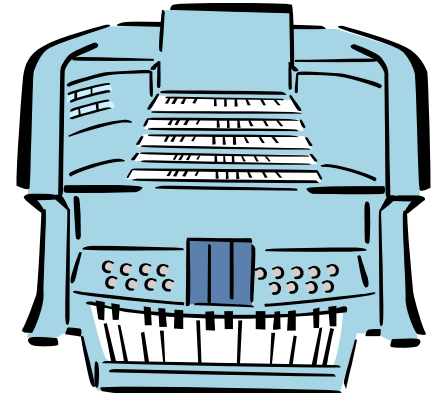


# How To Look After Your Pipe Organ



The **PIPE ORGAN** has been associated with Christian worship for over a thousand years and is still considered to be the best instrument for leading congregational singing and accompanying choirs. Sometimes enhanced by a fine organ case, it can also be a prominent architectural feature within the Church.

The pipe organ is usually the most expensive item present in any Church and a well-constructed instrument can function with minimal attention for as many as a hundred years. Many Churches possess organs which have given trouble-free service for a long time, some having remained unaltered since their installation; such instruments could have historic value.

When, as a result of many years of playing, the mechanism has become worn, careful and informed restoration can give the instrument a new lease of life and many more useful years of service as well as preserving our organ heritage for the enjoyment of future generations.

## Routine Care

The Pipe Organ may have a replacement value running into hundreds of thousands of pounds. It is therefore sensible to insure it as a single item as the cost of damage to the organ by, for example, rainwater after a storm or by vandalism could then be covered by the policy. As one of the most common causes of serious damage to a pipe organ is water, it is wise to clear leaves away from gutters and to ensure that rainwater does not accumulate in the region of the roof above the organ. Similarly extreme dampness or dryness of the atmosphere (i.e. relative humidity) can do serious damage to the wooden parts. A new and more efficient central heating system is a frequent cause of problems. If there is any doubt, consult your organ builder.

Care should be taken to prevent dust and other debris from settling within the organ when restoration of the building and other work likely to create dust is carried out. The organ builder will have the necessary expertise to sheet down the organ without causing damage to its delicate parts.

The absorption of sound by thick and extensive new carpeting is frequently overlooked. This can have a disastrous affect on the tonal output of the organ which can be severely attenuated thus rendering the instrument less effective.

Mice and vermin can attack leatherwork and other parts, particularly the multi-core cabling associated with electric action which will have serious consequences for the functioning of the organ. If affected seek advice. The Church should have a regular maintenance contract with a recognised organ builder for tuning and minor repairs. The frequency of the visits depends on the size of the instrument and the amount of usage it receives, once a year being the basic minimum for the smallest of organs. If possible the Church should be at the normal temperature for Sunday worship during tuning. A named individual (usually the organist) should be responsible for the lubrication and maintenance of the electric blower and he or she should keep in touch with the tuner to determine how much lubrication is required. The organ may be tuned only annually, but many blowers need lubrication every six months. Lubrication should be noted in the organ logbook kept on the console. Occasionally fires have been started in Churches because the blower has been accidentally left running in a unattended building.

### **Major Works to the Organ:**

There comes a time in the life of an organ when routine maintenance is no longer sufficient and more extensive restoration work to the mechanism becomes necessary. Parochial Church Councils are urged to establish contact in writing at an early stage with either the Archdeacon or the Secretary of the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) who will in turn write to the Diocesan Organs Adviser. All restoration work on organs requires at least an Archdeacon's certificate but usually a Faculty is required.

Where appropriate, the Organs Adviser will visit the Church and inspect the organ so that general guidance and advice may be given as to the best way to proceed with a restoration. It is not within the remit of the Organs Adviser to submit a detailed specification for the work as this lies within the scope of an independent organ consultant employed by the PCC. If you consider that one is required, please contact the Organ Adviser (via the DAC Secretary) who will be able to tell you how to obtain the services of such a consultant who should be registered with the Association of Independent Organ Advisers.

Those responsible for an organ restoration are advised to seek two or three competitive estimates from organ builders and to ask to examine some examples of the builders' recent work. Some firms are registered with the Institute of British Organ Building which is concerned with professional standards.

Both the Organs Adviser and the DAC regret that they cannot be involved in the choice of organ builder but they will willingly assist by advising how to standardize the contents of estimates such that each builder is quoting for the same amount of necessary work. This enables the parish to reach a more informed decision and to have the appropriate work economically carried out.