



ALEX WENHAM LTD

118 Kennington Rd
Oxford
OX1 5PE

11th Jan 2021

Heritage Statement

for

**Randolph Hotel
Vehicle Entrance
Stone cleaning and repairs**

Ref 2020 20/03207/LBC

**Prepared by
Alex Wenham**



ALEX WENHAM LTD

Purpose

This Heritage Statement has been prepared in connection with the proposed stone cleaning and repairs to the vehicle entrance archway of the Randolph Hotel, Beaumont St, Oxford. The proposed cleaning addresses the dirty condition of the stonework generally, and allows for sensitive colour matching of the proposed stone indents and mortar repairs. This statement considers the heritage significance of the elements concerned and the building generally, so that the impact of the proposed repairs can be assessed.

The Author

Alex Wenham is a stone carver based in Oxford of over twenty years' experience working in the heritage stone conservation sector, with excellent experience and working knowledge of the UK's stone architecture generally, and Oxford's built heritage in particular.

The Building

The Randolph Hotel was built in 1864-66 to the design of William Wilkinson, an architect also responsible for many houses in north Oxford.

There was much debate concerning the original design of the hotel. John Ruskin, along with many original stakeholders in the project, favoured Gothic Revival. However the City Council favoured a classical format, largely for the sake of harmony with its immediate surroundings (the Ashmolean Museum opposite is Italianate Ionic, and the rest of Beaumont St is early 19th Century Regency). Consequently a subdued gothic format was adopted by way of compromise.

The original Beaumont St elevation of the hotel was a symmetrical construction comprising five bays with the entrance archway positioned centrally, as shown in this image from 1915:



source: Historic England archive

ARCHITECTURAL STONE CARVING · RESTORATION · STATUARY · LETTER CUTTING

www.alexwenham.co.uk · 07703 260672 · alex@alexwenham.co.uk



ALEX WENHAM LTD

In 1952, a significant extension westwards doubled the length of the hotel's elevation along Beaumont St. The extension was designed by the architect J. Hopgood. Though simpler in layout than the original hotel; thematically it is broadly consistent with the design of the original elevations, both in terms of the materials used (brick with Bath limestone quoins, jambs and detail) and stylistically with regard to many of the detail elements (mouldings, carved detail, roof pitch, windows etc). The overall effect of the extension is harmonious with the original, and most locals (not to mention guests at the hotel) are unaware that the construction took place in two phases almost a century apart.

One significant innovation of the extension was that it included a vehicle entrance to an off-street car-park, as shown in this photograph:



Source: undated postcard

And in this publicity image from 1961, placing strong marketing emphasis on the new parking potential offered by the hotel ('large garage adjoining'):

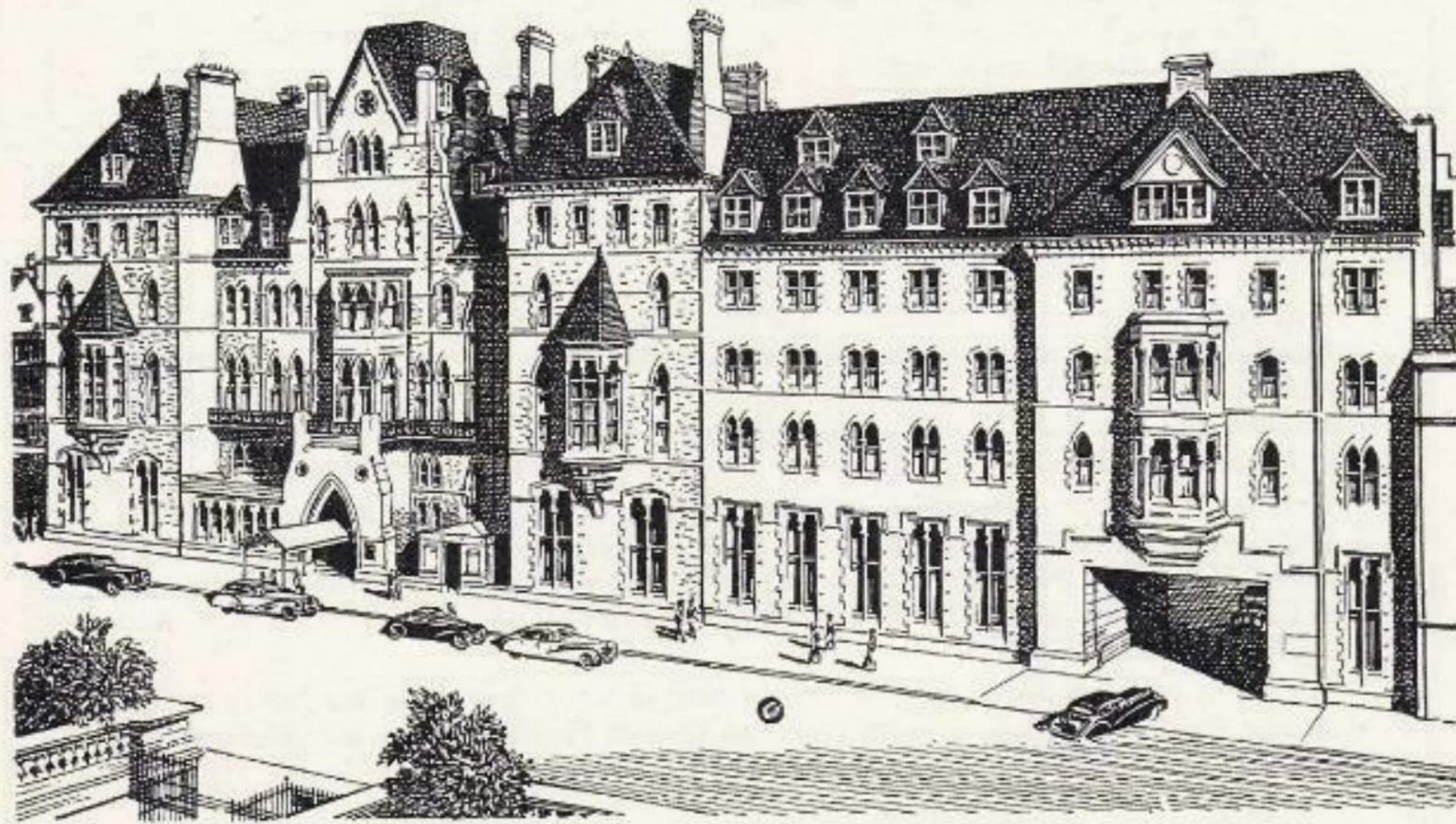
ARCHITECTURAL STONE CARVING · RESTORATION · STATUARY · LETTER CUTTING

www.alexwenham.co.uk · 07703 260672 · alex@alexwenham.co.uk

AW

ALEX WENHAM LTD

RANDOLPH HOTEL



In the heart of the University City at the corner of Beaumont Street, opposite the Martyrs' Memorial, is the Randolph Hotel, familiar to many generations of Oxford men and women.



Telephone 47481-5

Large Garage Adjoining

A Trusthouse Hotel _____

53

Source: 1961 publicity image

ARCHITECTURAL STONE CARVING · RESTORATION · STATUARY · LETTER CUTTING

www.alexwenham.co.uk · 07703 260672 · alex@alexwenham.co.uk



ALEX WENHAM LTD

Proposed Work

The vehicle entrance has sustained damage from the repeated impact to the archway of tall vehicles, notably delivery vehicles. Areas concerned are:

- the volutes of the carved capital to the E corner of the vehicle entrance (left hand side when viewed from the street)
- the vertical roll moulding to the E external jamb arris of the entrance (left hand side when viewed from the street)
- the roll moulding to the external soffit arris in the central area below the bay window
- scratch damage and low-level degradation to the arch soffit generally

The proposed intervention is to:

-Sensitively clean the stonework to this area using the Thermatech steam cleaner system on a gentle setting. This is not intended to be a clean to 'as new', but just to remove the worst of the dirt and generally improve the appearance. The cleaning will be carried out by a qualified, experienced practitioner, and will be done in a way that stops well short of damaging the stonework and brickwork in any way, and not leave evidential 'trails' of more and less cleaned areas. Examples of this technique used successfully on similar stone can be seen locally on the High St façade of All Soul's College, and on the rear elevation of the entrance gateway of Magdalen College (both projects that I have been involved in).

-Make good the damage to the stonework. This will be done using stone indent repairs to four areas: two on the damaged capital, two to the roll moulding as described above. The remainder of the damage will be repaired with mortar repairs, using colour-and-texture-matched lime mortar, prepared bespoke. Methodology for the indent repairs is set out below:

Indents:

Roll mouldings: cut out damaged area, introduce new limestone of similar nature and appearance (base bed Bath stone or similar), keeping new joints as tight as possible and ensuring that the bed orientation and any relevant existing joints are respected. Fix indents with resinned dowels and mortar joints as deemed appropriate by the practitioner. Trim roll moulding indent *in situ* to align with existing. Point all joints with colour-matched lime mortar

Carved capital:

The carved capital opposite the damaged one is identical in design, consequently the repairs can be carried out using the twin capital as a model, without any conjecture on the part of the carver. Methodology is as follows:

- Gently clean capital by hand or by Thermatech – NB not a clean to 'as new'
- model missing areas by building up missing volumes with clay/plasticine on one of the two symmetrical broken volute areas for approval by client – following model of twin capital opposite

ARCHITECTURAL STONE CARVING · RESTORATION · STATUARY · LETTER CUTTING

www.alexwenham.co.uk · 07703 260672 · alex@alexwenham.co.uk



ALEX WENHAM LTD

- copy approved model to replace missing stone areas on other side, carved limestone indent *in situ*, **preserving a maximum of original material**, carved indent fixed securely with resin and fibreglass dowel
- then copy first stone indent to carry out second symmetrical indent replacing clay volumes, similarly **preserving a maximum of original material**
- prepare colour-matched lime mortar (matched to new stone)
- carry out lime mortar repairs to smaller areas of low-level damage where stone indents would not be practical, point joints to indents, re-point any failed joints to capital
- shelter coat of colour-matched limewash to whole capital to homogenise appearance, if deemed appropriate by carver.

Heritage Values

The heritage assets that will be affected by the proposed intervention is the existing stonework of the vehicle entrance archway, particularly the (significantly damaged) carved capital.

The heritage value of these assets, and the 1952 hotel extension generally, with regard to the proposed intervention derives from the fact that the stonework proposed for repair is original fabric. Therefore, specifically with regard to the damaged stonework concerned with this proposal, it contributes to the high evidential value of the original construction ('Evidential value derives from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity': English Heritage 2008). Of particular interest is the material quality of the stonework, particularly the execution of the carved detail in the damaged capital proposed for indent repairs.

Impact to Heritage Assets

As a starting point for consideration it must be established that the heritage assets described above have already been significantly been harmed by damage from repeated impacts from vehicles, in terms of their evidential but also significantly in terms of their aesthetic value.

It is understood that the proposed introduction of indent repairs to the stonework will further impact the evidential value of the assets, in that it replaces original material with anachronistic modern replacement.

This effect can be mitigated to a large degree by:

- the understanding that any harm to evidential value of the areas in question has already occurred by the damage sustained, and
- ensuring that any further removal of original material surrounding the damaged areas (for the introduction of stone indents) is kept to a minimum, so that a **maximum of original material is preserved**, and by
- ensuring that the new stone introduced matches the existing as closely as possible, and by
- ensuring that all surface finishes to the new stone, and the calibre of the replacement carved detail reproduces the original as closely as possible.

ARCHITECTURAL STONE CARVING · RESTORATION · STATUARY · LETTER CUTTING

www.alexwenham.co.uk · 07703 260672 · alex@alexwenham.co.uk



ALEX WENHAM LTD

The aesthetic value of the archway is significantly compromised by the damage it has sustained. This heritage statement offers an opinion which weighs heavily in favour of making good all damage to the areas concerned, on the understanding that:

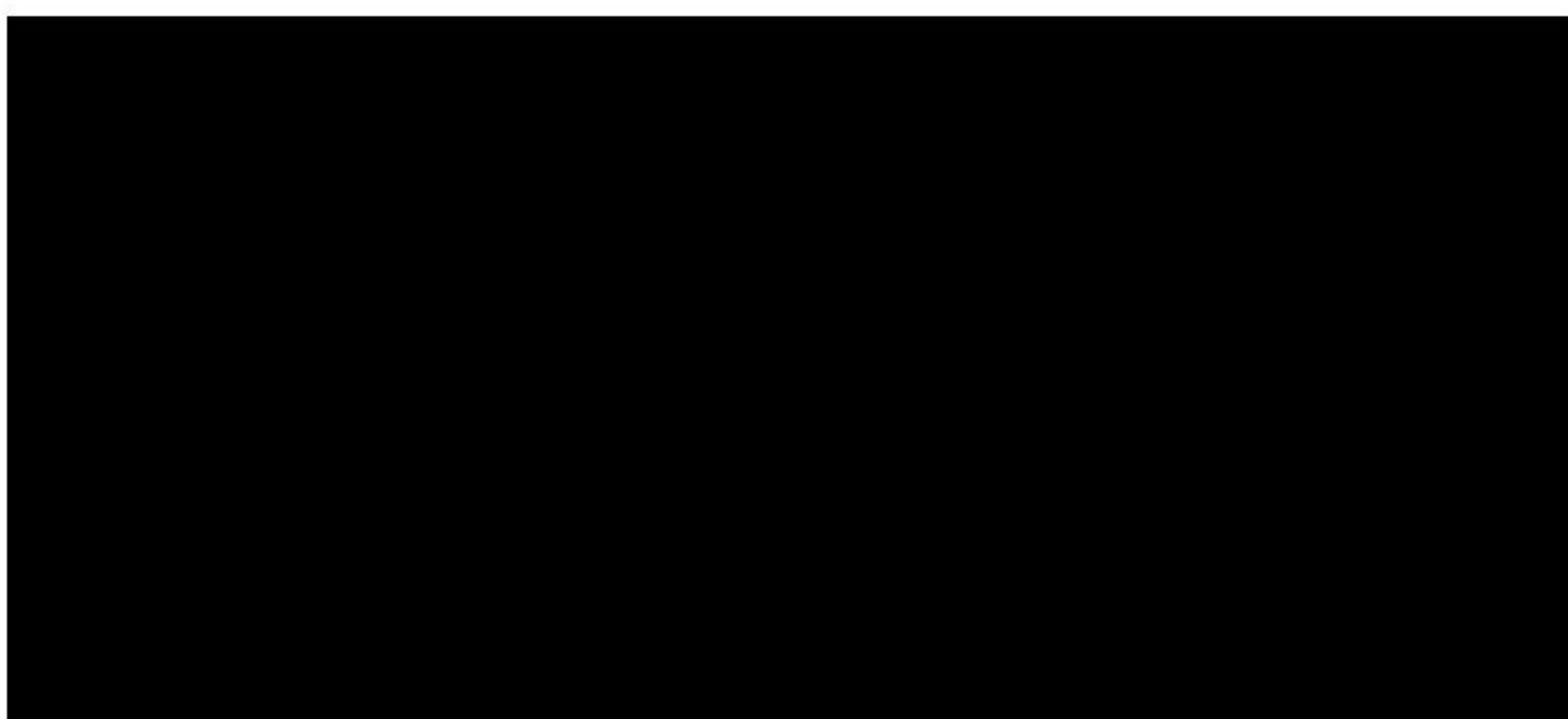
- a maximum of original material will be preserved, maintaining a maximum of evidential value, and that:
- beyond this, priority will be given to remedying the harm to the compromised aesthetic value, by making good all damage in as harmonious and invisible a way as possible.

Conclusion

It is hoped that this Heritage Statement addresses all the concerns raised in your letter of 21st December 2020 (ref 2020 20/03207/LBC), in that it:

- introduces the building and describes the proposed work
- identifies the heritage assets that will be affected
- sets out what is significant about those assets, showing an understanding of the importance of those assets
- explains how the proposed intervention impacts on those assets (and weighs that against the impact of not intervening)
- sets out how the proposed work has mitigated the impact of any harm resulting from it.

I offer this Heritage Statement along with my very best wishes for the coming year,



Alex Wenham
Oxford
11th January 2021

ARCHITECTURAL STONE CARVING · RESTORATION · STATUARY · LETTER CUTTING

www.alexwenham.co.uk · 07703 260672 · alex@alexwenham.co.uk