

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY, SHORTLANDS

ANNUAL REPORT ON THE FABRIC AND ORNAMENTS FOR 2022

Introduction

This report is produced in accordance with the Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Measure 1991.

Several significant items of work were undertaken by external contractors during 2022 and additional items were carried out by volunteers (Section 1).

The premises were inspected on behalf of the Churchwardens in March/April 2023, a few months after the Quinquennial Inspection in November 2022. The main items requiring attention, noted in Section 2, are based on both inspections.

No fire safety evacuation practices took place in 2022, in readiness for a potential emergency, but it is intended that these should be resumed soon. Fire extinguishers throughout the premises including the Scout Hut were serviced during the year.

The goods and ornaments have been inspected by the Churchwardens and new photographic records of silverware and plate are being compiled. A statement on the contents of the Terrier and Log Book is at Section 3.

1. Repairs and other work carried out during the year

The following significant items of work were undertaken by external contractors :

- (i) The Quinquennial Inspection of Church buildings was carried out in November 2022 by John Bailey of Thomas Ford Associates. The Fabric Committee are preparing a prioritised action plan based on the recommendations in the report.
- (ii) Tree Surveys of the Hall Grounds and Church Grounds were carried out by Crown Tree Surgeons Ltd. Faculties for the recommended work have been obtained. Work in the Hall grounds was completed in February 2023; the same company will carry out work in the Church grounds in May.
- (iii) A structural survey of the main nave roof was commissioned with abseilers Extreme Rope Access Ltd.; the first stage of this work involving a visual inspection and photographs of the internal roof structure was carried out in March 2023.
- (iv) A new AV operating station was commissioned (installed early in 2023). A retrospective Faculty for the AV equipment is in preparation. Moving the AV equipment has enabled re-instatement of the St. George's Chapel.
- (v) A structural survey of the Hall patio doors was commissioned because of recurring problems. The recommendations have been followed for the installation of replacement doors and frame.
- (vi) The harnesses and Latchways wire anti-fall system were serviced in Sept 2022 and all passed the inspection test.
- (vii) The annual boiler service was carried out.

Other repairs and maintenance work were undertaken by volunteers including the following :

- (i) The main Church doors (south porch) were sanded and re-oiled and cracks filled.
- (ii) Drains and lower gutters were cleared of debris including the French drains. Clearing of the high gutters will be pursued once authorisation for work at high level has been obtained. Leaks and water ingress on the south side of the chancel require investigation once this approval has been granted.
- (iii) 2 loose slabs on the external steps leading from Church House to the Hall were re-bedded with sand/cement and grouted.
- (iv) The restoration work on the 2 benches closest to the south porch was completed.
- (v) Lawns were regularly mowed throughout the year, the borders tidied, hedges trimmed and trees near the south porch were pruned.

2. Inspection of the fabric of the Church including the Millennium Chapel (MC) and curtilage

The inspection carried out on behalf of the Churchwardens showed the following main defects require attention. *[Actions suggested are indicated]:*

Outside :

- Various coping stones around the Church have minor cracks, distorted lead flashing, missing mortar and stained brickwork underneath. *[continue repairs in 2023 and beyond, particularly to the worst areas of missing mortar in the joints]*
- The condition of the coping stones over the MC east wall is a particular cause for concern since they are crumbling on several sides and really need to be replaced. *[replace at earliest opportunity]*
- Previously identified cracks in the brickwork around the Church have not changed significantly but should continue to be monitored for deterioration, in particular high up at the north west corner where significant cracks on both the north and west walls contribute to potential instability of the brickwork at this point. *[continue to monitor]*
- The large square holes high up on either side of the organ loft appear to lead to control louvres for the organ chamber below and the louvres inside these holes are visible. Much of the wire mesh on the external sides of these louvres, to keep out birds, animals, leaves etc., has completely disintegrated. *[replacement to be discussed by Fabric Comm]*
- The flat roof above the south aisle is in good condition as is the one on the north side where previous patched repairs are holding but on the various other low level tiled roofs there are a number of broken or cracked tiles (north and south porches). *[repair/replace when roofing contractor on site]*
- On the nave roof a lot of mortar has become loose and broken away particularly along the ridge on the north and south sides but also from underneath the lowest course of tiles especially on the south side – this mortar is lying in the north and south side gutters and needs clearing. Many of the tiles have weathered badly causing surface damage, cracks and broken corners – previous repairs on the south side need to be addressed. Some of the flashing, particularly along the north side gutter is worn/damaged and requires repairing. There is one coping stone at the north east corner where the bottom corner has completely broken away. *[Roofing contractors will be re-contacted; action in 2023]*
- Some of the mortar/mastic on the north side coping stones around the flat roof at the top of the caged ladder is missing or has gaps/cracks and should be repaired – see previous comment. *[attend to in 2023]*
- The Church bell on the south wall has not been functioning properly since September 2022 and requires maintenance/repair. *[attend to at earliest opportunity, awaiting advice from Diocese]*

Inside :

- The cracking at the wall/ceiling joints at the west end of the Church and in both north and south aisles coupled with some vertical cracks previously identified are largely the same as last year although there has been some deterioration (above arch leading to the south porch, above the organ pipes extending into the sanctuary). *[continue to monitor]*
- The brickwork at the bottom of the wall of St. George's Chapel, close to the curtains and outer doors, is in a very poor state and needs attention. *[attend to in 2023 if possible]*
- A number of the 12 remaining pews on both sides of the Church are loose, as are one or two choir stalls. *[replace screws and/or tighten 2023]*
- In the sanctuary, no faults were found in the fabric of the leaded windows and surrounding stonework. *[continue to monitor staining on inside of stonework]*
- The north aisle ceiling needs preparation and repainting. *[re-paint 2023/24]*
- In the MC there is minor cracking showing at the wall/ceiling joints but otherwise this chapel is in very good condition since its re-painting in 2018.

Inspection of the fabric of Church House (CH), flat and curtilage

The inspection carried out on behalf of the Churchwardens showed the following main defects required attention: *[Actions suggested are indicated.]*

- The CH, Vestry and Choir Vestry roofs are generally sound but the choir vestry roof has 1 or 2 coping stones where the surface has badly disintegrated and needs repair. In addition, one of the coping stones on CH roof (Hall side) has a hole and crack and needs repair. Some roof tiles have previous patched repairs and these should be monitored to ensure that future leaks do not occur. *[repair coping stones 2023/24 and continue to monitor previous roofing repairs on CH roof]*
- Outside, the wooden window frames are in poor condition and are badly in need of repair or replacement, priority being the three windows above the main entrance and those at ground floor level but also those at the rear of CH. *[repair/replace as soon as funds allow with a target of the next two years]*
- The area to the rear of CH needs vegetation clearing, repair to the walls and the short corridor (Hall entrance to CH/flat) east face boards need repainting. *[attend to when time allows]*
- Tarmac paths around CH have cracks and holes. *[carry out patch repairs in next two years]*
- Internally, the wall/ceiling joint on the stairs from ground floor level up to the flat is in poor condition due to damp and similarly the wall at the top of these stairs by the flat front door. These areas require treatment. *[treat and re-paint when time allows 2023/24]*
- In the kitchen and adjoining storage room there is clear evidence of damp on the ceilings and this should be treated and re-painted when time allows. *[continue to monitor]*

Inspection of the fabric of the Hall and curtilage

The inspection carried out on behalf of the Churchwardens showed the following main defects require attention: *[Actions suggested are indicated.]*

Outside and Inside :

- The Hall continues to have a number of defects as noted in previous annual reports (external east wall windows/sills, internal cracks in walls on all sides – some severe, below stage damp and wall cracks). Attention to these is dependent on the decisions made by the PCC with regard to the future of the Hall.
- Additionally, the corridor leading to the Hall has major cracks in the wall brickwork and floor on the inside and cracks showing on both north and south sides externally.
- The Hall corridor roof needs sweeping and clearing of debris to prevent blockages in the rainwater hoppers/downpipes. *[attend to in next few weeks]*
- On the roof above the toilets the felt around the cabin (between the skylights) is worn/damaged and needs repair. *[attend to when time allows]*
- The corridor stair lift needs servicing since recent malfunction. *[arrange inspection with manufacturer]*

Inspection of the Church Surrounding Area :

- The perimeter dwarf wall needs repair/repointing in places and the main gate posts need treating with preservative as does the gate from the north porch to the vicarage. *[attend to when time allows]*
- Tree branches overhang the vestry and scout hut roofs and are close to the main Church east window. Planned tree lopping work is in hand to attend to these and faculties are being obtained where required.
- Japanese knotweed is under observation generally in case there are any further outbreaks *[continue monitoring and treatment]*
- The garden benches, apart from the new bench on the front lawn and the one closest to CH, are in the process of restoration. As mentioned above, the two benches closest to the south

porch are complete leaving the ones on the lawns closest to Kingswood Road to do. *[continue treatment in 2023]*. The newest bench, however, should be scrubbed and cleaned with water.

- Moss treatment should be continued on the various paths and steps and tarmac patch repairs carried out. *[Continue treatment and repairs when time allows]*
- There is an increasing amount of damage to grass verges around the parking areas outside the south porch – preventive measures should be implemented to preserve these areas from further damage from cars and/or contractor vehicles. *[implement in 2023]*
- The gate at the back entrance to the Hall/Scout Hut needs preservative treatment. *[Treat within next 2 years]*
- The picket fencing leading from this gate and along St. Mary's Ave. has had temporary repairs but is still in a poor state of repair. *[replace when funds allow]*

NB. The various work, actions and timings listed above will be discussed by the Fabric Committee and major items decided by PCC in the light of plans for redevelopment of the buildings on the church site.

3. The inventory of Goods and Ornaments (Terrier) and Log Book

The inventory of Goods and Ornaments has been checked by the Churchwardens. The inventory has not been fully revised and updated for some years and the Churchwardens, with other helpers, aim to complete this before the next APCM in 2024. The updated inventory will include new photographs of plate and ornaments.

The Log Book records items of work carried out in the Church, Church House, Hall and associated buildings throughout the year both by contractors and by the maintenance team.

Insurances

Insurances for all the buildings and contents were kept up to date (as were those for employee and public liability).

Acknowledgements

The Churchwardens would like to thank the staff and many volunteers who are involved in the care and maintenance of the church ornaments, buildings and grounds. Thanks to the maintenance team for ongoing checks and repairs throughout the year.

April 2023

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