

St James' Church, Wick

PROJECTS

2018 - 2021



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During 2017 St James' Church, with the help of a number of generous donors, replaced the church roof at a cost of £136,593. A separate report is available on this project.

Once that project was started, our attention turned to the other things that needed doing. In particular, there was a need for a refreshment point and a toilet. Installing new facilities in a listed building obviously presented challenges and we commissioned a study to consider options. Even so, we were advised by diocesan authorities that we should first tackle other issues, including repointing of walls to deal with the problem of damp and addressing a crack in the north face of the tower.

This report reviews what we have done since then.

Safety issues

We were conscious of two potential hazards – the steps beneath the chancel arch and the plinth beneath the font, which had caused people to trip up.

For the chancel steps, the decision was to install handrails, but these would need to take account of the position, minimising the impact on the 12th century arch. The task was entrusted to Paul Dennis, a specialist in architectural metalwork.



The hand-crafted brackets supporting the handrails have history. They originally formed part of the Albert Memorial in London, but were no longer required after a major restoration of the memorial in the 1990s. The Albert Memorial was completed in 1872, around the time of the Victorian restoration of St James' Church.



The font dates from Norman times, but the plinth was probably Victorian. Unfortunately, it was damaged when it was raised and has now been replaced with new stone, which is set flush with the surrounding floor.



Repointing

Damp was a problem in various parts of the church. Part of the reason for this was that the sand and cement pointing used in the last century was less porous than the limestone. Water getting into the stone and subsequently freezing caused some of the stone to disintegrate as well as causing dampness on the inside of the walls.

One of the main areas of damp was the east wall, behind the altar. Water was getting in at several points, but most noticeably below the stained glass window.

Work on the walls started on 1st September 2020 as scheduled but, after some delays, it became clear that it was unlikely that it could be completed before the onset of severe weather which could damage the fresh mortar. The work was halted, with the scaffolding remaining in place and protection for the walls being worked on. The contractors returned in April 2021 to complete the work.

The tower

Repairs to the tower took place at the same time as the repointing of the chancel walls. We had commissioned a report from a structural engineer, who advised that the problems identified in a 2006 report (such as cracks permitting water ingress into the walls, potentially causing subsequent damage, damp issues internally, etc) had not been resolved. In keeping with the engineer's recommendations, to avoid matters getting worse, the crack was repaired with stainless steel reinforcing bars, damaged facing stone made good by piecing in new stone and the north face of the tower repointed.



The lightning conductor

Following a prompt from our insurance company, we arranged for the lightning conductor to be tested in December 2020. It failed, so we arranged a repair.

--- and more

While repairing the lightning conductor, we found various other problems with the tower roof. The metalwork was corroded, the coping stones needed repointing and the bell supports inside were dangerously fragile. While we had run out of funds at this stage, these were things that really needed to be dealt with while the scaffolding was in place.



The cockerel

No one was very sure what sort of bird was sitting on top of the finial. It had become a perch for other birds. The shape was found to be consistent with a cockerel, but he had lost both head and tail over the past 150 years. The original hard wood form and copper coating was all kept and simply added to in order to restore the cockerel to his former self. And, as a weathercock, he now turns in the wind.



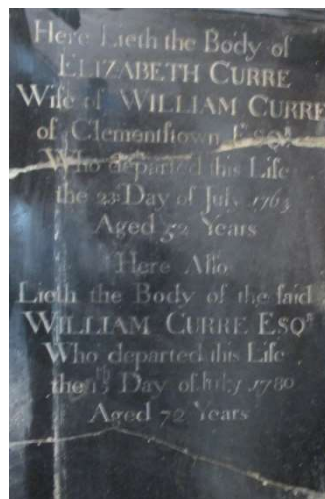
The altar

As part of tacking the damp, it was agreed to move the mediaeval stone mensa away from the east wall and mount it on new stone supports. This had the added advantages of allowing west-facing celebration of the Eucharist and uncovering a memorial.

The memorial

The base of the altar had obscured a memorial. We now know that this originally covered the grave of Elizabeth and William Curre, who died in 1763 and 1780 respectively and who had lived at Clemenston House. At the time of his death, William Curre also owned Itton Court, near Chepstow.

We believe that they were buried in the chancel, which was tiled during the Victorian restoration of the building.



The memorial obscured by the altar base

There was a problem with damp where the altar was joined to the wall



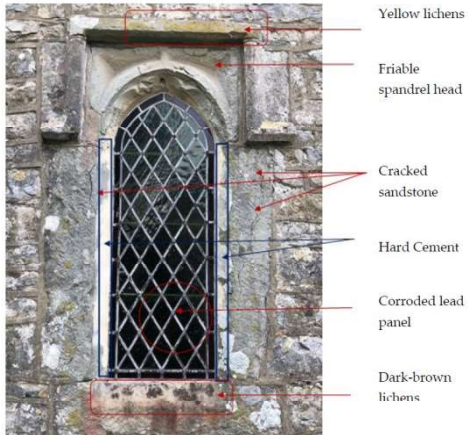
It took some heavy lifting gear for the delicate task of moving the altar.

The ancient altar slab is now set on new stone pillars



The chancel window

The stonework around the window, said to date from the 13th century, was in poor condition and previous efforts at repair had not helped. The conservators undertook repairs so as to limit further problems.



Next steps

There is more work to be done, but we have exhausted the funds currently available. We hope to be able to start fundraising again before too long.

There is a need for some internal decoration and repair and we would like to make more effective use of the space in the tower.

And, despite everything else that we have achieved, we still need a toilet and refreshment facilities.



Permissions

There are strict controls on what work can be undertaken on this Grade II* listed building. This normally takes the form of a Grant of Faculty issued by the Chancellor of the Diocese of Llandaff or, in some cases, a formal Determination by the Registrar of the Diocese. A list of the relevant permissions is given in the table.

Date of application	Date of Grant	Reference	Details
22.4.19	11.11.19	2019-001984	Repointing of chancel walls and installation of handrails at the chancel step
14.7.19	28.11.19	2019-002075	Removal of a trip hazard in the vicinity of the font
11.3.20	15.8.20	2020-005652	Repair of stonework around chancel window
11.3.20	15.8.20	2020-005653	Repairs to tower
11.3.20	3.1.21	2020-005651	Repositioning of altar
10.2.21	6.3.21	2021-006161	Repairs to tower roof, ironwork and bell supports (Registrar's Determination)

Who did what

Michael Davies Architect

18 Mountain Road
Caerphilly CF83 1HJ

Supervision of
project activity

Mann Williams

Consulting Civil & Structural Engineers
53 Mount Stuart Square
Cardiff CF10 5LR

Structural survey of
the tower

Peter Bricknell & Co

Building & Conservation Contractors
Llanfair Fach Farm
Heol St -Y-Nyll
Capel Llanilltern
Cardiff CF5 6HF

Repainting of chancel
walls and north face
of the tower

Dawsons Steeplejacks

The Stable
Wick Lane
Hewish
North Somerset BS24 6RR

Repairs to lightning
conductor; repairs to
ironwork and bell
supports; repainting
of tower ridge

Paul Dennis

Specialists in Design, Manufacture and
Restoration of Fine Ironwork
Penllwyn-yr-Hendy
Heol Senni
Nr. Brecon
Powys LD3 8SU

Provision of
handrails;
refurbishment of
cockerel

Cliveden Conservation

Conservation of Statuary, Masonry,
Plasterwork, Wall Paintings & Decorative Arts
Home Farm
Ammerdown Estate
Kilmersdon
Somerset BA3 5SN

Repositioning of
altar; repairs to
stonework around
chancel window

What it cost

	£
Options appraisal	2,160
Handrails	1,250
Structural survey of tower	900
Altar survey	650
Repointing of walls and tower	29,361
Removal of plinth beneath the font	1,330
Lightning conductor test and repair	2,705
Repair of ironwork on tower roof	4,484
Refurbishment of cockerel	850
Repair & repointing of tower ridge	2,080
Renewal of bell supports	912
Repositioning of altar	6,530
Repair of stonework around chancel window	1,285
Architect's fees	5,134
VAT	10,379
Total	70,010

Where the money came from

The company developing the housing at St James' Gardens made £128,000 available to the council for community projects. Of this, £10,000 was allocated to the church as a contribution to the installation of a toilet and refreshment facilities. When delays arising from the pandemic meant that this could not be achieved in the timescale, it was agreed that the funds could be used towards the other work going on at St James'.

Where the money came from

	£
Vale of Glamorgan Council	10,000
Welsh Church Act Fund	5,000
James Pantyfedwen Foundation	1,500
Allchurches Trust	1,500
Representative Body of the Church in Wales	3,000
Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme	9,637
Friends of St James' Church	4,865
Fundraising	2,836
Donations (including Gift Aid where relevant)	9,940
Ministry Area Council	8,000
General funds	13,732
Total	70,010

We have been fortunate to also have received grants from the Welsh Church Act Fund, the James Pantyfedwen Foundation, Allchurches Trust and the Representative Body of the Church in Wales. A grant from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport under the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme compensated for much of what we had paid in VAT.

We are grateful to the Friends of St James' Church, who paid for the handrails and for the work on the font and chancel window as well as making a contribution to other project costs.

While fundraising was curtailed due to the pandemic, several individuals have made generous donations which have enabled us to proceed with the work.

By the time we became aware of the problems with the tower roof, other funds were exhausted but the Ministry Area Council – effectively, the other churches in the area – helped us deal with these issues. We much appreciate this and hope to be able to offer similar support to other churches in the future.



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