

FREELAND REES ROBERTS ARCHITECTS

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Anthony
David Bartleet Esq
Buckleys Farm House
Buckleys Lane
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16 March 1998

Dear Mr Barleet,

St Peter's Church, Birch

I enclose a copy of our report on the condition of the Church. I would say that the Church has deteriorated quite a bit since I last inspected it.

In addition to the report we have met John Sherriff of Sherriff Tiplady Quantity Surveyors. He has looked over our repair figures and we have adjusted figures for the retiling and timber repairs; gutters and downpipes; the vestry roof and the tower and spire in discussion with him. He had no comments on our other figures.

He also provided approximate ball park costs for one or two other things which you requested as follows:-

1. Mezzanine floor in both aisles and two west bays of Nave plus three staircases £100,000.
2. Lavatory and kitchen accommodation £20,000.
3. New mechanical and electrical services £60,000.

These approximate figures are exclusive of professional fees and VAT. You should probably allow a budget of 15% for professional fees and 17.5% for VAT.

Please ring me if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely,



Henry Freeland

Enc.

INSPECTION OF ST PETER'S CHURCH BIRCH

Date of Inspection
Date of Report

6th March 1998
9th March 1998

By Henry Freeland

Freeland Rees Roberts Architect
25 City Road, Cambridge, CB1 1DP

1.0 LIMITATIONS OF THIS REPORT

1.1 The inspection was carried out from ground and ground floor level from ladders to the west end of the south valley and to the South Aisle eaves next to the South Porch, to all floor levels of the Tower.

The weather was overcast and drizzly.

1.2 This inspection and report were carried out under the normal conditions and rules of Quinquennial Inspections of Church of England Churches.
No parts were opened up for inspection. Therefore it is not possible to say that hidden parts of the fabric are free from rot or other defects.

1.3 **Work carried out since the last Quinquennial Inspection.**

Emergency holding repairs to north valley gutter and some roof tile patching.

1.4 **Priorities A B C & D mean:-**

- A Repairs needed within years 1 & 2.
- B Repairs needed within years 3,4 & 5.
- C Repairs needed after five years.

1.5 Figures given are approximate budget costs at today's price levels for building work exclusive of professional fees and VAT and in £ sterling.

1.6 This inspection and report were carried out for Colchester Borough Council but also for the use of the Trust which has recently been formed to repair and reuse the Church.

1.7 This report must not be used as a specification. In due course when repairs are contemplated by the Trust a proper Architects Specification should be prepared and competitive tenders sought.

2.0 ROOFS

2.1 Chancel Roof

This is tiled. The south side is in reasonable condition, there are one or two tiles out of place but otherwise it is in fairly good order. There is a typical Victorian detail at the eaves with a gutter sitting on a corbelled stone table and the gutter is obviously leaking into the wall top.

On the north side tiling is in reasonable condition. There is quite a lot of moss build up, particularly near the Nave east gable which would need clearing and there are some broken tiles. Some maintenance is required. The same comments apply to the gutter as on the south side.

There is a tall chimney rising out of this side of the roof which is in poor condition, particularly at its base and consideration should be given to its removal and tiling over the area where it was.

Maintenance to roof tiling.

B 1500
A 200

2.2 Vestry

This is on the north side of the Chancel and has a tiled roof with lots of ferns, moss and stonecrop growing out of it. It is difficult to see the condition of the roof, but I suspect that it is in very poor condition and would need retiling.

B 4000

2.3 South Aisle, Nave & North Aisle

These are all tiled and there are lead valley gutters between the roofs, running east west. Access into these valleys is extremely difficult. It was possible to get up to look at the west end of the valley between the South Aisle and the Nave. Tiling on the south side of the Chancel is in fair condition but there are quite a lot of tiles out of place and one or two signs that there may be nail failure particularly above the South Porch. Near the ridge the tiles are in worse condition.

During the inspection tiles were taken out of the south slope of the South Aisle roof and battens etc. and rafters seem to be in reasonable condition. Tiles tend to have one small peg nail in them and they are also bedded in lime mortar. The lime mortar is so dry that it falls out and the tiles seem to be very precariously fixed.

Tiles on the north slope of the South Aisle and south slope of the Nave are in very poor condition, many signs of tiles out of line which indicates nail failure. The lead valley gutter is in poor condition and has lots of tile debris in it. The valley needs to be releaded.

The north slope of the Nave and the south slope of the North Aisle could not be seen from below but internal decayed timbers indicates that this is in exceptionally poor condition. There are wide spread signs in the north Arcade of dry rot attacks in this valley. It was possible to see out of the east Belfry light to see the valley and inner slopes of the Nave and North Aisle roofs. These are all in poor condition, a

great hotch potch of different tiles and the valley has been covered in some felt material to try and keep it water tight.

The north slope of the North Aisle roof is in better condition. However, it does have a number of tiles out of place, broken or missing. The same applies to the gutter detail as to other roofs. On balance it would be sensible to retile this slope while other slopes are being dealt with. It may be required in any case in order to be able to carry out timber repairs to the south edge of the roof at the valley. Retiling South Aisle, Nave, North Aisle roofs, re-leading valley gutters and repairing timbers. Assuming 50% replacement of tiles.

A 100,000

2.4 South Porch

Tiling to this roof is in poor condition and should be retiled.

B 2500

3.0 EXTERNAL WALLS

The whole Church is built of Bath stone with flint, brick and stone walls faced with flint cobbles. There are general wide spread problems with the Bath stone which is of poor quality and has deteriorated since the Church was built. There are also some problems with the cobbles which are prominently set with the pointing quite recessed. So some of the smaller cobbles are tending to become quite loose, simply because they are not held in by very much mortar.

3.1 Tower & Spire

The general appearance of the spire seems to be quite reasonable. The stonework of it is fairly plain but there are spire lights on all faces. There are also some signs of shaling in faces of stone in the general plains of the spire. There are three layers of spire light windows on an octagonal broach spire. It has a weathervane on the top with a cockerel which is badly bent which needs repairs and improvement to lightning protection. The top four or five metres appear to have been rebuilt at some time. It is not clear whether there are any cementitious mortar repairs on the general stonework of the spire but if there are, this could hide quite a lot of problems with the stonework from the observer. Generally the spire lights have problems associated with the poor quality of stone of which they are built. There is quite a lot of decay in individual stones and repairs will be required.

The Tower is Bath stone and flint cobbles. There are wide spread problems with individual stones, perhaps more so on the south and west faces than on the north and east and quite a bit of stonework repair will be required. It is also likely that there are areas of flintwork which will need repointing or rebuilding, for instance on the east face in the middle stage above the Nave roof there is a hole.

There also appear to be one or two vertical cracks, for instance on the south west buttress and with better scaffolding access later inspection will need to be made to see whether there are any other problems of this nature. There are corbelled

courses of stonework beneath the spire, which are in quite poor condition.

Tower Walls

There is Belfry light stage; four Belfry lights which are in variable condition, buttresses which are rectangular, two on each corner. Gabled tops to buttresses are generally in rather poor condition. There is a middle stage below the Belfry which has a clock face on the west face and small lancet windows on north and south. There is another chamber below this which has a pair of lancets on the west face and then there is a ground floor stage with a large window on the west face and a small window on the north. Bath stone dressings to windows, quoins on corners, buttresses etc are in poor condition and need widespread repair. The Tower and spire need to be scaffolding and repaired.

A 125,000

3.2 North Aisle

All of similar character to the rest of the Church, Bath stone dressings with flint cobbles. There are four windows which are boarded up, so it is impossible to see the condition of stonework. There are buttresses between windows which have some problems with stonework. There are also problems on the label moulds over the windows.

The whole of the north side has a protected corrugated iron sheeted off area so it is not possible to inspect adequately the bottoms of the walls.

The north west buttresses have a lot of old ivy growth which will need to be removed and there are some stonework problems, particularly at the gable on the north of the angled buttresses and on the plinth where there is a section of stone missing.

Budget for stonework repairs.

B 10,000

- 3.3 The east end of the North Aisle is in reasonable condition. The kneeler stone is worn on the north end of the gable. Open joints in the gable copings need to be repointed. The east window is boarded up and one would suspect some stonework deterioration here.

A 5,000

3.4 Vestry

The walling has a north door which is boarded up. The east half gable has quite a lot of ivy and there is an east window which is boarded up. There has obviously been some deterioration under copings of the half gable and the kneeler stone and flintwork in the north east buttress has some open work which will need consolidation, repointing, tying in etc.

B 5000

3.5 Chancel

The south wall of the Chancel is widely covered in ivy which needs to be killed and then very carefully removed. The walling seems to be in reasonable condition. Buttresses have lots of ivy and moss which need to be carefully removed.

B 1000

There is a north window which is blocked by boarding up. The eaves corbel stone holding the gutters on both the Chancel, North Aisle and the Vestry may need some repair once the gutters are taken off for replacement.

A 2000

The east wall of the Chancel appears to be in reasonable condition, however there is quite a bit of flint missing from underneath of the gable copings which needs consolidation and rebuilding. The north kneeler stone needs to be checked and there is a possible crack in the lower kneeler stone. Some tying in may be required. The buttresses are in reasonable condition, showing a little bit of wear but not too serious yet.

B 3000

Flintwork is in reasonable condition. The east window stained glass has copper guards which are causing the sill stonework to go green.

The south side of the Chancel has three windows and three buttresses. Two of the windows are covered with boarding so they could not be seen. The third has stonework in reasonable condition but deteriorating galvanised steel guards and stained glass. The guards should be removed.

B 200

Buttresses need some stonework repair. Flintwork seems reasonable.

B 2000

3.6 South Aisle

The east wall of the South Aisle and the east Nave gable are in reasonable condition. There are bits of flint facing missing here and there and there are some open joints to copings which need to be repointed.

A 800

The Nave Gable cross is missing above its plinth.

The east window to the South Aisle is blocked with boarding so it could not be seen. Kneelers and intermediate kneelers of the gable stonework copings are worn and some consolidation/replacement may be required. The stonework beneath the south east corner kneeler is looking fragile and some consolidation and support may be required there too. Some minor attention is required to the south east buttresses.

B 2500

On the south wall of the South Aisle there are four windows, buttresses at corners and four intermediate buttresses and a south Porch. Three of the windows are blocked with boarding so could not be seen. The third has rusting galvanised steel guards and stained glass corroding guards and fixings should be removed. There is a lot of ivy growing up the walls here and this should be very carefully killed and then removed.

A 1000

A tree growing next to the wall should be killed and very carefully removed. The eaves corbel stonework is deteriorating in places because of leaking gutters.

A 1000

Flintwork is in reasonable condition but an area of it has come away above the east slope of the south Porch roof. Some areas of decay to stonework on buttresses and

A 500

windows can be seen and will need attention.

A 5000

The west end of the South Aisle is a fairly large west window which is blocked with boarding and cannot be seen. But it is clear that stone dressings around the window are in bad condition. There are also two buttresses on this elevation which are in very poor condition and the south west kneeler stone to the South Aisle gable looks dangerous and will have to be completely rebuilt. There is deterioration of coping stones on this gable and some problems with flint work.

A 15,000

3.7 South Porch

The stonedressings are looking worn, particularly the apex to the gable is in difficulty and needs stonework repair. Some of the other stonework needs consolidation. Flintwork immediately under the gable copings needs consolidation and some flints replacing. The flints particularly either side of the south door and at bottoms of buttresses are worn and there is also ivy here which needs careful killing and removing.

A 3000

3.8 Nave

The west elevation of the Nave has a large west window with a doorway beneath it and there are some problems with gable copings, open joints etc. some deterioration of stonework and of flintwork immediately below the copings.

A 2000

The west window seems to be in reasonable condition except the bottoms of the mullions at sill level are deteriorating. The right hand side jamb bottom is deteriorating. Stonework repairs are required

A 2000

The west doorway seems to be in reasonable condition. Flintwork is in fair order but needs checking for loose flints etc.

- 3.9 Generally all flintwork faces need checking over for loose flints to make sure there is nothing that could fall on the public.

4.0 INTERNAL

4.1 Spire

It was possible to get up to the Belfry floor. The spire stonework is quite eroded on the inside and obviously has been suffering from moisture coming through. Undoubtedly an internal scaffolding will be required with repairs to the inside face of the spire. The bottom level of the spire containing the bottom spire lights is in brick and this area is in good condition.

A 25,000

4.2 Belfry

The Belfry is in brick on the inside and walls are in good condition. The Belfry floor is extremely dirty, has about a foot of pigeon manure on it which needs very careful cleaning out. This could be a health hazardous process and needs to be done

by specialists.

A 1000

There is an oak bell frame containing a single bell which will need to be cleaned and possibly treated. The bell was not examined in detail but it was noted that the straps and bolts holding the crown of the bell to the head stock were very rusty and need redecorating.

A 250

Belfry lights and spire lights have wire guards on the inside and are suspect. They all need adequate stainless steel weld mesh bird screens.

A 2500

The louvres to the Belfry lights are in timber which appears to be oak and these appear to be in reasonably good condition.

4.3 Sound Deadening Chamber

Walls are in good condition. Floors seems to be reasonably sound but are extremely dirty and need cleaning and checking after cleaning. There is a clock by Gillett & Johnston of Croydon 1897, this appears to be in good condition and is standing on a timber frame in a case.

A 500

4.4 Ground Floor Stage

In the ground floor stage of the Tower walls are in good condition. There are north and west windows in reasonable order, except the glazing of the north window is in rather poor condition. There are openings into the Nave and the North Aisle which are in reasonable order, there is a bit of peeling of paint and plaster at the head of the opening through into the Nave.

The floor has quarry tiles in reasonable order. There are one or two missing both near the Nave entrance.

Ladder access up the Tower is not safe. There is a vertical steel ladder with poor fixings up to the Sound Deadening Chamber and there is a two stage ladder plus a pole ladder up to the Belfry light. The access up the Tower needs to be completely overhauled to come up to current Health & Safety standards and there needs to be adequate guarding at landings and hand holds etc. as you come up through openings.

A 1500

4.5 Chancel

The ceiling is softwood dark stained and the roof appears to be in good order. Walls are plastered and generally in good order, a bit dirty and there are remnants of inscriptions around window heads and on the north wall.

Floors are glazed tiled and stone generally dirty but otherwise probably in fairly good condition. There is a stone, painted and tiled reredos behind a curtain which appears to be in reasonable order but rather dirty.

Glazing to windows appears to be in reasonable condition and there is stained glass

in the east window and in the south west window. In due course the stained glass should be looked at by a glazier to check the condition etc. Superficially it seems to be in reasonable order. There are altar rails, an altar table and choir stalls which are all very dirty but otherwise in reasonable condition.

There is some dampness in the walls next to the Chancel arch on both sides. Some plaster repair may be required.

B 300

4.6 Nave

The Nave has a very large dark stained, probably softwood, roof. This is in reasonable condition except probably at the west end of the south valley and for the whole of the length of the north valley where there are wide spread signs of water ingress, fungal fruiting bodies etc. There is also a slightly suspect area in the second bay from the east on the south side. During the inspection there was a lot of water coming in from the north valley gutter onto the pews on the north side of the Nave.

There was also water coming in the west bay off the south gutter where there is an internal rainwater pipe above the arcade wall. The leak is badly affecting the arcade.

There are arcades down both sides of the Nave. The north arcade and the west bay of the south arcade are badly affected by water ingress and all need quite a bit of repair.

North arcade.

A20,000

South arcade.

A10,000

Floors are quarry tiled and timber pew floors. The pew floors must be very badly affected on the north side and will need substantial rebuilding and the pews themselves are going white and probably have been affected by fungal attack.

Timber treatment etc.

B5,000

B15,000

At the west end there is a certain amount of brick floors as well as tiled floors. The west wall of the Nave has been badly affected by leaks in the south west corner of the Nave. The west window has one large panel of glass out from one of its main lights and another which has slipped. Some of the glass is on a table in the south west corner but is now covered in debris. This needs to be rescued and kept in safety.

A5,000

There is a boarded off area which acts as a Vestry or hymn book store in the north west corner of the Nave and this also has a donations board attached to the outside of it.

4.7 South Aisle

This has a similar roof to other areas which appears to be in reasonably good condition. There could be some problems towards the east end in the east two bays

where water has come in through the valley gutter, these will need to be checked in due course.

Walls are in reasonable condition but rather dirty. Arcades are in reasonable condition, except as mentioned before. Windows are mainly blocked and are quite difficult to see. Some have plain glazing and others have stained glass. They will all need closer inspection once boarding is removed.

There is a south door which is in good order, above it there is a small carved coat of arms which appears to be in good order but it needs looking after from a security point of view. On the west wall there is a memorial to Margaret Lewis and Lucy Higginbotham, daughters of James Round.

There is a font in the South Aisle which is in reasonable order. Floors are brick, tile and the pews have wooden floors.

4.8 North Aisle

This has a similar roof to elsewhere. This is in extremely poor condition along the edge with the north valley gutter. There are broad signs of leaks over the full length and fruiting bodies everywhere. This has deteriorated considerably since the last inspection three or four years ago. Walls are plastered and generally in reasonable condition except for arcades which are badly affected by the leaks, Pews and floors next to the arcade are also badly affected.

The organ is at the west end and has a tarpaulin over it which is hopefully keeping it dry. Floors are tiled and timber pew floors. The north pew floors are probably in reasonable condition. South pew floors are poor and badly affected by water from the valley gutter. The organ chamber area in the north east corner is very dirty and slightly dark and rather hard to examine but seems to be in reasonable condition.

4.9 South Porch

This has a softwood roof which is in reasonable condition but there is quite a lot of ivy growing inside. It is dirty and needs cleaning. Walls are plastered and in fair condition, there are one or two bits of plaster that need repair. Floors are tiled and in reasonable condition.

B 200

Outer doors are oak and a bit dry and need refinishing on the outside.

4.10 Generally the whole Church interior will need to be redecorated after repairs.

B/C 8000

5.0 FURNITURE & MEMORIALS

5.1 There are some very fine pieces of furniture in this Church. Some highly carved priest stalls and interesting lecterns and tables which all need to be looked after very carefully. Most of these are draped with polythene but there is also quite a

possibility of theft.

5.2 There are a number of memorials internally which are in reasonable condition.

6.0 RAINWATER GOODS

6.1 Throughout the whole Church there is a difficult detail with a square box gutter on top of the stone corbel on the wall at eaves. Most of the joints of these gutters have failed and water is leaking through including into the wall heads and this needs urgent attention which would involve taking all of the gutters off and replacing defective parts. Box gutters tend to have vertical back faces and horizontal bottom faces which because they cannot adequately painted. Therefore a large quantity of corroded gutter parts may need to be replaced.

Rainwater pipes generally looked to be in reasonable condition. There are also lead rainwater heads which need to be fitted with overflows so that when they are blocked they do not cause problems. In addition to that, pipes can be taken a direct route through heads to connect with rainwater pipes. The rainwater pipes will need to be taken down, repaired and painted as well. Assuming 50% replacement.

A 15,000

7.0 ELECTRICAL INSTALLATION

7.1 There was obviously quite an elaborate lighting scheme in the Church. There are quite a few fairly modern looking lights. It is not known what the condition of the electrical cabling is in but it appears to be old wiring rising from distribution boards at the west end of the Nave in the north west corner. It is assumed therefore that this would mean total rewiring if the building were to be used.

8.0 HEATING INSTALLATION

8.1 There are a number of cast iron radiators and pipes which are large bore pipes. There is a header tank in the bottom stage of the Tower on the north wall above the bottom window. The Boiler Room was not inspected and we are not sure quite where the boiler is. It is suspected that the heating system would need complete renewal if the building were to be used.

9.0 LIGHTNING PROTECTION

9.1 There is a lightning down conductor on the north side of the spire and Tower. But this would not comply with the current British standard. Obviously because of the spire and because East Anglia is a high risk area this must be a fairly high risk building for lightning strikes. The question of whether it needs a more thorough

lightning protection system would depend on insurance and the sensitivity of electrical and communication systems in the building. A proper lightning installation, which comes up to current British standards would probably cost £6000.

10.0 GLAZING & VENTILATION

10.1 Glazing appears to be in reasonable condition. However the west Nave window has some serious problems where one panel has fallen out and a second has slipped down. Repairs will be needed.

A/B 10,000

10.2 Guards to most windows are defective. Widespread replacement in black stainless steel may be required.

B 15,000-20,000

11.0 CHURCHYARD

11.1 This is neat and tidy and has a lot of vegetation at the west end and a number of trees, mainly yews, and holly. The Churchyard generally falls to the north and appears to be in reasonable condition, although a detailed inspection of the Churchyard was not part of this commission. The Churchyard appears to be open. (i.e. burials continue).

Henry Freeland

DISTRIBUTION

Ms K McCavana Colchester Borough Council
David Bartleet