



ALEX WENHAM LTD

118 Kennington Rd
Oxford
OX1 5PE

18th Jan 2021

Heritage Statement

for

Magdalen College President's Lodge

Decayed shield label stops to front door hood mould

**Prepared by
Alex Wenham**



ALEX WENHAM LTD

Purpose

This Heritage Statement has been prepared in connection with the proposed replacement of the two labels stops in the form of shields to the hood mould of the front door of the President's Lodge, Magdalen College OX1 4AU. The statement addresses the severely decayed condition of these elements within the heritage context (significance) of the building and the wider college site, 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.

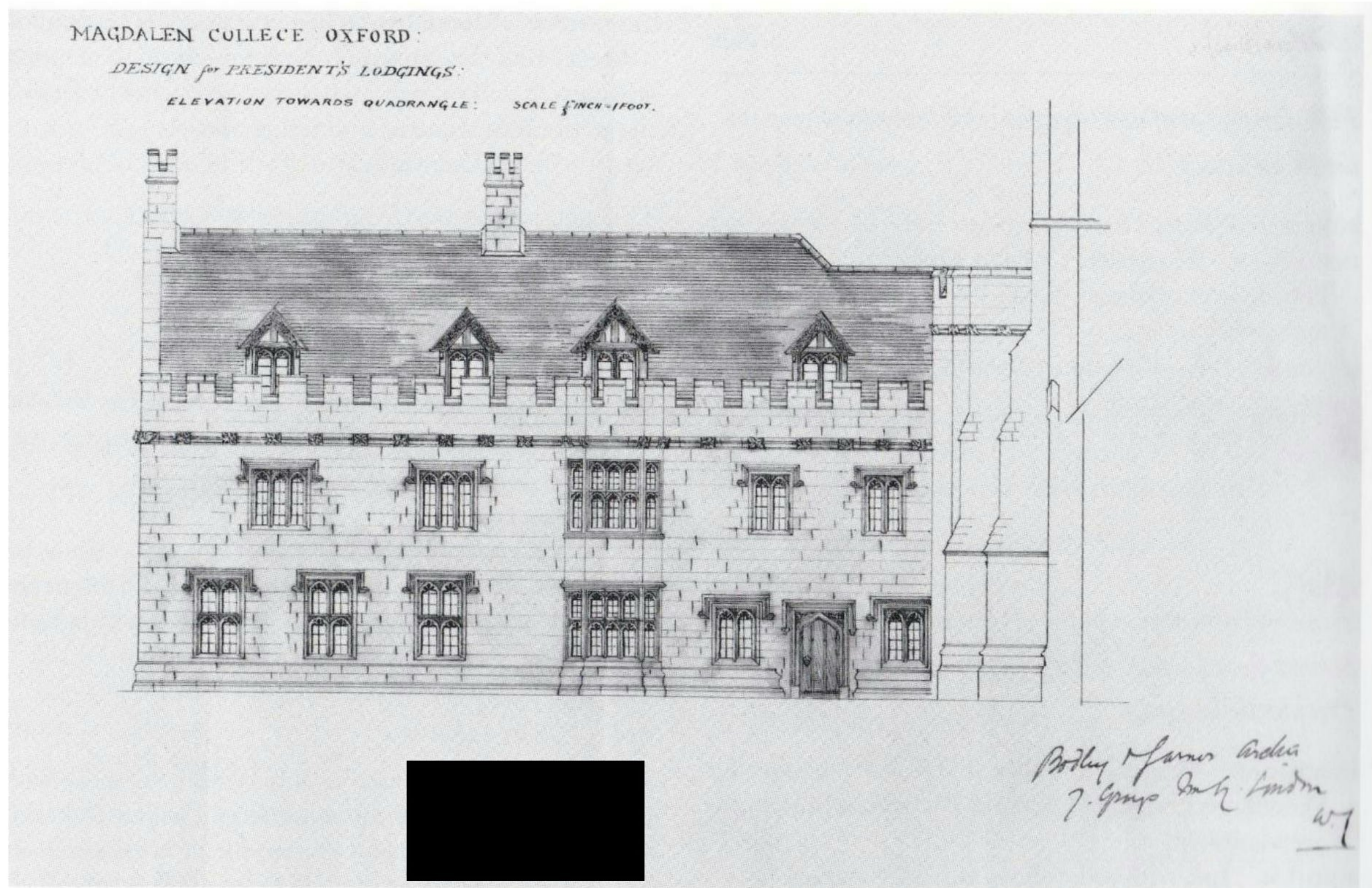
The Building

The 1880s saw this area of Magdalen College extensively remodelled, to the designs of Bodley and Garner. The shape and layout of St John's Quad was altered, the Old Grammar School buildings reduced and modified, St Swithun's Buildings (1880-84) and the new entrance gateway (1885) were constructed to their designs, and finally the President's Lodge (1886-88; also known as President's Lodging) was also reconstructed at this time, on broadly the same footprint as it had occupied before, to a subdued gothic design also by Bodley and Garner.

Several similar but nuanced designs for the President's Lodge exist in the Magdalen College archives, where the architects re-worked their plans over a series of visits to the College. Of these the proposal drawing below most closely corresponds to the building as it currently stands (only the crenelated parapet and the chimneys are substantially different:



ALEX WENHAM LTD



Above: proposal drawing for the President's Lodge by Bodley and Garner, in the Magdalen College archive. The inscription reads: 'Bodley & Garner Archts, 7 Grays Inn Sq London WC. It is countersigned by H.R. Franklin and dated 1886. Archive ref: MC:FA8/3/IAD/6



Present day quad elevation of the President's Lodging, substantially similar to the design above.

ARCHITECTURAL STONE CARVING · RESTORATION · STATUARY · LETTER CUTTING

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



ALEX WENHAM LTD

Material

The façade of the President's Lodge has the appearance of a fine-grained Bath stone such as Monks Park or Box Ground, but Arkell (1947) seems sure that it is either Taynton or Milton, and of these two the stone is probably Taynton – as was used elsewhere by Bodley and Garner in that decade in St John's Quad.

Whatever the stone is, two things can be said of it in the context of this building: firstly, that the ashlar and window/door dressings have performed very well over the last 130 years – palpably better, in fact, than that of the entrance gateway thought to be of the same material, and only built a couple of years earlier.

The second thing to be said is that all of the salient carved detail (string course grotesques etc) has fared badly, being in some places quite substantially decayed. This, the most compromised carved detail is the pair of shield label stops either side of the front door.

Label Stops description

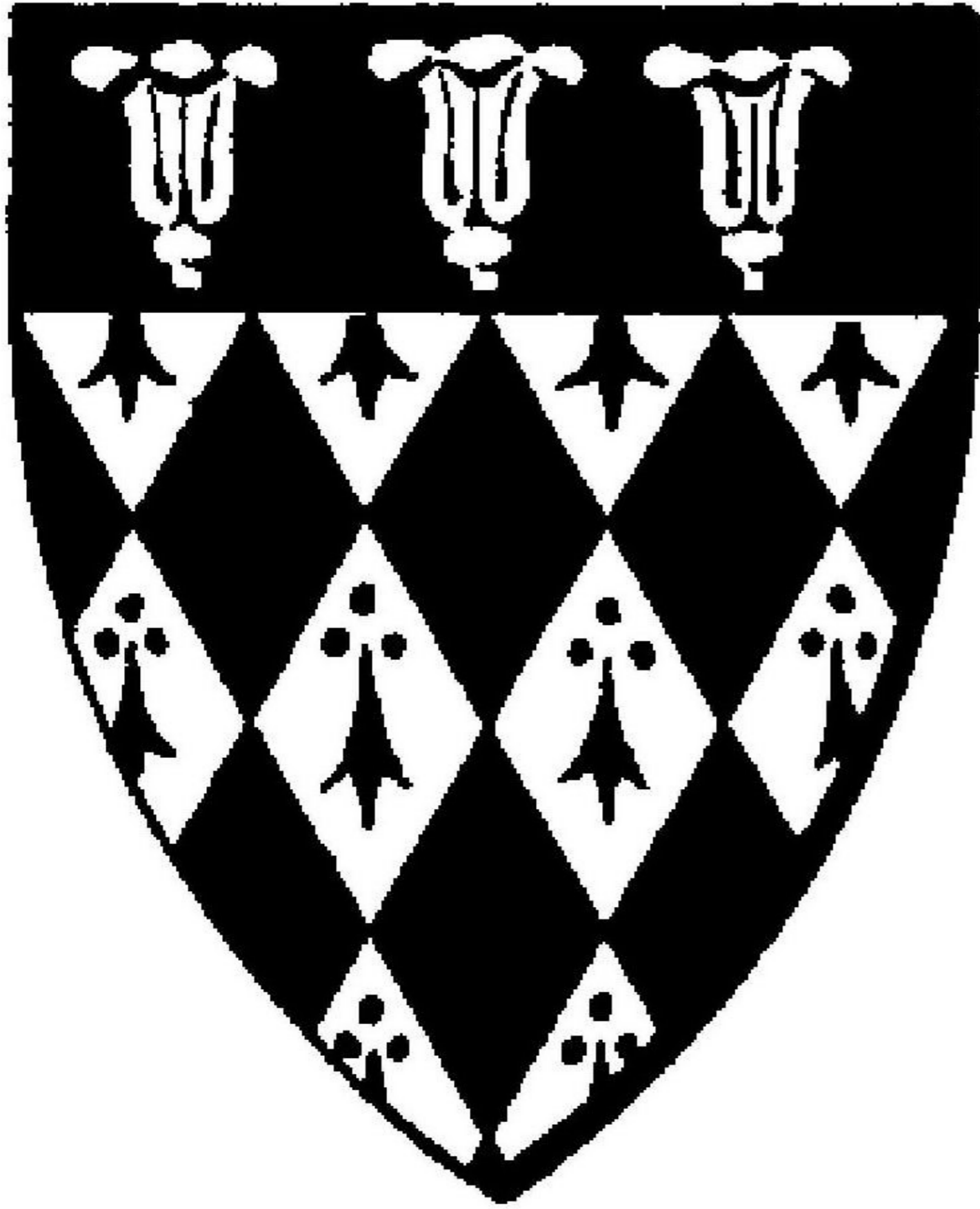


The label stops are both in the form of a heraldic shield, having a bowed belly, a five-pointed upper edge, scooped sides, and a cartouche-style lower edge with cut-away areas much favoured by Bodley and Garner or their stonemasons, to judge by their appearance elsewhere on this series of buildings.

The heraldic devices on the shields are the Magdalen College crest on the left (*lozenge ermine and sable, on a chief of the second three lilies argent*) and the arms of the Bishop of Winchester (*gules, two keys addorsed in bend the upper or the lower argent between them overlying the uppermost key a sword in bed sinister point upright of the third hilt and pommel or* (Debrett's Peerage).

ARCHITECTURAL STONE CARVING · RESTORATION · STATUARY · LETTER CUTTING

Magdalen College Crest:



Bishopric of Winchester:



The Magdalen College crest label stop on the L is within the range of canonical interpretations of the college arms as they appear variously around the college. However, the arms of the Bishop of Winchester (the college was founded in 1458 by William of Waynflete, Bishop of Winchester) are here represented inverted, with the tips of the keys and sword lowermost:





ALEX WENHAM LTD

Condition

The condition of the label stops is poor, and decay seems certain to accelerate.

The Bishop of Winchester shield has the following decay:

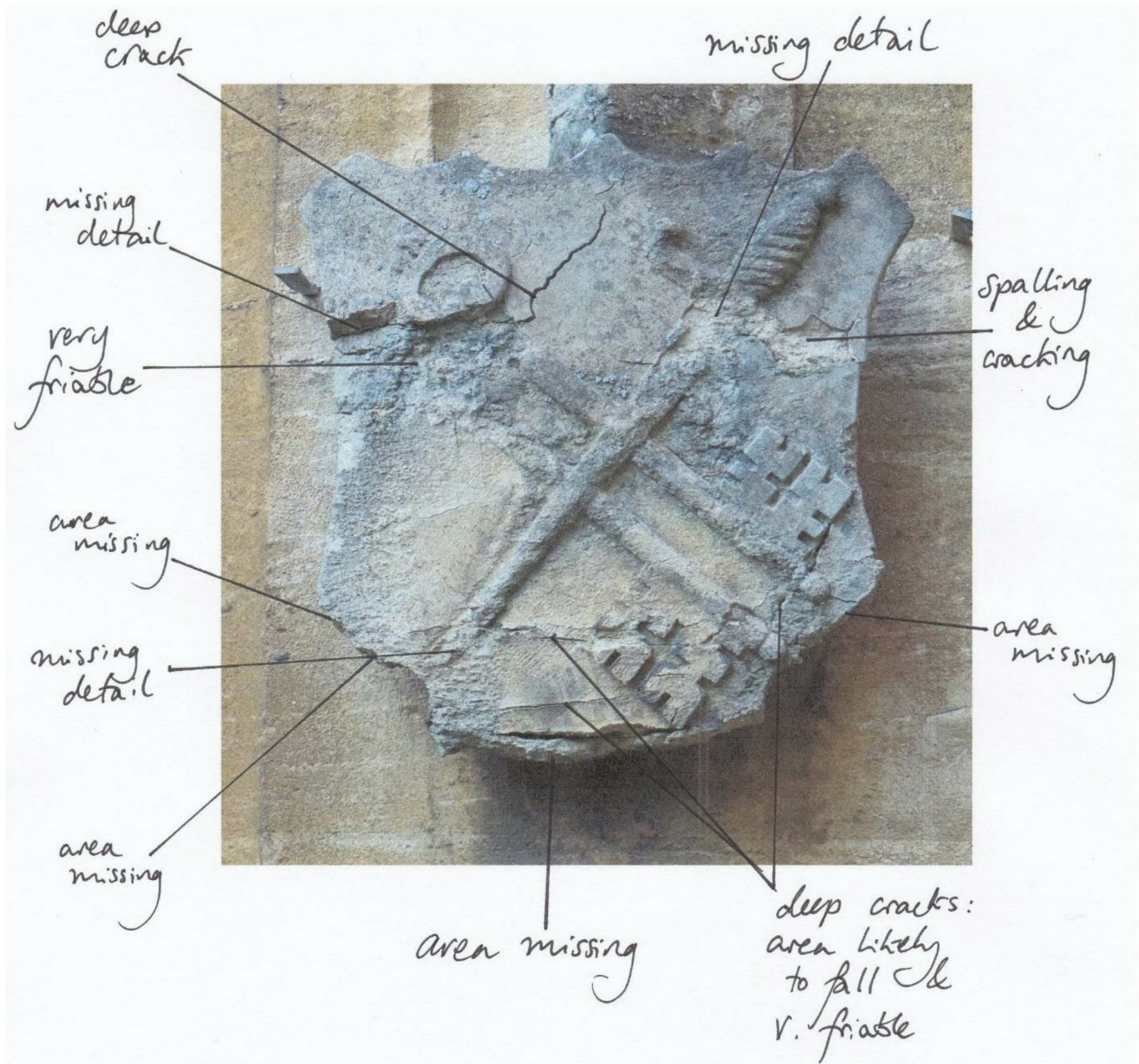
- bottom areas missing
- deep cracking to various areas
- missing detail to keys, sword
- loose and friable material not likely to last long
- surface spalling

The Magdalen College shield has the following decay:

- bottom areas missing
- cracking
- missing detail to ermine, lilies
- loose and friable material
- surface spalling

An annotated survey of the decay to each shield is reproduced below:

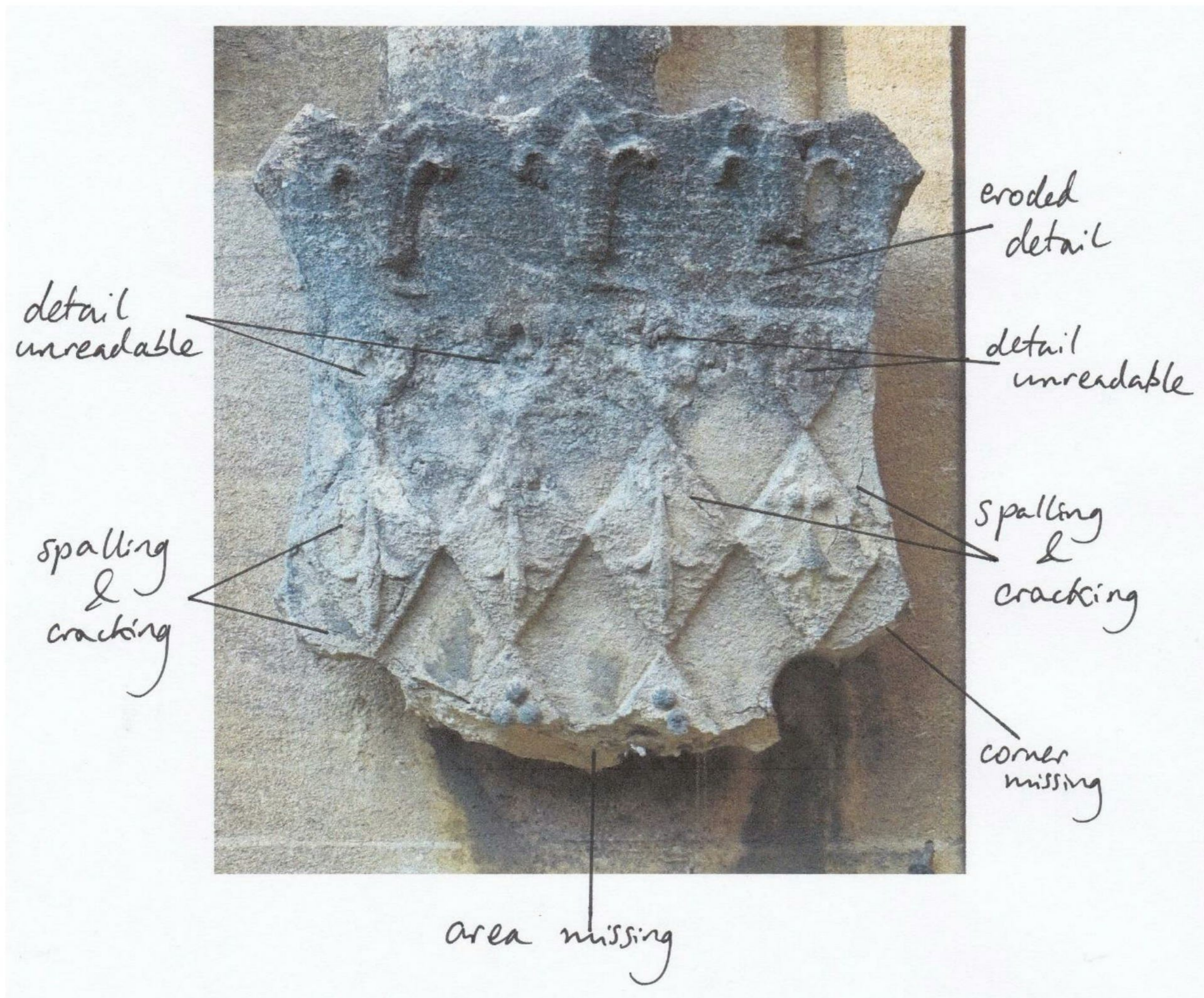
Bishop of Winchester shield:





ALEX WENHAM LTD

Magdalen College shield:



ARCHITECTURAL STONE CARVING · RESTORATION · STATUARY · LETTER CUTTING

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



ALEX WENHAM LTD

Intervention and methodology

The intervention proposed is a faithful like-for-like replacement of the two shields. The methodology for replacement is as follows:

- prepare plaster casts of existing shields as seen, adding pigment to casting plaster
- on poured casts, build up missing detail in untinted white plaster, allowing stakeholders to see what is original and what is conjecture
- approval of built-up plaster models by stakeholders
- faithful reproduction of plaster models in new stone (stone type to be a limestone of close colour and texture match to original and surrounding areas)
- carefully cut out decayed original shields
- install new shields, keeping new joints tight and hidden in undercut area behind the shield faces
- hidden fibreglass dowel and resin to secure new shields, gravity grout as deemed necessary by stonemason
- point all new joints with colour-matched bespoke lime-based mortar
- leave area clean and tidy

Heritage Values

The heritage asset that will be affected by the proposed intervention is the existing stonework of the shields.

The heritage value of these assets, and the façade generally with regard to the proposed intervention derives from the fact that the stonework proposed for replacement 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 shields 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 harmed by the decay they have suffered, in terms of their evidential but also significantly in terms of their aesthetic value.

Secondary to this it is to be understood that the decay is severe, and if left unchecked very likely to accelerate. Even if these shields were to be repaired using conservation techniques, this would be of limited value since the structural integrity of the shields has suffered, and it is very likely that in the coming years significant parts of these shields will fall away, resulting in a further loss of significant detail.

ARCHITECTURAL STONE CARVING · RESTORATION · STATUARY · LETTER CUTTING

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



ALEX WENHAM LTD

In this event, any future replacement once more critical detail has been lost, would inevitably be less faithful to the original carvings, on account of the original shapes being missing.

A separate concern is that this is a doorway in frequent use, and there is a material risk of harm to passing humans from falling stonework from the decaying shields.

Impact to heritage assets:

It is understood that the proposed replacement of 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 will continue apace.
- the understanding that leaving the decay to continue will mean that potential future replacements would be less faithful to the original
- 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** (tight joints, replacing only the shields and not the surrounding stonework), 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, and by
- ensuring that the form of the new carved shields faithfully reproduces the originals as closely as possible.

The aesthetic value of the doorway is significantly compromised by the damage these shields have sustained. This heritage statement offers an opinion which weighs in favour of making good the damage to the aesthetic value of the areas concerned, by their replacement; on the understanding that all possible mitigations to harm to the evidential value of the replacement of the original shields will be taken, by maintaining a maximum of original material, and by reproducing the originals as faithfully as possible in all aspects.



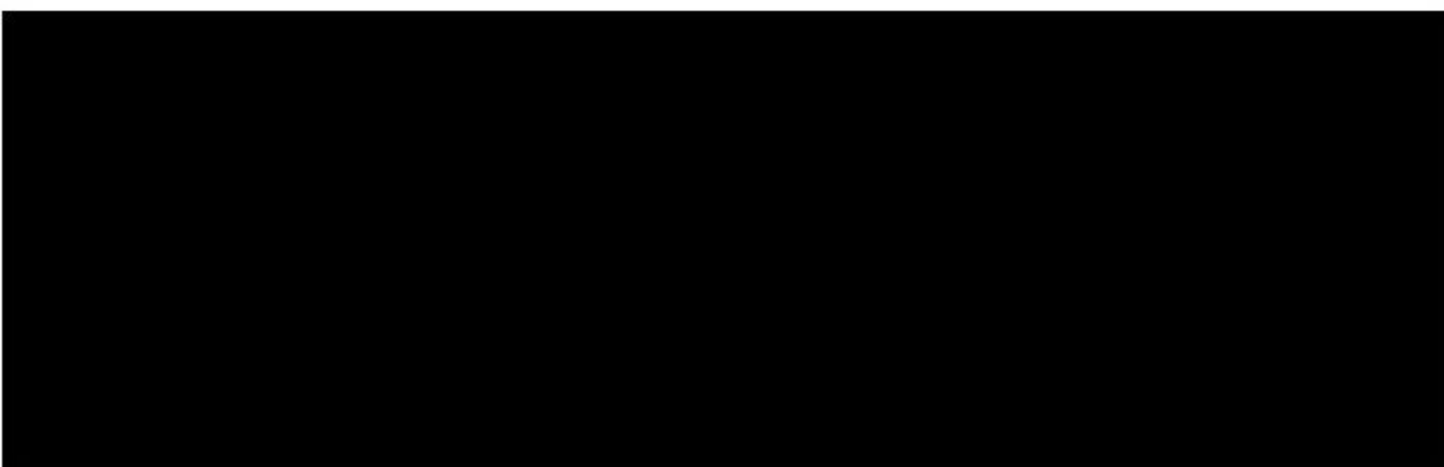
ALEX WENHAM LTD

Conclusion

It is hoped that this Heritage Statement addresses and justifies all necessary aspects of the proposed intervention, in that it:

- introduces the building and describes the proposed work
- identifies the compromised heritage assets, and how they will be affected by the proposed work, and how they will be affected by being left to further decay unchecked
- 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
18th January 2021