



CHURCHWARDENS' CHECK LIST

❖ The well equipped churchwarden

On taking office a churchwarden should make sure that he or she has a watertight pair of wellies, a strong raincoat, a pair of binoculars, a set of church keys, a notebook and pen and a stout heart. With these, he or she can tackle anything, especially spotting trouble before it starts.

❖ The enemy

Rising damp, blocked drains and gutters, poor ventilation, faulty wiring, insecure windows and doors, the unserviced boiler, the slipped slate and crumbling stonework all pose a serious threat to our intrepid warden and can lead to expensive repairs if not treated quickly. Water is probably the greatest single cause of damage to buildings. Second is poor ventilation, followed by faulty electrical wiring (which is the cause of most fires) and poor security that lets thieves and vandals in.

A regular walk around the building in your care (at least once a month), occasionally in the rain to spot blocked gutters and drains, armed with binoculars to spot the slipped slate or the elder tree growing half way up the tower can do wonders. Notice it, note it and get help to put it right!

❖ A check list

The following check list may help:

- a) Drains and gutter – should be cleared at least once a year when leaves are down. Paying someone to do this may cost £100 if cannot do it yourself. Failure to keep them clear will lead to several thousands of pounds in repairs.
- b) Weeds and green growth round the base of the wall should be removed or killed as needed.
- c) Ventilation – good ventilation is important especially between services, to reduce internal condensation
- d) Slipped slates and damaged tiles – look out for them especially after a storm and for internal telltale damp patches.
- e) Insecure doors and windows are an invitation to thieves.
- f) Old, trailing or loose wiring is the cause of many fires.
- g) Churchyard care – not just the grass but also noting dangerous or loose tombstones (a real hazard to children), broken glass, dead limbs on trees that may need surgery.
- h) The boiler should be serviced annually and started up occasionally during the summer to make sure that it works when it is needed.
- i) Churchyard walls and fences – a stitch in time can save large bills.
- j) Valley gutters may be out of sight and out of mind but they need regular clearing of leaves and snow.

- k) Fire extinguishers need annual maintenance.
- l) The Log Book and Inventory need to be ready for the New Year and the PCC's inspection.
- m) Graphite locks – dry locks bend keys. Oil can attract dirt and may end in clogging the lock.
- n) Spring clean – an annual event in both church and churchyard can prevent the accumulation of clutter and debris.
- o) Clean tower roof and belfry – jackdaws and pigeons love bell towers – check screens for holes.
- p) Beetles and dry rot – watch for tell tale dust (woodworm), droppings (mice), droppings that look like mice droppings (death-watch beetles) and growths on walls and woodwork (which may be dry rot).

Make sure you have help. Good churchwardens look for trouble but seek the help of others to help put matters right.

If in doubt, ask either your archdeacon or speak to the DAC office at Church House. Keep your inspecting architect informed.