

News on the Former Scout Hall at 04 April 2024:

The former Scout Hall in Church Street is now back in the ownership/trusteeship of All Saints Church. The Scout groups that met in the hall stopped meeting there three years ago and Bath District Scouts asked the church to receive the building back into church ownership. After careful consideration of all the options, the PCC agreed to do this. Currently, the building is in a poor state of repair, although it is usable for storage and so will be used to store the contents of the church that were removed from the church building when work started on the refurbishment project. Over the next 6 -12 months, the PCC will be reviewing options for the future use of the building.

HISTORY OF THE FORMER INFANTS SCHOOL / SCOUT HALL

The hall in Church Street was the original church school in the village and part of the building dates back to 1817. It was used as an Infants School right up until the late 1950s when new Infants and Junior Schools were built on the current site in Broadmoor lane. At the same time the Junior School moved out of what is now the All Saints Church Centre. Later the two schools were merged to form Weston All Saints Primary School (WASPS).

Both of the former school buildings then reverted back to the ownership/trusteeship of All Saints Church. In the 1960s the Church decided that it would keep the Juniors building but that it would lease the Infants building to the Scouts (the 66th Group). So in 1965 All Saints & the Diocese entered into a 100 year lease with the Scouts on the basis of a one-off payment of £1,000 and ten shillings (50p) annual rent, provided that the building was maintained in good condition.

In the autumn of 2020, the 66th Bath Scout Group ceased to meet and the group was formally disbanded by the Bath District Scouts in the spring of 2021. For the past three years, conversations have taken place between Bath District Scouts and the PCC as to the future of the Hall. During that time the church and the Scouts commissioned a survey of the building and found (as expected) that it was in a very poor state of repair and to bring it to a fully usable, safe and comfortable state could cost several hundred thousand pounds. Later in the conversations, the Scouts made it clear that their preference was to hand back the Hall to the church. However the PCC was not willing to simply receive the hall back in its present condition.

The Scouts were asked to either make good some of the defects in the building or contribute a sum of money to the church to enable it to carry out remedial works if it decided to retain the building.

In 2023, agreement was reached whereby the Scouts would surrender the lease early and relinquish all responsibilities for the hall and would transfer £145,000 to the Church. This agreement was concluded on 28 March 2024 when the building reverted back to the ownership of All Saints.

In the first instance, the church will secure the building and carry out any urgent repairs of a health and safety nature or defects which could further damage the building. The building will also need to be insured. These costs and any others (including the legal conveyancing costs) incurred by the church will be funded out of the money transferred by the Scouts – not out of voluntary giving.

The PCC has agreed to explore the possible options for the future use of the hall. These range from finding a suitable on-going community use of the building, under the management of the church to a full disposal of the building for alternative uses e.g. residential use. At the moment the PCC does not know what options might be drawn up and which of those are even feasible, practically, financially, legally and planning-wise.

The PCC is conscious that it has now taken on the ownership and management of a currently empty building. This is a significant responsibility. The PCC is also aware that options and decisions about the future of the former school and former scout hall will be of interest to a number of businesses and homes in Weston High St and Church St and in Weston more generally. Careful and sensitive management of these decisions is essential. If any church member has any concerns or ideas about future use, they should speak to Tom Yacomeni, Peter Heywood or Ernie Messer, who has agreed to steer this piece of work.