

Part 2

LOOKING AFTER A MEETING HOUSE

.1 Annual Check

It is hoped that all Meeting Houses will be professionally inspected at least once every five years. Even if such inspections are carried out, it is still important to watch for any tell-tale signs which may mean trouble. Expert advice may be necessary if any of the following symptoms become apparent:

- Fresh cracks in plaster (? possible structural movement).
- Damp patches (? roof or pipes leaking, or rising damp).
- Musty smells (? damp or rot).
- Small holes in woodwork or unaccountable wood dust (? beetle).
- White root-like threads or leathery fungus on woodwork or spores like ground coffee (? dry rot)

These symptoms require urgent attention. Premises Committees should try to keep their buildings in good condition and save expense by making an annual check of each building, on the basis of the checklist given in A 201.1

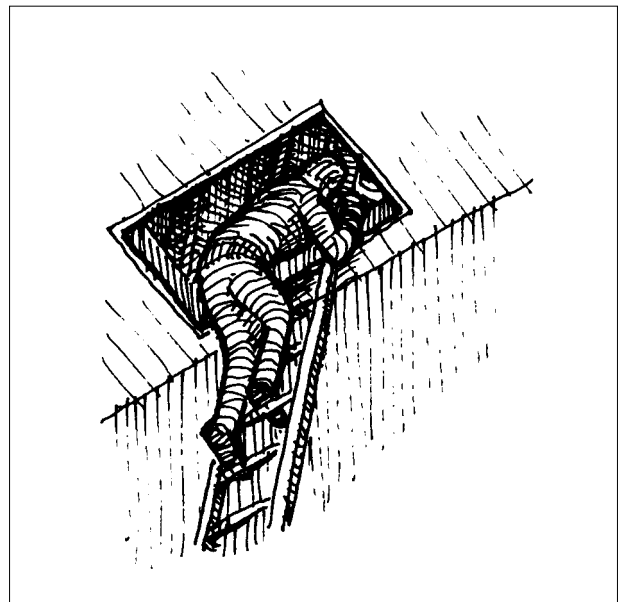
See: 105 Quinquennial Survey

.2 External Maintenance

Roofs If there is no access to the roof space, have one made. It is essential to be able to inspect all wood structures regularly in order to catch fungus and woodworm attack at an early stage and thus avoid crippling costs. Check especially the bottoms of the rafters where visible and the wall plate on which they rest, as this part is particularly vulnerable to rot.

Make sure that the roof is sufficiently ventilated to carry away the humidity from below which can otherwise condense and cause rot. Where there are ventilators or air bricks, make sure that there is fine gauze across them to prevent entry of insects such as bees and wasps. Ensure that loft insulation does not block the ventilation.

Ensure that there is adequate insulation to the ceilings of rooms below the roof, and check that it has been properly replaced after work in the roof space. Leaks in the roof should be repaired immediately they are noticed. Remember that the damp patch on the ceiling is rarely directly below the leak.

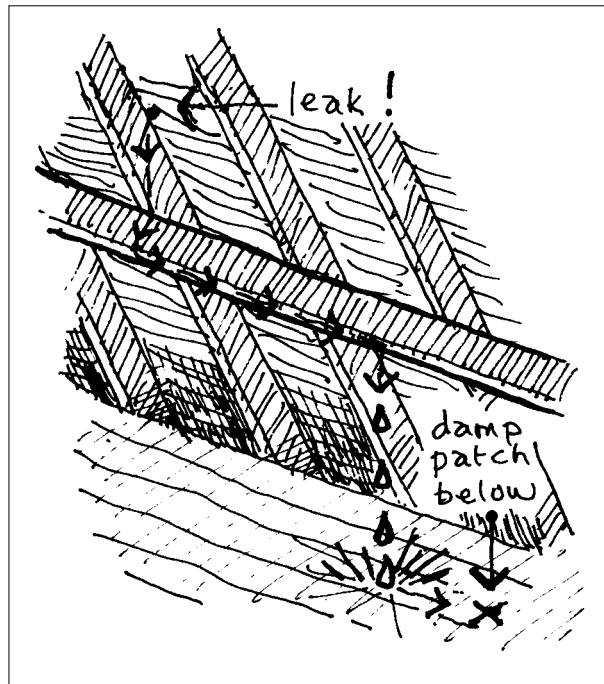


'If there is no access to the roof space, have one made.' 201.2

201. Building Maintenance

So-called 'waterproof' finishes applied to slates or tiles are a short term expedient and should be avoided. Apart from encouraging internal condensation, causing battens and even rafters to rot, the roofing materials are ruined for reuse.

Walls Materials such as brick or stone usually look best to start with, weather best with the passage of time, and need less maintenance. If the initial mortar was appropriate repointing should only be necessary at very infrequent intervals, but when it has to be done the raking out should be thorough and advice should be taken as to the composition of the mix. Generally speaking, the mortar should not be harder than the materials it joins; a mortar too rich in cement can cause the brick or stone to spall and may well fall out in chunks due to the effects of frost; on the other hand too weak a mix will not last. Many fine walls have been ruined by the wrong mix and form of pointing.



'Remember that the damp patch on the ceiling is rarely directly below the leak.' 201.2

There is no cure for spalling bricks or stone except replacement. Most 'cure-all' surface treatments result in the formation of a hard skin which itself flakes off in time and extends the area of damage.

External rendered finishes, smooth or pebble-dash, are on the whole to be avoided, especially as a means of protecting failing brickwork. The danger is that the surface finish will shrink and the many small cracks that result will let water in, the water will freeze and the rendering will come off bringing the face of the bricks with it. If you have inherited rendered walls you must try to keep the water out by applications at say five year intervals of an external treatment which will keep the haircracks filled. Remember if you start to use paint on external render you are committing future generations to do the same.

Woodwork and painting Some of the materials now being used for windows and doors: unplasticised poly-vinyl-chloride (UPVC), anodised aluminium or coated aluminium, need little maintenance other than routine cleaning. Painted joinery, soffits, fascias, bargeboards and the like need regular redecoration. The painting of external woodwork is perhaps the most onerous of the regularly recurring expenses which a meeting has to face.

There is a tendency for the paintwork in some parts of a building to deteriorate faster than the rest, such as horizontal ledges and window cills. In such cases it can be beneficial to have them touched up after say three years. In addition to being better protected in the meantime, these parts will then provide a better base when the main 5-year painting comes to be done.

Varnished woodwork looks attractive, but if it is to remain so, the finish will have to be renewed every two years, particularly where it is exposed to the sun and the rain. Solvent-based preservative stains are less liable to damage than paint or varnish, and are easier to re-coat, but note carefully the manufacturers' instructions and keep a record for next time.

When re-painting, make sure the old work is cleaned down to a firm base and use a good quality paint system, that is, primer, if needed, one or more undercoats and finish, all from the same manufacturer, and all carefully applied. It is easy for a painter to do a 'cheap' job which does not look too bad initially but does not last.

In new buildings painted ironwork is best avoided for gutters, downpipes etc and non-ferrous materials such as coated aluminium are advised instead. PVC is relatively cheap but seems to be of limited durability and can be damaged by ladders and vandals. If you have cast iron gutters, make sure the insides are painted as well as the outsides and that as far as possible the backs of both gutters and pipes are properly painted - those are the first parts to rust away. Bituminous paint will do very well for old gutters which have been poorly maintained in the past.

.3 Internal Maintenance

Walls Check regularly for cracks. If careful records over a period of time show that they are getting worse, take action under expert guidance. Cracks can be caused by:

- An unusually dry spell of weather.
- Shrinkable clay subsoil which seasonally expands and contracts.
- Thermal movements, more common in modern rigid construction. These do not normally cause serious trouble, but cracks from other causes, such as a leaking drain near the foundations, can cause more serious damage, which is why expert advice is needed. Note any sign of dampness and try to ascertain the cause.
- If damp is due to condensation the symptoms will show on cold surfaces and high up in a room. Black or green mould on walls or ceilings is usually caused by condensation. Try to remove this with water and household bleach, and then get advice about stopping the condensation, which normally entails getting rid of the moist air and sometimes adding insulation. See: A201.2 Condensation.
- If damp can be traced to an overflowing gutter or a damaged rainwater pipe or a leaking water pipe, a plumber should be asked to effect an urgent repair.
- If walls are damp low down and the trouble is not attributable to either of the above causes, then it may be rising damp. If irregular patches of damp occur on the walls this may be due to poor construction or materials. In both these cases professional advice is required and the cure may not be easy.

Floors Avoid slippery materials, finishes and polishes for floors. Ensure that only appropriate sealing and cleaning preparations are used. Impervious sheet materials such as lino or plastic sheet or foam-backed carpet on wooden floors tend to trap condensation and water from washing, producing ideal conditions for rot. A particular danger occurs in kitchens and toilets where a lot of water may be present.

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Inspection traps in all timber ground floors enable the underside of the floor to be inspected for rot or insect attack. Get expert advice on where to place the traps and use them regularly. Any sign of rot or insect damage should be dealt with immediately. Ensure that the space under ground floors is well ventilated.

If wood floors are badly worn, they may be smoothed with a sander. Do not use hard varnishes, like polyurethane which chips, it is better to seal with an oleo-resin, eg. "Bourneseal", and then lightly wax occasionally. Similar treatment is applicable to cork. Vinyl tiles may be rubbed over with fine steel wool to brighten them considerably, but be careful to treat them with the polishes recommended for plastic flooring, do not use wax polish. Carpets are best cleaned by a reputable firm, rather than attempting to do it yourselves.

If you decide to fit carpet over an existing floor, remember that the floor must be completely smooth and level or the carpet will rapidly show wear. Make sure that the underfelt is self-ventilating. Remember that dark carpets show marks as readily as light ones. Carpet or carpet tiles in modern materials will give you a quieter and more comfortable room and prove a good investment.

Decorating Walls and ceilings should be redecorated every 5-10 years depending on the use which the building receives.

Make sure that the old work is thoroughly washed down and dry before redecoration starts. Rake out cracks in plaster before attempting to fill them. Remove all rust from metal work and treat with a good rust inhibitor before painting.

Do not use shiny finishes on uneven surfaces, use matt. Do not think that strong colours will 'brighten the place up': they may be exciting but they will not reflect as much light as paler colours. The brightest colour is white.

See: A201.5 Specification for painting and glazing.

.4 Carrying out work

It is the intention of the handbook to distinguish between items of work which may reasonably be arranged by members of the meeting, and larger or more specialist work which should be undertaken through professional advisers. This is because of the very real problems that can arise over, eg specification of the work and materials, compliance with regulations, financial control, and legal and insurance considerations. We therefore limit our advice to work such as re-painting and small repairs. If the meeting has a member equipped to control larger works, well and good, if not such control should be bought.

A most helpful book called *Getting work done on your house*, is published by the Consumers' Association, and might equally well be called 'Getting work done on your meeting house' (Available from bookshops or from the Consumers' Association, 359-361 Euston Road, London (near Great Portland Street), or from the Consumers' Association, Castle Mead, Gasgoyne Way, Hertford X, SG14 1LA).

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Quotations for work may be obtained either by invitation or by competitive tendering.

Over the years any building will need the services of several tradesmen, often urgently eg. for re-glazing or leaking pipes. It may be provident of the meeting to establish a working relationship with such firms, who will thus know their way around and therefore respond more effectively and quickly than strangers. Such a long-term relationship is worth a lot to the meeting.

It follows that firms giving such service should not be excluded from larger jobs about the place. Therefore think twice before embarking on competitive tendering. If mutual confidence exists prices and standards should be reasonable. Estimating cannot be an exact science. A lesser price might well be obtained from a firm expecting to use cheaper materials or less preparation: the meeting will not be equipped to supervise the work at this level, nor to seek a remedy when the work fails prematurely.

When carrying out work to a Listed Building, note the need for a responsible attitude, the possible need for Planning and other consents, and the possible involvement of English Heritage, eg over grants. See their book by C. Brereton, *Repair of Historic Buildings*, 1991 (EH, 23 Saville Row, London W1X 1AB).

See: A201.3 Obtaining Tenders
 A201.4 Sample Draft Contract
 A201.5 Specification for Painting and Glazing

Finally In all these endeavours, always remember that everything you do to your meeting house should be an “improvement”. Whether it be adding a new room or only adding a light switch, nothing should be regarded as of no importance. Do not leave the odd-job man to make your decisions for you. Anything you replace or add should leave your meeting house better than before, in both function and appearance.

.5 See: 202 Electrical Maintenance
 203 Heating Maintenance
 207 Doing it ourselves
 A201.2 Condensation in Buildings

.1 Advice

Electricity is dangerous. It can kill. Even in British homes it kills several people each year. It can start fires. Only electricians whose qualifications are recognised by NICEIC or ECA should be employed (see para. 8). Never adopt do-it-yourself methods for wiring or alterations.

.2 Tariff

Make certain that you are on the most advantageous tariff. These vary from company to company and from time to time, but there is usually one especially designed for community buildings like Meeting Houses with a lot of weekend and evening use.

.3 Lighting

It is obvious that lighting covers and shades need cleaning regularly to maintain their illuminating efficiency, but this is too often overlooked. If you are contemplating changing your lighting, give it very careful thought. Lights illuminate our activities, give shape and form to the space they illuminate and are strong decorative objects themselves. Too many Meeting Houses have been lit as if they were workshops. Seek advice. Consider the use of long-life, low energy lamps in suitable situations.

.4 Heaters

In smaller little-used Meeting Houses, infra-red heaters are often used. These are more comfortable and are much less unsightly if they are placed high on the walls and angled across the room, and not hung from the ceiling.

See: 203 Heating maintenance.

.5 Routine Inspections

First Inspection Unless your meeting house already arranges routine inspections, arrange for a qualified electrical contractor to inspect and check the complete installation.

This inspection should include:

- checks that the switchgear is adequate for the load, which may have been increased since it was installed;
- checks that all switchgear is easily accessible, so that in emergency it could be operated without delay;
- unless already provided, asking the inspector to mark the function of each piece of switchgear, and to make a diagram showing clearly the circuit controlled by each controlling switch, and fix it adjacent to the switchgear;
- considering the replacement of rewirable fuses (which can be rewired with the wrong wire, and are fiddly) with circuit breakers which are more reliable, and are less trouble to reset;
- considering the installation of a residual circuit device (RCD) which will switch off the electricity if a fault develops.

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Regular Inspections

Annually, (the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 requires regular inspections) test all equipment which plugs into a socket, including the flex and the plugs. Since these could have been opened or fitted since the previous inspection, the electrician should open each plug and check it. Between inspections keep a wary eye in case, unbeknown to you, someone has changed a plug!

5- yearly: (now recommended annually by the Institute of Electrical Engineers). Examples of some of the items the electrician should check:

- the insulation is sound;
- the earthing is efficient;
- all fuses have the correct wire;
- earth bonding of water and gas pipes, metal sinks, etc;
- fix back any loose items;
- no water is leaking onto any electrical part.

This inspection should preferably be part of the quinquennial survey of the premises. (see 105)

Friends' own checks At the time of the first inspection, and thereafter routinely, check the vulnerability of switches, cables, lights, heaters, kettles, plugs, etc. Include outside items: for example, in a country meeting, can outside cables be damaged by cows' horns? Is a cable slung low overhead liable to be used as a clothes line or be damaged by vehicles?

Are any inflammable fluids being stored in the same enclosure as switchgear? If a fuse blows it could cause an explosion by igniting the vapours.

Get the habit of making the following checks whenever you use a piece of electrical equipment:

- Has it developed a new rattle?
- Is it getting warmer than you would expect?
- Is there evidence of worn or frayed cabling?

.6 Routes of new wiring

Whenever new wiring is called for, do not leave the route to the electrician but insist on agreeing the route with him. It is worth the trouble, as otherwise you may find new wires in unexpected and unwelcome positions. Try to use hidden routes wherever possible: top of ledges such as picture rails or shelving, in cupboards, roof spaces, and existing ducts, etc.

Where a run across bare plaster is unavoidable, have a shallow groove made in which a plastic tube can be buried and along which the wire can be threaded. Such runs of cable should be horizontal and/or vertical between obvious points only, then it is more possible to 'read' a wall and have an idea which areas are free of cables. Horizontal cable runs should preferably be in or near floors or ceilings. Before making any fixings, for shelves or even picture hooks, into any plastered wall it is advisable to use a suitable metal or electrical detector to verify no cables are close by. If new wiring is to be installed in floors and joists need to be cut, be aware that the Building Regulations contain rules to avoid

weakening the floor joists. Do not be tempted to run wires on the outside face of a building, as that may spoil the appearance. This may seem obvious, but it often happens.

It is common to find wires left both inside and outside buildings which are now no longer needed. They make the place look tatty, and should be removed. A good time for doing this is just before redecorating.

.7 Extension leads and plugs

Leads should always be of 3-core construction unless they can only be used with double-insulated equipment. It is important to unwind the whole length of the cable unless it is going to be used for less than half of its current carrying capacity, otherwise it is liable to overheat. The fuse in the plug must be correct for the size of cable, because the longer the cable is, the less likely it is to blow in the event of a fault. Up to 500 to 600 watts correspond to a 3 amp fuse.

Most people reckon they can fit cable into a plug, but someone knowledgeable should always check that the fuse is correct, and that there is a stock of replacement fuses available. Many items, such as lamps, radios, record players, need only a 3 amp fuse.

.8 Addresses

National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting (NICEIC),
Vintage House, 36-37 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7UJ.

Electrical Contractors' Association (ECA),
34 Palace Court, London W2 4JG, or ECA of Scotland, 23 Heriot Row, Edinburgh,
EH3 6EW.

.1 Introduction

The word ‘engineer’ can cover varying degrees of training and competence depending on the context. Accordingly in this section the following definitions apply: ‘heating engineer’: a professionally qualified person; ‘installer’: one who supplies and fits systems and appliances; ‘service engineer’: one who mainly undertakes maintenance of systems, but who may also be an installer.

The heating of a meeting house has three components:

- the source of heat;
- making the most efficient use of the fuel;
- preventing the waste of heat.

.2 Advice

Normal rules do not always apply in a meeting house heated only intermittently, therefore extra care is needed in choice of fuel and equipment.

Advice is best sought from a professional heating engineer or a known competent installer, rather than from a source tied to one fuel or system.

.3 Routine Inspections

In view of the high cost of heating, keep it as efficient as possible by:

- full annual servicing contract for gas and oil appliances and mechanical controls;
- 5-year specialist check of electrical control systems where there is central heating; and of electrical heating systems. (For electrical safety checks see: 202 Electrical Maintenance)
- At not more than 10-year intervals have the system inspected by a professional engineer (or 5 years if the system is maintained by a competent installer). A 5-year period is better where regular servicing is undertaken by a service engineer. A 10-year period is more appropriate for a professional engineer’s inspection, if only on grounds of cost. This inspection should preferably be part of the quinquennial survey of the premises. See: 105 Quinquennial survey.
- At the 10-year inspection consider whether, in view of its age, performance and the current cost of fuel used, there may be a case for changing to another fuel, or even to another system.

All inspection and work should be done by qualified people.

.4 Green Developments

Keep abreast of developments in energy conservation. Get advice on heating economics from your heating engineer, and on appearance from your architect. Technical innovations occur frequently, and you may come across something that makes sense for your meeting house. However, beware that some technical innovations may be untried and therefore bear risks; there can be side effects not perceived immediately. See: A101.2, the QPS leaflet *Greening our Meeting Houses*.

.5 Heat conservation

Consult your architect and heating engineer on the economic and comfort benefits of taking steps to conserve heat more efficiently (and consult your 'green' conscience too):

- by sealing doors and windows to reduce draughts, which is the most cost-effective way of reducing heating costs;
- by adding thermal insulation, especially in the roof;
- by adding secondary glazing to existing windows, or by replacing windows with double glazing. Secondary glazing may improve sound insulation.

These measures can have side effects which are very detrimental to a building unless they are carried out correctly, and increased risk of condensation, possibly in concealed locations is taken into account. Listed buildings may be particularly vulnerable.

See: A201.2 Condensation.

.6 System

Pipes and radiators If yours is a new system of pipes and radiators, make sure that it is chemically cleansed before being treated with a corrosion proofer incorporating a biocide. If it is an old or extended system, a special type of chemical cleansing may be required before the corrosion proofer is added. This may be costly, but will avoid more expensive remedial work at a future date. Seek advice from your heating engineer or installer; have water samples tested by a laboratory. Some manufacturers of treatments may do this free of charge.

Go round several times a year and make sure that there is no air in the system, by 'bleeding' the radiators. If air has often to be vented from radiators, or if water is discharged from the boiler safety vent pipe, obtain advice immediately from your heating engineer .

Should it be necessary to install new pipe runs be aware of rules included in the Building Regulations to avoid weakening of floor joists .

Warm air systems From time to time remove the outlet grilles and vacuum clean them and the duct as far as practicable, and do likewise with the return air grille(s).

.7 Addresses and institutes

Check that your advisor is a member of one of these accrediting bodies:

CIBSE Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers

IDHE Institute of Domestic Heating Engineers

IOP Institute of Plumbing

IEE Institute of Electrical Engineers

203. Heating maintenance

Names of installing contractors may be obtained from:

HVCA Heating and Ventilating Contractors' Association,
34 Palace Court, London W2 4JG (0171 229 2488)

NICEIC National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting,
36 Albert Embankment, London SE1 (0171 582 7746, 0171 735 1322)

CORGI Confederation of Registered Gas Installers,
(address from local Gas Regional Office).

.1 Introduction

Attention to fire precautions has the dual object of ensuring the safety of users and the preservation of the premises from damage or destruction.

.2 Advice

Detailed advice can be obtained free of charge from the Fire Prevention Officer of the local Fire Service and should be regularly updated and action recorded. The notes that follow are intended to alert responsible Friends to the issues involved. Newer Meeting Houses are likely to have the built-in safeguards mandatory in the Building Regulations both as concerning construction, materials and means of escape, and thus many of the provisions set out below may have been satisfied. The principal objectives are to prevent the spread of fire by the provision of fire breaks, fire doors and the use of intumescent paints, and to ensure that any fire is discovered as soon as possible, possibly requiring the installation of smoke alarms. Know where to turn off gas and electric main supplies to the building.

.3 Risks

Combustible materials should be identified and excluded from situations where they may constitute a potential hazard; for example, combustible foam-filled upholstery in soft furnishings, storage of paints, timber or waste materials in boiler houses or under staircases.

Portable gas heaters are a fire hazard and are not recommended for permanent use because of the condensation they produce, but their effectiveness in providing supplementary heating in extreme or emergency situations is appreciated; spare liquid petroleum gas cylinders - Propane, Butane, etc must be stored outside the main building.

In older premises it will be prudent to check that boiler houses have incombustible wall, door and ceiling surfaces - the latter should be lined with a non-asbestos board having a fire rating of at least one hour. Proper ventilation at low level in the boiler house should be maintained at all times. There are regulations governing the siting of fuel tanks and provision for automatically shutting off the fuel in case of fire.

.4 Electricity

Fires are often caused by defective electric wiring. Amateur installations, long extension leads or a multitude of appliances plugged into a single socket are to be avoided. The installation of a residual current circuit breaker is strongly advised. Old style fuses which can be wrongly rewired should be replaced as soon as possible with miniature circuit breakers. Know where the main switch is. Leads of portable appliances should be inspected annually and this involves checking that the fuse in the plug is of the correct rating.

204. Fire precautions

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.5 Regulations

For any premises used by the public there are mandatory local authority regulations governing the provision of outward opening escape doors, of appropriate signs and of maintained emergency lighting, and it is the responsibility of the building owner to see that these are adhered to, and that all escape routes are kept clear and free from furniture etc. Regulations stipulate the maximum number of persons permitted to be in the building at one time and there are mandatory notices which need to be posted and maintained instructing users what to do in case of fire. Resident Friends and every member of the meeting should know the fire drill. The fire itself should only be tackled if it can be done safely - call the Fire Service!

.6 Extinguishers

Fire extinguishers are of four principal types: red - the gas/water extinguishers for general use but never on electrical fires for which blue (dry powder) or black (carbon-dioxide gas) must be used. If there is an oil-fired boiler a white (foam) extinguisher will be required. Kitchens should be equipped with a fire blanket. The Fire Prevention Officer or your insurance company will advise on appropriate types and where they should be sited - generally near the exit from the area concerned. Where possible extinguishers should be operated from floor level and directed at the base of the fire - but again, the overriding rule is don't try to fight the fire if you cannot do it safely. Used extinguishers should be recharged immediately and it is advisable to enter into a contract for them to be serviced annually.

.7 Residential accommodation

Where there is living accommodation over the Meeting House, the stair should give direct access to the open air. Smoke and heat detectors should be linked to an alarm bell in the residential part of the building.



'... see that all escape routes are kept clear and free from furniture, etc.' 204.4

.1 Advice

The Crime Prevention Officer of the local police is available to offer detailed practical advice upon precautions which can be taken to make the premises more secure and advantage of this service should be taken. The following notes are therefore meant to be of general rather than particular application.

.2 Surroundings

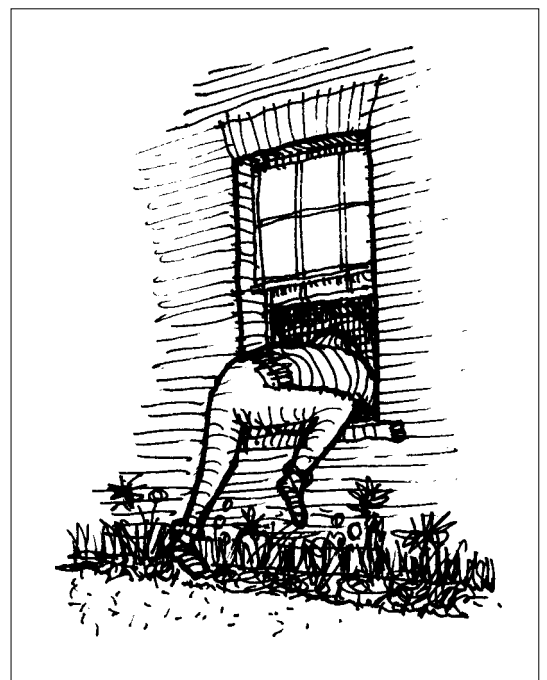
Meeting Houses are designed to be welcoming and the need is to discourage and deter opportunist thieves who are looking for an easy entry. If they have to make a lot of noise, spend a lot of time or risk being seen, the chances are they will not bother. Open surroundings are in themselves a defence. Where Meeting Houses are tucked away behind other buildings for quiet and privacy they are more vulnerable, particularly if there is no resident Friend or warden; it is important, then, to see that fences and gates are high and in good order especially where there are rear entrance ways, public parks, etc.

Ladders, garden tools etc. should be locked away and easy access to flat roofs prevented. Remember that lead from your roof has a ready market. Where any part of the Meeting house premises is out of sight of an illuminated highway, you might consider installing outside lights operated by a programmable time switch or by a detector activated by approaching persons.

.3 Doors and windows

Doors should be protected by security deadlocks to BS 3621. These can only be opened with a key, even from the inside, so if a burglar gets in through a window, he has to leave the same way because he cannot open the doors to remove his takings. The windows can themselves be made more secure quite inexpensively by fitting window locks. A lock forces the thief to break the glass which risks attracting attention. Secure the most vulnerable windows on the ground floor, windows which cannot be seen from the street and windows which can be reached from a drain-pipe or flat roof.

If you have to replace windows consider using laminated glass which is much more difficult to break than ordinary or even the toughened variety, and which should in all instances be used for safety reasons for large panes or patio doors in public places. Patio type doors need special locks top and bottom



'The windows can themselves be made more secure quite inexpensively by fitting window locks.' 205.3

which prevent the glass from being lifted out. Outward-opening doors should be fitted with 'hinge-bolts', to maintain security because hinge-pins can be removed.

.4 Contents

If the Meeting House contains valuable antiques (furniture, books, etc) make an inventory with photographs to help the police if they go missing; things like TV sets, videos etc. can usefully be marked indelibly with the postcode. Some insurance companies offer lower premiums if specific security precautions are taken: ask for their advice. Know where all your keys are; the police like to have a list of keyholders. Identify any problems of security which may occur when the Meeting House is actually open.

.5 See: *Treasurers Handbook* - Insurance

.1 Responsibilities

Responsibilities of trustees, the committee for gardens and burial grounds and the local meeting must be clearly defined.

See: 101 Management

.2 Monthly meeting duties

Church Government lays certain duties upon monthly meetings concerning burial grounds:

- 730 • Preserving records
- 936 • Authorization of burials and disposal of ashes
- 937 • A register to be maintained
- 938 • Burials of non-members
- 982 • Records to be kept
- 983 • Uniformity of gravestones

Monthly Meetings vary in the degree of attention they give their burial grounds. Sometimes the guidelines they provide to the Friend responsible for authorising burials and the disposal of ashes on their behalf are scanty, if indeed they exist at all.

Appendix A206.1 contains guidelines adopted by a monthly meeting in 1989 which might be useful as model, suitably adapted.

.3 Prams and seats

Consider the needs of prams and wheelchairs, and note that ramps and steps may be equally needed by different people. Seats are a great asset to an open space, but where there is public access provide litter bins, and arrange for emptying them.

.4 Personal Safety

Check for:

- paths which are breaking up, or have uneven paving slabs, or are slippery through moss or lichen;
 - flat paving or grave slabs which may trip or are slippery;
 - steps which are badly designed or in need of repair;
 - absence of railings or other protection against falling on to a lower level;
 - railings, fences or walls which are unstable;
 - slates, tiles, masonry, guttering, etc, which might descend unexpectedly;
 - trees dropping branches or liable to fall;
- though the last two should not occur if proper maintenance and husbandry have been carried out.

Ensure that there is adequate insurance indemnifying Friends in respect of claims due to third party personal damage on the premises.

See: 102 Property Responsibilities.

206. Gardens and Burial Grounds

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.5 Security

To assist in the protection of the premises from thieves, vandals and other mis-use:

- a) check that all walls, fences and hedges are sound;
- b) check that all gates are in good condition and are lockable;
- c) where it is not practicable to fix a lockable gate, say due to a pedestrian right of way, consider lockable bollards which hinge at the bottom so that only those with keys can drive their cars over. This is one way of reducing nuisance from unauthorised parking.

See: 205 Security

.6 Inspection

A tour of inspection of all burial grounds (and gardens if included in the committee's duties) should be made regularly. A checklist is suggested in A206.1 to assist in systematic inspection. If a fair copy is filed after each inspection, a useful record of development can be built up over a few years.

.7 Building on disused burial grounds

The Disused Burial Grounds (Amendment) Act 1981 extends to other religious bodies facilities for building on disused burial grounds hitherto granted to the Church of England only. See: A206.2 Disused Burial Grounds

A206.3 Disposal of Burial Grounds

- .8 See:**
- A206.1 Gardens and burial grounds
 - 302 Provision for disabilities
 - 303 Outreach
 - A302.1 Access for disabled people

.1 Introduction

There is an acknowledged place in the care of the Meeting House fabric for 'doing it ourselves'. It can be inexpensive, effective, and can draw the meeting together. Occasional or regular days may be arranged for major cleaning and minor maintenance.

.2 Preparation

To achieve these satisfactory results however clear organisation, guidance and instruction are needed, also forethought on equipment, materials and preparatory work (eg. not all decorating jobs can be carried through from first cleaning to top-coat in one day).

.3 Safeguards

- Insurance: check that the policy covers for damage to members of the meeting working on the premises, and for damage which they may do to the Meeting House (this includes those carrying out a quinquennial survey).
- Health and Safety at Work: failure to observe the provisions of this legislation could cause real trouble in the case of an accident.
- Electrical and gas installation: should be worked on only by someone suitably qualified.
- The hazards of inadequate work are far greater in a public building than at home, and accidental fires less quickly noticed.

.4 Taking decisions

It is easy for members of the meeting to defer to one of its number all decisions on whether work is needed and how it should be done. This is usually a most admirable way of using the available talents. However it has been known to lead to long-term trouble where the person concerned has met each situation at the least possible expense. The accumulation over the years of inadequate remedial work can be disastrous. A second opinion should be welcomed at all times, and a proper quinquennial survey should pick up the problem before it gets out of hand.

If your attic is not boarded a two-plank fixed walkway is essential for inspection purposes. 201.2

