

Diocese of Durham

# St MICHAEL SULGRAVE

**Washington**

(19)

Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1991

## **QUINQUENNIAL REPORT**

on the architect's inspection on

**3 August 2023**

Sunderland Archdeaconry

Chester le Street Deanery

an unlisted building

not in a conservation area

Incumbent Revd Julie Wing

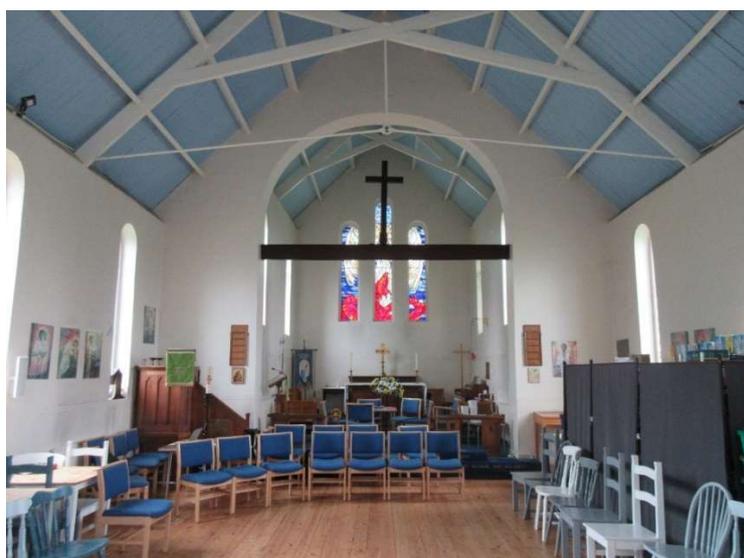


IAN NESS  
ARCHITECT

26 GROSVENOR PLACE NEWCASTLE upon TYNE NE2 2RE

tel & fax

0191 281 2559



## **PART ONE**

1. I have made a thorough general survey of the condition of the church and grounds. The inspection was such as could readily be made from ground level and ladders. I have not inspected woodwork or other parts of the structure which are covered, unexposed or inaccessible and I am therefore unable to report that any such part is free from defect. The chimney flues were not inspected and none of the services were tested. Damp meters were not used.
2. No material seen is likely to contain asbestos and the history of the church is such that asbestos is unlikely to be present. However this report is an Assessment rather than a Management Survey under the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2012. The PCC may wish to see the guidance on the Church Buildings Council ("ChurchCare") website.  
If a management or demolition survey is required and not previously done, a specialist surveyor should be approached.

## **Brief description**

3. A modest colliery terrace church of 1904. A simple red brick Nave and narrower Chancel under a continuous welsh slate roof. N offshot containing an Entrance Lobby, large Kitchen and wc. A bricked up lean-to against the S Chancel wall may be a disused blower house or wc. Altar moved forward to the Sanctuary step and Chancel carpeted. Pews cleared and now many chairs removed in turn to make space for tables. Now used both for 'café church' and weekday cafes and food bank.
4. Small grounds enclosed by brick garden walls. Public open space to S and E with houses and flats beyond. Terraced houses to E and W. Shops to N.

## Recent structural history

5. The Log Book shows significant work since 1997:

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| 1997 – 2002 | Plaster cracks filled for monitoring and the church decorated 1998<br>Drains at S and SW inspected by CCTV and cleared of roots, drain by wc and connection at boundary renewed<br>Two small trees close to Chancel removed<br>Bell canopy covered in Nuralite and timbers painted<br>Patch pointing at W side of offshot, W and N boundary walls<br>Clipped polycarbonate window protection added |
| Since 2002  | S Michael stained glass installed in E windows 2003<br>Drains rodded, examined and reported sound<br>Pews removed, softwood floor sanded and stained, upholstered chairs added<br>Accessible wc made in the former boiler room and wc, kitchen fittings added in the offshot   |
| 2011        | Church redecorated   |
| 2012 - 2017 | Chancel recarpeted   |
| since 2012  | Slates repaired<br>Patch pointing including the tops of some buttresses<br>Some lights changed to LEDs   |
| 2018        | Bargeboards repainted<br>Sink repiped, water heater disconnected<br>External sign remade<br>Lectern microphone replaced<br>Roof repairs<br>Nave floor repaired and resealed  |
| 2019        | Gutter repairs, Boiler repair  |
| 2022        | Boiler replaced, hot air curtain added   |
| 2023        | Kitchen tap and wall tiles repaired<br>Organ and W end screens removed, keyboard added in Chancel  |

## Summary of structural condition

6. Overall the church is well maintained.

7. The Chancel brick walls are tall for their thickness, with limited tying by the roof (unlike the Nave) and are pierced by seven tall lancets. The high return walls between Chancel and Nave are barely wide enough to buttress the arch securely. These return walls have rotated outwards slightly, flattening the Chancel arch and distorting the brickwork over the E Nave windows. One end of the timber rood beam is pulled out.

8. After the 2011 redecoration there was in 2018 some 4mm of further movement at the beam, now increased to about 5mm. Minor cracks (mostly hairline) similar to those sketched in 2007 are unchanged. For the record they are mainly:

- under the Chancel SE window
- horizontally E of the Chancel NE window cill
- under the soffit of the crown of the Chancel arch and a short way up both faces

It appears that some spread happened early and started again later, perhaps due to soil movement caused by drain faults and tree growth. Now appears stable.

## PART TWO

### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE EXTERIOR

#### Roofs

9. The roofs are welsh slate with timber bargeboards and eave fascia boards. The Chancel and Nave roof is continuous with a very slight wave in the slates over the Chancel arch, another sign that the Chancel arch has flattened.

10. The **Chancel** and **Nave** roof is fair both sides. At S there is an uneven patch W of the Chancel arch at a former vent or turret, where one slate is missing, one slipping and one is on a lead clip. Any future repairs would be better with stiff copper clips not soft lead.

11. The lower **offshot** meets the Nave roof with fair lead valleys and stepped abutment flashings. Offshot slates good. Stepped lead flashings on soakers around the chimney. At the chimney SE side the cover flashings are all or part missing. At NW one cover flashing is missing.



Lead cover flashing missing from NW of chimney



SW

### Rainwater System, Drainage

12. The gutters are upvc half round bracketed from fascias with downpipes and shoes, mixed black and grey. Most gutters seem sound but blocked by plants at the S end of the offshot W gutter.



W side of offshoot

13. Many rainwater gullies are blocked. Both gullies taking kitchen wastes are blocked and overflowing.



Overflowing gullies at Kitchen



Loose brickwork and soil blocking kitchen branch at NW manhole

14. Earthenware drains with shallow brick manholes around most of the building. The drains pick up the rainwater gullies, the Kitchen waste gully, the wc and a former wc in the now bricked up lean-to against the Chancel S wall. One branch goes E around the Chancel to the S side. The other begins at the Kitchen gully and passes the W end. They join at the middle of the S side and pass out S to a sewer.
15. Past blockage by tree roots is recorded but no present sign of trouble.
16. The sample NW manhole was opened again. The brick joints remain open letting soil build up in the manhole, part blocking the kitchen gully branch, perhaps explaining the overflows there (para 13). Clearance, rebuilding or at least internal repointing is needed. Other manholes may be similar.

### **Walls, Buttresses, Chimney**

17. The church walls are solid brick with a low plinth and tall buttresses. The offshot appears cavity brickwork. Modern struck cement pointing over the original lime mortar. Very slight loss of pointing especially in
  - the wetter plinths
  - the top of the Nave NE buttress
  - around the Nave NE pipe
  - joints in the tops of three S Nave buttresses (with minor plants)



18. The E gable brickwork is good but bellied out from vertical at sill level where some joints are cracked in and below the brick-on-edge sills and two cracked bricks below the sills. No visible change. A cherry tree by the boundary wall is about the recommended minimum 6m away so in severe drought might also influence the wall's foundation. Two other trees formerly near the gable have been removed.
19. Once a wall is bellied the outer edge of the foundation becomes more highly stressed so movement could continue even after trees are removed. Deep raking and pointing the cracked joints could help trace whether the wall is stable or bellying continues.
20. The brickwork of the other Chancel walls and Nave all appears in good condition. Long standing slight twisting of the E Nave window arches on both sides seems caused by past movement of the Chancel arch. No sign of present movement.
21. The offshot E wall leans out a little, probably pushed by deflection of the truss on the pier between the windows.

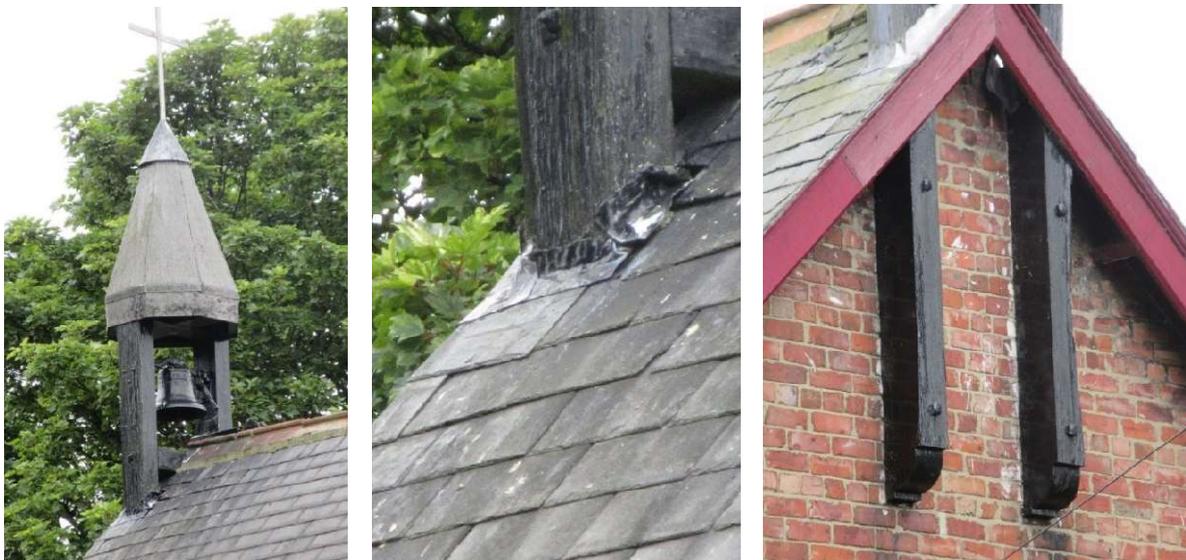


E side of Chimney – upper bricks coming apart with plants in open joints

22. At the disused chimney two former pots and a top brick course have been removed. Top not visible but no sign of any capping so the brick stack seems fully exposed to the weather. If so it is natural that brick joints at the upper E side are open with plants growing. This will progress.  
Given both flues are now disused and the chimney needs repair the alternative of removing the chimney down to slate level and slating over should be considered.

### Bellcote, Bell

23. Two stout timber posts bolted to the W gable brickwork support an octagonal timber spirelet covered in Nuralite sheeting with a cross on a metal cap. The painted timbers look sound without close access.



24. A single bell hangs between the posts. Its rope used to pass through the slates but is now missing, leaving an open weathered hole.  
25. Painted flashband weatherings between the slates and bell posts have limited life.

### Window and Door Openings

26. The church windows have round brick arches and brick on edge sills with added mortar weathering on the sills to improve water run off from the window glass. Brickwork sound but minor open sill joints at Chancel E and N and offshot E side.  
The arches and shallow brickwork over them are weak horizontal restraint to the tall wall panels. The offshot openings have stone lintels.

### External Iron and Wood

27. Slow corrosion of a small iron cross at the E end of the ridge continues and cannot practically be stopped. It leans slightly to N. If it falls it should be replaced in stainless steel.
28. Painted gable bargeboards and eave fascias good.
29. The only doors are the pair at the offshot. They are sound raised panel doors with steel sheets outside. Paint sound. The offshot windows are painted vertical sliding sashes in rebates and apparently sound though fixed shut.
30. The church window frames are painted timber in brick rebates. Generally fair but paint breaks down at S and W sides. Rot at one W end cill. The windows cannot be fully painted without removing the protection.



Typical S Nave



decay in a Nave W sill

### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERIOR

#### Roof timbers

31. In church exposed painted trusses, purlins and vertical sarking boards throughout, without apparent defect.
32. In the Chancel a single scissor truss without tie. In the Nave four wider scissor trusses with iron tie rods built into the canted wallheads. Patched boards at the Nave ridge near the Chancel show where a former turret or vent stood.
33. In the offshot one scissor truss concealed above ceiling. No visible defect.

#### Ceilings

34. In the **entrance lobby** flat painted matchboards. At **wc** flat painted plaster, hatch and ceiling decked over for storage. No insulation at hatch and unknown at ceiling where the decking might hide insulation.
35. At the **Kitchen** fair flat and sloping painted plasterboard with a high hatch. No insulation on the flat ceiling or ply hatch.

#### Chancel Arch, Plaster, Decoration

36. A plain round Chancel plastered brick arch without embellishment. Below the springs a timber rood beam with dressed mouldings and cross is built into the opening. In the past its S end pulled out of the plaster and a 43mm long infill of the moulding was inserted. In 1997 the infill was found further pulled 4mm out of the plaster. The gap is now very slightly wider which may be no more than seasonal movement or the Chancel arch may continue very slight spread.



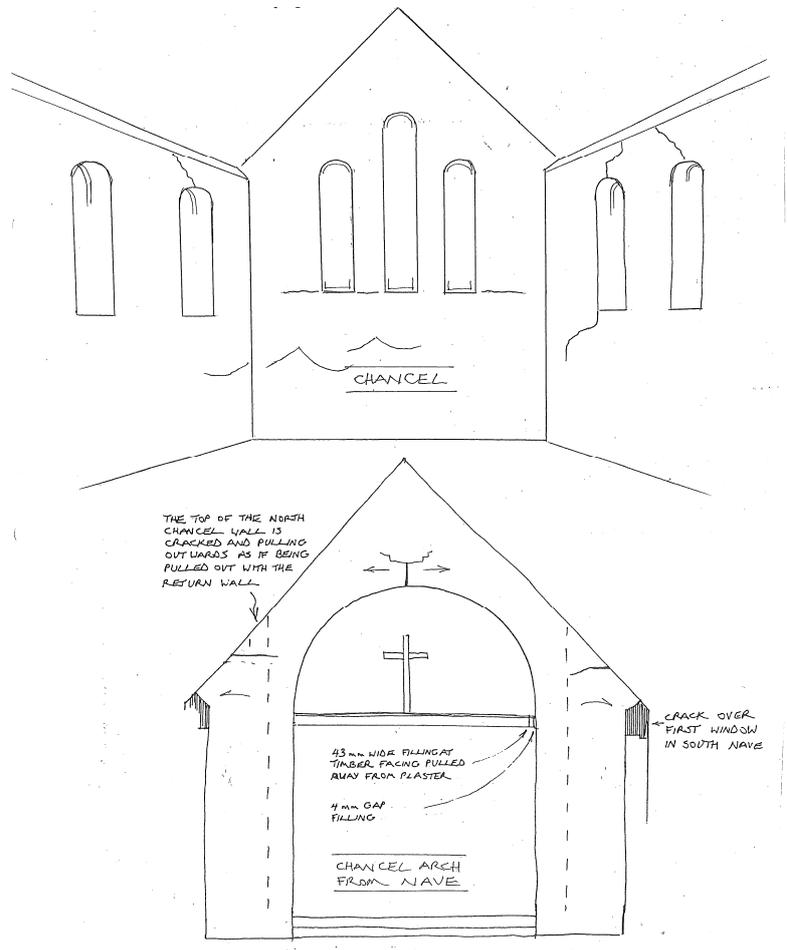
2012



2023

37. Plaster cracks at the Chancel arch and Chancel windows and walls were recorded in past reports and have appeared stable since at least 1992. The whole interior was filled and decorated in 2011. Most cracks previously noted are again visible, suggesting the building is essentially stable but that some parts flex slightly with the seasons.

38. As an aid to future inspections a 2007 record sketch is repeated below. No material change.



CHANCEL MOVEMENT CRACKS 2023 (very similar to 2007)

39. Some plaster at the Chancel N and E walls remains hollow. Otherwise the plaster is in good condition. A dado strip planted on the plaster below the cills may mask a joint between waterproof render and upper plaster. The dark stained rood beam and cross stand out in contrast to the cream paint.
40. A colourful church interior. French and sky blue painted roof boards, cream walls, blue chancel carpet, bright blue chairs. Cobwebs in all parts begin to be noticeable.
41. Minor low level damage in the Lobby where the walls are painted brick above painted render.



42. The Kitchen has painted dry lining over walls which were previously seen to be rendered up to cill level and painted brick above. Tile splashback above the fittings, with cracked grout under the Kitchen tiles. WC all drylined.

### **Partitions, Doors, Screens**

43. The pair of panelled Nave doors are well grained with brass pulls and an overhead closer on one. The wide gap between the meeting edges may be draughty and noisy.
44. The Kitchen room door is stained solid core flush ply with brass levers and overhead closer. The wc door matches without closer. Its indicating lock has a thumbturn inside. A paddle lever might be better for disabled use.

### **Ventilation**

45. The subfloor under the whole church appears well ventilated by airbricks in each bay at all sides.
46. Six window hoppers, all disused. The SE Nave hopper lets air in through permanent gaps at the sides, which may be useful. Steel hoppers of this type tend to rust and distort unless very well maintained. The wc is ventilated by a fan controlled by the light.

### **Glazing, Protection**

47. The three E Chancel lancets have very vivid modern 'St Michael' coloured glass with saddle bars in the wooden frames.

48. Remaining church glass is white obscure in regular leaded panes in the timber frames. Good condition but some dirt.
49. In the Kitchen plain single glazing in the small vertical sliding sash windows except cast obscure in the bottom N lights.
50. All church windows have well fitting ventilated clear polycarbonate protection fixed in clips. Sunlight is clouding and surface crazing the S sheets. Dirt and cobwebs in most spaces. Some ferrous screws begin to rust.
51. The offshot windows have more recent clear polycarbonate protection fixed to the wooden frames.

### **Floors, Rails**

52. In the Chancel thick carpet on a suspended floor with three steps.  
An oak communion rail has a long mid lift out section. The N rail is a little loose.
53. The Nave floor is good suspended softwood boards, now mainly exposed, sanded and varnished.  
Its now exposed W end is unsanded and has a few disused pipe holes needing to be patched, sanded and varnished.
54. Solid uninsulated floors in the offshot.  
Fitted clean-off carpet in the entrance lobby. Non slip vinyl at the Kitchen and wc, all sound.

### **Monuments, Brasses, Furnishings, Organ**

55. No monuments or brasses except 1937 'Welsh' Mothers Union plaque on pulpit.  
Brass fronted aumbry in S wall of Chancel.
56. Oak altar with carved patterned framing for front panels.  
Oak 1942 Clarke memorial chair and four original grained chairs.  
Credence and tall ornate steel paschal candle stand. Modern Douglas fir font with stainless steel bowl.  
Tall beech crucifix, brass cross, two brass altar candle sticks and two wooden floor candle sticks.
57. Sound plain oak pulpit. Modern oak lectern. Reduced number of upholstered chairs in Nave.  
Assorted tables, chairs and foodbank racks.
58. The former Organ and freestanding blower have been removed from the W end of the Nave.  
Now a small electronic organ in the Chancel.

### **Heating**

59. Central heating by a wall mounted Worcester gas combi boiler hidden in a Kitchen wall cupboard with balanced flue through the wall. A large floor standing gas meter.  
Modern steel panel radiators and copper pipework under the floors.  
Control by a frostat, timer and portable wireless thermostat.
60. A former gas fire at the Kitchen chimney breast has been removed.

### **Electrical**

61. A single phase supply with meter and RCD protection high on the offshot N wall. Installation about 30 years old. Concealed wiring except where minitrunking runs along the sloping wallheads to sockets in which lights are plugged.
62. No wiring test report in the Log Book but a sticker at the distribution board says a periodic installation test was done in June 2017. Next due June 2022.  
A new test said expected in week of the inspection. The report should be read and any urgent or necessary recommendations for improvement carried out.
63. Church lighting is eight E facing floods at wall heads. Adequate and warm colour but some glare looking W. Switched in pairs across the church which gives limited control if reduced light is needed in liturgy.  
Two small spots on the rood beam now LEDs.

64. A fluorescent strip in the Kitchen, a ceiling light at Lobby (not working) and a wall light in the wc.  
An LED flood outside the entry doors has a time clock.
65. Recessed white plastic twin 13A sockets at SE corner of Chancel and SE and NE corners of the Nave, one with a spur used for the pulpit light. In the Kitchen recessed and surface sockets and minitrunking.
66. Two small speakers fed through white minitrunking, an induction loop with amplifier under the pulpit steps.

### **Lightning Conductor**

67. None at this modest building.

### **Fire Precautions**

68. Extinguishers all serviced January 2023 and adequate :
- |         |  |
|---------|--|
| Nave    | 2 kg CO <sub>2</sub>                   |
| Nave    | 6 litre foam                           |
| Kitchen | 2 kg CO <sub>2</sub> and fire blankets |

### **Water and Sanitary facilities**

69. Double drainer stainless sink and stainless wash basin in the Kitchen, set in a long worktop. Taps fed from the combi boiler.
70. WC and two wash basins, one with lever mixer tap and one with hot and cold percussive taps, both on short hot legs from the combi boiler.

### **Access and use by people with disabilities**

71. From the wide gates good level access. Path raised a little at the door into the building then level to the Chancel steps.
72. The wc has a baby change shelf and is wheelchair accessible including handrails and a visible and audible alarm with internal and external resets.

### **Security**

73. The grounds are walled but accessible. The steel sheeted entry doors have a 5 lever mortice deadlock, nightlatch and heavy shootbolts. The vulnerable fanlight has intruder alarm detectors.
74. A floor safe in the Kitchen. The thick solid room door has its own 5 lever mortice deadlock.

### **Grounds, boundaries, signs, paths, trees**

75. The small grounds are planted as an attractive garden on the E approach with adequate paths. The narrow S and W margins have subsiding concrete flags and slabs, perhaps caused by past root and drain disruption. Paving around the offshot is high to clear high drains. Any repaving should be kept low where possible to keep damp out of the walls.
76. Shrubs at the N boundary and two medium trees to the E - a silver birch and cherry which may be a little close to the E gable.
77. Enclosed all sides by head or chest high brick walls with piers. The higher W and N walls with half round copings are of fair quality except patches of decayed bricks and joints with some plants both sides. Rebuilding some tops with repointing soon would prolong the life of the bricks. The other walls are part old with some decay, part modern and sound.





78. Painted signs fixed to the Chancel gable (with a new section) and on the offshot gable.



### Archaeology

79. The local authority archaeologist indicates that the church and its site are not of archaeological importance.

### General comments

80. The lively and attractive interior contrasts with the rather unpromising exterior, despite the attractive garden.

81. The parish is to be commended for its continued good care of the building.  
A decision on the chimney is needed soon.

## **PART THREE**

### RECOMMENDATIONS in order of priority

#### **For immediate action**

Repair S Nave slates	10
Clear gullies and manhole outside Kitchen	13, 16
Act on any significant recommendation in the expected Electrical Test Report	62
Renew ceiling light at Lobby	64

#### **For completion within 18 months**

Decide whether to repair or demolish chimney and act	11, 22
At NW manhole rebuild or at least rake and point brickwork	16
Prepare and paint window frames at S and W Nave including cut out and repair rot at one W cill	30

#### **For completion within five years**

Rake and point open joints in garden walls, replace decayed bricks	77
--	----

#### **Desirable improvements**

Rake and point scattered open joints in Church	17, 18, 26
Add ceiling insulation at Kitchen	35
Brush away cobwebs	40
Draught strip doors between Lobby and Church	43
Clean between Church glass and protection	50
Patch and refinish floor at W end of Nave	53

#### **Recommendations on Maintenance and Care**

Continue to monitor cracks and beam for signs of movement	8
Clear gutters at least once a year	12

## **ADDENDUM to the SURVEY REPORT**

### **Required under the Care of Churches and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction Measure 1991**

**PURPOSE OF REPORT** This is a general report only, as is required by the Measure. It is **not** a specification for execution of repairs and must not be used as such. The parish is reminded that it will be necessary to obtain either the Archdeacon's permission or a Faculty if it is intended to make repairs for which an architect's specification should be sought. The PCC minutes must record that an application is being made for permission or faculty and a copy of that minute must accompany the application together with a full specification, drawing where appropriate and an estimate of the cost of the work. In any application for grant aid a full specification is always required.

**LOGBOOK** The parish has a duty under Canon F13(4) to keep a Log Book recording all work carried out on the building. I commend this practice to the PCC. Not only does it help the inspecting architect but it can prove a valuable aid to the parish.

**MAINTENANCE** Continual vigilance to guard against blockages in gutters and the rainwater system as a whole is needed. Every parish must find for itself a reliable procedure to ensure that gutters, ground gutters, gullies and drains are kept clean. It might be:

maintenance under contract by a local builder or handyman or

maintenance by church working party

Whatever system is adopted the problem remains to remember when to organise the work. Gutters and pipes should be checked at least twice a year. If the Log Book is used as a check list of action every year and kept as an up to date record this will itself act as a reminder.

**HEATING INSTALLATION** A proper examination and test should be made by a qualified engineer annually **and a written report obtained for the log book**

**ELECTRICAL** The installation should be tested every five years and immediately if not done within the last five years by a competent electrical engineer, that is a certificate holder of the National Inspection Council of Electrical Installation Contracting (NICEIC), a member of the Electrical Contractors Association (ECA) or of the National Association of Professional Inspectors and Testers (NAPIT) and a resistance and earth continuity test should be obtained on all circuits. **The test report should be kept with the Log Book.** The present report is based on a visual inspection of the main switchboard and certain random sections of the wiring without the use of instruments.

To check registration with NICEIC and ECA see [www.electricalsafetyregister.com](http://www.electricalsafetyregister.com)

**LIGHTNING CONDUCTOR** Any lightning conductor should be tested by a competent electrical engineer every five years (in addition to any recommendation in this report) in accordance with the British Standard Code of Practice. Records of the results and condition should be kept with the Log Book. Note that there is no general requirement for a Lightning Conductor.

**CHURCH WARDENS' INSPECTION** Although the Measure requires the church to be inspected every five years serious trouble may develop in between these surveys if minor defects are left unattended. It is recommended that the wardens should make or have made a careful inspection of the fabric at least once a year and arrange immediate attention to such matters as displaced slates and leaking pipes.

**PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES** 'One of the striking characteristics of the Gospel narratives is Jesus' concern for people with disabilities but sadly the Church has, in the past, given little attention to their needs. The design of our buildings has often proved a barrier to those who attend church services' (Chairman of the Church Buildings Council). The PCC are reminded that the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 places a duty on churches to review all practices and facilities and to take all reasonable steps to avoid discrimination against people with disabilities caused by physical features, bearing in mind the limitations often found in historic buildings

Useful advice and audit sheets are to be found in 'Widening the Eye of the Needle' published by the Church Buildings Council 1999 £10.95.

**INSURANCE** The PCC is advised that insurance cover should be reviewed annually to take account of any rise in the cost of rebuilding.