

Ayton Heritage

Newsletter 005
March 2021

Welcome to our fifth newsletter. Things have moved more slowly than we would have liked due to coronavirus restrictions but there has been some progress.

AGM: The virtual AGM using email was completed successfully. Our financial year is September to August and we would like to have the AGM as soon as possible after the end of the financial year. Although that wasn't possible for 2020, hopefully we can get back on track this year and have the AGM in September. Chris Nitsche has taken over as treasurer. Thanks go to Aline Robertson who had the role since our formation.

Condition report: We got the grant from Scottish Borders Council to pay for the report which was written by Adams Napier Partnership after visiting the site. It's quite a detailed document but it's what we need to go forward with grant applications. The estimated preservation cost of around £300,000 is eye watering but that's what is required. It might be possible to make some savings once we get into the detail.

Grant Applications

We are in the process of applying for grants from Historic Environment Scotland, Fallago Environmental and the Pilgrim Trust. These all take time to submit and the approval process can be lengthy. It may be that we need a phased approach as funds become available. At the moment we have no indication of timescales from any of these organisations although HES have indicated that, if we were successful, it could be into 2022 before we have cash in our account from them.

Volunteer work: It has been impossible to do any practical work during the past year due to covid restrictions but hopefully we can get going again in the summer. Perhaps the heavily entwined railings could be cleared and we may be able to revisit some of the ivy which has grown back since the last cut.

In preparation for information boards which will be included in the finished project, volunteers are required to carry out historical research work on the church itself as well as the people who are commemorated on the memorials. Please let Bill Black know if you can help.

Ownership issue

We addressed the issue of who might own the St Dionysius ruin back in 2019 but it was not possible to get to a definitive answer. This is important as it is a question which is always asked when making grant applications. Scottish Borders Council is the landowner of the cemetery and discussions are ongoing to find a pragmatic way forward.

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Bill Black