

# St Mary's Woburn

## Fabric Report 2023

We are fortunate that the overall fabric of St Mary's Church is in good order. The church is an imposing building that is admired and appreciated by many. Like all properties of its age, it must be maintained and enhanced so that it can be used by current and future generations as a place of worship with a historical interest and significance. We are extremely grateful to Bedford Estate who maintain the fabric of the building and mow the grass to the south of it.

Over the past twelve months we have endeavoured to ensure that repairs where necessary have been made and that ideas and suggestions for improvements have been considered and carried out where finances have allowed.

- **General**

2023 saw the huge increases in gas and electricity prices come into effect. We had been shielded from these due to the fixed price three year deal we had entered into in 2021. Thanks to the professional procurement connections of Steve Apted and Maurice Campbell we were able to secure an 18 month fixed price deal that came into effect in January 2023 until September 2024. Budgeted items such as the redecoration of the crypt toilets were again shelved. Non essential items of maintenance and repair have been postponed.

- **Plumbing**

Various minor repairs were carried out – mainly to the kitchen taps and dishwasher

- **Central Heating**

The central heating boiler was serviced as part of the annual maintenance schedule. The digital timers installed at the foot of the organ steps and in the crypt work well. The heating can now be controlled on an app by either Ian Wayment or the churchwardens, though Ian remains the lead on heating. The ambient temperature - previously maintained at 11 degrees on account of the organ has been allowed to fall in line with the external temperature during the week when the church is not in use. The building is now only heated when required. This has had no detrimental effect to the tune of the organ.

- **WiFi**

The church now has WiFi throughout

- **Organ**

The organ continues to be tuned twice a year, which is organised by Tim Gage

- **Church Surrounds**

The maintenance contract has been renewed. This ensures that those parts of the church grounds not looked after by Bedford Estates continue to be kept in a respectable condition

- **Graveyard**

Woburn PCC is responsible for the upkeep of the Graveyard behind the Heritage Centre in the High Street. The graveyard is maintained to a high standard by a small group of dedicated volunteers. The

equipment was professionally serviced, and a grant gratefully received from Woburn Parish Council. The PCC is extremely grateful to Roland Perry whose son was buried in the graveyard in 2023 for all the work he has done removing ivy, cutting back brambles and general tidying up. While there are currently no dangerous gravestones, it was agreed that an annual inspection should be carried out. An annual contract with Jason Darlow was renewed for control of moles.

- **Roof Repairs**

A number of slipped tiles in the valley between the north and south aisles apex roof and the south side of the main roof have been replaced by Bedford Estate. Following extremely heavy rain in December, a leak became apparent at the southeast corner of the nave by the organ loft. A successful temporary repair was arranged speedily by Bedford Estates with a permanent one scheduled for 2024

- **Inspections and Certificates**

2023 was a Quinquennial Inspection which was carried out by the Church Architects Stimpson Walton Bond in May. This has been shared with Bedford Estate who have commenced work on the Priority 1 items.

All the necessary Electrical, Firefighting Equipment, Sound System and Lightning Conductor inspections have been carried out and appropriate certificates issued.

- **Disabled Access**

Following comments from wheelchair users, it has become apparent that the current portable ramp used to access the front door of the church is no longer suitable as the angle of approach is too steep for battery operated wheelchairs and hair-raising for manual wheelchair users. Steve Apted has carried out extensive research and a possible solution has been proposed by a specialist company. This will represent a major Capital Expenditure and will necessitate the approval of all the necessary authorities (incl St Albans Diocese, Historic England, Mid Beds Council, The Bedford Estate). If agreed, it is likely to take some months to complete and will need to be budgeted. In the current economic environment, and considering the increased cost of utilities external funding will need to be obtained.