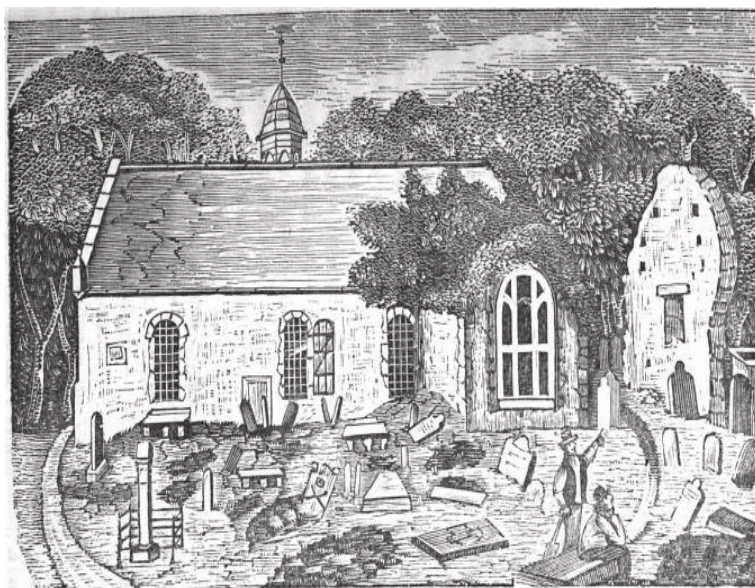


Welcome to our second newsletter and the first for the New Year 2020. There has been little opportunity for further community engagement at St Dionysius since our survey training day back in November - more of which below - but that doesn't mean that things have been standing still.

Newsfeed

- Current membership stands at 42; although most members having paid the annual subscription of £5.00 there are still some payments outstanding.
- Both of our two days of vegetation clearance at St Dionysius last year were blessed with excellent weather affording good photo opportunities and helped to maintain the levels of enthusiasm. An estimated 3 tons of ivy and other growth was removed to head height and above in some places.
- In conjunction with advice provided by Archaeology Scotland, Scottish Borders Council have been approached to tackle and - potentially at least - part-fund the chemical treatment of the remaining vegetation. This is currently still being negotiated due to issues of access to the higher parts of the surviving upstanding masonry.



above. Sketch of Ayton Auld Kirk (St Dionysius) from *A History of Coldingham Priory*. by Carr, A (1836) .

This historical view of the south wall of the nave and the window in the gable of the Fordyce burial aisle is probably quite a good likeness given our findings on site to date. More intriguing is the depiction of a free-standing east gable wall that is no longer there!

Other notable details that can be seen in the sketch include the ivy growth over the Fordyce aisle and the somewhat haphazard and unkempt arrangement of the burial markers - which typically look to be mainly of 17th-18th century form. Given the age of the original church building on the site it would suggest that there must be considerably older burials on the site which are now obscured.

left. A sombre 18th century burial marker *in situ* on the south side of the nave



What's happening now?

Although there is a bit of a hiatus in terms of practical work on the site for volunteers to be directly involved in there are several avenues that are being followed up. In order to proceed with our main objective - the conservation of the structure in order to guarantee its survival into the future - we will need to secure some significant funding!

We are looking at various options for initial funding to appoint a conservation architect to advise on future requirements which in itself is likely cost upward of £4000. A number of potential candidates have now been asked to tender for this contract. In order to meet these initial costs we are exploring what funding could become available to us from the Community Fund which is administered through Scottish Borders Council as well as other strands of potential funding. Members will be advised on the outcome of these enquiries in due course.

right. General view of the nave and part of the north transept of St. Dionysius Church looking west toward the original entrance photographed in 1961. The kirkyard and even the remains of the auld kirk would still seem to have been well maintained at that time!
© HES (Scottish National Buildings Record)



Survey Day November 6th 2019

In conjunction with Archaeology Scotland we ran a survey workshop at St Dionysius last year on Wednesday 6th November. Some eighteen members participated at intervals throughout the day which, although cold, was bright. Hands-on activities included the demonstration and use of a Leica Reflectorless Electronic Distance Measurer (REDM) Total Station which was used to record accurate digital measurements to capture the footprint of the upstanding remains.

The results of the survey await to be fully processed, but we will circulate them when they become available. They will be used primarily to assist the conservation architect to identify areas of interest.

The second activity was more practical and involved volunteers dividing into teams to measure and make sketches of the building elevations, recording their observations concerning building materials, building style, architectural features and phasing with guidance from heritage professionals. This seemed to be a popular activity and we will publish a selection of the results in the next newsletter.