

St James's Properties Committee

History of the Properties Committee

The committee came into being following the Wells Stewardship campaign circa 1960/61. Although this had been primarily aimed at achieving an increased and predictable income, the giving of 'time and talents' was quickly recognised as an alternative and/or parallel form of stewardship. Tackling a neglected churchyard and a backlog of repairs and dilapidations to the buildings was an obvious outlet for those with the necessary aptitudes and energy, and a group soon came.

An early guiding principle was to avoid, as far as possible, the use of any paid labour, keeping building maintenance costs to a minimum. This remains as an underlying philosophy.

Initially, the 'properties' were the church, the churchyard, and Wayside. The hall in School Road had been leased to the Scout Group, with nominal responsibility for maintenance. Sadly, this was given a low priority, and in 1972, the lease was ended, and the hall also came under the remit of the PC.

Some of the work completed during its first forty years

EXTERIOR: Digging out, clearing, and re-laying surface-water drainpipes on north side, with new catchpit and soakaway. Similarly, on south side, with new pipes. Various roof repairs prior and subsequent to major complete recovering of roofs in 63.

bench seats and cycle blocks in courtyard.

INTERIOR: Furnishings and fittings: Hymn-book cupboard, movable altar table, weddings kneeler, west porch pelmet and curtains, organ protection barrier, bookstall display case. Carpet tiles fitted to floors of choir stalls, vestry, west porch. Wheelchair ramp in South porch.

Fixtures: Various internal notice boards; cupboards and shelves in west porch; cupboards in south aisle; prayer corner. Housing for speech reinforcement equipment.

Major items: Fixing pigeon-proof grilles to spire apertures and bell louvres, and replacing ladder at top landing with new. Forming apron stage extension of chancel, with liftable section and new altar rails. Necessary alterations to heating pipework. Taking out pews from south aisle, sanding and sealing boarded floor. Taking out pews from north aisle, carpeting floor. Renewing floor tiles across west end of nave after replacing sunken section.

Pressure-washing/cleaning stone surrounds of south aisle windows and the brickwork/stonework of the bapistry. Re-decorating vestry (twice!) and south porch.

Involvement during total re-decoration, re-wiring, and re-lighting by contractors under John Deal's direction (so that the church remained fully usable for services). Making west porch doors to open and putting new locks and bolts to give congregational access during the building of the new hall. Also at that time, providing portakabin, with lavatory, for the Sunday School. Later, making a safe fire exit route.

Routine maintenance and odd jobs: Annual spring cleans, leaf-sweeps and gutter clearance. Periodic inspections of fire-extinguishers, small electrical appliances, lightning conductor. Replacing failed light bulbs. Repairs to doors, windows, and locks after attempted burglaries. New wall safe. Repairs to pews. Problems with heating system (major and minor)

Churchyard

Tarmac covering on footpaths from the church to the Avenue. Repairs to memorial bench seats. Building the churchyard shed.

Levelling infant grave mounds, and laying out Garden of Rest (circa 1962 - Faculty) Large teak-framed notice board, made at Twickenham Technical College, erected on St James's Road frontage also c1962/3: replaced by metal signboard. Old signboard modified and moved to Park Road site.

Prior to Churchyard closure, cutting lawns and trimming vegetation around graves. A major part in this was played by the 'Churchyard Guardians' with occasional help from organised 'mass attacks' Trimming holly hedge and lopping/felling trees as needed. Providing chainlink fence and repairing, buttressing, and part rebuilding, wall along boundary with 57 Park Road. New fence along 40 St James's Avenue boundary. Taking down and capping brick wall on Park Road boundary. Shrub planting round base of tower.

Hall

Providing railings and gates required by Nursery School. Sundry plumbing, heating, carpentry and electrical maintenance jobs in liaison with Hall Committee. Pin-boards/notice boards in upper room and main hall. Ramp for disabled access.

Vicarage

The PC has become involved in some maintenance and repair works, formerly undertaken by the Parsonages Board, for which the PCC is now responsible.