

Case Study

Fonthill Abbey

Wiltshire

A Gothic Revival Abbey built in haste by William Beckford between 1796 and 1813. The original Abbey was short lived and demolished in the late 1800s. All that remains is the gatehouse, half the north wing and a seventy six foot tower of gothic perpendicular architecture. Ellis and Co were commissioned to restore the towers' stonework, remove ironwork, install steel supports, repair the windows and lay a new roof.

Stonework was cleaned, biological material removed, and stonework repaired. Corroded iron cramps were cut out and where necessary new steel cramps were inserted. Surrounding masonry which had been damaged by the ironwork was repaired. New Chilmark stone was cut and pieced in to fit neatly and tightly alongside existing stonework. Smaller gaps and joints were cleaned and filled with mortar.



The tower of the north wing before and after works showing the new windows and stone repairs.

The windows throughout were stripped down and repaired, including the Oriel window shown above which required additional structural support once cement and ironwork were removed. A large section of bulging ashlar was removed and replaced with stonework designed to match and fit neatly alongside surrounding stonework.

We commissioned replacements for missing sections of stained glass to restore the south elevation window. An entirely new window was inserted in the second floor with moulded stone surround, oak frames and casements, toughened clear glass and steel accessories.

In addition to repairing window frames and casements throughout the tower our joiners also repaired the staircase to the turret roof the supporting beams for which had perished, laid new floor boards and inserted a new oak door opening within the second floor.

A three meter section of chimney was taken down and rebuilt with a combination of salvaged and new stone. A new clay flue liner was fitted. The lead roof was replaced with a new timber supporting structure, new lead sheet, and gutters. Lead flashings on the parapet were salvageable so repaired and reinstalled.

All work had to be timed carefully so as not to disturb a colony of bats living in the tower and slate access vents were fitted in the roof to support future populations of bats.