

## **McNeilage Conservation**

**Stone      Plaster      Wall paintings**

*Weeks Farm, Talaton, Exeter, Devon, EX5 2RG*

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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.



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 McNeilage ACR Ruth McNeilage ACR*

Mr P Errett  
The Fairway  
Ayrmer Path  
Ringmore  
Kingsbridge  
Devon  
TQ7 4HW

20 November 2006

Dear Mr Errett

## **All Hallow's, Ringmore: slate sundial**

Thank you for your letter dated 15th November. I am pleased that this work will now proceed. I can confirm that the contingency is included. I should like to collect the sundial in the week beginning 8<sup>th</sup> January and transport it to our workshop for a drying period. I will then work on it in March and intend to have it re-fixed for you by the end of March.

I trust that this meets with your approval, but should you have further queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Torquil McNeilage

5% / YR.  
GO AROUND NOW  
REPAIR IN AUG  
4 RLY 05

## JUNDIAL RESTORATION

EST@ SEPT 03  
INCLUDING NEW SLATE  
TO REAR FACE IS

£ 1650. + VAT.

AMENDED COST WILL BE  
5%/ANNUM.

∴ COST SEPT '04 ~ 1732.50  
" " 05 ~ 1819.13  
" " 06 ~ 1910.08.

WITHOUT REAR SLATE  
SEPT '03 ~ £1400 +VAT

∴ COST SEPT 04 ~ 1470  
" 05 ~ 1543.50  
" 06 ~ 1620.67

COST QUOTED @ NOV 06  
is £1850 +VAT  
assume this included rear  
slate contingency. YES ✓

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Mr P D Errett  
The Fairway  
Ayrmer Path  
Ringmore  
Kingsbridge  
Devon  
TQ7 4HW

6 November 2006

Dear Mr Errett

**All Hallow's, Ringmore: slate sundial**

Thank you for your letter of 26 October. I am pleased you have got the go ahead for the work. Our revised price for undertaking this is £1850 plus VAT. I hope this is of help and look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely



Torquil McNeilage



# Church of All Hallows, Ringmore

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Tel: 01548 810547

22 November, 2006

## All Hallows, Ringmore, Slate Sundial

Dear Torquil & Ruth

Thank you for your letter dated 6 november quoting your revised quote of £1850 plus Vat to carry out the restoration of our Sundial. I assume this does include original contingency of a new slate to the rear face if required.

We are therefore pleased to accept your quote and hope that you can carry out the restoration work at your earliest convenience.

Yours Sincerely,

Mr P D Errett  
Church Warden  
All Hallows, Ringmore

15 NOV '06

Quote as per letter  
rec'd 6 NOV accepted  
Letter sent 15 NOV  
ref PDE/Sundial 2.

# Church of All Hallows, Ringmore

18 February, 2007

## Sundial Restoration

Thank you very much for your kind and generous donation towards the restoration of the Church Sundial, it is greatly appreciated.

The restoration work is currently being carried out by Torquil McNeilage, of McNeilage Conservation, who are based in Talaton near Exeter. Torquil removed the Sundial during the early part of January and hopes to carry out the work to enable him to re-fix it to the Church above the main door by the end of March this year. The quotation for the work, which is of a specialised nature, is £1,850 so we do appreciate your kind donation, along with others, towards our costs for the restoration work.

It is hoped that during early Spring an event will be held to mark the completion of the restoration and re-fixing of the Sundial back in its rightful place above the church door, perhaps we will have the benefit of some glorious sunshine at the time to show it off properly. Your presence at this event would be much appreciated and I will contact you nearer the time when details are finalised.

Did you know that contributions made for the restoration of the Sundial can be enhanced through Gift Aid. Any one who provides a contribution to the Church, assuming they are Tax payers, can enhance the amount by the significant sum of **28p in the £** simply by filling in a form. I have enclosed a form with this letter which hopefully you would be so kind to fill in and return to me. I would also be very happy to collect it from you if you so desire.

Yours sincerely, on behalf of All Hallows,

(P D Errett)  
Church Warden  
The Fairway  
Ayrmer Path  
Ringmore  
Devon  
TQ7 4HW

# Church of All Hallows, Ringmore

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7 May, 2007

## All Hallows, Ringmore, Slate Sundial

Dear Torquil

Thank you for your recent phone call pointing out that a new gnomon will be required to ensure the sundial shows the correct time throughout the day. I am sorry that the original one was so badly corroded that its profile was difficult to replicate. It has also been pointed out to me, and I must say I agree, that the Sundial does not look level on the Church wall. Perhaps this could be levelled when you come to fit the new gnomon.

We look forward to the completion of the Sundial restoration.

Yours Sincerely,

Mr P D Errett  
Church Warden  
All Hallows, Ringmore

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Mr P Errett  
The Fairway  
Ayrmer Path  
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Kingsbridge  
Devon  
TQ7 4HW

14 May 2007

Dear Mr Errett

## **All Hallow's, Ringmore: slate sundial**

I have today visited the church as promised, removed the defective gnomon and replaced it with a correct one, free of charge. Whilst I was there I double checked the level, with regard to the query you sent me last week. I can confirm that the base of the sundial is indeed level, and that the string course below is considerably out of level, causing an illusion that it is the other way round. The sundial itself is not square, but splays out slightly towards the top. When we fixed the sundial, we tried to align it with the window above, ignoring the string course.

I hope this answers your query to your satisfaction.

The accompanying invoice itemizes as follows:

Original price for repairs, reattachment and backing on to a slate back slab	£1850
Supply, cutting and fixing of protective frame	£200
Supply and fixing of new stainless steel gnomon	£100
<b>Total invoice</b>	<b>£2150</b>



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Ringmore PCC  
C/o Mr P Errett  
The Fairway  
Ayrmer Path  
Ringmore  
Kingsbridge  
Devon  
TQ7 4HW

14 May 2007

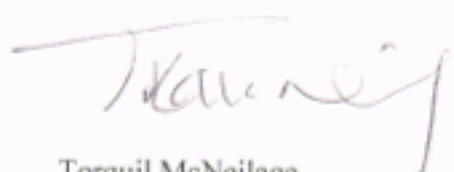
**INVOICE**

**No 478**

**All Hallow's, Ringmore: slate sundial**

To completion of project (see attached schedule)	£2150
VAT @ 17.5%	£376.25
<b>Total invoice</b>	<b>£2526.25</b>

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Torquil McNeilage'. The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Torquil McNeilage



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Tel: 01548 810547

30 May, 2007

### All Hallows, Ringmore, Slate Sundial

Dear Torquil

Please find enclosed two cheques to the value of £2526.25 to cover the cost of the Sundial you recently restored for All Hallows, Ringmore. Sorry it has to be two cheques but they had to come out of separate accounts as it turned out to be more expensive than originally anticipated. I appreciate now that the sundial is installed level and it is the stringer course on the church wall that is not level but you must agree it was worth me asking the question.

Many thanks for the work you carried out on the sundial, it is now not only safe but enhances the front of the church. I am sure in the years to come it will be really appreciated by the village and visitors alike.

Yours Sincerely,



Mr P D Errett  
Church Warden  
All Hallows, Ringmore