

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY, SHORTLANDS

ANNUAL REPORT ON THE FABRIC AND ORNAMENTS FOR 2023

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 2023 and additional items were carried out by volunteers (Section 1).

The premises were inspected on behalf of the Churchwarden in March 2024. Items requiring attention are noted in Section 2.

No fire safety evacuation practices took place in 2023, in readiness for a potential emergency, but the intention is to carry one out soon (Spring/Summer 2024). 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 have been 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) Following a Tree Survey by Crown Tree Surgeons Ltd. work on a number of trees in the Hall grounds was completed in February 2023; the same company carried out work in the Church grounds in May.
- (ii) 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.
- (iii) A new AV operating station was installed and commissioned in the early part of the year. A retrospective Faculty for the AV equipment was then prepared. Moving the AV equipment has enabled re-instatement of the St. George's Chapel.
- (iv) During the second half of the year three bids were received for the external roofing work (replacement of ridge tiles plus other work) on the main nave roof. These were reviewed by the Fabric Committee and selection of the preferred contractor was made. An explanatory note of this whole process was then tabled to the PCC for approval. Approval was subsequently granted both for this work and that on the internal structure in item (ii) above. Work on the external roofing was planned to commence in early January 2024.
- (v) A new boiler was installed in Church House flat to replace the old one which had broken down.
- (vi) The annual main boiler service was carried out.

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

- (i) 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 and lower gutters will be due for clearance of debris later in 2023 including the French drains.
- (ii) Now that the external roofing work has been completed, previous leaks and water ingress noted on the south side of the chancel will be monitored.
- (iii) A Wi-Fi hub was installed at the back of the Church to improve connectivity.
- (iv) Conversion of all lights to LEDs in the Church and Church House are gradually being completed.
- (v) The Hall entrance was re-painted.
- (vi) Some repair work was carried out on the ground floor window frames either side of the Church House main entrance door.
- (vii) There was a deep clean of the Church plus high-level dusting carried out during the year.

- (viii) Work was carried out to prepare two areas for re-wilding, (i) a metre wide strip down the side of the steps leading from St. Mary's Avenue, down to Church House and (ii) a strip close to the hedges and trees leading from the main entrance path down towards the border adjacent to Kingswood Road.
- (ix) 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 Churchwarden 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 2024 and beyond, particularly to the worst areas of missing mortar in the joints as identified in the Quinquennial Inspection (November/December 2022)].* Some of these areas at high level on the nave roof have been completed as part of the work carried out by Oakland Roofing.
- 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. A quote from Oakland Roofing is currently being obtained to replace these and also to carry out minor repairs on several of the other church roofs.
- The 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 through 2024]*
- 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 completely 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 but on the various other low level tiled roofs there are a number of broken or cracked tiles (e.g. north and south porches). *[repair/replace when roofing contractor on site – see bullet point 2 above]*
- The previously identified work on the nave roof was completed (January/February 2024) by Oakland Roofing including replacement of all the ridge tiles with new half-round clay ones, missing mortar repairs at the bottom of the south side tiling, replacement of approximately 60 damaged tiles, coping stone repair in the NE corner, guttering flashing checks and clearance of all debris from the same. In addition, missing mortar/mastic between the coping stones around the organ loft flat roof and around the entire perimeter of the nave roof has been repaired.
- The safety harnesses and Latchways wire anti-fall system were not serviced in 2023, but visually remain in good condition prior to their next service.
- The Church bell on the south wall has not been functioning properly since September 2022 and work is still underway with the Diocese and the specialists, Whites, to repair/replace the solenoid mechanism *[completion hopefully in mid-2024]*

Inside:

- The cracking at the wall/ceiling joints at the west end of the Church and in both north and south aisles has further worsened with cracks showing obvious signs of widening. 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]*
- The vertical cracks previously identified are largely the same as last year 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 2024 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 2024]*

- 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 2024/25]*
- 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 Churchwarden 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 one or two 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. There are also some roof tiles where previous patched repairs are holding but these should be monitored to ensure that future leaks do not occur. This work is being picked up in the additional quote being obtained from Oakland Roofing (see earlier under 2. Inspection of the Fabric of the Church – bullet point 2) *[completion planned in 2024]*
- Outside, the wooden window frames are in poor condition and are badly in need of repair/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 has had significant vegetation cleared, particularly in the large bed towards the Hall, but repair to the low walls and painting of the short corridor (Hall entrance to CH/flat) east face boards still requires attention. *[attend to when time allows]*
- 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 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 2024/25]*
- 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 Churchwarden 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 during Spring/Summer 2024]*
- 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]*
- Operation and servicing of the corridor stair lift should be checked since there was a malfunction in 2023 - the last maintenance inspection noted on the lift is 26/03/12. *[check required on inspection interval 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 overhanging the vestry and scout hut roofs and which were close to the main Church east window have been lopped by Crown Tree Surgeons during their tree work around the Church with faculties being obtained from the Diocese 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 2024]*. 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 and the Fabric Committee have proposed that plastic or similar 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 2024/25]*
- 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 Avenue has had temporary repairs but is still in a poor state of repair. *[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 the 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 Churchwarden. The inventory has been fully revised and updated by Tony Chase and Marion Westropp and the Churchwarden would like to thank them for this work. The updated inventory includes 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 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 Churchwarden 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.

James Hollingdale
Churchwarden

April 2024