

Restoration of Victorian Encaustic & Geometric tiled floor work carried out at:
St Paul's Church, Irton, Holmrook, Cumbria. Grade 1 Listed building

Barbara Wright Churchwarden of St Paul's contacted me after getting a scare from the Co who insured the Church as the tiles had become that unstable it constituted a health & safety risk.

St Paul's Church at Irton is set on a hill and apart from the Vicarage and a small farm nearby it is isolated, it was an enjoyable contract, and I was left to carry out my work with few distractions apart from the stunning view at the back of the church.



St Paul's Church Irton.

The Church Shown here was built after demolishing the original church in 1865 further renovations were carried out in 1887 to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria. There are some beautiful Stained Glass & Painted windows throughout the Church. Some were made by William Morris & Co.

One of the oldest Celtic Crosses still standing is the Irton cross erected in the late 8th or early 9th century it stands at 10 foot high made out of a block of red sandstone it was in the church yard prior to the Viking invasions.

It has interlocking Celtic designs & Vine scrolls & Rosettes all of Irish Celtic artistry, while I was there a Japanese tourist spent a good part of the day taking pictures of the Church the work I was doing and he was fascinated with the Cross & the stained glass windows.



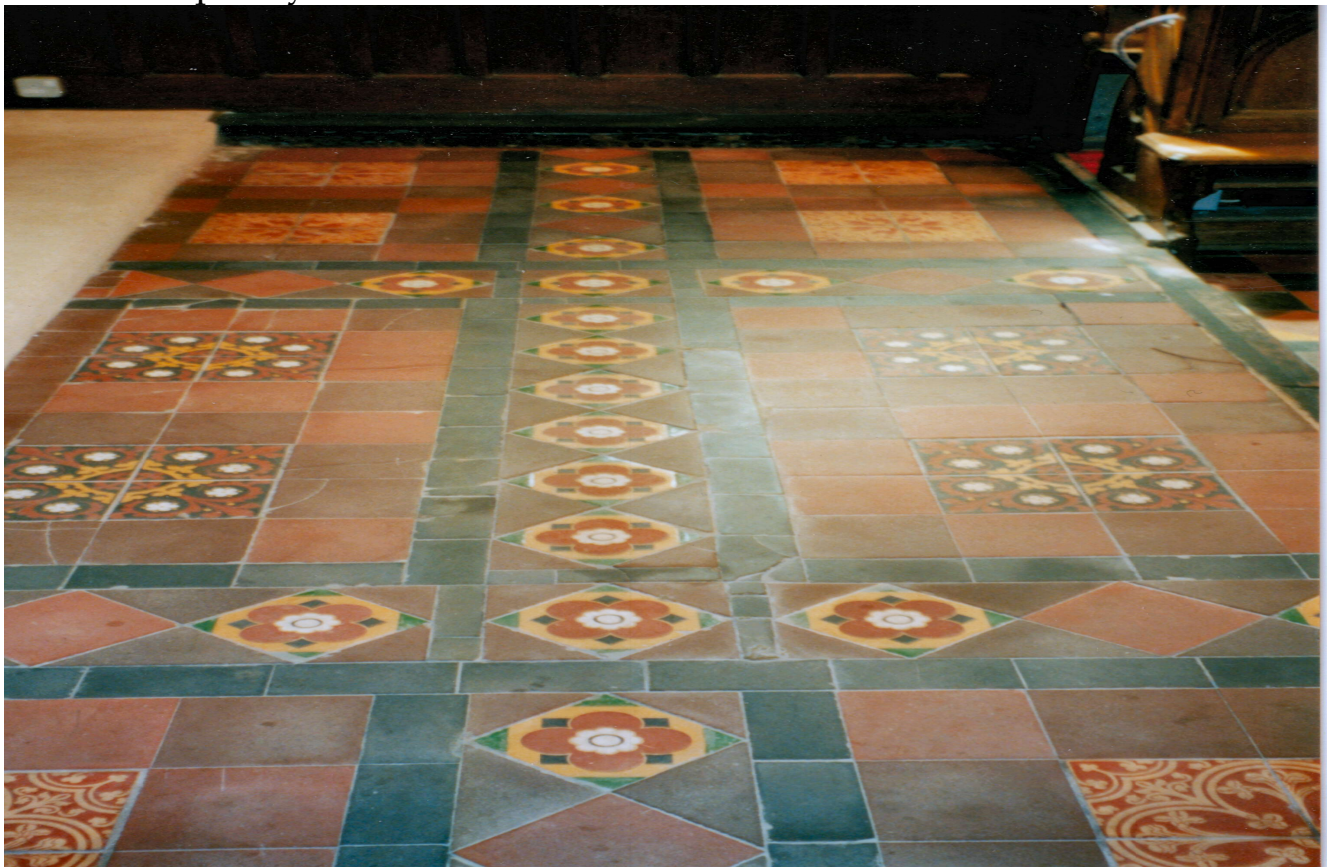
The Irton Celtic Cross.

The Victorian encaustic & geometric tiles had heaved in a number of sections of the floor including areas that had plaques of local prominent citizens , a number of tiles had cracked into so many bits it was not worth trying to piece them back together.

The Altar tiles had suffered the worst damage and it was obvious that numerous misguided attempts at resetting the tiles had taken place usually to the detriment of both the tiles and the aesthetics & symmetry of the floor.

Many of the tiles apart from being cracked & loose were also out of sequence so many had been shifted around it was impossible to tell how the original floor may have looked plus there were no photos to check with.

As the Church is a Grade 1 listed it is usually very difficult to get permission to lift large sections up, however I was given a free rein and I can say that trust was re-paid (see reference) the restoration of the various parts of the Chancel and in other parts of the Church took two weeks to carry out and the Altar floor was almost completely re-laid.



St Paul's damaged Victorian encaustic & geometric tiled floor prior to restoration.

Because so many tiles had been broken and were out of sequence I took all of the tiles up in front of the Altar as they were too loose to consider fixing in-situ the tiles to the side & rear of the Altar were just viable to lift & remove the underlying screed down to a depth to accept the tile along with a bed of adhesive.

I cut out all the damaged screed laid a new screed with glass fibres blended into the mix (provides a flexible mix) this screed was laid over a DPM (damp proof membrane) as with most restoration work the vast majority is invisible work = the client rarely is aware of this part of the project, in this case I had removed many hundredweights of rubble then all the viable tiles had any mortar chipped off the backs & sides so they could be fitted back down as tightly as possible.

The finished floor looks stunning but 90% of the work is literally hidden or is done in a fashion that isn't seen because it is prep work.

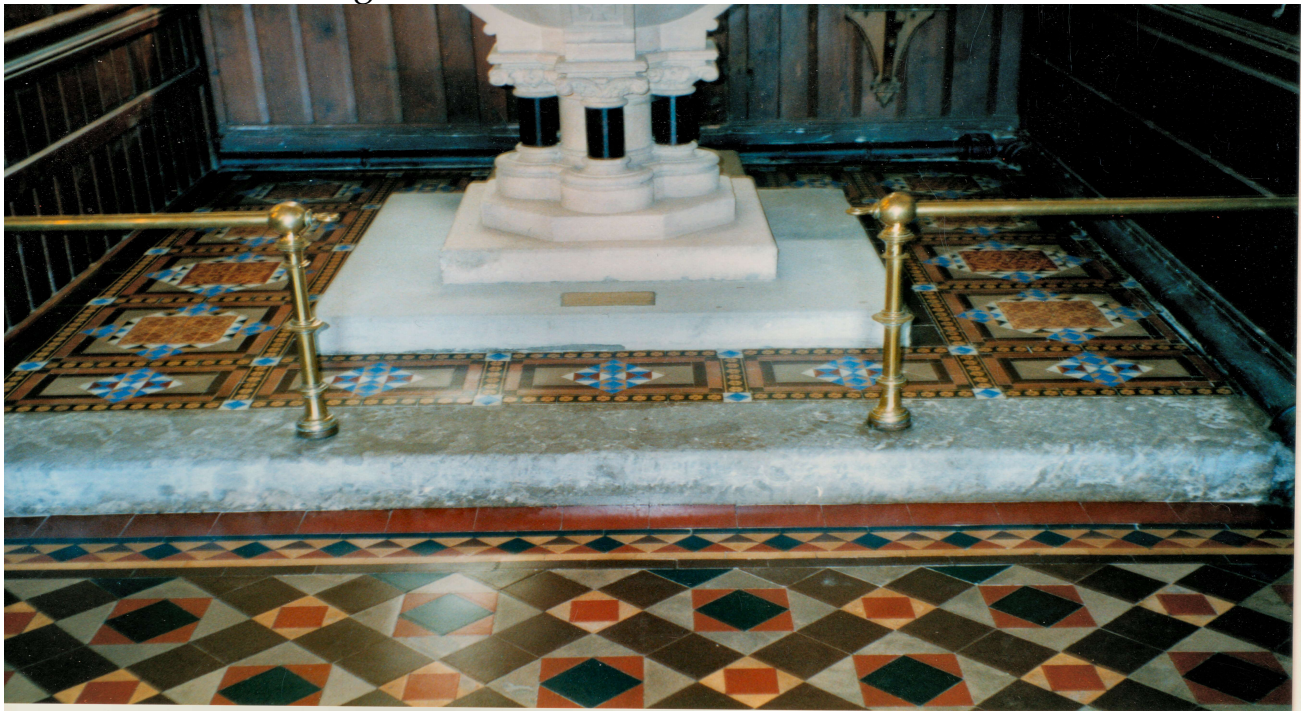


St Paul's Victorian encaustic & geometric tiles restored.
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Below pictures showing the Fount tiles cleaned & restored those tiles had very little damage, the aisle pictures show the tiles restored most of the tiles here were just loose.



Main Aisle Victorian geometric tiles restored at St Paul's Irton



Fount Area tiles cleaned & restored.

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Re-positioned Victorian encaustic & geometric tiles restored at St Paul's Irton.



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Reference for St Paul's Church Holmrook Irton.

St Paul's Church, Irton, Holmrook, Cumbria

Steve Sinnott
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REFERENCE

The Churchwardens, PCC and members of the parish of St Paul's, Irton in Cumbria cannot recommend too highly the work which was done for them during the summer of 2003 by Steve Sinnott of Heritage Tiling.

Our insurance firm was starting to talk about the possible closure of our church until work done on our Victorian floor tiles in the chancel had been completed. The tiles were starting to lift, sink and dislodge in places due to the movement of the cement body on which they were laid.

Tracking down an expert who was both able to do the work, and was also prepared to travel to a remote area of Cumbria wasn't easy but recommendations led us to Steve Sinnott.

From the start his knowledge, experience and able assessment of our predicament gave us confidence that we could leave it in his hands.

During the two weeks that Steve worked on our church we realised how wide was his expert knowledge and experience. He understands the make up of tiles: their clays, glazes, history and design.

It was also a great time.

Steve is a good raconteur, and with his years of tiling could write book.

We have no hesitation in saying that if you can get Steve Sinnott and any workforce he employs to do work on your tiles you will be most fortunate.

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