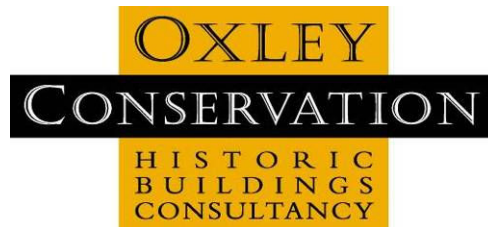
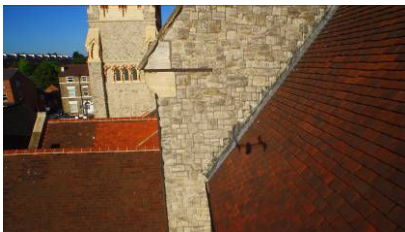


HIGH LEVEL INSPECTION & CONDITION SURVEY

THE CHURCH OF THE SACRED HEART WATLINGTON STREET READING, BERKSHIRE

JULY 2015



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1. THE REPORT

1.1 The subject church

Church of the Sacred Heart
Watlington Street
Reading
Berkshire

1.2 The report

The aim of this report is to update previous reports, dated September 2007, October 2008 and June 2009, to reflect the extensive work carried out to the west gable of the nave, the north and south transepts, the spire and the tower and to highlight the urgent works that remain.

The remaining urgent works were assessed by carrying out a High Level Inspection Survey to the eastern end of the church, primarily the chancel and the east gable of the nave, utilising a Remotely Piloted Aircraft [RPA].

The High Level Inspection survey is a non-destructive survey; digital images taken by a camera attached to the RPA are downloaded and reviewed on a computer for the purpose of this report.

The report is mainly based on the observations made from ground level during the site visit and upon a review of the digital images taken from the RPA.

The RPA and the digital images taken from the RPA were provided by vision2video.

A full condition or structural survey of the building has not been made.

1.4 Dates of inspection

The High Level Inspection Survey was carried out the 10th of July 2015. The weather during the inspection was clear and sunny.

1.5 Previous reports

The condition report issued in 2007 identified urgent repairs, most of which were addressed in the following three phases of work:

1. West gable of the nave, north stair turret and the north transept [2009-2010]
2. Spire [2011-2012]
3. Tower and south transept [2012-2013]

The outstanding works from the 2007, 2008 and 2009 reports include:

1. Repairs to the east gables of the nave and the chancel.
2. The overhaul of the rainwater goods.

In 2007 it was recommended that the repairs to the east gables and rainwater goods be implemented within three-four years.

The 2007 report had concerns over the longevity of the roof coverings and recommended further investigation to determine the condition and constructional detailing. Repairs carried out subsequently to the 2007 report have revealed inherent defects and poor detailing to the roofs, the most urgent of which, the upgrading of the abutments, can be addressed within the repair of the gables.

2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Site constraints and the proximity of the surrounding buildings, in particular the terraced houses to the east on St John's Street, make it extremely difficult to view the east gables.

The use of an RPA overcame the access constraints so that a worthwhile inspection of the east gables could be made; some of the findings from this high level inspection are illustrated on Photo Sheet No's 1 & 2.

The findings show that the condition of the east gables is very similar to the west gable of the nave before it was repaired in 2009-10 [Photo Sheet No. 3].

The weathering of the copings, weathered bedding mortar and abutment detailing, combined with the gables having being repaired using cement mortar, illustrate that there is still a significant backlog of repair that was classified in 2007 as being necessary within three to four years.

The true condition of the church fabric was revealed during the repairs carried out in 2009-10 [Photo Sheet No. 3], where the stone walling was found to be loose and in need of partial rebuilding, extensive repair and consolidation. The complete replacement of the copings was found necessary, as they were beyond practicable repair where confidence could be placed in the long-term performance of the copings; for this reason the copings were replaced.

Although the tiled coverings to the pitched slopes are generally intact they do have a limited life, with evidence of movement noted to the chancel roof [north slope], which may be attributable to movement to the gable and/or decay of rafters resting on the wall heads and/or the decay of the purlins embedded in the gable wall.

The poor detailing and deteriorating condition of the abutments, between the gable and the roof coverings, increases the risk of water penetration and associated problems of decay; as was revealed in the 2009-10 repairs.

The nave roof would benefit from a thorough overall. However, it is envisaged, at this stage, that the nave roof cannot be fully recovered, as the scale of this work is most probably cost prohibitive. For this reason it is strongly recommended that the overhaul of the nave roof be programmed to be carried out within the next 5 - 10 years. In the interim it is most probable that some ongoing repair and maintenance will need to be implemented on an ongoing basis to keep the roof in a sound and watertight condition.

Within future repair works both practical and cost efficiencies could be achieved if the chancel coverings were stripped, structural restraint and stone and abutment repairs implemented and the roof recovered [taking the opportunity to install improved insulation].

Based on the inspection made from ground level and the images taken from the RPA, together with the experiences gained during the previous repair works, it is recommended that the following works be prioritised to be carried out **within** the next two years to both the nave and chancel gables:

- Replacement of coping stones
- Improvement of the abutment detailing, with the provision of soakers
- Structural restraint to the gable walls, in particular to the chancel; the structural work would provide the opportunity for practical and cost effective recovering of the tiled roof coverings to the chancel roof
- The repair/replacement of decayed timbers revealed when roof coverings are stripped
- The overhaul and decoration of the rainwater goods
- Repair and repointing of the facing stonework to both gables

If the problems are not addressed within the next two years the risk of serious problems of water penetration and structural problems will be significantly increased. The recommendations of the 2007 report are, at least, four years overdue and are in increasing need of urgent attention.

Oxley Conservation
July 2015

It is strongly recommended that a programme of repair be devised that positively addresses the remaining backlog of repair at the church. The extensive programmes of repair implemented between 2009-2013 have made significant 'in-roads' into the backlog of repair that were putting the preservation of the church at serious risk.

If the funds are available the recommendations previously made in 2007 and 2008 need to be implemented to remove the remaining backlog of repair, or at least to address most of the high level works, and to put the church into a condition where it can be cared for with routine repair and maintenance for the foreseeable future.

Extract: October 2008 Oxley Conservation Report

Report on Further Investigations

The church of the Sacred Heart

Watlington Street, Reading, Berkshire

East gables: Devise a practicable and cost efficient schedule of works to the east gables so that repairs works can be implemented within the next three to four years. In the interim monitor for signs of water penetration. The programme and timing of the works to be brought forward if problems are experienced that cannot be resolved, or at least temporarily halted, with holding repairs. The repairs to include:

- 3.1.1 The repair, replacement and the provision of improved detailing to the rainwater goods.
- 3.1.2 Lifting, repairing and/or replacement of copings.
- 3.1.3 The investigation and repair of timbers.
- 3.1.4 The provision of new abutments, either tiled mortar fillets with soakers or lead flashings and soakers.

4 LIMITATIONS

The inspection was carried out in accordance with the Conditions of Engagement. It is a strict condition of the agreement that the work undertaken is on behalf of the named client only and their professional advisors and that the Report shall not be shown to any other person(s) without the written consent of Oxley Conservation.

All statements and expressions of opinion contained in the Report are provided on the strict understanding that they are for the benefit of the named client(s) and their professional advisors only. Oxley Conservation accepts no liability in contract or tort to any person other than the client.

I trust that this Report provides sufficient information to assist in understanding the condition of the high level building fabric to the eastern end of the church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

If you require any further information or assistance with regard developing this Report please do not hesitate to contact me.

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RICS Accredited in Building Conservation

29th July 2015