

St Matthew's, Harwell

Fabric Report 2021

Summary of work carried out to the Church in 2021

A special mention is due to all those who have given their time, either on a regular basis or occasional basis, to maintain and enhance our building. Thanks are also due to those members of the Church who give their time to ensure our buildings are kept clean and tidy, who ensure that they are maintained, decorated and generally in good order, who arrange flowers and who contribute generally to the upkeep of these buildings.

The log book of Church repairs has been maintained and is presented with this report. The Terrier, recording details of the Church buildings and land is held as subsection 1.2.2 of the Church's Maintenance and Operations Manual and is also presented, along with the Inventory of valuables. There is also a log book of repairs and maintenance to the Church Hall.

General repairs and maintenance to the fabric of the Church, the Church Hall and their surroundings have been carried out as and when necessary. In 2021 this and other regular activities have of course been affected by the pandemic and the way the use of the buildings has changed.

The Church Architect carried out the Quinquennial Inspection of the Church building (delayed from 2020) in June 2021. The recommendations have been incorporated in the PCC Buildings Committee Action Plan. The overall condition of the church building is good and the Architect commented "It is clear from the O & M Manual as well as the Church Logbook that the PCC take a great deal of care and pride in looking after the fabric of this Church".

Key items of work carried out in 2021 are as follows:

Electrical

Work to implement key recommendations from the 5 year electrical inspection carried out in October 2018 has been completed.

External

Roofing

Broken and slipped red clay tiles on the roofs of the nave and transepts have been replaced. At the same time the gutters and downpipes were all cleaned.

Some stone tiles from near the ridge on the south side of the chancel roof became detached in early November. A specialist contractor inspected the area, made repairs and also reported on the overall state of the chancel roof. In their estimation replacement might be necessary within 5 to 10 years. This situation will be discussed with the Church Architect before recommending how this work could be planned.

The PCC has considered whether a roof alarm should be installed to discourage any further thefts of lead. The only lead now remaining is on the roof of the south aisle. Having reviewed the pros and cons, including the economic case, the PCC concluded that there was not a good case for installing a roof alarm. Instead different security options based on more lighting will be investigated by the Buildings Committee.

Other External Items

The lightning conduction system has been inspected.

A swarm of bees settled in the eaves near the porch in May and had to be removed to a new home.

The flagpole has been repainted.

A blockage in the drain from the extension had to be cleared in September.

This year again a Christmas tree was not put up on top of the tower. However, the floodlights, lighted cross and coloured lights were put up, and a Christmas tree with lights set up just to the east of the porch. This may be continued in the future since it has been successful and is easier than putting a tree on the tower.

Internal

The north aisle wall and ceiling were re-decorated to make good damage from water ingress following the lead theft of July 2019. This included repair of the eroded end of a rafter above the north aisle west window.

In January a repair was necessary to the lock on the outer porch door following an unexplained fault which prevented insertion of the key.

Some dampness at the base of the west wall of the disabled toilet was investigated and the area made good and re-painted.

Repairs were carried out to some broken or cracked sections of the masonry string course in the chancel, and a small section of the east wall re-painted.

The emergency lighting for the platform and chancel has been improved by installing two mains plug-in emergency torches.

Church Hall

Due to lockdowns, and restrictions on meeting indoors, the Hall has been used less than is ideal during 2021. The Hall was used for Holiday Club in the Summer and some bookings resumed in the Autumn. Bookings during the course of the year have been managed by the church administrator. Maintenance issues, lawns and hedges were managed by the Rector until the early Autumn when, in the absence of a Hall Manager, the maintenance was taken over by the Buildings Committee. The heating and ventilation systems have been checked and reset to fit with regular users. A new front door has been fitted, plumbing repairs carried out, and repairs to the rainwater good are underway. We are grateful for all those who manage the Church Hall and help to keep it clean and tidy and in working order. There are a number of general repairs and grounds work that need to be carried out each year and the details of these can be found in the Log Book.

Work planned for 2022 on the Church and Church Hall includes:

- Continue to action recommendations from the 2021 Quinquennial Inspection and other tasks identified by the Buildings Committee;
- Investigate permanent wiring for the floodlight system and any additional lighting and other measures that would enhance church security;

- Establish a strategy for the future of the chancel roof, that might need replacement within 5 to 10 years;
- Continue the work of making improvements to the two toilets in the extension when funds permit;
- Consider re-painting the rainwater goods and window bars if funds allow;
- Complete repairs to the rainwater goods of the Church Hall;
- Maintain and re-oil the woodwork of the extension windows and investigate the possibility of providing secondary double glazing;
- To continue to look at improvements that could be made to the interior of the church to ensure that St. Matthew's continues to be a growing vibrant church for worship and a valued part of the local community.

Allan Macarthur and Eliza Wheaton – Churchwardens

With thanks to Tony Hughes for preparation of this report.