

## APCM Fabric Report for works undertaken during 2025

During 2025, the Fabric Committee reported to the PCC on the following matters:

**Membership of the Fabric Committee:** During 2025, Tina Hobbs took over the role of PCC Treasurer and joined the Fabric Committee. John Edwards the outgoing Treasurer stayed on the Committee until the completion of the works to the Penfold Hall during the Summer of 2025. We thank John for his many years of service to the Fabric Committee as Treasurer and for looking after the works at the Penfold Hall.

**Tower:** Progress on the tower works remains dependent on funding being in place. As reported in the Projects & Fundraising report (item 2.2 of APCM Reports) a long delay in obtaining the faculty for the work on the tower meant that it was not until later in the year that we were able to make an application to the National Churches Fund for a grant towards the work. An application has also been made to the Franklin Trust. We were successful in obtaining grants from The Benefact Trust.

The inside of the tower continues to suffer from damp particularly in the choir vestry and the spiral staircase. An electric dehumidifier has somewhat improved the dampness in the choir vestry.

**Fundraising and 5-Year Plan:** The Fabric committee continued to be updated on the developments with fund raising and planning for the church improvements, with the Tower repairs taking priority over the building improvement works. During 2025 our principal outcomes identified in our 5-Year Plan having been achieved, our 5-Year Plan Coordinating group was disbanded. The ongoing activities have been successfully absorbed into the programmes of our individual church groups overseen by the PCC.

**Penfold Church Hall - Underpinning and structural repairs:** The Penfold Hall had been closed during underpinning and repair work. All the community facilities in the Penfold Church Hall became available again in July when the repairs to the large hall had been completed, thanks to the generosity of the Wilson Trust (£50,000) and the legacy of the late Millicent Honeywood (£16,300). The Parochial Church Council financed the remainder (£55,400). Other parts of the Penfold Hall remained open whilst the works were carried out.

The large hall, originally built in 1840, was the old National School and is a Grade 2 Listed building. For several years it has suffered from subsidence and cracks in the walls had become more serious. Two trees, which had made the subsidence worse, were removed by Ben Warner and the stumps ground out by Maplewood Tree Surgery.

Pilbeam Construction Limited started work at the end of January having been awarded the contract prepared by Simon Dyson of Hanslip Architects and Heather Munro of Hockley and Dawson, Structural Engineers. Asbestos in the wall boards, floor and outside paintwork was removed by Crucial Environmental where it would have been disturbed by

the works. After Pilbeam had finished their work, which included excavation and underpinning from inside the hall, internal painting was carried out by a team of volunteers organised by Christine Aubrey and helped by Richard Bean, a Steyning decorator, and a new floor laid by DJ Flooring.

Users returned during the autumn and charges have been increased. However, running costs have exceeded income from hirers and the PCC contributed £3,570 in 2025 to help meet these costs. In 2026, all finances will be managed in a Penfold Hall Fund within the PCC Accounts. *Report on Penfold Hall from John Edwards*

**South Door step:** The step continued to be a hazard. A design was produced for a handrail at the South door and approved by the PCC with installation programmed for early 2026.

**Conservator Issues:** Advice has been obtained from Sally Strache of SSHC on restoration works for the Cowerson gravestone, the corbel table, repairs & moving of the font, and repairs to the S door stone molding. Diocesan faculty approval for the Cowerson grave stonework has been sought and the Friends of Steyning Parish Church have offered to pay for the work.

**Fire, Security & Safety:** A programme of Health & Safety briefings for church teams is under way and the Fire Risk Assessment has been updated. The wardens and H&S officers are considering an appropriate approach to briefing church teams for a full church evacuation. This to include teams responsible for weddings, funerals and concerts as well as all services of worship.

Following an incident involving the police in the churchyard in March 2025, security at the church entrance has been improved with the installation of a CCTV camera at the South door. A CCTV policy has been agreed and we now have arrangements to automatically turn off CCTV cameras in church during the main worship services.

We continue to research improvements to our dangerous and slippery path from the lychgate to the South door of the church – one of the problems being that remedial efforts such as pressure washing can dislodge the stones and make matters worse. We are in communication with Horsham District Council who are responsible for the paths in the churchyard.

**Churchyard Team:** The churchyard maintenance team under the leadership of Simon Knowles continues to do an excellent job, striving to strike a balance between promoting wildlife & biodiversity and respect for the burials & cultural traditions of the churchyard. We have responded to earlier criticism of the ‘overgrown and unkempt’ appearance of the churchyard though improved dialogue with Horsham District Council over strim/no strim area and changes to our maintenance approach.

Our new neighbours in Gatewick House have offered to pay for improvements to the Shooting Field entrance including a lighted arch as well as collaborating on work to trees. Design of the arch has been agreed and Diocesan approval agreed in principle.

We have commenced the tree works for which planning permission was obtained (a requirement for works to trees in a conservation area). List B permission from the Diocese is being obtained as each phase of the tree work is undertaken. This year we took part in 'Love Your Yew Week' in collaboration with Caring For God's Acre to celebrate the work carried out on our lovely yew tree which was in great need of some TLC.

Together with Horsham District Council (HDC), the responsible authority, we have inspected the South boundary wall which is showing signs of instability. Temporary stabilisation measures and a warning sign have been put in place by HDC. A plan is being developed for the improvement of the ashes memorial burial area.

**Minor works undertaken included:**

- Proposals have been agreed for the Tower grab rail and Tower training bell.
- We have attended to a number of minor plumbing works, and leaks in church radiators.
- Fire alarms were tested by Kestral on 5/11/25.
- Problems with South and North door handles have been resolved.
- Improved lighting has been installed in the cottage.
- A new built-in storage box has been constructed behind the organ console.
- Proposals have been developed for improved churchyard lighting leading to the Shooting Field entrance.
- A hole in the flooring behind the organ console is being investigated.

Sarah Lavery, Churchwarden  
19 April 2026