

St Mary's Church Polstead

Fabric, Goods and Ornaments Report for 2008-09

Building

St Mary's Church building remains in generally good structural condition and in an excellent state of decoration.

Side aisle roof timbers

Following the expert inspection of the side aisle ceiling roof timbers, carried out during redecoration, a schedule of recommended timber repairs was prepared by structural engineers. An independent review endorsed this advice and an estimate of the cost of these repairs is being obtained. Meanwhile, on the recommendation of the engineers, two tell tales have been installed on the joint in the North aisle that has caused most concern. These are being inspected every three months. No sign of movement has so far appeared.

Possible insect infestation

The dropping of dust and insect fragments in the late summer gave rise to concern that certain side aisle timbers might have become re-infested with death watch beetle. An inspection by Rentokil, under their insurance arrangements, found no evidence of active re-infestation, but advised on further monitoring this summer.

Bell tower ladder

The existing bell tower ladder does not conform to current safety regulations for ladders above 15 feet and a replacement is urgently required. A design and quotation for a new ladder was obtained but failed to meet the bell ringers' requirements for insulation from noise and cold. Affordable ways round this problem are being investigated.

Wall paintings

The recommended conservation work on the wall paintings, including the area discovered during redecoration, will be commissioned as soon as funds available from the Friends allow.

External plasterwork

The repair of external plasterwork above the chancel was completed in the early summer.

Lightning protection

The lightning protection failed its test in the late summer and part of the system had to be renewed.

Churchyard

Collapsed tomb

The repair of the collapsed Boutell tomb was carried out in the summer by a volunteer team led by Jim Sephton. We are most grateful to all who took part.

Churchyard wall

The repair of the churchyard wall is currently subject to tender and we hope that this work can be completed very shortly.

Extension of churchyard

The extension of the churchyard, on to land owned by the PCC for the last forty years, which is urgently required to provide space for new graves, received planning permission for change of use at the end of January. The permission is subject to the implementation of a full archaeological survey of the area before any use is made of it for graves. The Suffolk Archaeological Team has quoted almost £10,000, plus VAT, for carrying out the work. We are looking at various ways of reducing this cost; but hope to go ahead shortly. Extension of the graveyard is subject to a faculty being obtained and consecration in due course. Meanwhile, the first phase of fencing is likely to be temporary to save cost for the time being.

Path to South door

The resurfacing and enlargement of the approach path to the South door has had to wait its turn due to the number of priority maintenance projects that need to be carried out. A limited resurfacing would probably not be subject to planning permission. It is hoped to progress this work once the necessary finance is available.

Maintenance

The Parish Council has once again kindly agreed to finance five cuts of the churchyard during 2009. The Bury St Edmunds Probation Service continues to carry out other maintenance and grass cutting to a very high standard, without charge.

Goods and Ornaments

The organ has been giving some trouble during the year and Bishops have had to attend on several occasions to free up keys that were sticking. Bishops have suggested, and we have agreed, the installation of a small heater to keep the organ warm in winter. However, Bishops have recommended a full overhaul of the organ (at an estimated cost of about £2,000) as soon as we can afford it. Plans are in hand to establish a suitable fund.

Terrier and Inventory

The Terrier and Inventory is fully up to date and is open for inspection at the Annual Parochial Church Meeting.

Jill Lowe
Bill Wigglesworth

Churchwardens

16 April 2009