OLIVER ARCHITECTURE

STRATFORD TOWN HALL

LISTED BUILDING CONSENT APPLICATION FOR CONSERVATION OF SHAKESPEARE STATUE

HERITAGE STATEMENT

January 2022
Version v.2

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Heritage Statement accompanies a Listed Building Consent application for conservation of the Shakespeare statue on the Sheep Street façade of the Town Hall, 1 Sheep Street, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire CV37 6EF.

1.2 Following a condition survey in 2018, a programme of external fabric repairs was carried out to the Town Hall in 2021. This mostly comprised repairs to masonry and external redecoration, and a new lightning protection installation as well as the consolidation of the coat of arms in the pediment and the removal of soiling whilst conserving painted decoration to "God Save The King" on Chapel Street.

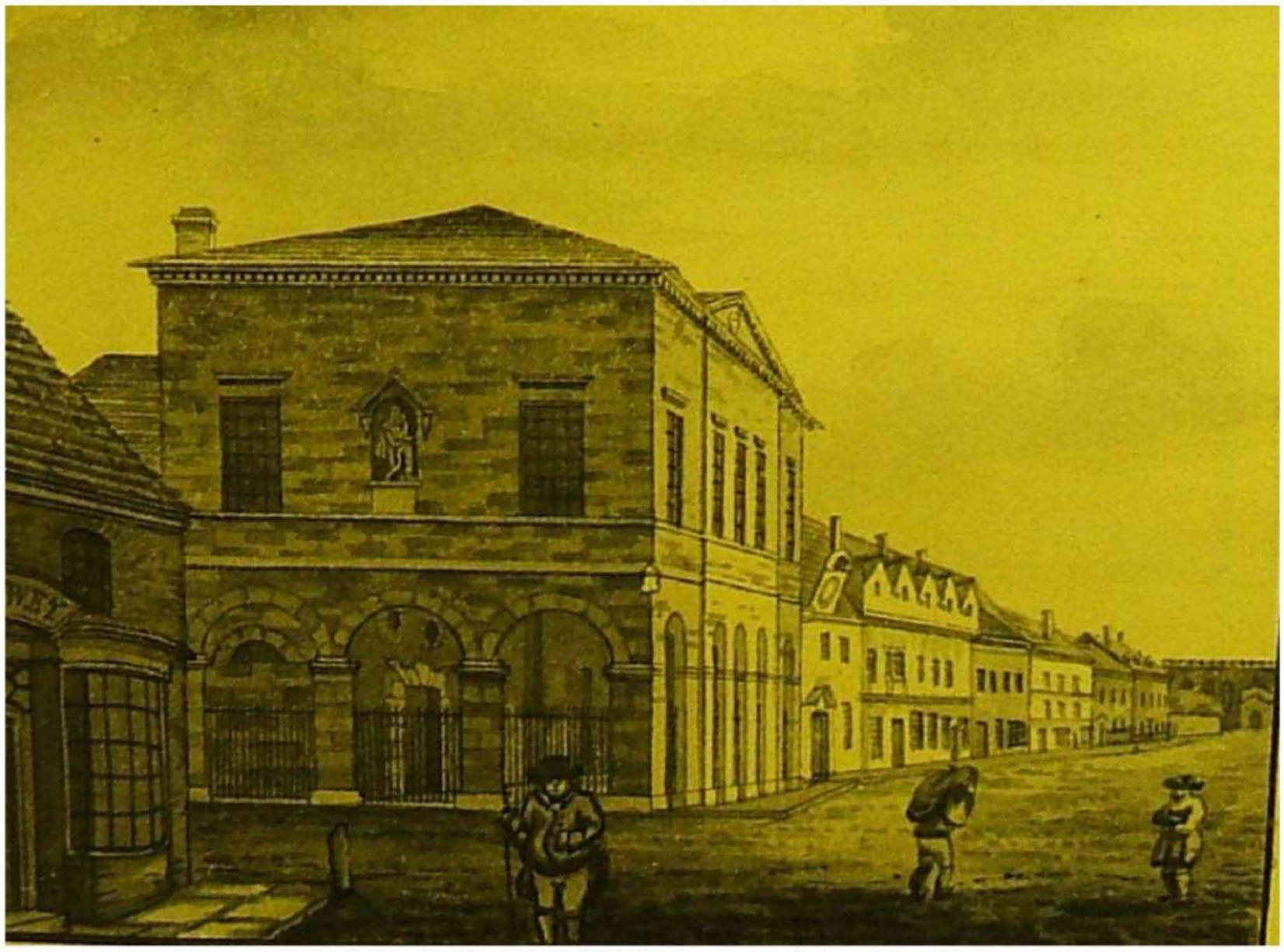
1.3 The conservation of the lead statue of William Shakespeare on the Sheep Street elevation formed part of the original application for listed building consent. Due to the pandemic, access for inspection via a cherry picker was severely delayed, but it was eventually possible for the conservator, Alexandra Carrington ACR, to make an inspection, and she reported serious concerns such as splits to the lead and advised that a specialist in lead statues was engaged. The Town Council have appointed Rupert Harris ACR, one of the country's leading conservators of metal sculpture, to report on the statue. Rupert immediately highlighted the major significance of the statue, as well as the high probability that it would have originally been painted, so the current black finish is not the intended appearance. Indeed, it appears to be a relatively modern change, as the statue appears pale in a postcard image of 1931.

Postcard, c.1931 *(Shakespeare Birthplace Trust)*

2.0 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

2.1 The Town Hall in Stratford-upon-Avon is a grade II* listed building.

2.2 The building was constructed on the site of the former Bull Ring, originally as an open arcade at ground floor level, with a ballroom at first floor. The building was constructed in 1767-68 in golden Cotswold limestone ashlar in the Palladian style. The 'builder and mason' was Robert Newman of Whittington, Glos. but it is possible that Timothy Lightoler (1727-1769) of Warwick was the designer.



Town Hall c.1800 *(Shakespeare Birthplace Trust)*

2.3 The arcade was infilled in 1863-4, and there were some other improvements by J.H and G.F. Hawkes of Birmingham.

2.4 A fire damaged the building in 1946 and the interior and roof structure are now principally of this period. The work was undertaken by the local architect F.W.B. Yorke and includes some fine decorative plasterwork in the ballroom with individual heads.

2.5 The statue of Shakespeare on the Sheep Street elevation was added very soon after the construction of the building. Timothy Lightoler was responsible for the design of the niche to contain the a lead statue of Shakespeare, which was presented by the famous Shakespearean actor David Garrick 1769. John Cheere (1709-1787) was one of the most important producers of lead statues in the period. He worked at Hampton Court, Blenheim Palace, Castle Howard, etc. His brother, Sir Henry Cheere, was a sculptor, and together they took over the lead-statue business of John van Nost. John Cheere's work is of the highest artistic quality and craftsmanship, but he has always been somewhat neglected and misunderstood, due to the potentially repetitive nature of lead casting, and changes in fashion.

2.5 Cheere's nephew Charles gave a smaller version of the statue to the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane after his death, where it still resides.

Shakespeare by John Cheere, Theatre Royal

2.6 David Garrick was highly influential in promoting Shakespeare's work and he organised a jubilee festival in September 1769 at Stratford to celebrate Shakespeare. A drawing of the Cheere statue features on the tickets to the jubilee.

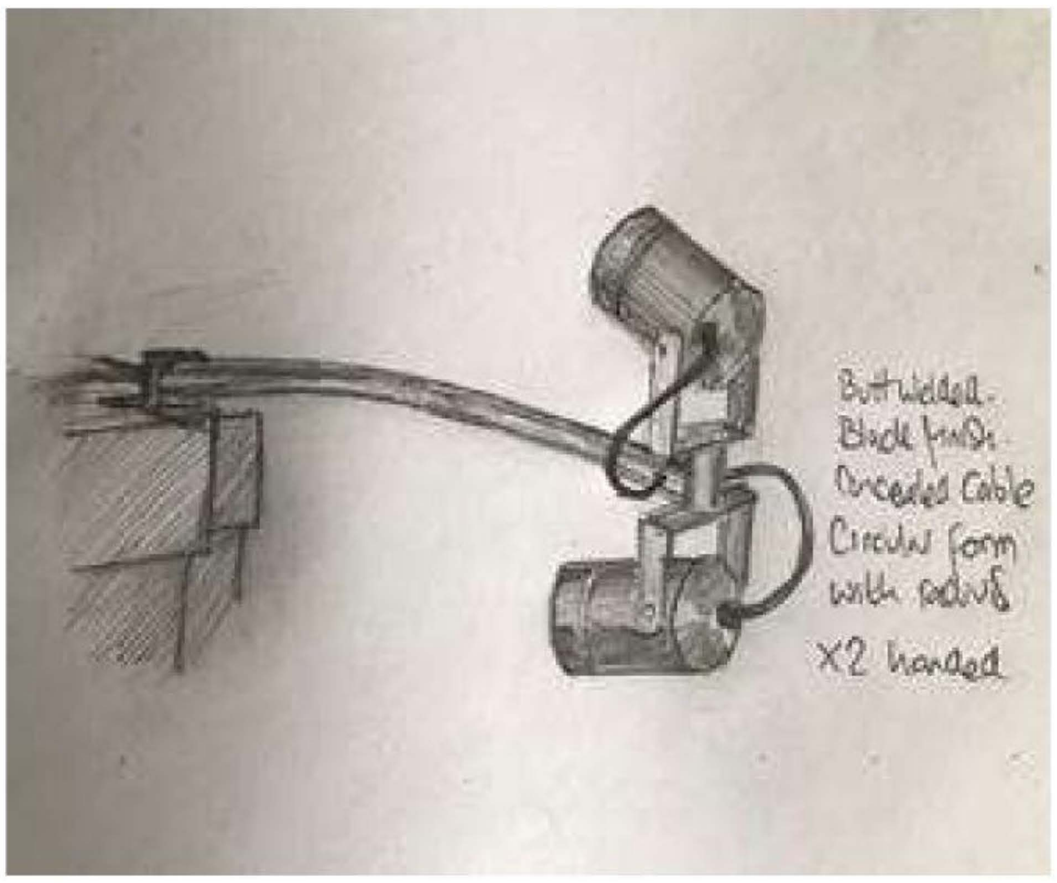
3.0 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

3.1 The conservation work required to the statue is not in itself contentious, and will be carried out by one of the leading firms who deal with this work. The change in appearance, based on a thorough understanding of the sculptor and works of this period, and now confirmed by paint analysis by Catharine Hassall (see appendix), will restore the statue to its intended appearance.

3.2 During the period when scaffolding was in place, the rear of the niche was limewashed during the masonry repair work, matching the existing off-white colour.

3.3 **Netting:** The chicken wire netting has been removed but some means of preventing pigeons roosting on the statue need to be considered. The chicken wire was stretched over and in contact with the statue, which is not ideal. The proposal is to use a stone coloured fabric net, to match the colour of the statue as closely as possible, on a stainless steel perimeter wire, with stainless steel prongs to keep it away from the statue. This will provide a durable means of preventing pigeons, with minimal visual disruption.

3.4 **Lighting:** The existing lighting to the statue comprised a pair of light fittings on metal stalks. They were large fittings and out-of-date. It is proposed to replace this arrangement with a pair of new metal stalks, each with a pair of smaller 60mm diameter LED fittings. Steane Electrical have suggested the new installation. The additional fittings will provide a more even illumination in a warm-white tone.



3.5 **Conclusion:** The proposals have been carefully considered, and are based on input from the leading metal sculpture conservator. The change in appearance to the statue is based on research and evidence, and will restore it to its intended appearance. The new netting and lighting are improved versions of the existing. We therefore hope that there should be no barrier to listed building consent being granted.

APPENDICES

1. Rupert Harris: Notes on John Cheere, March 2021
2. Rupert Harris: Paint Finishes on English Lead Sculpture, August 2014
3. Rupert Harris: Conservation Proposal and Method Statement, March 2021
4. Rupert Harris: Method Statement
5. Rupert Harris: Conservation Update, December 2021
6. Catherine Hassall: Paint Analysis, December 2021

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Notes on John Cheere (1709 -1787)

Biography

In around 1739, John Cheere, in partnership with his brother, Sir Henry Cheere, took over the business of John Nost, including the yard and moulds for his lead-cast figures. Contemporary accounts describe the figures as life-size, and frequently painted. In 1752, Cheere produced Mars for Hampton Court. Augusta and Flora, 1759, were augmented by seven other mythological subjects in 1768, for Longford Castle. Two large wyverns for the brick gate-piers of Glynde, Sussex were made in 1759, and between 1762 and 1763 lead figures of Apollo, Venus, Mercury, Livia, Augusta, Flora and Fortuna were made for Bowood. Sphinxes were supplied for the bridge at Blenheim in 1773, for Somerset House in 1778, and for Castle Hill, Devon (together with a lion and lioness). For Stourhead he made nine lead statues, including the River God in the grotto, often erroneously attributed to Rysbrack. For Castle Howard, he made two lead figures, a Dancing Faun and a Roman Gladiator. Wedgwood purchased from Cheere busts of Shakespeare, Plato, Homer and Aristotle, and in 1769 he produced the lead statue of Shakespeare which was presented by Garrick to the Corporation of Stratford-upon-Avon, and which was erected on the north side of the Town Hall. As well as working in lead, Cheere also worked in plaster, producing stock statues and busts of figures such as Homer, Virgil, Socrates, Milton, Chaucer and Shakespeare. His many works in plaster include four casts of classical figures for the Pantheon at Stourhead, 1766. He also made the chimney pieces for Kirtlington Park, Oxfordshire. Following his death in 1787, his nephew, Charles Cheere, offered the Royal Academy the figure of their choice from his uncle's collection, and they selected Susannah. Samuel Whitbread purchased a number of the lead statues for Southill Park, Bedfordshire. The figure of Shakespeare was presented by Charles Cheere to Drury Lane Theatre, where it first stood in the portico, but latterly in the entrance hall.
Source: Gunnis, R., Dictionary of British Sculptors 1660--1851, London, 1964. [WCS2003]

The Ssignificance of John Cheere as an Artist of Lead Sculpture

According to Weaver (1909), John Van Nost the Elder, the Flemish sculptor who had come to England with William III in 1689, started the first lead yard in Piccadilly, where he produced lead garden statues in considerable numbers. It is likely that he brought with him more sophisticated skills from Flanders (Fulton, 2003). Other artists' yards followed, including those of Andrew Carpenter and Henry Cheere. Henry Cheere (1703 – 1781) was a very successful sculptor, specialising in carved stone funerary monuments, busts and fire surrounds. It is thought that Henry trained his brother John, and that in about 1739 he helped John to establish his own practice by purchasing Van Nost's statuary yard, along with his stock and moulds (some of which may have originated with Quellin (Fulton, 2003)) and possibly Carpenter's moulds also.
Manufacturing both lead sculpture and ornament, and interior plaster busts and figures, John Cheere quickly dominated the trade for the next fifty years and ultimately made the most significant contribution to the quality, quantity and variety of English lead garden sculpture. The

statuary he provided ranged from antique Greek and Roman and Italian Renaissance figures and groups, to copies of later French and Italian sculptures, to contemporary portrait figures of royalty and noblemen. Pastoral rustic figures, Commedia dell'Arte figures, cherubs and animals were also produced in large numbers – their modest scale and subjects more affordable and suitable to less magnificent grounds than those at, for example, Castle Howard in North Yorkshire, which boasted a large collection of classical subjects. Casting in lead, finished to resemble stone or bronze, or polychromed or gilded, was a cost-effective means of mass-producing garden sculptures, allowing the expansion of the market to properties throughout the country and abroad.

The classical subjects are perhaps the most admirable of Cheere's output, particularly the figure groups; powerful works of art both in their form and their allegorical resonance. The importance of the narrative power of classical themes and the ability to identify the subject (by the figures' attributes, for example) to the eighteenth-century audience should not be underestimated. As in Lord Lumley's time two centuries before, they retained symbolic and emotional resonance (illuminated by literature) in the psyche of the eighteenth-century English viewer, provoking emotional and intellectual responses through the classical stories they represent, as well as by their aesthetic beauty, dynamism, and sculptural magnificence.

Both in his own time and until recently, Cheere's work was often not respected; this may be largely due to the major critics of his time, Horace Walpole and George Vertue, who dismissed him because the majority of his works were not original. Early nineteenth-century critics such as Cunningham, also wrote with a bias that turned away from the artisanal and collaborative nature of eighteenth-century sculptural practice and emphasised individual creativity, which no doubt has served to further diminish Cheere's importance in art history (Baker, 1995). Cheere's production methods should be read as a direct development of the widespread working practices of the English mason-sculptors. They are known to have adopted practical working methods that included repetition of designs, use of pre-produced sculptural elements, collaboration with other sculptors, and sub-contracting to skilled artisans. This was particularly true of Henry Cheere (Baker, 1995) who aimed to provide an affordable, fast service to his clients and who would have educated his brother John in these effective operational and commercial practices.

Though the evidence of Cheere's craftsmanship and sculptor's eye is clear, the same could not be said of all the objects produced by the trade as whole, and Cheere may have been tarred by the same brush that reviled the output of lesser statuaries that produced inferior lead statues in the same area of London, probably as part of a wider supply of vases and urns, fountains and other more prosaic garden ornament, as illustrated by Benjamin Rackstraw's 1738 trade card (Baker, 1995).

Today, the quality of John Cheere's work is not in question, but was he a sculptor or simply a high quality manufacturer? It is true that many of his works were produced from moulds taken directly from casts of the Antique however, recent research (Fulton, 2003; Neto and Grilo, 2006) confirms that some of his works were sculpted within his workshop, suggested by drawings of sculpture and engraved imagery brought from Europe, or possibly inspired by maquette-sized sculptures that he may have acquired or seen (such as Fanelli's Venus & Adonis, which can be seen at the British Museum). Though more research needs to be carried out in this field, it is clear that not only John Cheere's craftsmanship but the artistic quality of his work is consistently

high, that he skilfully altered, re-scaled and adapted existing models and, moreover, modelled many of his own sculptures from scratch (for example, his Demosthenes (Fulton, 2003)), all of which retain aesthetic integrity, subtlety and emotional force.

Conclusion

John Cheere died in 1787, but lead statues had already begun to fall out of fashion in the late 1760s when the taste for garden design changed to that of a 'natural' landscape. Finally, war with Napoleon (1803 – 1815) led to the closure of the remaining lead-casting yards in London, and their stock was melted down for ammunition. The nineteenth century, with its admiration for individual artistic achievement, brought a rather hostile attitude to the mass-produced castings of Hyde Park Corner and without the enthusiasm or technique to preserve them, many were lost to wanton damage or neglect. The conservation and on-going maintenance of the remaining lead sculpture on the buildings and in the gardens of Britain and abroad is therefore of great importance; much has been learned by all involved in the work, and it is hoped that the project has greatly added to the appreciation of an unfairly neglected, misunderstood sculptor.

Rupert Harris
March 2021

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Shakespeare Statue:
Conservator to repair statue, replacing rusting framework in non-ferrous metal, repairing leadwork and redecorating to match original colour.

New lighting on stalks to replace existing.

New bird netting on completion of works, held away from statue to avoid abrasion.

0 1 2 3 4 5m

Note: This drawing is based on Roger Abbot Architect's survey, not a digital measured survey.

Revisions:

- **A** 11-02-2021 Amended for Tender Issue
- **B** 06-09-2021 Repairs revised
- **C** 27-09-2021 Repairs revised
- **D** 05-10-2021 Repairs revised
- **E** 14-12-2021 Statue only

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Project	Stratford Upon Avon Town Hall	**Scale**	1:100 @ A3	**Job No.**	1959
Drawing	East (Sheep St) Elevation Showing Repairs	**Date**	May 2020	**Drg. No.**	103
		Drawn	vh/mgf	**Rev.**	E

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Outline Report

Paint Finishes on English Lead Sculpture

Contents:

Rupert Harris
August 2014

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1: A brief history of the production of lead sculpture in England

Pre-1660

Pictorial references suggest that lead statues were cast in Britain since the 15th century, and the means to make it certainly existed at that time. Lead had been mined across England for centuries, and the expertise in the purifying and working of it, which had begun in medieval times for the making of ecclesiastical fonts, figures and architectural fittings, had remained widespread. Further, Dutch and Flemish artists who came to work in England brought skills to enhance our native ones.

It is not known how many garden sculptures were made in lead in England during the reigns of Elizabeth, James I, and Charles I, as few examples of early lead sculpture remain, the most notable survivor perhaps being the small 'blackamore in led' at the Red House, Marston Moor, which can be securely dated from Sir Henry Slingsby's diary in 1638.[1] The English Civil War (1642–1651) and subsequent Puritan rule (1649–1660) temporarily put paid to the acceptability of garden statuary in England and it is likely that most of those lead sculptures that did exist at this time were destroyed and made into musket shot.

1660 - c.1780

The restoration of Charles II in 1660, and the increase at that time in European travel amongst the wealthy and classically educated, revived the art of garden design. The transformation of English gardens from the geometric Dutch style to the classically influenced English Landscape Garden meant that the use of sculpture in English gardens became extremely popular. The production of lead sculpture therefore began again towards the end of the 17th century and reached its height in England during the 18th century, when the European appetite for 'the Antique' grew, as ancient statues were excavated in Italy and casts began to be exported to other European countries to be copied, studied and admired by enlightened rulers and owners of great properties.

This increased demand gave birth to an artistic industry based in the Hyde Park Corner and Piccadilly area of London, run by a small but hugely influential group of sculptors that included Van Nost, Scheemakers and Carpenter as well as Henry Cheere and, later, his brother John Cheere, the most significant of this group.

These sculptors and manufacturers of interior and exterior statuary produced their works in stone, plaster and particularly in lead – chosen due to the ready supply and quality of English lead and for its affordability when compared to cast bronze or carved stone, but also as a practical alternative to carved marble, which does not weather well in the British climate. The subject matter of these lead yards' output ranged from the antique to sixteenth century Italian, including comic and rustic subjects such as Punch, Harlequin and other pantomime figures, mowers, haymakers and shepherds.

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[1] Weaver, 1909, pp.158-9

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c.1780 onwards

John Cheere died in 1787 but lead statues had already begun to fall out of fashion in the late 1760s when the taste for garden design changed to that of a 'natural' landscape. Finally, war with Napoleon (1803 – 1815) lead to the closure of the remaining lead-casting yards in London, and their stock was melted down for ammunition. The nineteenth century, with its admiration for individual artistic achievement, brought a rather hostile attitude to the mass-produced castings of Hyde Park Corner and without the enthusiasm or technique to preserve them, many were lost to wanton damage or neglect. The conservation and ongoing maintenance of surviving eighteenth-century lead sculpture is therefore of great importance.

2: Original surface finishes of late 17th-century and 18th-century lead sculpture

It is on record that most English lead statuary was finished and coloured before it left the workshop (see examples illustrated overleaf):

- The larger, classical and Renaissance subjects were generally painted to imitate pale stone or marble
- Others were finished to resemble patinated bronze using tinted lacquers and glazes
- Royal portrait figures were often leaf gilded
- Comic subjects such as Punch, Harlequin and other pantomime figures, and the Arcadian mowers, haymakers, shepherds were generally smaller than the classical subjects and were often painted in polychrome, as were the Kneeling Slave models, as described in J. T. Smith's *Streets of London*, "…the figures were cast in lead as large as life and were frequently painted with an intention to resemble nature". More specifically, the Palace of Queluz inventories of 1761 and 1763[2] describe in great detail the colour schemes of some of Cheere's leads purchased for that garden, for example, "…sculpture representing an elderly man…with black shoes, red heels and big laces of the same colour, white socks, black trousers, red leather strap holding the trousers up, black dress coat and black Phrygian cap on his head".
- There are references from Boxwood, Wiltshire in 1762 to sculptures being oiled, which could suggest that some were sold with a natural-coloured surface, though we know those with painted surfaces were also oiled for protection, as described in Cheere's own instruction for maintenance to his client the Duke of Atholl: "…. once in two years it should be washd very clean & oiled over with Linseed Oile"[3]

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[2] Caldeira Pires, 1924, pp.314-315.

[3] Davis, p.53, quoting Cruft, C. 'James, 2nd Duke of Atholl and John Cheere', *Studies in Scottish Antiquity,* Edinburgh, 1984.

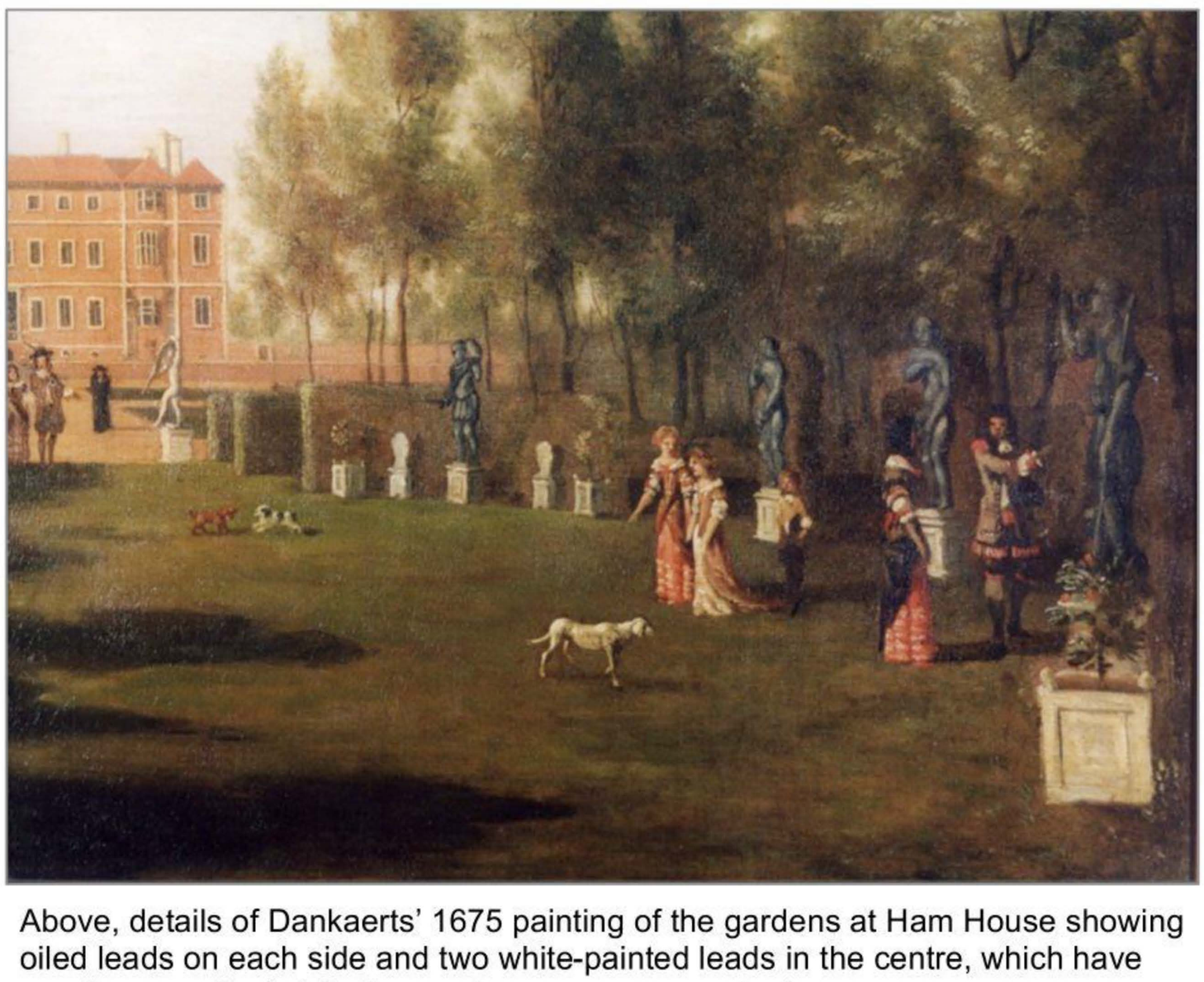
Anglesey Abbey, lead Allegory of Painting, John Cheere, mid-18th-century, painted to resemble marble

Interior lead Andromeda at Osterley, late 17th-century, retaining its original bronzed finish, which was created using an early metallic paint, finished with a glaze

St Helier, lead George II, John Cheere, 1751, leaf gilded

A lead 'Columbine' painted in polychrome. Private collection.

The written evidence mentioned above for the variety of surface finishes is confirmed by numerous contemporary and earlier paintings of gardens, examples of which are shown below.



Above, details of Dankaerts' 1675 painting of the gardens at Ham House showing oiled leads on each side and two white-painted leads in the centre, which have now been replicated for the gardens, as seen overleaf

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Above, detail of a painting of Bifrons Park, Kent (English, c.1700). Below, detail of a painting of Denham Place by John Drapentier (fl.1674-1713). Both paintings show white-painted lead statuary (close examination of the statues reveals that in most cases their form could not have been achieved in stone). Both properties are now lost.

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3: Subsequent loss of original surface finishes

Inevitably, the original artificial surface finishes degraded over time. Although some appear to have been fairly consistently maintained for years, in the end most of the decorative surface finishes were almost universally lost. This resulted in a change to our expectations and our perception of what is appropriate and 'tasteful', so that by the time Weaver wrote his thorough treatise on English leadwork (1909), he described the practice of painting lead in "all the colours of the rainbow" as "a superfluity of naughtiness" and elsewhere spoke of: "…the exquisite patina that lead takes on when it weathers. This is a charm peculiar to leadwork, and it is of a simple graciousness which makes the figures harmonise with the domestic dignity of English formal gardens in a way that stone never does".

Weaver was voicing his own view here, clearly not based on the evidence in eighteenth-century records and literature of which we are now aware, and he was also not privy to what we now know from modern techniques of paint analysis that can be applied to samples of surviving physical remains of original paint.

Natural patina on 'Olympian Courtship' (Diana and Endymion) at Anglesey Abbey

4: Remaining physical evidence of original surface finishes

Sadly, many sculptures have lost almost all traces of original finishes, but much can still be found in recessed areas of many sculptures, or on surfaces that have been preserved beneath subsequent layers of paint.

Neither existing historic paint nor a stable natural patina should also ever be removed unless there are compelling conservation arguments to support this action. In order to preserve these remaining traces it is absolutely imperative that no blast cleaning techniques be permitted on historic lead sculpture, regardless as to whether the intention is to repaint or to allow the surface to acquire or re-acquire a natural oxidised patina. Blast cleaning also obliterates original fine surface detail.

As part of any conservation intervention to lead sculpture it is extremely important to carefully search for and take small samples for analysis, and to scrupulously record the results of analysis. Analysis is straightforward and economical and often reveals very clear information as to the history of the surface treatment of a particular sculpture, two examples of which are outlined in Part 7. Existing original or old paint found on lead sculptures should still be left in place, regardless of analysis having been carried out.

Traces of original paint can be seen in the recessed areas of this lead's surface. The red colouring is the primer coat. A careful note should be kept of the location of each sample taken for analysis and it is helpful to support written records with photographs like this.

5: Restoration of original surface finishes

The question of whether to restore original surface coatings presents curators with a problematic set of decisions. There is much academic debate at present on whether or not to repaint lead sculptures in their original paint schemes. As a general principle, before embarking upon restoration to any type of original finish, specific evidence should be found, in the form of paint analysis and, ideally, visual or written evidence. In the absence of such evidence, it is unlikely that restoration of a finish could be justified.

Weaver's high opinion of "the exquisite patina that lead takes on when it weathers" is still held by many today; the natural patina of untreated lead is often prized and the idea of repainting resisted on the grounds of taste alone. Though the emphasis in recent years has been on presenting sound arguments for the restoring of paint finished on lead, it could be equally argued that allowing an important feature of an historic garden or architectural scheme to remain inaccurate and anachronistic, purely in order to pander to modern expectations, should also be a fully justified decision.

Polychroming (of the Arcadian figures for example) is perhaps understandably quite hard for the modern viewer to accept, particularly when the paint is freshly maintained and unweathered, as most such colour schemes were originally bold and bright. Though mid-nineteenth century awareness of historic polychrome liberated sculptors of the time[4], it seems not to be a fact that is readily remembered or celebrated. Responses ranging from fascination to discomfort to outright horror have been noted to the recent examinations of the original polychrome exteriors of medieval cathedrals and of classical sculptures themselves. One might term this reaction 'the shock of the old', however there are subtle ways to approach the restoration of colouring, which would perhaps reflect more accurately the appearance that original polychromed sculptures may have actually had for much of their life, given the original use of lead-based paints that would have softened and faded in an outdoor environment more rapidly than modern paints.

However, the practice of restoring original surface treatment to the larger, classical subjects, repainted to resemble white stone, is less challenging to the modern eye. The lead groups at Wrest Park are a good example of how such restoration can be successfully carried out and the effect that it has as part of the overall aesthetic and historical accuracy of a garden's design. (see Part 6). An additional case can be made for the repainting of originally pale, stone-coloured painted leads on buildings, on the grounds that their tone was originally intended to harmonise with, or contrast with, the building material, their tone being an important and deliberate design decision.

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[4] Luke, 1996 p.1

In addition, there are practical pros and cons to consider. Firstly, the new problem of the formation of visually intrusive, dark brown lead dioxide (as shown below), which has lately been affecting the surface of many lead statues and architectural leadwork (in Europe at least) may influence the conservation community's attitude to the restoration of painted surfaces on outdoor leads.

Secondly, painted surfaces require maintenance, i.e. repainting every 10 to 15 years. As the paint layers build up, they will gradually obscure surface detail, which after many years may lead to them requiring stripping and starting the process again.

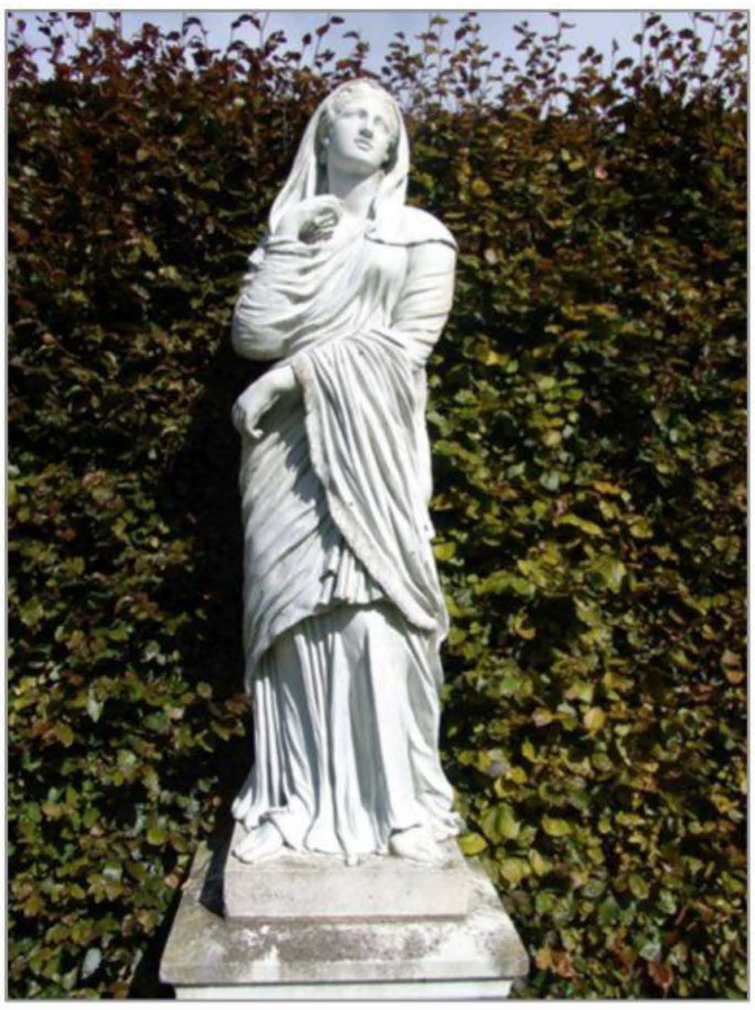
A suitable paint system must be chosen (use of the correct primer is paramount). The use of oil-bound lead paints often used on the sculptures originally is now not considered a sound option for health and safety and environmental reasons.

Lead dioxide formation on the Shepherd at Charlecote Park

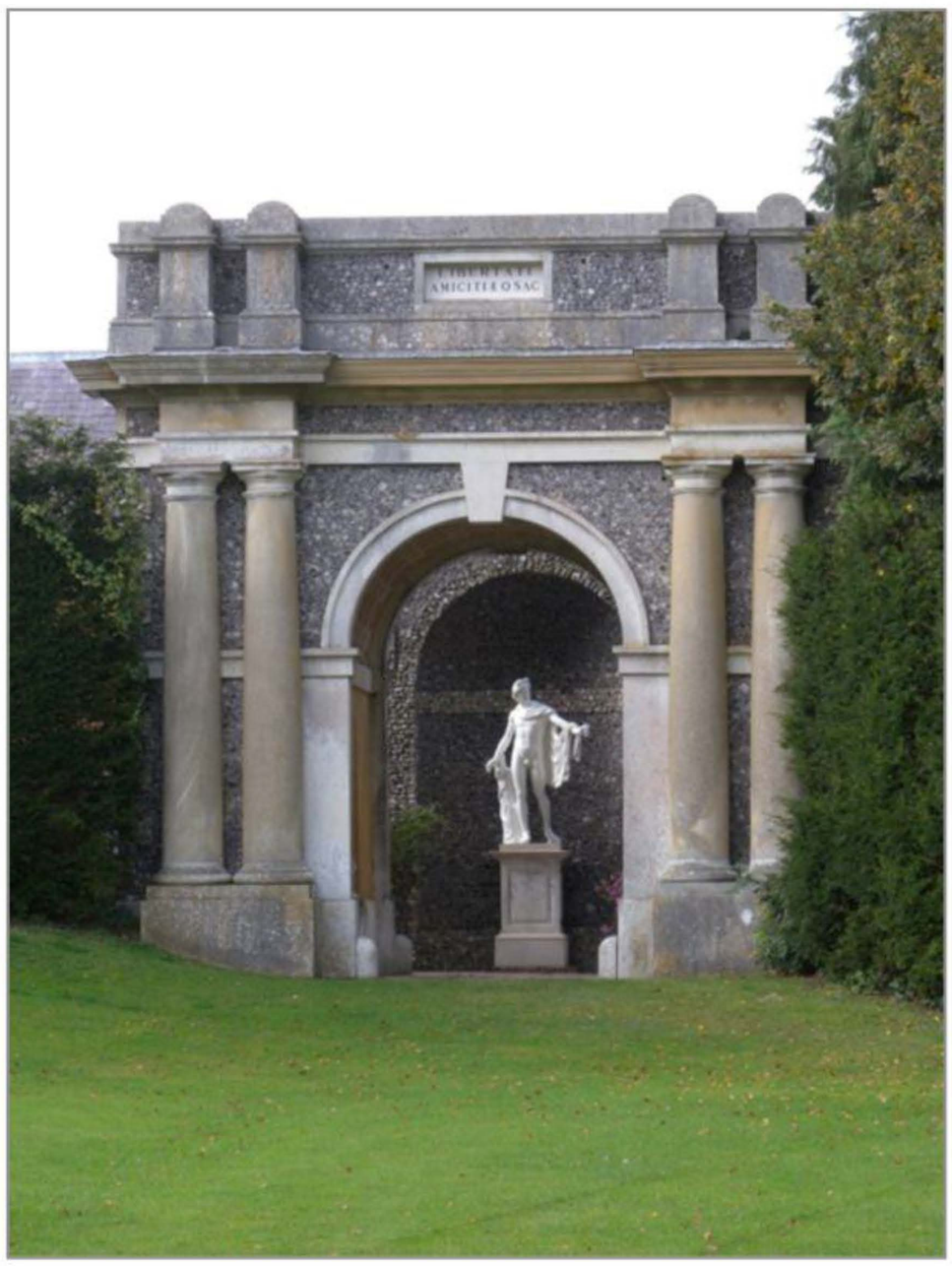
6: Examples of painted lead sculpture

Four Cheere groups on the French Parterre at Wrest Park

Four Cheere figures at Anglesey Abbey



Cheere lead sculpture at West Wycombe



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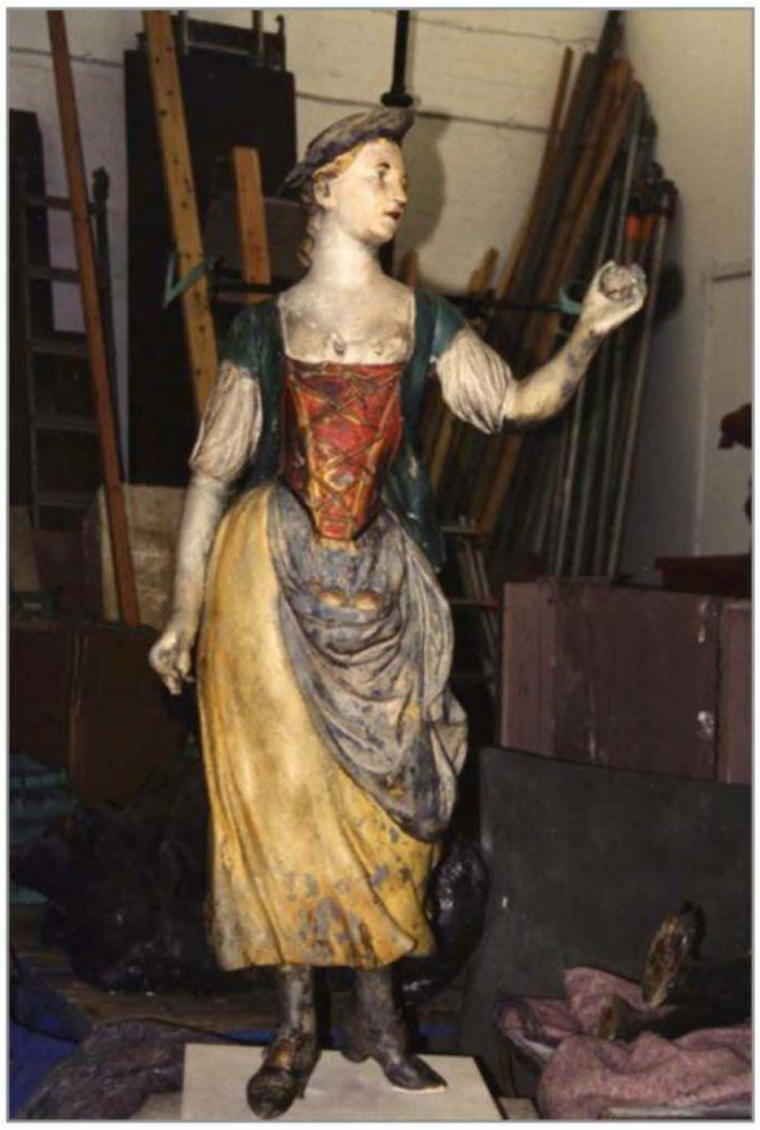
Polychrome figures

Shepherd at Fenton House

Shepherdess (Apple Picker) at Antony

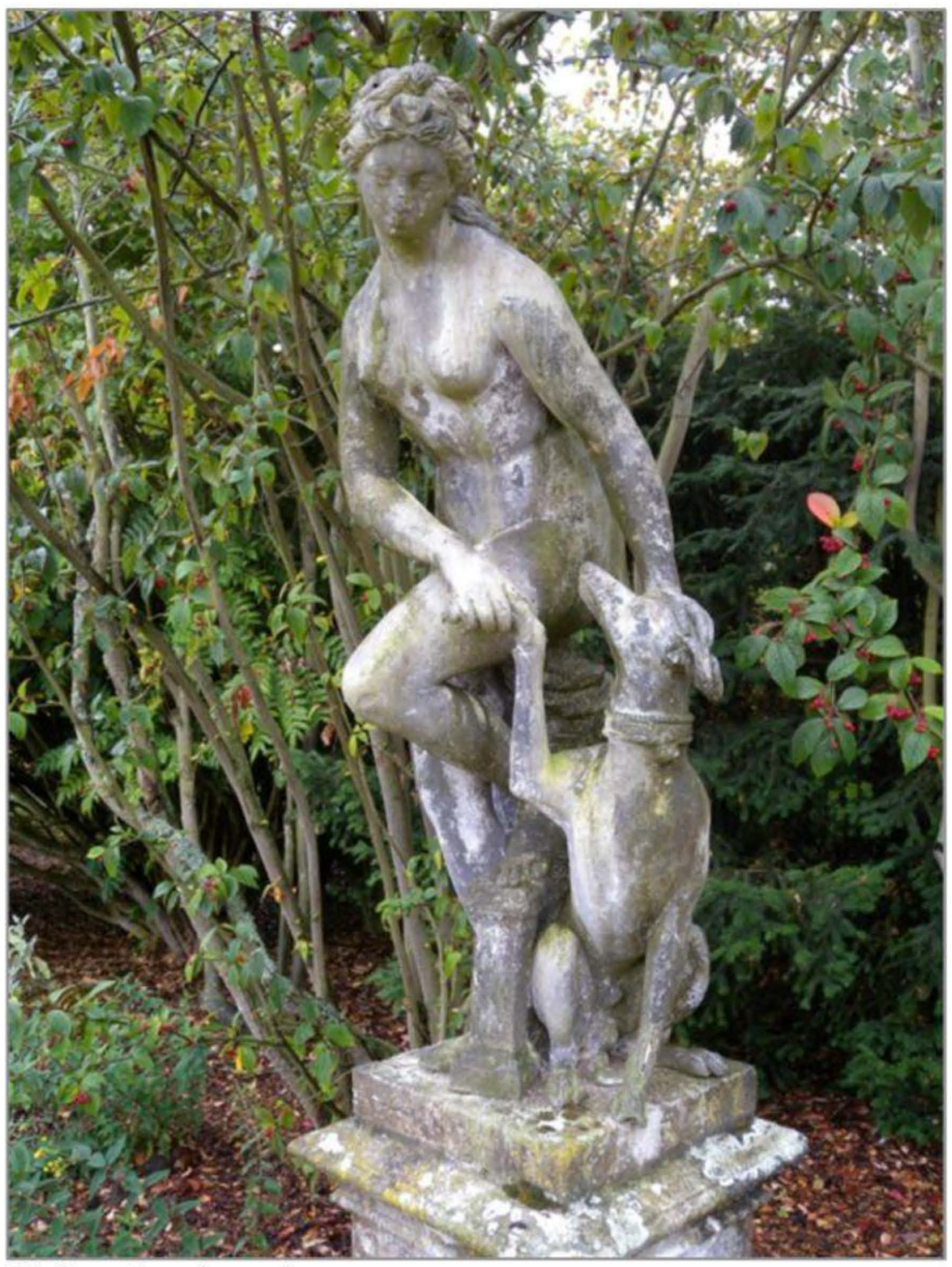
The Blewcoat Boy, Blewcoat School, Queen Anne's Gate



Shepherdess (Apple Picker) from Waddesdon Manor

7: Examples of paint analysis results

Example 1: Diana and Hound, Van Nost, returned to Wrest Park by English Heritage in 2012



Before treatment

After restoration of the original surface

Paint samples were sent for analysis (see images overleaf), from which the following conclusions were drawn:

In all the samples, the first paint found was a dark grey based on lead white and carbon black.

There is no dirt layer over the grey, and it is likely that it was applied as a priming for the lead white paint which rests on top of it. The white top coat contained a few small particles of black but these may have been contamination from the primer, and the colour will have been close to pure white. All subsequent schemes were whites or off-whites.

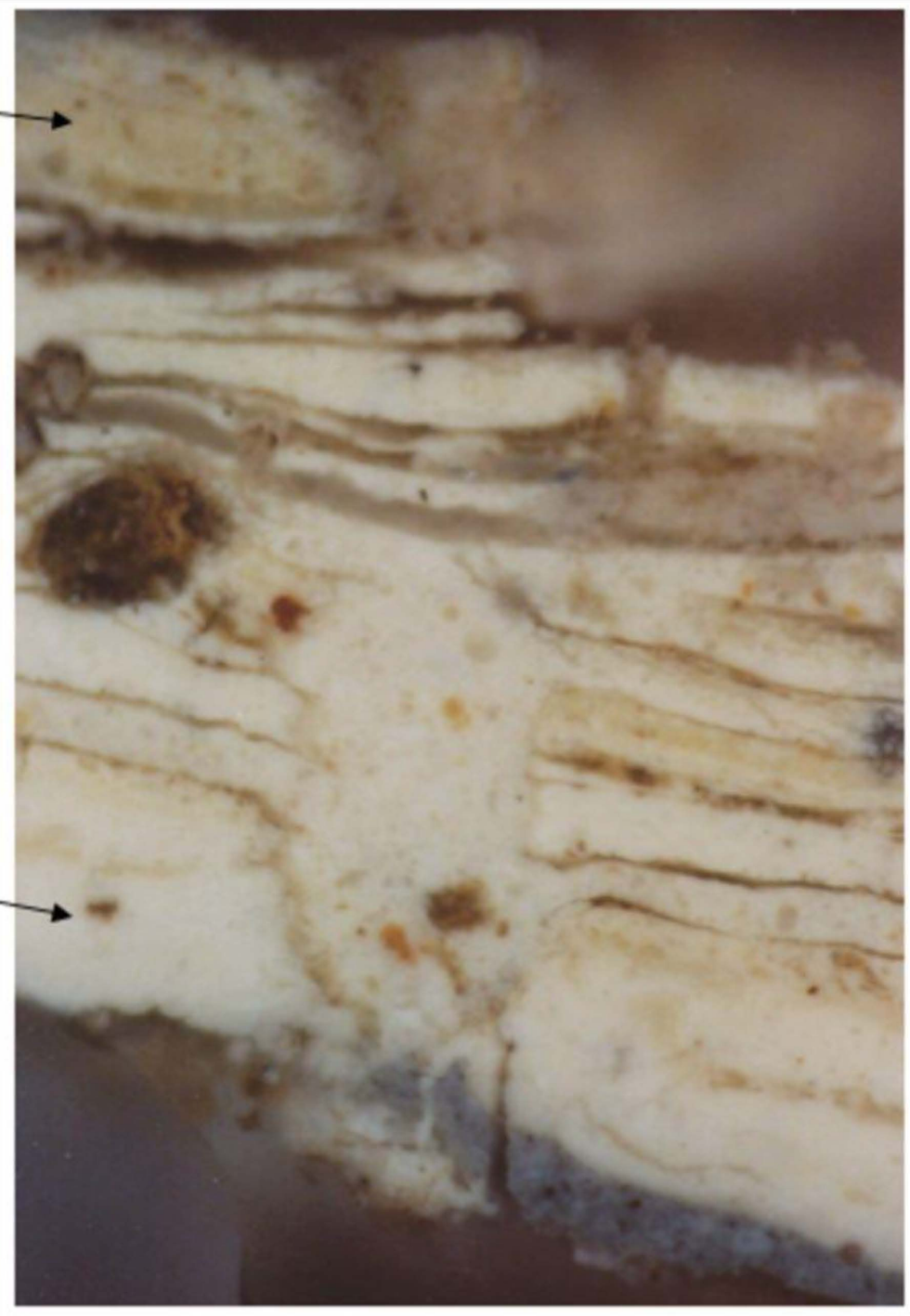
If the grey is a primer it is good evidence that the statue was painted from the very beginning.

SAMPLE 3
Diana thigh
[x200]

final stone-coloured scheme, still based on lead white

eight stone-coloured and off-white layers

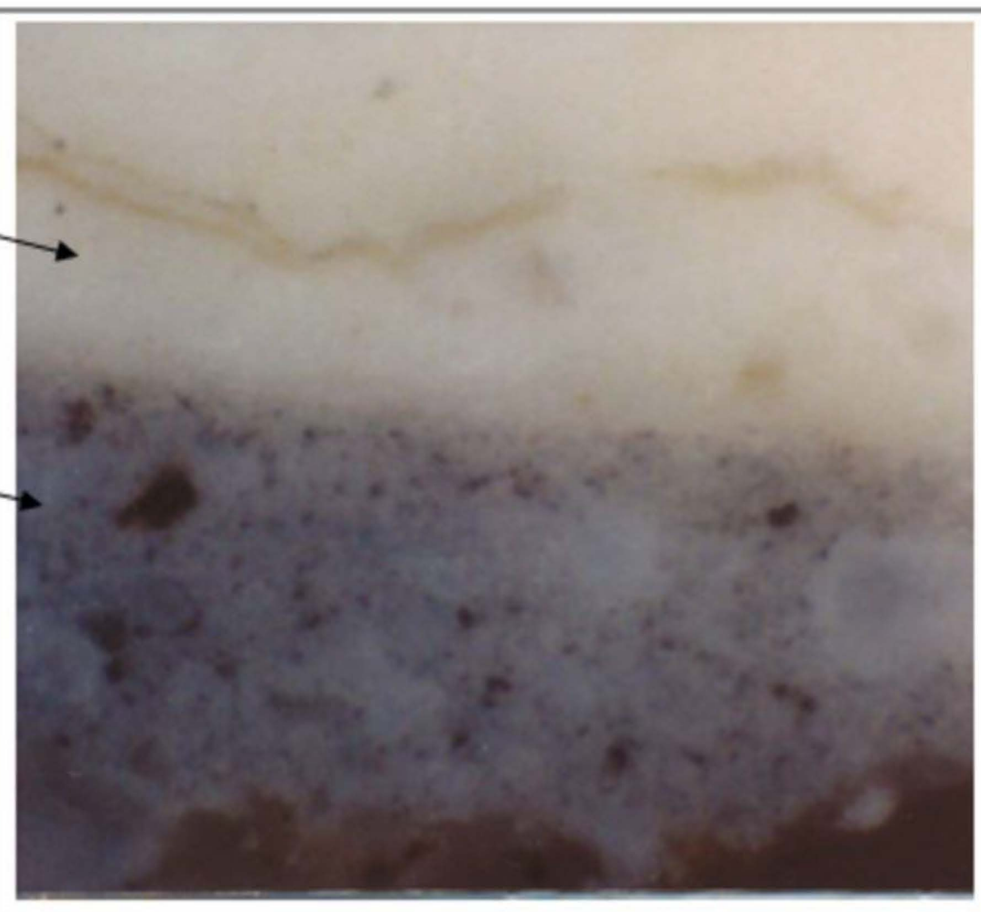
white first paint scheme



Detail of the early layers
[x500]

white first scheme

grey primer



Example 2: Samson Slaying a Philistine, John Cheere c.1755, at Trent Park

Paint samples were sent for analysis (see images overleaf), from which the following conclusions were drawn:

The cross-sections showed that the statue has been painted at least four times.

Original decoration

The lead was first coated with a mid grey primer of lead white mixed with finely-ground carbon black. This was followed by an off-white oil paint based on lead white, tinted with a very little yellow ochre.

The use of a primer, and the fact that there is no obvious dirt under the paint, is a good indication that this off-white oil paint is the original decoration of the statue.

Later decorations

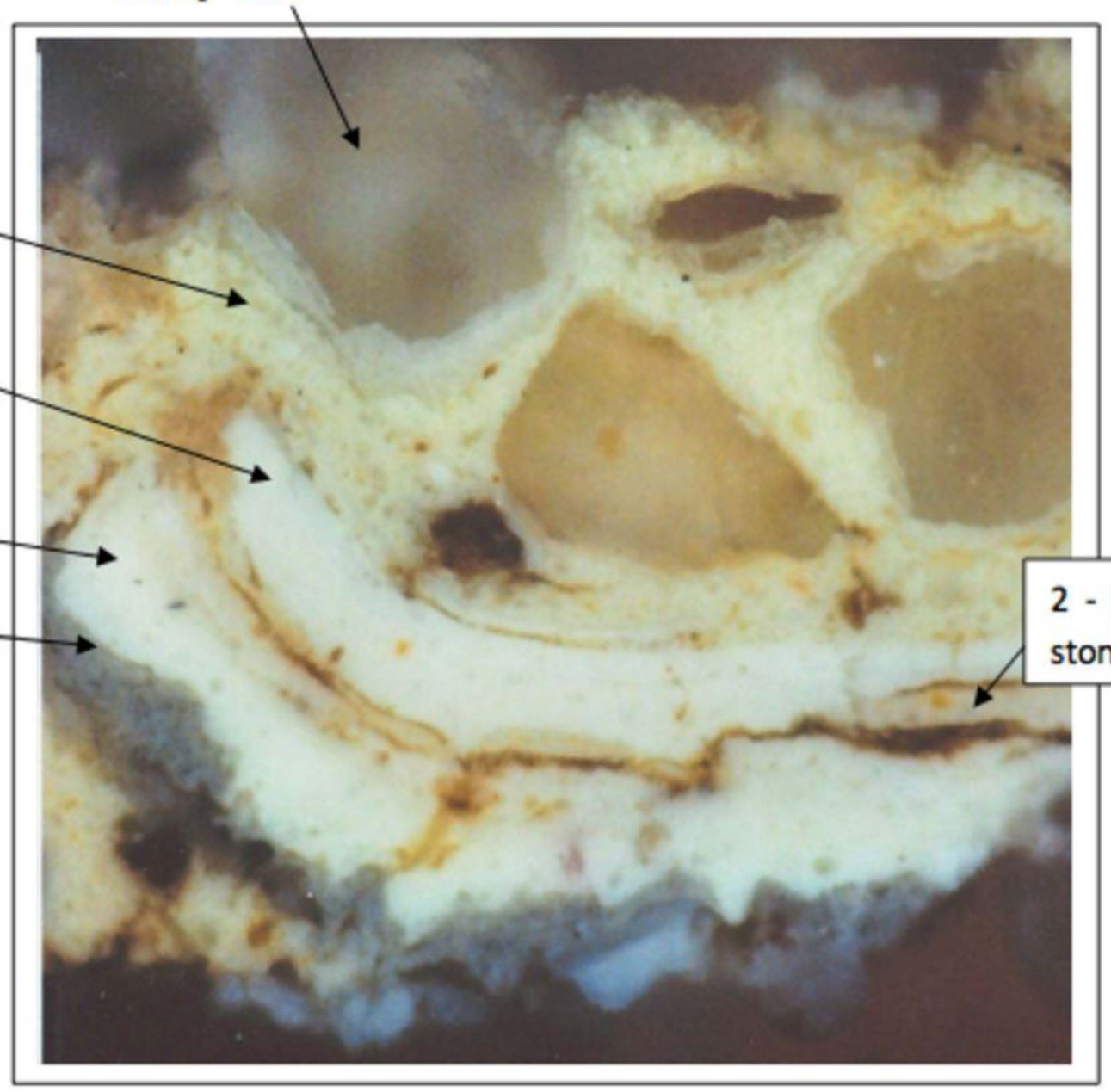
2 A pinkish stone colour based on lead white mixed with a little red and yellow ochre.

3 An off-white oil paint.

4 An off-white textured oil paint of lead white mixed with sand particles. This paint forms a thick layer. The sand was added to produce a rough surface that gave the impression of stone. This was commonly done in the eighteenth and the nineteenth-century, to statues and to buildings. It was rarely done after circa 1900.

There were probably many more layers of paint, which have since flaked off.

CROSS-SECTION
[x200]



Rupert Harris
August 2014

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London

Stratford upon Avon Town Hall
Lead Sculpture of Shakespeare by John Cheere

Conservation Proposal and Method Statement

Historic Importance and Subject References

Unique lead portrait sculptures by John Cheere are rare, and have both significant historic and monetary value. The John Cheere portrait of Shakespeare is a life size sculpture of a smaller cast lead version of the same sculpture in the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, London. The John Cheere sculptures are thought to take their inspiration from earlier stone carvings of the Bard by Peter Scheemakers 1691 -1781, one of which can be found in Westminster Abbey; the other, at Wilton House. In Scheemakers' sculptures, Shakespeare stands to the left of the decorated pedestal, while Cheere's version stands to the right. Further information on John Cheere, his work and the significance and history of painted lead sculpture from the17th and 18th centuries is contained in the attached documents.

Condition

The following assessment is largely based on observations made by Alexandra Carrington during her inspection of the historically significant memorial tablets and painted armorial crests on the façade of the Town Hall.

The lead sculpture by John Cheere would have likely been cast in two large pieces: the figure of Shakespeare and the pedestal. In the 18th century, before the development of gas welding foundries, there was no way of successfully joining cast lead, so sculptures were cast by the lost wax process in one piece. With larger sculptures, such as the Shakespeare, an internal wrought iron armature was included in the casting, and the plaster of Paris and refractory brick dust core material was left within the casting on completion. However, this working method and process presented a problem in the long term, as water ingress into the core initiates corrosion of the iron armature, resulting in rust jacking and the splitting of the lead, and consequent loss of structural capability.

In the case of this sculpture, evidence in the form of splitting of the lead and slumping of the pedestal indicates that there is corrosion of the existing armature and structural weakness within elements of the sculpture. With regard to the overall structural condition, as it has been impossible to undertake a close, detailed inspection of the sculpture owing to the presence of wire mesh covering the niche, this report can only be an assumption of condition based on the limited available visual evidence.

The inspection report by Alexandra Carrington also notes damage to the sculpture's surface detail, which has largely been caused by the bird-protection wire mesh cutting into or rubbing against the lead. It has also been noted that some historic in-situ repair work would appear to have been undertaken; the fact that these repairs are visible would suggest that they have been achieved using lead solder and not pure lead.

The survival of this and other lead sculpture suffering the same form of structural degradation requires quite major intervention to put the sculpture into a structural and surface condition that will ensure its survival in the long-term. This restoration work is not able to be undertaken in-situ as it requires the removal of the refractory core material and the wrought iron armature; correction of the splitting and distortion, and repairs using lead welding.

In terms of the overall surface condition, the photographs show the typical lead corrosion patina of lead carbonate and dark lead sulphate with most probably some carbon based pollutant coating. Alexandra Carrington's survey suggests that there are traces of paint existing on the surface. This is most probable, as the painting of lead sculpture to resemble stone was fashionable in the 18th century, and many examples of these finishes on lead sculpture of the period exist.

Condition Summary

Based on the above assessment, I would strongly advise that consideration is given to undertaking thorough conservation of the sculpture while building works are in progress. If this was done, it would ensure the safety and protection of the sculpture, if not subjected to accidental damage, for at least a hundred years, if not longer, as the causes of the present decline in condition would have been removed. There are, however, still many details relating to the overall condition and structure that are not fully investigated, consequently the production of an exact specification for restoration is not possible without a detailed inspection with the wire netting removed. In particular, it would be most useful to be able to assess how the sculpture is fixed to the stonework of the niche in order to devise a method to safely lift the sculpture from the building.

Taking all these factors into account, subject to structural condition and fixings, the following steps outline the process of work I'm proposing as being necessary:

Conservation Stages

1. Removal of the sculpture from the niche
Notes: This would be best undertaken before the scaffold is erected using a HIAB fitted with fly jib and a scissor lift platform for access.
As details of the fixing of the sculpture are unknown, it is being assumed that any iron fixing into the base of the niche will need to be cut using a reciprocating saw.
The sculpture will either be lifted in one or in two pieces the figure and then the pedestal, using soft slings.
2. Pack the sculpture in a steel-framed open case suitably protected for transporting.
3. In the studio, undertake a full detailed structural inspection and take paint samples for cross-sectional analysis.
4. Remove the original core material and any existing wrought iron. This will be achieved by cutting windows into the lead to access the relevant areas.
5. High-pressure steam clean the external and internal surfaces of the sculpture.
6. Re-form all distortion to the sculpture, closing the splits and other movement damage.
7. Construct a new, 316-grade stainless steel internal armature designed to fully support the sculpture.
8. Repair the damage to the sculpture caused by the splitting, wire mesh and past poor repairs, by lead-welding using pure lead, and then fit back the access windows cut into the surface.
9. Hand-finish the surface modelled detail and texture to match the existing original surface.
10. Depending on the results of the paint analysis, possibly repaint the sculpture to its original finish.
11. Repack and return to the Town Hall to reinstall the sculpture, adopting the same methods used for the removal. The fixing method will be discussed and agreed once the condition and structure is fully understood.
12. Record in detail all work processes during the conservation and present as a final report.

The above method statement can only at this time outline the work I anticipate would be required to complete such a project. Regarding the potential cost of the conservation, this can only be estimated without a more detailed condition assessment, however, subject to an initial agreement that the conservation is necessary I would be able to provide a budget breakdown of costs based on the above method statement.

Rupert Harris
20 March 2021

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Stratford upon Avon, Statue of Shakespeare by John Cheere

Conservation Update

1. Work to the Structure

We have undertaken the partial removal of the existing plaster and refractory sand core material along with the remains of the corroded iron armature from the main body of the figure of Shakespeare and the pedestal. The iron armature was found to be heavily corroded with a significant amount of rust surrounding what remained of the iron, causing rust jacking, the main cause of the splitting of the lead on Shakespeare's legs and the pedestal.

To facilitate the removal of the core and armature, windows in the lead have been cut to allow access to the key internal areas of the sculpture. These windows have mainly been created on the back of the figure where there is no significant modelled detail. The exception to this is the left foot where, owing to the angle of the foot and leg, removal of the foot above the ankle was required in order to extract the remains of the iron armature.

Work will concentrate on the removal of the remaining core and then the design of the replacement stainless steel armature.

The entire sculpture will then be high-pressure steam cleaned to remove all loose dirt and the more lightly attached remains of the original paint coatings.

Once this work has been completed, lead-weld repairs will be undertaken to the existing splitting damaged areas before turning our attention to the construction of the new armature. Regarding this we are presently considering the best way to reinstall the sculpture bearing in mind the difficulty encountered during the removal process. We will be providing a suggested approach to this as the project moves forward.

2. Surface Coating

We have now received the results of the cross-sectional paint analysis – please find the report attached.

In summary, the sculpture was originally painted off-white to resemble marble, which was very much the fashion of the period and a decorative scheme frequently found on sculpture produced by John Cheere and his workshop.

However, there is the possibility that some polychrome decoration was added in the 19th century as traces of a blue were found on the spine of one of the books in an area more protected from the weather. Despite this finding, it is very unlikely that the sculpture was originally painted in a realistic, multi-coloured scheme. This is made more likely as the back of the sculpture and consequently more protected surfaces only show the use of the off-white scheme. On this basis, we are recommending that the sculpture is repainted following the structural works in the monochrome off-white scheme. We will however make a second inspection following the steam cleaning to check that no other paint coating, other than those already identified, exist.

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The issue of what colour the lettering of the quotation from A Midsummer Night's Dream should be on the scroll needs to be discussed and agreed, but for legibility, I am of the opinion that a dark colour needs to be used - probably black.

In terms of the general approach to the work, there are no changes being made or suggested that deviate from the conservation condition report and treatment recommendations already supplied.

Rupert Harris
13 December 2021

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STATUE OF SHAKESPEARE

Stratford-upon-Avon Town Hall

The lead statue was made in 1769 by John Cheere.

Paint samples were taken from three different areas by Rupert Harris Conservation. Samples 1-3 were taken from different parts of the cloak; Sample 4 from the book spine.

Examination procedure

The samples were examined under low magnification and then the fragments were mounted in cold-setting polyester resin to be cut and polished as cross-sections to show the layers.
The layers were compared, and pigments from key layers were identified using a polarising light microscope. A chemical test for lead was carried out on representative cross-sections.

RESULTS

Original eighteenth-century decoration

The statue was painted an off-white, or cream colour using oil paint applied in at least two coats: a white undercoat based on pure lead white, and a cream-coloured top coat tinted with a small amount of yellow and brown iron oxide particles.

Remains of this paint scheme was found in all samples. It was cracked and damaged, and in some fragments of Sample 4, it survived only in tiny patches.

?Sealing coat

In the cross-sections made from Samples 1-3 we can see that on top of the off-white paint there is a yellowish organic coating. When this coating was applied it filled cracks and losses in the original off-white oil paint scheme, and even worked its way underneath the paint.

It does not have the fluorescence of a varnish and it is probably a sealing coat applied after the statue was first stripped.

Nineteenth-century paint layers found in Sample 4

The cross-sections made from Sample 4 show that parts of the statue were repainted at least twice following the original scheme.

On the first occasion the book was painted blue over a white undercoat. The pigments used – lead white Prussian blue and little carbon black – are not helpful for dating, but as they rest on top of black sulphation they are clearly not original.

More black sulphation covers the blue and then the book was painted a dark brown. Lead white was still involved and so this decoration must pre-date the Second World War.

On top of the brown are further layers of sulphation.

The conclusion must be that in the early years the statue was painted more than once with oil paints, including at least one polychrome scheme.

Paint stripping

The oil paint layers were largely lost when the statue was eventually stripped, but they have survived in a few corners, such as on the spine of the book.

Following the paint stripping thick coats of black sulphation containing lead salts as well as carbon black and iron oxide built up on the surface.

It is interesting the cross-sections show a kind of structure to this sulphation, with alternating darker and lighter layers [see Sample 2, p.3]. A lot of calcium is present in the layers, and it remains a possibility that the statue was occasionally either painted with limewashes or became splashed with lime-washes used for the building.

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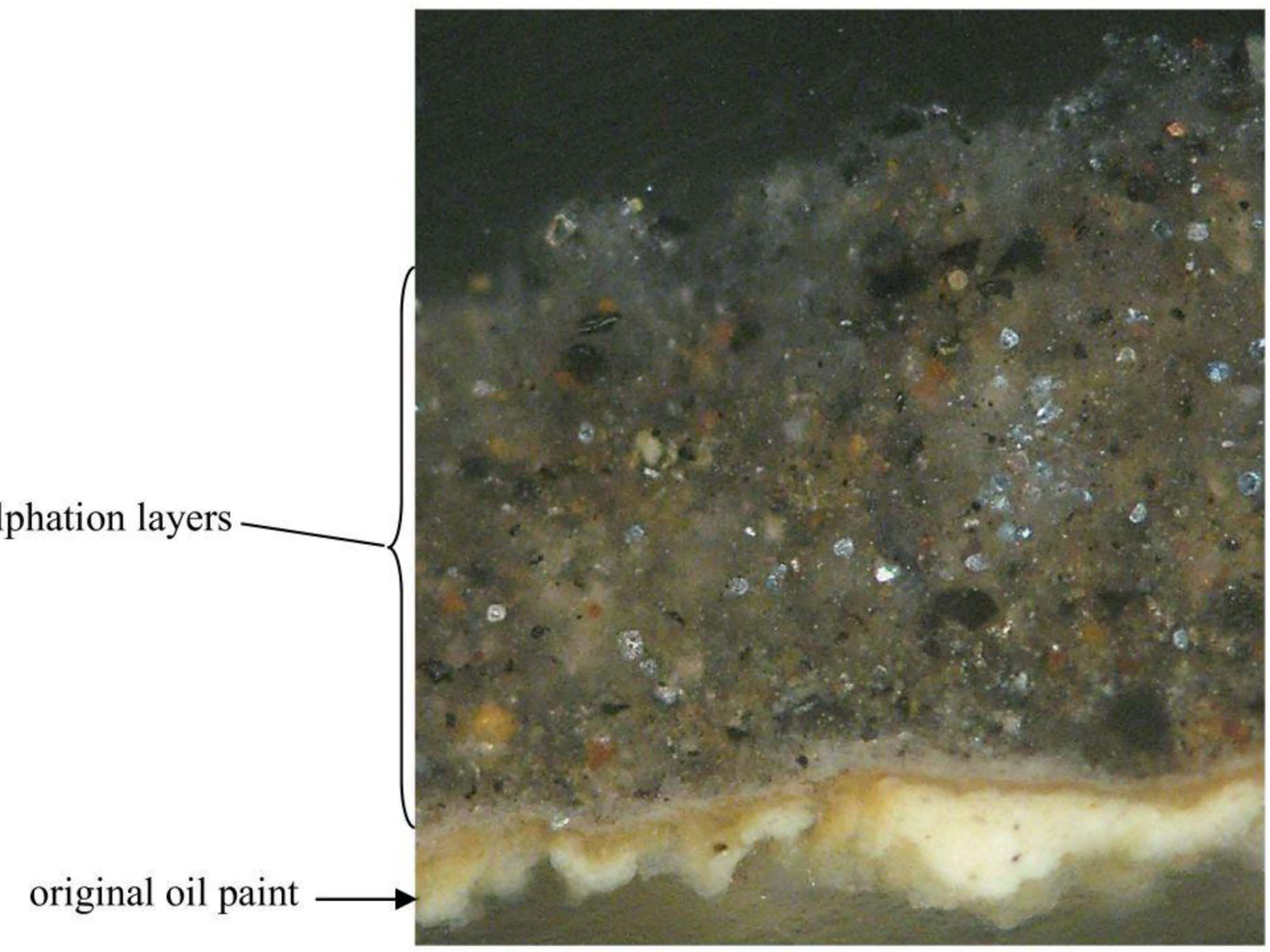
SAMPLE 1
Fold of cloak

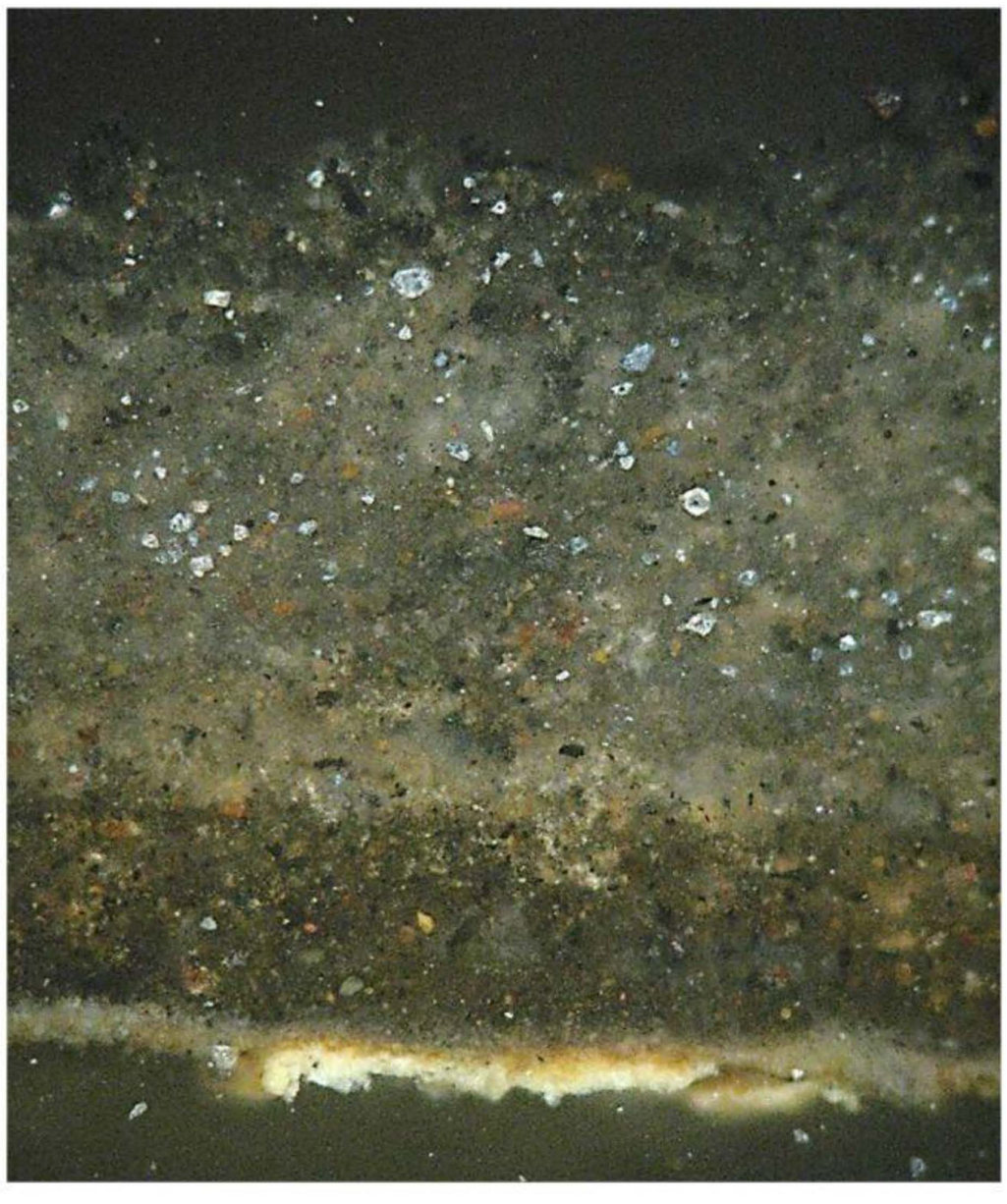


<u>Detail of original paint</u>

Showing the later ?sealant penetrating cracks in the oil paint

SAMPLE 2
Fold of cloak

Showing paler and darker layers of sulphation over cracked remains of the original oil paint



SAMPLE 4
Spine of book

Fragment (i)
Showing layers of oil paint sandwiched between layers of black sulphation

Fragment (ii)

Showing a layer of the sealant applied after stripping