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266/GWB

Dear Mr Smart

LAYSTON : ST BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH

Following my recent inspection of the church I am able to give you the following interim report.

A number of items of routine maintenance and more general repair have been carried out to the Chancel, Porch and Tower. The techniques employed and the materials used have not always been those that are appropriate to an historic building and it is possible that some of the work may accelerate the deterioration of the fabric.

The corrugated asbestos sheeting over the Porch is almost completely covered with moss and it was not possible to establish its condition. The tiled roof covering to the Chancel and the tiled and lead covering to the Tower roof are in serviceable condition and no evidence of leaks was noted.

The pvc and cast iron rainwater goods on the Chancel are in satisfactory condition. On the Porch pvc half round gutters have been laid over the defective lead lining to the parapet gutters and on the east side the connection between the outlet of the gutter and the downpipe has failed allowing water to discharge into the wall. The chutes draining the water from the roof of the Tower are in poor condition and are generally too short as a result of which water is able to drip onto the walls. The outlet in the north west corner of the Tower is blocked.

There are signs of former structural movement in the walls of the building, most noticeably in the north wall of the Nave and in the north east corner where the east and north walls of the Nave meet. Movement in this position has caused distortion of the Chancel arch and noticeable cracks in the east parapet of the Nave. These cracks have allowed water to penetrate into the fabric of the wall and the masonry is beginning to break up to the extent that parts could be dislodged by high winds or vibration.

The unprotected tops of the walls of the Nave are beginning to deteriorate in places and the projecting top of the former rood loft staircase is unweathered allowing water to penetrate into the interior of the wall and affect the plaster in the north west corner of the Chancel.

The dressed stonework to the windows is also heavily eroded in places and earlier repairs using a hard mortar are failing. In the Belfry repairs are currently in hand to the stonework of the openings but the cast concrete being used is quite inappropriate and some of the temporary staging erected for access appears positively dangerous.

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Only the windows to the Chancel are glazed and the glazing is in serviceable condition although the opening light is in need of overhaul.

The interior finishes of the Chancel are deteriorating as a result of damp penetration and general wear.

The large doors within the Chancel arch are constructed and installed in such a way that the whole of their weight is carried on the side frames. Also the transome supporting the glazed spandrel panel above is undersized and has deflected. The resulting pressure on the doors will make them difficult, if not impossible to open and any movement of the doors could have an effect on the unstable masonry on the parapet above.

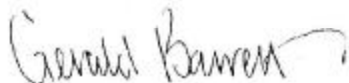
Ivy is encroaching on the exterior of the building and if left unchecked will cause further deterioration of the masonry. Also there are a number of trees growing sufficiently close to the building to have an affect on the foundations.

If members of the public are to be invited into the Chancel I would recommend that access be limited to the small door in the south wall until such time as repairs can be made to the parapet above the east wall of the Nave and improvements carried out to the doors in the former Chancel arch.

There will need to be a continued programme of repairs to the remainder of the building, particularly to the masonry and it will be important for these to be carried out using appropriate conservation techniques and materials. The offer of any grant aid would be conditional on the use of such techniques. Also, if the building were to pass out of the control of the PCC it would probably become subject to Listed Building Control under which any alterations would require approval by the Local Authority.

I trust this brief report will be of some help. The full report will be available within the next two weeks but please do not hesitate to let me know if I can be of any further assistance in the meantime.

Yours sincerely



Gerald W Barrett