

Ayton Heritage Annual General Meeting – 24th October 2022 Chairman's Report

The year has been spent mainly on grant applications by the trustees. The ownership issue has been resolved to allow these applications to go forward and be accepted in some cases. Quotes for ivy removal were obtained from three sources and Alan Hogarth Garden Services was chosen. Work started in early October and has made a significant difference to the look of the auld kirk.

Grant applications

The following grant applications were successful during the year.

➤ Reston & Auchencrow Community Council	£1000
➤ Foundation Scotland (Drone Hill Windfarm)	£3,500
➤ Heritage Lottery Fund	£20,318
➤ Tweed Forum (Fallago Windfarm)	£20,000
➤ The Pilgrim Trust	<u>£10,000</u>
Total	£54,818

Ownership

The question of ownership had proved to be a stumbling block for many applications but after much consultation with Historic Environment Scotland and Scottish Borders Council (SBC) a letter was issued by SBC solicitor to Ayton Heritage stating that the council owned the land upon which the church was built but did not own the building. It also stated that SBC were supportive of Ayton Heritage doing any preservation work. This has proved satisfactory for the above grant applications to be successful.

Other Fundraising

Ayton Heritage held a fete and open day on 12th June which was very popular. Those attending enjoyed a tombola, wine/water draw, a children's quiz, a display of church plate and teas & cake were served. Guided tours of St Dionysius were also given and all this helped to raise the profile of Ayton Heritage.

Two American families who had ancestors buried in the kirkyard were shown around while visiting and both made generous donations.

Ivy Cutting

With volunteers having cut ivy to head height in the previous year there was no need for further work in the past year. In early October Alan Hogarth Gardening Services started cutting ivy from the higher parts of the building. This difficult work has revealed parts of the Fordyce Aisle unseen for many years. To reduce costs as much as possible, volunteers have cleared the cut ivy by placing it in a skip supplied by Scottish Borders Council who then dispose of it. This support from SBC has been much appreciated.

Going Forward

As funds allow, work will continue on the removal of ivy. The work which follows that will involve specialist stonemasons preserving the remaining stonework of the ruin. This will require approval of a written work specification which will be supplied by our supporting field officer from Archaeology Scotland, Phil Richardson. We are appreciative of the support which Phil has provided.

Volunteers will continue to load the SBC skip with ivy cuttings as the work proceeds. The trustees will monitor the spending of the grants we have been allocated so far, as well as applying for further funding.

Thanks

Thanks go to all members who have assisted during the year and to the trustees who have put in many hours on committee meetings and grant applications. Special thanks go to Mike Wilson who was responsible for securing the three largest grants from the Heritage Lottery, Fallago Wind Farm and the Pilgrim Trust.