



Hawksmoor's tunnel vault ceiling prior to conservation

ALL SOUL'S COLLEGE, OXFORD

Tim Pretty, David Cropley, Iain Edwards and Paul d'Armada (MSc)

The ceiling of the Hall of All Souls' College, Oxford was designed by the celebrated architect, Sir Nicholas Hawksmoor. Begun in 1729, the beautiful tunnel vault design is decorated with circles, geometrical motifs and guilloche decorations on the transverse arches.

The works were carried out under the guidance of architect Peter Carey (Donald Insall Associates). Whilst undoubtedly impressive, our initial condition survey found the beauty of the ceiling to be compromised by cracks and surface dirt which dulled the pale decorative scheme of modern paint. The exposed stone walls retained many fragments of earlier stone coloured paint coatings.

Architectural Paint Research suggested that the present appearance of the dark stone walls and pale ceiling was not that intended by Hawksmoor: the first surviving scheme on the ceiling was found to be a stone coloured distemper, with the walls also distempered to integrate and disguise any fine joints in the stonework. The first schemes on both the ceiling and the walls were identified and recorded using the internationally recognised Natural Colour System (www.ncscolour.com).



Heraldic shield

Improvements were made to the ceiling through the consolidation and filling of cracks and the removal of surface dirt. Strip-

ping of the paint layers was not recommended and over two centuries of paint archaeology were preserved. Following cleaning and crack repair, the ceiling was distempered in a tone that was mixed to match the visible pale paint layer, following a decision to preserve the existing balance with the darker walls. Application of the bespoke distemper gave a subtle, diffuse finish to the ceiling without loss of definition to the mouldings which can happen with the application of a thick paint.



Distemping of the ceiling

Tests showed that removal of the more ingrained surface dirt from the walls using aqueous means exaggerated the already uneven appearance. Dry methods were therefore used to remove loose surface dirt and debris only, complimenting the newly repaired and distempered ceiling, and adding to the renewed appearance of the Hall

Additional works included the cleaning of the heraldic shield positioned above roof height on an exterior wall of the hall. Its redecoration was achieved using lead oil paints and gold leaf in accordance with the known heraldic colours.

Hawksmoor's rejuvenated Hall has regained its mantle as a light and inspiring environment for the dining and debates of our eminent scholars.



Conserving the Past Enriching the Future

Message from Elizabeth Hirst ACR

Welcome to the fifth edition of our Newsletter. We hope that you enjoy this brief insight into the many exciting conservation projects that we have been involved with during the past few months; from our work on the artefacts of the old Wembley Stadium, to the world renowned seat of learning in the Colleges of Oxford University. To all who have supported us in our work we extend our sincerest thanks and look forward to many happy years of continued co-operation in conserving our wonderful heritage.



CUSWORTH HALL

2000-2007, The Hirst Conservation Team



Cusworth Hall was built during the mid-18th century on the outskirts of Doncaster, South Yorkshire by landowner William Wrightson and architects George Platt and James Paine. Support from the Heritage Lottery Fund has enabled (phase 1) investigation of the interior decoration, and (phase 2) the extensive restoration of the Hall, which is home to the Museum of South Yorkshire Life.

Purcell, Millar, Tritton. Hirst Conservation was commissioned to undertake several aspects of work, including the complete restoration of Paine's Chapel, which involved the uncovering of ceiling paintings, treatment and relocation of a large canvas painting, repair of stucco plasterwork, decoration with bespoke lead paints, and, following materials analysis, repair of the original lime ash floor. We also carried out extensive lime plastering of the interior and lime rendering to the exterior

Our involvement with Cusworth Hall began in 2000 when we were engaged by Doncaster Metropolitan Council to investigate the building's original interior decoration using architectural paint research

The research aimed to discover how the Hall had looked in Wrightson's day; what type of paint had been used, in what colours, and in which rooms? Had any structural alterations been made to the house over the decades, and how had the interior decoration changed? Based on the findings of the research, a select few of the rooms were to be restored to their original appearance.

These initial investigations informed Phase 2 of the works, and in 2005, HLF funding for the extensive restoration of Cusworth Hall was secured. The building contractors were Robert Woodhead Ltd and architect Jane Roylance of

Cusworth Hall reopened in Spring 2007. The incredible programme of restoration was extended to the gardens and all areas of the building and its outhouses, which will work alongside the newly presented exhibits of the Museum of South Yorkshire life. to at-



'The Ascension' by Francis Hayman. After treatment, and repositioning at the centre of Paine's Chapel ceiling.



NEW EASEL PAINTINGS & SCULPTURE WORKSHOPS

New workshops have been built at our Laughton headquarters, designed specifically for the conservation of large sculptures and easel paintings.

The studios are equipped with up to date resources for the conservation of works of art on canvas, wood and metal. The new storage facilities are capable of housing large collections for conservation.

CONGRATULATIONS!

...to easel painting conservators Alison Aynesworth (nee Thornton) and Rhianon Clarricoates (nee Hughes), on their recent marriages...

WELCOME BACK!

...to architectural paint researcher Karen Morrissey following maternity leave and the birth of her son, Edward.



Paine's chapel, 1952
Note the dark area on the ceiling to the left of the photograph.

PAINE'S CHAPEL, CUSWORTH HALL

The Hirst Conservation Team

Most exciting were the investigations relating to the intimate family chapel built by James Paine

in the west wing of the building.

When our research began in 2000, the chapel interior had a gloomy and neglected air. Large cracks split the plaster of the white emulsified ceiling, whilst sections of once brilliant stuccowork were disastrously affected by salt efflorescence, leading to delamination and loss. A huge canvas painting of the *Ascension* which originally adorned the central panel of the ceiling had long since been removed, and chequered linoleum covered the original lime ash floor adding to an overall impression of tired and faded glory.



Clues hidden in the archives hinted at a far more spectacular past.

A cherub painted by Samuel Wale. Above, after uncovering, below, after retouching.

Household accounts relating to works undertaken in the Chapel in 1750 showed that payments had been made to the established artist Francis Hayman for canvas paintings of the *Ascension* and the *Good Samaritan*. The whereabouts of both these paintings was known, with the *Ascension* in storage at Doncaster Museum, and the *Good Samaritan* in America, having been sold in the 1950s.

More mysterious was evidence of a large sum of money that had been paid to an artist named Samuel Wale for 'painting in the chapel and library'. Where were these pictures for which Mr Wrightson had paid so handsomely? More clues were to be found in the archives.

A photograph (left) taken in 1952 shows the chapel interior prior to redecoration: on the left side of vaulted ceiling can be seen a dark area framed by mouldings, that had disappeared from photographs taken after decoration. Could this area represent the lost and forgotten paintings created by Samuel Wale some 250 years ago? Uncovering tests and paint research confirmed that it could indeed. In each of the six compartments on the ceiling, below the layers of modern white paint, was found evidence of grisaille paintings, Samuel Wale's forgotten masterpieces.

Day-by-day the paintings were revealed, the images identified, and the losses retouched. Positioned on the flat of the ceiling were two large panels depicting the *Nativity* and the *Deposition*, whilst in the four corners were smaller panels of cherubs holding various attributes of the Christian church.



Stucco plaster cherubs on the ceiling of Paine's Chapel, before and after treatment.

The intended appearance and iconography of the chapel decoration was fully realised with the conservation and re-positioning of Francis Hayman's triumphant *Ascension* and at the centre of the ceiling, as illustrated on page 1. The Hirst team were greatly supported by the knowledge and enthusiasm of curator Julie Harrup.

WEMBLEY STADIUM, THE 1948 BRITISH OLYMPIC TABLETS

Tim Pretty and Paul d'Armada (MSc)

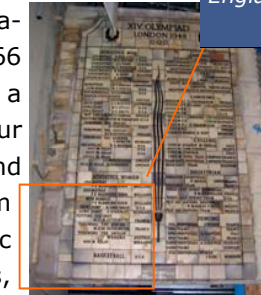
The original Wembley stadium, the 'Venue of Legends', played host to many unique and historic events, including the 1924 British Empire Exhibition, the 1948 Olympic Games to the 1966 World Cup Final and Live Aid in 1985.

In 2000, the world famous old stadium, with its famous twin towers, was demolished. Hirst Conservation was delighted to be entrusted with the preservation of several precious and historic artefacts from the old stadium, including the 1966 World Cup plaque, a bronze bust of Sir Authur Elvin and the torch and two huge tablets from the 1948 Olympic Games. The tablets, which are an example of the early work of Hugo Powell, consist of glazed

tiles set into concrete with raised lettering listing the gold medal winners.



Detail from the tablets, with England showing similar form to more recent games.



Tablets from the 1948 British Olympic Games

Prior to transportation from the stadium to our workshops, the cracked and flaking tiles were consolidated and the tablets faced with tissue and carefully drilled from their location beside the Royal tunnel. At the workshops, the facing was removed and the tiles cleaned.

Cracks and losses were filled with polyester resin paste, replicating the texture of the tile surface, and retouched using dry pigments in a synthetic resin media.

A happy and appropriate ending is in store for the tablets as they are to be re-instated either side of the entrance to the new Wembley stadium.

HERTFORD MUSEUM, CONSERVATION PLAN

Rhiannon Hughes (MA) and Alison Aynesworth (MA)



Hertford Museum houses a diverse range of artefacts

As part of the Centenary Development Project, the trustees of Hertford Museum have instigated an ambitious plan to update and improve the environmental conditions in which the museum's 50,000 artefacts are stored and displayed.

Hirst Conservation worked with PMT (Ely) to examine the storerooms and galleries, and make recommendations for improvements, taking into consideration the diverse preservation requirements of the materials contained in the collection, which ranged from glass and metal objects, to feather, paper and leather.

Around 15% of Hertford Museum's collection is to be displayed as part of the Centenary Development Project.

To give an idea of the conservation work that will be required to prepare the collection, and how long this work might take, a brief condition report, including conservation and handling recommendations, was made for a small number of objects representative of those going on display.



The scale of the work required to fulfil the trustee's mandate for Hertford Museum can now be more fully appreciated.