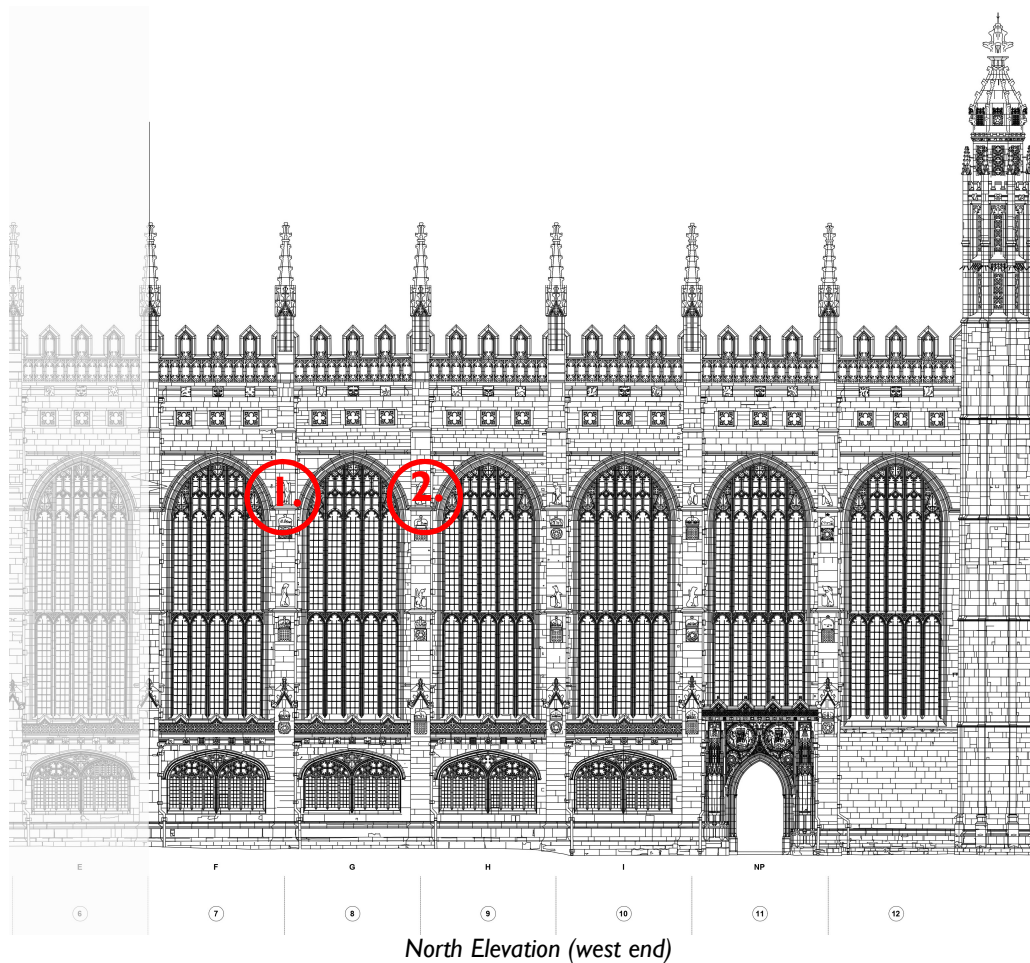


**099 KINGS COLLEGE CHAPEL  
REPLACEMENT OF UNSAFE HIGH-LEVEL CARVING  
COVER PAPER TO FACULTY APPLICATION**

This paper supports an application for Faculty under the 2015 RULES, for replacement of an unstable animal sculpture on the upper water table of the buttress between bays 7 and 8 for which removal of the loose parts has already been completed under an Interim Faculty, and repair of the adjacent carving on the buttress between bays 8 and 9.



- 1.** Severely decayed and unstable carving to be carefully removed and replaced. Note stonemasons estimated weight of the replacement carving would be in the region of 400kg.
- 2.** Carving shown initial signs of similar defects although not in as poor condition as item 1. To be stabilised by insertion of stainless steel pin using the same scaffold access.

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Very concise history and description.

The Chapel was the major building of the College founded by King Henry VI who laid the first stone in 1446. Its building history, which was marked by long periods of inactivity, reflects a politically turbulent era around the War of the Roses. For this reason, the Chapel went through three phases of construction, under four separate master masons, and was not completed until 1515. Subsequently the college Front Court developed to the South. The ensemble now comprises the C18th classical Gibbs building, the C19th Wilkins building and later C19 screen to Kings Parade, both in a gothic revival stylistic idiom.

Of relevance to the present application are the carvings and sculptures introduced in the third and final phase of construction which began in 1508 under John Wastell, a mason who once worked for Simon Clerk and succeeded him after his death. With funding secured by Henry VII and subsequently Henry VIII, Wastell was able to complete the Chapel including the antechapel, vaults, towers, and battlements by 1515. This phase of work is perhaps most easily identified through the use of heraldic symbols and coats of arms carved into the buttresses and interiors. The master carver at this time was Thomas Stockton.

Significance of the whole: EXCEPTIONAL

“One of the major monuments of English Medieval architecture. Despite its long building history, the interior of Kings College chapel is a harmonious whole, a supreme achievement of a series of royal masons of the highest calibre” Pevsner: Buildings of England.

## STATEMENT OF NEED

During a programme of high priority Quinquennial masonry works being completed under List B consent (dated 28/08/2021), close hand inspections to some of the high-level masonry elements on the north elevation were made possible through the associated provision of a 100ft cherry picker. The delicate animal sculpture on the upper water table of the buttress between bays 7 and 8 (from the east) was found to be in extremely poor condition as shown in the following photographs, with concerns over its stability and the risk it may not last a hard winter.

Given the real risk to Health and Safety, the College closed the side chapels directly below, and cordoned-off an exclusion zone to prevent people walking beneath externally. There was also fear for the potential damage to the building itself were anything to fall.

Due to its location, there are significant difficulties in removing the loose masonry. Ultimately, it was agreed that scaffold access would be required due to the inherent risks of working with fragments of such weight, at this height, using a cherry picker or steeplejack.

Works to remove the loose masonry and to remove the risk as soon as is practicable have been completed under an Interim Faculty.

Taking a long-term view as recommended in the QIR, which addresses the approach needed to decayed figurative carving, the advocated policy is that we should be re-carving and replacing features like this. It is the replacement of the existing carving to which this consent application pertains.



Procurement of the scaffold is a significant outlay for the College, with most costs associated with the erection and dismantling. As such, the proposal of the College is to leave the scaffolding in place to be used for the installation of the replacement, as well as the removal of the existing.

The development of similar defects were also noted in the sculpture on the next buttress to the west although to a much lesser extent. Following discussion with the stonemasons it appears feasible that this feature could be retained by strengthening with a stainless steel pin. The scaffold access for removals would also enable this repair to be undertaken.



*Loose and unstable carving on the buttress between bays 7 and 8.*





*Detail of friable and cracked carving.*

## SCOPE OF PROPOSED WORKS FOR FACULTY

### **Replacement of unstable animal sculpture (upper carving on buttress between bays 7 and 8)**

The careful removal of the existing masonry will seek to salvage the sculpture in as few fragments as possible and will be completed under the interim Faculty.

The objective is to replace the removed stone with a re-carved sculpture based on the original. We now seek agreement and consent on the proposed methodology for its replacement, as follows:

The design of the replacement will build on the root of the original. Acknowledging that some details have been lost through deterioration, similar carvings around the Chapel will be analysed to produce a gazetteer coupled with archival research to provide information on the original design intention. This would form the brief for the sculptor who would be given level of free expression in the new carving, to a similar extent as would have been received by the original.

A 3D model of the root would be formed from a plaster cast, if possible from the salvaged fragments. This would be built up in a layer of clay for the sculptor to model a maquette of the proposal. As part of the Faculty process, details of the maquette would be submitted by the sculptor for sign-off by the DAC and Chapel Architect before the final carving is cut.

The approved maquette would then form the template for the sculptor to carve the replacement in stone. It should be noted that a number of similar carvings on the south elevation have previously been replaced in Lavoux Fin limestone, which provided a good match to the original Ketton whilst accommodating the bed height required for the sculpture (Ketton cannot be procured in the required bed heights to ensure integrity throughout the sculpture). It is proposed that this precedented use of Lavoux Fin be followed for the current replacement, subject to approval of a sample.

### **Stabilisation repair of the upper sculpture (upper carving on buttress between bays 8 and 9)**

With scaffolding in place, it is advised that a stabilisation repair be undertaken by carefully inserting a stainless steel pin into the existing carving in the adjacent bay.

The full process will be documented and those papers retained within the College records.

## PROCUREMENT

Selection of the sculptor will be through will be through a shortlist of craftspeople, approached on the basis of suitable and demonstrated experience and ability.