



The Church of Scotland
BISHOPTON PARISH CHURCH
Erskine Ferry Road, Bishopton, PA7 5PP

Masonry Conservation Project Phase 3 - Final

Planning

This project was the 3rd and final Phase of a 3-Phase project to rectify deficiencies found in the Church masonry during the Quinquennial Inspection of 2010, undertaken by Wylie Shanks Architects in September 2010. Phase 1 of the overall project was completed in 2018, and the second Phase in 2022 – see earlier reports on the Website.

This final Phase of the project has involved the conservation of the Northern (rear) elevation, and the north western section of the East Gable. It also finished up involving a complete overhaul and repair of the roof over the external Plant Room.

Budgeting and Fund-raising

Our experiences with the Phase 1 and Phase 2 projects indicated that we had to follow a similar process involving firstly an update of the Conservation Report and the development of a Specification (budget) for the proposed works, and then looking for funding for the project. The Specification was updated in 2022 and the Phase 3 Specification generated with an indicative Project cost of ca. £97,000.

We settled on approaching two specific funders. The first selected was Historic Environment Scotland, applying to their Historic Environment Scotland Grants Programme. It was clear from the guidance that this would be a protracted process, so it was decided to make early application to determine whether the project would qualify for a substantial grant (less than 50% of the total budget). An “Expression of Interest” form had been submitted during 2021 and had been accepted, and the formal Application process was commenced in May 2022, with a target funding sum of £40,125.

This application required rather more work than had been required before. In particular, we had to identify and include proposals for training / engagement with skills training as part of the application process. Our Conservation Consultant (Nic Boyes again) worked with our preferred contractor (Limerich again!) and came up with some possibilities. We approached local schools and colleges – with (sadly) little or no result, the exception being a possible placement of a UoWS student.

The second selected funder was FCC Communities Foundation; an SCLF Funder like Viridor Credits from Phase 2. Again, we had to find 3rd Party Contributor funding for this application, which we



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eventually found through both The Dalrymple Donaldson Trust and from The National Churches Trust.

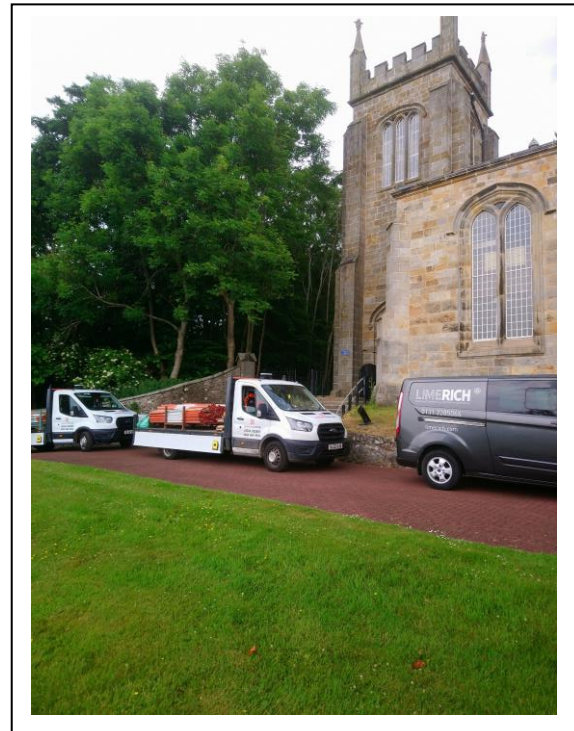
This was all eating up time. We couldn't start looking for a second funder until we had HES committed (October 2022), and we couldn't place a Contract until we had both funders fully committed – March 2023! This was not helped by our failure to notify the General Trustees of our application to HES, which caused some delay in getting the documentation signed off. This was certainly down to us not being aware of the requirement to notify both Presbytery and The General Trustees of any grant application to HES. HES requires confirmation from The General Trustees that the Church will remain viable for a certain number of years. Fortunately, thanks to cooperation with Presbytery, General Trustees and (particularly) Jamie McNamara, the situation was resolved satisfactorily.

We had asked for tenders from 3 contractors; only two replied and again the quote from Limerich was the lower of the two. In this case, we compiled and agreed a formal Contract (SBCC format), and a start date of June 12th for Scaffold erection was agreed.



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The scaffold going up – day 1.



Scaffold erected for the first two lifts. This gains access to the main elements of the wall



The scaffold at two lifts. Work has started on the masonry.





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There was a concern that an old flue in the NW corner of the Sanctuary may have degraded in the same way as the flue on the East Gable. There was some evidence of disruption at the NW cope, and this photo after excavation shows a degree of movement.



The source of the flue was known and was explored. It had old twigs in it and led to the top of the wall, but no distinct exit point could be found and all the masonry appeared to be in fair condition.

No further work was required other than some re-setting of the copes above where the flue appears to have been run.

It remains a bit of a mystery!



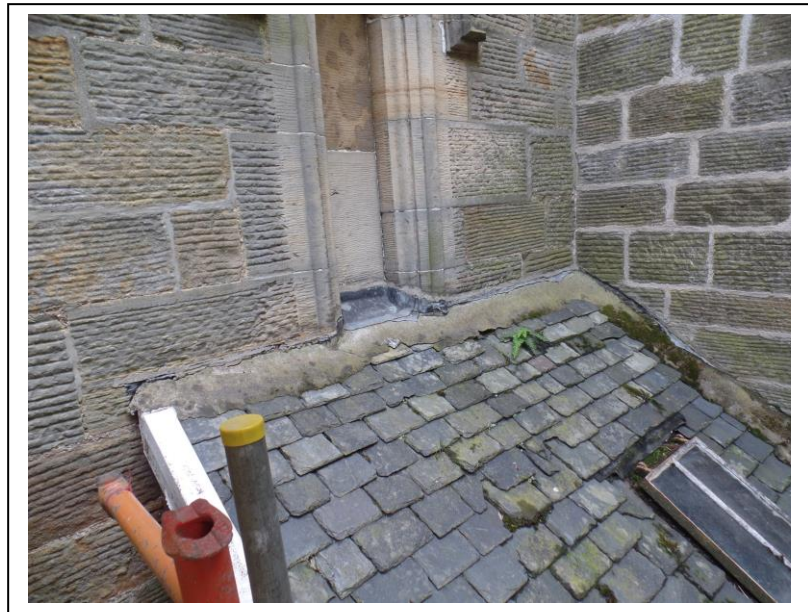


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The windows were found to be in a similar condition to the other aspects of the building, as were the ashlar mortar infills around the detailing.



Before the final lift of the scaffold could be erected, it was found that the roof of the Plant Room (not part of the project) was found to be “spongy”. This entailed a re-think about how the final lift should be installed, and also raised concerns about the condition of the roof. The “dodgy” pointing around the top of the roof raises alarm bells!





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The third lift of the scaffold installed, after much deliberation as to how it could be supported without putting any loading on the Plant Room roof.

A clever bit of scaffold design and construction!

The West Gable Some loose-ish stone and copes, but no evidence of a flue exit, and no real evidence of movement.



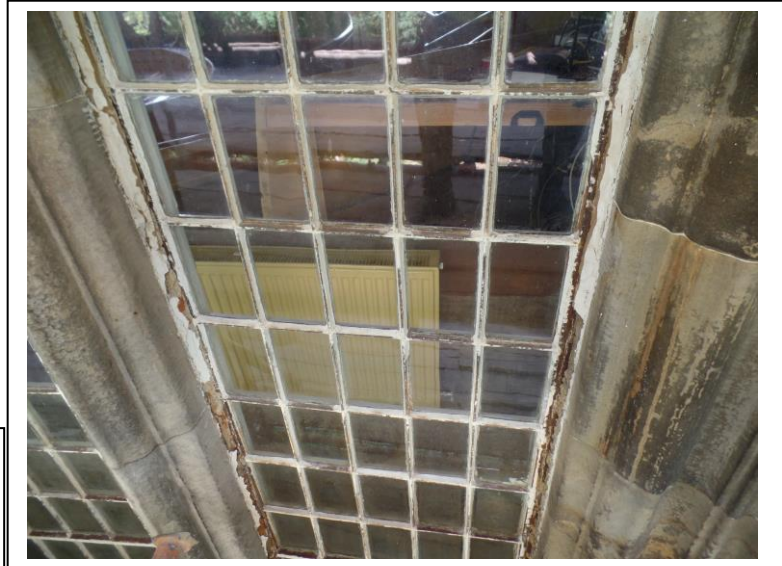
The top lift up on the scaffold.



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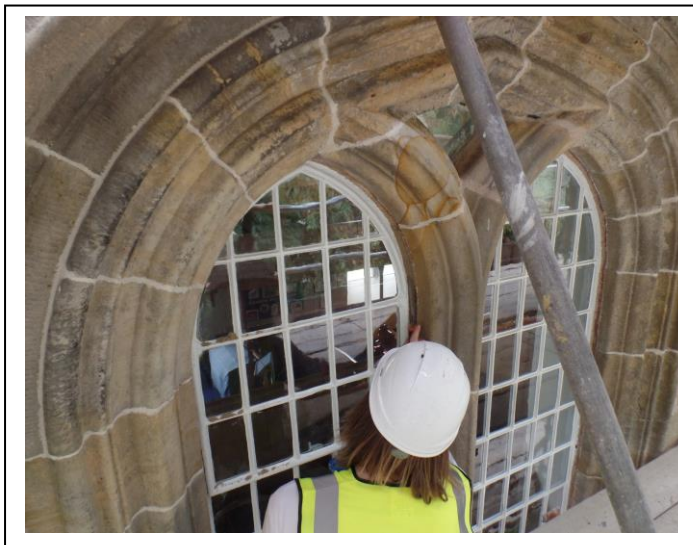
The windows:

-first scraping and wire brushing



- Red oxide primer

- first top coats

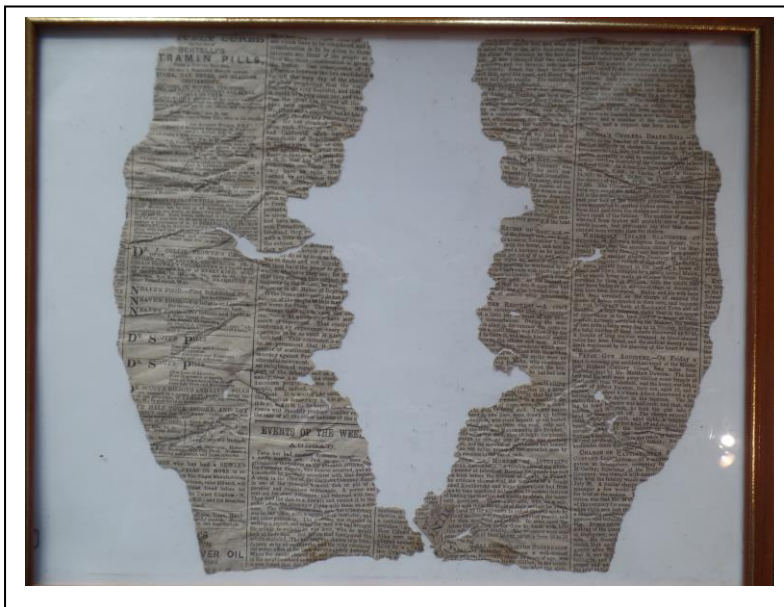


-finished!.



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Project hazards – a wasp nest found in the loft space, with a very active colony entering and leaving through the slates at the East Gable. Fortunately, easily accessible from inside and rapidly dealt with!



There was some evidence that some of the window frames had been reset in the late 1800s. These fragments of old newspapers were recovered from beneath the old burnt sand mastic and were in good condition despite being inside a wall to window joint for over 120 years! They have been framed and are now on display in the Extension Hall. Despite the age, the readers must have good eyesight judging by the font size!



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Project highlights!

The requirement from HES to undertake some skills training as part of the project caused a fair few sleepless nights and significant head scratching.

It was eventually solved very elegantly by Limerich, who managed to secure funding from HES and the placement of a trainee with the company for an extended period.

At the same time, an enquiry to the Prince's Foundation (now The King's Foundation) at Dumfries House got us in touch with Mr Michael Goodger, in charge of the Heritage Skills training activities at Dumfries House.

This resulted in the visit to the Church by Mr Goodger and the Summer School 2023 students – about 30 from around the world.



A crack team of Church volunteers arranged – at very short notice! – a buffet lunch for the visitors, and a programme of sessions was set up by Church and Presbytery volunteers and by both Limerich and Nic Boyes.

Feedback from the Summer School was very positive, and the whole session seems to have been enjoyed by all (including the volunteers!)





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New stones arriving!

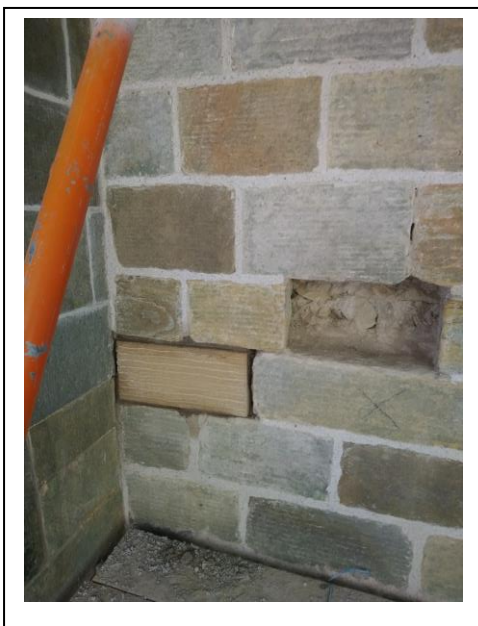
a greater number of stones on this elevation (compared to the two earlier phases) seemed to need replacement. Reasons for this may be

- a) Being on the North elevation means that they are subject to damper conditions over the years (as evidenced by the algal growth) leading to earlier deterioration, or
- b) Being on the less-seen

aspect of the Church may have meant that the original quality of stone may have been poorer than on the more visible aspects of the building. This is partly supported by some of the work done under the windows – although this in turn may have been from the possibility that additional work on the windows was required in the early 1900s.

Stone replacements going in:-

Adjacent to one of the buttresses-



And another



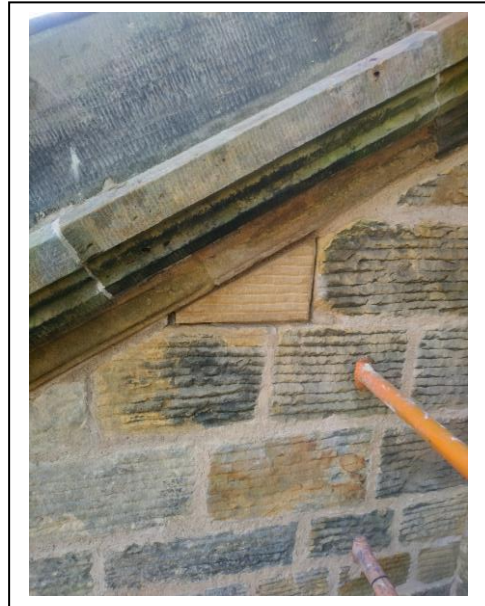


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At the roofline.

Note matching colouring in the new stone with the old stone. Although the new stone comes from a quarry near Edinburgh, it is thought that this is actually the same stone stratum as in the original quarry in Renfrewshire. This could possibly be confirmed by comparing the chemical and structural compositions from the two stones.

The replacement stones have also been “tooled” (the horizontal lines carved into the surface) to match the original stone finishing.



Roof works are about to commence. The main area of concern is at the west end of the roof where rainwater coming from the tower has been directed to run down the slates, increasing their exposure to prolonged dampness and Verdigris growth.

There is also concern about the capability of the lead margins to carry away rainwater – especially as climate change means that rainfall is heavier – with the result that rainwater may

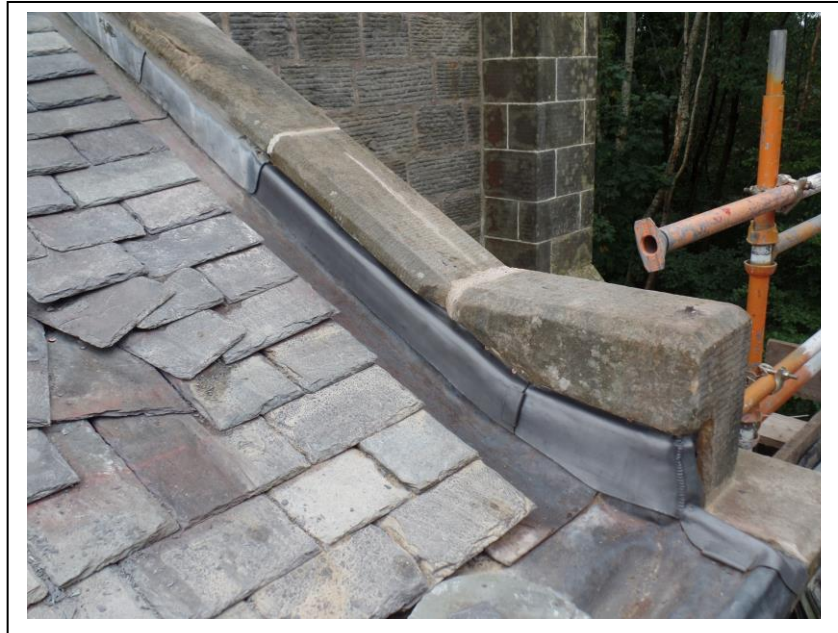
over-top the flashings and get underneath the slates. Almost all of the area shown required stripping, investigation and timber repairs before improving the lead flashings.



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The slates have all been reset and the lead flashings improved to give a better rainwater capacity.

In addition, the rainwater-goods arrangement from the tower has been modified so that the water is no longer directed onto the slates, but instead is directed onto the lead flashings, where the water flow will help to flush away leaf debris before it can settle.



The attraction of the pipe as a nesting site has also been removed!



The rest of the roof was checked for loose slates and other potential problems. Most were found to be in good condition but some were crumbling and had to be replaced



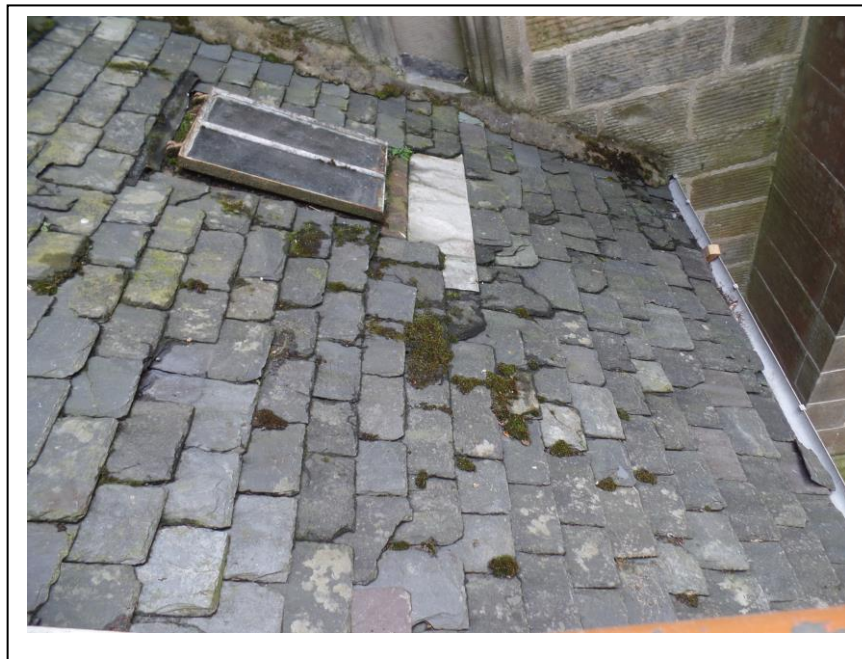
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Final inspection of the roof works, including the re-arranged tower drainage arrangements.

Once complete, the main scaffold can be removed.

The Plant Room roof. This was not part of the specification, but was found to be in very poor condition, so it was agreed to undertake necessary repairs – essentially, re-roofing involving removal of all the slates and the skylight, repair of timbers, then re-slatting and replacement of the cement flashings with properly crafted lead flashings.





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The salvaged skylight (cast iron) was found in good condition once cleaned up and was re-used.



Repairs well under way. The timber “wall head” at the brick wall has been replaced and about a third of the roof sarking boards renewed.

The skylight has been replaced and slating is mostly finished and awaits only the lead flashings going in.

Almost finished. The lead flashings are in and all slates in place. Only a couple of barge boards to go up at the LH roof edge.





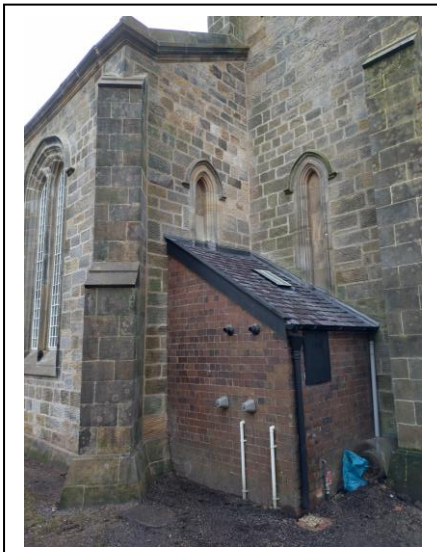
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All the scaffolds away and the grounds cleared.

Finished elevation looking from east to west.

And from west to east.



And the Plant Room detail.



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People

Along the way with these projects, we have come to know many people and organisations.

In addition to the obvious candidates (those who grant us funding!) there are the essential people who help it all to work. I've tried to list them below:-

The Congregation

Many thanks to you all for sticking with us on this journey! You have provided support and encouragement, and many – who started out contributing to the Cornerstone Fund – have continued regular giving into the Church Restoration Fund. Thank you all so much (and don't stop now!!)

The Funders

All our Funders in this last Phase have been consistently helpful and supportive. Our sincere thanks go to:-

- The Dalrymple Donaldson Trust, who supported our 3rd Party Contribution;
- The National Churches Trust, who also supported the 3rd Party Contribution;
- FCC Communities Foundation, who granted us £37,635; and
- Historic Environment Scotland, who granted us £40,125.

The supporters

We've had so much support from people outside (and inside) the Congregation. Special thanks to the Elected Representatives and others who have supported our Grant Applications! Thanks in particular to Jamie McNamara, the Presbytery Buildings Officer, who has been hugely supportive of our efforts, and (along with Nic Boyes and Michael Goodger) is part of the SPAB Band of Brothers and Sisters.

The Prince's Foundation (now The King's Foundation)

Also known as Mr Michael Goodger, who engaged fully and very effectively with us and our Contractors to stage a very successful Training Day at the Church for the Summer School students from Dumfries House.

The Property Team (including co-opted!)

You've all put up with the moaning by me, the endless "little" tasks including hosting lunches and teas/coffees, photography, and the trips up scaffolds. You know who you are – thanks!

The Contractors

Firstly LimeRich. This is Richard Fraser, who is passionate about lime mortar (it takes all sorts ...). As an employer, he's also passionate about skills and developing people, and has been in very many



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interesting places to apply these skills and learn new things. Along the way he picks up very interesting “subbies”, one of which we have now seen on both Phases. Chris Dodd is a self-employed painter, and is passionate about painting windows – which he does very well! He can also turn his hand to many other important tasks to which he devotes the same intensity and attention to detail.

Then there’s Nic Boyes, our Conservation Consultant. What to say? Other than many thanks for your guidance and unfailing common sense and pragmatism.

And finally, Nic’s chosen Roofing Contractor, Peter McCluskey, who brought along his colleagues and his sense of humour (much needed as the weather turned!).

Outcomes

Well, it’s all over now

Except, of course, it isn’t!

All the masonry on the 1815 Sanctuary has now been conserved and should not require any significant interventions for a good many years. It is believed that the 1890s “Choir” Room was repointed in or about 2000. The Extension Hall was re-roofed in 2014.

The Cornerstone was effectively rebuilt in 2007 – but that’s now nearly 17 years ago. The Manse was built in the 1980s – but many similar buildings in the village of a similar age are requiring a new roof .. you’ll get the picture.

All buildings require regular maintenance in the form of annual inspections and prompt attention to any defects found that could lead to more significant degradation. In particular, we have to remain aware of the “service life” of structures and their materials, and be prepared to budget for ongoing maintenance and repairs. “Stuff” happens, as we all know, and we have to be prepared to attend to issues as they arise.

We have developed and will maintain a fabric budget for all our properties, and will keep this up to date. This should allow us to anticipate any major works likely to be required and to commence funding them in good time.

Watch this space!



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Thanks to funders and supporters!