

# MCNEILAGE CONSERVATION

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## St Petrock's, Timberscombe, Somerset

### Tower Commemorative Plaque

### Conservation Report

### October 2021

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#### Introduction

This brief document describes work undertaken to a small oval stone plaque mounted on the north wall of the tower of St Petrock's church, Timberscombe. The work was commissioned by Marion Jeffreys on behalf of the PCC and undertaken by Torquil McNeilage ACR during October 2021.

#### The Plaque – Description and condition as found

The plaque is an oval design and bears the following inscription:

*Richardus Ellsworth Armiger hanc ? erexit anno domini MDCCI George Alderman Mason*

A V-cut border circumscribes the inscription.

The inscription plaque is fixed on the external north face of the tower, below the clock face, bears the date 1701 and is apparently carved of a local material, a sandy limestone to judge from the areas of visible surface. The lettered inscription is V cut and the entire surface of the plaque has been painted black at one time. However, it seems likely that the letters were originally picked out in white, and fragments of white do remain in corners of the lettering.

The plaque was in reasonable condition; there were some small areas of stone surface breaking down and the last word of the inscription, *Mason*, had begun to lose its definition. In addition, the letters had become difficult to read because of the loss of much of the black surface paint layer and a confusion of different colours throughout. There were two large ferrous cramps to either side of the plaque; these were corroded and had done some slight damage to the surrounding stone.

#### Conservation work

Access scaffold was set up to allow good access to all areas of the plaque.

The two ferrous cramps were carefully removed with fine drills and hand tools. Though it is debatable whether these fixings were in fact doing much fixing work, it was agreed that replacement fixings of stainless steel would be inserted. These were set in resin and pointed into position with lime mortar. The visible faces of the cramps were then painted black to make them unobtrusive.

Areas of stone surface breakdown were locally consolidated, as appropriate with Primal B 60a 20%, or with lime slurry. Areas of loss and damage were filled with colour matched lime mortars based on a hot mixed quicklime mortar with a small addition of Argical pozzolan to ensure the set. These mortars were covered with cotton wool for a couple of days to prevent quick drying. The lettering of the lowest word, “Mason” was partially remade with lime mortar to allow it to be legible once more.

The black painted surface was reintegrated with Keim mineral silicate paint with lamp black pigment; this in itself rendered much of the inscription legible again, but in some areas, the letters were very faint and so a further Keim-based paint was applied where necessary into the lettering to reinstate the white letters. The end result was a plaque that still appears weathered and aged, but allows the inscription that is its primary purpose to be read once more.



Photo 1 the plaque's position on the north face of the tower





Photos 2 and 3 The plaque before (left) and after work







Photo 4 left: application of Keim paint

Photo 5 below: new stainless steel fixing inserted and pointed

