

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY, SHORTLANDS

ANNUAL REPORT ON THE FABRIC AND ORNAMENTS FOR 2024

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 2024 and additional items were carried out by volunteers (Section 1).

The premises were inspected on behalf of the Churchwardens in April 2025. Items requiring attention are noted in Section 2.

A fire safety evacuation practice took place in October 2024, in readiness for a potential emergency. 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 3.

1. Repairs and other work carried out during the year

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

- (i) The structural survey of the main nave roof commissioned with abseilers Extreme Rope Access Ltd. in March 2023, involving a visual inspection and photographs of the internal roof structure, led to the previously identified work on the nave roof being 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 replaced.
- (ii) Extreme Rope Access completed the removal of rust and repainting as required from their inspection.
- (iii) A number of broken or cracked tiles on the various low level tiled roofs were replaced.
- (iv) The safety harnesses and Latchways wire anti-fall system were serviced in 2024, and remain in good condition.
- (v) The lightning conductor was reconnected and tested.
- (vi) The annual main boiler service was carried out.
- (vii) We have submitted a pre-application to the borough planning officers for the installation of solar panels to see if this will be permitted.
- (viii) The Borough Surveyor and an architect from Thomas Ford visited and both advised that the Hall building did not present a structural risk.

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

- (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 had not been carried out for some time and it was agreed that a fresh survey of the Church and Church House should be arranged. Quotes are being obtained.
- (ii) A retrospective Faculty for the installation of the AV and AV desk was obtained
- (iii) Applications for retrospective Faculties for the removal of pews and changes to the heating have been submitted. Quotes have been obtained for this work.

- (iv) 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 were cleared of debris later including the French drains.
- (v) 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.
- (vi) Instances of flooding and damp in the basements of the Hall and Church House, due to exceptionally heavy rainfall, were dealt with. A sump and pump have been installed in the room adjoining the Pre-school Numeracy Room to deal with any future instances.
- (vii) The storage in the Vickers Vestry has been rearranged to accommodate the altar drapes and the space released in the office has been turned into 3 cupboards for additional storage, some secure, for the filing of parish papers and materials.
- (viii) The flag stones on the steps by Church House to the hall have been re-bedded
- (ix) There was a deep clean of the Church plus high-level dusting carried out during the year.
- (x) Lawns were regularly mowed throughout the year, the borders tidied, hedges trimmed and trees near the south porch were pruned.
- (xi) Work was carried out on three occasions to tidy the front and rear gardens of the Vicarage whilst it was unoccupied.

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 2025 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 to replace these has been obtained and the work now needs to be scheduled.
- 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 2025]*
- 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 *[repair/replace as necessary when roofing contractor on site – see bullet point 2 above]*
- The Church bell on the south wall has not been functioning properly since September 2022 and work is deemed too expensive now that we have found that the bell is cracked.
- There is cracking to the north west corner of the church which will need to be monitored.
- The North Porch doors require rubbing down and re-coating with protective oil. *[to be attended to 2025]*

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 staining 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]*

- 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 2025 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 2025]*
- 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 2025]*
- 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.

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
- 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 within the next year.]*
- 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, particularly behind the St George's Chapel, needs some further vegetation clearing and 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 2025]*
- 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]*

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: *[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 largest crack is fitted with a gauge monitor so that further movement can be checked.
- 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]

5. 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*]
- 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 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 2025*].
- 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 2025*]
- 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*]
- 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.

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.

6. 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 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 new photographs of all goods and ornaments.

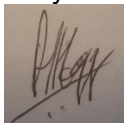
The Log Book records items of work carried out in the Church, Church House, Hall and associated buildings throughout the year both by contractors and the maintenance team.

Insurances

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

Acknowledgements

The 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

22 April 2025