



Parish Church of St Eustace

Does it have a future in our Ibberton community?

This is not an appeal for financial contributions; neither is it about religion. It is about setting our village church in context and about us, as Ibberton's residents, together considering its future in a deliberate and decisive manner.



The value of St Eustace to Ibberton

Our church is far more than just a place of worship. It is a 700-year-old record of Ibberton's history, a landmark in the Dorset landscape, a repository of local memories, a place of beauty and reflection, and a heritage asset that cannot be replaced. Saving it is not simply about preserving a building: it is about being good custodians and preserving the identity, history and character of our community for future generations.

- Part of our shared history as a community, spanning many centuries – it embodies the story of the village
- Beautiful setting with commanding views across Dorset – part of our landscape
- Historic building with a fascinating story to tell – it is a unique piece of local history
- Irreplaceable – if allowed to decay it will likely become lost forever
- Architectural and artistic value – represents the skills of craftsmen, masons, carpenters, glaziers and artists from centuries ago
- Represents shared values and is part of Ibberton's identity – a place where we can meet together as family, friends and neighbours
- Belongs to us and serves the whole community (not just worshippers)
- Provides continuity between generations – baptisms, weddings, remembrances, burials
- Adds financial value to our homes because of what it brings to the village

A great philosopher once said:

“If we undervalue what we have, we will lose it.”



Our church in the context of history

	<i>England's history</i>	<i>Life in Ibberton</i>	<i>St Eustace's development</i>
14th century	Fatigue, war and social upheaval	Farming across open fields amidst plague and hardship	St Eustace built on its hillside site above our village
15th century	Dynastic conflict dominated by the Wars of the Roses	Farming families living quietly through distant dynastic wars	The church gains a tower and its north chapel, expanding its medieval form
16th century	Religious reform under the Tudor monarchs	Agricultural life continues as religious changes reach the parish	A north aisle was added, creating much of today's layout
17th century	Civil war, revolution and constitutional change	Civil war tensions touch the community	New bells and minor alterations
18th century	Empire expands as commerce and industry accelerate	Farming improves gradually as traditional village life continues	Our church remains active, gaining memorials and commandment tablets
19th century	Industrialisation and imperial power reach unprecedented heights	Agricultural work persists despite railways and urban growth	Neglect leads to serious decay and partial collapse
20th century	Society transformed by world wars, reforms and decolonisation	Mechanisation, war and modernisation transform rural life	Extensive restoration rescues and reopens the historic building
21st century	Globalisation, immigration, technological change and political realignment	Residents balance village traditions with modern connectivity	<i>This is up to us ...</i>

THE RECTORS OF IBBERTON

Edward de Bremere	1320 - 1324
Edmund de Forde	1324 - 1348
Ralph de Sanchadone	1348 - 1349
John Faber	1349
Richard Cornet	1349 - 1404
Thomas Abbot	1404 - 1406
John Alre	1406 - ?
John Guyst	? - 1420
John Leigh	1420 - 1422
Richard Kauf	1422 - 1423
Robert Ludington	1423 - 1440
Nicholas Upton	1440 - 1441
William Savernake	1441 - 1452
John Towning	1452 - 1512
Michael Wawgh	1512 - 1514
Richard Langhill	1514 - 1515
John Rownde	1515 - 1519
John West	1519 - 1520
Nicholas Maynewaring	1520 - 1522
David Henslegh	1522 - ?
No record for 82 years.	
William Stickley	1604 - 1653
Edward Deare	1653 - 1655
William Sutton	1656 - 1682
Nathaniel Highmore	1682 - 1723
Charles Baker	1723 - 1752
Clement Elswood	1753 - 1774
Richard Daubeny	1775 - 1802
George Wasse	1802
J. Manesty	1802 - 1813
Thomas Salter	1813 - 1855
John Martyn	1855 - 1882
Joseph Augustus Wix	1882 - 1899
Lionel Seymour Plowman	1899 - 1927
Henry Thomas Blake	1928 - 1952
Montagu Clare Callis	1952 - 1959
Ronald Flower Martyn	1960 - 1968
Michael James Bmeroy (Pin C)	1969 - 1972
ditto (Rector)	1972 - 1990
David Michael Pine	1991 - 1993
Stanley Gill	1994 - 1999
Diana Jones	2000 - 2006

CURATES

Edward Acton	1813
Samuel Fitzherbert	1814 - 1818
Sydenham Sabine	1818 - 1830
Henry Davis	1830 - 1852
DeC. Meade	1853 - 1854

The future of our historic church building ...
... *if* we allow this to happen again.



Solving the “village church paradox”

The key to financing the future maintenance of St Eustace lies in securing grants from funding organisations, and the way to unlock these is to solve the “village church paradox” ...

- The primary paradox is that:
 - The congregation is small.
 - The building is expensive to maintain.
 - The heritage significance is very high.
- Funders increasingly view broader community use as part of the solution.
- St Eustace would be outstandingly well placed to secure grant funding, if it can be demonstrated to be:
 - of high value to the community as a whole,
 - a cultural venue,
 - and a place of worship.

Church profile	Grant competitiveness
Worship only, small congregation	Low
Worship plus occasional community events	Medium
Regular programme of community activities, diverse users and partnerships	High



A possible solution for us

In order to secure the grant financing that we require to sustainably maintain our church, we are going to have to demonstrate its value to the community. Below are a few ideas as to how this can be done ...

Culture:

- Art exhibitions (eg Dorset Art Week)
- Musical concert evenings
- Saturday kids' "art appreciation" or "music appreciation" mornings
- Dorset history / archaeology talks

Heritage and tourism:

- Guided church open days
- Heritage events
- Guided countryside walks that include the church

Community:

- Swap shops
- Get-together for something cultural in the church before selected pub nights
- School visits

Please do add other ideas that you may have!

If, as a village, we decide to proceed with some of the above, we would need to discuss and decide together who would be responsible for arranging and running each event.

Note re the church and the village hall: Given the church's physical constraints, it probably cannot become a café or major community centre and should not try to do so. The village hall is already fulfilling that role. Instead, applications for grants should emphasise that the church complements the village hall - it provides a unique cultural and heritage venue, and it supports community identity and social cohesion.



Where could the church apply for grants?

The numerous organisations to which we could apply for grants all take community value into account when considering grant applications ...

Oganisation	What they fund	Importance of demonstrating community value
The National Lottery Heritage Fund	Heritage-led conservation and repair projects, often including interpretation and public engagement	Very strongly dependent on demonstrating public benefit, engagement, and wider community access.
National Lottery Community Fund	Community-led projects that improve local wellbeing; sometimes includes church-linked community infrastructure	Funding is driven almost entirely by clear, measurable community benefit and social impact.
Benefact Trust	Church repairs, restoration, and projects supporting Christian mission and buildings	Expects clear evidence the church is central to community worship, outreach, and social value.
Garfield Weston	Capital grants for building repairs and restoration projects, including churches	Particularly values evidence of wider community benefit and local support, alongside strong fundraising effort.
Historic England	Conservation of highly significant heritage assets, including expert-led repair of historic fabric	Focuses mainly on heritage significance and conservation quality, but application benefits from showing public engagement.
National Churches Trust	Urgent and essential church fabric repairs (roofs, stonework, drainage, structural issues) and conservation works	Primarily funds building need but still expects evidence the church is active and valued locally. Community use strengthens the case.
The Pilgrim Trust	Conservation of historic interiors, monuments, stained glass, and decorative heritage	Prioritises heritage value and specialist conservation - expects evidence the church is accessible and valued by the community.
ChurchCare (Church of England)	Conservation of church interiors, organs, stained glass, bells, and monuments	Focuses on Anglican church heritage - community use helps justify ongoing investment in maintenance.
Wolfson Foundation	Major grants for conservation of significant listed church fabric (often via partner schemes)	Prioritises architectural and historic significance - public access and benefit strengthen applications.

Next steps ...

You are invited to share general thoughts, ideas and comments on the subject of the future of our church by sending these to Alice, our Church Warden, on 07506-511-478, or alice.church90@gmail.com.

A survey will be prepared and circulated to all Ibberton residents inviting responses to particular questions regarding the future of our church.

Inputs and feedback received will then be shared between all of us so that we can decide together how best to proceed, taking everyone's views into account.



