

2015/16 Annual Health and Safety Report to the PCC AGM

21st April 2016

Gwen Fisher, Churchwarden

No serious injuries have been reported since I reported to the 2015 PCC AGM.

The Health and Safety committee met twice in 2015/16, receiving reports on concerns, inspecting the church and churchyard and authorising action and work where necessary.

Areas covered were:

Church Exterior

In addition to the serious damage found to a large area of stonework on the South side of the tower during August 2014, the 2015 roof work brought to light further damage to the east side of the tower above the roof line. This will be fully assessed as part of the 2016 Quinquennial Inspection.

The flag staff which was found to be rotten, originally on the top of the tower, has now been completely removed. A replacement is under discussion and H&S considerations are being included.

Church Interior

The two trollies which were sited at the back of the church and were causing concern, as reported last year, have been removed to allow less obstructive passage across the back of the church. Also the large table in the tower area is less of a permanent feature and only placed out when being used for a specific purpose. However it is still felt that some further clearing of the tower area would be an advantage.

Fixing loose floor tiles has also made moving around the back of the church safer.

The work done to steady the Rector's stall has proved effective.

Three fire blankets have been fitted at strategic points around the inside of the church.

The North porch has been treated for woodworm and the elevated floors and bell-frame in the tower for the same and death-watch beetle. This infestation had been detected at the end of 2015. The interior floors and bell-frame in the tower are deemed structurally safe working areas.

A Risk Assessment for the bazaar, held in church on 5th Dec. 2015, was completed.

The DIY Team and Churchyard Activity Risk Assessment has been up-dated.

A Church Interior Risk Assessment is in place.

New service books As weekly printed service-sheets are no longer required hymn numbers were only posted to the Hymnal boards which could not be easily seen or read by all the congregation. Hymn numbers are now printed on the News Sheet.

Children's Area : Two retaining chains have been fitted across the storage area behind the curtain.

The cork covering to the side of this cupboard, creating a notice board was fragmenting and becoming detached and so has been removed.

As reported last year, the positioning of the Offertory box and the size of the box itself remains hazardous and has caused great difficulty for parents trying to manoeuvre baby-buggies in and out of the children's area.

As is reported in the Fabric Report Dry-Rot and roof leaks were found in several areas of the church and these were treated and repaired. However these works caused considerable disruption through the year and at various times services and access were curtailed as H&S requirements would have been compromised.

Again, on behalf of the PCC, I should like to thank the church cleaning, flower arranging and maintenance teams for keeping St Mary's Church a beautiful and safe place for worship and contemplation. With scaffolding and contractors being present inside the church, sometimes for extended periods, these volunteers have often had an extremely difficult time. They have carried out their duties with common sense and a clear appreciation of H&S considerations for all users of the church.

Churchyard

The broken coping stone to the S.W. floodlight housing by the West steps to School Lane has been replaced. These steps have also been repaired in places as have the paving stones at the top of the flight.

The 'step sweeping team' has been reviewed and reorganised so as to ensure regular sweeping and clearing of steps to maintain safe access to the church and churchyard.

A refuse bin has been installed for dog waste with instructional signs supplied by Horsham District Council. We are grateful to Richard Hurley (Parish Councillor) for his support in this matter and John Butler for the work he put into the project. John also organised and installed additional and new signage in the churchyard and the disabled access is now made more obvious.

It is our understanding that all work carried out within the churchyard, both by volunteers and contractors, is compliant with H&S considerations and there is an up-to-date Risk Assessment in place and maintained. We thank Ray Hunt for the work he puts into this. We are also grateful to the whole churchyard team who not only preserve this area as one of beautifully kept peace and repose but are also diligent in maintaining safe access and use of this sacred and widely appreciated space. This was endorsed by the special award made by The South East in Bloom judges last year (2015).

Boundary and churchyard walls

After instances of the churchyard wall in School Lane crumbling and falling away in several places as well as other areas where the stonework was crumbling and in poor condition, an entire section of the wall collapsed into the roadway. This was reported to Horsham District Council as soon as the churchwardens were made aware of the situation. HDC undertook to remove adjacent sections of wall and replace with a reinforced double wall faced with original retained stone and new matching stone. This section of the wall is now considered safe. However there are still places in the remaining length where crumbling and missing stones remain. This has been reported to HDC but not acknowledged.

Other Matters:

Safeguarding - No matters of concern within the church were reported by Jackie Lee, our Safeguarding Officer. John Taylor, Tower Captain and Laura Wadey, Dep. Tower Captain, are supplied and familiar with current safeguarding guidelines- Central Council of Church Bell Ringers, Tower Stewardship Committee Guidance Note No.3 'CHILD PROTECTION IN BELL TOWERS', as recommended by the Diocese, and both hold current DBS certification. Though at the present time there are no children nor vulnerable adults bellringing at St Mary's, John and Laura keep an up-to-date 'sign in' register of all ringers. Jackie has agreed to post current Safeguarding posters and notices in the tower and will add both John and Laura to her list of people for whom Safeguarding Training would be of use. Jackie Lee will approach Jacquie Peal (Choir Leader) and suggest that the Choir mirror the Tower 'sign in' register procedures. However at the present time there are neither children nor vulnerable adults singing in the choir. 'Safeguarding Training' delivered by the Diocese is up-to-date and Jackie is arranging for further training to be delivered here in Storrington. This gives a number of members of our church an opportunity to easily attend. DBS Certification for all clergy and adults in positions of responsibility for children and vulnerable adults, is up-to-date and Jackie, Gwen and the Rectory Office hold copies of necessary up to date documentation and information regarding safeguarding and care and protection of children.

No other hazards or risk areas were observed by, or reported to, the PCC during 2015.

Future Improvements

The Rector has undertaken to review and renew St Mary's Health and Safety Policy.

The H&S committee discussed the advantages of extending the Tower repair project to include a number of improvements which might include installing a ringing platform above the base of the tower. It was agreed that this

would create a safer area for the ringers and it was also agreed that it would free up the space at the base of the tower allowing more freedom of movement and access to the West door which would considerably reduce risk at the back of the church for congregations and concert audiences, especially when the church is full. Also that an inspection hatch from inside the tower to one of the main roof valleys would allow safer and easier inspection and maintenance access.

The difficulty and risks attached to servicing the current lighting situation have also been noted. The committee have recommended to the PCC that whenever redecoration of the interior is possible, the lighting scheme and possibly the whole electrical system be reviewed.

The H&S committee have also recommended to the PCC that:

- We should write a Fire Risk Assessment for the church as advised by Ecclesiastical, our insurers
- Invite those people who are experienced and have received appropriate fire extinguisher training, brief certain key people on the use and operation of the fire extinguishers located in the church
- That the Concert Committee be asked to produce Risk Assessments for events taking place in the church.