

## Blog 46: Looking Up

It was 1978 and I had been through the whole checklist; gutters, roof, tower, bells and around 180 other items, making notes for my report. I was about to leave St Andrews Church, Shrivenham in Wiltshire, UK when I looked directly upwards, leaning backwards. One of the main oak roof truss tie beams which supports the nave roof was curved, not straight as it should be.

It had been there undisturbed since 1638 but now we had trouble. Closer inspection from scaffolding showed that urgent repairs were needed before the main structure, which was suffering from timber decay, gave way. It was not possible to replace the beam without dismantling the roof so the next best option was two steel beams on either side, bolted together through the timber.

Quinquennial (every five years) inspections and reports are required by government for every heritage church in the UK and must be carried out by an architect or specialist surveyor. The reports must be paid for by each church. Whilst we don't have this requirement in Australia, we have an increasing number of buildings that are getting beyond their 150th birthday.

We have links with Ian Hamilton of Arcuate Architecture in Adelaide, a heritage architect with UK experience who has taken this a step further. He has developed [Strategic Asset Management Plans](#) (SAMP) for churches. He links the church's objectives with care and maintenance in order to see "the big picture".

Councils and government do this to plan and budget. In churches we often only respond when trouble appears. However, if we could forecast it and nip it in the bud, a "stitch in time would have saved nine". Currently the Anglican Diocese of Adelaide is starting to use the process.

Without QQs, as we called the inspections, some UK churches would probably have been lost by just waiting for trouble to appear and finding it was too late. It took detailed observation at Shrivenham.



*St Andrew's Shrivenham, strengthened roof structure. Photo by Nikhilesh Haval*

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