

Ayton Heritage
Annual General Meeting – 30th October 2023
Chairman's Report

The past year has seen significant progress on the removal of ivy from the St Dionysius ruin. This was greatly assisted by support from volunteers in clearing the cut ivy. More grant applications were made but the question of ownership continued to be an obstacle in some cases. Educational visits took place from local schools and an open day was held.

Ivy removal

Local contractor Alan Hogarth was employed to remove the ivy canopy on St Dionysius without any disturbance to stonework. This made a big difference to the appearance of the ruin, making it much more visible. It also removed the stress put on stonework from the ivy during high winds.

The cost of this work was greatly reduced by volunteers gathering up cut ivy and placing it in a skip provided free of charge by Scottish Borders Council. The hours contributed by volunteers amounted to 107, saving £3000.

Grant applications

Applications were made to various funders with £6,500 received from Dalrymple Donaldson. Other applications to the Radcliffe and Leche Trusts were not successful due to their having too many applications for available funds. The difficulty in being able to identify ownership of the ruin also prevented applications to Historic Environment Scotland and the Wolfson Foundation.

Local school visits

In March two groups of children from Ayton Primary School visited the ruin as part of their project on old buildings in Ayton. In October two groups of Eyemouth Primary School children took part in "Attainment through Archaeology" taster workshops run by Archaeology Scotland at St Dionysius.

Open Day

We held our second open day in June when there were a number of stalls, tours of St Dionysius, teas and a display of church silver. This raised additional funds as well as raising awareness of Ayton Heritage and our work. We also had a stall at a church fete in August.

Information Boards

We are currently working on design and getting the necessary permission to erect information boards explaining the history of St Dionysius. One would be at the entrance gates to the cemetery and one down at the ruin.

Updated Survey

We had a survey of the ruin done in 2021 by a conservation architect. This was limited due to the ivy coverage so we had it updated in September. The report stated that there were several areas high up on the walls where there was loose stonework. We reported this to Scottish Borders Council who have responsibility for public safety in the cemetery. At the time of writing, we await their response.

Going forward

We will complete the last of the ivy removal soon and hope to start stonework conservation in the spring but this will depend on funding and the response of Scottish Borders Council to the conservation architect's report.

Thanks

Thanks go to all the trustees for the many hours spent on the project and to the volunteers who helped with the ivy clearance. Thanks also to Scottish Borders Council for providing the skip and disposing of the ivy. Finally, thanks to all our funders for providing the grants we have received.