

# **Churchyards**

## **What Can Go Wrong?**

Without maintenance churchyards can become overgrown, inaccessible and unwelcoming. Plants and trees can grow out and block paths and harm the building if they get close enough. Flag stones in paths can become loose and create a hazard. Litter can obstruct paths and devalue the church's exterior and make the church seem run down and inhospitable to outsiders.

For many churches, the churchyard will be the first experience for people visiting. So it is important that your churchyard provides the right impression of your church!

## **How Should They Be Maintained?**

Maintenance of a churchyard starts with monitoring. The appointed fabric officer of your PCC should do a quarterly inspection of the churchyard. Start from the main entrance gate, walk all of the paths and walk along the boundary wall. Look for any of the following:

Potholes and trip/slip hazards affecting paths

Accumulations of litter

Overgrown areas

Dead trees

Obviously dangerous monuments (all churchyard monuments should be inspected in accordance with legislation - this is an additional visual check while walking the site)

Damage/movement of walls

For a large majority of these problems, except potholes, dead trees and damaged walls, an appropriate contractor is not necessary. Many of these problems can be rectified by the PCC itself for little cost.

Churchyard maintenance is a great opportunity to get the local community involved with the care of the church.

Community involvement could be useful for keeping paths clear of debris, weeds, and litter, as well as the church exterior. This should ideally be done on a monthly basis. Keeping paths safe and clear gives a great first impression of your church, and including the local community can help them feel more like part of the church.