

**DIOCESE OF SALISBURY  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR THE CARE OF CHURCHES**

***Guidance Notes on Windows***

**CARE OF STAINED GLASS**

Stained glass has been an integral part of the Christian church for many centuries, some of the earliest pictorial remains probably date back to the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries. It continues to be so, the wonder of “worked”, transmitted light illuminating God’s continuing Revelation.

Most churches contain some stained glass, occasionally Medieval, much Victorian/Edwardian, and mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> Century. All may require attention from time to time due to age, climatic variations, vandalism or accidental damage. Plain leaded light quarry glazing of a geometric nature also becomes subject to a duty of care.

The following notes are offered as **broad guidance**:

- 1) All stained glass should be carefully **photographed** showing as much detail as possible both for insurance purposes and an aid to any repair, restoration and conservation work that may be required in the future.
- 2) In the event of **breakage** inform the church architect and leave alone, unless dangerous, until a practitioner arrives to inspect damage. Board over externally if fairly major; clear fabric externally on a dry surface will suffice for minor damage and specialist advice should be sought as above. Carefully brush up any fragments remaining and set aside.
- 3) **Cleaning** – never wash any stained glass with detergent or patent “wonder” cleaners. One parish managed to wash all painted detail from the chancel windows using dishwasher detergent. If the fixed oxide line and tone work details appear faded and in poor condition leave alone and seek advice from the church architect – such deterioration should be noted during the quinquennial inspection. The condition is usually due to under firing of the oxide paint during manufacture and years of condensation.  
  
If painted detail appears sound (ask the church architect/surveyor to check during the quinquennial) a light dusting with a softish brush will suffice but only do this if the window appears dull or lifeless.  
  
A wipe over externally to remove excessive grime is acceptable but guidance might be sought should areas of yellow stain (normally fired on the outside surface of the glass) appear to be faded.
- 4) Numbers of churches have been surveyed and recorded by **NADFAS**. This can be very helpful as, normally, photographic information is included in the report.
- 5) It is important that repair/restoration/conservation work is only carried out by **appropriately qualified practitioners** in consultation with the church architect, proper specifications prepared and all faculty requirements followed.
- 6) **Replacement/repair work** can be tabulated as follows:

i) Plain lead re-glazing:simple – usually clear or tinted plain/semi obscured/textured unpainted glass quarry windows, rectangular or diamond with or without borders. Glass type, lead sections and face widths should match the original.

ii) Decorative lead re-glazing: much as above but involving more elaborate forms of pattern work, sometimes coloured. Lead and glass types to match.

iii) There are some occasions when contemplating a complete repair remake scheme that existing semi-obscure textured/tinted glass might be replaced with a 70% clear : 30% mouth blown “antique” reamy glass quarries might be considered. This can achieve an “opening out” in visual and spiritual terms of the character of the interior spaces. Such an approach would of course have to be developed in consultation with all necessary bodies.

iv) Painted and stained glass:

(a) the re-glazing of stable painted and fired glass excluding the provision of new glass

(b) the re-glazing of stable painted and fired glass including new glass restoration of lost areas of painted, stained and/or acid etched work in a matching style and technique

c) full conservation of historic and/or ancient glass involving an understanding of the process involved in glass deterioration of glass and paint. It is imperative that before any action is taken the church architect who will have been monitoring glass condition at five yearly intervals must be consulted. Only specialist accredited studios should be approached to undertake such work.

Historic glass should be listed in the church inventory as part of a national corpus vitrearum mediæevi

v) Expediting information required by the DAC when presenting window/replacement schemes

a) as much photographic information as practically possible

b) details of windows concerned showing type and size

c) plan showing position within the church

d) if stained glass – the period and/or approximate date plus name of manufacturer/artist if possible

e) a detailed specification indicating method of repair and extent of any necessary artwork to be carried out, section of lead comes and method of resetting in mullions and traceries

f) details of artist/contractor together with information concerning previous work. It is important for the DAC to know that the individual artist/craftsman is appropriately skilled, especially when an artistic style is to be matched

g) church architect/surveyor’s agreement signed on the appropriate form enclosed with the Form 1 application. Please inform the DAC when work has been completed so that the level of workmanship can be monitored

h) it is desirable that any iron saddlebars that have to be removed as part of a contract are replaced with matching section non-ferrous bars. Stone deterioration due to rusting saddle bars is a growing problem and should be noted via the quinquennial survey

## PROTECTION OF WINDOWS

Protection of windows is an important and difficult problem to resolve. All protective solutions are to some degree visually intrusive. Ideally protection should be unnecessary but the real world has to be lived in. The most usual method is:

i) externally fitted mesh either galvanised iron or stainless steel made to a variety of simple geometric patterns. Galvanised mesh is initially the cheapest, but is prey to rust. Externally it is visually intrusive reading a pale grey – this can be mollified by finishing in dark grey/black. Stainless steel is more expensive but lasts far longer. Finished in a special black coating it is almost invisible externally. Both read from the interior, but depending upon depth of colour and tonality employed in the window this becomes acceptable after a comparatively short time. New mesh should be fitted within each window and tracery shape and not spread right across a set of mullions in one piece

ii) polycarbonate sheeting is to be discouraged – particularly in the architectural context of what might be termed a “traditional” church structure. Large smooth reflective surfaces have an unfortunate influence upon the sculptural and textured values of such structures

iii) isothermal glazing – considerably used on mainland Europe and increasingly being considered in the U.K. It is considerably more complex and expensive than the two previous methods so perhaps only practical when areas of historic glass need to be conserved.

In all cases consult the church architect/surveyor and proceed through the proper approval channels.