



## Conserving the Past Enriching the Future

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### THE PLAZA, STOCKPORT ARCHITECTURAL PAINT RESEARCH TO THE FAÇADE AND FRONT OF HOUSE CLIENT: STOCKPORT PLAZA TRUST

The super-cinema in Stockport was built between 1929 and 1932 to designs by local architect, W Thornley of Wigan. Art deco motifs were used, along with finishes such as textured plasters commonly associated with cinema decoration. It is clear that the interior was intended to project an air of glamour.



Plaza Cafe during renovation, 2009.

Hirst Conservation was engaged to undertake a campaign of paint research to the façade, the Plaza Café and front of house to provide key information for its intended restoration, the aim of

which was to re-instate the original decorative schemes.

Our research was based on archive and documentary evidence, taken in conjunction with analysis of paint films and uncovering of historic paint layers on site. The research enabled the identification of many original colours and finishes. This valuable information taken in the context of similar interiors of the same dates, enabled complete decorative schemes to be re-introduced to the theatre.

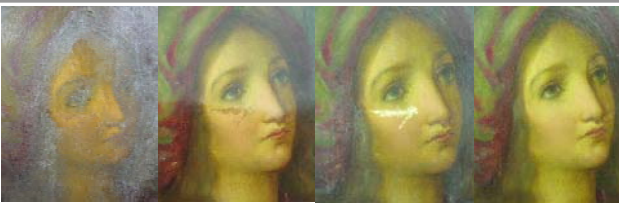


Plaza Cafe after restoration, 2010.

© Stockport Plaza Trust

### ST PETER'S CHURCH, NORMANBY LE WOLD 'WALKING ON WATER' and 'PALM SUNDAY'

The two paintings were marred by a veil of dirt and varnish which had degraded and yellowed, resulting in the compositions being very difficult to make out, particularly in low light levels.



Detail from 'Palm Sunday' l-r: before treatment; after varnish removal; after removal of old retouching and after retouching.

cotton wool, acetone applied through tissue paper and mechanical cleaning with a scalpel. Further treatments included: application of an isolating varnish; filling; retouching and reconstruction where required;

It was initially thought that the paintings were by the same artist, but the thick discoloured varnish disguised just how different they were stylistically and in technique.



Detail of 'Walking on Water' during varnish removal.

A variety of techniques were employed to remove the varnish, including poultices of acetone

final varnish application; cleaning of frames and re-framing.



'Palm Sunday' after treatment.

### HIRST CONSERVATION RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS OXFORD PRESERVATION TRUST AWARD

In 2009, Hirst Conservation was honoured to receive an award for our restoration work on the **Wren Sundial, All Souls College, Oxford**. The awards panel said "The restoration work was of excellent quality and based on careful historical research, achieving a stunning renewal of this important Oxford landmark".



**Congratulations** to architectural paint researcher Karen Morrissey (PG Dip, BA) who has been approved as an *Accredited Member of the Institute of Conservation (Icon)*. A peer-based assessment process confirms that Accredited Conservator-Restorers have the appropriate knowledge, practical skills and sound professional judgement to uphold the care of our cultural heritage.

**Welcome** to conservator Amanda White (MA, PG Dip, BA) who joined the Hirst Conservation team in March of this year. Amanda brings her experience of the conservation of mixed-media objects to Hirst Conservation, having worked in both the public and private sector, nationally and internationally.



As seen on 'Climbing Great Buildings' on BBC2.

### ST PANCRAS CHAMBERS, LONDON

Elizabeth Hirst is privileged to have been involved in the huge restoration project being undertaken at the Grade I listed Midland Grand Hotel, St Pancras, designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott. As conservation consultant for the project she has provided a weekly appraisal of the repair work being undertaken. We have provided condition surveys including assessing the nature and extent of damage to the historic plasterwork within over 700 rooms. Earlier this year we also completed the re-instatement of the painted Lounge Bar ceiling after it had been destroyed by a fire in 2007. Elizabeth is pictured during filming of **Climbing Great Buildings** in which she appeared with Dr Jonathan Foyle. Details of the work we undertook at St Pancras will appear in our next newsletter.

### ST LEONARD'S CHURCH, WOLLATON CONSERVATION OF THE MONUMENT TO SIR HENRY WILLOUGHBY ARCHITECT: MARK GOODWILL-HODGSON, INCLUSIVE DESIGN LTD

This project involved the conservation of a rare 16<sup>th</sup> century polychrome and gilded sandstone open tomb chest to Sir Henry Willoughby, complete with a stone cadaver within the cavity beneath the effigy slab.



Dismantling the tomb chest.

Following an environmental assessment of the object and the building envelope, it was clear that interventive remedial measures were required to prevent the severe, ongoing deterioration, which included surface delamination

and disaggregation, with soluble salt activity affecting both the stone and the polychromy.

Further treatment included cleaning the monument, using dry and aqueous methods, and consolidation of the stone and polychromy. Thick salt crusts were removed mechanically, and fills and capping repairs were undertaken in areas of de-lamination and minor fracturing using non-hydraulic lime mortar. Broken elements were pinned and the fractures filled with lime mortar. Failing and inappropriate mortars were mechanically removed and replaced with non-hydraulic lime mortar. The conserved monument was then rebuilt.



Treatment of the cadaver.

Additional treatment included the cleaning and retouching of the inscription plaque above the monument.



Tomb chest after treatment.

**ALL SAINTS RC CHURCH, BARTON-UPON-IRWELL**  
 CONSERVATION & RESTORATION OF THE EW PUGIN CEILING  
 ARCHITECT: LLOYD EVANS PRITCHARD, MAIN CONTRACTOR: LAMBERT WALKER

Located to the west of Manchester in the Diocese of Salford, All Saints Church was commissioned by the de Trafford family and designed by Edward Welby Pugin (1834-1875). It is a fine example of Victorian Gothic Revival architecture and is Grade 1 listed. Described as a 'cathedral in miniature' it is regarded as being one of Pugin's masterpieces.

Following a series of trials and investigations, Hirst Conservation was commissioned to clean, stabilise and restore the splendid 19<sup>th</sup> century polychrome ceiling of the Chancel.

The tierceron rib-vaulted ceiling is of a wooden construction, comprising joists and laths supporting painted and gilded plaster panels separated by moulded ribs. The plaster panels are beautifully decorated with gilding and painted roundels, each containing a saint playing a musical instrument. Cast foliate ornamented bosses are located at the junctions between the converging ribs.

Our preliminary investigations involved a full condition survey, limited architectural paint research and cleaning trials to understand the environment and inform treatment proposals. In general, the condition of the ceiling was poor, with extensive rotten timber supports, plaster fractures and losses to the paint and gilding.



Panel being carefully removed.

The first phase of the project involved consolidating blistered and flaking paint layers prior to emergency construction works to the deteriorated timber supports. Some of the panels, which were supported by timbers infested with wet and/or dry rot, had to be removed to enable repairs to the ceiling

frame to be carried out. After cleaning and stabilisation back at our workshops, these panels were re-fixed to the new timbers.



Ceiling panel with roundel before (left) and after (right) treatment.

The second phase of works involved further conservation and restoration works, including consolidation and stabilisation of delaminating paint layers, removal of surface dirt, filling of cracks and minor losses, and retouching of fills and areas of paint loss.

Where ribs and areas of plaster panels had been replaced due to rot, the stencilled, painted and gilded decoration was recreated.

EW Pugin's rejuvenated ceiling can once again be fully appreciated and enjoyed by worshippers and visitors to All Saints Church.



Chancel ceiling after conservation and restoration.

**QUEEN VICTORIA STATUE, WAKEFIELD**  
 RELOCATION AND CONSERVATION OF THE STATUE  
 CLIENT: CITY OF WAKEFIELD MUNICIPAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

This Grade 2 listed statue consists of a bronze figure of Queen Victoria standing on an inscribed pink granite plinth. Wakefield Council was co-ordinating the refurbishment of the Bull Ring area and the statue needed to be relocated to a more appropriate location in the Civic Quarter.



Cleaning the bronze statue.

Conservation treatment of the monument included cleaning the bronze statue using a variable pressure system and micro-abrasive where necessary, followed by re-patination and waxing. The granite plinth was also cleaned with the variable pressure system.



Before treatment.

The monument was dismantled with the use of a flatbed vehicle with a crane mechanism, and the component parts transported to Hirst Conservation's workshops for treatment.

The statue itself was generally in good condition but was covered in an uneven green/grey corrosion and dirt layer, or patina, caused by moisture and pollutants present in the outdoor environment.

with stainless steel cramps.

The treated statue was then lowered onto the re-built plinth, where it can be enjoyed by visitors and residents of Wakefield.



Positioning the statue on the re-built plinth after treatment.

**HUDDERSFIELD UNIVERSITY, RAMSDEN BUILDING**  
 CLEANING AND CONSERVATION OF THE WAR MEMORIAL  
 CLIENT: AEDAS BUILDING CONSULTANCY LTD

This unusual early 20th century mixed media war memorial consists of a triptych painting on canvas by J.R Gauld, surrounded by an art deco style carved and gilded timber surround with a central bronze plaque. The monument required complete dismantling to enable the necessary treatment to be undertaken at Hirst Conservation's workshops.

The treatment proposals followed two initial site visits, cleaning and dismantling trials and a condition survey. Treatment of the timber elements involved cleaning and the careful removal of a failed, disfiguring intumescent varnish. Losses to the lettering were filled, sized and regilded using 23 $\frac{3}{4}$  carat gold leaf.

Conservation treatments of the paintings ranged from varnish removal,

application of an isolating varnish, filling and re-touching, application of a final varnish and the provision of a strainer bar lining.

The lining of polyester sail cloth effectively flattened the sharp angle of the crossbars, providing improved tension and a good seal (acting as an effective dust barrier).

Once the monument had been reassembled, a final protective coating was applied to the wooden elements.



Removing disfiguring varnish.



Monument before (left) and after (right) treatment.

