

*Gilian M. Lewis*

HERITAGE & MUSEUMS CONSULTANT

PETERBOROUGH CATHEDRAL NAVE CEILING -  
EMERGENCY PHASE 1997

*Draft*  
*Nov. 96.*

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- 1 SCAFFOLDING Must be installed very carefully - ensuring that no one and nothing brushes or touches the ceiling accidentally at any stage; also that no vibration nor air movement occurs near the surface. There will be no point in scaffolding if the paint drops off before the conservators can get to it!
  - 2 RECORDING Before treatment commences, present condition and location of problems to be recorded in line with established documentation program (measured drawing + colour photos + raking light photos + UV fluorescence photos).
  - 3 METHOD PROPOSAL FOR RESECURING PAINT to be agreed in advance with reasons for technique, materials given. Consideration to be given to:
    - reduction of GLUE DRIBBLES
    - reduction of DISTORTED & CURLING PAINT FLAKES
    - reattachment of LOOSENED or DETACHED PAINT from below IN SITU.
  - 4 LEAVING ALL IN SECURE STATE until such time as main phase of conservation reaches these areas.
  - 5 RECORDING and LOCATING all areas of treatment and intervention, including all materials and techniques used. Location on verso (upper surface of ceiling) to be marked also. This information to be part of the documentation of the nave ceiling preservation project, copyright to Dean and Chapter.
  - 6 LIGHTING Cold sources must be used during work and recording; light levels should be measured and agreed during treatment. Installation of lighting equipment to observe same rigorous care as for scaffolding at 1 above.
  - 7 HEALTH & SAFETY Never less than two persons at all times on scaffold. Maximum number of persons at any one time Every visit to be logged each day with names and times of visit(s). Vergers and project coordinator to be notified in advance of every visit. Vergers to be notified at end of each day's visit.
- Etc etc JL to add. Timescale? Penalty clauses?

10 VL  
from GML Nov. 96

DOCUMENTATION OPTIONS  
PETERBOROUGH CATHEDRAL NAVE CEILING

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- 1 Clarify coordinator's role and range of activity - is it he or a new documentor who collates, supervises recording, proposes additional work, or who else?
- 2 PIGMENT identification and distinguishing from earlier, later repaints; give precise location by photograph and written means. Involves distinguishing between earlier and later layers, photographing samples in various light sources, printing out spectra, confirming composition, and giving reasons for identification and dating. We need to know how much later paint we are dealing with and how much early remains. This for every colour on the ceiling and the side boards.
- 3 MEDIA Closely related is the need to distinguish the early media (if possible), to guide conservation work on these. To find means of easily distinguishing later media, taking account of omnipresent animal glue. Appropriate identification techniques to be proposed (HH has a few samples to check preliminary possibilities by FTIR this week).
- 4 TIMBER identification and dating of earliest boards and then later additions (dating probably not necessary for the latter). Print outs and comparisons of ring data, as well as precise location of samples again, using photo and written means.
- 5 CONSERVATION TREATMENT will coordinator ensure comprehensive and up-to-date recording at all stages? Using established range of examination techniques. Who will circulate this to anyone who needs to see it?
- 6 ICONOGRAPHICAL ASSESSMENT Comparison with other images of period etc etc.
- 7 ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING regular weekly checks liaising with vergers, architect, conservators. Quick response options if problems appear? Who? How?
- 8 Thus what is exact role for HH and how much time might be involved for her over the whole project?

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PETERBOROUGH CATHEDRAL NAVE CEILING -  
ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING

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The main purpose behind a longer monitoring period - especially during any works at ceiling level - is for information which will enable (one hopes) prevention of further decay. Environmental monitoring and control could prevent need for future costly repair and intervention - or at least keep it to a reasonable minimum.

Just as the past 5 years or so have seen greater heat production and efficiency in the cathedral than ever before, but without any comparative figures for climate in the preceding decades, so now we need to have a picture over the next decade really to assess long-term effects on the fabric and ceiling in particular.

During close work and inspection of the ceiling (as is currently envisaged) the time is ideal to monitor and assess conditions closely, with the project team, and thus to know prevailing internal conditions alongside external climate as well as special events in the cathedral.

Any marked further distortion or other change to paint or wood may then be related to environmental effects. Without continuous checking/monitoring, we shall not know.

This is a first line of defence, a non-interventive way of checking out threats. It can enable preventive measures to be taken to protect the ceiling and enables moments of risk to be identified.

In any major museum (and increasingly in historic buildings and collections) environmental monitoring and control is one of the basic activities for the care of collections. In a sense the painted ceiling is a major item within the fabric of the cathedral and has to be similarly nurtured in its old age and for its unique status.

During the forthcoming conservation work environmental checks should be maintained, and the results looked at weekly by the environmental adviser and the conservation adviser, as well as the conservator(s) and the architect. The vergers can easily be given a basic

understanding of readouts to enable them to identify stable from unstable/ potentially dangerous conditions. Where possible an "events" sheet could be kept for comparison. Control over heat and humidification, especially during winter extremes, needs to be maintained within the rigidity of the present heating system.

Ken Waterman and Barry Knight at EH have been asked to suggest appropriate monitoring and assessment systems for this situation, so that it can be costed into the work (we are probably looking at Meaco-type telemetry loggers, etc). At such an important point in the history of the ceiling not to undertake this ongoing assessment could well be judged as a serious omission by our successors.

*WJm*  
Nov 96.

*Julian M. Lewis*

HERITAGE & MUSEUMS CONSULTANT

FAX TO JULIAN LIMENTANI

11 December 1996

*Julian -*

PETERBOROUGH CATHEDRAL NAVE CEILING

The draft roles of preservation project team members are very useful. I have a couple of comments as follows:

2 Consultant conservator Additional para.  
They will advise the D&C through the Architect on the short and long term physical welfare and care of the ceiling, including environmental aspects.

3 Documentation coordinator At 3.2 add : ", with a view to possible publication at the end of the project."

At 3.4 delete "situation"; substitute "state" of the ceiling.

Additional 3.7 To ensure regular receipt and assessment of the weekly/monthly environmental records, plus liaison with architect and cathedral staff over responses to any changes in climate.

Present 3.7 thus becomes 3.8

You might include an extra para in 1 Architect specifically ensuring that environmental monitoring and control systems are put in place for the duration of the project as soon as possible (in the light of the European bid).

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Regarding the RTD project bid, is any timescale imposed? Will it tie the cathedral into completing the project within a certain funding period? If so, we would need to assess whether such targets could be met, or indeed whether this would be in the best interests of the long term welfare of the ceiling. If it is open ended, then no problem, except to allow for inflation over the coming years.

These are initial comments as I am rushing off to an MGC meeting. Happy to look at the draft page of the initial bid, if that is helpful.

*Yours,  
Julian*