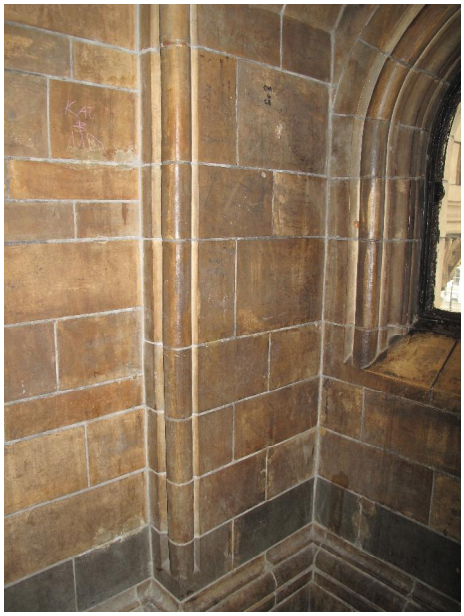
HOLDEN CONSERVATION LTD

Terracotta Walls
Natural History Museum, Central Hall, First Floor, South-End Balcony

Conservation Treatment Report

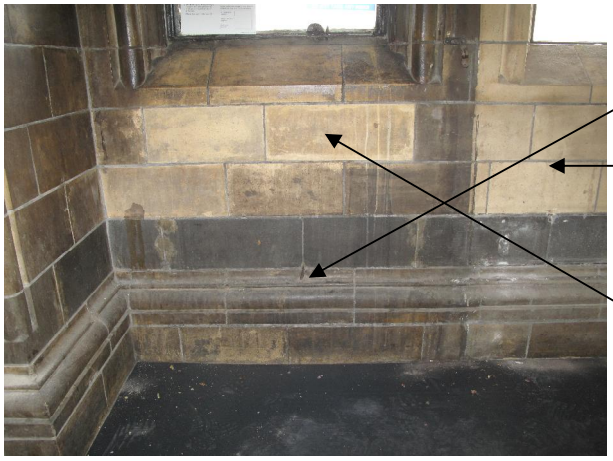
by
Holden Conservation Ltd.
6 Warple Mews
Warple Way
London
W3 0RF

May 2010



1

The terracotta walls before treatment.



2

The terracotta walls before treatment.

Previously cleaned terracotta, within the former office.

Samples of cleaned blocks from cleaning trials.



3

The terracotta walls before treatment.

Previously cleaned terracotta, within the former office.

Treatment

An even layer of Artimundi 2 was brushed onto the terracotta. The Artimundi was left overnight and then removed by hand the next day. The terracotta was then cleaned using bristle brushes, sponges and water.



4

Detail of terracotta before treatment.

Detail of terracotta after cleaning.

All the old cement fills, the wood and plastic plugs and iron fixings were removed with the use of a drill, hammer and chisels.

The older hooks within the terracotta walls were left in place.



5

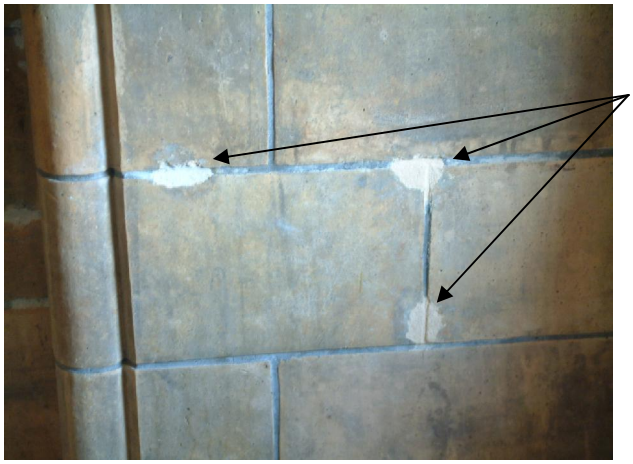
The metal and cement fixings have been removed from the terracotta.

All the holes were then back filled with a hydraulic lime mortar, made up of 3 parts sharp sand to 1 part St Astier hydraulic lime NHL 3.5.

A top layer of hydraulic lime mortar, to match the basic colour of the terracotta, was then applied to the repairs.

The mortar used was;
1 part – hydraulic lime NHL 3.5
1 part – building sand
1 part - Silver sand
1 part – Bath stone dust (sieved to 300µm)
¼ part – brick dust (sieved to 300µm)
¼ part – Slate stone dust

All the holes in the pointing were filled with a hydraulic lime mortar made up of the 2 parts silver sand, 1 part slate dust and 1 part St Astier hydraulic lime NHL 3.5.



6

Detail of repairs with the top layer of hydraulic lime mortar, before re-touching with acrylic paints.

The hydraulic lime repairs were re-touched to match the terracotta with acrylic paints.



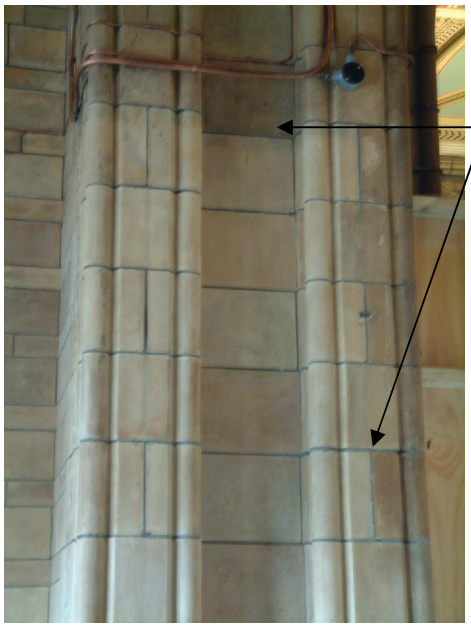
7

The terracotta joint line between the former office and the rest of the alcove, before cleaning.

Once the terracotta had been cleaned the joint line was reduced but not eliminated because of the previous over-cleaning of the terracotta within the office.

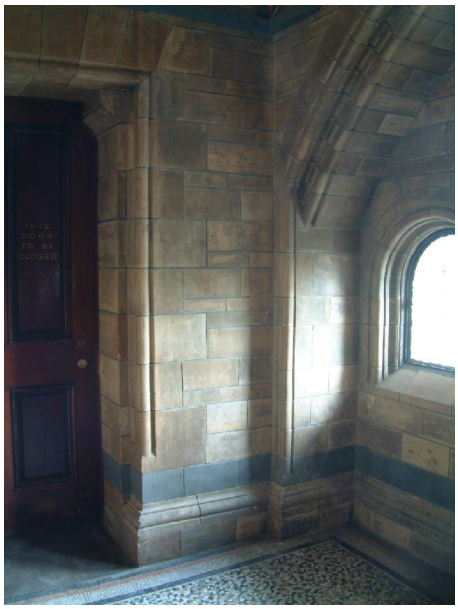
In order to reduce the visibility of the joint line of the former office and its fixings certain sections of the terracotta were re-touched with acrylic paints up to the nearest joint line to soften the distinction between the different levels of cleaning on the terracotta.

The areas to be re-touched were first sealed with a 2% solution of carboxymethycellulose in water. They were then re-touched with acrylic paints to colour match the terracotta within those joint lines.



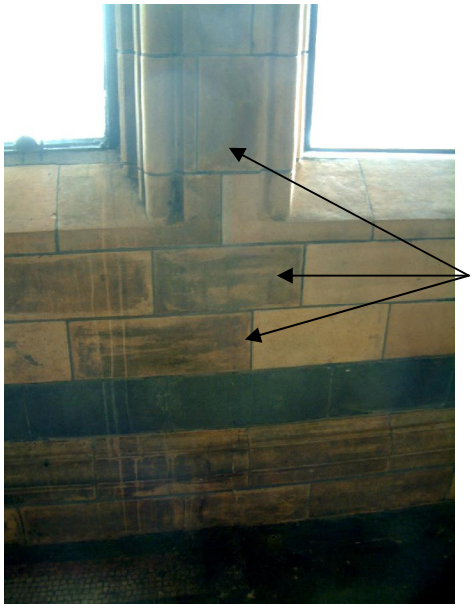
8

The terracotta joint line between the former office and the rest of the alcove, after cleaning and re-touching.



9

The terracotta walls after the cleaning and repairs were finished.



10

The terracotta walls after cleaning and repairs were finished.

Some of the blocks of terracotta have been re-touched to disguise the joint line between the former office and the rest of the alcove.