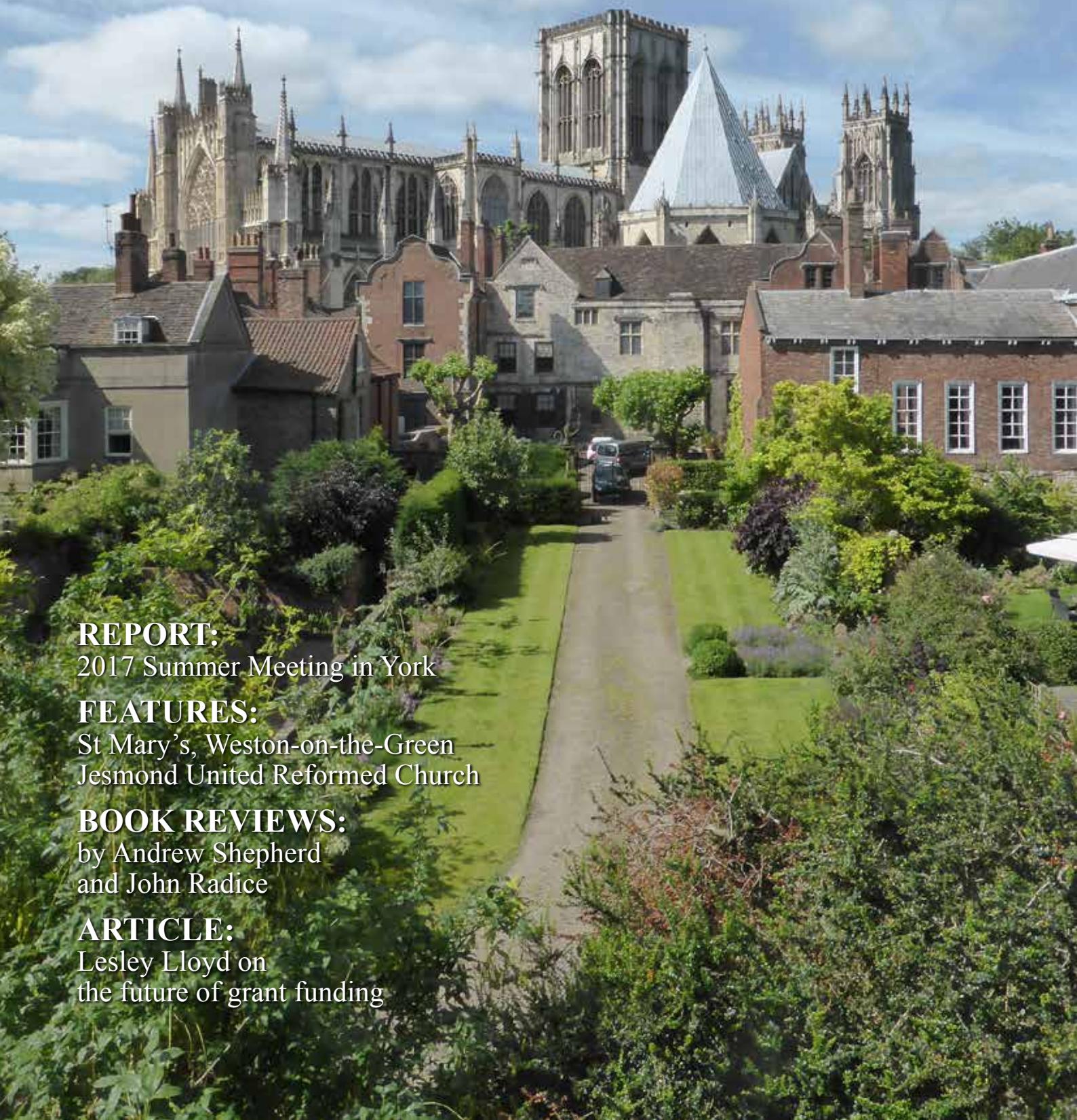


The Journal of the Ecclesiastical Architects' and Surveyors' Association



EASA JOURNAL

SUMMER 2017



REPORT:
2017 Summer Meeting in York

FEATURES:
St Mary's, Weston-on-the-Green
Jesmond United Reformed Church

BOOK REVIEWS:
by Andrew Shepherd
and John Radice

ARTICLE:
Lesley Lloyd on
the future of grant funding

This project was short-listed amongst last year's Presidents' Award entries.

The church of St Mary the Virgin, Weston-on-the-Green was first consecrated in 1273. It consists of a C18 Nave with a tower at the west end believed to have elements dating from the C13. In 1564 the church was re-roofed and the pews replaced. In 1743 the church was substantially remodelled by Norreys Bertie in an Italianate style. The original Chancel, of which a scar can be seen externally at the east end, was demolished in the early C19.

I carried out a Quinquennial Inspection of the church in 2011. The key recommendations resulting from this inspection were as follows:

- Clear the bell ringing chamber and improve access to tower for maintenance and a new bell fitting
- Remove the existing emulsion paint in the Nave and renew with a breathable paint finish.
- Create a WC, Kitchen and Vestry area within the base of the tower.

There was a desperate need to provide these basic facilities to allow effective use of the building not only by the church but also by the community.

Andrew Higson (John Taylor Bell Foundry) carried out the repair of the bell frame and installed the new bell. He was also consulted in order to make sure adequate provision was made for any future removal or installation of the bell by creating a hidden hatch within the new Vestry floor. Julian Mundy (Diocesan Archaeological Advisor) was consulted with regard to excavations for drainage through the church yard.

Within the Nave a coat of emulsion had been applied over the original lime wash - and approved by EH, according to the church! It had quickly failed, bubbling and lifting in large patches as well as contributing to some areas of plaster failure below windows where moisture was trapped behind it.

Removal of this top coat was important in order to allow the walls to breathe and also to improve the dilapidated look of the space. The paint had to be removed mechanically with scrapers, which was time consuming but did not damage



Interior in 2011



C18 paint finishes revealed



Banner uncovered over arch to tower

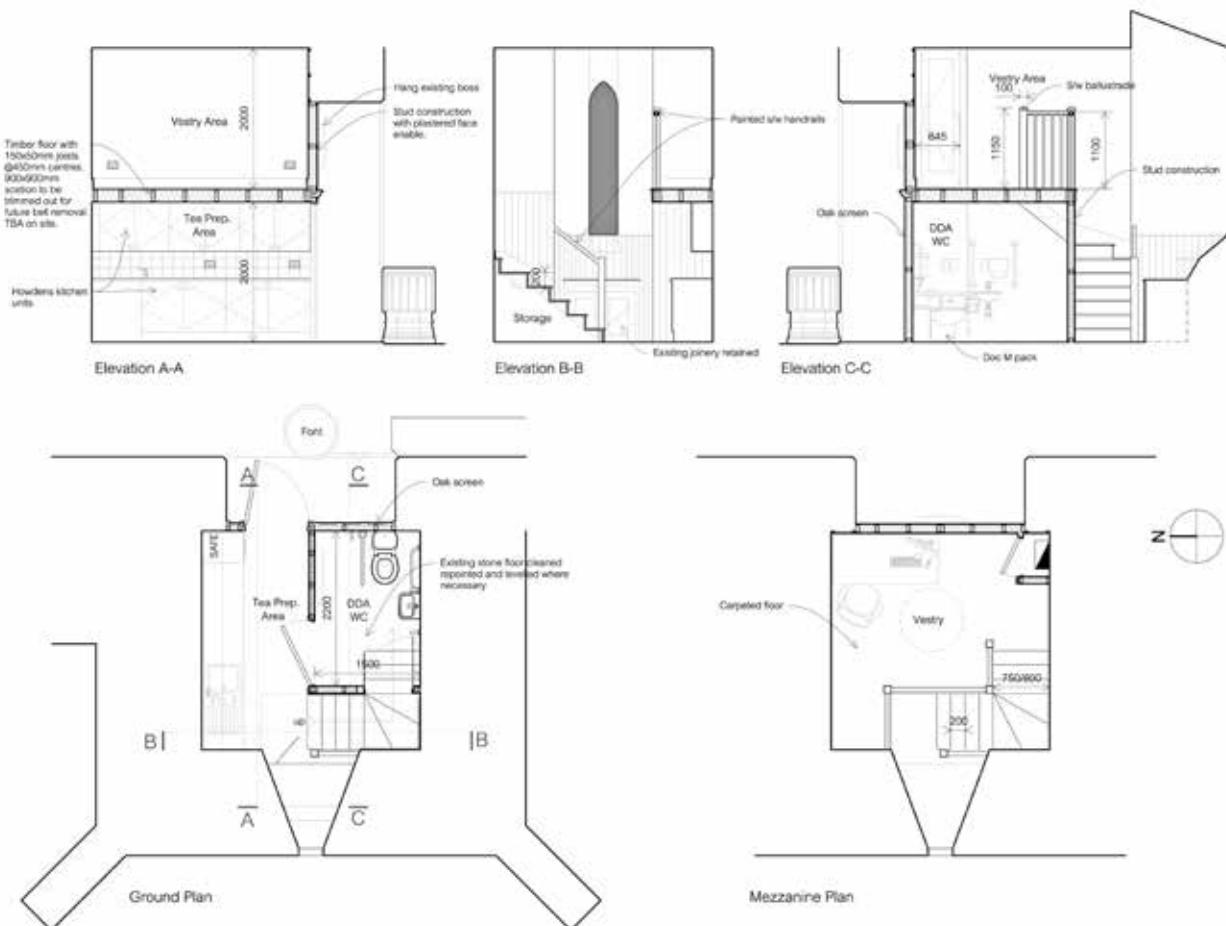
the surface below. A trial patch of paint had been removed beforehand and this method of removal found to be best. Around 90% was removed this way without damaging the plaster below. The remaining 10% was well adhered, indicating that it was not causing ongoing problems either to the plaster or to the breathability of the walls, so it was left rather than risking damage to the plaster.

During the paint removal the original colours used for the walls and coving were revealed. The ornate C18 ceiling had collapsed around the mid-C19, so it is assumed that the colour scheme was from this later period. I was keen to reinstate the Victorian colour scheme of green coving with light tan walls (using samples of paint). However the church did not support this idea.

Another discovery was a Victorian banner over the arch into the tower, which read: 'Therefore with joy shall we draw water out of the wells of salvation' – Isaiah 12. The hand painted banner had survived very well and did not lift when the emulsion was removed. It had faded slightly through absorption to the emulsion (being water based paint) and there was some damage to the lower sections where electrical cables had been embedded in the walls. The discovery of this piece of Victorian embellishment captured the imagination of the parish and indeed the whole village. Recovering this previously lost feature added much to the outcome of the project.

As work progressed, small areas of plaster which had been blown by water ingress were carefully removed and replaced with lime plaster. The new finish was Earthborn clay based paint. I had gained approval for this product a few years earlier on another grade II* church, with excellent results. Clay paint is breathable, much easier to apply than lime wash and does not rub off. It does not react when applied over different substrates and is popular with decorators too.

The church had been planning to provide an external WC in an extension next to the south Porch. Such an external extension would have had a detrimental effect on the character of the building and would have been very unlikely to gain approval. I was motivated to come up with an alternative idea which would provide much better facilities in a more convenient location without altering the footprint of the building.

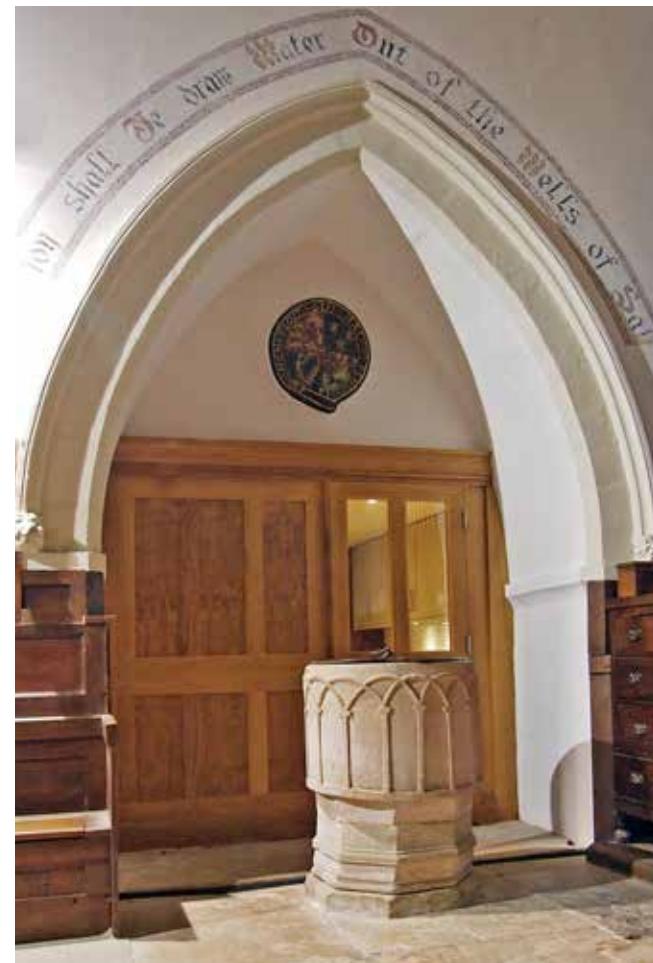


The solution was to offer a Kitchen and Vestry as well as a WC, over two levels within the tower. The new accommodation would be hidden behind an oak screen (with a door in it) to reflect the existing oak panelling, this would infill the arch to the tower but be recessed as far back as possible. Above the new oak panelling was a plain plaster panel which not only reduced the visual impact of the infill but allowed a better junction within the arch. This area was also a good place to mount a C17 boss which had been discovered beneath a chest of drawers in the original vestry. The idea was supported by the PCC and gained Faculty and funding over the following 12 months. The project was completed in June 2013.

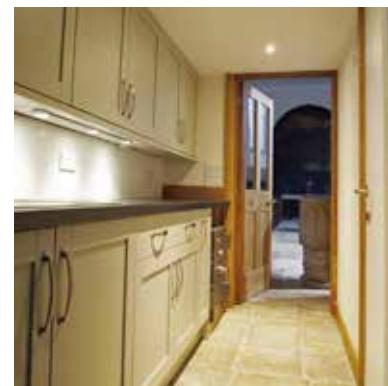
The final result was very successful. The plaster repairs and removal of paint went smoothly and, though time-consuming, the result has been worthwhile. Over the last 4 years there have been no paint defects, and the building feels lighter and more welcoming. We succeeded in fitting several new facilities within a space which appeared to be too small to accommodate them, for a lower cost than an extension. Though fiddly to construct due to space constraints, the contractor carried out the work to a high standard and should be commended for the care and patience employed.

There are many churches which have this same need and could probably use this project as an example of what is possible. There is no external sign of the work and internally it does not draw undue attention to itself.

Christian Randall



Victorian banner and remounted boss above new panelling



Project Details

Architect	Christian Randall
Contractor	Imley Construction Ltd
Bell Hangers	John Taylor Bell Foundry Ltd