

# **St Mary the Virgin Baldock**

## **Church Restoration**

### **Phase 1**

The first phase of restoration followed the 2008 Quinquennial Report. This identified serious problems with the church tower, including failure of the copper cladding of the drum, and masonry damage, both of which lead to water ingress. Initial cost estimate was £350,000. A grant of £166,000 was promised by English Heritage, and after other promised grants left £100,000 target for fundraising.

As work began in March 2010, further problems were found with the wooden framework of the tower steeple, leading to a cost overrun of £300,000! Since it was not sensible to delay this work, the decision was made to apply for a bank loan, and increase the fundraising efforts. The project was completed in December 2010, and the final project cost was £750,000. It took until the end of 2015 to pay off the bank loan.

### **Phase 2**

The next Quinquennial Report in 2013 identified the next priority as replacement of the lead of the South Aisle Roof, last recast in 1931, and masonry repairs to the south wall crenulations, replacement of Victorian cement render with original lime mortar render, and refixing some worn "clunch" and flint facings. The estimated project cost was £250,000, and a grant to this value was applied from the Heritage Lottery Fund in July 2014. In order to make our application meet the requirement of HLF we were advised to ensure that our project would enhance the use of our church by the community, and make our heritage more accessible. We included some internal reordering to allow better use of the church for concerts and choirs. We also replaced the halogen floodlighting with efficient LED lights so that we could allow visitors to turn them on on dark afternoons. We also prepared and printed Church History Guide and a Children's Church Trail. We were successful, and first phase funding was obtained in December 2015. The initial funding was to carry out surveys and develop designs so that the project costing could be confirmed.

The phase 2 application was submitted in September 2015, and approved in January 2016. Work started in April 2016, and the scaffolding was finally removed at the end of January 2017. The PowerPoint presentation gives more details of Phase 1 and Phase 2 projects, with lots of photographs!

### **Phase 3**

Flushed with success, we plan to apply for another grant in 2017. The lead of our Nave and Chancel are in the same state as the south aisle roof was, as confirmed by our next Quinquennial Inspection (brought forward to 2017). We plan to further improve the use of the church by the community. Current plans include a large roll-down screen and projector, and improved sound system, so that the church can be used as a cinema (there is no equivalent facility in Baldock). We will need to lobby various societies and interest groups in Baldock to demonstrate that this facility will be used!

## **Project Contacts**

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