

# Restoration to extend life of historic church

**JAMES LAW**

Restoration work on St Mary's Church in Maitland is likely to extend the building's life for 150 years.

Newcastle-based Australian Heritage Restorations and Wallsend architecture firm Carste Studio were called in to halt the deterioration of the stonework in the Church Street building, which was built about 1880.

Restorers have worked on the heritage-listed Anglican church piecemeal over the past three years as money became available.

The Federal Government's Jobs Fund has given \$200,000 for the latest work, which involved creating a chemical barrier at the base of the walls to stop rising damp.

The restorers inject an Australian-made product, Cocoon, which removes the moisture, salt and other minerals from the stonework to arrest

corrosion.

Australian Heritage Restorations managing director Chris Bart said this work would extend the life of the building dramatically.

"Realistically, with proper maintenance, it'll last another 150 years," Mr Bart said.

Mr Bart said analysing the stonework of these old buildings helped to tell the story of the building and the area.

He said high levels of nitrate were found in the church's stonework, which was soaked up from the ground over the past century.

This was indicative of the rich, highly fertilised farming soil on which Maitland was built.

St Mary's is the ninth church or cathedral the business has restored.

"Aesthetically, it's one of the nicest churches in the Hunter Valley because of its traditional English architecture," he said.

The restoration work is expected to be completed in May.



**RESTORATION:** Katrina Bart from Australian Heritage Restorations inspects the work at St Mary's Church.

240210K03 Picture by KRISTEN ORR