, is delighted to confirm that restoration work at its future permanent base in Hill Street continues to make excellent progress. Preservation of the former 19th-century church remains at the forefront of the renovations and two specialists in their field, Stonemason

Sarah Klopper and church organ expert, Geoffrey Morgan have joined the restoration team on a pro bono basis.

As part of the Listed Building Consent, which was granted to the charity earlier this year, Routes to Roots is required to safeguard features of special architectural and historic interest, which included the ancient stonework.

Sarah Klopper, who works as a stonemason at Salisbury Cathedral, will repair and relocate the memorial stones and carved stone signage. Commenting on her involvement in the project she said: “I’m looking forward to working on this project. There are so many buildings like this in the UK that are just crying out to be lovingly restored and what better way to do that than to support the homeless community.”

Geoffrey Morgan, a local organist, and Organs Adviser to the United Reformed Church offered his services to salvage some pipework from the 19th-century organ. On learning of the purchase of the former church, Geoffrey contacted Routes to Roots to express his interest in preserving part of the instrument, which has been unusable for many years following a fire. It may be possible, however, to reuse some of the pipes in other organs.

The organ is of historic importance to the local area as it dates from 1839 and was previously installed in the former St. Paul’s Church in Poole, so it is definitely worth saving. With Geoffrey’s help, it has been carefully dismantled and the keys, stop-knobs and interesting large brass plaque have been cleaned. Much of the organ itself, including the pipework, had been damaged beyond repair, but the handsome, original organ case and console have now been preserved and mounted in the organ loft so that they can still be appreciated by all who visit the new centre.

Commenting on the importance of preserving the Hill Street building’s legacy, the project manager of the renovations, R2R Trustee Kate Mellor said: “The building was erected in 1815 as a Baptist Church and as such it is an important part of Poole’s history. Our architect, Ken Morgan, has worked closely with the BCP Council conservation officer, Margo Teasdale, to find ways to bring the building into 21st-century usefulness, whilst retaining as many of the historic elements as possible. We would like to say a very big thank you to Sarah and Geoffrey for their time and expertise and who, alongside our team of professionals, are helping us to preserve this wonderful building for future generations to enjoy.”

For further information, visit www.routestoroots.org

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Media information & interview requests

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Routes to Roots

Poole-based charity Routes to Roots was founded in 2002 to support local rough sleepers and the vulnerably housed and is dedicated not just to providing day-to-day support but also outreach services to help those in need make long-term change. Through its Amos House facility, it provides three short-term supported housing units, helping residents make the transition from life on the street to more permanent homes.

The Patron of Routes to Roots is The Right Reverend Karen Gorham, Bishop of Sherborne. The Trustees are the Reverend Pat Southgate, Chairman of Board of Trustees and Associate Priest at St Peter's, Parkstone, Founder

Trustee of R2R and Chaplain to the Homeless in Poole, Kate Mellor, Martin Finch, Andrew Teale and the Reverend Lucy Holt.

In February 2020, the charity bought the former Hill Street Baptist Church. Renovations at its future permanent base have begun this month. Once completed, the building will become the centre for all the help and support available to Poole's vulnerably housed to help them realise lasting positive change in their lives.

Saltwater Stone is working for Routes to Roots on a pro-bono basis. PR, marketing services and advice are being offered to the charity without charge.