

Ellerton Church Restoration

Timeline

- 1978 – Ellerton church is declared redundant, and closed by York Diocese and the Church Commissioners. Legally, they have three years either to dispose of the building or to find an appropriate new use for it.
- 1980 – Final inventory of furnishings in the church
- 1984 – The church is designated as a furniture store and most of the contents are disposed of; the altar, altar rails and bier to the Murton farming museum, the font to Beverley diocesan store and other items are sold. The important 14th century glass is removed from the windows, and most is re-set in the north aisle of Selby Abbey.
- 1985 – Document detailing the logistics and costs of demolition. This proposal founders on the problems of access across the graveyard, which still belongs to the Parochial Church Council rather than the diocese
- 1986 – Sale particulars are published with provisional planning permission, together with caveats regarding the placing of a septic tank in the field immediately to the north of the church
- 1987 – Four schemes are drawn up for the proposed “ruination” of the church, to reduce it to a controlled, permanent ruin. Fortunately difficulties of access prevent this proposal.
- 1989 – Keith Barley commissions an architect’s survey and development plan for conversion into a stained glass workshop. Planning permission is granted but there are major obstacles surrounding the placement of a septic tank for the property.
- 1989 – The Carstairs Countryside Trust (CCT) is established.
- 1990 – The CCT buys the land surrounding Ellerton Church (the large field still called Abbey Garth, and the adjacent ings) in order to protect it from inappropriate uses, and to manage it for wildlife. The Lower Derwent Valley is widely recognised as being of international importance for its rare MG4 grassland and dependant animal, bird and wetland communities
- 1991 – The Diocesan Redundant Churches Uses Committee (now called the Closed Churches Group) resolves that Ellerton church should be demolished. The CCT becomes concerned at the potential loss of such an essential part of the cultural landscape, and suggests that a separate trust might be set up to restore and care for the church.
- 1992 – Supportive visit to the church by Rosemary Habgood, the wife of the Archbishop of York, who encourages her husband to help expedite matters.
- 1992 – A feasibility study by the ecclesiastical architect Peter Pace gives encouragement to the idea that the church could be saved. Estimated costs - £50,000. Keith Barley was still provisionally interested in using the building.
- 1993 – Yet more correspondence about the septic tank

- 1994 – Schedule of costs for restoration drawn up. Because of vandalism and water damage, these have now risen to £87,900
- 1995 – Ellerton Church Preservation Trust (ECPT) established.
- 1995 – Peter Pace formally appointed as the architect for the restoration project.
- 1996 – Specifications of work drawn up and sent out for tender. Work will not be able to begin until the barn owls nesting in the church have been accommodated.
- 1996 – Archaeological test pit dug in the SE corner of Abbey Garth, to the north of the church. It reveals a significant number of mediaeval building fragments.
- 1996 – The special barn owl entrance hole and box created in the eastern gable of the nave are declared to be a success. This paves the way for the reconstruction and repair work to begin on the roof and high-level stonework.
- 1997 – The church building is formally transferred to the ECPT together with a narrow strip of the churchyard between the church and the northern boundary.
- 1997 – There are still problems with septic tank.
- 1997 – First community working weekend clears the churchyard, lowering the ground next to the church walls back to 1848 level, and preparing the way for the first stage of the restoration. Broken cross from the porch roof is discovered on the ground with an elder tree growing through it.
- 1997 – Scaffolding goes up at the west end and round the bell-cote.
- 1998 – Restoration of the nave roof, bell-cote (which is completely dismantled and re-built) and high-level stonework completed, with newly carved cornices and stainless steel guttering. One of the gargoyles receives a new pair of ears from sympathetic stone masons!
- 1998 – November - work of stripping and reconstructing the porch roof starts.
- 1999 – Chancel and vestry roofs are repaired, the vestry chimney is dismantled and re-built, and the cross on the porch gable is carefully re-assembled and re-set.
- 1999 – Cost for electricity supply quoted at £8,000 + VAT. This is unaffordable.
- 1999 – Two plain glazed windows on the south side of the nave (re-using 1848 glass reclaimed from the debris inside the church) fitted and given new wire guards.
- 1999 – Service trench dug under archaeological supervision, ready for a future water pipe and electricity cable.
- 2000 – Third window on the south side, and the west windows fitted (incorporating reclaimed plain glazing, and the surviving mediaeval Ellerton glass not transferred to Selby Abbey), all with wire guards. Pace arms in stained glass installed.
- 2000 – Bricklayer Reg Thomas starts repairing the churchyard wall (still on-going), and re-builds the north side with a unique Gothic “sheep-creep”.

- 2002 – Minor low-level stonework and pointing repairs completed on the church.
- 2001 –Dunnington-Jefferson arms in stained glass and Clayton & Bell window on north side of the nave are installed. (King David & Christ).
- 2002 – Remaining windows installed in north wall of the nave (including reclaimed 1840s plain glazing and Percy Bacon window depicting the prophets Isaiah & Daniel), and surviving original glazing restored and protected on north and south sides of chancel.
- 2002 – Timber pew-platforms removed and new stone floor laid.
- 2002 – The original parish bier, altar rails, stone font and American Organ (harmonium) are all returned to Ellerton church.
- 2002 – The diocese gives the ECPT the rare seventeenth century carved font-cover.
- 2002 – The Worshipful Company of Glaziers makes the Ellerton east window the subject of the prestigious Stevens Competition.
- 2003 – New east window installed.
- 2003 – Eighteen upholstered pews (c.1890, from a Unitarian chapel in Hindhead, Surrey) are gifted by Stephen Warburton, and delivered to Ellerton.
- 2003 – New steel floor grilles are fitted, exact copies of the broken cast iron originals.
- 2003 – Volunteers start removing old plaster from the internal walls of the nave and small areas of the chancel. This will eventually be completed in 2009.
- 2004 – Last window fitted on the south side window. Gilbertine arms in stained glass installed.
- 2005 – Re-plastering in traditional lime plaster starts in the chancel. This will eventually be completed in 2010 with the south wall of the nave.
- 2005 – As the plastering is completed it is lime-washed by volunteers (still on-going).
- 2005 – Railing put up to guard the boiler house steps.
- 2006 – Wooden gate on north side and new noticeboard erected.
- 2007 – Snowden Sights memorial window installed.
- 2009 – New stone benches and other stonework in the porch. New pulpit and donations box acquired from closed church of St Hilary, Picton.
- 2010 – Four altar riddel posts donated from Howden.