



Welcome! to what we hope will be the first in a continuous series of newsletters that will keep members of Ayton Heritage and the wider community up to date with progress and events relating to our current project at St Dionysius Old Kirk along with any other activities arising that seek to promote our local history and heritage. Since our inaugural public meeting at the Ayton Community Hall in June things have moved on apace; the main events are listed below.

What's been happening?

- In June we were accepted into the Adopt-a-Monument Scheme run by Archaeology Scotland funded through Historic Environment Scotland.
- We now have a constitution and an elected committee comprising six members who are currently also serving as trustees.
- Since the meeting in June we have signed up 41 members to Ayton Heritage paying an agreed annual membership fee of £5.
- We have a pop-up promotional banner that was first shown at the Ayton Church Fete in August where we attracted several new members.
- Our application to become a SCIO (Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation) was accepted in September.
- We have had two articles published in the Berwickshire News
- We have held two hands-on sessions with members in mid-September and early October to tackle the vegetation growth that has obscured much of the upstanding remains of the Old Kirk in recent years, including the later burial aisles which have otherwise confused the overall understanding of the original church layout.

These events attracted a great turnout with a very respectable half of the membership giving of their time and effort.

Thanks so much to all who came along. If you haven't already seen the results you may be pleasantly surprised!



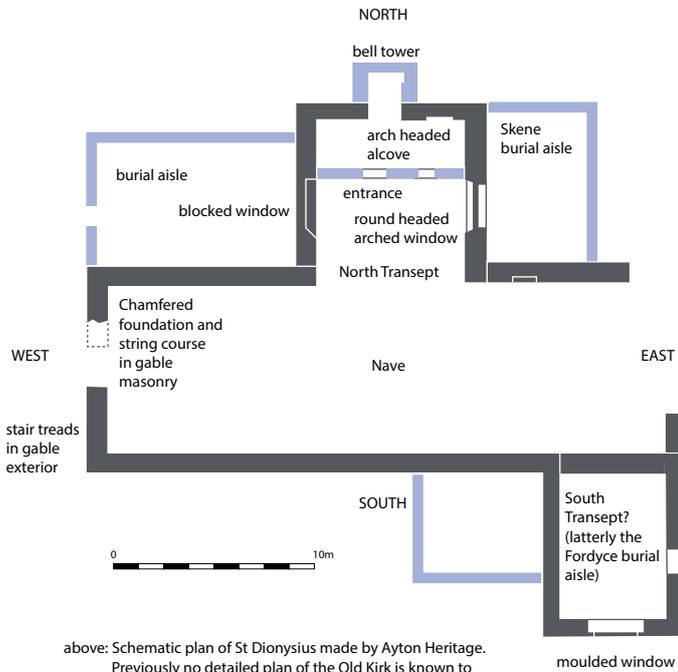
Ayton Heritage members taking a break from the cutting Sept 2019



South transept (Fordyce burial aisle) prior to the removal of the ivy.



South transept after the removal of the ivy October 2019



above: Schematic plan of St Dionysius made by Ayton Heritage. Previously no detailed plan of the Old Kirk is known to exist so we will be able to rectify this during the project.

What have we revealed so far?

- Due to the work members of Ayton Heritage have already undertaken it has become possible to make out different phases of construction and architectural detail in the fabric of the Old Kirk which suggests that a significant proportion of the original 12th century church still survives.
- The iconic eight-light moulded window in the gable of the south transept can now be seen again in its entirety for the first time in over a decade.
- A further surviving round headed window has been cleared in the east side of north transept.
- Through Mike Wilson's recent research we have been able to ascribe certain visible areas of repair to the then Berwick Council carried out in the early 1960s.

What's next?

As things stand we have probably reached the limit of what can be achieved on site within the liability insurance provided by Archaeology Scotland for the work undertaken to date. That said we are in the process of reaching an agreement with Scottish Borders Council (SBC) to apply a suitable chemical to kill off the remainder of the vegetation that is established in the wall heads and within the masonry to allow for a more detailed appraisal of the monuments overall condition.

We are now in a position where we will need to appoint contractors to carry out necessary remedial works to consolidate the upstanding masonry. This will require funding outwith the immediate financial resources of our organisation; to that end we are working closely with Archaeology Scotland (AS) to see what funding might become available.

Under the present guidelines we may be entitled to receive a small interim grant pending future match funding from Historic Environment Scotland (HES). We will need to be proactive in this respect if the criteria we have identified to carry the project forward are to be met. In terms of funding applications we have a small window to make progress in the current financial year.

If you have any queries about any aspect of the project or are interested in obtaining details of our constitution please contact:

Bill Black , Chairman , Ayton Heritage
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Calendar Events

6th November 2019 Community Event

Ayton Heritage in conjunction with Archaeology Scotland will be running a skills workshop at St Dionysius on Wednesday 6th November.

The aim of the event will be to create a detailed measured survey of the Old Kirk and environs to inform potential contractors of the nature and extent of the surviving remains.

Activities will include learning how to carry out a measured survey using a plane table and how to read buildings in order to understand how the structure developed over time and see how the extant physical evidence can be matched with the historical record.

No pre-existing skills are required to participate just enthusiasm and an open mind!

Further details to be circulated shortly.