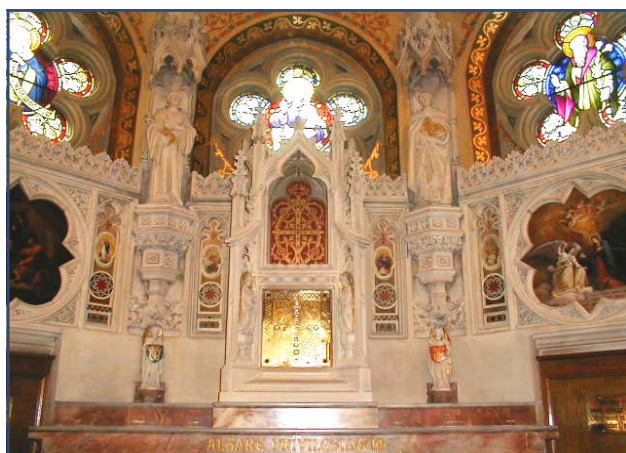


ST THOMAS AQUINAS & ST STEPHEN HARDING RC CHURCH, MARKET DRAYTON

CONSERVATOR—ALISON THORNTON MA BA(HONS)

The church was completed in 1886 by local builder Thomas Brown of Market Drayton, to the designs of the architect Edward Kirby of Birkenhead. The oil paintings within the reredos are believed to be of Italian origin by an unknown artist. Unfortunately, little is known about previous repairs or conservation works that have taken place within this magnificent church. However, we do know that during the 1980's, green paint was applied to many of the original painted areas to "brighten" the reredos. Hirst Conservation were employed as recognised specialists principally to remove alkyd varnish and overpaint from the paintings of the reredos. Initially, dirt was removed from the stonework using dry methods,



including dusting and vacuuming. Ingrained dirt was then removed using silicon-based Wishab sponges. The wax drips on the lower reaches of the stonework were removed,

"This magnificent reredos can now be enjoyed as intended for generations to come."

as was the overpaint from the panels, tabernacle, and shields of the angel statues. Acetone was applied to soften

the alkyd varnish which was then removed with a scalpel.

As expected, the exposed original designs were of great subtlety, and the details that had been obscured for years were now revealed. A layer of Paraloid B72 varnish (8% in Xylene) was applied to the painted surfaces prior to retouching, and all losses made good. Retouching of the fillings on the edges of the roundels and areas of abrasion/discholoration was achieved using dry pigments in a Paraloid B72 solution. A final coat of semi-gloss Ketone resin varnish was applied to protect the paint and improve saturation. This magnificent reredos can now be enjoyed as intended for generations to come.



Meet the Team:

- Elizabeth Hirst AMUKIC – Principal Conservator
- Paul d'Armada – Senior Conservator/Chemist
- Matthew Webster – Project Management
- Karen Morrissey – Architectural Paint Research
- Ali Thornton – Easel & Wall Painting Conservator
- Sabina Cheba – Stone & Wall Painting Conservator
- Kate Spinks – Easel & Wall Painting Conservator
- Michael Grady - Specialist Plaster Conservator
- Tim Pretty – Plaster Conservator
- David Cropley – Specialist Building Cleaning Operative
- David Wilby – Specialist Building Cleaning Operative

Formed in 1986, Hirst Conservation are field leaders in the world of conservation. Dynamic and innovative in approach, they specialise in:

- Conservation of historic painted and applied decoration on plaster, stone, canvas, wood and metals.
- Conservation of internal and external architectural features.
- Conservation of Easel Paintings
- Specialist building works including joinery, sculpture, stonework, marble, stucco, pargetting, wall and ceiling plasters.
- Conservation of terracotta.
- Specialist building façade cleaning.
- Re-creation of historic decorative schemes and finishes.
- Creation of sympathetic new decorative schemes using historic and traditional paints.
- Surveys of historic decorative schemes and report production.
- Surveys of historic buildings and structures and report production.
- Detailed environmental surveys and monitoring.
- Detailed laboratory analysis of historic plasters and paints.



Visit us on the Web at
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Conserving the Past Enriching the Future

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Welcome to the first edition of the Hirst Conservation Newsletter. Here we hope to share with you our involvement in the many interesting conservation projects currently being undertaken, and to outline some of the exciting challenges facing our team of specialist conservators.

CARDIFF CASTLE

CONSERVATOR—KAREN MORRISSEY BA(HONS)
CONSERVATOR—PAUL D'ARMADA BSC



Cardiff Castle

Cardiff Castle began life as a Roman fort, to guard the crossing of the River Taff. The present Castle began life in the Norman era in approximately 1081. The Keep and the Black Tower, both of which survive to this day, date from the 13th Century.

We continue to be involved in the long term conservation of this impressive building. Having witnessed many changes during the Victorian period, Cardiff Castle serves as a lasting tribute to the vision of the 3rd Marquis of Bute. The success of this project has required a heuristic approach to secure the long term stability and presentation of the structure.

We have also been actively involved in exhaustive, non-intrusive environmental monitoring of the building. The Castle is a building of diverse micro-climates, with many factors impacting on the delicate balance that needs to be achieved to ensure the integrity of the detailed decoration and architecture. Deployment of state of the art electronic data loggers has proved significant in gaining a better understanding of the micro-climate within the building. The days of swirling hygrometers and inexact readings are now thankfully consigned to history. The ability to implement changes based on accurate and real-time results has afforded us the opportunity to once again raise the levels of proactivity.

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- Cardiff Castle
- Retford Town Hall Paintings
- Lizard Lighthouse
- Temple Newsam House, Leeds
- The RSA
- RC Church, Market Drayton
- Meet The Team

Karen said, "It has been a fascinating journey to uncover the evolving face of the Castle through historic paint research. The photo-micrograph techniques used have resulted in a highly detailed and accurate recording of the decorative schemes used within the Castle throughout its life".



Lord Bute's Bedroom



RETFORD TOWN HALL PAINTINGS
 CONSERVATOR—ALISON THORNTON MA BA(HONS)
 CONSERVATOR—KATE SPINKS MA BA (HONS)

There is probably no more a satisfying feeling than standing back and viewing a fine painting as it must have appeared to the artist when the last brush stroke was applied. The re-creation of this scenario was the challenge facing us with 10 magnificent paintings from Retford Town Hall, which dated from the 17th to the 20th Century.

Typically, the treatment included the removal of a significant layer of surface dirt using, for example, triammonium citrate. Following exhaus-

tive testing, the yellowed varnish was removed using a variety of solvents. Following the application of an isolating varnish and appropriate filling, retouching was carried out using dry pigments in Paraloid B72. The paintings were then re-varnished using Ketone resin “N” (20% white spirit, together with a small amount of microcrystalline wax).

Result, the transformation of a dull canvas into a feast of original and vibrant colours, enabling us to see and appreciate once again the full vision of the artist.

LIZARD LIGHTHOUSE

CONSERVATOR—ELIZABETH HIRST AMUKIC
 CONSERVATOR—KAREN MORRISSEY BA(HONS)



total, 75 samples were taken from a variety of locations within the building. Using resin mounts, cross sections were made of the samples through the stratigraphy. Photomicrographs were taken of those samples considered to be significant, and microchemical techniques were employed to determine paint type. Of particular interest is an area referred to within the lighthouse as “Dwelling 4”. Built in 1845 and integrated into the present building between 1874-1878, this area will become open to the public.

It is clear from our investigations, that during its operational period, the level of maintenance undertaken by the Keepers to the lighthouse was extremely high. Nowhere is this more evident than in the engine house,

which is one of the grandest and most intact examples from the 19th Century. As a testament to the lavish and caring maintenance applied to Lizard Lighthouse by its Keepers, one paint sample alone revealed a total of 45 layers, mainly lead based. None of this should surprise us when you consider that not only did the lighthouse serve a very important function to shipping, it was also a home to many people.

This is the type of project that undoubtedly confirms our belief that by conserving the past we do enrich the future, thereby enabling successive generations to visit and enjoy our wonderful heritage.

This remarkable building has performed its duty well since the first coal fires were lit over 250 years ago.

Following guidance from the architect, Frans Nicholas, Hirst Conservation became involved in the architectural paint research project at Lizard Lighthouse, set in the beautiful landscape of Cornwall. Our starting point was to be the Conservation Plan, taking into account the history of the lighthouse from its first firing in 1752 with the use of coal, up until the time Keepers were withdrawn from the site in 1998. Our main aims were to provide guidance for the re-

.... one paint sample alone revealed a total of 45 layers of paint”.

creation of historically correct colour schemes and paint types, assist in dating the development of the scheme, and those areas rich in paint archaeology. In

TEMPLE NEWSAM HOUSE, LEEDS

CONSERVATOR—SABINA CHEBA MA
Sabena is a graduate of the University of Applied Science, Cologne, where she majored in wall paintings and stone objects

The doorway of the south wing of Temple Newsam House was in a state of advanced decay when Hirst Conservation began the work in Leeds in December 2002.

Faced with a scenario of algal growth and failing pointing mortar in many of the joints, our first objective was to remove all traces of the fungi. This was a slow process which involved many techniques, including the use of micro-steam cleaning on the many intricately carved areas of the building.

A major feature of the conser-



vation programme was the consolidation of the many fractured and scaling/flaking areas. Extensive research and testing was undertaken to produce a mortar mix that would be ideally suited to the building.

It was also crucial to develop a shelter coat for the doorway. A significant degree of erosion had taken place,

and it is astonishing to think that, prior to commencement of works, only 15% of the original surface within the doorway had survived.

*Photographs showing Temple Newsam House

 Inset showing detail over door
 “before” and “after” treatment*

THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF ARTS (RSA)

It is amazing to look back and realise that it is 3 years since our first association with the RSA building, on John Adam Street in London.

Commissioned by Chartered Surveyors Mellersh & Harding, on behalf of the RSA, our task was to establish the existence of original Adam decoration. Additionally, we were to determine the significance of the paint layers, and where possible determine any changes that had been made to the ceilings.

The ceilings examined were located in The Library, The Research Room and The Shipley Room.

It was the desire to represent

beauty that dictated the original selection of colours. In 1757, Edmund Burke stated that the colours used should evoke “.... **that quality or those qualities in the bodies by**



which they cause love, or some passion similar to it”.

This attitude towards colour can be seen in the practicing architects of

the time, and one of the most noted of these architects was Robert Adam.

Now back at the RSA, we are translating our previous investigations into the practical application of these wonderful colour schemes, together with the design and installation of sophisticated suspension repairs to the ceilings designed by Robert Adam.

Our sister Company, Hirst Conservation Materials Ltd, will faithfully reproduce the colours in a lead carbonate medium which were so passionately described by Edmund Burke

Would Edmund Burke and Robert Adam approve? - you know, I suspect that they probably would.