



Welcome to **November's** email bulletin. As November is the month when we celebrate [National Gutters Day](#) (Friday 25th) we thought we would focus on **rainwater goods**. You can also view an illustrated version of this bulletin [online](#). If you have a subject that you would like us to cover in a future bulletin let us know by emailing the team at [info@spabfim.org.uk](mailto:info@spabfim.org.uk).

## Things to think about...

Our rainwater goods are one of the key functional elements of our buildings and should be our top priority in terms of maintenance. If we don't look after our gutters and downpipes properly, the consequences can be dramatic. Concentrated and prolonged wetting from failed rainwater goods is likely to cause damp patches internally, leading to mould growth on walls and ceilings. We may also start to see evidence of decay in timber skirting boards and panelling etc. Further investigation will often reveal rot in concealed timbers, such as roof truss bearings beneath parapet gutters.

Externally, failing rainwater goods can lead to algae growth on masonry and to the premature erosion of mortar joints. Render failures might also be expected, particularly if the render is cement-based as it will tend to draw in water through hairline cracks. External joinery can also be attacked by wet rot where there are leaks above doors and windows. Blocked gullies may lead to a build-up of water and damage to foundations.

You can read SPAB's brief history of gutters on the [National Maintenance Week website](#).

## Things to do...

- Every autumn clear away any plants, leaves and silt from gutters, hopper heads and flat roofs. It's a good idea to do this in spring too.
- Look for blocked downpipes. This is best done during heavy rain to see if there is water spilling out from leaky joints. In dry weather you can look for stained brickwork or masonry behind the downpipe.
- Keep gulleys and drains at ground level clear of debris such as leaves, twigs and even things like tennis balls, dead pigeons and plastic bags. Have blocked gulleys and drains cleaned out by a professional company if necessary.
- Remove potentially damaging vegetation from behind downpipes by cutting back or preferably removing the plant altogether.
- Use a hand mirror to look behind downpipes as splits and cracks in old cast iron often occur here and are not easily noticed.
- Consider fitting bird/leaf guards to the tops of soil pipes and rainwater outlets to prevent blockages but remember

that these need to be maintained too!

- Have gutters re-fixed if they are broken, sloping the wrong way or discharging water onto the wall.
- If sections of your rainwater goods are beyond repair, make sure that replacements are made of the same material as the originals (this is sometimes lead, but more usually cast iron).
- Regular painting of cast iron is essential to prevent rust and keeps your place of worship looking good!
- Give careful consideration to your own safety before you undertake any maintenance work at high level. If in doubt always seek help from a professional.

## Further information

SPAB Technical Advice Q&A 4: [Rainwater Disposal](#)

Faith in Maintenance Video Clip: [Looking After Gutters and Rainwater Goods](#)

## Need more help?

If you have any questions about maintenance or repair issues contact our [Technical Helpline](#) for advice and guidance. This service is normally available on **Fridays** between **11am and 6pm** on **0207 456 0916**. Alternatively you can email your questions to [advice@spabfim.org.uk](mailto:advice@spabfim.org.uk). Copies of the SPAB's range of Technical Pamphlets and Information Sheets are available to purchase from our [online bookshop](#).

## New SPAB Project ~ The Maintenance Co-operative Movement

We have now submitted an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a new project which we hope will be a fitting successor to the Faith in Maintenance project. The aim of the new project is to set up and run a series of '**local maintenance co-operatives**' across England. The idea is to bring together a group of volunteers in a local area and to support them to tackle the challenges of caring for historic places of worship together. Further details are available on [our website](#).

We thought we might also share the story of how one church was able to successfully tackle a series of repair projects by involving the community in the project. Watch the story of Fishley St Mary, in the Diocese of Norwich, on [YouTube](#).

**Sara Crofts** Faith in Maintenance Project Director

*Stave off decay by daily care ~ William Morris 1877*

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