

Behind the headlines

MEDIEVAL FRIARY MAKEOVER

THE 800-year-old Beverley Friary is being lovingly restored so it can operate as a modern youth hostel. **John Townend** finds out more

THINK of Beverley's landmark buildings and the list is long and impressive.

Topped, of course, by the Minster; the list includes St Mary's, North Bar and Norwood House.

But you'd almost have to be local, or at least an enthusiast, to know about Beverley's Dominican friary. Tucked away in Friar's Lane off Eastgate, the ancient building has been operated as a youth hostel since the 1980s.

Now it's being treated to a £270,000 renovation to bring the facilities up to modern standards.

To protect the building's character, the renovation is being overseen by Beverley Friary Preservation Trust.

Trust chairman Chris Dawson said: "The aim is for it to reopen for the coming YHA season. It's medieval and parts of it are 13th and 14th century."

"We wanted to preserve in perpetuity the building in its current context."

East Riding Council has worked on the project in conjunction with the Trust and the Youth Hostel Association.

A council spokesman said: "The refurbishment is scheduled to be completed in time for the summer season and will provide a 30-bed modern self-catering hostel, which will meet the requirements of the Youth Hostel Association and add to the tourist offer of the town."

"The Beverley Friary Preservation Trust which has been the custodian of the Friary since the 1970s, will, in partnership with the council and The Youth Hostel Association, continue to play an active role in the preservation and promotion of the friary."

"The friary is the only youth hostel in East Yorkshire."

The eventual aim will be for the friary to operate full-time as a youth hostel. But, as part of the agreement between the parties, it will also be available for community events.

Mr Dawson said: "We will have a couple of weekends a month when



RESTORATION: East Riding College students visit Beverley Friary to learn about work being done. Front from left, Steve Voase contractor, Andy Morley site manager, and back from left, college tutor James Baron and students Stuart Sweet, Mike Holmes, and Joshua Nicholson.



DERELICT: The friary fell into disrepair and faced demolition.

Ancient building gets lease of life

THE Dominican Friary was first established in 1263.

Parts of the building date from then while others were added in the centuries that followed.

The friary was closed in about 1548.

After falling into disrepair and facing demolition, it was converted into a youth hostel in 1984.

The YHA pays a small rent and the deal means the ancient building has been given a lease of life and a modern function.

The friary is the only one in the region and was referred to in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales.

people will be able to visit the friary and look at those aspects of the building that are to do with medieval times.

"We've been anxious to ensure that it's not just a youth hostel. I wanted to maintain the community aspects of the scheme."

He paid tribute to expert architect Jonathan Hobson, who was tasked with designing an upgrade of the Friary while preserving its historic architecture.

The project, being carried out by Hull-based Voase Builders, is so unusual, it caught the interest of lecturers teaching building skills at East Riding College.

They arranged a tour of the site

so students could see the range of difficulties such a scheme presents and the solutions used to overcome them.

Tutor James Baron said: "Because of the downturn in work, the students are getting very little site experience."

"They're going through the qualification but, for some of them, this was their first time in a proper work environment."

"The opportunity to visit a working construction site reinforces the work already being done with the learners within the college environment on their qualification."

"Being able to see the theory in practice is a big reason for organ-

ising visits like this. A building like this one is a fascinating example and a good chance for learners to see the challenges an older building presents."

Student Mike Holmes, 23, of Butterfly Meadows, Molescroft, said: "I'm a time-served joiner but I've gone back to college."

"Just looking at the old joints they used in something this old is a real eye-opener."

Another student, Joshua Nicholson, 17, of Beverley, said: "It was a great opportunity to visit a working site, especially one which demonstrates both restoration and new-builds at the same time."

"Seeing the work in practice will

help with my studies and has made me more determined to get my qualification and go into the building industry."

Clearly proud to show off the work his crew are doing, building company boss Steve Voase said: "There are a lot of requirements on what we can and can't do."

"With all construction, you always see something different and you always get a sense of pride. That's especially the case with something like this."

"It's about problem solving. It's a very old building but it will be a 30-bed youth hostel and that means it will need the maximum supply of hot water to all rooms, and they'll all want to have a shower at the same time."

"That means getting a huge number of pipes from one side of the building to the other."

Where repairs are needed next to ancient stonework or joinery the decision has been to make it obvious work has been done. That means the original features still stand out and there is no hint of features being made to "look old".

Mr Voase paid tribute to architect Mr Hobson, saying: "It's been a different set of challenges for us. But Jonathan Hobson is passionate about what he does."

"It will be a fantastic place when it's finished."

The hostel closed in September last year. Work started in January and is expected to be completed in May.



GRAND PLAN: Students get a tour of the work being done.



RACK AND RUIN: The derelict Dominican friary in December 1964.



HOME SWEET HOME: The friary was being used for dwellings in 1957.