

St Matthew's, Harwell

Fabric Report 2022

Summary of work carried out to the Church in 2022

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.

It is not possible to mention everyone by name, however the Church Wardens would like to thank Tony Hughes and David Pyke, in particular, whose dedication and attention to detail have kept our buildings in such a good stage of repair.

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.

The PCC Buildings Committee continues to monitor implementation of recommendations from the Quinquennial Inspection carried out by the Church Architect in June 2021. It also maintains an Action List of all the small and larger tasks required for the good maintenance of the building.

Key items of work carried out in 2022 are as follows:

Electrical

A faulty extract fan, a broken light fitting and a number of failed light bulbs have been replaced. The two emergency lights in the extension have been replaced as has the PIR sensor for the external porch light. There are now also LED emergency torches in the chancel and on the platform to provide cover there in the event of a power cut.

Portable electrical appliances in the church and church hall have been tested.

External

Roofing

Broken and slipped red clay tiles on the roofs of the nave and transepts have been replaced. Two broken ridge tiles on the porch have been replaced. The gutters and downpipes have all been cleaned and the base of north east extension downpipe concreted to improve drainage..

During the hot weather in the summer some ridge sections of the steel roof on the extension lifted as a result of their nails becoming detached. This was repaired by the original roof installers in October 2022.

The Buildings Committee is continuing to investigate options for improved security lighting on the church roof and permanent wiring for the floodlights.

Other External Items

The lightning conduction system has been inspected.

White lines on the path and porch steps have been re-painted.

Internal

The storage area behind the organ has been cleared and tidied with new shelving. Some stored items have been moved to the upstairs cupboard in the extension, where disposal of unwanted items has made extra space available. The new shelving behind the organ provides storage space for Fledgelings equipment that previously was in the vestry.

White lines on the internal stone steps have been re-painted.

The wall plate and ceiling by the first roof truss was inspected after pieces of haired lime render were found on the floor below. This probably came from the infilling between the first rafter and tower wall but no further loose material found. This will be monitored in case more loose render falls.

Further work to examine the feasibility of replacing the inner wooden porch door with glass doors continued and quotations from two contractors were assessed and priced. The status of the project was reviewed in the light of escalations of the likely costs beyond what could be provided by the earmarked legacy, and some technical issues including there being no acceptable solution to disposal or storage of the old wooden door. In June 2022 the PCC agreed to put the project on hold and instead agreed that an alternative use of the legacy should be discussed with the benefactor's widow. As a result a project to use the legacy to restore the three broken finial crosses on the church roof has been pursued.

Electricity costs have increased and might increase further in the future. This has serious implications for the annual cost of utilities for the church. Options for reducing electricity usage have been examined. The largest cost is for heating, and management of the heating system e.g. by only using the heaters required for the part of the building actually in use, is now being done. The only scope for reducing heat losses that looks like a worthwhile financial investment at present is putting cavity wall insulation in the external walls of the church extension. This has now been done. Other possibilities such as secondary window glazing will be kept under review if electricity prices increase even further.

Church Hall

The Hall has been used less than is ideal during 2022. Bookings during the course of the year have been managed by the church administrator. In the absence of a Hall Manager, maintenance has been carried out by the Buildings Committee and Churchwardens. Plumbing repairs and repairs to the rainwater goods have now been completed. 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.

The future of the Church Hall is being reviewed by the PCC, in particular whether it might be sold if surplus to requirements and if so what constraints might be imposed by the Charity Commissioners. This includes consideration of what might be done to enhance the church building to compensate for the reduction in facilities.

Work planned for 2023 on the Church and Church Hall includes:

- Continue to action recommendations from the 2021 Quinquennial Inspection and other tasks identified by the Buildings Committee;
- Establish a strategy for the future of the chancel roof, that might need replacement within 5 to 10 years;
- Continue to determine the future of the Church Hall;
- Development of the project to restore the broken finial crosses on the church roof, and carry out associated repairs, with the aid of a legacy;
- Commission the 5 year full electrical installation inspection due in 2023;
- Investigate permanent wiring for the floodlight system and any additional lighting and other measures that would enhance church security;
- Repair rendering in the north transept if funds allow;
- Consider re-painting the rainwater goods and window bars if funds allow;
- Maintain and re-oil the woodwork of the extension windows;
- 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;
- Keep utility costs under review.

Allan Macarthur and Eliza Wheaton – Churchwardens

With thanks to Tony Hughes for preparation of this report.