Restoration of

Saint Michael the Archangel on the Mount Without

“The Mount Without”

1. Condition at the start of the project
   1. In March 2020 the diocese gave us the keys for this wonderful building. There was no roof on the North and Central aisles (?), the timbers below had either wet rot (north and central sections, or galloping dry rot in the South section. Rain had drained into the crypt and the tombs below. Most of the windows on the North face had been blown out by the fire, and the whole building had been boarded up with timber and steel doors
   2. Photos of the fire, iconic roof, floor damage
2. The Roof
   1. A “like for like” timber framed roof was reinstated in the North section by Oliver Whitmore of East Bristol Timber. This amazing carpentry on a massive scale was calmly crafted and installed by Ollie and our team

The centre section had steel trusses/purlins installed after the bomb damage in the war. The structural engineers (KB2) called for significant replacement or enhancement of these beams due to the intense heat of the fire.

* 1. Photos of the timber trusses and the steel ones (2)

1. The Windows
   1. Most of the windows on the North side were replaced by a team of lead window specialists forming a mini production line. The stained glass window behind the alter was luckily saved from any damage, and certainly caused a lot of “Wows” when the protective boards were removed.

Dan from DRH welding has individually hand made each of the retaining bars that will hold the secondary glazing units. From many angles, these bars cant be seen because they blend into the cement columns behind

* 1. Photo of Ben on production line/Secondary glazed unit

1. The floor
   1. The rotten floor of the church all had to be removed. The base for the sprung dance floor in the central aisle was pumped in from down on St Michaels hill. Harlequin flooring provided the sprung dance floor for the central area, which was fitted by our team the week before our first wedding. Phew! Under floor heating has been fitted beneath the North and South aisles
   2. Photo Fitting the underfloor pipes/ laying the dance floor
2. The balcony
   1. The fire was started by the squatters under the North end of the balcony, and between that and having 3 years of no roof, all the raked seating had gone past repair. Between Seamus McKenna, Sophie “X” from Hydroc, and Dan from DRH welding they have fitted some massive steel beams to make the balcony useable again. Woodtec made a replacement balcony panel that we will keep its “new” colour to show the history
   2. Big beams going in / new front panel
3. The crypt (Pt 1)
   1. The Crypt had been used as a bomb shelter in the war, and consequently had very many internal double (or tripl) skinned walls. These all had to be brought down by hand, loaded to buckets, taken to the waiting van, and transported to Kings Weston House where it could be offloaded and then collected by lorry for recycling. The grey wide lines on the crypt ceiling have been retained to show their original locations
   2. Photo of knocking the walls down/buckets by the slope?
4. The Crypt (Pt 2)
   1. The whole of the crypt is a catacomb of walled tombs (from when the church was rebuilt in the 1750s. Many of the tombs had been “tomb raided” with rubber handled grips being found in an early one. Jude from Cursus Archaeology was with us through the whole process, and Atwills stonemasons have done a wonderful job of relaying the slabs in their original locations.,(but 600mm lower) This was a fascinating part of the project, with many and various shaped tombs, some magnificent coffins, reused tombstones from the 1450 church as under slabs for the new “residents”, and, quite a lot of manual work to shift 300 tons of bricks ad soil out by hand
   2. Photos of crane, coffins, labyrinth of tombs
5. Aesthetics
   1. Michele Jetzer, our venue director, set the tone for the refurbishment aiming to keep as much of the character and history as possible. It took two goes to paint the central domed ceiling after the first version was amazing but didn’t give the right “feel”. The sculpture that hangs from the roof made from solid bronze “hrrmppph”, was created during lockdown, when Will and his team couldn’t do their normal set work for music festivals. We nearly put it on Ebay at one stage after failing to get it fitted initially, but now love it!!
   2. Original ABC painting/ Sculpture on the floor
6. Acoustics
   1. Dave from “Ion Acoustics” has been our acoustic guru throughout, guiding our strategy with the roof and the secondary glazing. Since Spirolux fitted our drapes in the main church, the acoustics in there have become amazing
   2. Dave’s drawing of the roof?
7. The gardens
   1. After the planning department added £10k to our £20k budget, we withdrew the application last year. Having saved up, the plan is to create some very special places for everyone to love in spring early summer 2022
   2. Photos of before/ Plan from Hillside
8. How has the journey been?

So we chose to take on the project during a Pandemic, and after Brexit when prices shot through the roof.(if we had one)

We have had brilliant support from The Diocese, The Christmas Steps Arts quarter, The Civic Society and all the local residents/shop keepers.

It’s a shame we didn’t get any support or encouragement from the people who appeared happy for it to stay on the “Heritage at risk” register for the next 20 years, but that’s the Conservation planning system for you.

Still we are where we are. Everyone seems to love this amazing building, and we are looking forward to sharing it for many years to come