

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY, SHORTLANDS

ANNUAL REPORT ON THE FABRIC AND ORNAMENTS FOR 2025

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 2025 and additional items were carried out by volunteers (Section 1).

The premises were inspected on behalf of the Churchwardens in March 2026. Items requiring attention are noted in Sections 2, 3, 4 & 5.

A fire safety evacuation practice took place in October 2024, in readiness for a potential emergency. This will be repeated in 2026. Fire extinguishers throughout the premises, including the Scout Hut, were serviced during the year.

The goods and ornaments have been inspected by the Churchwardens using the new photographic records that were compiled in 2023. A statement on the contents of the Terrier and Log Book is at Section 6.

1. Repairs and other work carried out during the year

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

- (i) The Asbestos Management Plan was adopted by the PCC, and Graham Smedley and Tony Chase carried out an inspection, as a result of which the floor of the flower arrangers' cupboard was re-sealed. A survey of the Hall was carried out finding that there was no asbestos present; however a fresh survey of the Church and Church House (CH) found residual asbestos in the basement/boiler room from the removal of the hot water pipe lagging 20 years ago. As a result, specialist contractors were engaged to remove all traces of asbestos in the boiler room.
- (ii) We assisted the Diocese to prepare the Vicarage for new Incumbent by attending inspections and liaising with Diocesan appointed contractors to carry out remedial works, including electrical and floor repairs.
- (iii) Outside, the wooden window frames of CH were in poor condition and badly in need of repair/replacement, priority being the windows at ground floor level, but also those at the rear of CH. These were repaired and repainted.
- (iv) Applications for retrospective Faculties for the removal of pews and changes to the heating were approved. Quotes were obtained for this work. Two heaters have been removed and a new heater installed in the west wall to compensate for the two lost heaters. A row of pews at the front of the church has been removed along with the six rows at the back. The old carpet has been removed at the west end. Quotes have been obtained to repolish the exposed wooden flooring.
- (v) The heating contractor also repaired the existing heater on the left/north of the central aisle.
- (vi) A contractor working on the roof noticed damage on the organ loft roof where the felting at the upstands around the edges had become detached from the brickwork in a number of places. It was decided, after discussion, to renew the felt covering over the whole roof including the upstands and this has been successfully achieved.
- (vii) A book stand was built for the WWII Memorial book – this was paid for by a donation from a parishioner
- (viii) The safety harnesses and Latchways wire anti-fall system on the main roof were serviced in 2022, and remain in good condition. 2 new hard hats are to be purchased, to replace those that went missing, for potential work on the roofs and other areas by the maintenance team. Another inspection will be booked this year.
- (ix) The Office carpet was replaced
- (x) The laptop used for streaming was repaired.
- (xi) The annual main boiler service and gas safety check were carried out.
- (xii) The 5 yearly electrical test due in 2025, was carried out in February 2026 – see next year's report

- (xiii) The lightning conductor test was carried out in 2024 and is next due in 2029
- (xiv) The pre-application to the borough planning officers for the installation of solar panels was approved and we are now obtaining quotes for their installation.

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

- (i) Improving storage in the Vicars' Vestry and Church Office
- (ii) Boxing in of gas meters in the church house stair well
- (iii) Repairing the coping stones at the east end of the Millennium Chapel
- (iv) Installing a light in the Wardens' office storage cupboard
- (v) Clearing the gardening shed
- (vi) Installing a donation box at the west end of the south aisle
- (vii) Repair of hall windows that were difficult to open
- (viii) Purchase of new café signage (SRA donation)
- (ix) Installing additional sockets at west end of church
- (x) Cutting back ivy overhanging the side gate
- (xi) Extending the paved area for hall bin storage
- (xii) Repair of the steps to the north porch
- (xiii) Addressing items from a Gas Safety report for the flat
- (xiv) Repair of floor in the nave after the removal of the two heaters
- (xv) Repair of existing heater in the south aisle
- (xvi) Cut down a dead branch over-hanging the grass area at the top of Garth/garden area next to the hall
- (xvii) Creation of play area screens
- (xviii) Clearing of the high gutters on the nave roof was carried out by Oakland Roofing in January/February 2024 as part of their work on the external roofing. The drains, including the French drains, and lower gutters were cleared of debris twice in 2025.
- (xix) Now that the external roofing work has been completed, previous leaks and water ingress noted on the south side of the chancel have been, and will continue to be, monitored.
- (xx) The North Porch doors were rubbed down and re-coated with protective oil
- (xxi) There was a deep clean of the Church plus high-level dusting carried out during the year
- (xxii) Lawns were regularly mowed throughout the year, the borders tidied and hedges trimmed.

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

A survey of the roof was carried out by Oaklands Roofing using their drone and a detailed review of the drone pictures has yet to be carried out. If any tile damage is spotted then this will be addressed during 2026. This will be reviewed again if we proceed with the plans to fit Solar Panels.

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

Outside:

- The previously identified cracks in the brickwork around the Church have not changed significantly but will continue to be monitored for deterioration *[continue to monitor through 2026]*
- 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. The wire mesh on the external sides of these louvres, presumably to keep out birds, animals, leaves etc., has partly disintegrated. *[replacement to be discussed by the Fabric Committee]*
- 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 *[continue to monitor through 2026]*
- The vertical cracks in the brickwork high up at the NW corner should continue to be monitored in case they worsen and cause instability *[continue to monitor through 2026]*
- The outside of the North East door (behind St George's Chapel) needs repair and repainting *[attend to in 2026 if possible]*

Inside:

- The cracking at the wall/ceiling joints at the east and west ends of the Church and in both north and south aisles has been monitored and is worsening in places. There is staining and further cracking in the south west corner. There is a danger that over time pieces of plaster will continue to fall from a high level with a risk to those below. [*Fabric Committee to continue to monitor closely as a priority*]
- There is some flaking of bricks at the top of the walls in the north aisle and the south aisle, by the organ console, [*Fabric Committee to monitor closely*]
- The vertical cracks previously identified are the same as the last two years, high up around the Church, and similarly above the arch leading to the south porch and 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 2026 if possible*]
- 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 2026*]
- The north west corner of the north porch requires cleaning and painting – in fact, both porch ceilings would benefit from redecoration [*attend to in 2026 if possible*]
- The south west corner of the south aisle, above the sides-persons' cupboard, requires cleaning and painting [*attend to in 2026 if possible*]
- In the Millennium Chapel (MC) there is continued minor cracking showing at the wall/ceiling joints, but otherwise this chapel is in very good condition since its re-painting in 2018.

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

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

- The CH, Vestry and Choir Vestry roofs are generally sound
- At the rear of the two vestries a wilding area has been created on the grass banking between them and the Hall patio and some planting has already taken place.
- The retaining wall for this area needs attention [*carry out patch repairs in next two years*]
- The area to the rear of CH, particularly behind the St George's Chapel, needs some further vegetation clearing [*attend to when time allows*]
- Tarmac paths around the back of 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*]
- In the kitchen and adjoining storage room there was evidence of damp on the ceilings and this should be rubbed down and re-painted when time allows. [*continue to monitor*]
- There is a crack above the window (by the sink) in the new toilet. [*continue to monitor*]
- The ceiling of the old toilet requires cleaning and painting [*treat and re-paint when time allows*]
- The outside of the windows of the Sacristy, Wardens' Office, Kitchen and Store Room need repair and repainting – this had not been included with the other CH windows whilst awaiting FGP plans

4. 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:

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 largest crack is fitted with

a gauge monitor so that further movement can be monitored. These cracks have increased in number and severity over the last few years.

- Instances of flooding in the basement have reoccurred in 2025. A sump pump has been installed. The sump pump in the basement appears to be working effectively – the whole area was nice and dry at the time of the inspection.
- On the roof above the toilets the felt around the cabin (between the skylights) is worn/damaged and needs repair. This was attempted on 31 March 2026.
- Operation and servicing of the corridor stair lift is to be checked, since there was a malfunction in 2023 - the last maintenance inspection noted on the lift is 26/03/12 and we are following up with the manufacturer.

5. Inspection of the Church surrounding area:

- The perimeter dwarf wall needs repair/repointing in 15 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*]
- Japanese knotweed is under observation generally in case there are any further outbreaks – none seen at the time of Inspection [*continue monitoring and treatment*]
- The garden benches, apart from the new bench on the front lawn, require further restoration. [*treatment in 2026 if at all possible*]
- Moss treatment should be continued on the various paths around and behind the Church and Church House and tarmac patch repairs carried out. [*Continue treatment and repairs when time allows*]
- The path as you turn from the west side to the north side, where it meets the north step, requires levelling and pointing [*carry out patch repairs in next two years*]
- There is an ever-increasing amount of damage to grass verges around the parking areas outside the south porch and the Fabric Committee have proposed that plastic matting be installed in these areas through which grass can grow to preserve these areas from further damage from cars and/or contractor vehicles. [*implement in 2026*]
- The gate at the back entrance to the Hall/Scout Hut needs preservative treatment. [*Treat within next year*]
- There is vegetation in several places but particularly at the base of the long eastern wall of the hall that needs treatment and removal [*continue monitoring and treatment*]
- The picket fencing leading from this gate and along St. Mary's Avenue has had temporary repairs but is still in a poor state of repair. [*repair/replace when funds allow*]
- A temporary fence has been erected between the open area and number 1 St Mary's Avenue whilst we wait for the new owners to replace their fence. This was dependent on the removal of some saplings which was due to be completed in December 2025, but this work had to be postponed to February 2026 whilst the builder removed rubble he had placed on our land. We are now waiting for the erection of a new fence by the owner of #1.

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

6. The Inventory of Goods and Ornaments (Terrier) and Log Book

The inventory of Goods and Ornaments has been checked by the Churchwardens on 12th March 2026. The inventory had been fully revised and updated by Tony Chase and Marion Westropp and the Churchwardens would like to thank them for this work. The updated inventory includes photographs of all goods and ornaments.

Items deleted from the Terrier are:

- A painting entitled the Adulteress
- Various altar hangings of unknown origin
- Old alms bags
- Old kneelers from the choir stalls
- The Sound System
- The Music Group's Sound System

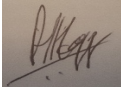
The Log Book records items of work carried out in the Church, Church House, Hall and associated buildings throughout the year both by contractors and the maintenance team, many of which are listed above in section 1.

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 regular and occasional members of the gardening and maintenance teams for ongoing work, checks and repairs throughout the year.



Robin Hogg Churchwarden

31st March 2026