



Welcome to July's **Faith in Maintenance** email bulletin.

Every month we try to provide you with some useful ideas to make sure that your place of worship stays in tiptop condition. You can also view an illustrated version of this bulletin [online](#).

This month our subject is **caring for masonry**. If you have a topic that you would like us to cover let us know by emailing the team at info@spabfim.org.uk.

Things to think about...

In the main, the masonry elements of the building will stand up well against the elements and will weather slowly over the years. However, problems with other parts of the building fabric, such as the rainwater goods, may increase their rate of decay. We also know that incorrectly specified mortars, for example those containing cement, can have a damaging effect so it is good practice to examine the wall surfaces from time to time.

Architectural features such as string courses, cornices and the hood moulds above windows and doors are an important element of the building fabric, not just in terms of adding visual interest but also in a technical sense as they help to throw water clear of the face of the wall. If these features are damaged water will run down the face of the wall and increase the rate of decay in the masonry below. In addition, pollution may affect the appearance of buildings in urban areas over time. However, unless the soiling is heavy and is actively harming the masonry, cleaning is usually inadvisable.

Where masonry is severely damaged and is thought to be in need of repair there are a range of approaches that your professional advisor might take. The starting point is usually the principle of minimum intervention which aims to retain as much as possible of the existing fabric. This may mean carrying out repairs using lime mortar or perhaps pinning fractured masonry with stainless steel rather than replacing old stones with new masonry. When new stones are required it is vitally important that the replacement stone is a close match with the original in terms of its geological type, texture, porosity and hardness. Colour is important too but bear in mind that stones change colour as they weather.

Things to do...

As part of your annual fabric inspection it is a good idea to have a close look at the condition of the masonry and to report any

concerns to your professional adviser. In order to gauge the rate of decay you might like to photograph a representative part of the structure so that you can compare the condition of the stone over the coming years. This will give you some idea of how fast (or slowly!) the stone is weathering and may help you make sound judgements about the need for future repairs or replacement.

Further information

The following articles may be of interest and can be found on the [Building Conservation Directory website](#).

- *'Building Stones of the United Kingdom'* by Francis Dimes
- *'Stone Replacement: To do? Or what to do? That is the question'* by Malcolm Coulson
- *'The Search for Stone: Identifying, Sourcing and Matching Britain's Building Stones'* by Graham Lott
- *'New Stone for Old: Techniques for Matching Historic Stone Finishes'* by Jamie Vans

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 **9.30am and 3.30pm** on **0207 456 0916**. Alternatively you can mail your questions to advice@spabfm.org.uk. Copies of the SPAB's range of Technical Pamphlets and Information Sheets are available to purchase from our [online bookshop](#).

Faith in Maintenance Survey

We recently appointed consultants to carry out some research to discover whether the Faith in Maintenance training courses have had an impact on volunteers and their places of worship. We were interested in volunteers' views so that we can explain to others the value of what we do. The survey generated a tremendous response and so we would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who took the time to share their thoughts with us.

Sara Crofts Faith in Maintenance Project Director

Stave off decay by daily care ~ William Morris 1877

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