

I am writing this article on the Anniversary of D Day and the rain is pouring down, but we are in early summer and everything is growing. It is lovely seeing the gardens in all their glory.

The reason I am mentioning the weather is because after over 13 months, we are finally getting the work on the water goods at St John the Baptist underway. This involves new lead in the Gullies and Valleys, refurbishing and painting all the guttering and reattaching a lot of it to where it should be; clearing all the downpipes as they are all blocked, moling through blocked drains to open them up again, clearing and re-bricking/repointing all the open gutters round the church and making a French drain and placing a membrane to get rid of the damp where a Victorian grave was placed 18 inches above the floor level in the Vestry! It also involves putting guttering on the boiler house roof, and finally, putting guttering around the roof of the Spire. All the water coming off the spire roof currently runs down all the walls and is causing damp problems and loss of lime plaster in the tower. When finished, it should leave the church pretty watertight, with the amount of water coming in equalling the amount of water coming out of the walls. We will need to repair and redecorate the Vestry, Sacristy and Tower ringing room at some point, but need to wait three years before we can consider that. Walls 3 feet thick dry out at the rate of an inch a month. Luckily we are not in a hurry. It has taken a long time to get a Faculty, the Church of England equivalent of planning approval. It is made worse as we are a Grade 1 listed building and everything has to be done to Heritage standards. There are 155 pages of standards the builders have to apply, and we have had to consult every organisation that might want some input. I am so glad we have the church architect Julian Vallis to lean on and put it all together, and that he is a specialist in Ecclesiastical buildings and Heritage work. When we finally got the actual Faculty permit, the rain started after a long period of glorious dry hot weather! Normal summer weather. All this work will take 10-12 weeks, weather dependent. Pray for dry weather please.

I would firstly like to thank the Benefact Trust very much for a grant of £6,000 towards the work. A much needed boost to funds to help us afford the work. It is a very expensive job, around £80,000 plus vat. A government scheme was closed in March due to too many applications, but a new one has just started for historic listed buildings and we can hopefully make a claim to recoup the vat.

I would also like to thank the Friends of John the Baptist very much for helping us with costs. They raised £1,600 at their Car Rally at Findon Place on Bank Holiday Monday and fund raise continually to ensure the Church can be passed on to future generations in a good state. We would be lost without them. I would like to thank Caroline for the use of her magnificent house and her work as Chair of the Committee. If you would like to help in any events in future, please get in touch. Becoming a friend costs £10 a year.

On a final note, I would like to thank Evelyn Stanford who has retired as Verger and Sacristan after many years work. If anyone is interested in taking over either of these roles, either on their own or with others to share the load, please get in touch. I literally do not know how Evelyn did both on her own for years. Happy retirement.

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