

Method Statement for Ornamental Cornice Repair

Project Title: Church Ornamental Cornice Repair

Location: St Mary's Church, 12 Castle St, Reading RG1 7RD

Date: 02.01.2026

1. Scope of Works

The works include the careful repair, conservation, and reinstatement of the existing ornamental plaster cornice in the church. The cornice was partially removed to facilitate crack repairs on the underlying wooden beam that is covered by both lime plaster and ornamental cornice. This method statement provides an outline for repairing the cornice and addressing any potential damage to enrichments, should further work on the wooden beam necessitate additional intervention.

2. Materials

- **Lime Plaster / Lime Putty Fine Stuff** (compatible with original plaster)
- **Fine Lime Repair Mortar** (for detailed repairs)
- **Stainless Steel Screws and Washers** (for discreet mechanical fixing, if required)
- **Casting Plaster / Lime Plaster Mix** (for detailed ornamental repairs)
- **Moulding Tools** (for accurate replication of profiles)
- **Soft Brushes, Sponges, and Cleaning Materials**
- Clean water and traditional tools

3. Condition and Site Assessment

- **Current Situation:**
 - Part of the ornamental cornice has already been taken down to allow access to the underlying wooden beam.
 - The wooden beam requires crack repairs, which are currently exposed, and the cornice is temporarily removed to facilitate this work.
 - Some enrichments remain in place but may require recasting if additional work on the wooden beam leads to further adjustments to the cornice.
- **Potential for Future Work:**
 - If more significant work is required on the wooden beam (e.g., replacement or major repairs), the cornice enrichments may need to be removed, recast, and replaced if damaged during the process.
 - At this stage, no further damage to the enrichments is anticipated, but the method statement includes provisions in case this situation arises.

4. Preparation of the Work Area

1. **Access:**
 - Scaffolding or other suitable access equipment will be used to provide safe access to the ceiling and cornice.
 - All access points will be checked and stabilized in line with safety regulations.
2. **Protection:**

- Floor surfaces and adjacent areas will be covered with dust sheets to protect them from plaster dust and debris.
 - Any delicate or movable objects will be carefully removed or protected from damage.
3. **Cleaning and Inspection:**
- The remaining cornice and enrichments will be gently cleaned to remove surface dust, dirt, or loose debris.
 - Inspection will take place to assess the condition of the cornice, underlying timber, and plaster background.

5. Repair Methodology – Ornamental Cornice

5.1 Stabilisation and Initial Preparations

- Begin by **carefully stabilising any existing loose cornice sections** using stainless steel screws and washers, if required, to ensure that the remaining cornice is safely secured during the repair process.
- Areas of crack damage to the wooden beam will be treated in accordance with the planned structural repairs, taking care not to disturb the surrounding cornice unnecessarily.

5.2 Reopening of Damaged Cornice Sections

- If the wooden beam repair process leads to further complications or further work on the wooden beam is needed, the cornice may need to be temporarily removed, and additional steps will be taken to **recast or replace any damaged enrichments**.

5.3 Recasting and Replacement of Damaged Enrichments

- If any enrichments are found to be damaged during the course of work, they will be removed with care to prevent damage to the original profiles.
- The removed enrichments will be **cleaned, moulded, and taken to the workshop for recasting** if necessary. New enrichments will be made using compatible materials and techniques.
- If enrichments need to be recast, **silicone moulds** will be produced to ensure a perfect match with the existing decorative profiles.

5.4 Inspection of Laths and Timber

- Once the cornice has been fully opened and inspected, the condition of the **laths and timber structure** beneath the plaster will be evaluated.
- Any deterioration of the timber will be assessed, and appropriate measures will be taken, which may include **repairing or replacing damaged laths** using traditional methods and materials to ensure a stable background for the plaster.

5.5 Repairing and Running the Cornice

- After stabilising the timber and laths, a **running mould** will be prepared using the existing cornice profile.
- The **pricking-up coat** will be applied to the prepared surfaces,

- The second coat and top coat of lime plaster will be applied, carefully **running the cornice** profile in situ using the prepared running mould.
- Enrichments will be **reinstalled** carefully once the plaster has set sufficiently. These will be either the original pieces or recast replacements, depending on their condition.

5.6 Final Finishing and Making Good

- Once the cornice profile is run, any **small incisions or fixing points** will be filled with fine lime plaster.
- The surface will be smoothed and finished to match the existing cornice, ensuring a seamless and cohesive repair.
- **Curing** of the new plaster will be done naturally, with no artificial drying methods, to ensure the lime plaster sets properly.

6. Health and Safety

- **PPE:** All workers will be required to wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), including gloves, dust masks, safety goggles, and sturdy footwear.
- **Lifting and Access:** All work at height will be carried out using properly secured scaffolding. Safe lifting techniques will be employed when handling any heavy materials or cornice sections.
- **Dust Control:** Adequate ventilation will be ensured, and dust suppression methods (e.g., misting or using dust sheets) will be employed to control plaster dust.

7. Quality Control

- The completed works will be subject to quality inspection to ensure:
 - The repaired cornice matches the existing profiles and decorative features.
 - All new materials are compatible with the original fabric.
 - The cornice is stable and securely fixed.
 - Any recast enrichments match the original designs and details.

8. Completion

- On completion of the repairs, the site will be thoroughly inspected for any signs of defects or unfinished work.
- The church will be cleaned and restored to its original condition, with all materials and finishes treated in a way that preserves the historical integrity of the structure.
- The project will be signed off, and any remaining work or adjustments will be noted for future attention.

Produced by:
 Michal Wolf
 Fully qualified tradesmen.
 07894436204
<http://allthingslime.co.uk/>

NVQ 3 in Heritage Solid Plastering
 Educator on three different plastering courses (traditional, ornamental, and pargeting) for the SPAB in the NT Training Hub in Coleshill.
 Member (freeman) of the Worshipful Company of Playsteries. - Master Plaster.