

Restoration Award 2004
South Transept Rose Window
St Magnus Cathedral
Kirkwall, Orkney

The project in Orkney involved the renewal of the South Transept rose window and stonework repairs to the clerestory stage. There were also minor repairs to the Session House masonry, including rebuilding a pinnacle.

Existing stone in the rose window was measured and templates made. The window was set out to full size. The joints remained the same size as original.

The project involved collecting clock stone from the Head of Holland in St Ola on the island and transporting it in 24-tonne loads down to the Boden & Ward workshops in Northampton. The stone was sawn and worked at the workshops and returned to Orkney for fixing.

The original rose window was installed in 1856, when the gable top and wall tops of the South Transept were rebuilt under the instruction of Richard Spence, the architect.

When Boden & Ward's scaffolding went up, inspection showed the stone was in poor condition. The masons realised it had been put in on the bed the wrong way. It was also a softer stone and believed to have come from the north of Scotland and not from the island itself. It was believed there was an iron band around the window, but nothing was found when the window was removed.

Problems were encountered while sawing the blocks because of quarrying difficulties that caused the blocks to shatter.

The blocks were quarried 17 years ago and had been left out in the elements on the coast, so when it was time to use the stone faults became obvious quickly. The masons had to saw many blocks in order to get unvented stone big enough for the 'Y' sections in the tracery.

The project was completed in February this year and the new window went in without any further problems. New glazing added the finishing touches.

The masons' verdict was that it was a most enjoyable project, both in the workshops and fixing on site.

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