

Churchwarden's Report on Fabric & Ornaments for APCM April 27th 2025

HEATING PROJECT Fabric (Buildings and Grounds)

For over a year we spent time preparing for various work to be done inside Church. Two large projects were agreed and started - **Heating and Organ**. The Heating system was included in the **Fabric** report last year and was thoroughly discussed with PCC, Diocese and local engineers, some of whom we had previously employed to do smaller repairs and refits in our Church.

Heating Project. St Helen's Church has been pleased to increase our numbers over the past few years but our ability to keep our church members and visitors comfortably warm during services and events has been a constant trial. In November '23 a leak was found and we began looking for options. The first option we explored was Herschel Infra-Red heating halos. We had a rep. come in December '23 for details and a quote received in January '24. When considering halos, and with advice from electricians and the Distribution Network Operator (National Grid), we found we didn't have enough power for halos so halos weren't an option.

The C.W. log from February '24 reported that the radiators failed unless the water pressure was topped up every few days, by hand, throughout the winter. It has been clear for several years that our current system is not managing, and with the instruction from Diocese that we should only replace with "Green" heating, months have been spent studying and discussing our options. Since then, we have had several meetings with Diocesan advisers and engineers. Because we can't use halos, we had to look at Heat Pumps. We met with other Reps. & some Consultants during Spring and Summer to talk about Heat Pumps but found that we don't have enough electrical power to run this sort of heating unless we install an ancillary Gas Boiler to use, when necessary, during very cold weather.

The main objective was to improve our poor and unreliable heating system so that our Services can be held in a comfortably warm environment *and* keep the cost as low as possible. Clearly, we wanted to follow Diocesan advice and install a "Green" system which would also merit a grant of £10,000 towards our expenses. The heating system which was finally agreed would cost about £65,000. Rev. David applied for a WECA Grant of £30,000 which we would only receive if our "Green" heating system was installed by the end of March 2025. The time limitation for us to receive these two grants was proving to be very tight. Fortunately, WECA allowed us some extra time as the fitting was delayed. Rev. David reported that we also received donations from local people of approximately £21,570.

In January '25, a local firm, Advanced Heating, renewed and fitted the pipework which went under the church in preparation for fitting the whole new system. In February they fitted 10 new, larger radiators in better positions, much closer to where congregation members actually sit.

In March a double plinth was erected in the Churchyard behind the Vestry for two Viessman Air-Source Heat Pumps to be fitted. The heat pumps arrived on March 21st which complied with the WECA Grant timing. Spring warmth was on its way but we hoped it would be backed up well by improved heating. Some of the important "parts" were attached to the Vestry interior wall which reduced space but was the only sensible position available.

Sunday March 23rd was the warmest in Church for a long time but some tweaking of the new heating was necessary so the work by Advanced Heating continued until all the electric fittings were adjusted as required. By Friday April 4th all was ready for the final commissioning by Veissman staff which was booked in for a couple of weeks later. The final check was on April 17th when to the great relief of Troy Cook from Advanced Heating as well as David, Brian and me all was well.

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CHURCH ORGAN Ornaments (Fittings incl. Organ)

Our Organ was originally in a church at Lockleaze, in Bristol, before being moved here about 30 years ago. It has served us well but had quite a lot of faults which Paul Bailey will elaborate on if you are interested in learning more. Apparently, discussions on improving the organ had taken place over the years but now, with diligent Paul in the organist's role and with PCC support, arrangements for improvements would be made and grants sought to help towards the costs.

Paul contacted Reuben Anstey, a well-known organ builder and Musician who lives in Norwich. Reuben visited Church about a year ago and spent the day inspecting the organ and discussing with Paul what was needed. It was clear that this expert is in great demand for his skills and that we would have to wait for him, and his associate, to be free to spend several stop-over visits to Alveston over the next few months. They would base themselves at the Premier Inn during visits.

Fund raising was started and thanks must go to all of you who donated generously towards the expensive upgrade of the organ. Paul also applied to other sources for Grants towards the Organ Project including Gloucester Historic Churches. At the end of September '24 some necessary preparation work was done and scaffolding arrived at the start of October. I must report that extreme care was taken over Health and Safety issues all through the project as well as making sure that Sunday services would be disrupted as little and as seldom as possible. You will all have seen and experienced the way we managed at the time, and even though the Chancel and sanctuary were shut off for a while they were still in view to all worshippers.

The main work was carried out in November and December '24 The Chancel was available for Christmas Services and then work continued in January '25. It wasn't an easy time as some lettings and events had to be cancelled or moved and our Clubs had to meet elsewhere for a while. To help with this Rev. David and Sue Moss generously invited some groups to use their Vicarage home during the Organ and Heating Projects.

However, the organ has now had a lot of improvements done with short visits from Reuben to do "voicing" I think it is called. Paul will keep a check on this too and we hope he is pleased with the overall improvement despite experiencing some new issues caused by the new heating!

At the beginning of this month, Paul told me that the total cost of the project was in the region of £30,000. As a way of celebrating the completion of this project he and the organ will be "star" performers in the 4 @ 4 Sunday Concert to be held as usual here at St Helen's Church this very afternoon. Why not come along and celebrate with him? I am sure it will be worth it.

Elaine Lee, April 27th 2025