

FABRIC UPDATE FOR ST MICHAEL'S APCM 24 APRIL 2022

1. The inaugural meeting of the newly formed St Michael's Fabric Team took place on the nicely symmetrical 21 Sep 21. The team is few in number and we are utilising expertise where we can find it, within and beyond our congregation. The detailed Quinquennial Report (QR) dated April 2019, produced by the St Michael's Church Architect (CA), Mr Russ Palmer, was taken as a baseline from which we could start, as it represented the totality of fabric work known to be required and had been produced by a subject matter expert. Any additions and subtractions were then agreed and most important of all, an order of priority to channel our limited resources.

2. Beyond the more constant and routine aspects of general maintenance and low-level repairs, Matters Fabric have, since the last APCM, been dominated by two factors: fractured masonry in the tower pinnacles and more latterly, identification and appointment of a new CA.

- a. Fractured masonry in the tower pinnacles. Early visual inspections of the tower pinnacles revealed cracks running down approximately six feet of at least one pinnacle, with smaller cracks evident on other pillars. These cracks clearly represent a potential danger should stonework fall and alongside an explanatory article in the Teignmouth Post, the footpath below was consequently closed off in October; it remains so. This has had a big impact, not only for the members of our church but also by the many members of the public who regularly used the footpath.

After liaison with Alex Copsey (Church Buildings Adviser & CBSC Secretary in Exeter Diocese) West Access Conservation, a company which regularly conducts work for us, was approached to provide a quote. With the tower being over a hundred feet high and the exact extent of work required not evident until scaffolding is in place, the work is going to be large scale, expensive and time consuming. The strong recommendation from Alex Copsey that work of this magnitude be CA-led, was complicated by the impending retirement of Mr Russ Palmer, our CA of many years. St Michael's therefore had to identify and appoint a new CA (see para 2b, below).

In order not to influence further quotes or jeopardise any commercial confidences, detailed costs will not be reflected in this report. To enable you however, to have a feel for our collective challenge, it is worth being aware of the following:

- i. The job is extremely unlikely to cost less than £50,000 - £70,000.
- ii. Scaffolding costs form the greatest part (considerably more than half), even if the work is completed on time @ two months.
- iii. We don't not know exactly how long the work will take because until the scaffolding is in place, the scale and scope of required work will not be apparent.
- iv. Weather will inevitably hurl in the odd googly.
- v. Once the work is underway, the package may reveal further urgent work of which we are currently unaware.

Three quotes are required to satisfy any application for funding and the Fabric Team is very grateful to Mr Peter Weeks, who is kindly leading in the somewhat complicated process of applying for funding to organisations including the English Heritage Lottery Fund. Once our new CA is in place, we will involve him closely in the process of securing the remaining two quotes.

- b. Identification and appointment of a new CA. Late in 2021, we were informed that our CA of many years standing, Mr Russ Palmer, was retiring imminently. The onus then lay with St Michael's to identify and appoint a suitably qualified CA. With St James being in the same situation, this was conducted in tandem with them.

After visiting both churches and meeting Rev. Carol on 22 Feb, Mr Grant Elliott was subsequently offered the post as CA, both for St Michael's and St James. He is genuinely thrilled to be offered this position. Grant will be taking up a new position as Senior Conservation Architect for Le Page Architects in Plymouth from 16 May. You are encouraged to look at the Le Page Architects website, where you will see that the firm's ecclesiastical work is extensive and I think you will agree, impressive:

<https://www.lepagearchitects.com/category/projects/>

Worth a close look is Le Page's work at:

- i. All Saints Malborough (multi-use space etc)
- ii. All Saints Church, Thurlestone
- iii. St Thomas Church, Plympton
- iv. St Gabriel and St Mary, Stoke Gabriel (Porch)

3. Inevitably, many things may prompt you to look up on a Sunday; I know there are unseemly damp patches, phantasma various and missing pieces of plaster. Inevitably, things may even prompt you to look down on a Sunday; unseemly damp patches and masonry dust, newly fallen since Andrea and Alison hoovered it up the previous Friday. All these aspects are in our line of sight, irksome and definitely not pretty. The team grafts hard every week in its standard battle rhythm, to get the church into Bristol fashion for us all each Sunday. Often out of sight however, are the overriding priorities of the Fabric Team, which are to keep St Michael's Church:

- a. *Safe*
- b. *Open for worship and all the other good things we do*
- c. *Watertight*

4. My thanks to you all for being so stoic when faced with your usual access doors being denied and a footpath which calculates to thwart even those with David Hemery prowess.

G W H HATCH
FABRIC OFFICER