

DIOCESE OF SALISBURY



REDECORATION, PLASTER SURFACES, WALL PAINTINGS AND MONUMENTS

GUIDANCE NOTES

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING AN APPLICATION TO CARRY OUT REDECORATION AND OTHER WORKS TO PLASTER SURFACES

Nearly all churches have plaster on their walls: until the late 19th century this would have been based on lime, mixed with locally available aggregates such as crushed stone, sand etc. and sometimes hair. Until the early 20th century plaster was painted: in the Middle Ages with pictures, after the Reformation with texts; even in the 19th and early 20th centuries painted and stencilled decoration was used.

The advantages of these traditional materials are that they allow the walls to 'breathe', as they are porous. In buildings without damp-courses this is essential. Gypsum and cement-based plasters are not porous; neither are oil paints or vinyl-based paints. Experience of over 100 years shows that untold damage has been caused to churches and their contents by these materials, which trap moisture behind them. Examples of the damage are the complete destruction of the plaster or the disintegration of the adjacent stonework, both of which create huge expense.

When an application is made to redecorate, therefore, the Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches (DAC) needs to know certain things:

- 1. Some background information: which parts of the church are to be re-decorated? What date are they? (a sketch plan and some labelled photographs are helpful)*
- 2. Is there any documentary evidence for the date of the existing plaster and painting?*
- 3. What material is to be used for repainting? You should consult your architect for advice on the correct material: - if the architect can provide written assurance that the present paint on the walls is limewash or distemper and that the intention is to repaint only and in the same material, this will be sufficient information. Details of protective measures for any visible wallpainting should be included.*
- 4. Any proposals involving disruption of the actual wall plaster or any scraping back of the surface call for more detailed information. You will need to get patch tests done by a conservator to check for the presence of earlier painting. The conservator should produce a report, to be submitted to the DAC with the application.*

The kind of situation where this is required can be replacement of a substantial area of plaster, scraping or rubbing down, patching prior to re-limewashing or even mounting an object such as a plaque on the wall.

The **exception** is if you have documented evidence that the walls were re-plastered in the 1930s or later, and this evidence should be part of your application. Again, seek advice from your architect, who may be able to provide the necessary evidence. The DAC also gives informal advice and can provide names of conservators.

- 5. If you are thinking of applying for grant-aid, a conservator's report will be essential.*

SUMMARY OF MINIMUM INFORMATION REQUIRED FROM A CONSERVATION REPORT ON INVESTIGATION OF PLASTER AND WALLPAININGS IN HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Many churches, whether they were built in the medieval period or even as late as the 19th century, had decorated walls. This wall decoration (fresco, mural or stencil work), which is probably more widespread than is often thought, can be hidden by a number of layers of paint. **If your architect is able to issue a certificate that there are no wallpaintings or later decorations then you need not obtain a conservator's report.** The architect **must** be able to give a brief description of the plaster in the areas to be redecorated/repaired, with documentary evidence that these walls were plastered in the 1930s/40s/50s etc and therefore have no earlier decoration, or that the walls are presently repainted with limewash/distemper and the intention is to repaint with limewash or distemper. If there is no documentary evidence either of the earlier work or of earlier cleaning test results, then a conservator must carry out patch tests and the report must be submitted with the petition for redecoration/repair.

As a minimum the conservator's report should contain:

1. DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY

A brief description of the building, its date, etc. There should be a building and site plan, with locations of the proposed work clearly marked.

2. TECHNICAL EXAMINATION

Results of sampling, with information about the sequence and types of plastering in the areas considered, any information about earlier paint schemes, etc.

3. CONDITION RECORDING

To include annotated photographs, graphic overlays or line drawings, together with a written condition survey.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The general environmental conditions must be assessed. Current and historic services should be identified, including drainage, heating and ventilation.

5. ASSESSMENT OF DETERIORATION AND DAMAGE

To include the identification of particular patterns of decay, the extent to which various areas may be in need of treatment, and the severity of the problems.

6. PRACTICAL MEASURES

To include any proposals to remedy adverse environmental conditions, together with the proposals for repair, materials to be used, etc.

7. RECORDS

It is essential that proper records are kept of any work done. These should include photographs. Details of the proposed records should be given.

For further information, see English Heritage: The production of wall painting conservation documents

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING AN APPLICATION TO CARRY OUT WORK ON STONE MONUMENTS IN CHURCHES AND CHURCHYARDS

Nearly all churches contain some monuments, some of national importance, ranging from the small memorial tablet to the massive edifice covering a whole wall. Many also have 'table tombs' in their churchyards. What they all have in common is that they are made from heavy sections of stone fixed either to the wall or to each other, usually with fixings made of iron. Once the fixings corrode, then stability and safety become major factors.

Before it can recommend permission to carry out any work to a monument, the DAC therefore needs to have some basic information:

- 1. Some background information about where the monument is in the church or churchyard (a sketch plan of the church is helpful). What is its date? What is the name on it and its maker? What are its dimensions? What is it made of (e.g. marble or limestone)? Photographs should be included.*
- 2. How is it held together if freestanding, or to the wall if wall-mounted? Is there any sign that any of this is becoming unstable? Is this because of a failure of the building, e.g. a roof leak or rising damp?*
- 3. Does it have any features such as paint and gilding which will affect any treatment?*
- 4. What do you wish to do to it? You must give full details of any proposed work, including all the materials to be used and how they are to be applied.*
- 5. What record of the work will be given to the Parish? This is very important, as it may save a lot of trouble in the future.*

For a simple wall tablet with no problems requiring only minor cleaning, the Parish may be able to supply the required information themselves. For anything more complex and **always** when structural problems are involved, you will need specialist advice. You should ask your architect whether this is required. The DAC secretary can also give advice about this. The DAC keeps a list of specialist conservators who can inspect your monuments and prepare a report for you. There are national guidelines prepared by the Council for the Care of Churches for conservation reports on monuments – see Appendix 1. Make sure the report contains a clear assessment of the minimum that you need to do as well as the maximum.

If you are thinking of applying for grant-aid, a full conservation report will be essential.

It should be stressed that taking monuments down and throwing them away is **not** an option (however attractive this may seem to hard-pressed parishes). They form part of the fabric and history of the church and are not disposable. Nor is it even a cheap option: they may leave huge holes and scars and in some cases may even be supporting the wall.

APPENDIX 1

GUIDELINES FOR INFORMATION REQUIRED IN CONSERVATOR'S REPORTS & PROPOSALS ACCOMPANYING FACULTY AND GRANT APPLICATIONS

These guidelines are for conservators and parishes. The information is largely taken from the guidelines of the Council for the Care of Churches and addresses the type of information required in reports accompanying faculty and grant applications.

MONUMENTS

Introduction

Monuments in church buildings and graveyards vary enormously and factors influencing their deterioration can include adverse environmental conditions, inappropriate past treatment, inadequacies of the materials used or the techniques employed and accidental damage, as well as the unavoidable changes observed as a consequence of ageing.

The principle of conservation, and the long-term preservation of monuments rather than their restoration, is generally supported. Environmental conditions or methods of reducing the impact of unavoidable adverse conditions will often be involved. Minimal intervention to ensure stability, rather than extensive cosmetic treatment, will often be advocated. However, it should not be forgotten that a principle function of a monument is to be seen, therefore legibility and presentation are also important.

The Report

1. The Report should be illustrated with good quality, clearly labelled images including context views of the church and monument images must be captioned including information on the date taken and copyright holder
2. Recording of the current state of the monument requires, as a minimum, good quality photographs and preferably some form of graphic mapping to record both the nature and the distribution of phenomena

1. SUMMARY

A maximum of one page, summarising the key information from each section of the report/proposal.

2. BRIEF

The scope and intention of the report, the conservator(s) who undertook the investigation, the circumstances of examination (including access), the author(s), the persons responsible for the monument and building (including the architect).

3. DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY OF THE BUILDING

- 3.1 Name of parish, dedication of church, diocese and county
- 3.2 Brief description of the building, including date(s) of construction phase(s) and materials, and major interventions relevant to the monument.
Summary of the heating, ventilation and, as appropriate, rainwater disposal systems, and their condition and normal use.

4. DESCRIPTION, HISTORY AND VALUES OF THE MONUMENT

- 4.1 Name and date of monument (different from the date and dedicatee's death)
- 4.2 Location within the church (this should be given on a plan of the building and context photographs included) or graveyard, overall dimensions, and method of installation

- 4.3 General description: to include original materials, details of polychromy, surface treatments, inscription, etc.
- 4.4 Construction to include: description of elements, type of fixings and jointing material
- 4.5 Physical history of the monument, including previous conservation interventions. This should be based on previous documents (including images) as well as circumstantial evidence if possible. Original and restored elements should be clearly differentiated. References to the sources of information used should be given.
- 4.6 Assessment of the values associated with the monument, such as historical, art historical, social, etc. These values may be local, regional, national and international. This assessment should be substantiated and referenced. Members of the parish may be able to help with this section. The values assessment is an important part of the conservator's understanding of the object to be examined and possibly treated. It is also vital information which allows for informed decisions to be made by faculty and grant-giving committees. Parishes should try to trace the descendents of monument dedicatees, in order to establish whether they are able to contribute towards their conservation.

5. CONDITION ASSESSEMENT

- 5.1 State the nature of the examination undertaken (e.g. day or artificial light, raking light, ultraviolet light, under magnification), and whether any diagnostic investigations, sampling and analysis were carried out (these should be reported under 6. Causes of Deterioration)
- 5.2 Describe and provide a record of the manifestations of deterioration and damage and their distribution including:
 - 5.2.1 structural: fractures and breaks, core disruption or settlement, loose or broken elements
 - 5.2.2 surface: nature of decay phenomena, mechanical damage, soiling and staining; condition of any polychromy
- 5.3 Assess whether the deterioration is active. With reference to the physical history and the current examination, substantiate this assessment, citing the relevant evidence.
 - 5.3.1 If it is not possible to determine whether the deterioration is active, indicate what further monitoring or investigations are required to ascertain this.
 - 5.3.2 If the deterioration is active, indicate how, and estimate the probable rate of change. State the evidence for this conclusion
 - 5.3.3 If the deterioration is not active, assess the risk and rate of loss of original material that would occur without stabilisation treatment and state the evidence for this conclusion

6. CAUSES OF DETERIORATION AND THEIR TREATMENT

- 6.1 State the basis for the assessment of the causes of deterioration, including examination, sampling and analysis, and diagnostic investigations, and give the results
- 6.2 Provide an interpretation of this evidence in relation to the physical history of the monument and building, indicating the causes of deterioration
- 6.3 If the causes of deterioration are related to the building envelope, the internal environment, or the use of the building, what measures are being taken by the parish and/or its architect to address them?

7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSERVATION

- 7.1 Proposals relating to the building, its use and environment should be given with Section 6. Assess what interval (if any) should elapse between the completion of this work and the start of the proposed conservation
- 7.2 Provide details and results of any treatment tests, including photographic documentation

- 7.3 If you consider that emergency stabilisation work is required, indicate the extent, the materials and methods proposed
- 7.4 Indicate any significant ethical or practical issues particular to this case
- 7.5 Describe proposed conservation interventions, their sequence, and the materials and methods proposed. Indicate if there are any alternatives to the recommendations (type of interventions, materials and methods) and explain why the proposed course is the most suitable
- 7.6 Provide details of the record that will be submitted on completion of the conservation

8. FUTURE RECOMMENDED CONSERVATION REQUIREMENTS

- 8.1 Describe what, if any, additional steps you recommend should be taken following completion of conservation to ensure the continuing wellbeing of the monument.
- 8.2 Indicate the nature and frequency of post-conservation monitoring required.

9. ESTIMATE

- 9.1 Describe what preliminaries and attendance you would require the parish to provide for your work. e.g. scaffolding, electricity, the architect, a builder, etc.
- 9.2 State accurately the time and cost for carrying out the above work, the qualifications/experience/accreditation status of those who will be undertaking it, and the insurance cover provided. If a phased programme is envisaged show estimates for the phases separately. All on site costs such as materials, accommodation, and travel should be included (unless accommodation is the subject of a specific agreement with the parish).
- 9.3 Ensure the estimate cost includes the time to produce the record of conservation work.
- 9.4 Indicate VAT as a separate item
- 9.5 State terms of payment and duration of validity of the estimate
- 9.6 Indicate any other terms of contract e.g. insurance liability

10. SOURCES

Provide a list of the sources of information, including published and unpublished materials, historic photographs, etc

11. APPENDICES

Full records of sampling, analysis, diagnostic investigations, monitoring, etc should be appended

APPENDIX 2

CONSERVATORS

Salisbury DAC strongly encourages the use of accredited conservators.

Guidance on choosing and working with a conservator can be obtained from the Conservation Register which holds information about conservator-restorers in the UK and Ireland.

Conservation Register
C/O Institute of Conservation
3rd Floor, Downstream Building
1 London Bridge
London SE1 9BG
Tel : 020 7785 3804
E.mail: info@conservationregister.com
www.conservationregister.com

