

ABERLADY PARISH Church

Early Christian Origins

Medieval churches and monasteries are key features of the British landscape, contributing to local identities and a sense of place and belonging deeply rooted over time. This is certainly the case with Aberlady's sacred heritage.



St Aidan arrives at Aberlady on his journey from Iona to Lindisfarne in 634 AD

Illustration by David Simon

While there is little tangible evidence of the first church, we know there's been Christian worship here since the 8th century, and perhaps earlier. The intricate carvings on the high Anglian cross that stood nearby our church reflect the illuminated artwork found within the Lindisfarne Gospels, made on Holy Island in c.720 AD by Eadfrith, Bishop of Lindisfarne.

In this magnificent book native Celtic elements blend with Anglo-Saxon and Eastern traditions in the cultural melting pot of 8th century Northumbria, of which Aberlady was then part. In a time of few bibles, the cross was one, albeit carved in stone.

Recent community archaeology in the Glebe Field immediately to the north of the church has uncovered evidence of stone structures dating to the 7th-9th centuries. These structures are likely to be monastic. More research work is planned.



Image courtesy of the National Museum of Scotland

Although not an island itself, Aberlady's wide bay, its role in nature conservation and our sacred heritage combine to create a very special and spiritual location.



Around 750 AD, King Eadberht of Northumbria awaits permission to enter the inner enclosure of the monastic settlement at Aberlady

Illustration by David Simon



Wemyss and March Estate

ABERLADY PARISH church

Restoration Project 2015-16

Having stood since at least 1452 it is unsurprising that our rubble-built church tower was in need of restoration. A survey of the building found that other areas were in need of repair also.

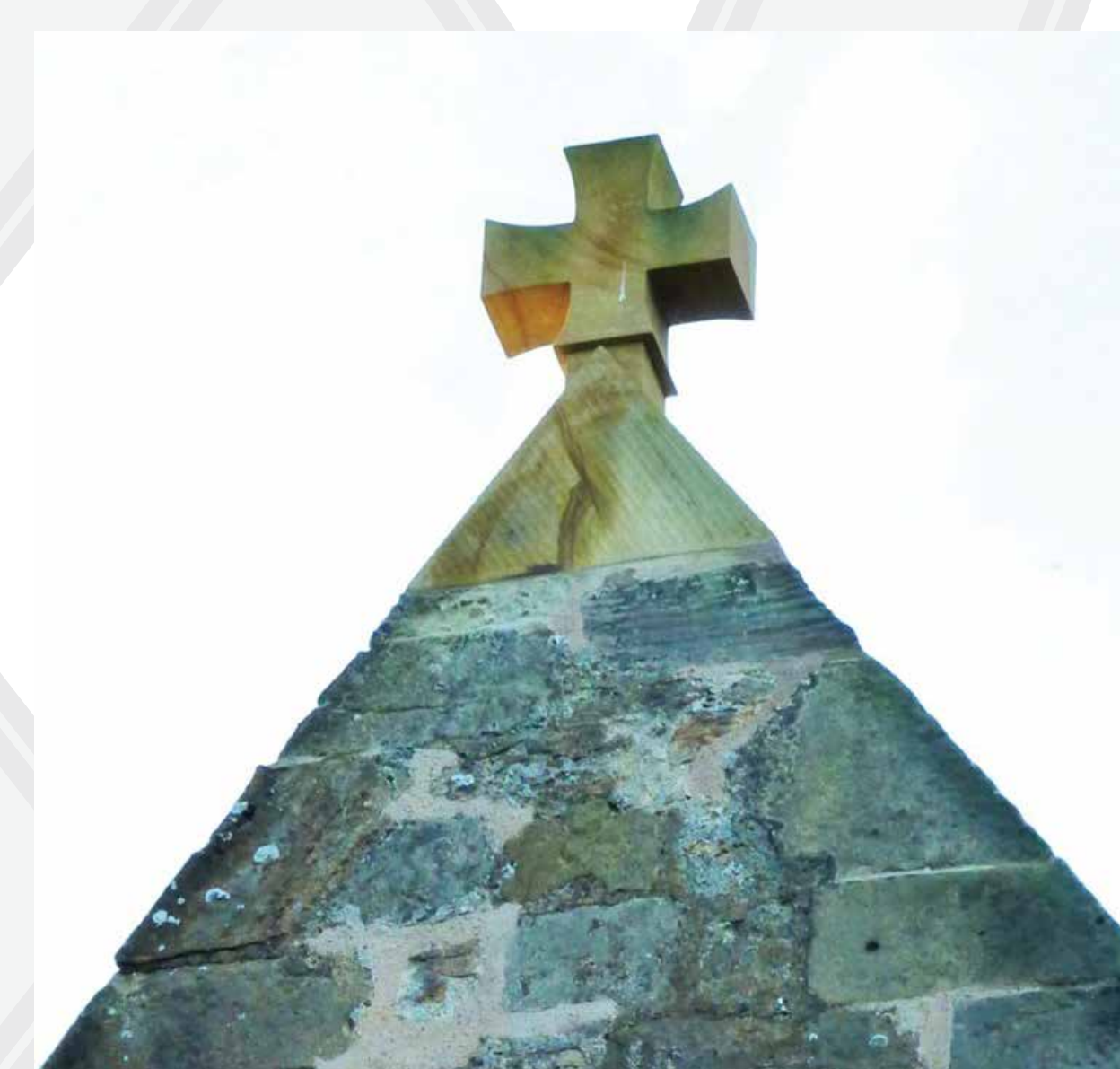
Thanks to grants and donations, most notably from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Historic Environment Scotland, remedial works were carried out during 2016.



Nearly
600
square metres
of the stonework
were re-pointed



224
stones eroded
by wind rain
were skillfully
removed and
replaced



516
square metres
of slate were
replaced



The
**entire
roof**
was lined with
weatherproofing



Topping it all, an impressive new weather vane, gifted through generous donations and resplendent in black and gold above the tower, completed the restoration project.



We hope that the church will continue to thrive as a place of worship and community in the heart of the village for many generations to come.



Wemyss and March Estate

ABERLADY PARISH church

15th Century Onwards

Our church tower was built in about 1452, perhaps as a watchtower in the first instance. The rubble-built structure comprises four floors. The ground floor serves as the vestry. The first floor boasts a magnificent vaulted ceiling, while the floor above was adapted as a dovecot sometime after the original defensive arrow slits were used as flight windows.



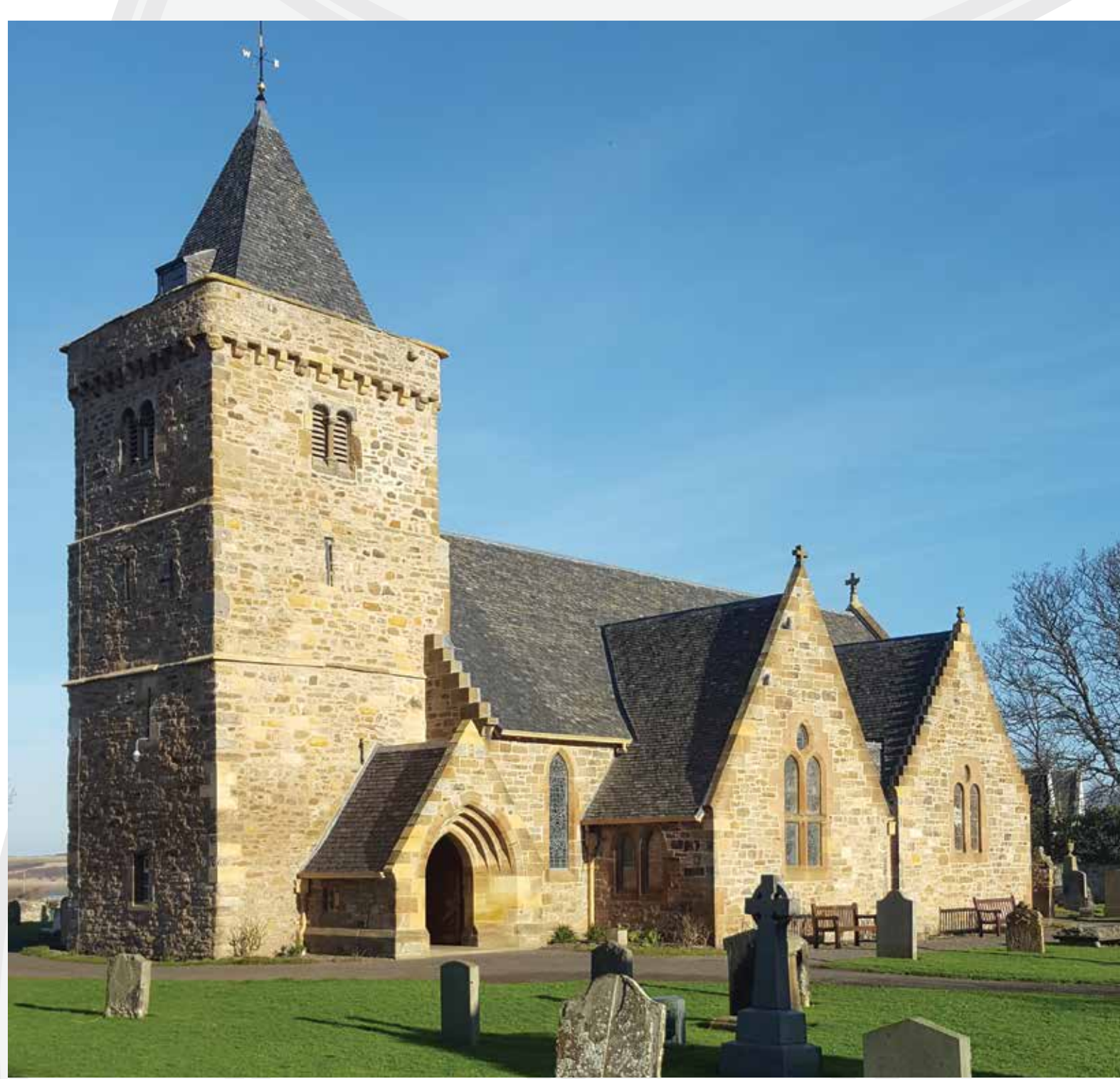
The upper floor of the tower is the bell chamber. The first floor is connected to the floors above by a spiral stone staircase.



Around fifty years after the tower's construction, a church was built onto its east face and a chancel was added. This was followed by the addition of the 'Ballencrieff Aisle' to the north elevation in the 16th century and the 'Gosford Aisle' to its immediate west in the 17th century. This church, apparently long and low in design, was described as 'a disgrace to the parish' prior to its reconstruction in 1773.

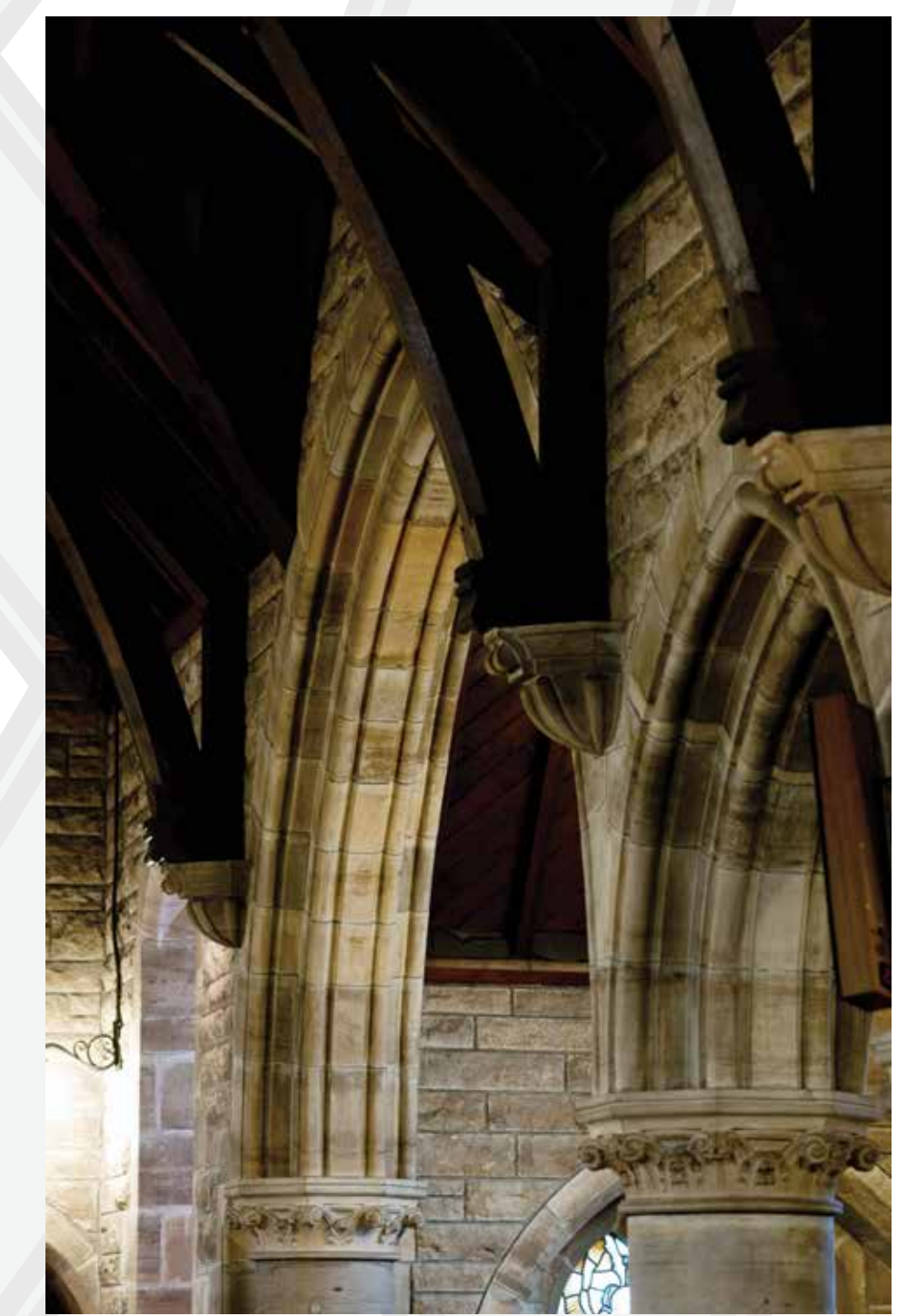
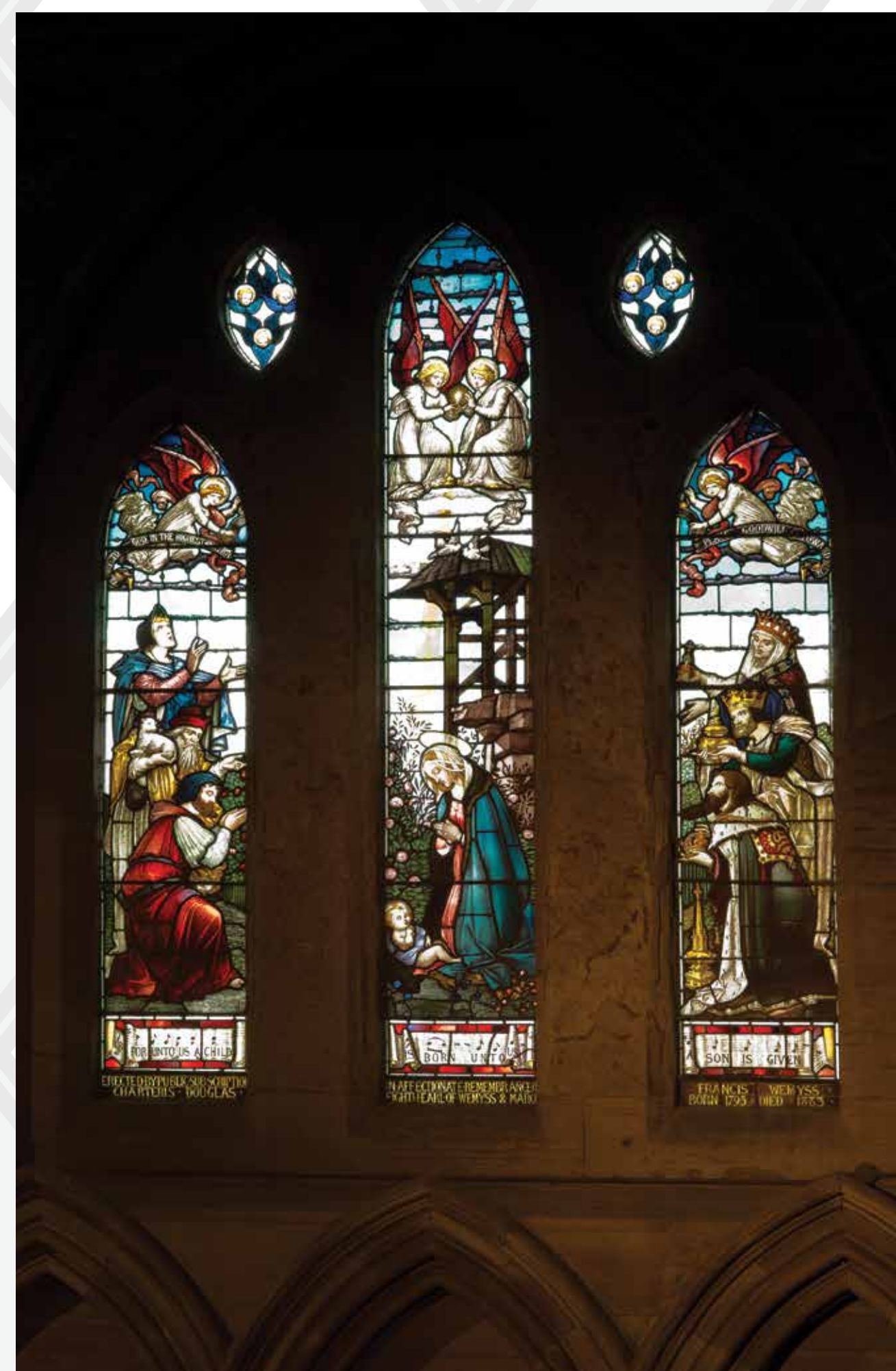


The tower and the two aisles on the north elevation were incorporated into the 1773 rebuild. Known as the 'square kirk', the roof of this new church was much higher than today's and it boasted an upper gallery accessed by a spiral staircase.



In 1886, all of the building work of 1773 was demolished to make way for the present design. The work was commissioned by the 10th Earl of Wemyss and designed by London architect William Young. The lower roof greatly enhances the 15th century tower. New transepts built into the south elevation create a church in cruciform. Internally, the open timber roof, pointed arch arcades and crocketed capitals opening into aisles and transepts complete the building design.

The chancel incorporates the large, and probably 18th century, window design. The stain glass windows and those in the south aisles are by Edward Frampton of London. The most significant is the central window which was copied by Frampton from Sandro Botticelli's painting of the 'Virgin Adoring the Sleeping Christ'.



The new church opened for worship on 2 June 1887.



Wemyss and March Estate