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## **St Mary's, Nettlecombe, Somerset (Diocese of Bath and Wells)**

**Effigies attributed to Sir Simon, Sir John and Maud Raleigh**

### **Conservation and Relocation Report**



**February 2022**

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## Introduction

This report describes work undertaken over a period of years to on thirteenth century and two fourteenth century effigies in the south aisle of St Mary's church, Nettlecombe, Somerset. The project has been a process of discovery and adjustment as new findings came to light during the work, and this report is itself the last of a series, documenting this journey. An attempt has been made here to distil the process into its salient details. Both effigies had been poorly treated in the past and subjected to repair work of distinctly variable quality, and unpicking these repairs, and deciding how to react to them, was a major part of the project.

The project was commissioned by Lucy Devitt on behalf of the PCC, who also raised funds with great efficiency and kept informed of progress. I am very grateful for the help and support of all the PCC, and particularly Mrs Devitt and their patience in seeing the project through. I am also grateful for the input of the church architect, Annie Evans and of members of the CBC sculpture and furnishings committee, who visited and corresponded helpfully.

The work was undertaken by the author of this report, Torquil McNeilage ACR, assisted by Ruth McNeilage ACR, Carolyn Robinson, Ingrid McNeilage and Tim Woolgar.

This report will first give an overview of the project and briefly record the stages through which it has evolved, and then deal in detail with each effigy. As is made clear in the report, the attributions of these effigies to particular historic figures is insecure, but for the purposes of clarity, the effigies will be described here as "Sir Simon Raleigh", "Sir John Raleigh" and "Maud Raleigh", Sir Johns first wife.

Photographs detailing the work undertaken to each effigy are included at the end of each section dealing with that particular effigy.

### **The Nettlecombe Effigies: previous reports**

The author first inspected and reported on the three Raleigh effigies in 2012, producing an initial report in October of that year discussing their history and condition and putting forward initial proposals for their further investigation, stabilisation and conservation. Two subsequent reports in 2014 and December 2016 proposed and then described detailed investigations into the effigies of Sir John and Maud in the western recess, as well as discussions with representatives from the Church Buildings Council. Further interim reports on works to Sir John and Maud were produced in 2018 and January 2019, leading to a full conservation proposal document produced in June 2020.

These reports demonstrate the evolving nature of the project and new proposals as new evidence and analysis came to light. They are available from the author if necessary, but the project as it was finally undertaken and achieved is described in detail in this report below.

## The Nettlecombe Effigies: Overview of the Project

### **The Church and the Effigies: introduction**

St Mary's church Nettlecombe is a grade I listed building with a wealth of interesting features inside and out, and a beautiful setting in the grounds of Nettlecombe Court (now the Leonard Wills Field Centre), itself a grade I listed building. Inside the church was subject to extensive restoration in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but has a medieval origin and many surviving medieval and early modern features, including the Perpendicular arcades, rood stair and Trevelyan chapel. It is not unfair to suggest, however, that the most spectacular medieval survivals in the building are collected in the south aisle; the seven sacraments font called by Pevsner "uncommonly ambitious in its sculptural decoration" and

the three Raleigh effigies in the two south wall tomb recesses. The recesses themselves retain medieval stonework, with characterful 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century corbel heads, but have clearly been repaired and possibly altered in the nineteenth century – their window openings are C19 inventions. The effigies themselves represent a magnificent group, rare in their survival and in their features, and each unique in its points of interest.

The church sits on a north facing slope of the deep valley of Nettlecombe and on the north side, the floor level inside the building is lower than the external ground level. The ground falls away to the south and a few metres to the south of the church a stream runs across the edge of the churchyard from south west to north east. There have been historic problems of water penetration in part due to these factors, and considerable work has been done to the drainage arrangements to try to tackle this. Internally, there is still evidence of damp penetration in the lower walls, the floor is often wet from condensation and also from rising dampness and some of the windows leak badly. Rainwater goods are at present well maintained and it is imperative that this continues. A photograph from 1999 showing appalling water penetration in the western recess then containing the 14<sup>th</sup> century effigies shows the danger of failing to keep up with maintenance.

The effigies were in poor condition when the first investigation was carried out in 2012. Dampness in the walls and floor had created a hostile environment for delicate stonework. Poor quality old repairs, some actively damaging, others inaccurate and disfiguring, had added to their problems and the two figures in the western recess had been jammed into a space too small for them, leading to damage and decay. Cement and gypsum plaster had been liberally used and the effigies partially buried.

The project as it ultimately emerged consisted of liberating all three effigies from their inappropriate and damaging situations, repairing and repainting the failed plaster of both recesses, removal of unsightly and damaging repairs, laying of new floors and the re-presentation following detailed repairs and cleaning, of all three effigies in more appropriate and dignified positions. The result is a display of the Raleigh family effigies that pays proper tribute to their importance and excellence and, technically speaking, provides them with a far more stable and suitable environment.

The initial wish to keep disturbance of the effigies to a minimum had to be revised in the light of investigations. It had originally been the intention to keep both 14<sup>th</sup> century effigies in the western recess, but this became untenable as it left Maud's highly important effigy pushed hard against the persistently damp south wall, partially obscured by Sir John's higher effigy and impossible to repair properly.

Ultimately, then, all three effigies were lifted and moved out of their respective recesses, repaired, cleaned and conserved as described below, and reinstated, Sir John on a new purpose made plinth of stone and the two Ham Hill stone effigies in the recesses, providing a satisfying symmetry and logic to the arrangement.



## Effigy of Sir Simon Raleigh

### Description and History

The effigy in the eastern recess dates from approximately 1270-80 and is reputed to represent Sir Simon Raleigh. It is one of the celebrated group of “sword handling knights” that appeared in various parts of England in the period c. 1260-1330. The effigy is depicted in relaxed pose, with crossed legs, his dexter hand grasping the hilt of the sword, whilst his sinister hand holds the scabbard. The sword has been drawn just a few centimetres from the scabbard, giving an impression of movement. His head rests on two cushions, a large rectangular one beneath a smaller square one placed diagonally. The figure is in full chain mail, with coif and mitts, the detail of the mail carved into the stone in small crescent shaped sections. Over this he wears a sleeveless surcoat with a waist belt. The sword belt crosses his body lower down and diagonally. A large shield on the sinister arm, attached by a guige over the figure’s dexter shoulder bears the arms of Raleigh. The supporting animal, a lion, apparently holds a smaller animal in its paws.

The effigy is carved in Ham Hill stone from south Somerset, a liassic limestone/sandstone with a high proportion of clay. The stone is coarse in nature and strongly bedded, including beds of clay which have a tendency to weakness and can be affected by persistent dampness. However, the stone is durable despite these weaknesses, and takes good detail in spite of its coarse quality. It does, however, govern to an extent, the nature of carving; the Raleigh effigy is well modelled and elegantly designed, but detail is bold and simplified, rather than intricate. The design is none the worse for that and this is a piece of sculpture with real presence, power and feeling.

Thirteenth century knightly effigies are rare and important survivals – about 120 have been documented for the whole of England, and complete figures, with their supporting animal, sword and heraldry are even rarer. The cross-legged pose and the active sword handling attitude date the effigy to the latter half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and probably to the end of the century, and does not indicate any kind of crusading career, contrary to persistent popular myth. The drapery style led Harry Tummers to suggest that the Nettlecombe effigy is the product of a “development of the Bristol style”, and linked it to other examples at St Mary Redcliffe in Bristol and at Porlock and Stock Gaylard in Dorset.

The identification of Sir Simon Raleigh as the subject is unsubstantiated (as has been discussed before); though the heraldic device still clear on the shield is documented as the Raleigh (or Raleigh) blazon, *Gules, five fusils conjoined in bend argent*, this merely identifies the family rather than the individual. Whoever the effigy represents, it is a stately and magnificent example of the English tradition, unique to these islands and unique to the period, of lively cross-legged knights drawing their swords.

Survivals of polychrome have been recorded and documented, and demonstrate the lavishness with which these figures would originally have been ornamented and coloured. The effigy has retained significant remnants of its polychrome decoration in nooks and corners of the draperies and mail. It is clear that the mail, as well as being carved in the stone, was gassed and picked out in a black and white scheme. The surcoat was a rich vermilion red and there are also smaller remains of pale blue on to gesso and green. The supporting lion had apparently a coat with black stripes, and eyes picked out with black lines and various other details were outlined in black for emphasis. These survivals

The physical history of this effigy, in common with the others, is difficult to unpick with any certainty. In some ways, this effigy is in very good condition. Many surviving 13<sup>th</sup> century effigies are fragmentary or mutilated, or have deteriorated significantly because of their damp and salt-laden locations. It is not certain that the effigy was always in a recess and doubt has been cast on the

authenticity of the Nettlecombe recesses. In addition, the stone surface of all three effigies was found to be covered with fine red clay, including even very inaccessible nooks and corners, which might even suggest that it had spent time either buried or outside (or perhaps even that the building had at some point been flooded?). Both AC Fryer and Harry Tummers state that effigies were regularly moved and very few are in their original position; Fryer records that the early 14<sup>th</sup> century knightly effigy at Churchill was moved out into the churchyard at one point. It seems likely at the very least that Sir Simon's effigy was moved out of the recess when the 19<sup>th</sup> century restoration work was undertaken.

### **Condition As Found**

The effigy of Sir Simon was found in 2012 in very damp condition, with widespread green algae growth and some salt efflorescence on the stone surface. Specific local areas of stone deterioration had begun to appear on the edges of the draperies and on the sword. The entire effigy had a dark damp appearance, it was partially buried in a very damp soil-based rubble capped with a cement skim, and the walls and floor of the effigy retained high levels of dampness. Plaster was blowing off the walls. In addition, the supporting animal had been detached at some point in the past and reattached with curious clay-based mortar. Despite this, the detail of the effigy and even considerable remnants of its polychrome decoration survived in good condition. The presentation and situation of the figure, however, left a great deal to be desired in both technical and aesthetic terms.

### **Conservation Programme**

Following analysis and discussion, it was agreed to remove the effigy from the eastern recess, allow it to dry out for a period while the recess was replastered and to clean and re-present it. Accordingly, a lifting rig was constructed and the effigy moved in 2014 to a position just outside the recess, and placed on timber bearers. Whilst the effigy was out of the niche, it was carefully cleaned, initially with brush and vacuum and then with cotton swabs and pH-neutralised deionized water, to remove soil and clay, dirt and organic green growth. Local areas of stone decay were treated with dispersed lime and fills of matched lime mortar inserted. The large area of grey surface on the lower part of the shield was cleaned with ammonium carbonate poultice to reduce its visual impact.

The survivals of polychrome in various parts of the effigy, as described in the section above, have been documented on photographs and these are appended to this report. Areas of polychrome were closely inspected under magnification and, if any were found to be unstable, were stabilized as necessary using Primal B60a 10% in water. Many of the areas of polychrome, however, were apparently stable and in good condition

The lower part of the walls of the recess had plaster in poor condition, much of it blown and some repaired with gypsum plaster. This plaster was removed and the wall allowed to dry out for a few months before re-plastering with lime plaster finished with three coats of limewash.

A new floor was laid in the recess. Ham Hill stone was selected since the effigy itself was of this stone type. The floor slabs were laid into fine sand and pointed with lime mortar with an open texture to allow moisture from the sub-floor to escape.

The effigy was then reinstated. It was laid onto a membrane of Code 6 lead and carried on stone bearers clad in lead to additionally permit air to pass underneath the figure. The detached supporting animal was refixed and the fracture filled with a mortar repair matched to the surrounding stone. The visible front joint as then repointed in open textured lime mortar.

Work to the effigy was completed in April 2018 and the effigy has since been kept under observation. There appears to be no significant change in its condition. There has been some staining in the lower

walls of the recess, but this must be expected since they remain damp in places. These have been limewashed again.



Plate 1 Effigy of Sir Simon Raleigh before work

Plate 2 The head end of the effigy, showing damp and organic growth







Plate 3 the foot end of the effigy before work, showing damp and growth

Plate 4: Effigy from above before work







Plate 5 (left): cleaning in progress: view from above

Plate 6 (above): cleaning in progress; poultices applied

Plate 7 (below): cleaning in progress; the head end







Plate 8: Work in progress: above, lifting the effigy out of the recess

Plate 9 (left): conservator in action







Plate 10: the supporting lion, cleaning in progress

Plate 11 The lower walls of the niche, plaster removed







Plate12: walls re-plastered, floor laid and figure returned to the niche on lead and bearers

Plate 13 below: the effigy of Sir Simon Raleigh after work finished





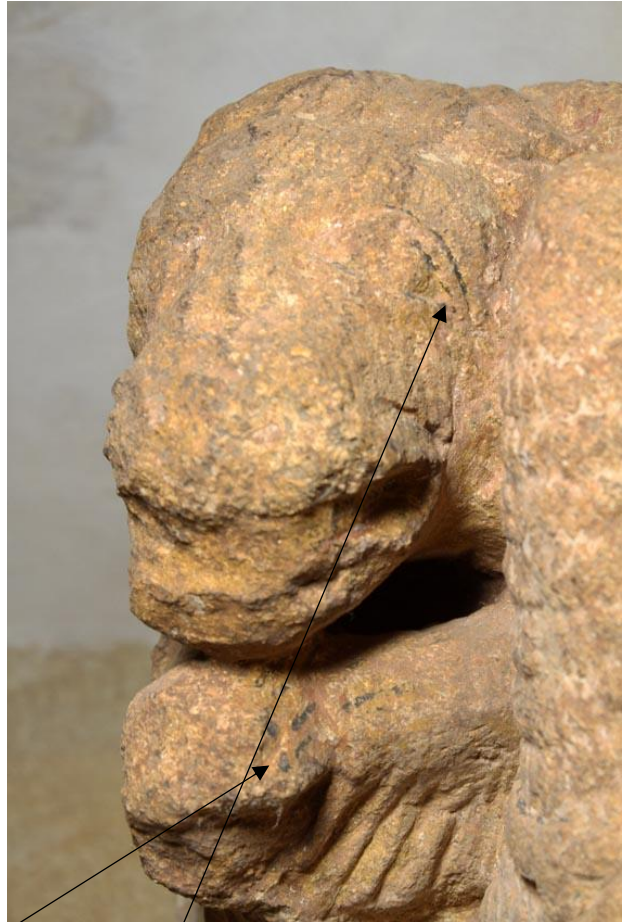
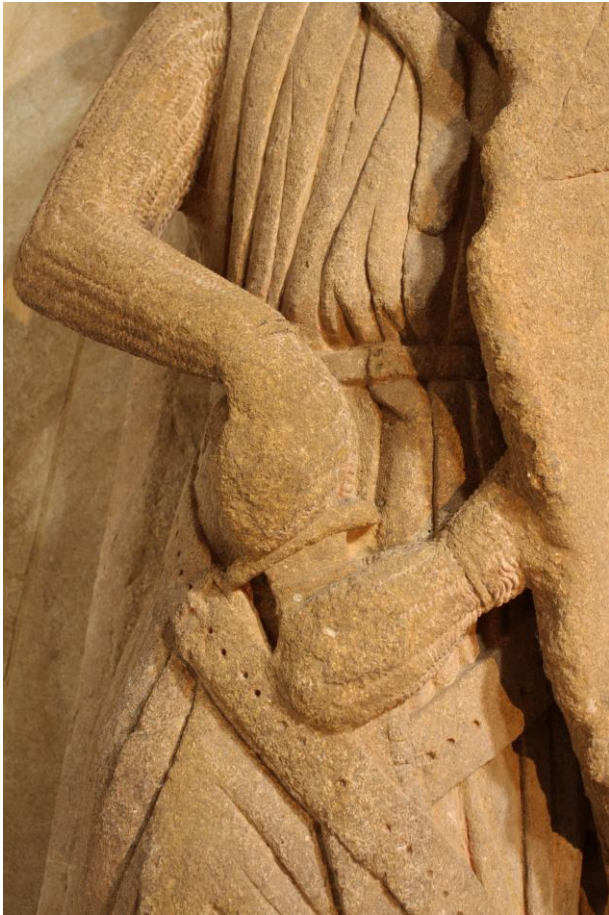


Plate 14: details. The partially drawn sword

Plate 15 polychrome on the supporting lion; stripes on the coat and the eyes picked out

Plate 16 polychrome on the mail: the spurs picked out







Plates 17-20: polychrome details in various parts of the effigy.

17 left: red on the surcoat

18 below left: red on the surcoat and mail in black and white

19 below right: gold and black stripes on the lion

20 bottom: blue along the edges of the surcoat



## Effigy of Maud Raleigh

### Description and History

The effigy attributed to Maud Raleigh is carved in high relief from Ham Hill stone, and is tentatively dated 1340-50. The detail has survived remarkably well given the situation; the lady's hands are clasped in prayer and she lies with her head supported on two cushions, the lower one placed square and the upper one diagonally. Her hair is partially covered with a kerchief or veil, tied with a single band which appears to have been ornamented, but is visible falling freely to her shoulders. Her facial features are worn but still otherwise intact.

The figure wears, apparently, a kirtle (fitted under dress) with a line of buttons visible along the lower edge of the forearms, a full-length gown dropping on long straight folds to her feet, which can be seen with pointed shoes, resting on her supporting animal. The gown has long sleeve extensions hanging down from her elbows. Over the gown, she appears to have a mantle, drawn over her shoulders; no sign of a cord tying it at the throat is visible.

The lady's feet rest against a small brachet with its head turn up towards her and in a most unusual addition, there is a second, larger hound lying beside her and facing her, its forepaws crossed. This is a remarkable and intensely personal touch, perhaps bringing to mind Chaucer's Madame Eglantyne. A new head has been added to this hound, apparently after AC Fryer's description in the 1920s.

A second unusual detail is the small prayer scroll held in the lady's sinister hand, and curling away. Both this detail and the hound seem to suggest that the lady depicted was of some importance, certainly to the commissioner of the effigy, and that these details were specifically requested.

The effigy retains tiny survivals of applied layers, a speck of red in the corner of the mouth and a little yellow ochre on the face, which may represent an underlayer or else a later accretion.

The physical history of this effigy is similarly mysterious to that of Sir Simon and Sir John. It seems certain that the figure has been moved about quite a few times, and the level of stone deterioration suggests that it may have spent time exposed to the elements, underground or otherwise in unsuitable conditions. We know that there has, even fairly recently been water penetration in the western recess, and that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a major restoration of the building was deemed necessary, including significant alterations to this recess. The effigy has a similar red cast over the surface to the 13<sup>th</sup> century effigy next door, and again, this seems so prevalent that it appears either to have been applied or to suggest the figures have been buried in the past. However, one can only speculate as to the details of its past life. At some point, repairs have been undertaken, some in a dark grey cement that seems late 19<sup>th</sup> century in appearance, others in a lime based coarser material, and perhaps earlier. The hound at her side has apparently had a number of different phases of repair.

### Condition As Found

The effigy of Maud was in the most fragile condition of the three Raleigh effigies. The Ham Hill stone had laminated in various places, failing along the weak, clay-rich beds. A major fracture across the centre of the figure had produced two large fragments. This fracture had been superficially filled and repaired in the past, and it seems certain that Maud was placed in this recess in two sections and filled as necessary afterwards. The fracture ran up at an oblique angle through the slab, through the side hound's paws and along the side of Maud's gown, passing across the figure at about knee level and then back up to her elbow on her dexter side.

In addition, there were further fractures at the lady's neck, along her forearms, extending along her upper arms and along the base of the figure where it joined the slab. This last fracture continued around the lower cushion. The hound at her side was laminated into three main sections, the lowest

still attached to the base slab, the upper two detached and loose. The bracket at her feet was detached from the base slab, again along a weak clay bed.

A large dark grey cement repair had been applied to the lady's gown over her stomach, and some salting could be seen around the edges of this hard inappropriate repair work. A number of other areas had also been repaired, but generally with softer mortars apparently bound in lime. Areas of stone surface were weak and crumbly, and there were numerous losses to surface details. Surfaces were soiled, covered in heavy accretions of dirt and debris, and in many places some kind of cement wash appeared to have been applied, perhaps to unify the surface appearance following the large cement repair mentioned above.

In general, the effigy appeared damp, fragile and in a dangerous condition of neglect and decay.

### **Conservation Programme**

The conservation of the effigy of Maud had to proceed in a staged process for a number of reasons. First, the effigy was very difficult to see whilst the adjacent, larger and higher effigy of Sir John was still in the recess, and particularly whilst he still had the modern arms and hands that further obscured the lady beside him. The true condition of Maud's effigy was therefore unknown until the effigy of Sir John was removed from the recess in 2019.

Secondly, it was necessary to proceed with caution and this required evidence gathering before any major intervention were proposed and undertaken. The intention of the conservator is to undertake as minimal an intervention as possible to safeguard the future stability of the object under consideration, and this was the approach adopted here. For this reason, the initial intention was to keep the effigy in its position and isolate it in situ. This was in fact achieved in 2019, by excavating carefully under the figure and replacing the wet soil-based rubble with concrete blocks with a slate on top, thereby providing the effigy with a new firm support and simultaneously isolating the Ham Hill stone from the surrounding masonry.

However, it soon became apparent that this approach was unsatisfactory for a number of reasons. First, the effigy was still pushed hard against the south wall of the recess, in places touching the rubble stonework, and the risk of future water penetration and consequent deterioration could not therefore be adequately relieved. Secondly, it was not possible to undertake repairs, cleaning, removal of unsuitable materials and surface stabilization with the figure still against the wall. Thirdly, it was agreed that the two effigies together were too large for the recess and keeping them both in position would impact on both of them, as well as obscuring the important effigy of Maud beside her male companion again.

A new proposal was therefore put forward, and accepted, to remove Sir John permanently from the recess and place this effigy on a new purpose-built plinth in the south aisle close by, and to relocate the effigy of Maud centrally in the recess on a new floor of Ham Hill stone (the proposal was described in our report of June 2020). This would allow both effigies to be properly presented as their importance deserves and demands, would allow Maud to be moved away from the wall, would make the isolation of Sir John's effigy much more efficient and would create a satisfying symmetry, with the two Ham Hill effigies in the recesses and the limestone effigy placed on a chest of limestone appropriate to his size and material.

Accordingly, following the removal of Sir John, the effigy of Maud was moved out of the recess in its several constituent fragments. The entire effigy was then mounted on a large slab of new Ham Hill stone, to give the necessary support to the fractured figure. The effigy was bedded on lime mortar and then pointed into place. The two hounds were then reattached and the gaps made good with lime mortar repairs.



Grouting of fissures and fractures was undertaken with caloxil injection mortar- a material based on ethanol rather than water and therefore suitable for moisture sensitive situations. Surface filling of these fractures was then undertaken with lime mortars matched to the surrounding stone. Some surface distressing of these repairs was undertaken with water colours and limewashes.

Stone surfaces were cleaned with cotton swabs and pH neutralized deionized water; areas of significant weakness were consolidated with Calosil E25 nanolime, applied in a number of phases as the situation demanded. The large grey cement repair on the lady's kirtle was removed and, after consideration, it was decided not to replace this with lime mortar, since it was a shallow repair and its removal had not damaged her appearance.

A discussion was held with the parish as to whether to retain the modern head of the hound at the lady's side. It was agreed that the head, though in style and condition somewhat different from the original, should be retained because it was well made in itself and its addition allowed the entire ensemble to read much more fully. A headless, somewhat decayed hound would have been difficult to interpret, not to mention macabre. The head was therefore re-fixed using the pre-existing dowel holes with a small amount of resin and plaster. This fixing will allow this head to be removed if at some future point it is deemed unsuitable, by creating a firm but reversible bond.

The lower walls of the recess had failed and blown plaster, inappropriate gypsum repairs and impermeable paint layers, and so the plaster here was removed and the wall left unplastered for two years to allow it to dry out. It has to be said that the very lowest parts of the recess wall remain damp and this problem is likely to require management in the future, rather than a complete solution.

The walls were replastered with hot-mixed lime plaster, applied in three coats, and then painted with three coats of limewash. A new floor of Ham Hill stone was laid on open gravel and fine sand, with a wide evaporation joint of very open textured lime mortar around the base of the walls, and the original step was then reinstated. The very decayed section of floor immediately adjacent to the step was replaced with new Marnhull stone. It is intended that these measures allow the greatest possible escape of any moisture from under the floor.

Following repairs, the effigy was then reinstated in the centre of the recess, on a membrane of Code 6 lead. The effigy, like that of Sir Simon was spaced off the lead on bearers to allow air to pass under the support slab, and thereby create a further protection from any possible moisture-related problems.

### **Conclusions and Future Maintenance**

The effigy of Maud has been cleaned, stabilized, repaired and given a new support. It has been isolated from source of possible dampness, and re-presented in a way that allows much fuller appreciation of this beautiful and poignant object. It is accepted that the effigy of Maud remains a fragile and damaged piece and that there may be some further deterioration as the effigy continues to adjust to a new, drier situation. For that reason, it should be kept under observation for the next few years by a suitably qualified conservator so that any further disruption may be swiftly attended to.

**It is vital that no attempt** is made to step over the effigy, for example to place flowers or candles on the window sill in the south wall. This can only lead to damage to this important effigy.



Plate 21: Maud before work: the head end, showing dirty and stained surfaces,

Plate 22: Maud before work: the foot end; cracks, soiling and bloom







Plate 23: the figure of Maud obscured behind that of Sir John

Plate 24: the companion hound, fractured into several large fragments







Plate 25 left: large grey cement repair on the lady's gown

Plate 26 below: fracture along the arms

Plate 27 bottom: fractures through the cushion and head







Plate 28: graphic, showing the fracture through the effigy (red line)

Plate 29: Cleaning in progress







Plate 30: the companion hound, showing jumbled, unfixed arrangement with modern head

Plate 30: the companion hound, showing jumbled, unfixed arrangement with modern head

Plate 31: the effigy of Maud isolated from the rubble and beginning to dry out

Plate 31: the effigy of Maud isolated from the rubble and beginning to dry out







Plate 32: the effigy removed in two sections: upper fragment

Plate 33: lower fragment, showing poor condition and stone weakness







Plate 34: repairs to stone in progress

Plate 35: new support slab supplied, and consolidation in progress with nanolime to lower fragment







Plate 36: the effigy being reassembled with lifting gear

Plate 37: Mortar repairs to the companion hound in progress







Plate 38: New Ham Hill stone floor laid and recess re-plastered and limewashed

Plate 39: pointing of new floor slabs in progress







Plate 40: Effigy of Maud reinstated and complete

Plate 41: the upper section of the effigy after work







Plate 42: the Companion hound from above

Plate 43 The companion hound from the side

Plate 44: Maud's head, with kerchief, curling locks of hair and tiny remnants of red colour on the lips







Plate 45: view of the two recesses after work

## Effigy of Sir John Raleigh

### Description and History

The effigy of Sir John Raleigh (if indeed it is he – and there were a number of Sir Johns) is of a different material, different style, different size and scale and apparently a different period from that of Maud. It is carved of a fine-grained pale cream limestone that appears to crystalline and hard to be Beer stone, shows no sign of shell and is difficult to identify with certainty. The figure, which appears to date from around 1370, is somewhat mutilated and had received shoddy treatment at the hands of incompetent restorers during the past two centuries. The surviving original material consists of the knight's torso and upper legs to just below the knee, his head resting on a huge helm and his feet in armoured shoes (sabatons? Or leather shoes?) with fishscale types design, resting on an extraordinary and characterful supporting lion with crouching stature and enormously long tail. The arms and lower legs of the figure are lost and poor-quality, disfiguring and damaging repairs have been removed as part of this conservation programme.

The knight wears a pointed bascinet with camail, to which it is attached with elaborate lacings. The camail itself has two large laces to either side at its lower edge, which fall onto the jupon, a plain garment extending to the knight's upper thigh and ending in a series of scallops. The jupon has a low belt or baldrick, consisting of a series of square plates decorated with small square flowers. The mail hauberk is just visible below the jupon and on remnant of the sinister upper arm, and does not appear to have been carved. His thighs are covered with cuisses of cuir bouilli, and the knees protected with poleyns of plate. The metal fixings of the cuisses are an interesting touch.

The face of the effigy is relatively well preserved, in particular the splendid moustaches; the nose is a modern replacement and not terribly good (but perhaps better than nothing).

The figure is carved almost completely in the round – in contrast to the two other effigies, with very little connection to the supporting slab and extraordinary undercutting at the waist. This may have been a stylistic decision, but may have also been assisted by the nature of the stone, which is of good quality fine and taking a good sharp edge.

Remnants of original polychrome were found in the grooves of the fish scale shoes – a black line delineating each scale. A yellow layer found on both the supporting animal and the knight's jupon may be original or may be a later accretion.

Aspects of the physical history of this effigy are a little clearer than that of the other two. It is at least clear that the effigy of Sir John did not start life in the western recess, since the effigy is too long to pass through the arch unless it is in two sections, as it was when our work started. Therefore, the effigy must have been housed elsewhere originally (doubt has in fact been cast on the authenticity of the recesses as homes for any of the effigies).

It seems that in the 1920s, the modern repairs were not yet in place, as AC Fryer, in his comprehensive survey of monumental effigies in Somerset (a series of articles in PSANHS vols 60-72) simply notes the knight's arms as "lost" and makes no mention of restoration work. It therefore seems that the arm and helm repairs, and perhaps the nose, date from the interwar period; the date of the ghastly leg mortar repairs is unknown, but also post dates Fryer's work and may be 1950s in origin. Certainly, they were already old and deteriorated when Jerry Sampson visited the church in the early 1990s to inspect the effigies.

### Condition As Found

The effigy initially appeared in a very sorry state when we first visited in 2012. The stone was clearly damp and salts had caused disruption locally, particularly to the lower part of the knight's body where there were pustules of salt and some powdering of the stone surface. Some areas of stone had been



disrupted and blisters had broken open in some areas, whilst in others, fine cracks had formed in the surface. The base was buried into the floor, laid on very damp soil-based rubble and surrounded by a hard cement screed; staining and patchiness disfigured the carving, the animal's head had been detached and reattached crudely with gypsum plaster. Both effigies in this recess were tightly jammed into a space clearly too small to accommodate them.

Analysis established that the disfiguring leg repair work had been carried out at least partially in gypsum-based plaster, and that similar material had been used to fix the hands and the detached dexter thigh. The surface was extensively covered with cement slurry, the inaccurate arms and hands had been fixed with ferrous rods that were now corroding and causing damage to the surrounding stone, and the dexter thigh had been fixed into the torso with a very large iron square-section bar. This had caused fine cracks to appear in the torso. Further ironwork was to be found in both repairs to the lower legs, and had caused shattering of the original stonework of the poleyns (knee protectors).

In an aesthetic sense, the poor-quality repairs completely dominated and obscured the original details, as well as concealing the delicate effigy of Maud from view.

### **Conservation Programme**

Initial survey and analysis work was undertaken to establish salient facts about the condition and nature of the effigy. From this, it became clear that the effigy was laid directly on a very damp subfloor and that the leg repairs were damaging. Following discussions therefore, the leg repairs were removed in their entirety. The internal ferrous rods that had done such damage to both the supporting animal and the figure's legs were also removed and drilled out of the thigh sections. In the course of this work, the repairs were found to have been smeared up over the poleyns of the figure and down over his shoes, and so extra detail was recovered during the process.

The step in front of the recess was removed to allow access and inspection of the base slab; this further established that this slab had been broken in two before the effigy was moved into the recess, thereby confirming suspicions that it did not belong in this position. Further, it was confirmed that the supporting animal had been previously re-set with lime mortar and was effectively detached.

The effigy was removed from the recess, partly to permit work to the effigy itself, and partly to allow full inspection and conservation of the effigy of Maud. The lower walls of the recess were stripped of their later plaster and left to dry out as much as possible.

As part of the process of moving the effigy of Sir John out of the recess, the arms, hands and inaccurate dexter end of the helm were removed, together with the support rods that had held them in position. These rods had been set into dark grey, very hard Portland cement, and this was also carefully removed with fine drills and hand tools. Stone surfaces were cleaned with cotton swabs, fine sponges and limited amounts of pH neutralised deionized water, which also allowed removal of superficial salt deposits. Harder pustules and blisters of salt were removed with scalpels.

This work revealed that the condition of the original stonework was not as bad as had initially appeared and following the cleaning work, a period of drying and adjustment was allowed (in the end amounting to about two years) that further suggested that the stone was largely stable. It was agreed with members of the Church Buildings Council Sculpture and Furnishings Committee that full scale poultice desalination work was not necessary or desirable, as it is an unpredictable and debatable process to be undertaken only in extreme circumstances.

The dexter thigh, which was a separate block from the knight's torso, had been attached with a large iron bar, as mentioned above. This was gently eased out of its socket, but it was found to have fractured with dexter side of the torso in several places. These fine but deep fractures were accordingly stitched with skew pins of 4mm threaded stainless steel rod (316L) set in resin, to ensure

a firm repair. The cracks were then filled with matched lime mortars. Areas of damage and shattered stone around the knees of the figure were repaired, using Mastice 2000 polyester resin where necessary for reattaching shattered fragments, and air lime mortars for repairs. Areas of fine cracking were consolidated with dispersed lime or Calosil E25 nano-lime, applied through syringe. The large block at the dexter shoulder of the figure that had been inserted with Portland cement to support the new dexter arm was removed and the large holes that had been cut in this site of the figure were filled with lime mortar to match the surrounding original stone.

Discussions were held on site as to the best future location for the effigy of Sir John and from this, a proposal was put to the CBC and DAC for relocation of the effigy to a new purpose made stone plinth just at the west end of the western recess and oriented south to north. This was agreed and the project proceeded on this basis. The plinth was to have a chamfered top slab and a wider base slab. New stone for the plinth was sourced and cut – blue lias for the base slabs and Marnhull stone for the plinth itself.

The plinth was built, bedded and pointed with lime mortar to provide a level top and plumb walls, which necessitate some variation of the base joint as the floor was worn and uneven. Internal walls of lightweight block were inserted at two points to add strength and stability, and a lead membrane was introduced under the Marnhull stone side panels to ensure no rising dampness could reach the effigy. It was agreed that the modern repairs to arms hands and helm were not to be reinstated, and these were inserted inside the plinth where they could be safely stored against the possibility of future antiquarian interest.

Once the plinth had been built, the effigy could be installed on top. The two sections of base slab were dowelled together with 6mm stainless steel rods and lime grout, the supporting animal was fixed on two dowels of 4mm extruded basalt fixed in lime, and the losses were filled with lime mortars matched to the surrounding stone. Some distressing with limewash was required to match the mottled original surface. The knight's dexter thigh was reattached, using a single dowel of 12mm extruded basalt set in resin and lime mortar, to provide a firm but slightly flexible repair fixing, and the joint filled with lime mortar. To support the lower end of the thigh section, a single rod of 6mm phosphor bronze was inserted into a small hole in the base slab and into the end of the thigh block.

## Conclusions and Considerations of Future Maintenance

The three Raleigh effigies have been stabilized, cleaned, repaired and moved into new locations more suitable for their long term preservation. They have also been re-presented for display in a more dignified and helpful arrangement, allowing both general viewing and more detailed study. The two recesses have been repaired, re-plastered and limewash to provide suitable settings for the effigies and the floor adjacent to the figures has also been repaired as necessary. Survivals of polychrome have been stabilized and recorded and old inadequate repair work has been removed, allowing the eloquence of the medieval work to speak for itself.

The project developed over the course of the last ten years as new discoveries came to light and different approaches and policies were put forward to take account of this. In the final analysis, we would suggest that this steady pace of conservation work helped to produce a result that is more satisfactory than a one-hit project would have been, though we accept it may have seemed frustrating at times to parishioners. The unwavering support of the PCC throughout has been greatly appreciated and the input of various authorities was generally very helpful.

It must be accepted that medieval stone artefacts that have endured such vicissitudes cannot be immediately and permanently stabilized by a single conservation project, and it is therefore recommended that the conservator returns at intervals to check the condition of the stonework, the repair work and to flag up any new developments or areas of new deterioration. It is noted in this



regard that bat and bird faeces have begun to be deposited on the effigies, particularly that of Sir Simon and this may require occasional cleaning. (At present it seems to be mainly bird faeces, with white elements to it, rather than bat faeces, and this is a surprise.) There may also be continuing low level deterioration of some of the weaker areas of stone surface and this could be quickly and inexpensively nipped in the bud by an occasional visit.

Equally, it has to be accepted that the walls of both recesses do retain, and will continue to retain, elevated moisture levels at the wall foot, and this will cause staining and possible deterioration of the decorations over time. The walls may eventually dry out or they may remain somewhat damp indefinitely. Occasional maintenance of a low key and inexpensive kind is again likely to be necessary.

One cannot stress strongly enough that no one should step over the effigies in the recesses to place flowers or candles on the window sills. This is bound to lead to damage and further loss. Additionally, it is not necessary for members of the congregation to dust or otherwise clean the effigies. Very slowly some superficial dust may accumulate, but it would be advisable for a trained conservator to give a light clean at infrequent intervals if this is the case.



Plate 46: Effigies of Sir John and Maud before work, squeezed into the recess, stained, damaged ,badly repaired





Plate 47: Poorly conceived and executed leg repairs, with large support block

Plate 48, right: gypsum repair to the animals neck

Plate 49: detail of inaccurate arm and helm repairs

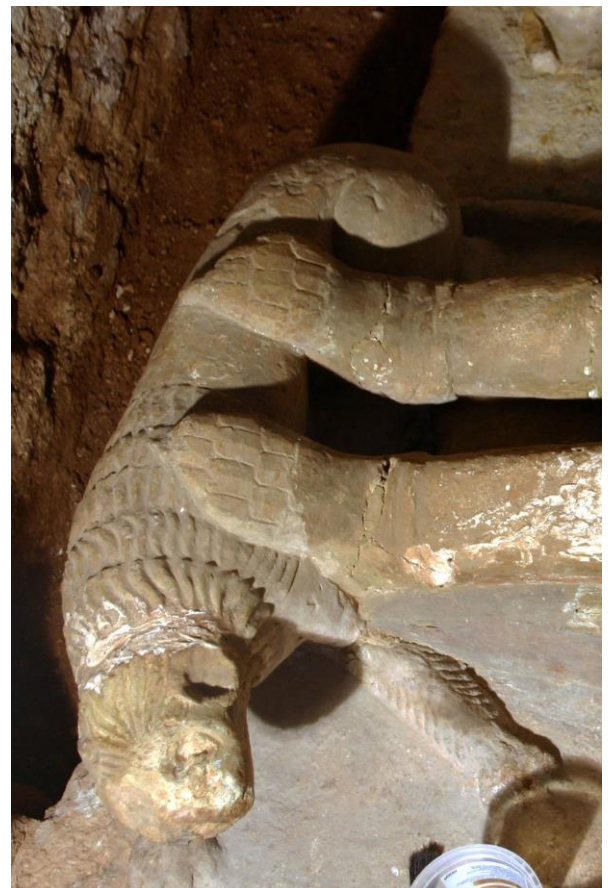






Plate 50: leg repairs to Sir John, side view

Plate 51: the large iron rod in the sinister leg

Plate 52: the iron rod removed

Plate 53: broken state of leg repairs before removal







Plate 54: Dexter upper leg removed, with massive iron bar

Plate 55: Damage caused to the torso by this bar

Plate 56: Repairs to sinister leg in progress







Plate 57: upper section of effigy removed from the recess on bearers

Plate 58: holes cut to take previous arm repairs, and cemented block to support those arms

Plate 59: removing the cement and block





Plates 60-69: Building the plinth: laying lias slabs; cutting and laying lead membrane; building the side walls

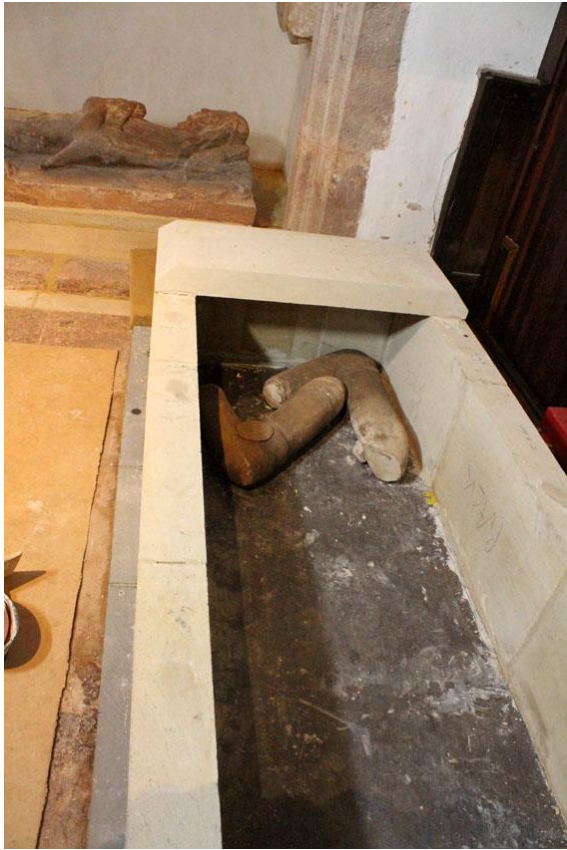






Building the side walls: cross walls of light block inserted; pointing the side walls





Old repairs installed within the plinth; laying the top slab; tapping the last stone into place







Plate 70: Upper section of the effigy in place

Plate 71 (below): lower section lifted into position

Plate 72: the two sections reunited







Plates 73-6: Repairs to dexter leg

Left, new basalt dowel inserted

Below left, leg fixed in position

Below right, small phosphor bronze support dowel

Bottom, The completed repair







Plates 77 – 80: Repairs to the supporting animal

Left, repairs to the neck in progress

Below right the animal dowelled in position

Below left, detail, the knight's shoes

Bottom, the supporting animal in position and complete







Plate 81: Effigy of Sir John after work was complete  
Plates 82 and 83: details of the knight's face and armour

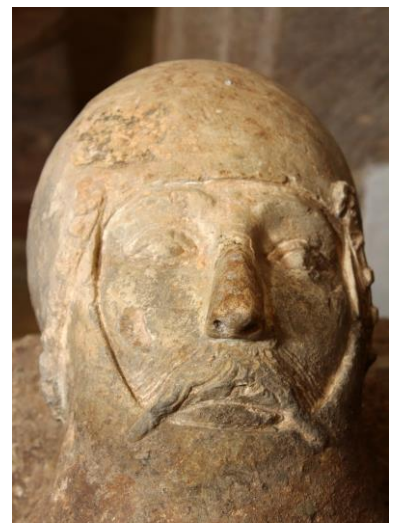






Plate 84: Effigies of Sir John and Maud after work was completed

**Appendix: record of polychrome survivals on Sir Simon Raleigh Effigy**



Dexter side





Front: upper section





Front: lower section







Sinister side