

The Curious Carvings Project



Bringing to life the extraordinary heritage of St Mary's ceiling bosses, stimulating the renaissance of the church's identity, role and relevance in the community.

Our vision

To inspire appreciation and curiosity for the bosses at St Mary's: their artistry, meanings, and capacity to teach us about the past and ourselves.

Our mission

1. Introduction

This final evaluation report assesses the impact of the Curious Carvings Project which benefitted from £421,400 funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) representing 49.8% of the total project cost of £845,869.

The project took place from July 2019 to September 2022. This evaluation report was completed by the project board in Autumn 2022.

Background

The aim of this project was to preserve and interpret the extraordinary heritage of St Mary's Beverley while focussing on the extraordinary collection of 688 Tudor and medieval carved wooden roof bosses distributed throughout the ceiling of the church. Found throughout the church these bosses are a vibrant visual record chronicling the life, times, stories, hopes and dreams of our ancestors, and are unique in both design and number (please see appendices -section 1). This extraordinary heritage was at risk from decaying stonework and fragile windows. Our aim was to make sure that they were not only preserved but also interpreted, making them and the wider heritage of this church accessible for all people, with a particular emphasis on those who would not normally connect easily with churches or heritage sites.

The NLHF award letter of 13 March 2019 contained a list of Approved Purposes for St Mary's Church PCC to complete by the end of the funding period. The letter stated that NLHF *"will be monitoring your progress against the approved purposes of our grant and any areas of risk we have identified"*. The Approved Purposes, were:

Undertake capital repair works as per the scope of work: Repointing of open joints; conservation of the remains of carved elements; cleaning stonework; replacement/restoration of pinnacles, eroded weathering stones, window tracery, stones, grotesques, label stops and moulded stonework; wall void grouting; minor rainwater goods/leadwork repairs; window glazing overhaul; re-building of an unsafe pinnacle on the north transept; and the Installation of a fall restraint system.

Engage priority underrepresented groups as identified through the extensive consultation exercise undertaken during the Development phase.

Provide a definitive plan of activities broken down annually and based on the proposals within the Activity Plan as submitted. Provide an update on the delivery of these activities with each progress report.

Evaluation

NLHF request that grant holders evaluate their projects. NLHF Evaluation Guidance states that the process aims to establish how well a project has met its objectives, as well as how effective, efficient, and sustainable it was. For us, this evaluation also provided an opportunity to learn and grow throughout the project. We took note of the things that were working well and celebrated them and learned from those things which were less effective.

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the project and has been an important consideration throughout this evaluation. The first COVID related lockdown in March 2020 occurred as the project was just gaining ground and connecting with visitors and the community. We were swift to do things differently and the creativity surrounding the project may not have developed if COVID hadn't inspired us to think quickly. We kept in regular contact with NLHF and were encouraged by our assigned officer, and that support has been invaluable as plans had to evolve to continue to meet the stated outcomes.

Report

The report is structured as follows:

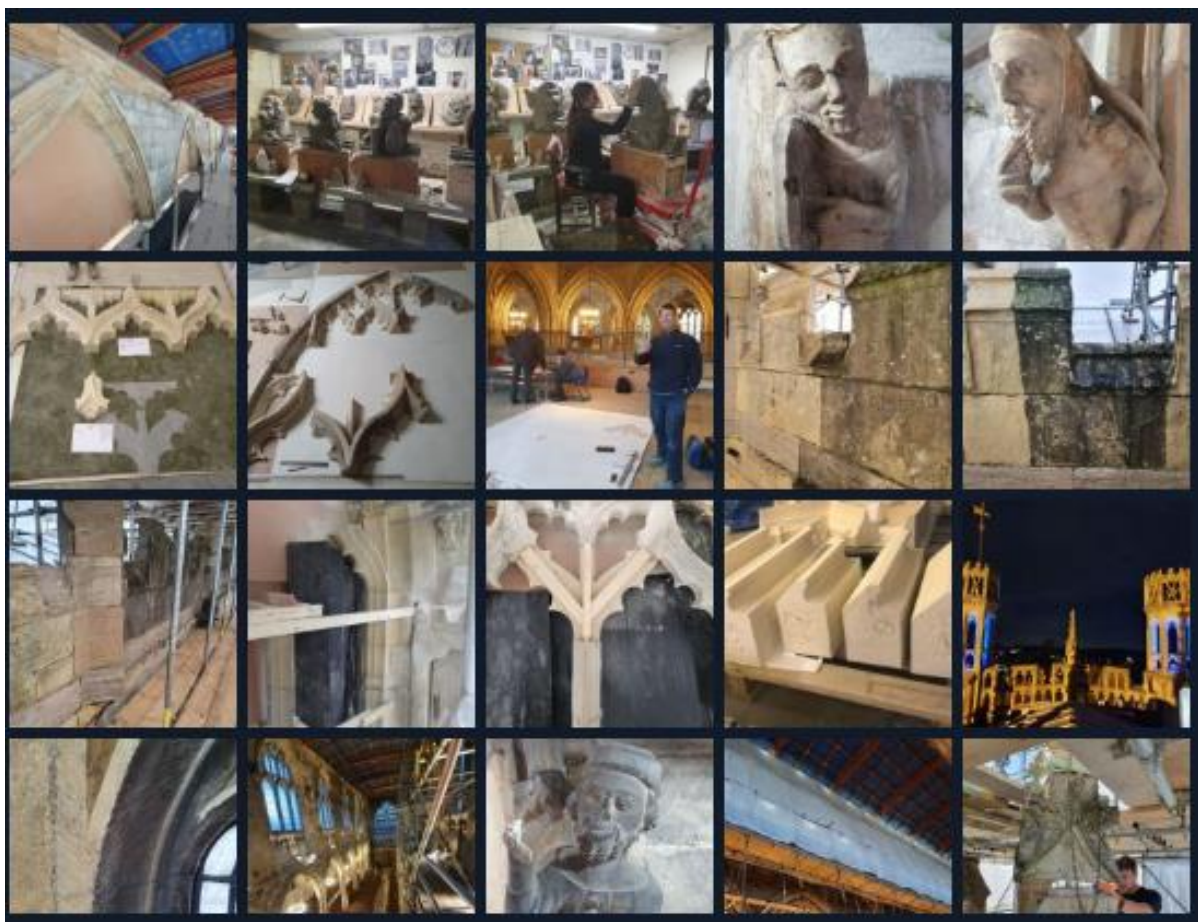
Section 2. Reviews project governance, management and relationships.

Section 3. Focuses on the capital works to church fabric.

Section 4. Assesses the project's activity programme.

Section 5. Assesses the wider impact and media response.

Section 6. Our conclusions.



The restoration

2. Governance and Management

This section looks at governance and management of the Curious Carvings team – Project Board, staff and volunteers, along with partnership working.

The NLHF funding was awarded to St Mary's PCC, which held ultimate responsibility for overseeing the project, but the day-to-day running of the project was overseen by the Curious Carvings Project Board (known as the Bosses Board). The structural and building work was overseen by a subcommittee of this board, who met bi-monthly to keep the project on track.

The Bosses Board

The Bosses Board worked to make sure the project had a strong and clear vision and mission and that it was able to fulfil the requirements of the NLHF.

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Our mission

We drew together an outstanding team of volunteers to oversee the project who were invited because of the skills and expertise they brought.

Skills required on the board	Person
Vision and Project Direction	Becky Lumley
Director of Development	Roland Deller
Administration, Governance and Leadership	David Smith Wilf Fowler
Vision	Ed Norman
Education Outreach KS 1 and 2	Lucy Jordan
Education Outreach KS 3 and 4	David Moore
College and further education	David Cooper Trevor Wray
Law, Employment and Governance	Lynsey Howells
Project Management	Pete Ashcroft Jon Charlton
Finance and HR	Anne Mansfield
Building Restoration	David Warren
Contracts and procurement and building restoration	Keith Gilson

The board met monthly for the duration of most of the project. When COVID struck, meetings were held online but care and attention was given to encourage members to participate as fully as they would face to face. The project manager provided updates at each meeting, and the minutes show that discussions took place on key issues before decisions were made. The wisdom and diverse experience and skills of the board led to rich discussion and positive outcomes.

We were very sad to say goodbye to David Smith who died during the project and also to Wilf Fowler and Roland Deller who both moved house during the final year, but the strength of the board lay in its capacity to keep driving forward.

“He loved the teamwork and was thrilled with the outcome to get the funding. Although he never saw it finished. It was a very satisfying end to his life”

Jennifer Smith (David’s widow)

The board undertook regular governance reviews and we worked hard to make sure all voices could be heard, and that communication was effective. In order to support the work of the board we created subcommittees to oversee the day-to-day practical tasks and management. This allowed the project to move forward and respond to changing situations swiftly.

Management

The board appointed a subcommittee for the appointment process of the Heritage Learning Officer and after a rigorous and competitive appointment process Dr Jennie England was appointed. The board then created a subcommittee to help support Jennie in her work and get the best we could out of the project. The committee included experts in the fields of Education and Management.

Skills / role	Person
Education	David Cooper
Management and Finance	Anne Mansfield
Project Management / Heritage Projects (ERYC)	Pete Ashcroft / Jon Charlton

We were delighted to work with our partners in delivering this project and thanks go to East Riding of Yorkshire Council for their support around project management.

3. Capital Works

The poor condition of the stonework at St Mary's Church has been a serious concern for many years and as we undertook surveys and began the restoration works, we discovered just how serious was the damage to the building.

Target:

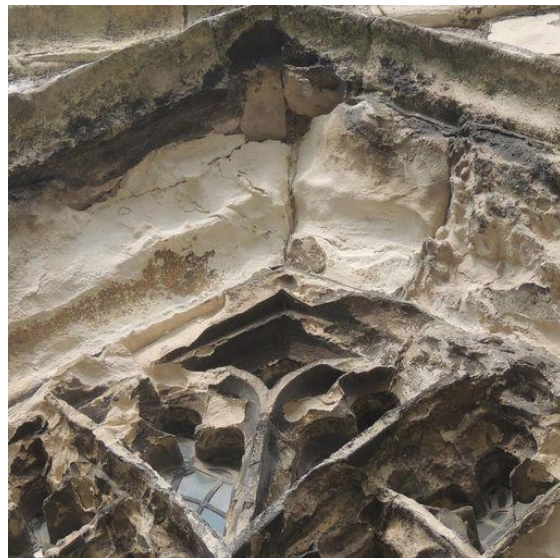
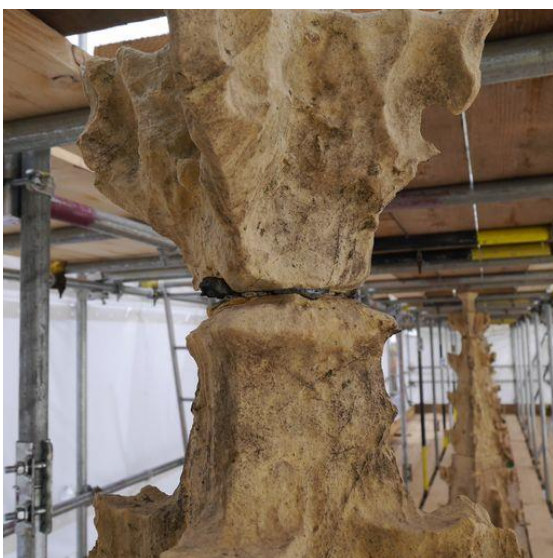
To leave the heritage in a better condition

The capital works were overseen by a subcommittee of The Bosses Board who worked with the multidisciplinary team of experts. We met every month to review the work and reports were shared with the Bosses Board and in turn with the PCC.

The team comprised:

Skills / role	Person
Oversight and church vision	Becky Lumley
Director of Development	Roland Deller
Building Restoration	David Warren
Contracts and procurement and building restoration	Keith Gilson
Project management	Pete Ashcroft (ERYC)
Architect	Andy Burrell
Structural Engineer	James Stevenson
Quantity Surveyor	Richard Wooley
Contractor and stonemason team	Matthias Garn

Before restoration



The pinnacle stones were found to have multiple fractures which made them dangerous, and likely to collapse if left untreated. Each stone was assessed and where possible reused.

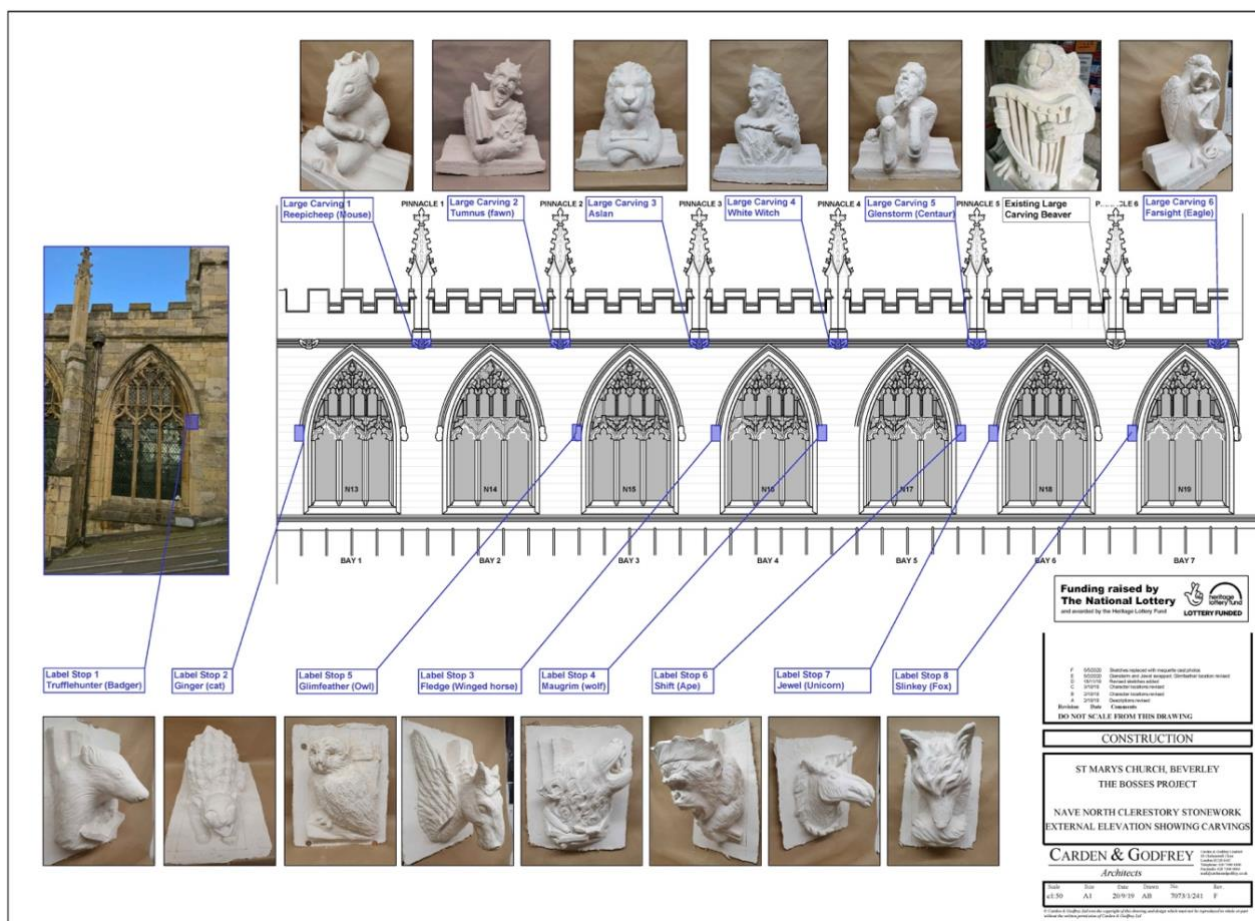


The carved elements are a distinctive feature of St Mary's Church, primarily label stops and grotesques on the high-level string course. The loss of detail on these carved elements was a serious threat to the character of the building as well as the loss of an important historical record. Where there was discernible shape left, the carvings were carefully cleaned and conserved with limewash to slow down the decay, but where the carved elements were too badly eroded, they have been replaced with new carvings.



Careful consideration was given to the subject matter of these carvings, and we consulted widely, including drawing on our connections with the local further education college – where design students offered suggestions and drawings for the project. It was decided that the new carvings should be based on characters from the Chronicles of Narnia, which not only connects to the theme of children’s literature and the link with Lewis Carroll (whose white rabbit in Alice in Wonderland is said to have been inspired by the St Mary’s Pilgrim Hare carving) but also points to the Christian story. Care and attention were given to make sure the work followed the tradition of the carvings already in church. The designs and clay maquettes were developed by sculptor Kibby Schaefer and the stone was carved by various carvers.





The stonework was cleaned inside and out to remove layers of atmospheric dirt, algae and internally-applied finishes. One of the principal benefits of cleaning was to allow the new work to blend with the existing; however, cleaning also revealed extensive microcracking in the high-level stonework, so these most vulnerable elements were treated with bespoke limewashes, primarily to fill the microcracks and extend the life of the stone.

Awards



The quality of the workmanship achieved by the Stonemasons is exemplary, and the end results have set a very high standard for future repairs on the building. This work has been recognised for its quality by experts in the field and St Mary's is just one of four projects to be shortlisted for the 'King of Prussia Gold Medal' a national award which recognises 'innovative, high quality church conservation or repair that overcomes the greatest aesthetic or technical challenge'.

We are also one of just four buildings to be shortlisted for the SPAB John Betjeman Award which celebrates conservation and repair in places of worship.

We will find out later this year whether we have been successful in achieving these awards.

In undertaking the capital repair works as per the scope of work:

- Repointing of open joints
- Conservation of the remains of carved elements
- Cleaning stonework
- Replacing / restoring of pinnacles, eroded weathering stones, window tracery, stones, grotesques, label stops and moulded stonework; wall void grouting; minor rainwater goods/leadwork repairs; window glazing overhaul
- The installation of a fall restraint system

we have fulfilled our target of leaving the heritage in a better condition.

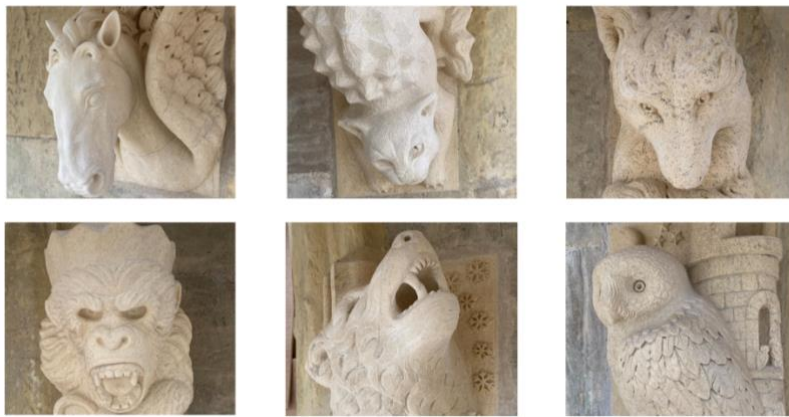


Please see YouTube for images

Our Restoration Showreel <https://youtu.be/cdUTyKrWk20>



But more than that, in choosing a theme for the carvings which captured the imagination and executing them with such skill St Mary's has become an example of excellent practice.



The project has attracted national attention and created generated national and international interest with people travelling from all over the world to see the Narnia Carvings.

This became the foundation for the next phase of restoration – The North Nave Clerestory and the Women of Influence Designs – which also received high acclaim.



Building on the success of the Curious Carvings Project – The Women of Influence Project

See here for a BBC article and video which clearly connects the two projects

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-humber-57171650>

4. Activity programme

This section focuses on the Curious Carvings interpretation, outreach and events and working with volunteers. We will also explain how the project achieved the following targets despite the challenges of Covid, we will show how the project adapted to respond to the situation.

Targets:

- A. More people and a wider range of people are engaging with our heritage and people are learning about heritage.
- B. Our heritage is being better interpreted and explained.
- C. Our heritage is being identified and recorded.
- D. People are developing skills.
- E. People are having an enjoyable experience.
- F. People are volunteering time.

A. More people and a wider range of people are engaging with our heritage and people are learning about heritage.

Despite the challenges presented due to Covid the project was able to fulfil almost all the aims of the activity plan, including increasing the footfall into church, which is remarkable given the periods of lockdown.

Increased footfall in church as recorded by welcomers, measured against the target specified in the activity plan.

	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
	2019-2020	2019-2020	2020-2021	2020-2021	2021-2022	2021-Sep 2022	2019-2022	2019-Sep 2022
Visitors	19000	27,711	22,800	29,426	25,080	30,778	66,880	87,915
% increase on target		46%		29%		22%		32%

As you will see, the project far exceeded the targets around fulfilling our objectives of increasing footfall into the building. During times of Covid the project turned to technology to deliver the program, and we will explore that later, but for now we turn to the headline figures in terms of formal learners.

Target outreach for formal learner and the achieved outreach

	Target number of classes	Actual number of classes (in person)	Actual number of classes (zoom virtual lessons)	Total number of classes	Target number of children	Actual number of children (in person)	Actual number of children (virtual)	Actual number of children (total)	% increase or decrease on reach
KS 1 and KS 2 children	54	24	28	52	1,120	2508	2,122	4,630	313%
KS 3 children	3		6	6	75		180	180	
Special Needs Schools					150	20	-	20	-87.7%

The work with special needs schools was very difficult to fulfil due to the vulnerability of children and young people during Covid. However, the project far exceeded its targets for engaging with schools. Activities contributing to this success included the Woodcarving Workshops, and our new and ongoing collaboration with Beverley Minster, with whom we have developed, organised, and led joint full-day school visits across the two sites. In these visits, students receive different educational workshops themed around the history of the buildings. We are hopeful that these joint visits will continue to offer an attractive option for visiting and local schools alike.

The only areas in which the project did not reach its targets was with Special Educational Needs Schools. In the context of the pandemic and its aftermath, it was our experience that these groups were reluctant to undertake visits. However, we made an extra effort to support mainstream schools which have large percentage of SEND within their communities, and we provided other ways for underrepresented groups engage with the project as you will see later.

We also engaged four classes of KS4 and KS5 students – neither of which were in our project target groups. We are particularly hopeful that we have initiated lasting links with local colleges, for whom we provided curriculum specific content for students undertaking History as an A-Level.

One good example of our face-to-face work as in January 2022, when we initiated a collaboration with a local woodcarver, Allen Stichler, who runs woodcarving workshops with schools and local community groups.

The participating groups were:

- Skidby Primary School
- Newland St John's Primary Academy
- St James' Primary Academy
- Newport Primary School
- Mires Beck Nursery (a registered charity that provides work experience and social therapeutic horticulture for adults with learning difficulties, Autism and physical disabilities).

We targeted these specific groups because they included people from low-income backgrounds (determined by the school having a percentage above the national average of pupils qualifying for free school meals) and children and adults with learning difficulties. The workshops were designed to be easily adapted to the abilities or needs of the participants. For example, at St James' Academy it was reported by the teachers that on one of the days 40-50% of the participants had SEND.

Allen provided feedback from some of the workshops:

"Great couple of days at Newport....it was a real success and has gone down an absolute storm. The kids absolutely loved it. They have a large number of SEN there and the staff loved how they were able to participate on a level with the other pupils...Every single pupil was involved (except one class on a residential trip)".

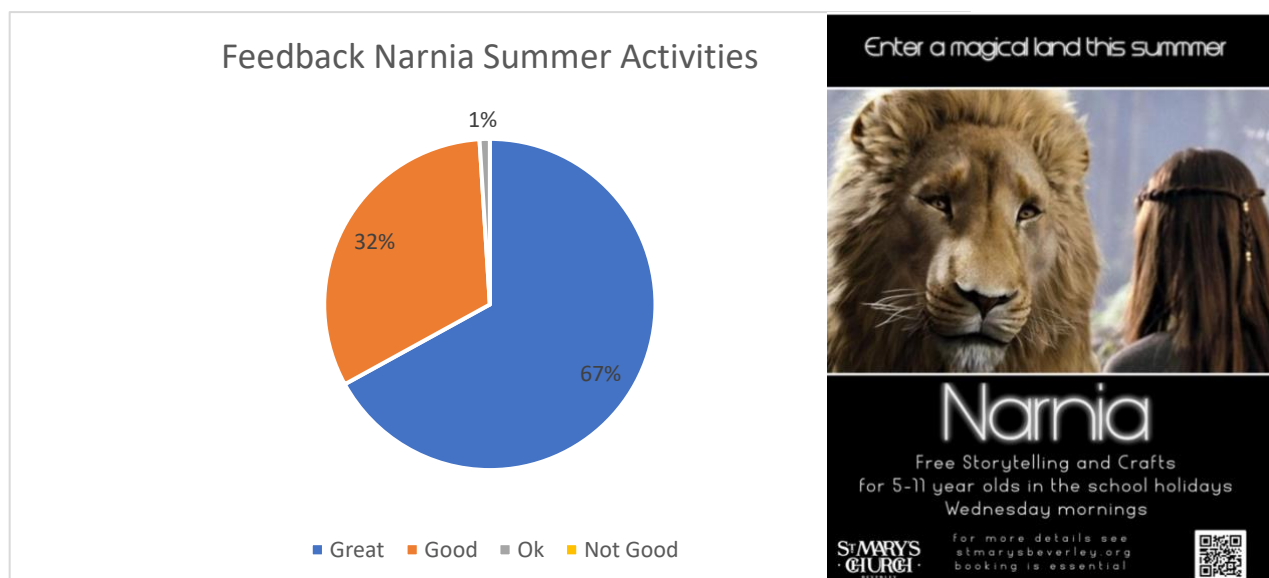
"[Newland St John workshops] were really good and the kids loved it once again ~ it seemed to go down well with the staff, who came and looked at the progress throughout".

Informal Learners

We made every effort to keep church open and to provide face-to-face activities when we could do so safely. This meant offering numerous sessions over a relatively short period of time rather than over the full three years.

So, for example, we offered a series of storytelling and craft sessions in the church during the summer holidays for children and families (rather than monthly groups as specified in the activity plan). These weekly sessions (which were free) ran 28th July - 1st September 2021 and were based on 'The Chronicles of Narnia' by C.S. Lewis (the inspiration for the new stone carvings made as part of the project).

A trail of 14 animals found among the curious carvings in the church was prepared especially for the event. The sessions attracted a total of 252 attendees (including 143 children). Audience feedback was positive: 67% of respondents rated the sessions as great, 32% good and 1% OK.



Another highlight was the Beverley 1300 festival, a major community event celebrating the 1300th anniversary of the death of St John of Beverley. The festival ran from 22nd - 25th October 2021 with the bosses being central to the activities, and over 1300 scallop shells were collected by visitors to take on their 'Pilgrimage' with their 'Pilgrim Passport' inspired by our Pilgrim Rabbit Carving (who carries a scallop shell – a sign of pilgrimage) in church. In order to make this as exciting as possible and safe (as people were still concerned about being inside) we joined up with other heritage sites.



Alongside this was an incredibly popular evening with Professor Dawn Maskell (Director of the International Centre for Brewing & Distilling at Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh) who spoke about the science of beer tasting and with the evening connected to the project by an introduction by Dr Jennie England to the 'Ale Wife' boss.

The variety and creativity of the events meant that there was something for everyone, and we tried to connect the history and heritage with experiences today. One excellent example was that of a talk given by stonemason David Switalla who followed the example of the medieval masons and craftsmen and women when he embarked on his Journeyman Years. It was an event which was attracted a large audience in church but also online.



How we adapted our plans to deliver the project during Covid

We had to think carefully about how we might reach people and reveal the heritage to communities and individuals when it was not possible to visit the church physically or when people were fearful (particularly the vulnerable groups). 'The Lion, The Unicorn and Me' is a good example of how we sought to deliver the project, giving priority to underrepresented groups, during a time of Covid.

The Lion, the Unicorn and Me

We identified schools in hard-to-reach communities and offered them the opportunity to engage with the bosses project through Jeanette Winterson's beautiful story 'The Lion, The Unicorn and Me'. We offered a beautifully produced film, a book for each child, and zoom lessons which connected the symbolism of four of the bosses (angel, donkey, lion and unicorn) with the characters in the story. We asked teachers how this project could best help them post-Covid and they identified the importance of reading and literacy, so we made sure the heritage we were drawing on allowed us to engage the children in storytelling and language.

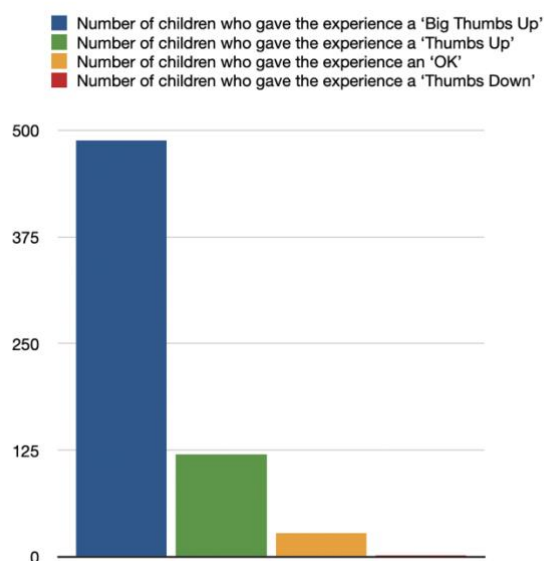


Schools

- 2,122 children across 17 schools took part in the project.
- 1,079 children followed this up by taking part in 28 zoom lessons

- We prioritised schools in 'hard to reach communities' and just under 1/2 of the schools who decided to take part in our project are in these communities.

Feedback



- 76% of children thought it was 'brilliant', 19% 'good', 4% 'ok' and less than 1% 'not good'.
- 100% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:

This was an enjoyable experience for the children

This experience helped support a love of story and language.

This experience would make me want to visit St Mary's Church (again)

Community

In addition, 1,954 people viewed the production on YouTube from the 11th - 31st December 2020 with excellent reviews.

AMAZING AND WONDERFUL your Winterson story, very very well done to all. I was entirely absorbed, and many congratulations to all. You are all stars.

Professor Barbara English

Just watched it - how amazing and magical

Mandy Beck

Can I have your permission to use it at Newsigate. Felt like a real spiritual moment when I viewed it. Story telling at its best. Thank you

Noelle Coe

This is one of the most lovely things I have seen produces this season (or for many in the past). It has genuine magic, my five year old immediately demanded to watch it again. I am so impressed by the acting but also the use of the beautiful church building - deceptive simplicity with a child's eye for how spaces, doorways etc can become other and marvellous.

Arabella Milbank

Further virtual outreach

In addition to the 'Lion, the Unicorn and Me' we released the following high-quality videos to engage audiences with our heritage.

Where was it released	Title	Views
National Centre for Early Music	Dr Jennie England – Invites us into St Mary’s Beverley	75
St Mary’s Church – Heritage and Restoration	Dr Jennie England -The Fall of the Tower	853
St Mary’s Church – Heritage and Restoration	Dr Jennie England - The Beastly Bosses	284
St Mary’s Church – Heritage and Restoration	The Narnia Carvings	1500
St Mary’s Church – Heritage and Restoration	Our Restoration Showreel	62
St Mary’s Church – Heritage and Restoration	Medieval Beverley	25
St Mary’s Church – Heritage and Restoration	The Priests Rooms	610

Social Media and website presence

We recognised that our social media and website presence was even more important during the times of lockdown so we worked very on these and exceeded our targets in every area.

Activities	Targets from Activity Plan	2019	2020	2021	2022 To date Sep 22
Increase number of annual website hits to	34,500	36,821	51,828	46,926	35,250 (predicted to exceed 50,000)
New Twitter Account number of followers	500				641 followers
Grow following on Facebook to	700				1,456 followers of page + Group members 705
Launch Instagram	350				798 followers
Launch YouTube channel	No target specified				33,055 Views

Moving the exhibitions onto the High Street

We recognise that many of the ‘underrepresented’ groups with which we were working might not have access to technology, and so we moved the exhibitions onto the high street. We secured a shop and used the window space to display the maquettes and stone carvings of Narnia and displays of the Tudor History of the bosses.

The pop-up display - which included information about, and images of, the bosses, plus backdrops created by a local artist - ran from 18th July to 10th September 2020 and included a holiday activity for children and families (to identify all 14 carvings - the display changed every fortnight). All primary schools in Beverley were informed about the activity and promoted it in their end of term letters to parents. Over 800 activity sheets were downloaded from our website and more than 20 young people completed the entire summer-long challenge, with some of them submitting their own artwork inspired by the carvings. Celebrating the heritage skills of the artisan craftsmen carrying out the restoration works has proved to be a highly effective way of engaging people in the heritage of St Mary's.

It is almost impossible to measure the numbers and impact but in the space of just 2 hours over 125 people stopped to linger at the window. We estimate that overall tens of thousand people stopped to look at the exhibition.

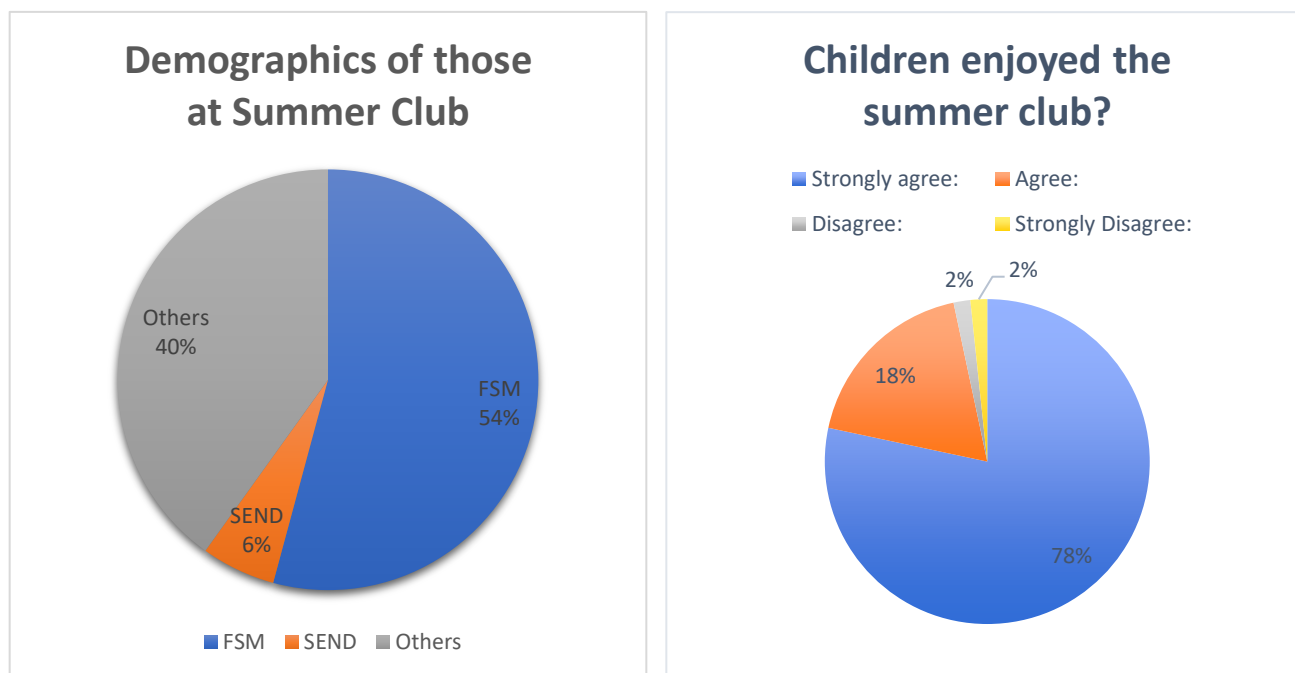


Engaging underrepresented groups

We found that an effective way was to reach those underrepresented communities through identifying schools where a high percentage of children receive free school meals or pupil premium. This was very effective, and we did all we could to engage the children and, by extension, their families in the project. We were delighted by the results of the woodcarver and the work done with schools such as Newland St John and St James Academy in Hull, as well as Mires Beck Nursery (a registered charity that provides work experience and social therapeutic horticulture for adults with learning difficulties, autism and physical disabilities).

During the summer of 2022 we set up a scheme to provide food and activities during the holidays for low-income families. We received some funding from the government's Holidays, Activities and Food program and offered 18 days of activities. We recruited 22 volunteers to help run these sessions and offered heritage related activities during these sessions. Our Heritage Learning Officer supported this work on 3 of the sessions.

342 of the 631 places were taken by children in receipt of free school meals, and 36 places were taken by those identified as non-free school meals but SEND (special educational needs and disabilities); 18 of the sessions were taken by Ukrainian refugees.



Feedback from families was very positive

"My children loved attending, after an anxious start they looked forward to each session and came out beaming, keen to talk about the new friends they made and activities they enjoyed. As a family on a tight budget this summer camp has enabled them to experience something normally beyond our financial reach. It has helped us tremendously as a family over the summer, we cannot praise or thank Becky and the team enough."

"Amazing job by everyone. It's been a huge help for us as parents and enjoyment for the children. Thank you so much"

"My daughter said that the leaders were all fabulous. She really enjoyed meeting new people from different schools and loved making a puppet and creating animals out of clay. It was wonderful. Thank you so much for helping us during the long holidays!"

Partnership with the NHS mental health service

It was a challenge to reach other community groups who had been working with adults with mental health problems, as many struggled to keep going through and beyond the pandemic. By definition, many of the members of these groups are vulnerable and were very anxious about Covid. Instead, we worked hard to establish a relationship with Humber NHS Mental Health Trust. We offered our church as a social prescribing centre, and we invited people through the mental health service to join us for wellbeing sessions. Six wellbeing workshops were held across June, July, and August 2022. These workshops were led by the artist Claire West and were aimed at people seeking to

explore how being creative can benefit mental health. Each workshop was 3 hours long, and participants were taken through different activities and techniques. No previous skill or knowledge was required, and the activities took inspiration from the art and heritage in St Mary's Church.

Again, the feedback was incredibly positive:

"Thank you so much for providing this workshop. I have been having a difficult time for the last few months and know my mental health has suffered. I really enjoyed the workshop and have developed a real love for collage. I have never done any art before but I didn't feel at any disadvantage. Clare was generous, enthusiastic and her cheerful positive approach was great and we were lucky to have her expertise to guide us. I 'stepped out of my own head' for a few hours and benefitted immensely."

"I booked on the workshop to 'take me out of myself' and didn't know what to expect. I'm often under pressure from family obligations, which I enjoy, but with health issues it's been hard to find time for me. Before I realised I was relaxed, creative and I felt it was calming and restorative. I wish there were more sessions available as I would love to be able to recommend to others, (I did feel happy and motivated doing something for myself!) and return if I could!"



WELLBEING ART WORKSHOPS

WITH ARTIST CLAIRE WEST

Join artist Claire West for FREE workshops that explore how art and colour can help promote happiness and wellbeing.

Each workshop will contain a different creative activity, drawing inspiration from the nature that can be found all around us.

Participants will be guided through the activities by Claire in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.

We are running 3 different three-hour workshops. You can sign up for morning or afternoon sessions for any of the workshops.

Print and Drawing.....	Tuesday 7th June,	9am – 12pm or 1pm – 4pm
Have Fun with Paint...	Tuesday 5th July,	9am – 12pm or 1pm – 4pm
Let's be Creative.....	Saturday 6th August,	9am – 12pm or 1pm – 4pm

All workshops are at: St Mary's Church Parish Hall,
North Bar Within, Beverley, HU17 8DL
TO BOOK A PLACE Phone: 01482 869137
Email: learning@stmarysbeverley.org

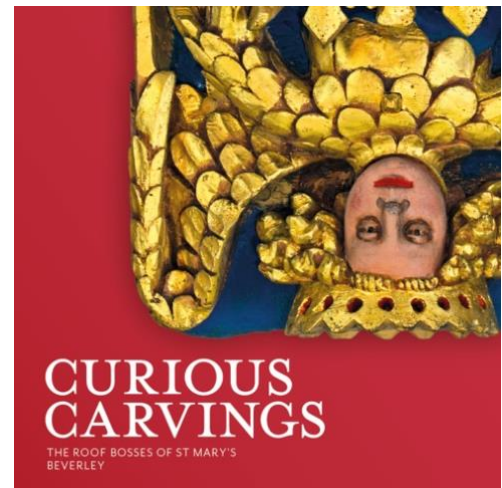
This demonstrates that 'more people and a wider range of people are engaging with our heritage' with a particular emphasis on the underrepresented groups identified in our activity plan.

B. Our heritage is being better interpreted and explained

During periods of lockdown, we were able to focus on interpretation and excellent resources were created to explain and interpret the heritage. They were carefully considered, making them inviting and accessible those who may not have formal education (in line with our desire to reach the underrepresented groups).

Therefore, guidebooks were designed which not only educated but inspired with beautiful pictures of the bosses written by Dr Jennie England. We are indebted to Jon Butterworth (an award-winning Creative Designer) for his invaluable support and guidance in this area.

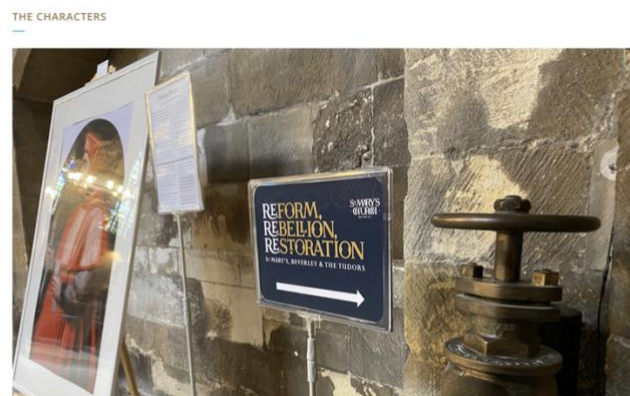
Likewise, we are very grateful to Fiona Jenkinson who added to our offer by creating 10 Pilgrim Rabbit magazines focussing on the heritage, which were distributed to 506 subscribers by email in addition to the 100 printed copies. This legacy is continuing as Fiona has volunteered to continue producing these popular magazines.



A database containing information and high-definition photos of all 688 bosses is now available on a touchscreen for visitors, and on the internet for those unable to visit in person. We have also created 3D printed images of the most popular bosses which can be touched and handled in church along with interpretation banners and trails around church.

Special Exhibitions

'Reform, Rebellion, Restoration: St Mary's, Beverley & the Tudors' was a free exhibition which connected paintings in the National Portrait Gallery to characters and events linked with St Mary's, Beverley, and the roof bosses. It included artwork by local artist Emma Garness.



The exhibition begins near the font, in the nave

Introducing the key players in one of the most transformative periods of English history. Click on each portrait for an insight into the life of one of the great personalities of Tudor England and discover some Beverley connections:

The event attracted 1,010 visitors into church during the one week it was open (October half term), before lockdown brought it to a premature close. We estimate that 1,000 people looked at the display about the exhibition in the windows of an unused shop of the high street; the homepage of the digital version of the exhibition on our website attracted 1,111 hits. In addition: 51 people attended the preview for our volunteer Welcomers.

Awareness of the exhibition in the region had been stimulated by front page coverage in the weekend edition of the Yorkshire Post on 24th October 2020.

The pinnacle of the exhibition was a webcast by historian Tracy Borman, joint Chief Curator for Historic Royal Palaces who told the story of Henry VIII (thought to be influential in the rebuilding of St Mary's and Tudor Bosses). This online talk was attended by 100 people.

In 2020, we began a series of rolling exhibitions in St Mary's. We found that these allowed more people, and a wider range of people, to learn about the church's heritage. Although some of the exhibitions had advertised run periods, they each have (or will) continued to be displayed in the

church in some way, making them more economically and environmentally sustainable options than, for example, printed leaflets.

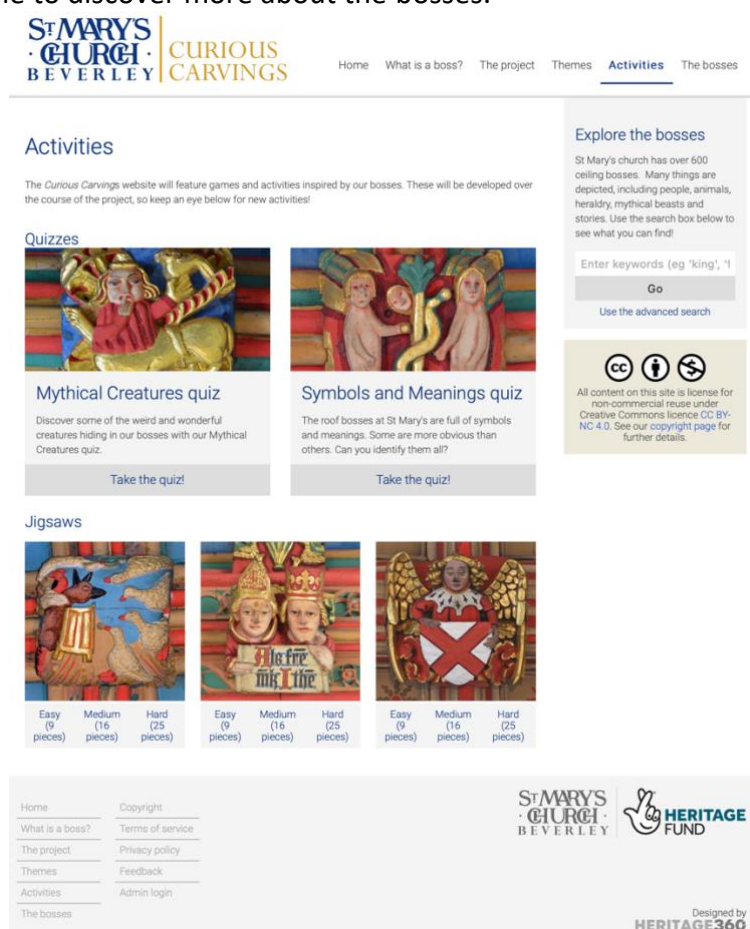
Between October 2021 and September 2022, the following exhibitions were displayed:

- “The Roof Bosses of St Mary’s Church” – introduction to the roof bosses and their meanings. Included a display of 3D printed bosses. After being up in the South Transept for seven months, the exhibition was rearranged to be a display area around the new touchscreen.
- “Women of Influence” – a display of the plaster casts for the new scheme of carvings on the external south side of the church.
- “Carved Roof Bosses” – display of the 5 wooden bosses made as a part of the woodcarving workshops.
- “Heritage Banners” - A series of pull-up banners that showcase elements of heritage in the church including, among others, the font, the Ceiling of Kings, and the Minstrels’ Pillar.

It has been our experience that the exhibitions have been a point of interest for visitors, increasing dwell time in the building, as well as providing an additional reason for people to visit the church.

The Curious Carvings Touchscreen

The touchscreen was accessed in the following between October 21 and November 2022 to explain and encourage people to discover more about the bosses.

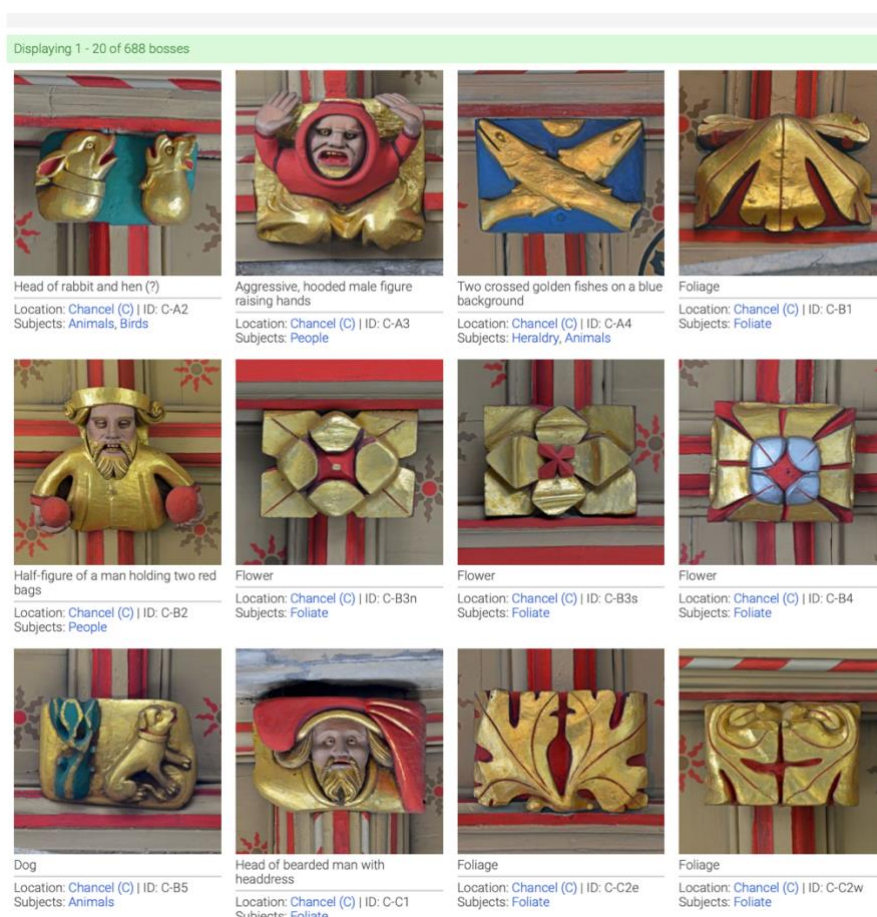


Oct 21-Nov 22	Numbers using the touchscreen
Curious Carvings Touch Screen	6,376

This demonstrates that ‘our heritage is being better interpreted and explained’ and ‘people are leaning about heritage’

C. Our heritage is being identified and recorded.

As part of the project, we commissioned a team from York University to photograph and record in high detail all 688 bosses. This information is invaluable for future repairs and restorations of the building but has also given us extraordinary insight into the life and times of Tudor and Medieval England. The findings from this research are shared through the Curious Carvings database catalogued by Dr Jennie England which will continue to grow and develop over the years as new discoveries are made.



In addition, paintwork samples have given a fascinating insight into the materials used to create these vibrant and fascinating pieces of artwork.

We have also recorded areas of the church which are normally inaccessible. So, carvings high up in the clerestories and graffiti not normally visible have been uncovered. We have photographed and

logged this information, which again not only provides insight into the heritage but will be valuable for future repairs and restorations.

D. People are developing skills

Throughout the project volunteers were invited to learn more about their heritage and were invited to receive heritage training.

In addition, we were able to offer very specific opportunities for two students from University of York's History of Art Department to develop their skills further.

The focus for these placements was for the students to develop new skills. This was assessed by the students' goals and ambitions being discussed at the beginning of their placement, and then monitored throughout. The overall aim was to work with Dr Jennie England to create an exhibition. For example, the two students in the 2021/22 academic year worked on the Heritage Banners.

In addition to these formal placements, across the last two years, Jennie has supported a student undertaking MA and then PhD level research on the roof bosses in St Mary's.

Feedback collected from the students is testament of the success of these placements:

"My placement experience at St. Mary's Church, Beverley, was overwhelmingly positive. One of the best aspects of the placement, which I know was a priority of Jennie's, was that it was tailored to my own needs and interests. I felt like I had a great deal of autonomy throughout the whole placement, and by consequence, feel as though I can take joint ownership over the exhibition. Jennie made sure I was involved in all aspects of planning the exhibition, from determining the show's overall message, selecting the objects to be displayed, and writing and designing wall labels and banners. I learned a lot about what goes into planning an exhibition...I always felt like my voice was valued, and that was a great feeling."

- MA student who undertook placement at St Mary's.

"From the beginning, I felt as if my ideas were genuinely valued and I was able to ask for further guidance on developing my ideas whenever it was needed...Furthermore, I found the independence of the internship really useful for future experiences. Having no set deadlines or a outlined checklist of activities set for me, I was able to develop my time management skills, setting personal deadlines and goals. ... It was a pleasure to collaborate on the project with [Jennie] and I feel I have gained some incredibly valuable experience. I feel very lucky to have been placed at St Mary's Beverley for my internship".

- BA student who undertook placement at St Mary's.

"Once restrictions started to come into force with the Covid-19 pandemic, the support and resources the project shared with me became even more important for the success of my dissertation. I was unable to visit the site so being able to access the wonderful archive of high-quality images of the bosses was really important...Jennie was also very helpful during this time... I think simply knowing there was someone I could contact with any questions was a great confidence boost during that time of uncertainty – I don't think I would have been able to carry on with the project otherwise."

- MA student who undertook research on the roof bosses.

This demonstrates that our heritage has and is being better identified and recorded.

E. People are having an enjoyable experience

We worked hard to make sure that we collected feedback from each session and visit. We tried to keep this as accessible as possible for those who were visiting or using our resources, so for example, after consulting with teachers we used a very simple data collection method for schools which involved smileys. The children were invited to tick a smiley face to represent how they felt about the visit.



The feedback we gathered from students and teachers coming to visit St Mary's has been highly positive. For students, at the end of visits we handed around a feedback sheet which had the following questions/tasks:

What did you enjoy about the visit?

- I think it was historic, fun and enjoyable
- I enjoyed that we got to learn a lot about the church
- I enjoyed drawing the [ceiling] bosses

The results were as follows



91%

8%

1%

What would have made the visit better?

- Nothing!!!
- If we got longer to draw the building
- If we got to explore more rooms

We also gathered positive feedback from the attending teachers, including:

"Thank you for today- our children really enjoyed it!"

“Our pupils absolutely loved the day and had lots to talk about once back in school. The activities were engaging and were pitched at just the right level for our pupils. They loved that they could bring home the planted seeds etc. From my perspective it was great to see their engagement and to hear and see their 'expression of wonder' when walking up to and into the wonderful buildings. I really feel this was a valuable experience for our pupils and an important part of their RE learning journey.”

“It was ideal to be able to tailor the visit to the needs of our pupils. I am very grateful for the amount of time Dr England gave us. They felt very confident and comfortable in asking questions and exploring the site. In lots of ways, it has informed my future teaching of the module because I am now much more aware of gaps in their knowledge and things that I may have taken for granted previously. The pupils claim that they are likely to step inside churches elsewhere now, and I am inclined to believe them!”

Other evidence was collected through surveys and social media and has been included in other parts of this report.

F. People are volunteering time

During the pandemic we lost some volunteers but the projected help us to recruit and retain others meaning that we are still able to keep church open every day and offer a warm welcome to visitors. We have no paid staff 'on duty' so this is a real achievement.

Alongside the important role of welcoming, people developed skills and volunteered their time in a wide variety of ways including:

- Offering expert advice on history
- Producing publicity and magazines
- Work with children and young people
- Overseeing finance and governance
- Supporting media and video output
- Project management



Children visiting the Narnia Trail

5. Media response

A real excitement about this project was generated in the national and local press, making people proud of their heritage. The excitement around the new carvings was particularly notable and the increase of visitors to church is no doubt related to this theme. We made sure that we thanked the NLHF and acknowledge the grant at each press release and media appearance (sadly these were not always recorded) but all the signage and information shared included the HLHF logo.



Date	Media / Newspaper	Title
11 December 2019	Yorkshire Post	Urgent restoration works begin at St Mary's with National Lottery support
30 April 2020	Yorkshire Post	Halfway Stage for renovation on poignant day for church https://www.stmarysbeverley.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Yorkshire-Post-30th-April-2020-Page-12.pdf
22 June 2020	BBC News website	Narnia Stone Carvings Chosen for Beverley Church
23 June 2020	The i newspaper	Wrong will be right, when Aslan comes in sight https://www.stmarysbeverley.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/The-i-article-of-23-June-2020.jpg
23 June 2020	Yorkshire Post	Mane attraction: Aslan the lion carves starring role at church https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/heritage-and-retro/heritage/stone-carvings-chronicles-narnia-characters-appear-yorkshire-church-2891739
24 June 2020	The York Press	Sculptor based near York creates characters from The Chronicles of Narnia

		https://www.yorkpress.co.uk/news/18538647.sculptor-based-near-york-creates-characters-chronicles-narnia/
3 July 2020	The Church Times	Carvings of Narnia characters to feature in medieval church https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2020/3-july/news/uk/carvings-of-narnia-characters-to-feature-in-medieval-church
18 August 2020	The Daily Telegraph	Lord's lion Bishop of Hull Alison White blesses a bust of Aslan from the Chronicles of Narnia, one of 14 children's characters sculpted for St Mary's Church, in Beverley. https://www.stmarysbeverley.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Daily-Telegraph-1.pdf
18 August 2020	The Times	Alison White, bishop of Hull, blesses a carving of Aslan, the lion who protects CS Lewis' Narnia from evil, for the north nave of St Mary's Church, Beverley https://www.stmarysbeverley.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/The-Times-1.pdf
18 August 2020	Western Daily Press	The Bishop of Hull Alison White blesses a statue of Aslan, a character from the Chronicles of Narnia by CS Lewis, at St Mary's Church in Beverley, East Yorkshire. https://www.stmarysbeverley.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Western-Daily-Press.pdf
19 August 2020	The Guardian	Yorkshire church to be adorned with Chronicles of Narnia statues: St Mary's church in Beverley commissions sculptures of CS Lewis characters to replace medieval carvings. https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/aug/19/yorkshire-church-adorned-chronicles-of-narnia-carvings-st-marys-beverley
21 August 2020	Smithsonian Magazine	Stone Sculptures of <i>Chronicles of Narnia</i> Characters to Adorn Medieval Church; Statues of Aslan, the White Witch and other mythical beings will replace weathered carvings at St. Mary's Church in Yorkshire. https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/chronicle-narnia-statues-will-ornament-medieval-church-180975611/
23 August 2020	BBC 1 - Sunday Morning Live	
Regular Updates	BBC Radio Humberside	For example - https://www.stmarysbeverley.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/BBC-Radio-Humberside-Afternoon-Show-with-Andy-Comfort-on-29th-April-2020.mp3
Regular Updates	BBC Look North	

6. Conclusions

This report has shown how effectively the Curious Carvings Project responded to extremely challenging circumstances. We have met our targets in the following ways:

(1) Our heritage is being better managed. The project has raised the profile of St Mary's and attracted investment from others, including a grant from the Government's Culture Recovery Fund which is enabling us to restore the south nave clerestory.

(2) Our heritage is in much better condition. The repairs which have now been carried out will protect the building from further decay and loss.

(3) Our heritage is being better interpreted and explained. The bosses are being presented and interpreted in the brochure, on social media and the website, and in learning resources.

(4) Our heritage is being identified and recorded. Professional photographs of all 688 bosses have now been taken and will appear in the visual database. We have a better understanding of the bosses in terms of the themes represented and their original craftsmanship, including the paint composition.

(5) People are developing skills. Training is being delivered to our volunteers, and the project team is increasing its experience and project management skills. Volunteers have been trained in hospitality and welcome, safeguarding, and some have received first aid training. They have taken up leadership and oversight of some events and have been involved in recording, interpreting and sharing the heritage.

(6) People are learning about heritage. The variety of activities and events which have advanced knowledge about our heritage and allowed us to show share that knowledge widely.

(7) People are changing their attitudes. The celebration of the project and the heritage in the media has generated a sense of pride in the local community (with many people visiting St Mary's for the first time) and a desire to get involved (with new volunteers coming forward).

(8) People are having an enjoyable experience. We are gathering a variety of feedback from visitors which reveals that they are engaging with the heritage at an emotional and intellectual level.

(9) People are volunteering time. Our community of volunteers is growing, and the project is creating more opportunities for people to get involved.

(10) More people, and a wider range of people, are engaging with our heritage. The big growth in our audience during the period has been digital. Despite the challenges presented by the pandemic, we will be seeking to work with more schools and community groups during the year ahead.

(11) The project is making the local area a better place to live, work and visit. The free events and activities generated by the project (such as the Tudor portrait exhibition which was open during half-term) foster a sense of ownership of St Mary's in the local community - that it is the "town's church" and for the benefit of its people.

(12) Our organisation is becoming more resilient. The capacity and capability which we have built during the development and delivery of the project enabled us to continue our restoration with

another major heritage project – the restoration of the south nave clerestory which has also received high acclaim and has inspired us to continue moving forward.

None of this could have been achieved without the support of the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Lottery players. We are particularly grateful for all the support and guidance given during this project by Roberta Lane and her colleagues from the Leeds office.

