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Artist and Restorer

Copy for the
Church Warden

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June 1981

St. Clement's Church,
Jersey

Report on the Feasibility Tests for the Restoration of Wall Paintings.

SUMMARY

1. Painting on the West Wall, South Transept.

Test No. 1

My first test was to scan with an ultra violet lamp inch by inch the wall painting in a raster form. The fluorescent scatter of the ultra-violet rays reflect a bright spot on all foreign matter embedded in the stone or plaster when viewed through a polarized lens. By this method I was able to trace the outline of the painting and so recover that which was lost.

One additional test, to increase the definition of the painted line, I painted glass medium over the original painting, This gave a greater lustre to the original pigment.

These two tests proved very successful.

Test No. 2

This test was to check for iron stain, which is common in paintings of great age. With a solution of Ferric Chloride I coated the surface of the stonework and plaster, which gave some minor reaction, but none that will give much trouble. After washing all the stonework free of corrosive fluid the painting was left to dry.

This test must be said to have been proved negative.

Test No. 3

I dabbed a solution of Nitric Acid to various parts of the painting with some egg templar as a suspended medium of Calcium. This gave the stonework free capillary action to penetrate the inner portions of the stonework so that the acid can act as a solvent and release some of the original pigments that were embedded deep in the stone, so bringing the pigment to the surface for recognition.

This test proved very successful.

2. Painting on the East Wall of the North Transept.

Test No. 4.

This painting is in a very poor state of repair, due to rising damp and will need a great deal of care to restore. The rising damp has delivered

a high degree of brine due to the fact that seashore sand was used in its construction.

To halt the decay I have painted a layer of Calcium over the whole painting - this I must leave for at least six weeks to harden and crystallize. By mixing alcohol with the Calcium I have given some solvent effect, sufficient to bring a greater recognition of the painting's outline. From this I intend to work the painting and restore it to its former glory.

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GENERAL REPORT

Restoration Report on St. Clement's Church, Jersey.

The first picture depicts two huntsmen, a hound and a dead pig. Writing in scroll script medieval standard script depicting a legend.

The first test is to establish the feasibility of restoring this church to its former glory. My first approach was to establish the state of the erosion, rather securing concentrated in one corner, depicting some scripture. Unfortunately, this piece of script was lost prior to observation.

This first test was to check for erosion in the top and close to the point where the drawing was lost. I used an ultra-violet lamp to establish the outline of the scatter. This clearly showed two distinct lines where one didn't exist before, and I traced those in: it depicts the leg of a horse on the left hand side. There was a clear indication of a yellow ochre paint depicting the ground soil of the picture, but above the horizon there was no colour apparent, so I used Nitric Acid tests to depict any colour, and between the hand and tail of the right hand horse of the picture I painted some Nitric Acid, which exposed a very deep green due to the fact that the content colour of Nitric Acid leaves a yellow stain. I derive from this that the paint was blue, so therefore I managed to paint one area with Nitric Acid sufficient to bring up the blue, which had obviously some green pigment in it, which we cancel out, and I painted the rest with an egg tempora blue, a very strong diluted monestral blue, which gives an appearance of sky blue.

I then checked each outline of the former horse and traced a leg, which strangely enough coincided with the same position as the horse, so the leg of the rider hangs down, there being no stirrups in those days. I then put some Nitric Acid on the boar and found quite a distinct red stain above the ear. This depicts a wound, obviously the boar had been caught hunting. There are one or two tiny specks of red on the tail of the boar, but I feel this could be red in the stonework of the plaster. There is some indication that the collar the hound is wearing has got some varying colours in it, but unfortunately I am not able to detect what colours they are without destroying the black. I am rather reluctant to do this at this stage. I think I will put some strong alcohol and see if I can detect any gold there. Nitric Acid would destroy any tones. It is too closely detailed.

The writing is quite clear - I have managed to bring the writing up by giving it a white background, bringing the brushwork almost adjacent to the writing, but not touching the black so that we can actually check the outline of each letter in a precise manner. The lines are obvious - I am quite satisfied that the colours I have achieved are as the

original. Blue would normally bleach to white over the period of years, but the penetration of the tempora in any plaster would be preserved and only retrieved by the action of the acid. This is one of those things that can't be proved one hundred per cent, but I would say ninety per cent correct.

The u/v lamp has depicted the forward rider's leg coinciding with the hind leg of the horse. I am puzzled about this - I can't decide what to do about it but will leave it for another time. The hind leg of the horse at the rear I can't make out - I think it is a rider with some sort of buckle or armour plate round its foot. I've left it untouched at the moment. The paintwork is distinctly ochre with white for the legs of the horses. This painting has every possibility of being recovered to its former state. I think the plaster is quite salted and there is a heavy deposit of salt which I have scraped away leaving a cavity, which no doubt we can fill in with fresh plaster, and recover that to a reasonable surface.

I have tested the stonework immediately above the painting hoping to find some original painting underneath, but unfortunately this stonework is apparently foreign to the stonework underneath, and I wouldn't think there is any possibility of anything being retrievable. I think the stone itself has been replaced and the top of the picture obviously destroyed at some earlier date, possibly during the building of the church or even before that. There is no possibility of recovering any of this picture other than what is now apparent.

I have used standard white tempora paint, which has a coefficient of 1:1 with the plaster. This should be good for many hundreds of years. The painting will be able to be restored, but I feel that there is a great deal of movement in Plaster in one or two places.

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St. Clement's Church, Jersey

DETAIL REPORT

This is a first report on the restoration of a wall painting in St. Clement's Church, Jersey.

My first purpose was to establish the source of the erosion. This was simply the plaster that was used for making good and this was sea-sand which retained a high degree of brine. The brine had attacked the picture and removed the paint.

Fortunately the original plaster, where retained, has a reasonable degree of painting still definable. By the use of an ultra-violet lamp I have progressively scanned the whole wall and depicted from the scatter the remaining lines which are not normally visible - these lines are embedded in the stonework and depicts foreign matter underneath the concrete. This foreign matter would be particles of paint that would be lost forever normally visible to the eye, but with the use of the u/v lamp the scatter of aurora would give a series of dots. These dots I traced out with a pencil and this way I recovered what was originally lost in the form of a leg, a spear, a horse's leg and what could be another leg on the other horse. The horse to the right of the picture has a distinct white pigment in its paintwork. This was established by using Nitric Acid painted on the stonework. This Nitric Acid burns its way through the stone and comes out a clear white chalk matter. Behind the horse's tail and the man's hand I painted Nitric Acid and this came out in a bluey-green. This, to my way of thinking, is the true colour of the background, but as Nitric Acid gives off a yellow pigment, one has to cancel this out and make an allowance, in other words intensify: the blue. This gives a true blue pigment, which could be the original painting - shall we say 1300.

The base line or horizon is depicted by a distinct finish to a yellow ochre, which fortunately has retained quite a high degree of pigment. This would indicate the soil. I don't think they would have interpreted it as green, rather as a yellow ochre, as they would use the natural clay to make the yellow ochre.

The writing I have given a distinct background of white to intensify the image without touching it. I put some glass medium on one of two letters where there was a confusion as to what letter it was and how it was drawn. This I found increased the black pigment, so much so that I could easily detect the lettering and give a precise indication of the wording and paintwork and the state of the paint.

Whilst testing the wild boar or victim of the hunt, I found with same Nitric Acid a patch of red above the left ear of the boar, indicating a wound which would possibly be an indication of a dead boar.

The hound has no features that can't be improved upon - there are a lot of black lines and it is a white headed hound.

The picture has quite a number of holes in the left hand corner and I feel quite justified in replacing it with fresh plaster.

I am somewhat puzzled at two lines at the right of the script, one coming from an X sweeping right down, and another one coming from a P on the last word, sweeping down and tailing off at a vector, which looks like a scroll, but I cannot see why it has any significance. I feel it may be a red herring - it could have been done at some later time. I feel we ought to leave it alone.

Dean and Chapter of Canterbury

FROM THE WALLPAININGS WORKSHOP

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ST. CLEMENT'S CHURCH - JERSEY

WALLPAININGS INSPECTION

9-10 DECEMBER 1987

Dry day: Outside temperature 0°C

Inside temperature 15°C

(electric heaters on underneath seats)

Relative Humidity 80%

Meeting at the Church:

Reverend Malcolm Beal

Mr J. Myers - Architect

Mr Tumblety - Builder

Mr G. Bree) Churchwarden Mr T. Hamon)

Myself - representing Canterbury Cathedral
Wallpaintings Workshop

There are four separated parts of Wallpaintings:

North Transept - East Wall:

- (1) St. Barbara with the tower
- (2) Dragon's wing (St. Margaret with the dragon)

South Transept, West Wall:

- (3) Fragment of the three living and the three dead.

Nave - North Wall

- (4) St. Michael and the dragon.

It was agreed that a restoration of No. 4, St. Michael and the Dragon, should not be envisaged.

Although some parts are heavily repainted, the general appearance is acceptable and a close inspection from a ladder gave no evidence of recent damage.

The other three murals were badly affected by salt efflorescence, deteriorating plaster and microbiological attack. However, it was difficult to assess how far the conditions have aggravated since the last inspection by G. Hauff in 1984, when minor parts of plaster had been fixed with a facing gauze.

The many plaster losses in painting No. 2 seems to have happened before.

A small hole left-hand of No. 3, where the cement plaster was removed by G. Hauff, appears completely white with salts.

After an inspection of the roof and the tower, where we could not find any immediately significant fault, which would be responsible for a big intake of water, it was discussed with the Builder and the Architect in what way the fabric had been repaired and could be improved further.

It is obvious that the first reason for the detrimental conditions must be seen in the extensive rendering with cement 100 years ago. Apart from the murals and architectural features, where the granite is exposed (with cement pointing) every wall is covered with cement plaster and furthermore painted with emulsion.

Some areas are affected by rising damp, others - as in the North Transept - are situated too high and rather indicate penetrating (or penetrated) water plus condensation humidity. (Moisture-meter readings are very high throughout).

The conclusion to remove the cement plaster (and to replace it subsequently with lime plaster) must be seen under various aspects.

When I tried to remove only a small part of it, I found it - as expected - extremely hard and well-adhering to its support (granite rubble). Power tools will cause vibrations, with certainly some effect on the mural fragments. Anyway, a complete removal will not be advised with the cement plaster well integrated in the joints.

Close inspection and cleaning tests show that salt crystallization and fungal growth affect first of all inadequate plaster repairs and the impermeable overpaintings.

Often the original plaster surface is to be found intact underneath.

The cleaning tests also showed that there is enough original substance left to justify an extensive restoration programme inclusive of the complete removal of overpaintings.

A cleaning test of No. 2 - the never overpainted fragment of a dragon's wing - was encouraging, too, and showed what result could be achieved.

The many losses, which are now repainted in a crude way, may perhaps be reintegrated in a reversible way and easier to distinguish (similar to the treatment of losses in the Fisherman's Chapel - St. Brelade).

In the lower right corner of painting No. 1 the salt efflorescences have been removed for analysis and to allow a control if they form again.

SUGGESTED CONSERVATION TREATMENT

In the North Transept the cement plaster around the arch and the murals should be removed as indicated on the sketch (ideally on both sides of the wall).

Faulty plaster repairs and overpaintings within the paintings should be removed, together with consolidation of endangered original plaster and paint.

The now square appearance would disappear and the fragments reduced to its original irregular shape.

It may well be acceptable to leave the surrounding stripped area unplastered looking like an Arriccio. At least it has to be left unplastered for some time.

A certain amount of reintegration will be necessary to help with the legibility.

In the South Transept where the damage is not as obvious, the removal of the cement plaster may be postponed (if done at all) till after a result of the actions in the North transept. The removal of the overpainting, together with the efflorescences and fungal growths, and the consolidation of the plaster and paint layer, should not be delayed however.

Dean and Chapter of Canterbury

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SACRAMENT'S
NORTH TRANSEPT

