THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

Sharing the rich heritage of St Mary's in godly celebration of people and places

St Mary the Virgin, Congerstone Restoration and New Building Work 2019-2020

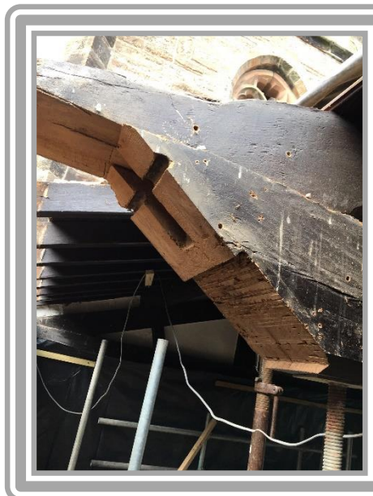
The Nave and North Aisle Roofs

Our saga began on 12 June 2015 when thieves stole the lead off the north nave and north aisle roofs……. Having secured grants of £19,000 from the Market Bosworth St Peter's Fund towards the cost of new terne-coated steel roofs and £187,000 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for restoration works, on 4 March 2019 Midland Stonemasonry Ltd started the building works at St Mary's church.

The following week, the layers of tarpaulin that had miraculously stayed intact for nearly four years were removed to reveal the rotten roof beam ends and wallplates discovered in September 2016 when the original roof works to replace the stolen lead with terne-coated stainless steel began.

This rot happened because, during restoration work in 1897, the void under the gutter boards was backfilled with sand/brick rubble and debris. This prevented air movement, and the backfill material soaked up moisture from leaks in the gutters (which had very shallow steps) and caused the beam ends and wallplates to rot.

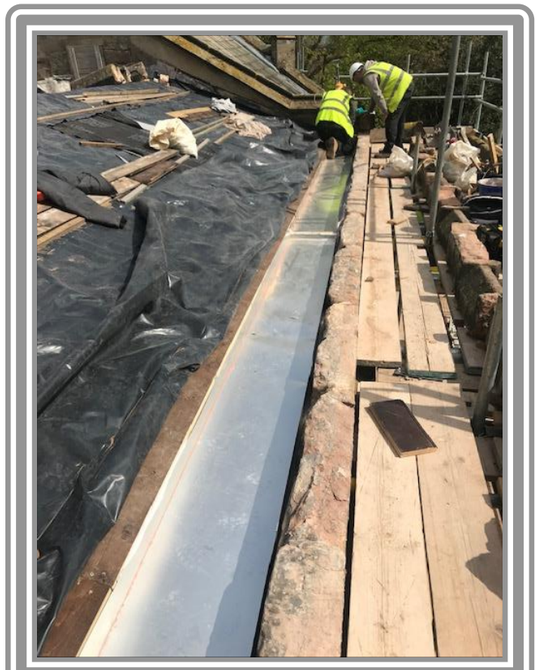
The Nave and North Aisle Roofs

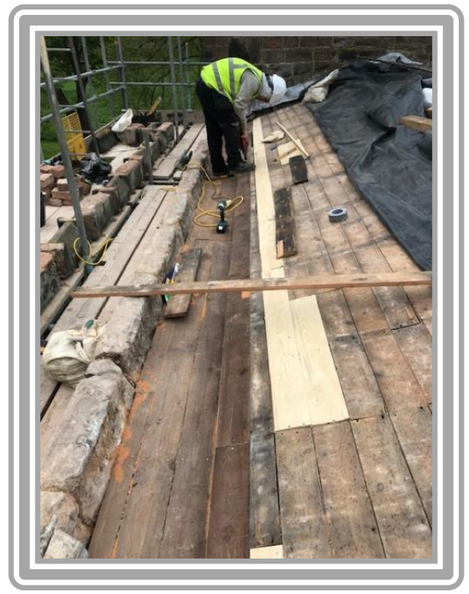


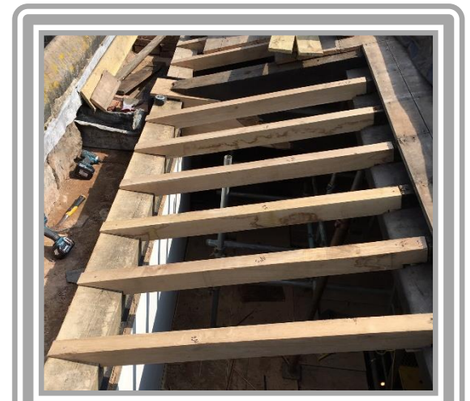
Before replacing the main beam ends in the nave and north aisle roofs, each beam was supported internally with an acrow prop. The rotten beam end was then cut out and a new oak end piece was inserted using a mortise and tenon joint before metal flitch plates were bolted each side over the joints for additional strengthening. Finally, the flitch plates were painted dark brown so that they are barely visible in the inside of the church.

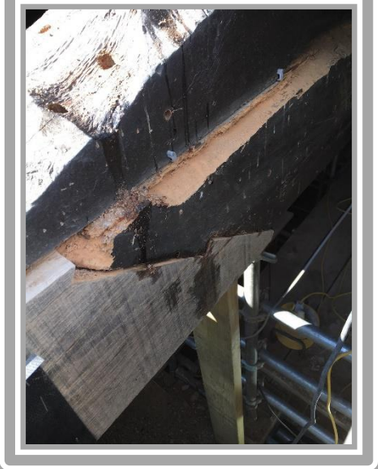
New wallplates were installed, the ends of the rotten rafters and the rotten roof boards were replaced, new gutter supports were crafted and terne-coated stainless steel gutters were inserted.

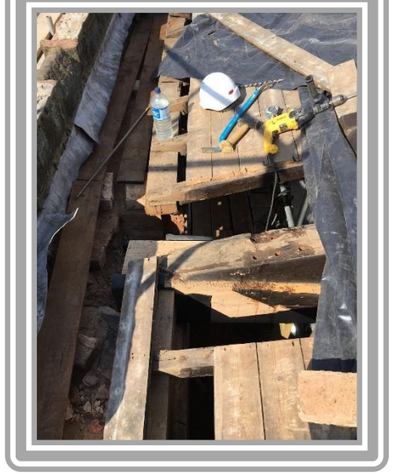
MSM BUILDING CONSERVATION RESTORATION







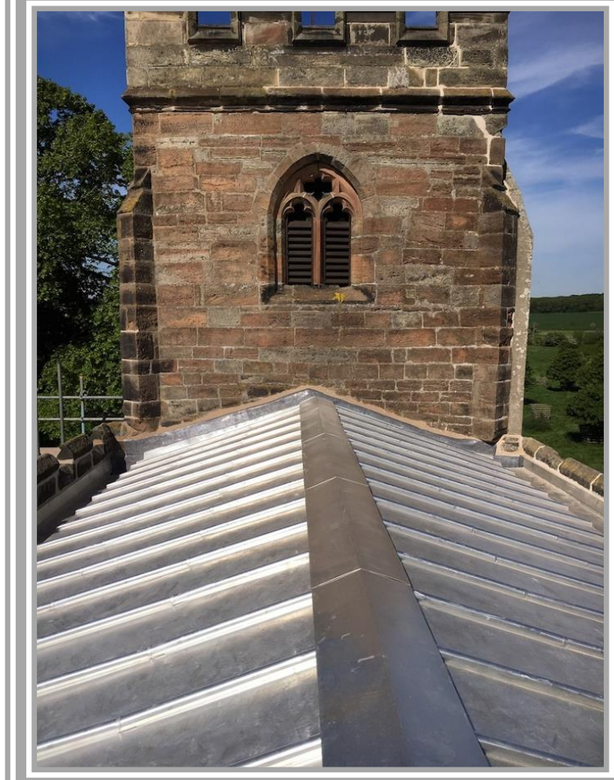


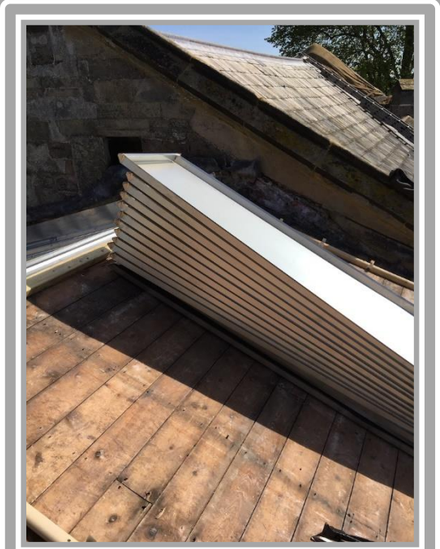


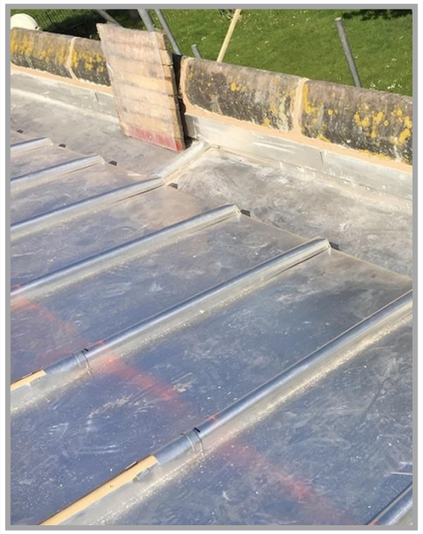
The Nave and North Aisle Roofs

With the roof timbers repaired, on 13 May 2019, it was time for the ‘steelmen’ from Warren & Neale to start on the new terne-coated stainless steel roof. The steel arrived on site in rolls which were transformed into flat sheets, ridges, and baton rolls using a steel former.

The flat stainless steel sheets were laid side by side on the roof boards, separated by wooden batons. Narrow stainless steel rolls were placed over the batons to join the sheets together to form a typical wood cored roll roof. At the edges of the roof, the roll ends were folded in to give a good seal. Finally, after adding the ridge plates, the new terne-coated stainless steel roofs on the nave and north aisle were complete, almost four years after the lead was stolen in June 2015!!

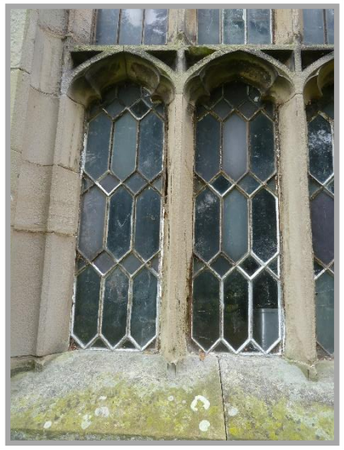






Warren & Neale
Roofing & Conservation Limited

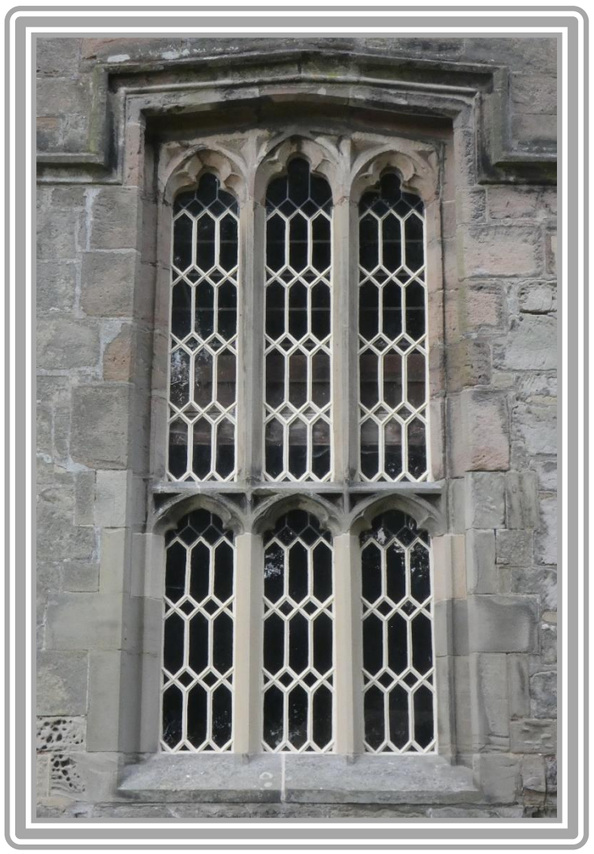
The Tower Windows

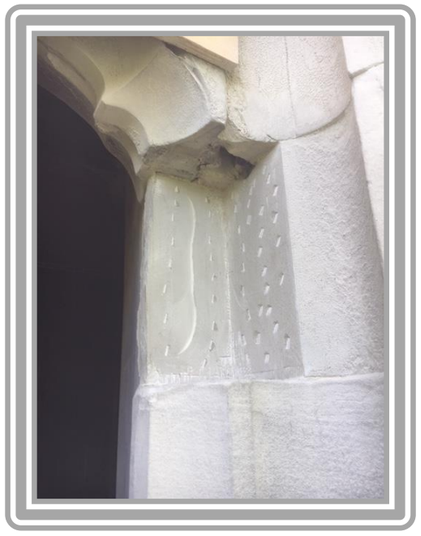


The large west window in the tower was in a very poor state of repair. The cast iron frames around each glass panel were rusty and corroded, and this had caused rust jacking to the surrounding stonework.

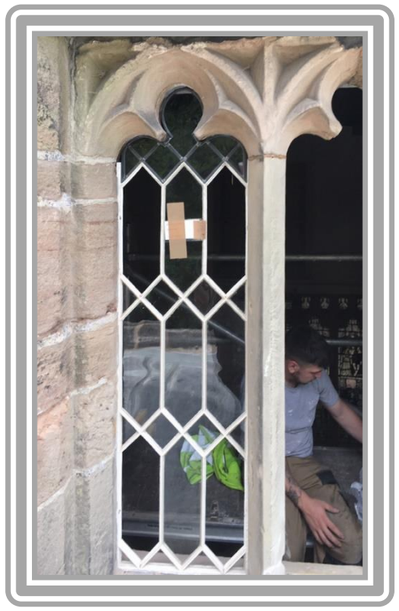
The six glass panels were removed from the window and taken off site. New jamb stones were then inserted into the lower stone window surrounds and the two lower mullions were replaced.

The original plan was to remove the glass carefully to allow the cast iron frames to be shot blasted and repaired before the glass panes were puttied back into their respective openings. Unfortunately, this was not possible as the glass panes were too fragile to remove intact. Therefore, after removing, cleaning and repairing the frames, the window panels were reglazed with new glass before they were put back into their stone surrounds.



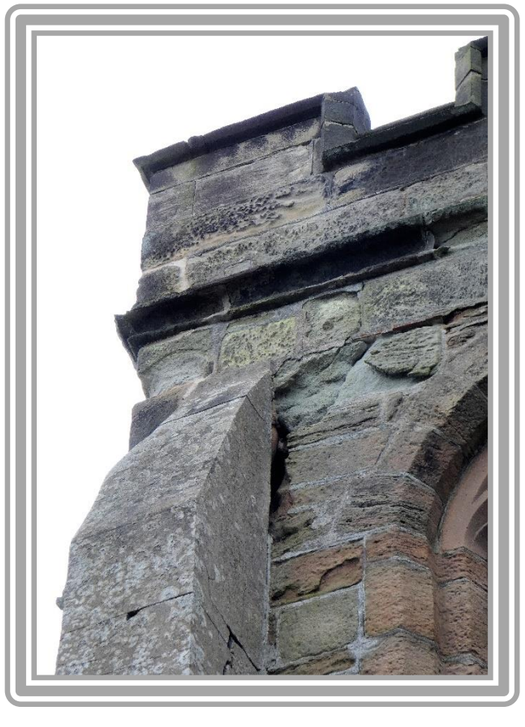


The Clerestory Windows and Other Stonework Repairs



As with the tower window, the glass panels in their cast iron frames were removed intact from each of the two north and three south clerestory windows. The frames were shot blasted, repaired and reglazed with new glass off site. In the meantime, the stone window tracery and two stone mullions were replaced in one of the two north clerestory windows and two stone mullions were replaced in one of the south clerestory windows.

Other stonework repairs were to the chancel walls where cramps had caused the stone to shatter, and a stone-tile repair to the chimney on the side of the tower using a cherry picker for access.

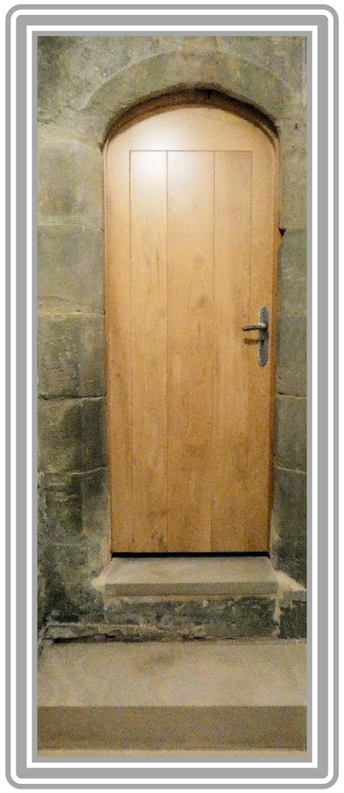


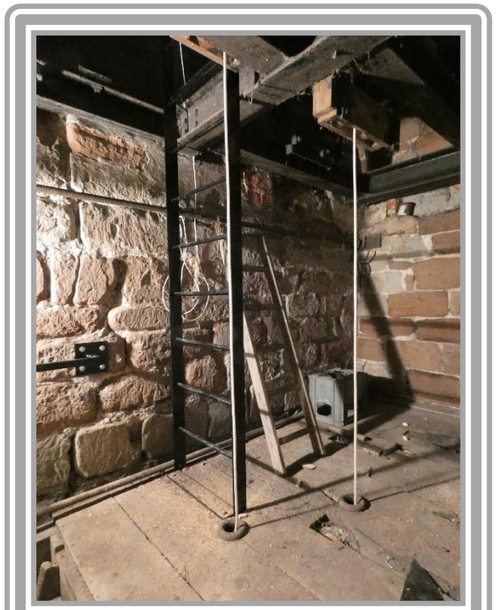
Access to the Tower Roof and Ringing Room

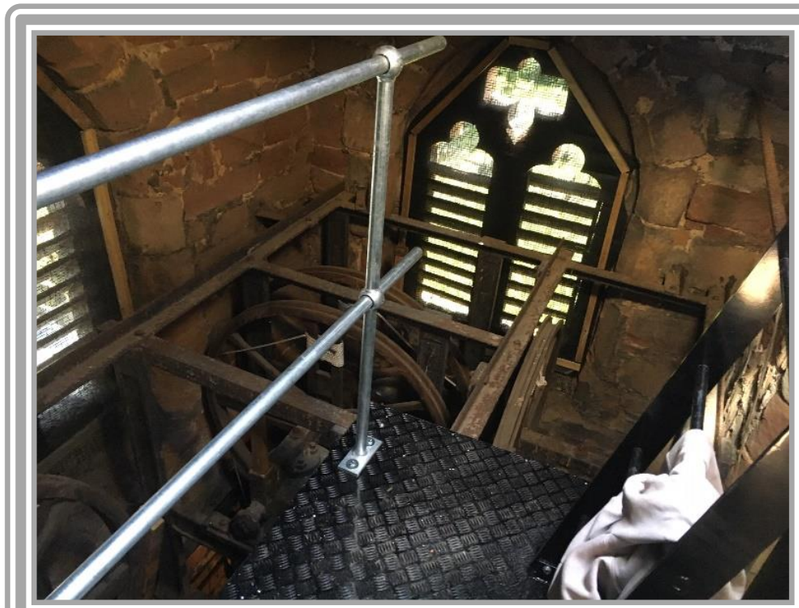
Inside the tower, new access ladders leading from the belfry floor to the roof were installed. Damaged slats on the tower windows were replaced and new wire meshes attached. The small, square, roof hatch with a very heavy lead top was replaced with a larger hatch with a much lighter terne-coated stainless steel top which is far easier to lift open.

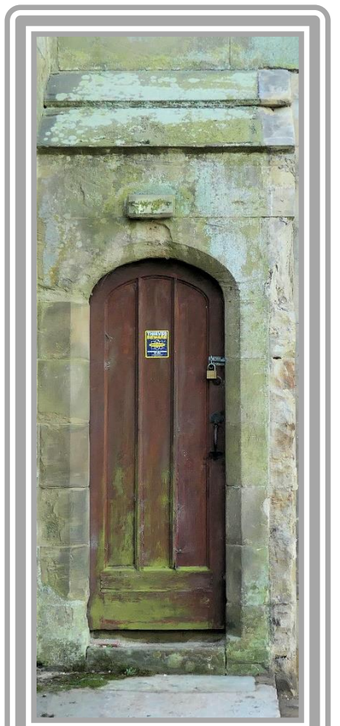
The old door to the ringing room on the outside of the north wall of the tower was replaced with a brand new oak door inside the new extension, and a new stone step was inserted.

Unfortunately, the badly corroded weathervane could not be mended and re-erected. We are, however, hoping to be able to replace this with a rooster weathervane in the near future when we have sufficient funding.

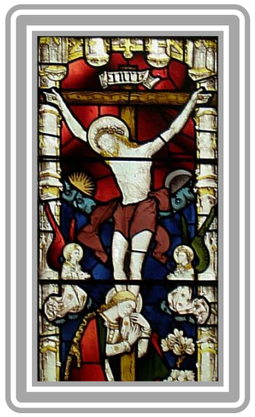


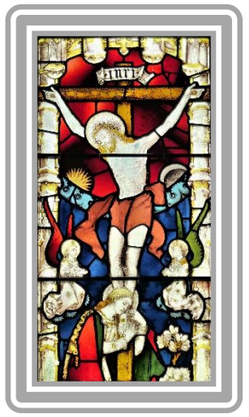






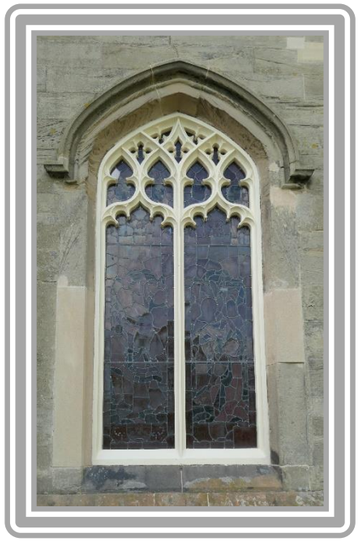
The Stained Glass Windows in the Chancel

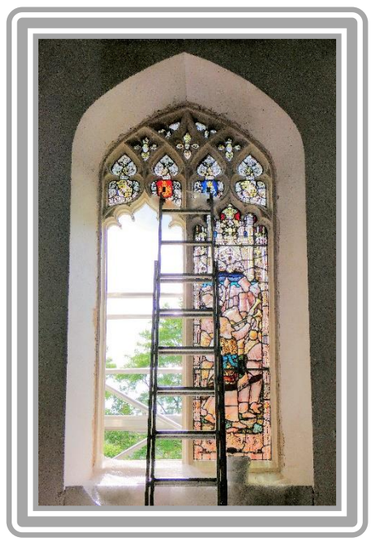


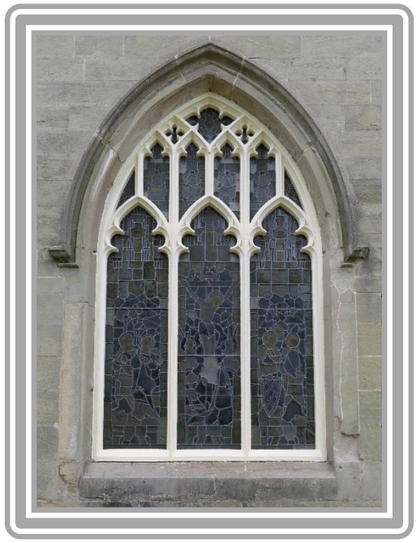


The large stained glass windows in the chancel are unusual because the jambs, mullions and tracery housing the leaded stained glass panels are made of hollow cast iron and the frames are built into the surrounding brickwork. As cutting out the frames would have been too destructive to the stonework, the internal plaster surrounds were cut back to allow the rusted edges of the frames to be treated and the cracks to be welded in-situ.

The stained glass panels in the east and south chancel windows were removed and taken off site to the Ark Stained Glass and Leaded Lights Ltd workshops. Here the panels were dismantled, re-leaded, cleaned and re-painted. The window paint was ‘conserved’ rather than ‘restored’. So, only significant details such as the faces of the figures were added. One of the lovely results of this work was that in the large chancel window above the altar, Jesus has had his eyes restored!





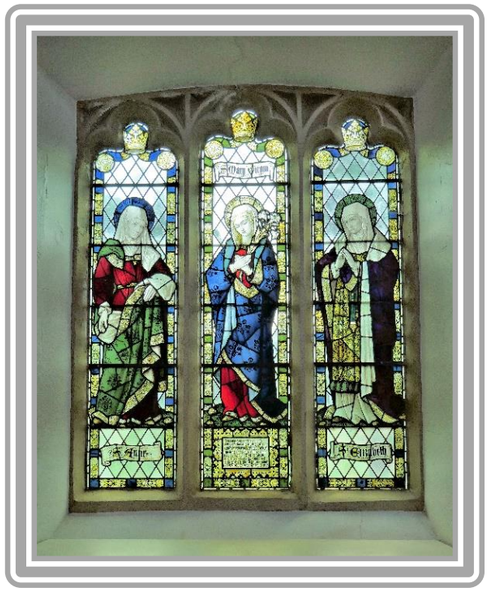


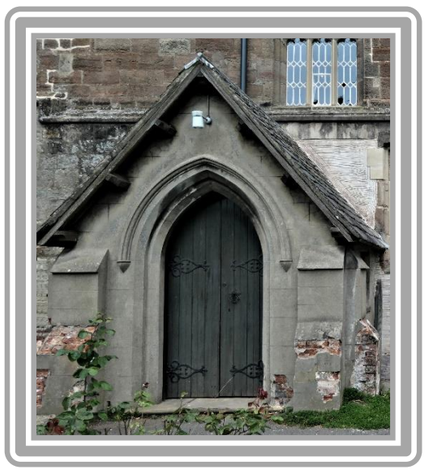
South Aisle & Nave Window & Nave Wall Repairs

Large areas of the stained glass windows in the south aisle and nave were hidden by bushes. These were removed to allow access to the windows and the nave wall for repairs. The removal of the bushes also let more light into the church.

Unlike the chancel stained glass windows, the windows in the south aisle (*Sheep & Goats Window*) and nave (*Three Saints Window*) have stone surrounds, mullions and tracery. The outside sections of 3 of the 4 mullions were replaced. Damaged areas of the tracery in the south aisle window were repaired by inserting intricately carved stone sections matching the original stonework.

The cracked render on the nave and south porch walls was removed, new lime wash render was applied and the walls painted. New guttering and downpipes were attached to the porch to reduce future damage to the new render.



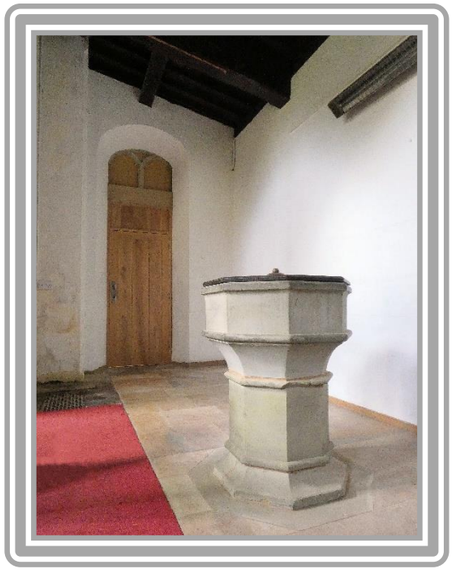


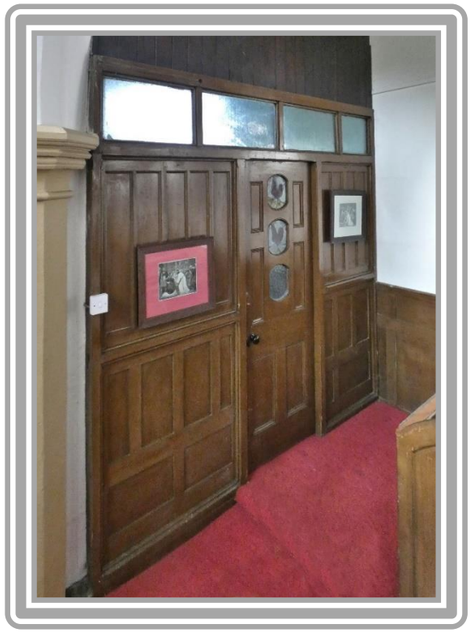
Preparing for the New Extension

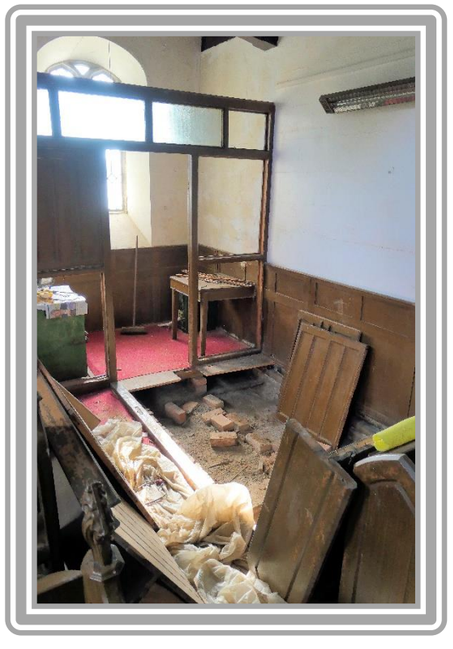
Before work on the extension was started, volunteers from the village demolished the old dilapidated building attached to the north side of the tower.

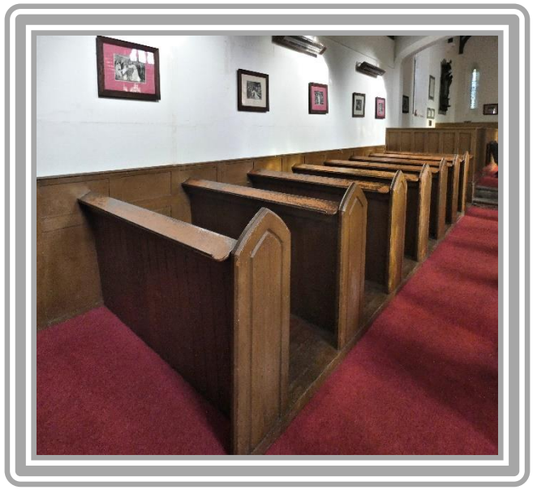
Inside the church, the vestry screen and door at the end of the north aisle were taken down, and the two stained glass roosters in the door were sent to Ark Glass & Leaded Lights Ltd to be restored and mounted in a light box.

Two, poorly sighted north aisle pews were taken out, a new stone floor was laid, and the font was moved from its original location close to the organ to the newly formed space.









Building the New Extension

Archaeologists who were present when the foundations were dug for the extension found several medieval tiles suggesting a path once existed to the old tower door. When the trench was dug for WC waste disposal, human leg and hip bones were discovered. These were reburied.

The vestry window was removed and a hole cut through the wall to create a doorway into the church. The extension walls were built in Woodkirk stone with 2 lancet windows inserted to mirror the 4 lancet windows in the chancel.

Inside the extension are a small servery and an accessible WC with a baby changing facility. The WC is served by an eco-friendly trench arch waste disposal system. The external stone walls were preserved wherever possible.