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Monumental brasses are one of the most common forms of memorial surviving from the Middle Ages, and a good number survive in our churches.

It is important not to overclean brasses, which can cause irreversible damage to the design. Make sure to inspect them regularly.

Our guidance can help you with the maintenance of brasses in your church, how to tell whether conservation is required, and how to find a specialist.

## Download our guidance



Rupert Harris Conservation Ltd

Monumental brasses are designed to inform and commemorate, they can also tell us much more about their times, such as the details of armour design, heraldry, social history, costume and the craft of brass-casting itself.

You can find more information on monumental brasses on the website of the [The Monumental Brass Society](#).

## Signs of Damage

You should regularly check your church brasses for damage. Look for the following signs:

- scratching of the surface
- blurring of the design (particularly on brasses which have been highly polished)
- whitish encrustations on and near the surrounding stonework
- a heavy brown or green tarnish
- denting, bending or splitting of the brass

## Causes of Damage

The main causes of damage to brasses are:

In floor brasses,

- wear from footsteps or the moving of furniture causing dents and scratches
- loose mountings leading to bending, flexing and weakening of the brass
- unsuitable matting accumulating damp
- grit and dirt under matting causing scratching
- Carpeting of floors where the carpet has an impermeable backing, such as rubber, causes damage to floor monuments underneath, including corrosion to monumental brasses. Such carpeting also drives moisture into the walls, leading to damaging levels of moisture in wall monuments.
- Damp: brass, an alloy of copper and zinc, is sensitive to moisture and develops a brown tarnish and green copper corrosion products.
- Dust can contain chemical contaminants and can also hold moisture on brass surfaces which causes them to corrode, even under appropriate conditions.
- Other materials such as iron nails or lime plaster touching a wall brass can cause corrosion.
- Frequent touching: the salts and grease from fingerprints can corrode brass surfaces
- Over-zealous cleaning can blur and wear away the design
- Bat droppings can badly damage uncovered brasses.

# Maintenance

Guidance is offered on practical advice for looking after [floor and wall brasses](#) as well as the [remounting of brasses](#) often carried out in churches.

# Conservation

The conservation of church brasses is a specialist task. If a brass is showing signs of damage you should contact a professionally accredited conservator to inspect it and advise you on required treatments. You can obtain details of accredited conservators on the [Conservation Register website \(click here to access the Register\)](#).

Some conservators may charge for visits and the preparation of conservation reports but we can help you [with a grant](#) for this initial work. Our grants also support [conservation projects](#).

The conservation of significant items is likely to require formal approval. If you are a church, contact your [Diocesan Advisory Committee Secretary](#) at an early stage about a faculty. If you are a cathedral please contact your [Fabric Advisory Committee](#) for advice in the first instance.

Also of interest



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[The Monumental Brass Society](#)

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