

27th October 2003.

A N D R E W
W O O D
C H A R T E R E D
A R C H I T E C T

Mrs Y. Sheppard
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Dear Yvonne,

CHURCH OF ALL HALLOWS RINGMORE DEVON
JOB NO: 0308

Thank you for your letter, which I received on 8th October 2003 regarding various matters relating to the above. I now respond as follows:

1) Re-slating of the South Slope of the Chancel Roof:

Thank you for confirming that the re-roofing can go ahead from 10th November. I think that it would be prudent to place some dust sheets over the altar and choir stalls, after first removing the candles sticks, cross etc. You should also protect the organ in a similar way in case there is a shake down of dust from the ceilings/roof, which gets into the works. This can be a little difficult to do safely for parishioners and so it may be better for a local contractor to organise this. Visqueen damp proof membrane is as good a "dust sheet" as any for this.

2) Conservation Reports:

I enclose a copy of the Sundial and Wall Paintings reports prepared by Ruth and Torquil McNeilage, which you will see are quite comprehensive and thorough. The wall paintings report is especially interesting as it does confirm that somewhere under what you see there are some remains of the early, perhaps original, paintings. There are, however, some implications, which follow on from this for the continuing care of the wall paintings and their conservation. The most important perhaps being the damage that the sprayed on wall rendering on the north and south walls of the Nave is causing and which now needs to be addressed. This is somewhat as I expected and we have of course discussed this rendering earlier. However, we do not need to go rushing this one, because it will have wider implications on the work needed to be done, how that work is done, what the implications of doing it will have on the rest of the building's fabric and not least, of course, the financial implications of the project.

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2) Conservation Reports Continued:

In order to work through this we shall need to get together again so that I can discuss with you and the church fabric committee the implications of what needs to be done and how we can do it. We also need to bring in the results of the drain survey and the Quinquennial Inspection and any other fabric matters and factors such as possible grant aid for the work etc. However, Ruth McNeilage, in her report, has not flagged up anything which is absolutely essential to be conserved in the next few weeks, rather she has laid down the fact that we cannot now neglect what you have and need to start addressing the issues which her report has raised. Grant funding may also be available and this too will take time to research.

3) Wall Paintings File:

As requested I now enclose your original papers, forming the above and will arrange for them to be passed into your office along with the conservation reports.

4) Drainage:

Phill did make contact with me over the continuing excavations and findings and I now have a fair idea of what your drainage may or may not be doing. As this may be linked into the conservation of the wall paintings and the general work to the church I think the next move would be a round the table discussion about the way forward.

5) Churchyard Trees and Wall:

I note that you should by now have met Mr Kennelly and have some information about the above and again it would be preferable to discuss these findings in conjunction with everything else.

6) Friends of All Hallows Evening:

The 21st November 2003 meeting seems to be the best all round and I have confirmed this with the McNeilages. We shall need to discuss what audiovisual equipment we need in due course.

I am flattered to be asked to give a talk to the Friends as part of the evening, but wonder if it would not be better for me to defer to the McNeilages, as they may feel that it would be better for them to talk for say 90 minutes and then have a time for questions. I think if I was to talk about Conservation we would also need to more clearly define what it is you would like me to talk about, as a general talk would take some time to prepare in order to get in as much as possible in the time I would have and this could be counter-productive, although I suppose I could briefly run over the challenges you face by way more of a long introduction to the main talk. Perhaps we could have a quick talk over the telephone about this and I can then liaise with the McNeilages to see how long they would actually need. I would not charge you for giving such a talk and I appreciate your offer of travelling expenses.

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7) McNeilage Conservation Account:

I also enclose McNeilage Conservation's account for the two surveys they have carried out for you. They have actually addressed it to me, but rather than pass it through my books and on to you I think it best and easiest if you can pay it directly to them. If you need the account re-addressing to the PCC please let me know.

I think that the above covers the various items in hand at present. We do need to arrange a progress meeting on the various issues we are now discussing in due course and of course continue with the arrangements for the Friends meeting so I will try and ring you during the course of this week as I am going to be rather a moving target for the next couple of weeks.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew S. Wood, Dip Arch, Pg Dip Conservation, RIBA.
for Andrew Wood Chartered Architect.

Encl.

McNeilage Conservation

Stone Plaster Wall paintings

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Torquil and Ruth McNeilage AMUKIC

All Hallow's, Ringmore, Devon

(Diocese of Exeter)

Slate sundial

Condition report and proposals

September 2003

1. Introduction

This report follows an inspection visit to Ringmore Church to assess the condition of the slate sundial over the main door of the church and make recommendations for its conservation. During the visit, I met the architect, Andrew Wood RIBA and the church wardens, and discussed the situation with them.

2. The Sundial – brief description

2.1 Location

The sundial is located on the south wall of the tower, directly above the outer tower door. The tower is south of the nave, where there would more usually be a porch.

2.2 Description

<i>Dimensions (mm):</i>	Height:	610
	Width:	510
	Max projection:	30
	Base at:	2970

The sundial is a simple slate slab with a curved top, fixed flat against the wall of the tower. The numbering is good quality V-cut work and the whole design has an understated elegance. The iron gnomon is large and comparatively clumsy.

2.3 Materials

Slate, apparently local Devon material.

2.4 Condition

The sundial is in poor condition; one large section of the surface, from the upper sinister side, has already detached and fallen. The fragments are preserved inside the church. The remaining slate in this area is cracked and under threat and, should there be hard frost this winter, it may not survive. Laminations around the broken area are exposed to rain and therefore to frost. Other areas of the surface sound hollow when tapped gently. There is rust staining around the fixing points of the gnomon.

A second pressing problem is the nature and condition of the supporting cramps. These are apparently of wrought iron and are in an advanced state of corrosion. In the past they were painted with a black paint. They have done some damage to the surrounding stone;

in addition, they may fail. The upper fixings – there seem to have been three iron nails – are also seriously rusted. Two have already failed.

The joint around the sundial has been re-pointed with a hard, cementitious mortar. Cracks have opened up between this mortar and the slate and water will penetrate, causing decay to fixings and possibly to the stone.

There is some flaking on the surface of the slate, although this is fine and does not at present endanger the legibility of the design.

2.5 Recommendations

The sundial must be repaired and re-fixed as a matter of urgency if further losses are to be avoided. We would recommend the following course of action:

- Erect secure scaffolding tower to give access to the sundial.
- Record the condition of the sundial as found; throughout the work, maintain records of all work and new discoveries.
- Remove the cement fillet surrounding the sundial, using fine hand tools and, as appropriate, power tools.
- Take down the sundial carefully and remove to a packing box, with the detached fragments, for transport to workshop.
- Remove all old fixings from the wall and make good as necessary.
- After a suitable period to ensure the slate is dry, grout the laminated area with a suitable low-viscosity resin. Re-attach the detached fragments with resin and fill lacunae with lime based, colour-matched mortars. It may be necessary to attach a new thin slab of slate to the back of the sundial if the original is severely weakened, but this has been included as a contingency sum should it be required. The architect will be consulted before any such work is carried out.
- Remove the gnomon, clean and de-rust, paint with rust inhibiting material and re-fix.
- Assess the condition of the rest of the sundial and, as necessary, introduce resin grout to secure surface.
- Re-fix the sundial in its present location, with stainless steel (grade 316) support cramps and one stainless steel restraining cramp at the top. Bed the sundial against the wall on lime mortar.
- Point the joint between sundial and wall with lime based mortar, toned to be unobtrusive.

- After discussion with the architect, create a suitable weather protection system for the sundial. At present, we would advocate a course of slates inserted into the wall above the sundial and projecting perhaps 50 mm, to prevent water penetration into the top edge of the slate without obscuring the gnomon from the sun. This method has been included in the price.
- Produce a conservation report, illustrated with photographs and detailing methods and materials.

3. Estimate

To undertake work as described above £1400 plus VAT

Contingency for attaching new slate to rear face £250 plus VAT

This price includes for all access equipment, materials and expenses. It remains valid until 1 January 2004, after which there may be a modest revision.

PHOTOGRAPHS

1. The sundial: general view
2. Closer view of the broken area
3. Detail showing the rusting support cramps
4. The detached fragments, presently stored inside the church.

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Torquil and Ruth McNeilage AMUKIC

All Hallows Church, Ringmore, Devon

**Survey of the Wall Painting on the West Face of the
Chancel arch
and polychrome on the pulpit and screen**

October 2003

1. Introduction

McNeilage conservation was requested by the architect Andrew Wood to undertake an examination and condition survey of the wall painting. The purpose of this survey was to assess the historical significance of the painting and also to examine the condition and if necessary put forward proposals for its conservation. A brief examination was also made of the pulpit and screen. These report details the findings made on the 22nd September.

2. Description and History

2.1 *The Building*

Ringmore church retains its original 13th century structure. Improvements were made in the 14th century and the tower was added.

2.2 *The Wall Painting.*

The wall painting beginning at the springing line of the arch covers the whole of the east wall of the nave. The painting is most unusual and original in design. It consists of a repeat scalloped diaper pattern containing a stylised plant form within. Thin palm like leaves support a large central flower design. The flower also has some resemblance to the eye of a peacock's tail, also a symbol of Christ's resurrection¹.

The painting was first uncovered in the 1890's by the then incumbent, Rev. Francis Hingeston Randolph. He has recorded that at this time there were fragments of painting on the other walls; a St. Christopher on the north wall and a crucifixion on the south wall. Unfortunately these were lost.

David Park of the Coutauld Institute has described the painting as probably 14th – 15th Century and thought it was probably meant as a backdrop for the rood. There are fills in the wall in the position where a rood sculpture would have been fixed. Other examples of painted backdrops to a rood can be found at Llantwit Major (Glamorgan) and at Compton (Surrey).

3. Survey of the wall painting

A detailed examination of the surface was undertaken with the aid of a magnified head lens and a hand held 15X magnifier (Loop). Access was obtained from a tower put up on the lower north side.

2.3 *Previous intervention*

The Rev Hingeston Randolph said that very little touching up was needed' to restore the painting to 'its original beauty'. A detailed examination of the surface on the north side however revealed very little of the original painting has survived and there are at least

¹ Hall's Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art.

three different periods of retouching in this area. It is possible that more original paint has survived in the upper and central area of the wall. The earliest retouching has been applied to most of the wall and one would assume that this was the work of Randolph. Areas of original paint have generally been conserved and were not painted over. Later retouchings are confined to the lowest area of painting on the north and south side of the arch and are probably associated with the damaging affects of moisture infiltration.

On the lower north side, the surface retains more overlying limewash layers. An investigation beneath these layers revealed that some earlier decoration still survives beneath. The small areas uncovered both showed a black line at the edge of a red area. Although only small sections were exposed the similarity to the existing pattern would suggest that part of the painting was never actually uncovered.

The stones of the arch have been exposed. It seems probably that Randolph undertook this in keeping with the fashion of the time. The painted border at the lower edge of the painting was applied at the same time in order to give a neat finish. It covers the edge of the plaster where it has been cut away. The design also matches that used on the pulpit and the screen which were also decorated at this time. The medieval plaster would have continued down to the edge of the arch. In some places one can see where the original design continues behind the border.

Some later fills have been applied at the lower edge of the painting, in the position where the rood fixing would be and also a couple on the south side (see photos). The pattern has been retouched over these areas.

Pencil lines for marking out the design can be seen by some of the leaves and around the edge of the border. It seems likely that these were probably put on by Randolph.

2.4 *Technique of execution.*

The plaster supporting the painting consists of a lime and sand mortar. The sand is well graded with some quite large aggregate, up to 3mm. The plaster seems to be the first application on the wall and therefore must be quite early. There are at least two limewash layers beneath the present scheme, which was applied onto a very uneven and possibly already decayed surface. The decoration was painted using the lime technique with pigments in limewater applied onto a limewash layer.

Pigment Analysis (see appendix)

Three samples were sent for pigment analysis. The results are inconclusive but indicate that some of the earlier scheme may still be obscured beneath layers of limewash. Two samples of red were taken. One from an area of decoration uncovered during this visit and one from an area thought to be retouched by Randolph. Both reds are iron oxide. The earlier one is less pure i.e. a mix of red and yellow ochre. A sample taken from an area of black paint has revealed that it is actually discoloured vermilion. The red in this sample is thought to be later.

2.5 Condition

Plaster

The plaster is very well bound and generally appears to be in good condition. There are some cracks down the south side near the wall, which were probably associated with some previous structural movements.

Paint Layer

The examination of the painted surface was limited to the lower north side. Much of the original painted surface is missing and the surface is quite pitted with grains of sand showing through.

Most of the painted surface apart from the lowest 1.5 metres appears to be in a good condition and the paint is not flaking. If one looks higher up the wall however there are many places where only a negative image of the palm leaf design remains, suggesting that some paint loss has occurred.

On the lower north side there is some serious delamination of the limewash layers from the bottom of the painting up to approx. 1.5metres. The lower south side also appears to have suffered from the same weakening of the paint layer. In many places the limewash is pulling away from the surface. The earliest limewash layers in this area have become very hard, an indication that there has been some moisture infiltration causing the limewash to form a calcareous crust. Although there are no salts on the surface, the delamination of the limewash layers must have been caused by some salt action initiated by the ingress of moisture in this area of wall. The hard render on the surrounding walls is probably the main cause of the damage to the painting. The moisture is being forced up the wall and the painted surface is at present acting as a sacrificial layer for the release of the salts.

The painting has further been disfigured by the small pieces of render that have splashed onto the surface down both the north and south edges.

3. Screen and Pulpit

Both the screen and pulpit are 19th century and thought to be of Flemish or Dutch origin. They were installed by Rev. Randolph and are reputed to have been decorated by him. The decoration shows a remarkable resemblance to the later border at the bottom of the painting so this seems quite probable. The figures of saints at the base of the screen are actually prints that have been coloured and gilded and stuck onto the wood. They are covered with a rather discoloured brown varnish. The figure on the cross is painted on tin.

Both the screen and pulpit are painted and gilded with similar colours to those in the wall painting. The paint is a strong oil and has suffered very little damage.

4. Recommendations

4.1 *Outline of conservation policy*

The present examination was limited by access to only one part of the wall. It is however apparent that the wall painting has deteriorated, particularly in the lower part of the wall. The more recent retouching in this area indicates that this decay has continued since the time that the paintings were first uncovered in the 19th century. The reason for this decay must be assessed and if possible steps taken to reverse the process. The presence of the hard render on the walls must be a major factor. Once this has been dealt with the paint layers will need to be consolidated and fixed. The plaster generally appeared to be in a good condition apart from few lacunae and cracks. Once the scaffolding is in place for the conservation work it would be appropriate to use the opportunity to undertake a more thorough investigation of the stratigraphy of the painted schemes. It may also be worth considering uncovering the area of original painting on the lower north side that at present is rather disfigured by the later retouching.

4.2 *Treatment proposals*

4.2.1. *Removal of part of adjacent render*

It would seem sensible to remove some of the render in the immediate vicinity of the lower area of the painting and insert a softer more sympathetic lime plaster, which may act as a sacrificial barrier between the render and the wall painting.

4.2.2. *Removal of surface dirt and accretions*

For areas of painting with unstable paint or ground layers, the preliminary removal of surface dust accretions will be limited to the gentle use of soft brushes with a vacuum cleaner nozzle held at a safe distance. Wishab sponges and de-ionised water, applied on cotton wool swabs rolled across the surface will be used for removing further ingrained dirt. The splashes of hard render on the surface can be removed mechanically with a scalpel.

4.2.3. *Re-attachment of the paint and ground layer*

Flaking paint and ground can be reattached using an acrylic dispersion such as primal AXC33. The use of lime can be problematic because of the risk of creating a surface bloom. The adhesive can be injected behind the flakes. The treated area is then pushed back into place with a small pad of cotton wool which will also absorb any excess.

4.2.4. *Fills*

Any loose edges or cracks will be filled with a lime mortar made up of lime putty and fine sharp washed sand at a ratio of 1:3.

4.2.5. *Grouting*

From the areas examined it should not be necessary to undertake any grouting. If however any serious voids are found further up the wall the following procedure will be applied: A grout made up of finely sieved feebly hydraulic lime (NHL2) and chalk

powder at a ratio of 1:2 will be injected between the interfaces where the voids have formed. If necessary presses will be put up to hold the plaster in position until the grout has set. The voids are first prewetted with IMS (Industrial Methylated Spirit.)

4.2.6. Further uncovering of the original painting and removal of inappropriate retouching

It would be advisable to remove some of the more garish retouching on the lower north side of the painting. The retouching is water based and therefore should be fairly easy to remove. A further investigation can be carried out to ascertain the extent of the area of painting that has been left uncovered and whether it would be viable to uncover it.

4.2.7. Presentation

Any new repairs will be toned in with appropriate coloured limewashes. White losses in the paint layer can be toned down using 'dirty' watercolour washes (aqua sporca).

4.2.8. Further analysis of the pigments and stratigraphy of the paint layers

While the work is in progress it will be possible to make a more thorough assessment of the extent of the original decoration and to undertake some more detailed analysis of the pigments.

4.2.9. Documentation

All the work will be fully recorded with graphic and photographic documentation. An illustrated report will be produced at the end of the project.

5. Estimate

Conservation of the wall painting as stated above	£2950
VAT @ 17.5%	£516
Total invoice	£3466

This quotation does not include the cost of scaffolding

6. List of plates

1. View of chancel arch. Note the later fills at the centre, bottom centre and lower south side where there were probably fixings for the attachment of the rood. The much more vivid retouching on the lower north side is also visible.
2. Detail showing area of original decoration exposed beneath the later retouching.
3. Splashes of render on the wall painting
4. Paint losses on the lower south side.
5. Detail showing the decayed and pitted surface.
6. Detail showing retouching on the leaves by Randolph.
7. Detail showing the earlier decoration continuing beneath the later border.
8. Detail showing the negative image of the leaves left after paint loss.
9. Pulpit
10. Screen
11. Detail of coloured prints that have been stuck on and varnished