

## **ST MARY'S CHURCH, SAND HUTTON RESTORATION PROJECT 2016 - 2018**



St Mary's Church is on Historic England's Heritage At Risk Register. Following the Quinquennial in 2013 and a subsequent inspection from a mobile hoist carried out in February 2014 after a fall of masonry from the tower, it became apparent that St Mary's distinctive tower and broach spire required urgent repair. If we wanted to preserve our beautiful church and its heritage for current and future generations, action was necessary.

Funds had been raised over several years through the generosity, commitment, hard work and support of the local community and those from further afield who attended Strawberry Teas, Gifts for Christmas, quizzes, concerts etc. However, as a small, rural community the scale of this particular project put it beyond our reach without external funding.

In January 2015 the PCC submitted a Project Enquiry Form to the Heritage Lottery Fund which in turn helped to inform a first round grant application to them in May 2015. This was for a grant towards the development stage, to undertake specialist investigations and determine what action would be required. In September 2015 we were delighted to be informed that we had been awarded a first-round pass and a 79% grant of £19,700 towards the development stage works. This would enable us to

proceed with specialist investigations and reports which would inform future plans and work.



## Development Stage

St Mary's was a hive of activity on December 16<sup>th</sup> 2015 with investigations of the tower and spire via a platform hoist; rectified photography, stone sampling; internal investigations and drainage exploration.



The spire had been damaged by woodpeckers trying to dislodge insects from under the shingles and felt covering which had left numerous large holes in the felt, some down to the broaches and others through to the timbers. Felt had worn through or was ripped and had totally deteriorated in places. Shingles were missing and others ripped. Water was getting into the building. In addition there were holes in the gutter with water leaking onto the tower back gutter and the fall pipe was cracked.



Tower masonry was in a poor and fragile state. Stones had lost considerable section. Ashlars and quoins were considerably decayed. Reveals in the belfry louvres were so badly decayed that frame sides were gapped.

There was also extensive decay of stonework in the nave west gable and south elevation with cracking, shaling and cavitation decay. In the nave west elevation, of stonework beneath copings, approx 80% had lost face. In the nave south east pier and around windows approx 50% was affected.

External window ferramenta needed repairing or replacing where rusting and causing damage to adjacent stonework. Rainwater goods also required extensive overhaul and / or replacement.

At the beginning of January 2016 an asbestos survey and glazing survey were undertaken.



The aim of our project was to preserve the church and its heritage and to create new opportunities and facilities to attract more people to use and enjoy it. The intention was to carry out urgent fabric repairs to the tower, spire, lower walls stonework, roofs, rainwater goods and drainage. In addition, to provide new kitchen, toilet facilities and a heritage display area.

The project aimed to deliver essential conservation work but also to bring the church into wider community use and offer a greater range of information and activities to raise awareness of its heritage. This would include educational materials and resources for school children; information booklets incorporating the history of St Mary's, key heritage features and a record of the project. Also the creation of a church trail. In addition, heritage opportunities for people to come to view and share artefacts, information, features pertaining to, not only the church, but the rich history of the villages, local area and community.

The reports gathered from all the investigative surveys were used to inform our plans and drawings for the delivery stage. Designs were also drawn up for a kitchenette, heritage storage area and accessible toilet.

March to August 2016 were busy months. Consultations with the Heritage Lottery Fund, our architect, Historic England, Diocesan Advisory Committee, Archdeacon, Sand Hutton Primary School, Claxton and Sand Hutton Heritage Group. Progress reports had to be compiled and grant payment requests made; invoices to be paid and collated. Specification, drawings and tender documents were prepared and submitted to HLF. Once approved, expressions of interest were invited and tender documents sent out. A faculty application was prepared, submitted and granted by the Chancellor. Cost breakdowns, cash flow forecasts, timetables were drawn up. A Maintenance Plan, Activity Plan, Evaluation Report and Completion Report were written and submitted. Amidst this hive of activity we also had to prepare a detailed second round application to HLF seeking a grant towards the delivery stage.

In September 2016 the second-round application was dispatched to HLF, fundraising continued and some additional grant applications to other grant bodies were prepared.

## **Delivery Stage**

January 2017 brought excellent news from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Our application had been assessed and we were awarded a grant towards our project. This was a huge boost to fundraising and one which meant we could actively move forwards to make our plans a reality. Meetings and discussions took place and further documents were prepared and submitted in order to gain “Permission to Start”, secured in February 2017.

March 2017 saw our pre-start meeting and consultations with PCC, architect, contractor, ecology and health and safety personnel. The PCC completed the Building Contract Works Questionnaire in order to arrange appropriate insurances and in April contracts were signed and we were on our way.

Scaffolding, metal sheeting and heras fencing were erected around the west end, tower, east end, chancel and vestry in May and a second bat survey was undertaken. The site office and store appeared and the external appearance of St Mary's began to change significantly.



Masonry work started, removing damaged ashlar and quoins, working new ones and replacing them – this work was ongoing throughout the project.



The majority of stones were tooled off-site which limited any disruption.

May 2017 witnessed the spire being stripped of all its shingles and wrapped in a protective blue cover. This enabled work to be undertaken in June on the wooden structure of the spire.



July saw the continuation of masonry works and the start of some roofing works. The core of the masonry indicated the poor state of all elevations and it was deemed the core to all elevations required consolidation.

September witnessed all of the ashlar stones, voussoirs and jamb stones to the small windows worked and fixed to all elevations of the tower. Eroded stonework was replaced down to cill level on the east and west elevations.

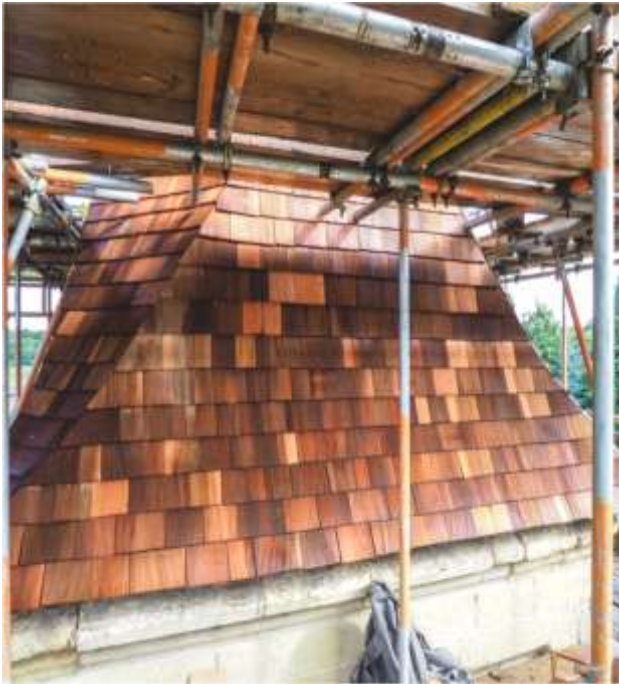


All ashlar replacements were completed to the nave west gable, vestry and chancel. 42 extra ashlars were replaced to complete the replacements to the edge of the window hoodmoulds.





The spire had repairs carried out to the hip areas and to the finial. 100% of the sarking boards were replaced and the majority of the re-shingling of the spire was completed.



Due to water ingress and damage to the sarking boards on the vestry north roof, a new lead vent was inserted and the whole roof re-slatted.

The ferrementa bars on the windows were either replaced or repaired.

In late October the shingle work was completed and a repaired and re-leaded button capping was created at the head of the spire.





The wrought iron cross at the top of the spire was painted and the newly re-gilded cockerel, returned to its 1885 specification, was re-instated surmounting the cross.



At the end of October a few intrepid people set out to scale the eight scaffolding lifts to view and photograph the work to date – many thanks to Bill Heath for his excellent photography. This involved climbing a ladder to each stage, the final one being absolutely vertical on the external corner of the scaffolding.



It was a long way down :



But the views were spectacular :



During November and December the work inside St Mary's began. Our new kitchen and heritage area units were built and placed in situ at the west end of the church – these were designed to complement the aesthetics of the church.

Preparations in the workshop:



Kitchen in place at the west end:



Heritage Display unit in place:



The old vestry was divided into two distinct areas: a toilet and store. Fittings were installed, new flooring laid and first fix electrics undertaken.



In January 2018 a new drainage system was installed and plumbing and second fix electrics largely completed.

Work on the stones (quoins, jambs, voussoirs) for the tower continued throughout January and February – tooling and fixing; also the remaining masonry work to other areas and lower walls.



February was a rather hectic month as the project began to draw to a close. The guttering was fitted around the base of the spire, the belfry louvres were re-instated with new mesh on the interior, glazing work was completed on the windows in the tower.



The new base and cross for the west end was carved, hoisted aloft and positioned.



In March when the whole country was beset with snow, ice and plummeting temperatures, the pressure was on. As the scaffolding began to be dismantled, work could progress with leadwork to the valley gutters and replacement of the rainwater goods. The lower walls were now accessible for masonry works and plumbing was able to be completed for the kitchen. Additional damaged stones were identified at low level which also had to be replaced.

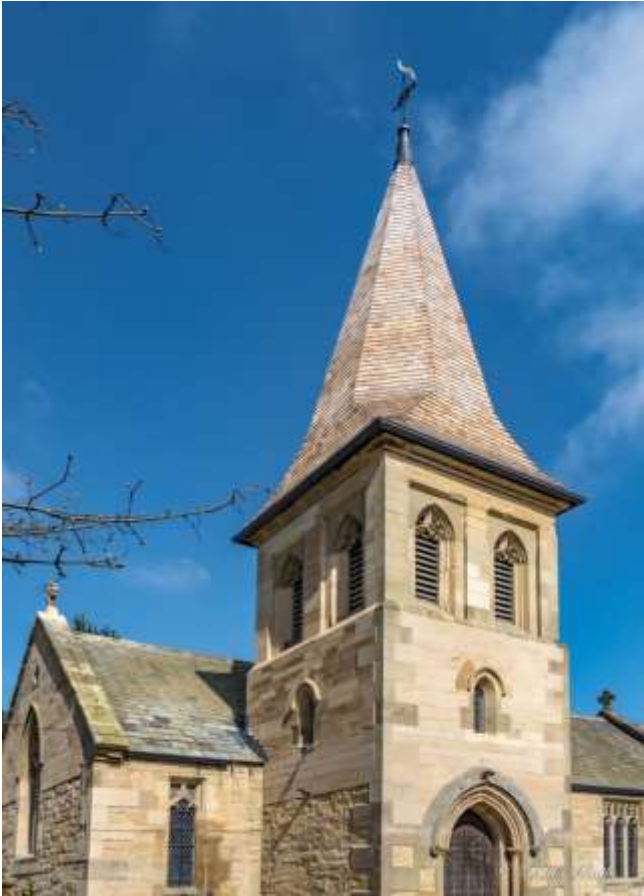
Andy, our stonemason, worked long hours carving the intricate apex stone and cross for the east end and they were placed in situ, completing the restoration of St Mary's three crosses.



As the scaffolding came down, the church began to re-appear:



It was a special day when all the scaffolding went to reveal the glorious results:





When we started to discuss the possibility of undertaking such a huge project it was a very daunting prospect for a small rural community. However we had tremendous support from many people which we appreciated more than words could express. We sincerely thank all those who worked tirelessly or helped in any way: those of you who kindly made generous individual donations to the project; those who organised, assisted or attended fundraising events over many years; St Mary's Gifts for Christmas team; Bill Heath and members of St Mary's PCC.

Our grateful thanks go to Andy of ARC Masonry Ltd and his team of willing workers who always retained good humour whatever the weather and difficulties. They were a pleasure to work with. Also to our architect Andrew Boyce of Ferrey and Mennim.

Finally, we simply could not have successfully delivered the project without generous grants from the following organisations – thank you so much :

- Heritage Lottery Fund
- National Churches Trust
- Allchurches Trust
- Yorkshire Historic Churches Trust
- Diocese of York



Together we have achieved our goal - to conserve and restore St Mary's Church and its heritage for future generations.

Researched and compiled by Ellen Stott, May 2018  
Booklet available

