

CONSERVATION OF STONEMWORK & SCULPTURE

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CHURCH OF ST. LEONARD, FARLEIGH HUNGERFORD, SOMERSET

DIOCESE OF BATH & WELLS

FOUR MONUMENTS IN CHANCEL

REPORT ON CONSERVATION WORK CARRIED OUT

January - May 2020



1. INTRODUCTION

The chancel was refurbished by the Houlton family, who bought the castle in 1730. It is a unified design, with the four large canopied monuments separated by a niched stone dado on the north and south sides and the reredos on the east, above which are three crocketed arches outlining the east window. As such it is a very fine example of a complete scheme.

The four monuments, with dates from 1799 to 1868, although different in design, are almost certainly by the same maker. There is a name written on the top of No. IV: H. Ottery Hinton Charterhouse 1897 which may or may not be the maker. The design of the construction is possibly unique, as the monuments are made with very few fixings, no tolerance on any of the vertical joints and no allowance for bedding. They relied for stability on sections slotting tightly together, with rough sections bracing them against the wall, but nothing tying the structures back to the walls. This indicates that the maker was familiar with creating fine stonework, such as the reredos, which may also be his work, but had no experience of freestanding monuments. Nos. I and II have remained stable, but Nos. III and IV had substantial movement, with sections pulling apart. One extraordinary feature of all the monuments was the complete lack of any fixings for all the freestanding pinnacles and turrets on the tops - they were simply piled up without bedding or fixings.

It took the Parish many years to raise the necessary funds for the repair work. In the meantime, sections of the west end of No. IV had to be removed in 2016. The sections were stored beneath the altar, but the PCC decided to close the chancel until all could be made safe.



MONUMENT 1 : DOROTHEA SHIRLEY, d.1828 and THERESA SHIRLEY, d. 1827



1.1 DESCRIPTION

1.1 The monument is floor-mounted and stands in the northwest corner of the chancel

Dimensions : Ht. 3.050m; W. 1.96m; D. 870mm

1.2 **Materials :** Bath stone

Description : A canopied monument, the lower area consisting of three octagonal columns framing a small niche at the east end and on the south side three quatrefoil niches and a shield, crest and motto. Above this the columns continue upwards, now panelled with niches, framing a shallow arched and crocketed central area with a grey-painted inscription panel at the back, the lettering cut and painted black. There is a flat cornice to the canopy, decorated with leaves and flowers, a parapet and four octagonal free-standing columns with foliated tops.

There is a small white marble plaque on the floor with the same names.

1.3 **Fixings :** only two were found, although there may be some at the lowest levels.

Jointing material : none

1.4 **History of Monument :** The monument is part of the scheme for the entire chancel and as such can be assumed to be in its original position.

1.5 **Significance :** It is unusual to find a canopied monument of this type at this date and it seems that the intention was to create a restored medieval-style chancel with all four monuments linked in design. The workmanship is of very high quality, in a local stone and it can be assumed that the whole scheme came from the same local workshop.

1.2 CONDITION ASSESSMENT

2.1 **Structural** : The lower areas of the monument are stable, although there is slight opening of the horizontal joint below the quatrefoil niches. The rest of the superstructure was stable, apart from the freestanding turrets on the northeast corner and its base, the whole section shifting towards the north, creating a large pressure flake on the section beneath. None of the turrets had any fixings.

The freestanding column on the northwest is simply placed on top of a bridge of stone, although from beneath it appears part of the structure.

2.2 **Surface** : The stonework was quite dirty.

2.3 **Condition of building and its impact** : There are no signs of erosion or salt growth caused by rising or penetrating damp.

1.3. CONSERVATION TREATMENT

As mentioned above, the monument is not tied back to the wall, relying on bridges of stone for its stability and in this case the system has worked well, with the exception of the back east upright, where there was some movement which looked to be caused by its being knocked, perhaps during redecoration. However, the lack of any fixings for the turrets had to be addressed, starting with the back east upright, which was dismantled and given a 12mm vertical dowel through all sections.





The two other turrets on the south side were similarly treated, having first removed the iron cramps beneath them and replaced them in stainless steel (Grade S316 marine).



The flat slab supporting the rear turret was found to be only resting on a tiny ledge, so this was given a new stainless steel support before reinstating the turret (without fixing).



The monument was then cleaned by gentle brushing with water in handsprays.

During Cleaning



Completed Monument



MONUMENT 2 : SARAH HOULTON, d.1799 and other members of the Houlton Family up to 1844



2.1 DESCRIPTION

1.1 The monument is floor-mounted and stands in the northeast corner of the chancel

Dimensions : Ht. 3.65m; W. 2.28m; D. 760mm

1.2 **Materials :** Bath stone

Description : Another canopied monument, apparently by the same maker as No.1. In the base area six panelled columns with gabled tops and faces frame panels of lozenges and trefoil-headed niches, with a central shield. Above this is a canopied area with ogee arch and the inscription panel painted grey, the lettering cut and painted black. On either side of this and at the west end are small niches containing crosses. Above it are more panels of trefoil-headed niches, flanked by panelled columns with gabled finials and small heads.

1.3 **Fixings :** there were very few fixings in the top levels. Comparison with No.III suggests that there may be some at lower levels.

Jointing material : none

1.4 **History of Monument :** The monument is part of the scheme for the entire chancel and as such can be assumed to be in its original position.

1.5 **Significance :** It is unusual to find a canopied monument of this type at this date and it seems that the intention was to create a restored medieval-style chancel with all four monuments linked in design. Given the similarity of all the monuments, it is unlikely that this monument actually dates from 1799, but instead the whole scheme seems to have been created in the early-to-mid 1800's. The workmanship is of very high quality, in a local stone and it can be assumed that the whole scheme came from the same local workshop.

2.2 CONDITION ASSESSMENT

2.1 **Structural :** In spite of the construction method described above, the monument has remained largely stable, with no signs of movement away from the wall. The exception is the area of the two panelled columns at the east end, which have signs of movement (see photo above). The top of the inner column is broken off and is not anywhere behind the monument.

2.2 **Surface :** There is an area of erosion on the chancel step in front of the monument and the easternmost bay of the monument which appears to have been caused by water.

The stonework was quite dirty.

2.3 **Condition of building and its impact :** There are the above-mentioned traces of what appears to have been a damp corner, but no active salt growth now.

2.3. CONSERVATION TREATMENT

As the monument shows no signs of overall movement, repairs were confined to the pilasters at each end.

At the east end, the top sections were lifted off to give access to the parapet. An iron fixing tying the pilaster to the centre was removed and replaced in stainless steel (Grade S316 marine).



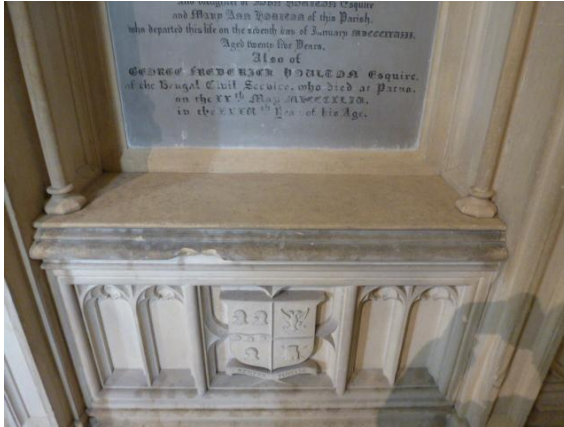
The process was repeated at the west end.



The pinnacles were then refixed, giving each section an internal stainless steel dowel.



The monument was cleaned with gentle brushing and water in handsprays.
Open joints were filled with a non-hydraulic lime and sand mortar coloured to match the stone.



During cleaning



MONUMENT 3 : JOHN HOULTON, d. 1839 and other members of the family to 1868



3.1 DESCRIPTION

- 1.1 The monument is floor-mounted and stands in the southwest corner of the chancel

Dimensions : Ht. 3.650m; W. 2320m; D. 740mm

- 1.2 **Materials :** Bath stone

Description : Almost identical to No.3, differing only in minor details such as the shield.

- 1.3 **Fixings :** no fixings were found, although there may be some at the lowest levels.

Jointing material : plaster of Paris

- 1.4 **History of Monument :** The monument is part of the scheme for the entire chancel and as such can be assumed to be in its original position.

- 1.5 **Significance :** It is unusual to find a canopied monument of this type at this date and it seems that the intention was to create a restored medieval-style chancel with all four monuments linked in design. The workmanship is of very high quality, in a local stone and it can be assumed that the whole scheme came from the same local workshop.

3.2 CONDITION ASSESSMENT

- 2.1 **Structural :** This monument was less stable than the previous two and had some substantial areas of movement. Starting at the base area, the horizontal joint in the level beneath the shield was opening, particularly at the west end, indicating the presence of iron fixings. Above this, the central area was stable, but there was serious movement at the west end, which was pulling away from the wall and the columns, particularly on the northwest corner, are pulling out, destabilising the sections above.

Movement at east end



At the east end a similar thing was happening, but on a less dramatic scale.

2.2 **Surface :** The stonework was fairly dirty.

2.3 **Condition of building and its impact :** the base area is obviously being affected by penetrating damp, with some minor damage to mouldings on the west end.

3.3. EMERGENCY WORK

In 2016, emergency work was carried out to remove the loose sections at the west end . No fixings were found. The sections were stored beneath the altar.

3.4 CONSERVATION TREATMENT



View from above



View from behind - movement out from wall, unfixed sections



As mentioned above, the monument was constructed with no tolerance on vertical joints and no allowance for bedding mortar, so that all sections just rested on top of each other and there were very few fixings. Stability depended on the sections fitting very tightly together and there were no retaining fixings to the wall behind. The plain sections in the above photo were intended to give the impression of a flat back to the monument, but were not fixed in any way and were pulling away from the wall. The monument was braced against the wall with offcuts of stone acting as bridges.

Once movement had started, the design was failing, as corner pilasters began to pull out, particularly on the west end, which was unsupported.

The central area of the monument appeared stable, being constructed of massive arched sections and it was decided to leave this in place and dismantle each end separately. However, first it needed to be tied together and to the wall to provide a sound support to which to fix the outer sides.

This was achieved by vertical 12mm threaded rod dowels to tie the structure together, then 20mm ties back to the wall from the top - see photos below.



The west end was then dismantled to sill level





This left the iron cramps in the base area, which ran under the central area, but were drilled out and replaced with stainless steel (Grade S316 marine).

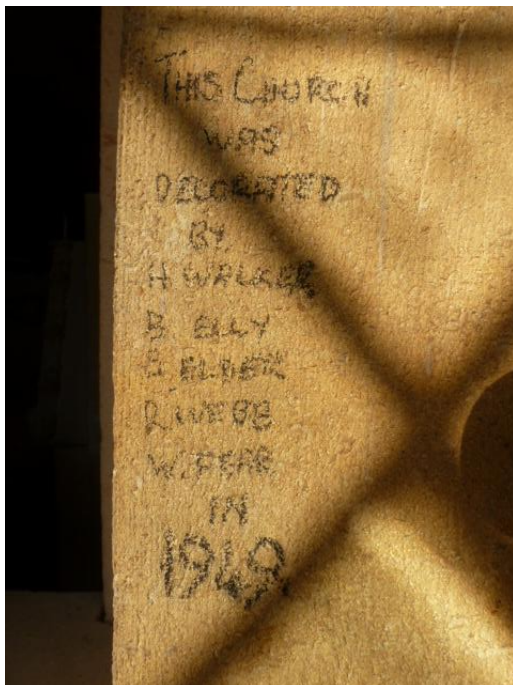


The west end was then rebuilt, tying all sections together and to the central section with stainless steel fixings.





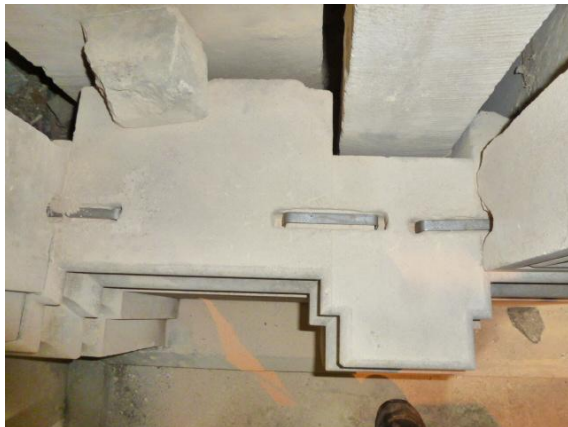
On the back was found a list of names recording the redecoration of the church in 1949

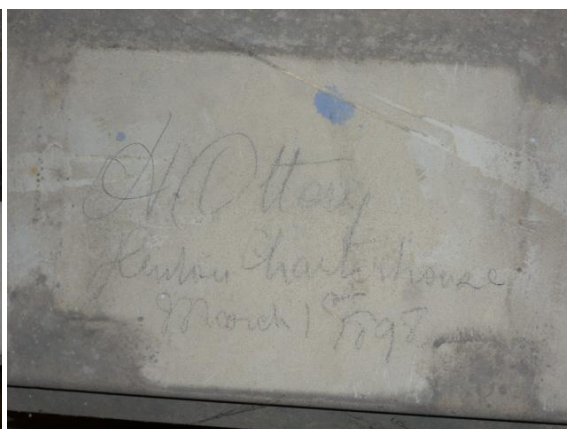


The east end was similarly dismantled. It was wedged against the reredos, requiring some sections to lean slightly.



The fixings in the base were replaced as for the west end and the east end was rebuilt, tying the sections back to the wall behind.





On the top was discovered a signature, 'H Ottery Hinton Charterhouse 1897' (see above photos)

The wall behind the monument contained a cavity which may be the remains of the old piscina.



In all, 50 new fixings were inserted, only 20 of them replacing originals.

Joints were filled with a non-hydraulic lime mortar coloured to match the stone.

The monument was cleaned as for the others with water in handsprays and gentle brushing.



Completed monument



MONUMENT 4 : AMELIA BRIDGMAN, d. 1864 & COL SIR JOHN MORILLYON WILSON, d. 1868



4.1 DESCRIPTION

1.1 The monument is floor-mounted and stands in the southwest corner of the chancel

Dimensions : Ht. 3.34m; W. 1.95m; D. 680mm to wall

1.2 **Materials :** Bath stone

Description : A canopied monument, of a similar design to the others, but less ornate. The inscription tablet rests within an arch, but this is not deeply recessed and the whole structure is plainer, the carving in fact less accomplished.

1.3 **Fixings :** there were few fixings, all iron.

Jointing material : no jointing material

1.4 **History of Monument :** The monument is part of the scheme for the entire chancel and as such can be assumed to be in its original position

1.5 **Significance :** It is unusual to find a canopied monument of this type at this date and it seems that the intention was to create a restored medieval-style chancel with all four monuments linked in design. This one would appear to be slightly later in date, or perhaps slightly cheaper than the others, whilst still following the same basic design.

4.2 CONDITION ASSESSMENT

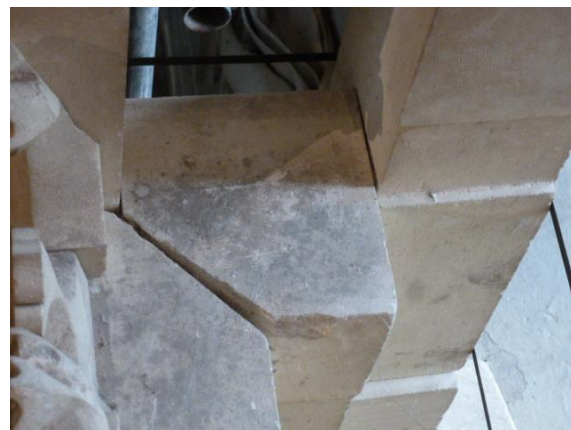
2.1 **Structural** : The lower areas of the monument appear stable. The construction method is the same as for the other monuments, with no allowance for joints or bedding mortar. Even the pinnacles were simply rested in place.

The top sections, from about 2 metres upwards, were all shifting about in a random manner and had been strapped together on the architect's advice.

2.2 **Surface** : The stonework was fairly dirty. There were some minor open joints in the lower areas.

2.3 **Assessment of risk** : Whilst the shifted stonework does not present an obvious danger, it is nevertheless loose and should be given fixings.

2.4 **Condition of building and its impact** : The base area has been stained with penetrating damp, but is otherwise sound.



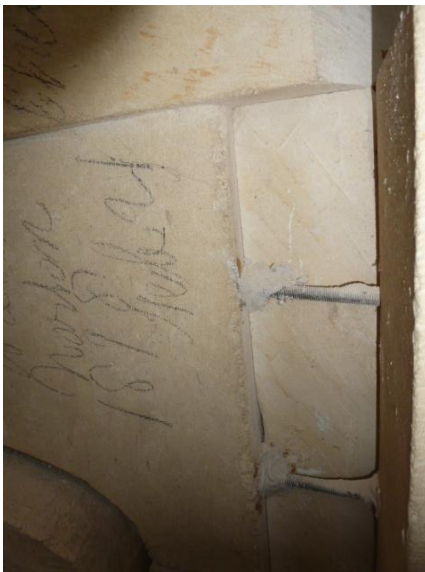
4.3 CONSERVATION TREATMENT

The monument was treated in a similar manner to No.III, leaving the central area in situ and dismantling both ends down to the tops of the corner pilasters beneath the mini gablets.

The first operation was to stabilise the central area with vertical 12mm stainless steel dowels to tie the sections together and then 20mm ties back to the wall.

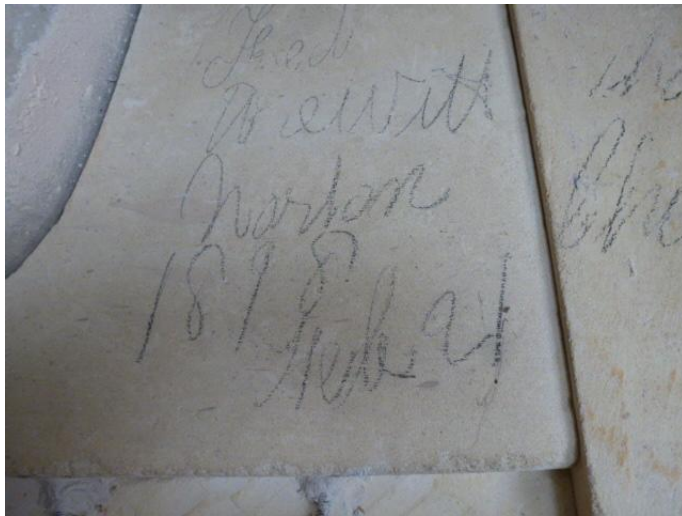


The end sections were then removed and rebuilt incorporating vertical dowels and cramps into the central section. 25 new fixings were made, of which only 4 replaced originals.





Writing was found on the back, although it could not be deciphered, but consisted of a list of names and the date 1898



The monument was cleaned as for the others, using water in handsprays and gentle brushing. Joints were filled with non-hydraulic lime mortar coloured to match the stone.



5. OTHER WORK

5i ALTAR STEP

A section of the south end of the top altar step had been broken away and pushed upwards by the corrosion and expansion of the iron fixing for the carpet rail.



The fixing was also removed from the bottom step, corrosion was removed from both fixings and they were reinstated, packed with a soft non-hydraulic lime mortar. The slab was then rebedded.



5ii MONUMENT TO SIR EDWARD VICTOR LEWIS HOULTON d. 1897

This monument had damage caused by the corrosion and expansion of three iron retaining cramps beneath the top arch.



The cramps were removed and replaced with stainless steel, then the top was replaced. Joints and cracks were filled with non-hydraulic lime mortar coloured to match the stone.



5iii MONUMENT TO VIRGIL PARKER, d. 1697 and ANNA PARKER, d. 1758

This monument has a similar situation to the one above, with the corroding iron fixings into the top of the inscription tablet causing the sections above to lift.



In this situation, accessing the fixings would mean removing the ornate top sections of the monument and the problem was not considered severe enough to justify this. Instead, the open joints were filled with a non-hydraulic lime mortar which would make any further movement obvious and it should be kept under observation.



5iv POLYCHROMY ON CHANCEL ARCH

The polychromy, which extends to both sides of the chancel arch, consists of a fine white layer, over which is a thick layer of red oxide paint, which also is covered patchily by a later layer of yellow ochre. This seems to have run over the whole outer order of the chancel arch, with more surviving on the south side.

The earlier layers have been roughly hacked back to key in later limewash and/or plaster and the stone itself has been keyed for plaster.

All the polychromy appears in sound condition.

