

Parish Church of St Michael, St Albans

Quinquennial Inspection - October 2017



PARISH CHURCH OF ST MICHAEL, ST ALBANS :
QUINQUENNIAL INSPECTION 2017

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INTRODUCTION

General

The church consists of a Bell Tower on the north east corner, a Nave, a north Aisle and a Lady Chapel at the east end on the south side of the Nave, a Chancel with the Clergy Vestry, the boiler house is located in a basement chamber beneath the Tower. An excellent history of the church is available in a booklet written by the late John Rogers, a local architect, last revised in 1982. In brief, the church has existed on this site since the 10th century though the present church is much altered and extended. During the 1866 restoration by Sir Gilbert Scott several earlier windows and areas of brickwork were discovered, the evidence of which is to be seen internally. North and south walls were added in the 12th century resulting in some fine Norman arches and arcades. The eastern end of the south aisle was enlarged to form the Lady Chapel in the 13th century in Early English style; a new clerestory and nave roof were added a little earlier. The present nave roof apparently dates from the 15th century. The original Tower was pulled down in 1895 and Lord Grimthorpe extended the Nave westwards and built the present Tower and the Choir Vestry in place of the western end of the south aisle. The Clergy Vestry was built in 1938. There is an interesting description of the church contained in the Hertfordshire edition of "The Buildings of England" by Nikolaus Pevsner, the latest edition being 1977 edited by Bridget Cherry. The church is listed Grade I and is within the Conservation Area almost in the centre of Roman Verulamium. The churchyard is a 'closed churchyard' and scheduled Ancient Monument which is well maintained by the St Albans City Council.

This report is based on a comprehensive inspection carried out on Monday 02 and Tuesday 03 October 2017 along the lines of the recommendations of the Diocesan Advisory Committee. The survey consists of a visual inspection of all accessible parts made from ground floor level and those upper roof levels reached from the external doors from the Clock chamber and the Belfry. It does not include spaces concealed within the floor, roof or other voids. The roof structures were not inspected. It has not been possible to survey concealed or otherwise inaccessible floor, roof or other voids, structural timbers, joists, wall plates or other smaller timbers in respect of wet or dry rot, wood worm or other infestation and only certain areas were inspected in detail.

The report indicates in the right hand margin of each page the order of priority recommended for works of repair and action under the following headings:

- | | | |
|------------|---|--|
| Category 1 | - | of utmost urgency |
| Category 2 | - | essential within the next 18 months |
| Category 3 | - | essential within the quinquennium |
| Category 4 | - | eventual, ie desirable repairs, renewals etc |
| Category 5 | - | items of routine maintenance/monitoring |
| Category 6 | - | items requiring specialist advice |

1.00 SUMMARY OF WORK CARRIED OUT SINCE PREVIOUS INSPECTION 2012

Since the last Quinquennial Report was prepared in August 2012 there have been a number of items of repair and improvement that have been carried out. These are recorded in the log book and a summary is set out below:

The gutters and downpipes are cleared twice a year, last date March 2017 with a date scheduled shortly after this inspection..

The fire extinguishers are tested annually organised by David Fletcher, last date December 2016.

The organ is tuned annually by Colin Hamling, last date November 2016.

The church security system is tested annually by Lee Security, last date November 2016.

The Tower clock is serviced annually by John Smith & Sons of Derby, last date June 2017.

The lightning conductor is serviced bi-annually by Messrs Roddell., last date October 2016.

The boiler(s) are serviced annually by P Chester & Sons, Bedford, last date August 2017.

An electrical 'PAT' test is carried out annually, and a full electrical test with certificate is provided every 5 years, last date July 2013.

- 2017 - Porch PIR sensor replaced
- Automatic clock winder and pendulum installed by Smiths' of Derby.
- Monument and Gravestone Review by David Fletcher (Health & Safety Consultant)

- 2016 - Bell tower heaters replaced
- Tree pruning in churchyard
- Replacement lighting system by Instalec
- Tower room redecoration
- Tower Room door to north aisle re-hung
- Churchyard east gates raised

- 2015 - Repair and redecoration of churchyard gates
- Redecoration of external doors
- Tree pruning in churchyard
- New bell stay no.5 bell
- All fire extinguishers were replaced by Fire Protection
- Removal of pew platforms and new floor quarry tiling in nave

- 2014 - Replacement roof covering and south porch valley gutter by J.G. Matthews
- New boiler and heating system by P Chester & Sons, Bedford
- Repairs to the Medieval and Jacobean stone font
- Stained glass repairs east & south elevations
- Boiler repairs

Summary and Recommendations

- Redecoration of tower door onto the nave roof, pilgrim door and choir vestry door
 - Minor cabling and light fitting installations in porch and bell chamber
- 2013 - Fire Safety Plan updated by a fire officer with evacuation training of stewards.

2.00 GENERAL CONDITION OF THE FABRIC

Insect attack

There has been a history of infestation affecting roof timbers in the North Aisle and Lady Chapel. It is noted that possible dust accumulation (minor) has been observed on the kneeling rail of the Lady Chapel and this should continue to be monitored to prevent further spread. It is hoped that with the new more efficient boiler and continued use of the fan light ventilation at clerestory level in the nave that the condition will continue to improve in the main body of the church..

Damp

There is evidence of damp in the walls and columns of the north aisle including flaking plaster, efflorescence and discolouration. This has accumulated over many years and can be seen from the floor up to around 1m height in various places particularly where it would appear inappropriate modern repairs have been carried with cement based products (possibly during 1950s/60s). The historic problem of damp in the walls at low level in the Sanctuary around the altar does not appear to have deteriorated. I note the carpet has been removed as recommended and the stone floors are now able to breathe more effectively. Damp readings should be monitored on a regular basis. I note the installation of the french drains 10+ years ago is likely to have contributed to some improvement.

Structural Stability

There has been some significant movement noted in cracks in the north wall of the vestry, the east wall of the north aisle, the north side of the chancel wall and beneath the west window. This is probably caused by differential ground movement including swelling and contraction of the soil in different atmospheric conditions.

At the time of the last inspection there was evidence of minor historic structural movement in the area of the Tower, this does not appear to have deteriorated but should continue to be monitored. The crack down the east face of the Tower that was repaired in the past has not re-opened. There is a crack visible in the east wall of the Belfry (viewed from the inside), there are also some open joints in the stone surrounds of openings to the Belfry and Ringing Chamber on the west face of the Tower.

Erosion of Stonework

There is some erosion to external stonework to window surrounds to the Lady Chapel and Chancel all as noted in the inspection. These would benefit from specialist repair.

Roofs

The roofs generally are in a good condition following the replacement stainless steel coverings to the nave and clergy vestries and the new lead valley gutter between the South Porch and Lady Chapel. A minor leak has been noted in the north aisle but this is rare and is not an immediate concern.

Generally given the age of the building and the financial constraints of the parish the general condition is good and is showing evidence of continued care and maintenance since the last inspection. It is important that the gutter maintenance is continued twice a year.

3.0. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CARE AND SIGNIFICANT REPAIRS TO THE CHURCH

Repairs

The most significant items for attention and or repair are:-

- Monitor cracks to chancel arch, west window, north aisle and vestry and consider structural engineer's inspection
- Consider remedial action to damp areas in north aisle
- Redecoration in the church, including Nave, North Aisle, Lady Chapel, Chancel and Clergy Vestry.
- Stone repairs to external window surrounds of Lady Chapel and Chancel.
- Monitor possible insect infestation in Lady Chapel and consider specialist action if required

Recommendations

With regard to the repairs arising from the Inspection Report, it is recommended that a programme of works be determined so that they can be carried out in a reasonable time. In this regard it should be noted that where action is recommended the grading in the Report is as recommended by the Diocese and listed in the **Introduction** Categories 1 – 6.

With regard to **maintenance**, it is recommended that the following is maintained:-

- gutters, flat roofs and rodding of downpipes and drains is carried out on a half-yearly basis
- that a programme of external and internal decoration is drawn up
- that the electrical installation and lightning conductor is tested every five years
- that the boiler is serviced annually
- that the heating pipes are tested annually
- that the fire extinguishers are tested annually
- that advice is sought for a safer means of access to the Tower roof

With regard to **care** it is recommended that the pattern of regular inspection of the fabric is maintained; that the present log book which provides an excellent record of works to the church is kept up, noting the nature and date of any repairs, maintenance and service works that are undertaken.

PARISH CHURCH OF ST MICHAEL, ST ALBANS

QUINQUENNIAL INSPECTION

1.00 ROOFS AND GUTTERS AND DOWNPIPES

Gutters and downpipes have been replaced in powder coated aluminium except for one on the Tower that is in lead. They are generally in good order.

1.01 Tower

The roof is covered with machine clay tiles with lead flashings and lead parapet gutters.

There are some minor damaged tiles at the base of the west, south and north slopes. 3

The parapet has some fine stone copings some of which are eroded: 1no on the east face 2 bays from the south side; 1no on the south face 2 bays from the west end; 2no on the north face 2 bays from the east end and 2 bays from the west end. There has been no significant deterioration since the last report. 5
The thin open joints appear to have been repointed in lime putty and silver sand mix since the last report.

A lead clip has slipped from the east slope requires re-fixing. 1

The oak spike requires preservative treatment although it is acknowledged that safe access makes this prohibitive.

1.02 Nave

The roof of the Nave has been renewed in stainless steel with retention of the lead flashings. All appears in good order except that it is noted at the time of the inspection that there was an accumulation of leaf and other debris. The lead gutter at the junction with the tower has also been retained, the upstand flashings appear satisfactory.

The abutment parapet wall at the west end, including flint work and copings appear in good order.

1.03 Chancel

The roof is covered with plain clay tiles. The north slope has extensive lichen and moss growth. There are some minor slipped and fallen tiles however I would be inclined to let 'sleeping dogs lay' as access onto the roof can cause more damage.

	Some tiles are laminating and will need replacing in due course.	5
1.04	Lady Chapel	
	The roof is covered with plain clay tiles that appear in satisfactory condition	
	The lead gutter between the north slope and the Nave is generally satisfactory but I noted a couple of broken tiles that needs to be cleared. A patch repair was carried out during the nave roof works. The leadwork is approaching the end of its life and may need replacing in the next 5years.	4
1.05	Choir Vestry	
	The roof covering has been replaced in plain clay tiles. Counter battens were fixed and flashings adjusted but it is acknowledged that the roof pitch is shallow, and may remain vulnerable for keeping water out in driving rain. It is important to keep the flashings of this roof in good order since water from the south side of the Nave drains on to it. The roof appears to be standing up to heavy rain but evidence of water ingress should be monitored.	5
1.06	South Porch	
	The west and east slopes have now been replaced with plain clay tiles. The lead valley gutter between the east slope and the Lady Chapel has been replaced. The gutter needs clearing.	1
1.07	North Aisle	
	The north aisle roof is covered in copper with copper flashings that appears to be satisfactory. There are impact marks where lead was thrown from above during the nave roof theft. It does not appear to have punctured the copper covering. There is a flashing in the north corner abutment that requires repointing. There has been a minor leak noted internally.	5
1.08	Clergy Vestry	
	The roof covering has been renewed in stainless steel and the lead flashings have been retained and all appears in good order. Many of the flashings have been repointed. There has also been a mortar repair to a coping on the west return. The renewal and repairs appear to have halted the problem of water ingress into the ceiling of the Vestry below. At the time of inspection there was an accumulation of vegetation on the roof that needs clearing.	

2.00 EXTERNAL

2.01 External walls, buttresses and windows

including masonry to windows and doors with notes on foundations, buttresses, stability and dampness

the walls and buttresses are generally in flintwork with occasional brick headers with stone quoins, dressings, copings and plinths.

The flintwork and stonework is predominantly in good condition.

There is no dpc except for the most recent additions to the church but there is a well-constructed French drain edged in blue engineering bricks along the south façade returning at both the west and east ends.

Windows are generally lined in metal frames in stone surrounds; there are a significant number of stained glass windows.

External doors and gates are generally in oak and are generally in reasonable order but a programme of treatment has been applied since the last report.

2.02 Tower

There is some erosion of the stone parapets which should be monitored with a longer term programme for replacement. See Tower roof. 5

An oak access door is provided complete with cover mould that has been replaced since last report. The door is fitted with two sliding bolts.

The wall to the north appears in good order. The wall to the south has a thin open joint over the LH Belfry opening and the wall to the west has some thin open joints over the Ringing and Clock Chamber openings. The SE corner of the tower has some stone delamination which should be monitored. As noted in the previous inspection there is also an open joint in the stone arch over louvered opening W.42 to the Belfry on the east wall and also a crack in the cill to the opening on the left. These open joints are probably indicative of historic movement in the Tower. There is no immediate cause for concern but should continue to be monitored. 5

2.03 South elevation

2.03.1 Lady Chapel

The east and west gables of the Lady Chapel are tile hung and appear to be in good order.

The stone surrounds to windows W7 and W9 have been repaired in recent times; there is some erosion to the stone cill of window W9. 5

The stone surrounds to windows W4 and W6 to the east wall are badly eroded; this also applies to the circular window, W5. These should at least be consolidated with lime watering, with specialist advice taken on the need for replacement.

2/6

2.03.2 Chancel

The eroded stonework to the niche on the east end noted in last inspection has been replaced.

As above the stone cill to the niche to window W3 has been replaced.

There is some minor erosion to the stonework of the right hand jamb of door D12 as noted last inspection.

There is some damaged stonework on the bottom of the left hand mullion and some erosion to both jambs of window W2. This is not as severe as W4 & 6 of the Lady Chapel but lime watering should be considered if repairs are carried out elsewhere. There is an open joint in the cill that requires repointing in silver sand / lime putty.

2/6

2.03.3 Choir Vestry and South Porch

The choir vestry and south porch appear in good order.

2.04 **East elevations**

2.04.1 Chancel

The wall is in flint with brick string courses and the timber framing to the roof is visible in the gable of the east end of the wall.

All appears to be in good order.

2.04.2 Nave and Clergy Vestry and North Aisle

All appears in good order.

2.05 **North elevations**

2.05.1 Nave, Chancel, Clergy Vestry and North Aisle

The north wall of the Clergy Vestry is in good order.

The stone surrounds to windows W14 of the north aisle is eroded. As for window surrounds W2, 4 & 6, this requires specialist repair with lime watering to stabilise the lamination.

2/6

There is some staining of the cills of windows W12 and W13 where old wire guards have been removed.

A number of stone surrounds to the windows in the north wall of the Nave show mild cracking and delamination which require specialist repair with lime watering to stabilise.

2/6

2.06 **West elevation**

There is a minor open joint in the window cill and a crack in the flintwork beneath W15 that requires repointing in lime putty and silver sand.

3/6

3.00 INTERNAL

3.01 The Tower

3.01.1 The Belfry

The timber roof appears sound though there is evidence of historic water penetration on some of the timbers particularly down the central vertical member which is immediately under the spire. Previous repairs to the flashing referred to in previous reports may have remedied such penetration, but it should be monitored. 5

The walls are lime washed brick and redecoration would be desirable when time and funds permit. 4

There is also a slight crack above the southern opening W43 that should be monitored. 5

The bellframe is cast iron with a steel frame above for two treble bells. The ironwork appears to be in good order.

There are 8 bells hung on ball bearings and they are rung regularly and have been well maintained by the ringers.

All fittings should be painted every 5 years and the Belfry should be thoroughly cleaned at least once a year and the louver openings checked three or four times a year to ensure that they are bird proof.

The clock is by Smiths of Derby and is serviced annually by them. It is now automatic.

Access to the roof is gained via a long ladder through a dormer doorway over.

A timber boarded duct contains the clock weights in the south east corner.

3.01.2 The Clock Chamber

The ceiling consists of a steel frame infilled with softwood boarding and is generally in good order. The walls are painted brickwork and redecoration would be desirable.

The windows are fenestrated with leaded lights in stone surrounds. There are 2no minor cracked panes in the west window W41 at an inherently weak corner junction with the surrounding stonework. I recommend no action is taken.

The external door Dex15 leading to the Nave roof is constructed in oak. It has been redecorated since the last report.

The oak door to the spiral stair D14 is in good order as above.

The floor is softwood timber boarding in reasonable order.

There is evidence of water ingress in the WS corner, possibly from the tower roof /belfry over?

There is a timber access ladder to the Belfry with a hatch over.

There is a softwood timber cupboard enclosing the clock mechanism.

3.01.3 The Ringing Chamber

The ceiling is constructed with softwood timber joists with softwood boarding over; all in good order.

The walls are painted brickwork and are in good order.

There are two double and one treble leaded light windows in stone surrounds.

There is a single leaded light window W36 in a stone surround looking into the Nave.

The oak door to the spiral staircase is in good order.

The floor is linoleum over timber boarding; all appears to be in good order.

There are two wall mounted electrical heaters

The water tank is satisfactory.

3.01.4 The Tower Room - Ground Floor

There is a new kitchen installed and the space has been redecorated.

The walls are painted plaster with stone surrounds to the doors and window W23. The window is fenestrated with leaded lights and there are cracked lights in the left hand section in the top left & right hand corners that should be monitored.

Door D4 has been eased since the last report.

All doors are in oak and have been redecorated.

There are 2no new 65KW boilers installed in a cupboard which replace the old boiler from the basement.

The stone floor is covered with a new carpet

3.01.5 Spiral Staircase

5

5

The stone spiral staircase is in good order.

The walls are painted brickwork.

There are a number of leaded light windows, some of which have cracked panes that should be monitored but they are generally in good order otherwise.

5

3.02 **The Nave**

There is a fine medieval timber truss roof supported on stone corbels along the north and south walls, all appears to be in good order but the opportunity to closely inspect the timbers should be taken whenever scaffolding access is available. The walls are painted lime plaster with some exposed brickwork to previous openings. The nave decoration (and plasterwork) is generally poor and requires repair and redecoration throughout.

1

The cracking of the plasterwork above the Chancel arch on the north side as noted at the last inspection has enlarged. There are also 2no new cracks in the corners beneath the adjoining corbels. These should be monitored for further signs of movement and an engineer's inspection considered. Once the pattern of movement has been tracked the cracks will require repointing in silver sand and lime putty and in conjunction with any forthcoming programme for redecoration.

5/1

There is some orange/black staining behind the pulpit on the chancel arch wall and on the floor just inside the reveal to the Chancel. This appears to stem from historic water ingress from the nave roof and now the roof is replaced it should be monitored.

5

The plaster-reveal to the easternmost clerestory window on the south side W29 has been removed to reveal a painting.

5/1

The westernmost clerestory window on the northern side W23 has a minor crack in the plasterwork of the arch which should be filled during the course of any redecoration programme.

There is water staining on the north wall to the side of the organ. Again this this appears to stem from historic water ingress from the nave roof and now the roof is replaced it should be monitored. This wall requires redecoration.

5/1

The "Doom" painting on a boarded panel is mounted on the east wall by the entrance.

The windows are generally in good order. There are two stained glass windows on the north side at clerestory level and one on the west end being W15. The opening lights are operated by window cords appear in good order. The ventilation provided by these opening lights seems to be adequate.

There is a hole in the plasterwork of the clerestorey wall by the truss and W14

that should be made good during the forthcoming redecoration works.	1
There is a hole in the plaster beneath the 'Notice of Incumbents' that should be made good during the forthcoming redecoration works.	1
There is some brown staining on the walls either side of W12, and some minor staining just above pew level adjoining the 'Notice' it is not clear what is causing this. This should be monitored.	5
The oak pews and the choir stalls are mounted on raised timber floors and appear in good order. 3no pew platforms at the rear have been removed with new quarry tiles laid and the pews replaced.	
There is a fine Elizabethan carved hardwood pulpit with stair and canopy. There is an elegant timber lectern.	
The floor of the nave is covered variously with black and red quarry tiles laid in a diagonal pattern with some stone pavings around the font. There are a number of old memorial stones and effigies; the most important of which are adequately protected. There are some heating trenches with cast iron grates over. There are some minor open joints and loose tiles but not requiring immediate action.	
3.03 North Aisle	
There is a mono pitch timber roof consisting of simple trusses, a single purlin with rafters over. The south side is supported by a continuous beam on stone corbels. It appears in reasonable order but there has been evidence of historic infestation that should be monitored.	5
The plasterwork is generally in need of redecoration as for the nave.	1
There is some erosion of plasterwork to the base of the walls generally and column (dampness noted second column west of chancel). There appears to be evidence of inappropriate historic repair in unsympathetic modern materials (cement mortar). This will need to be removed and the substrate dried out before re-plastering and redecoration.	1
There is also some minor flaking of plasterwork and cracking in the arch of window W12 and more severe flaking of plaster just above floor level beneath window W12. There is a moveable oak communion rail of simple design at the east end. There is some cracking in plasterwork behind the altar. These matters should be addressed within any programme of redecoration.	1
There is new cracking to the east wall which along with the new cracking in the chancel may be caused by differential ground movement. This requires monitoring and an engineer's inspection considered.	5/1
The windows and floor are as the Nave and are generally in good order.	

The pews are oak on stone paving; appear in good order.

3.04 Chancel

There is a timber strutted collar roof. There are splits in the rafter on the south side 7no.from the chancel arch, and on the north side collar 5no.from the chancel arch. These should be monitored. The timbers should also be monitored in view of the history of infestation.

5

The walls require redecoration. There is flaking plaster and erosion generally at the base. This is particularly severe around the altar. As for the north aisle the damp areas will need to dry out before re-plastering and lime washing.

1

There are new cracks in the east wall: i) through the window arch and stone tracery; ii) the north east corner; iii) the south east corner. These relate to widespread ground movement also noted in the north aisle and vestry. These should be monitored and an engineer's inspection should be considered.

5/1

The windows generally are in good order and contain stained glass fenestration.

The reveal to window W2 has some impressive decorated plasterwork and there is also evidence of old wall paintings that have suffered from erosion.

There is a life-size carved stone sculpture memorial stone to Sir Francis Bacon in a niche on the north wall.

There are some old tell tales on the south wall at the east end.

The doors to the Clergy Vestry D8 and the external door Dex12 are in good order.

The floor of the Sanctuary has had the carpet removed exposing tiles and stone slabs including a medieval altar stone. The damp staining appears to be drying out. The Chancel floor is a mixture of stone pavings and memorials.

The communion rail is in oak and the Bishop's chair and the Priest's chair are of finely carved hardwood.

3.05 **Lady Chapel**

There is a timber trussed roof with ridge, purlins and collars supported on the north south timber beam mid span with rafters over.

It was noted that the centre truss has been reinforced with ironwork and two trusses have been added in more recent times.

Fifteen years ago some evidence of decay to the rafters was noted and a closer inspection was recommended when scaffolding was available. In fact this took place and resulted in specialist work being undertaken to deal with infestation etc as reported elsewhere.

There has been concern of dust appearing on the altar rail over the last few months which may be a sign of infestation above and should be monitored.

5

Generally as elsewhere in the main bodies of the church the Lady Chapel requires redecoration.

1

There are signs of damp in the niche on the north side of the altar and on the south wall at high level. These appear to be historic. It would appear that there has not been any worsening of the situation since the last inspection but the situation should continue to be monitored.

5

The windows generally appear in good order and contain some fine stained glass fenestration.

The floor is generally the same as the Nave though the central aisle is carpeted.

There are oak pews mounted as elsewhere and appear to be in good order.

There is a painting of the Madonna and Child over the altar.

There is a finely carved oak screen behind the altar.

3.06 **Choir Vestry and South Porch**

Both these elements are located off the Nave on the south side. The Choir Vestry is in a more recent structure dated from the 1890s whereas the South Porch which forms the main entrance to the church is from a much earlier period.

The ceiling of the Choir Vestry is a timber mono pitched structure with main beams, purlin and rafters.

The walls of the Choir Vestry have recently been redecorated in a water based emulsion. The walls are painted plaster at the upper level with the lower portion being panelled with stained softwood timber.

There are stone surrounds to the windows and doors, which apart from some minor erosion to stone window cills with no action required, appear to be in reasonable condition.

The metal and glass fenestration in the windows appears in reasonable condition.

The floor is finished with vinyl tiles over a solid slab.

There are suspended fluorescent light fittings that have been replaced since the last inspection.

The doors are all in oak and in good order.

There is a large floor mounted fan convector heater installed as part of the new heating system.

The ceiling of the south porch is of the same construction as the Choir Vestry. There is evidence of historic damp staining due to the failure of the previous lead valley gutter which has been replaced since the last report and the ingress eradicated.

The walls of the south porch are in stone and flint work as the external walls generally and are in reasonable condition.

The floor is paved with stone and it appears to be ageing gracefully.

3.07 **Clergy Vestry**

The ceiling of the Vestry including lobby & WC is plasterboard over timber rafters which support the flat roof structure over. There are signs of damp penetration in all 3no ceilings (see redecoration below).

A new timber partition has been provided to form a small washing up area with a new sink and cupboard unit under.

The walls are painted plasterwork and there is fresh cracking in the lobby and vestry. There is also severe cracking in the WC. The probable cause is differential ground movement as noted in the nave, chancel and north aisle. I recommend a period of monitoring the cracks prior to making good and redecorating.

The doors are oak and are in good order.

3.08 **Boiler House**

The Boiler house is located in a basement chamber below the Tower and is accessed by a rather steep flight of external brick steps. The access has been improved by the provision of a wall-mounted metal hand rail. The sunken area

5/1

containing the steps is protected by metal railings which are in reasonable condition.

The ceiling of the chamber is constructed with stone panels supported in the middle by a cast iron frame.

The walls are fairfaced brick and are in reasonable order though there are signs of old dampness on the north wall. There have been floods in the past.

There is an open metal screen and door dividing the old boiler chamber into two areas.

The boiler has been removed. There are new controls and pumps for the new heating system, a new macerator and an electric hot water heater.

The floor is generally stone with some screeded portions.

4.00 CHURCHYARD including BOUNDARY WALLS, FENCES, HEDGES, GATES, PATHS AND TREES

The Churchyard is a closed churchyard and has been maintained by Parish volunteers on behalf of the City and District of St Albans. The churchyard is open to the public and the main footpath is well used by them. The path has been resurfaced in tarmac by the local authority some years ago and small sections have been professionally repaired by the authority since the last report. It is in good condition.

There are some very fine trees in the churchyard and these have benefited in the past from regular inspection and attention. There have been a series of large branches falling in the past, particularly from cedar trees, which have required tree surgery. Because of Health and Safety risks these works have been undertaken by the local authority.

6no.gravestones have been identified as a potential hazard as recorded in the Health & Safety Adviser's report and are being monitored.

5

4.01 East boundary

There is a brick wall by the Parish Centre that is generally in a reasonable condition, though there are some areas of eroded brickwork and some portions are out of plumb. There is also widespread moss and ivy growth on the top of the wall The condition of the wall in these respects should be monitored.

5

As noted at the last inspection the wooden gates at the east entrance have been redecorated and will need repair and possibly replacement in due course.

5

4.02 North boundary

This boundary with the school is marked by a brick retaining wall with no fence or enclosure above the ground level to the churchyard. As previously reported this constitutes a Health and Safety risk. The remainder of this boundary has a brick and flint wall topped by a timber fence.

The rubbish and debris referred to in the previous report has largely been removed and the area is significantly tidier than it was. There is still however significant growth of nettles etc that should be cut back.

The brick/flint wall has a large crack in the NW corner but does not appear to pose a hazard. There is a lot of ivy growth on the wall and fence.

4.03 West boundary

This is enclosed with a yew hedge up to the main gates of the churchyard on the west side. The yew hedge requires pruning adjoining the west gate.

1

As noted in the last inspection. The gates are in satisfactory condition and have been redecorated since the last report.

4.04 **South boundary**

This divides the Vicarage garden from the churchyard.

The boundary wall is mainly flint with brick copings apart from the east section that is in brick only. The wall is in reasonable order.

The eastern section of the boundary has a post and rail fence that is in reasonable condition.

The oak gate and frame at the eastern end of the wall and known as 'Lady's Gate' appears in good order and has been redecorated since the last inspection.

4.05 **Gardens of Remembrance**

There are two Gardens of Remembrance, one by the west end of the church and the other, more recently provided, by the south side of the Parish Centre. Both are well maintained.

5.00 SERVICES

5.01 Electrical installation

A new electrical system has been installed since the last report and is in good working order. There is a certified test carried out for every five years.

As recommended elsewhere in this report it is a requirement of the Diocese and a condition of insurers that all electrical work is carried out by an appropriately registered or other approved electrician. This is also a requirement of Building Regulations.

The lighting installation has been replaced and upgraded in the main areas of the church since the last inspection and emergency light have been installed which activate in the event of power failure.

5.02 Lightning conductor

The lightning conductor installation is bonded to the Bell Tower. The installation is regularly tested.

5.03 Heating and hot water

5.03.1 Boiler

The main heating was provided by a gas fired boiler which was located in the basement under the Tower and was replaced in 2014 with 2no.boilers in the Tower Room by P. Chester & Sons who carry out an annual service.

The flue for the previous boiler remains but is disused.

The safety of the system appears to be satisfactory as does the efficiency.

In common with most buildings of this age there is no insulation of the fabric.

5.03.2 Installation

The boilers provide the energy to serve hot water radiators in the main spaces of the church including the Vestries. There are however a number of secondary heating services including wall mounted electrical heaters in the upper rooms of the Tower as recorded above and tubular heaters in the WC.

The radiators have been replaced with a mix of modern radiators and fan convector heaters, all heated via the new boilers since the last report.

Hot water is provided by locally sited water heaters to the kitchen in the Tower and the WC adjoining the Clergy Vestry.

5.04 **Foul and surface water**

The surface water disposal system by way of gutters and downpipes is covered above under sections 1 and 2. The surface water is discharged into soakaways.

It is important that the gutters, downpipes and gullies maintain to be cleared twice a year. 1

As noted in the last inspection there appears to be no record of the location of soakaways or of the storm water drainage. Whilst the log book records regular checking and clearing of the drainage installation, it would be advisable to prepare a record of all outfall information for future maintenance purposes. 2

The gutters and downpipes have been replaced in powder coated aluminium in recent years. It is also noted that the rainwater pipe to the Tower is in lead and is partially internal.

6.00 **FIRE PRECAUTIONS**

There is a Fire Safety Log Book prepared by the parish Health & Safety Adviser: David Fletcher 01727 860628.

Hydro spray fire extinguishers are provided in the Boiler Room, the Nave, the North Aisle and the Tower Room, one in each space, and CO₂ extinguishers are provided adjoining the organ and in the Choir Vestry.

The fire extinguishers are serviced annually by Fire Protection Online, Canterbury.

There is apparently no fire plan but there is an evacuation procedure. There is apparently no fire plan but there is an evacuation procedure. An officer from St Albans Fire Brigade has attended since the last inspection and verbally advised on the procedure and his advice has been implemented in the current procedure. The Health and Safety Adviser will prepare a fire plan for approval by the PCC. 1

7.00 **SECURITY**

The outside doors are all provided with two 5-lever Chubb locks and hinged locks.

The Vestry door is satisfactory.

The Vestry safe has been replaced since the last inspection by Guardian Safes.

There is a security alarm system that is maintained by Messrs Lee Security on

an annual basis. A CCTV roof alarm has also been installed and is maintained by Videcome Security Ltd.

8.00 FURNITURE, MONUMENTS AND ORGAN

The furniture is generally referred to under the spaces concerned. The Peacock brass is protected in a cavity in the Chancel floor. It is available for viewing on request.

The Lady Chapel has two ancient brasses, one of which is in the floor of the aisle under carpet and the other mounted on the west wall.

A statue of Sir Francis Bacon is referred to above. This is probably the most well-known monument within the church.

The organ is at the west end of the Nave within a modern casing (1950). The organ itself was renewed in 1981 and built by Peter Collins of Redbourn.

Signature of Architect:



Stephen Melvin BArch RIBA AABC

October 2017