

Wardens' Report on Parish Buildings, Property and Fabric for APM 2022

1. PARISH HOUSING

The Parish owns and is responsible for four houses and four flats. The Rectory is the property and responsibility of the diocese.

55, Alwyne Road (St Mark's Vicarage)

The Parish Wardens undertook an inspection of Alwyne Road in April 2022. In general, the property is in good repair though an inspection of the roof is required as some loose tiles are visible and there is evidence of water staining on bedroom ceilings.

- Radiators need repainting; the ground floor, staircase and landing carpet is badly worn and there are various other minor repairs required.
- A new boiler has recently been installed.
- There is an out-house used as a garden shed that is in a poor state and needs repair.
- The property will require both external and internal repainting within the next two years.

A full detailed report was delivered to the PCC in April and a programme of work is planned.

10, Coombe Gardens (St Matthew's Vicarage)

There was a Parish Warden's inspection of Coombe Gardens in June 2021.

On the whole this is a sound property although certain issues needed urgent attention.

- The patio and garden shed were in a poor and potentially hazardous state. Renovation was carried out soon afterwards.
- A new boiler was installed and the kitchen is in the process of being renewed with certain built-in white goods being replaced.
- A roof inspection was undertaken with necessary repairs being carried. Other minor repairs were also undertaken.
- One long standing problem has yet to be addressed but will need doing so in the next year. There is a 1970's sliding glass patio door in the back room, whose lintel has slipped, causing the door to jam when being opened. An inspection by an architect is required to recommend a suitable solution.

A full detailed report was delivered to the PCC in September and the PCC has been regularly updated with progress reports and approval sought for the expenditure involved.

3, Arthur Road (Parsonage for St Mary's Associate Vicar)

As the proposed new parish housing scheme involves the eventual demolition of this property, only the most essential repairs have been undertaken.

- A new boiler was installed as the old one broke down beyond repair.
- The recurring damp problem has been treated as well as possible.

9, Thornton Road (currently not in use as clergy housing)

Thornton Road does not meet the requirements of a parsonage so cannot be used to house any of the team vicars. It has been let to tenants since December 2020.

A lot of maintenance, renovation and repairs were carried out prior to the tenants moving in and the property remains in good condition throughout.

General

The Parish Operation Manager ensures that all legally required electrical and gas checks of parish properties are carried out annually and certificates are issued. The POM is also instrumental in arranging a variety of day-to-day repairs at the various properties.

The Wardens would like to record their grateful thanks to Jane Johnston, Sam Pedder and most recently, Rachel Rowell for all their hard work and help in the maintenance of the parish properties.

The Galustian Houses

The Galustian Houses are two houses in Alexandra Road, divided into four flats, all rented out to tenants.

Margaret Swain chairs a committee which oversees the management of the flats and in practice deal with the tenants and arrange for any necessary repairs. Haart & Co. have been employed as managing agents, however they have not been very efficient and the arrangement with them is under review.

There was a major problem with the floors and leaking pipes, but this has all now been successfully dealt with.

The Wardens would like to record their grateful thanks to Margaret Swain and her committee for all their hard work.

The New Housing project - the development of two parsonages on the site of 4, Arthur Road

The new housing scheme has now been submitted for planning approval and we are awaiting a response from the local authority.

The Wardens would like to record their thanks to the Housing Sub-Committee for all its hard work on this project.

2. CHURCHES, HALLS AND OTHER PROPERTY

2.1 St Mary's

Falling masonry

Unfortunately, in the storms we had some falling masonry from the bell tower level of the church on the south-west face. Loose elements above the west door have been noticed. Following a review by the church architect and a stonemason, temporary repairs to make safe have been completed. A permanent repair solution is now being drawn up by the church architect.

Re-plastering work in the church

Following the Quinquennial survey issued in April 2017, structural work and repairs needed to the outside of the church were completed in 2019. Having effected the external repairs, the internal walls have had to be allowed to dry out before attempting to re-plaster them. This has finally been achieved. The works have been put out to tender and responses from the invited contractors are due in at the end of April after which it is hoped to award the contract and proceed with the works. This has received faculty approval.

Vestry roof

There has been an ongoing issue for years with damp in the vestry at high level. The architect has recommended a solution which involves lifting the coping stones, adding another layer of stonework, extending the flashing up to the coping stones, and relaying the coping stones. Once the problem has been fixed, the vestry can then be re-plastered and re-decorated. Currently, a more detailed specification to accompany the drawings is awaited so that a faculty application can be submitted and a planning application made to the local council.

Drainage and damp in the vestry toilet

The level of the clergy part of the vestry and toilet is lower than the ground outside and the walls on the east side have been damp for many years. Following the investigation of the drainage system, it is clear that the damp is probably caused by the lack of adequate drainage for the rainwater coming down from the roof of the church.

Specialist drainage engineers have proved that the Victorian system is broken beyond repair. A drainage consultant and the church architect are now working with the wardens to design a drainage system that will last for the next 50 – 100 years and cater for the expected changes due to climate change.

Any proposed solution will require faculty approval.

West Entrance

There is a plan to redo the paving and to ensure it provides for entirely step free access. As this is viewed as being minor change we do not require a faculty for this work. It is intended to wrap this in with Vestry roof work and possibly the permanent repairs for the falling masonry. The archdeacon has approved these works without the requirement for a faculty.

Church Clock

The clock maintenance has been moved to a new company, the Cumbria Clock Company who have repaired Big Ben amongst many other church clocks. They have taken away a moving part for off-site repairs and hope to restore the clock to full working order shortly. It is also intended to fit a time regulator so that it will re calibrate the clock as required and will automatically adjust for GMT and BST.

Other minor works

The worn carpet in the chancel has been removed and it will be seen how the congregation feels about this over the coming months. If a new carpet is not laid, then minor refurbishment will be required to the flooring and steps. The Archdeacon agreed to this temporary removal.

Churchyard

A huge vote of thanks to the gardening team, both the regulars and those that stop by occasionally. The churchyard is looking the best it ever has.

Parish Office

In January we said good-bye to Jane Johnston, our Parish Operations Manager, and expressed our thanks to her for managing the office and the many property issues which arise. We are extremely grateful to Sam Pedder who has stepped into the role so seamlessly.

Fellowship House

Fellowship House is used from Monday morning until Friday lunchtime by Oak Tree Pre-School Nursery and this provides a very useful contribution to St Mary's income. The wardens are in the process of renewing the lease on similar terms with Oak Tree Nursery.

Garden Hall

The oven and the dishwasher have both been replaced.

A major project to refurbish Garden Hall is underway. Key elements include: replacing the sliding glazed door, inserting acoustic panels, refurbishing the wooden floor, repairs to kitchen work surfaces and cupboards plus redo flooring, upgrade lighting, kitchen fire door and hatch, repainting foyer and hall. Marcus Beale Architects (MBA) have specified the works and are managing the tender process and the project as well as acting as the CDM. Tender responses from the companies we invited to tender are being assessed. Also, it is intended to replace the chairs in GH which will be done by the church outside of the main project.

Quinquennial Inspection

The next Quinquennial Inspection is due in July 2022.

2.2 St Mark's

The most major recent development at St Mark's has been the arrival of the Bishop of Kingston and his team (two archdeacons and two support staff) as occupants of four office spaces within the church building. Preparations involved giving notice to existing users, clearing the rooms, relocating the church office to another location completely, followed by several weeks of repainting, plumbing, electrical upgrading and linking of IT connections. This was all carried out 'at pace' to coin a phrase so that everything was ready for an early March arrival. Inevitably the main delay involved the work to be carried out by BT on internet and wifi connection, originally scheduled for January completion.

The work has been completed to a high standard and we are delighted to have been able to welcome Bishop Richard and his colleagues. As things stand, we believe we have solutions for the few issues that have cropped up along the way.

The rising bollard, which controls access to the ever-popular town centre car park, is rising proudly once more but requires regular attention such as new lights from time to time. A second camera has been installed to better capture license plate details for any future bumpers of the solid-looking but actually rather sensitive bollard.

Sadly, there continue to be serious problems with the refuse collection service as provided when they feel like it by Veolia. Recent service has been rubbish. Efforts to find a better supplier have so far come to nought, partly because of the challenging access for large vehicles to St Mark's Place. The search continues.

More positively, St Mark's has been working over recent months with specialist AV suppliers to comprehensively upgrade the sound and vision system, which among many substantial improvements will include a fixed, remotely controlled screen to replace the rather wobbly screen currently in use. The new

facilities will be much appreciated not only by the church's own congregation but also by the many musical and other local groups - including four full-scale choirs (besides St.Mark's own fine choir, of course) - which St Mark's already hosts. A faculty is being sought to facilitate this work.

2.3 St Matthew's

In addition to the servicing of lift, lightning conductor, fire extinguishers, boiler and electrical appliances, attention has been given to the following matters;

- The bottom of the door of the Lady Chapel was planed down so that it does not scrape on the floor tiles.
- The soil pipe from the nursery to the main drain on the street had to be flushed out by Thames Water in early October.
- On-going issues with the lift caused problems in October through to December.
- The humidifier for the organ was repaired in December.
- A new electrical circuit was installed in the choir to facilitate the streaming of services.
- A new water heater was installed in the kitchen.
- Spotlights on the altar were changed but both tracks will need to be replaced soon.
- The troublesome lock on the west door was serviced.
- The church met representatives of UK Power Network in December to renegotiate a higher rent from them for the sub-station which is on St Matthew's land.
- A little problem with the repositioning of a boundary fence between the church and a neighbour has been resolved.

The church has changed companies which service the boiler and fire extinguishers.

2.4 St John's

General

The general state of the fabric of St John's is in good repair on the whole. The usual gas, fire extinguisher and PAT testing have been undertaken and certified, and the insurance certificate renewed.

Recent problems with the boiler have been investigated and resolved. Likewise some necessary repairs to the organ have been undertaken along with routine tuning.

The majority of the issues raised in the last Quinquennial Inspection have been dealt with and the remainder will be considered alongside the next Quinquennial Inspection due later this year.

The three-year fixed contract that was obtained at the end of 2020 for the provision of gas and electricity to the church (and hall) has provided welcome protection from the ongoing volatility and price rises in the wholesale energy market.

Following evidence of an intruder in the grounds of the nursery garden, the orientation of the CCT camera near the hall entrance has been adjusted to give a better field of view to the front of the hall.

Church Lighting and Electrical

The main fabric project for the year was to install new lighting in the church and at its entrances, including pendant-based lighting for the body of the church, feature lighting for focal points, and emergency lighting at key points. The lighting system is provided with a wireless control system, which includes a push-button control panel and also remote control via a software app running on a tablet or smartphone.

Following the grant of a Faculty by the Chancellor of the Diocese, the installation work was commissioned and was completed on time and to budget by the target date in June 2021, following which a commissioning evening was held for a demonstration of the lighting system and also to choose the type of LED light bulb for the pendants. The selected light bulbs were subsequently sourced and installed in July 2021, at which time the pre-programmable settings for the push-button control panel were programmed. A training session for the lighting was then held in September 2021, at which time the operations manuals were handed over.

During the final stages of the lighting project, the contractors (CES Lighting) were able to perform some recommended ancillary electrical works, which included rationalising the electrical distribution cupboard located at the back of the church, which houses the electrical switchgear, and also installing a separate meter in the hall to monitor electricity usage in the hall.

St John's has since received very good feedback about the new lighting from the congregation and from other users of the church, including the Beautiful Korean Church, the Academy Choir, and the Wimbledon International Music Festival, with the latter no longer needing to procure temporary and disruptive lighting towers for use during the Festival. This long-awaited project has equipped the church with stylish, effective, efficient, and low maintenance lighting for the future.

Thanks go to the lighting team, particularly Ursula Edwards, Catherine Davies and Ken Boyt, for their hard work in seeing the project through to completion.

Church Furnishings and Ornaments

Following the identification of a moth infestation in the Vestry, a pest control company was engaged in August 2021, at which time all items of fabric (altar frontals, vestments, kneelers etc) were treated professionally, and the infestation successfully eradicated.

Having emerged from the pandemic, all movable items (bibles, pew cushions, kneelers etc) that were previously moved for storage have gradually been returned to their usual location.

The pew candlesticks that are attached to the side of the pews from Advent until Candlemas have been refurbished. The wooden posts have been given several coats of red paint, and the candle holding parts have been replaced with a new and safer mechanism. The refurbished candlesticks have been bundled up in protective coverings and returned to storage in the undercroft beneath the church until next Advent.

A replacement SumpUp 3G card reader has been obtained for taking contactless card payments, and a Samsung tablet has been purchased, which can run the Give-A-Little app to communicate with the card reader for taking monetary donations, and it can also run an app for full wireless control of the new lighting system.

Church Interior (including the Peter Dixon Room)

The delayed annual Spring-clean of the church took place in September 2021, following completion of the works for the lighting project, which had dislodged quite a bit of dust. A thorough cleaning of the church, including some of the paintwork, left it much fresher and brighter, ready for illumination by the new lighting. Thanks go to Julia and the team for their hard work.

The wooden valence panels for the staging at the front of the nave were stained and varnished to provide a darker contrast with the lighter colour of the stage surface. This was both for aesthetic effect matching the darker wood elsewhere in the church and also to make the step up to and down from the dais more visible for health and safety reasons.

Church Garden

The gardening team has undertaken general maintenance work during the year to keep the garden areas around the church and hall in good order. Thanks go to the gardening team and helpers for their hard work.

In June 2021 the trees around the church and hall were surveyed to ensure there were no visible problems following storms in the previous month.

Community Hall

Other than general cleaning and maintenance, no works have been undertaken in the hall beyond the installation of the new electricity meter.

3. Thanks

The Parish Wardens would like to record their thanks to all the Churchwardens and the many volunteers for all their hard work in the maintenance and upkeep of the four churches and their halls.

John Bush and Jane Austin,
Parish Wardens, 17th April 2022