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Units 6 - 7 Hollis Road, Grantham, Lincolnshire NG31 7QH

St. Andrew's church
WINGFIELD
Suffolk
(Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich)

Plate 1: The Michael de la Pole monument viewed from the south side.

Record of conservation works carried out to the monument to Michael de la Pole (d.1415) and his wife Katherine

June 2023

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Introduction

This report forms the conservation record of the works carried out to the Michael de la Pole monument at the chancel of St. Andrew's Church, Wingfield, Suffolk. The report should be read in conjunction with the conservation survey report on the three medieval monuments in the church by Dr. David Carrington ACR FSA, of Skillington Workshop Ltd, dated May 2022.

The works were carried out by Emma Teale and Theo Gayer-Anderson under the overall supervision of Dr. David Carrington ACR FSA, all of Skillington Workshop Ltd, during April and May of 2023. The works were commissioned by Rev John McCracken, on behalf of the Parochial Church Council (PCC).

The works have been generously supported by a grant from the Church Buildings Council (*ChurchCare*).

Summary of the work carried out

Before works commenced, further recordings of the monument were made, including detail photographs of the current condition of the wooden effigies and stone work to tomb chest and column just to the west of the monument. Access to the effigies was provided with a temporary platform, built to the height of the top of the tomb chest, measuring c. 1800mmx2400mm. Both effigies were carefully moved across to the platform using Teflon skids on wooden runners and turned over onto soft padding to inspect the condition of the underside. The effigies were cleaned with a soft bristle brush and vacuum cleaner before being treated with Constrain, a water based insecticide with a neutral pH.

The top of the tomb chest was cleaned before a sheet of clear rigid polyester plastic, was placed to collect and record future debris between treatment cycles before re-instating the effigies. Both effigies were placed on *Plastazote*, a museum grade inert high-density foam, supports on top of the clear polyester sheet. The temporary platform was then dismantled to give access to work on the tomb chest and lower stonework.

Iron cramps were removed from the top of the tomb chest and replaced with 316 grade stainless steel 6mm threaded dowel set in polyester resin. The loose indent on the cornice was removed when the adjoining iron cramp was removed and re-attached with a 316 grade stainless steel 6mm threaded dowel pin set in polyester resin. Historic iron fixings were removed from the back of the recesses and made good with a lime putty mortar repair mix. The loose section of the column base, to the west of the monument, was removed and re-attached with 316 grade stainless steel 8mm threaded dowel pins set in Hilti HY polyester resin.

All loose material to the base of the tomb chest and column to the west of the monument was carefully brushed off and consolidated with lime putty and then repaired with a lime putty mortar repair mix. All open joints and cracks on the tomb chest were also filled with a lime putty mortar repair mix.

A small area of pencil graffiti on the west end of the tomb chest was removed with melamine sponge and de-ionised water.

Conservation record of works to the monument

Documentation

Before any works commenced the monument was thoroughly documented with detailed photographs and datums to accurately record its current condition and position. The plaster fill surrounding the south side of the effigy of Katherine de la Pole was carefully removed with hand tools, to reveal that Katherine was being supported with old newspaper at the head and feet with nothing in the middle.

Plates 2 and 3: Plaster fill before and after removal, with view of newspaper padding for the feet of Katherine de la Pole.

A small amount of plaster was also removed from around the feet of Michael's effigy; this revealed a small wooden support

Moving and inspecting

A temporary platform was erected on the south side of the monument to the height of the top of the tomb chest. Before moving both effigies were cleaned using soft bristle brushes and a vacuum cleaner to remove dust and bat droppings.

Two wooden runners with Teflon skids were then placed underneath Katherine's effigy, before carefully sliding her on to the platform. Several large foam pads were then attached to Katherine's effigy before turning her over to inspect the condition of the underside of the effigy.

Plates 4 and 5: Temporary platform and Katherine de la Pole being moved by Teflon skids

Underneath there was evidence of historic insect damage, fortunately not too much, and she was still structurally secure. However cloth and resin repairs had been used to fill historic insect damage, so it was not possible to see the entirety of the historic insect damage to the woodwork. It is worth noting that very little frass was found underneath the two effigies.

Plate 6: Underside of Katherine de la Pole

Wooden runners and Teflon skids were then placed underneath Michael's effigy, before sliding him on to the platform alongside Katherine. Again several large foam pads were attached to Michael's effigy before turning him over to inspect the condition of the underside of the effigy. Michael was also structurally sound and there was far less insect damage to his effigy.

Plate 7: Underside of Michael de la Pole

Both effigies had hollowed out areas, in Katherine's main body and head, and in Michael's head.

Plates 8 and 9: The exposed tomb chest below the effigy of Katherine de la Pole (left plate) and underside of Michael de la Pole (right plate)

Treatment of wooden effigies

Both sides of each effigy were treated with *Constrain*, a water-based insecticide with a neutral pH. All surfaces were sprayed before all of the flight holes and cracks in the wood were injected.

Plate 10: Katherine de la Pole being injected with Constrain.

Reinstatement of wooden effigies

After inspecting and recording the top of the tomb chest for evidence of insect damage, the residual debris was removed using a soft bristle brush and vacuum cleaner. A sheet of clear rigid plastic (usually used as a stone templating material) was placed on top of the tomb chest to collect and record future debris between treatment cycles. The effigies were then reinstated back onto the tomb chest using the same method used to lift the effigies off the tomb chest, see above.

Plate 11: Re-instatement of Michael de la Pole on to tomb chest

Both effigies were placed on *Plastazote*, a museum grade inert high-density foam, supports on top of the plastic sheet. The temporary platform was then dismantled to give access to work on the tomb chest and lower stonework.

Plate 12: Effigies being supported by Plastazote *foam on top of a sheet of Mylar.*

Removing ironwork from tomb chest

On further inspection all of the cramps around the perimeter of the top of the tomb chest were rusting and needed to be removed and replaced. The iron cramps on top of the tomb chest were carefully removed and replaced with 316 grade stainless steel 6mm threaded dowel set in polyester resin.

Plate 13 and 14: Rusting cramps on top of the tomb chest being replaced with stainless steel

Historic iron fixings which had been causing stresses to the stone due to their corrosion and expansion were carefully removed from the back of the recesses and made good with a lime putty mortar repair mix, see below.

Plate 15: Historic iron fixings before removal

Plate 16: Mortar repair after removing historic iron fixings

Repairs to stonework on tomb chest and column base

The loose indent on the south side of the cornice was re-attached with a 316 grade stainless steel 6mm threaded dowel pin set in polyester resin, when the adjoining iron cramp was removed.

Plates 17 and 18: Before and after the re-attachment of loose indent

The loose section of the column base, to the west of the monument, was removed and fractured into several sections. These sections and an additional section found at the feet of the Katherine de la Pole effigy were re-attached with three 316 grade stainless steel 8mm threaded dowel pins set in Hilti HY polyester resin, before being made good with a lime putty mortar repair mix, see below.

Plates 19, 20, 21 and 22: Column section before removing, and during reconstruction including found section from top of tomb chest

It was noted while repairing the loose column base section that the bottom of the column had been pieced together with small elements.

Mortar repairs to tomb chest and column base

Lime putty mortar repair mix trials were carried out and two mortar mixes where chosen to match the different stones needing to be repaired, a warmer limestone colour and a greyer clunch colour.

Warm limestone repair mortar mix	Clunch Grey repair mortar mix
1 lime putty	1 lime putty
1.5 sliver sand	2 silver sand
1 Ham stone dust (sieved)	0.25 slate dust
0.5 Clipsham stone dust (sieved)	0.75 Clipsham stone dust (sieved)

After the section was re-attached, to the column west of the monument, all loose material around the rest of the base of the column was carefully brushed off. The carving details along the salt evaporation line, however, were in danger of being lost and had several cracks underneath them. These cracks were grouted with a lime putty mix before being repaired with the clunch grey colour matched lime putty repair mortar fillet.

Plates 23 and 24: Carving details before and after being grouted on column west of monument

Plate 25: Mortar fillet to carved details on column *Plate 26: Mortar repairs to re-attached section*

After the loose column section was repaired and re-attached to the column, carved details were also repaired with the clunch grey colour matched lime putty repair mortar mix, see plate 26.

The warm limestone repair mortar mix was used to repair over the cramps on top of the tomb chest, and to make good holes left by the removal of historic iron fixings in the reccesses of the tomb chest.

A mortar repair, using the warm limestone repair mortar mix built up in several layers, was made to the missing section of cornice on the south side of the tomb chest. All open joints and cracks on the tomb chest were also filled with the warm limestone repair mortar mix.

Plate 27: Repair to south side of cornice and replaced cramps

The base of the tomb chest had, like the base of the column to the west of the monument, been damaged by salts. The damaged areas had their loose material carefully brushed away including several loose cement repairs and lost areas were consolidated with the warm limestone repair mortar mix. Some areas on the base of the tomb chest had the original profile rebuilt in several layers in the warm limestone repair mortar mix.

Plates 28 and 29: During and after lime putty repairs to base of monument (north side)

Plate 30: Base of tomb chest (south side) consolidated with lime putty repair mortar mix

All loose joints and cracks on the tomb chest were raked out and repaired with the warm limestone lime putty repair mix.

Graffiti removal to east end of tomb chest

Plates 31 and 32: Graffitti in pencil (?) on East side of tomb chest

Graffiti on the east side of the tomb chest was removed using de-ionised water and melamine sponges, another piece of potentially historic graffiti of an arch was left.

Plate 33: Graffiti removed with historic graffiti arch still remaining

Observations

The material used to repair the insect damage on the under side of the Katherine de la Pole effigy has a pattern that looks very much of the 1950s, which would correspond the date of previous roof repairs.

Plate 34: Material used to repair insect damage underneath Katherine de la Pole effigy

The newspaper found underneath the Katherine de la Pole effigy was from the *Bournemouth Daily Echo* with a date of Thursday 26th August 1954. Further research, beyond the scope of the present record, might identify who carried out this last repair work.

Plates 35 and 36: Two examples of the newspaper found underneath Katherine de la Pole effigy

Future maintenance recommendations

1. As mentioned in our May 2022 survey report, there should be further smaller programmes of work each year. Preferably at the end of March or in early April, the insecticide treatment will have to be repeated. This will involve as a minimum moving the effigy of Katherine de la Pole , turning her over, and inspecting and treating from all sides; recording frass and other beetle evidence on the sheet.

2. Once the treatment programme has finished the final setting of the effigy will need careful consideration, this will need to be thought about during the treatment phases. The final setting will have to be mindful of the security risk to the effigies and how best to secure them.

3. Cleaning should be kept to a minimum with only light dusting to the stone tomb chest and not the wooden effigies or top of the tomb chest. If any further cleaning is required a suitably experienced conservator should be consulted.

4. The building fabric – in particularly rainwater disposal and roofs – must continue to be maintained in good order.

5. The impact from building works elsewhere in the church can be reduced by carefully laying over two layers of clean light-weight dust sheets. Any building works above or in the close vicinity of the monument will require that it is boxed in in such a way that both the dust is kept out and that there is no direct contact with the monument.

6. It is recommended that the monument be inspected by the church architect as part of their quinquennial reports. Observations should be made of any movement in the monument. If anything of concern is noted then an ICON accredited monument conservator should be consulted.

Emma Teale

Senior Conservator, Skillington Workshop Ltd