

SPAB Faith in Maintenance

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Company No. 5743962. Charity No. 111 3753. VAT No. 577 4276 02.



Annual Review 2007

Introduction

Last year, in the autumn issue of Cornerstone, the SPAB announced that it had been awarded a grant of £645,000 by the Heritage Lottery Fund to run its Faith in Maintenance (FiM) training project for churchwardens and their equivalents in other faiths throughout England and Wales. The training courses focus on the issue of maintenance – the routine work needed to keep the fabric of historic buildings in good condition – and encourage people to clean their gutters, check their drains and repair slipped slates and tiles. Over the course of the five-year project, we expect to train around 6,000 volunteers and visit a wide variety of faith buildings. Along with protecting significant historic structures, the project will encourage people to become actively involved in their local community's heritage. As part of the course, volunteers will learn about the importance of historic places of worship as well as traditional building materials and construction. They will also be shown how to recognise potential problems and take appropriate remedial action. Most importantly, the Faith in Maintenance courses will be free for volunteers to attend and will be available to any faith group using a historic building for its worship.

Staff/Office

The Project Director is Sara Crofts, an architect and SPAB scholar. She was previously the SPAB's Churches and Cathedrals Officer and took up the FiM post in October 2006. She is assisted by Kate Minnis, the Project Administrator, who is based at Spital Square. David John was appointed to the post of FiM Technical Advisor in April 2007. He trained as an architect and works in the FiM office on Fridays answering the Technical Advice Helpline. He is also the Buildings at Risk Officer at Islington Borough Council.

Part of the Spital Yard office has been converted for use by the Faith in Maintenance project team. The staff moved into the office in September 2007 having been accommodated within the main SPAB office during the first year of the project.



Courses

The target attendance for a FiM course is 40-50 people and the take-up of places has ranged from 19 at Carlisle to between 45 and 55 for the 8 courses that were fully booked (in practice there are usually one or two people who do not turn up on the day). There appears to be no obvious difference between bookings for courses held on Saturdays compared with weekdays.



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The take-up of places seems to be due to a variety of factors: size and geography of the host diocese and effectiveness of publicity in targeting the right people have an effect on course numbers. All courses are listed on our website and we advise course hosts how to promote the courses in their area. The FiM Project Administrator takes bookings for some courses while for others bookings are taken by the diocese or group hosting the course.

In 2007, we ran courses for sixteen Anglican Dioceses and two for Methodist or URC/Methodist churches. The total attendance at the eighteen courses was 670 giving an average attendance of 37 at each course. Twenty-one dates have been booked so far for 2008 and another four are likely to be confirmed shortly. We have now made contact with almost all of the 43 Anglican Dioceses and other denominations and faiths as outlined below.

Denomination/ Faith	Contact	Action/Likely outcome
Jewish Community	We have made contact with the Jewish Museum in Manchester.	We are planning a meeting in January to discuss a possible course.
Roman Catholic	Diocese of Cardiff.	Course for Llandaff Diocese (Church in Wales) will be promoted jointly with the Diocese of Cardiff.
Methodist	Property Secretaries in all the Methodist Districts have been contacted.	We are following up approaches from individual Methodist churches.
URC	Coventry & Warwickshire Synod	Following up contact with a view to finding a venue at a URC church in the Midlands in 2008.
URC	Tunley URC Church, near Wigan	Course booked (Sept 2008).
Baptist	Secretary to the Listed Buildings Advisory Committee	The Baptist Church has agreed to promote FiM courses to its members.
Interdenominational	Churches Regional Commission for Yorkshire & Humberside	We are following up the possibility of an interdenominational course in Leeds.
Interdenominational	Churches Together in North East Lincolnshire	Course at to be held at Grimsby St James and promoted to other denominations through Churches Together.
Interdenominational	Friends of Essex Churches Trust	Course booked (May 2008).

In addition to liaising with central points of contact at the various denominations and faiths, we are following up individual contacts made at courses and other events. These are generally people who have expressed an interest in hosting a course and are more likely to produce a positive result than unsolicited approaches.

A summary of the courses held in 2007 is set out in the following table. The events listed in italics are additional FiM-related lectures given by Sara Crofts, not full FiM courses.

Date	Venue	Diocese or Faith Group	Number Attending
Sat 28/03	<i>Wolfson College, Cambridge (Historic Churches, Who Cares?)</i>	<i>Cambridgeshire Historic Churches Trust</i>	120
Sat 19/05	Croydon St Michael	Southwark	46
Thu 31/05	Newport Parish Centre, Isle of Wight	Portsmouth	31
Sat 09/06	Betws-y-Coed St Mary	Bangor	46
Wed 13/06	Sheffield Diocesan Office, Rotherham	Sheffield	52
Thu 14/06	Edward King House, Lincoln	Lincoln	CANCELLED
Wed 20/06	St Nicholas Centre, Ipswich	St Edmundsbury & Ipswich	55
Sat 30/06	Pimlico St James the Less	London	27
Tues 03/07	Carlisle St Cuthbert	Carlisle (North)	19
Sat 07/07	Sandhurst St Lawrence	Gloucester	41
Tues 10/07	Norwich Diocesan House	Norwich	50
Tues 17/07	Tondu Methodist Church, Bridgend	Methodist	20
Tues 24/07	<i>Ratcliffe-on-Soar Holy Trinity (SPAB Working Party)</i>	<i>Southwell & Nottingham</i>	30
Thu 02/08	Chippenham St Peter	Bristol	49
Thu 06/09	Coychurch St Crallo, Bridgend	Llandaff	POSTPONED
Sat 08/09	Cheltenham St Mary (Heritage Open Days)	Young People's Course	CANCELLED
Tues 25/09	Bexhill St Peter	Chichester	29
Sat 29/09	Stoke Newington St Mary	London	46
Sat 06/10	Alvechurch St Laurence	Worcester	31
Weds 10/10	Truro Diocesan House, Truro	Truro	52
Sat 13/10	Union Chapel, Islington (The Big Draw)	Young People's Course	CANCELLED
Sat 20/10	Kendal Holy Trinity	Carlisle (South)	25
Wed 17/10	<i>Writtle College (Caring for the Parish Church)</i>	<i>Chelmsford</i>	60
Weds 24/10	Chester-le-Street St Mary & St Cuthbert	Durham & Newcastle	38
Sat 17/11	<i>Wirksworth St Mary (Church Buildings: Their Care & Reordering)</i>	<i>Derby</i>	75
Tues 27/11	Braintree Christ Church	URC/Methodist	13



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Course Programme

A standard course programme has been devised and is used for all FiM courses (see below). All the sessions are led by Sara Crofts with the exception of ‘The pattern of ecclesiastical building’. This presentation is given by a local architect or historian suggested by the host organisation. The speaker is provided with a brief although there is plenty of scope to respond to the particular local conditions. We also engage a local architect or surveyor to assist with the practical session in the afternoon and to form part of the ‘panel’ for the discussion session. The assistant is usually an SPAB Scholar or Fellow or perhaps a member of the Guardians Committee or one of the SPAB’s lecturers.

Course Programme		
9.30	Registration	
10.00	Introduction	
10.15	The pattern of ecclesiastical building	<i>Typology of places of worship in the local area Traditional materials and building construction techniques</i>
10.45	Coffee and ‘Working at Height Safely’ quiz	
11.15	Maintenance	<i>What is maintenance? Why do we need to think about maintenance? When should we think about maintenance? What should we look for?</i>
12.30	Lunch, opportunities for discussion amongst volunteers and bookshop	
1.15	Managing maintenance and repair	<i>Managing relationships with professionals, contractors and specialists Understanding the role of professional inspections and reports Understanding the systems of control for places of worship</i>
1.45	Staying safe	<i>Risk assessments, working at height and fire safety</i>
2.00	Observation and recording exercise	<i>Looking at the building element by element, inside and outside, to identify vulnerable areas of the fabric of the building and signs of defects.</i>
3.00	Tea and opportunities for discussion amongst volunteers	
3.15	Discussion about the observation and recording exercise with time for questions	
4.00	Depart	

Courses for Young People

As part of the project we aim to provide two workshops for young people (in the 18-25 age group) each year. This year we decided to run one of these events on Saturday 08 September in Cheltenham in conjunction with Heritage Open Days. A second workshop was scheduled for Saturday 13 October at Union Chapel in Islington and was linked with The Big Draw Campaign.

We recognised that the 18-25 age group might be difficult to reach and felt that linking up with others events might help to publicise the FiM workshops. Sadly, both events had to be cancelled at short notice due to insufficient numbers of bookings. In terms of publicity and marketing, we distributed posters and information to groups and venues in the local areas and contacted a large number of architectural practices and craft firms.



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We also issued press releases and sought help and advice from the Dioceses of London and Gloucester. Information was passed to relevant educational establishments including the Building Crafts College and the Architecture Association. Despite a great deal of hard work, we were unable to generate sufficient interest. We must now rethink our strategy for providing courses for young people so that we can try to run two successful events in 2008.

Support Systems

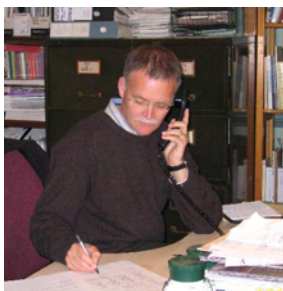
Handbook: We set ourselves the goal of producing a course handbook in readiness for the first course in May 2007. As it was clear that we would not have enough time to source high quality illustrations and images for the handbook we decided to produce a 'beta' version, which contains all the relevant information but is largely un-illustrated. This has proved to be very successful and is meeting the needs of the volunteers; there have even been a number of requests for additional copies. The handbook will be fully revised during the winter and reprinted with illustrations and further material in time for the first of the 2008 courses.



Calendar: We have also produced a laminated A3-sized maintenance calendar that can be pinned to the wall as a handy visual reminder of some of the most important maintenance tasks. It is fully illustrated with cartoons by James Innerdale and has proved to be very popular with delegates.

We hope to make the revised handbook and calendar available to purchase via the SPAB's online bookshop in 2008.

Website: We asked a number of web design companies to put forward proposals for the Faith in Maintenance website and were pleased to appoint Fat Beehive as our consultants. They produced an excellent website in time for the launch of the course season in May and well within the project budget. The website runs on a content management system, which allows the project staff to easily update and amend pages when necessary. So far, we have been able to upload a considerable amount of guidance notes and other advice. Dates and booking information for upcoming courses are easily accessible and we have also provided a number of downloadable documents. The website also has a facility that allows people to subscribe to our mailing list and there are plans to start a monthly maintenance reminder email service in January 2008. To date we have had 3,668 visitors to the website who stay for an average time of three and a half minutes. Most visitors come directly to the website or via a referring site with only 22% using a search engine to find it. We are pleased to note that we currently have 46 subscribers and are hopeful that this number will increase.



Technical Helpline: We launched the Technical Helpline in May and although it was fairly quiet in the first few weeks the number of telephone calls has increased steadily ever since. Most enquiries come from people who look after places of worship and a substantial proportion are people who have attended a Faith in Maintenance course. A wide range of subjects are covered although the most common enquiries concern matters such as damp, heating systems, rainwater goods and the use of appropriate materials.



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Most enquiries are straightforward and can be answered during the initial telephone call. We have also been able to refer people to specialist contractors and conservators drawn from the SPAB technical database as well as dealing with an increasing number of email enquiries.

Assessment and Review

Feedback to the courses has been overwhelmingly positive with most volunteers finding that the course programme and supporting materials meet their needs. Brief feedback forms were used for the first few courses to check that the course content and format was appropriate. This allowed us to make a number of minor adjustments to ensure that we achieved a workable and enjoyable format. Here are some of the comments that have been made this year:

“I think that we all came away having learnt something, but much more importantly came away feeling invigorated, more confident and less alone.”

“It was good to sit and listen to expert advice and guidance, but it was even better to go outside and examine a church building so as to locate many of the problem areas or potential problem areas that had been talked about during the course of the day. Anyone who has responsibility for a church building should grab the opportunity to attend one of these courses. Never will the blindly obvious be put in front of you so helpfully!”



“The day was extremely well presented by your architects, short and brief, but very much to the point and with plenty of opportunity for open discussion. I think it is fair to say that everyone who attended learned a lot and also enjoyed themselves.”

“I came out of a sense of duty, not expecting anything other than the mundane, but Charles’s and especially Sara’s presentation was so well done and very much passed on their enthusiasm. Being then able to go out and look at two so very different and intriguing churches in such close proximity, and with new eyes was brilliant. I came home really enthused. The booklet too is invaluable, and will certainly help us get properly organised.”

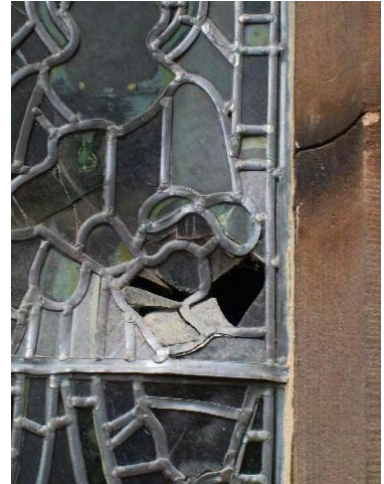
In order to provide a more rigorous evaluation of the impact of the Faith in Maintenance project we have appointed Dr Sharon Goddard as our assessment and review consultant. She has begun the process of putting into place measures to help us evaluate the project quantitatively and qualitatively and will report back to the FiM team in due course.

A pre-course questionnaire and a feedback form have been designed to test the volunteers' views and responses to the issue of maintenance both before and after the training course. These forms were successfully trialled at the last few courses of the 2007 season and will be used for every course from the start of the 2008 course season.

Steering Group and Volunteers

We are fortunate to be guided by a Steering Group of fifteen members with a variety of backgrounds in faith organisations and in heritage agencies. The steering group is chaired by former SPAB chairman, David Lodge, and has met five times since the project started in September 2006. The Steering Group has provided invaluable advice with regard to the format of the course and the supporting materials, contacts with faith groups and publicity amongst other things.

In addition to the Steering Group, we have been able to call upon a number of volunteers who have given their time to the FiM project. Their contribution has included lecturing on FiM courses, advising on the content of the course handbook and calendar and helping with the running of FiM courses.



Publicity

We have worked hard to publicise the Faith in Maintenance project. Our primary tool is the Faith in Maintenance website, which provides details of all upcoming events. We have also produced a tri-fold leaflet that contains information about the project and the courses. This has been sent to a wide variety of organisations with interests in heritage and/or faith buildings. Cadw, English Heritage and the National Churches Trust have agreed to send out copies of the leaflet with their grant information. We are also pleased to have featured in a number of publications and websites as follows:

- The Times ran a feature on FiM in December 2006 (*Defenders of the Faith*).
- The National Churches Trust website featured FiM on their 'Guest Spot' page during 2007.
- The FiM project featured in the 'News' pages of the Churchcare website.
- The FiM project featured in the 'News' pages of the Diocese of London's website (September 2007).
- Articles about FiM appeared in the Historic Churches Preservation Trust newsletter (Spring 2007) and the newsletter of the Northumbria Historic Churches Trust.
- The Faith in Maintenance project featured in several issues of Heritage Link's 'Update' newsletter.
- The Faith in Maintenance project is currently featured in the 'Training and Events' section of the Faithworks website (www.faihtworks.info).
- The FiM project features in the Technical and Conservation pages of the Methodist Church website and has also been mentioned in their email news bulletins.
- Articles about FiM have appeared in 'Property Points', a Methodist Church newsletter.
- Faith in Maintenance featured in radio interviews on BBC Radio Cambridge and the United Christian Broadcasting service. Sara Crofts was also interviewed by nine local BBC radio stations as part of National Maintenance Week 2007.



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Financial Review



A number of changes have occurred since the project was conceived during 2005 and 2006. The most notable change was the decision not to charge volunteers to attend the FiM courses. This has had an impact on the budget as it has meant that we have not received any income during this first year. It was originally thought that the income from course bookings would cover the costs of hiring venues and providing catering. Instead, we have sought assistance from the hosts of the FiM courses who have, in most cases, provided a venue free of charge. Some of the groups have also chosen to provide catering which has been a great help. Where catering cannot be provided, volunteers have been asked to bring a packed lunch and this has proved to be quite successful.

The other major change has arisen from the decision to procure a company car for the duration of the project. This has led to an increase in the travel costs but it is difficult to see how the courses could have been run by any other means. On the other hand, the travel costs arising from steering groups meetings etc. has been less than expected. Overall, we estimate that the cost of travel will be around £15,000 more than expected but we will be able to cover this additional cost through savings made elsewhere in the budget and through the contingency if need be.

Review of Objectives

We are pleased to report that we have successfully met all of our objectives in this first year. Our objectives and our progress towards meeting them are summarised below:

- To deliver a maintenance training course appropriate to the needs of volunteers who care for historic buildings used as places of worship in England and Wales.

We have devised and are delivering a maintenance training course that is meeting the needs of volunteers. The course has been refined in the light of feedback from delegates and will continue to be updated as legislation and guidance develops over the next few years.



- To devise an effective support system in order to provide readily and freely accessible information across the range of media to assist volunteers in the enduring care of the fabric of places of worship and their contents.

We have launched the Faith in Maintenance website and the Technical Advice Line. Material on the website is continually updated and expanded. Course delegates are also provided with a copy of the Faith in Maintenance handbook and calendar.



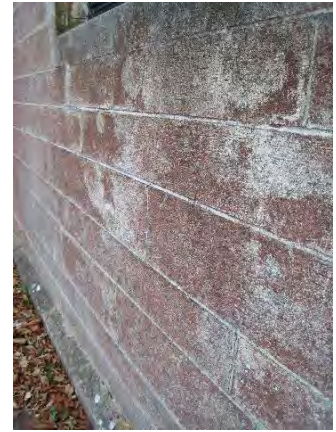
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- To reach as many and as diverse a range of volunteers as possible.

Although we have concentrated on the Anglican Dioceses in this first year we have made progress with regard to making contacts in other faith groups and networks. We are pleased to have the support and assistance of the Methodist Church and have welcomed delegates from the Methodist, United Reformed Church and the Roman Catholic Church to our courses. We hope that we will be able to work with volunteers in the Jewish community in 2008. We are also aiming to run a small number of interdenominational courses next year.



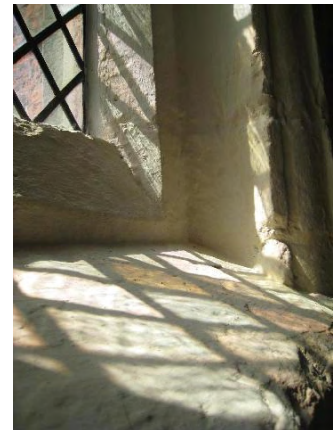
- To raise awareness generally of the need for places of worship to receive regular and basic routine maintenance in order to save historic fabric and money.

We have had generated a considerable amount of publicity in 2007 both in terms of articles in printed media and on websites. We have also given a number of radio interviews which have been a useful opportunity to spread the message of maintenance to a wider audience. We were also pleased to take part in discussions about how to promote the maintenance of church buildings with like-minded organisations such as the Church Buildings Maintenance in Scotland project, Maintain our Heritage, GutterClear and the Church Heritage Forum etc.



- To encourage greater understanding of the history and interest of historic places of worship and their importance and value to the sense of national identity and to their local and wider communities.

The first two sessions in the course programme are focused on the history and interest of historic places of worship in the local area. There is a particular emphasis on the issue of why places of worship are important and why they should be preserved. Information about church buildings and how to research places of worship can be found on the Faith in Maintenance website and also in the course handbook.



- To enhance the skills, expertise and personal development of volunteers and thereby to increase their interest in, and enjoyment of, their duties and tasks and improve the quality of their volunteering experience.

The course is designed to enhance the practical skills and understanding of volunteers regardless of whether they have a technical background or not. Our feedback has consistently shown that participants gain more confidence in their ability to look after their places of worship better.



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Many report a greater enthusiasm for the practical tasks necessary to keep buildings in a good state of repair and a desire to implement a maintenance plan.

- To promote the philosophy espoused by the Society with its emphasis on daily care, conservative repair and the use of traditional materials.

When William Morris founded the SPAB in 1877 he wrote that we should attempt “to stave off decay by daily care”. This is the core message of the SPAB and features in all the material produced by Faith in Maintenance. As part of the work of Faith in Maintenance we also promote the use of traditional materials and the philosophy of conservative repair as set out in the SPAB’s Manifesto and Principles. We ensure that all the architects, surveyors and contractors who share their knowledge as part of the training courses are committed to the SPAB’s philosophy of conservation.



Conclusion



The Faith in Maintenance project is an excellent opportunity for the SPAB to support the work of churchwardens and others and give them the help they need to look after their historic places of worship. We are finding that the courses do encourage people to take a greater interest in the fabric of their buildings and will hopefully reduce the need for costly repair programmes to correct the damage caused by leaking roofs and gutters. Although this is a major commitment for the SPAB, we have been extremely pleased by the level of support we have received so far and are confident that there is a genuine need for this type of training.

We have built a firm foundation for the FiM project in this first year and have learned a great deal that will help us to ensure that the project continues to be a success in the coming years.

Sara Crofts
Faith in Maintenance Project Director

“Take proper care of your monuments and you will not need to restore them. A few sheets of lead put in time upon the roof, a few dead leaves and sticks swept in time out of a water course, will save both roof and wall from ruin. Watch an old building with an anxious care; guard it as best you may, and at any cost, from every influence of dilapidation.”

John Ruskin (speaking of Rouen Cathedral in 1859)