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REPORT ON THE CLEANING AND CONSERVATION OF THE 1849 REREDOS



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St Peter's Church, Grandborough, Warwickshire

Report on the Cleaning and Conservation of the 1849 Reredos

September 2025

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Date: 3 September 2025

Ref. Grandborough 2

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We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Mr. Thomas Crane and the Parochial Church Council of St Peter's Church, Grandborough for commissioning the conservation of the reredos. Their invaluable support has played a crucial role in ensuring the success of the conservation project. Our grateful thanks also go to those funding the project – the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Society of Antiquaries of London, Janet & Bryan Moore Charitable Trust, Warwickshire Churches Trust, Garfield Weston Foundation, HDH Willis Foundation plus donations from the local community.

St Peter's Church, Grandborough, Warwickshire

The Cleaning and Conservation of the 1849 Reredos

1.0 Summary

St Peter's Church, Grandborough, a small parish near Rugby in Warwickshire, contains a very fine elaborately carved, Caen stone reredos dating to 1849 within which are painted zinc panels bearing the Lord's Prayer, Ten Commandments and Creed. At the request of Thomas Crane a condition survey was carried out on behalf of the PCC on March 18th 2024 and identified a range of issues, localised areas of damage and signs of structural movement.

When first executed the Gothic Revival reredos would have provided an impressive focal point at the end of the chancel as seen in the black and white photograph¹ (*right*) taken c 1910. Located on the east wall and rather hidden behind a large later altar the reredos had become somewhat neglected. Sadly the paint layers had been damaged by humidity over time and both the texts and the surrounding stonework required cleaning, conservation repair and restoration of lost and damaged detail.

The assessment identified several areas of concern, primarily the cracking and loss of the Caen stone structure due to structural movement and loss of the painted decoration associated with humidity problems at the rear. No obvious evidence of water ingress was noted with damp likely to be linked to the formation of condensation on the east window adversely affecting the stonework below. It was proposed that the reredos be partially dismantled to allow these issues to be addressed and the reredos then rebuilt and cleaned with missing stonework and painted detail restored. Work commenced in early June 2025 and involved cleaning of the stonework and the removal of the painted panels for restoration. Following the completion of the conservation work at the studio the reredos was reconstructed at the beginning of September 2025.



¹ Interior of St Peter's Church, Grandborough, looking east. 1910s Image Location: (Warwickshire County Record Office)

2.0 Description²

The history of St Peter's has been summarised by historian Iain Soden:

"The first church in Grandborough may have been a late Saxon chapel, held by Leofric, Earl of Mercia and his legendary wife, "Lady Godiva". They gave Grandborough and the surrounding land to St Mary's Benedictine Priory, Coventry. Robert de Limesey, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield gave considerable Priory Lands in Grandborough to his daughter Celestria and to her husband Noel, possibly as a dowry before 1100. The church almost certainly went with this and the gift was later ratified by Prior Lawrence to Noel and Celestria's son Robert, who is said to be the founder of Grandborough Church. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the tomb, which originally stood where the organ is currently positioned, was "the founder's tomb", and is now located outside under the east window of the chancel.

The present church dates from about the middle and the tower from about the end of the 14th century. There was also a "Chapel of the Blessed Mary of Grandborough" in the medieval period, which may not have been a separate church, but is likely to have been a Lady Chapel within the present church. Originally the church was dedicated to St Paul and this dedication was still in force up to 1730 but by 1743 it had been changed to St Peter's."

Behind the altar at the east end of the chancel stands an ornate English Gothic Revival reredos. Carved from Caen stone and erected in 1849 the reredos measures 2.9 m W x 2.3m H (9'6" x 7'7") and encloses four ornately painted tablets painted with (from left to right) the Lord's Prayer, the Decalogue and Creed. The painted tablets measure 47cm W x 84cm H (c. 18" x 2'7") and are painted with an off-white ground and black letter or Gothic text. Ornately decorated rubrics³ are executed in gold and spaces between the text are painted with stylised floral designs in red and green. Although the reredos can be found in many English parish churches each is unique and that at St Peter's is a very fine example, albeit a rather deteriorated one in its present condition.



² The history of St Peter's was revised in February 2014 by historian, Iain Soden see <http://www.stpetersgrandborough.co.uk/stpetersstory.pdf>

³ A rubric is a word or section of text that is traditionally written in red ink for emphasis. The word derives from the Latin rubrica, meaning red ochre or red chalk.

2.1 Listing⁴

Entry Name: Church of St Peter	Listing Date: 6 October 1960	Grade: II*	Source: Historic England
Source ID: 1034911	English Heritage Legacy ID: 308721	Location: Grandborough, Rugby, Warwickshire, CV23 8DV	
County: Warwickshire	Civil Parish: Grandborough	Lieutenancy Area (Ceremonial County): Warwickshire	
Traditional County: Warwickshire	C of E Parish: Grandborough St Peter	C of E Diocese: Coventry	

Listing Text

GRANDBOROUGH CHURCH ROAD (East side) Church of St. Peter 06/10/60 GV II*

Church. Mid C14; tower late C14. Tower restored 1848. Church restored 1862; clerestory added 1863. Nave roof restored 1879. Squared coursed red sandstone. Tower of limestone ashlar. Tile roofs, chancel of C20 tile; nave and aisle lean-to roofs have coped gable parapets with kneelers. Chancel, aisled nave, north chancel aisle, west tower. Decorated style with reticulated and other tracery, mostly with hood moulds. 3-bay chancel, 2-bay chancel aisle. 4-bay nave and aisles. Chancel has diagonal and 2 south buttresses of 2 offsets. 4-light east window has intersecting tracery. Tomb recess below has re-used C12/C13 moulded Romanesque arch and upper parts of shafts and colonnettes, and remains of gable. South doorway of 2 chamfered and moulded orders with C19 plank door. 3-light western window with blocked low-side window below, and 2-light windows.

North window has Y-tracery. Aisles have diagonal and other buttresses of one offset. 3-light east windows. North and south doorways of 4 moulded orders and hood moulds with foliage stops. C19 double-leaf doors to south, old plank door to north. 2-light eastern and south aisle west windows have curvilinear tracery. Western windows have Y-tracery. North aisle has straight-headed 2-light north and west windows with hood moulds and head stops. Clerestory has trefoil lights. Perpendicular tower of 3 stages. Double splayed plinth. Diagonal buttresses of 5 offsets. Moulded string courses. West doorway of 2 chamfered orders. C19 double-leaf doors. Second stage has deep-set 3-light window with splayed sill merging with string course. Third stage has clock in moulded stone surround. Paired 2-light bell openings have transom with blind tracery below. Continuous hood mould. Cornice and moulded embattled parapet. Fine recessed spire. North and south sides have chamfered straight-headed light instead of clock face. South side has canted stair projection in 2 staggered sections, the upper rising from south aisle roof. Interior is plastered. Chancel roof has medieval elements, with moulded tie beams and carved

⁴ <https://britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/101034911-church-of-st-peter-grandborough>

bosses, cusped arched braces and curved scissor braced rafters. Trefoiled ogee piscina. 2-bay north arcade has octagonal pier and responds to upper part only. C19 lancet opening to west. Arches of 2 chamfered orders with octagonal piers and half-octagonal responds throughout. Chancel arch has responds to inner order only. 4-bay arcades have splayed bases and moulded capitals. C19 moulded arched brace roof. Higher tower arch has responds to inner order only. Timber rib vault. South aisle has fragments of piscina. Aisle roofs, mostly C19, have moulded beams and rib. Wide chancel aisle arch. Fittings: elaborate mid C19 stone reredos with texts. C18 altar rails have column-on-vase balusters and fluted newel posts. Pulpit said to be C17 (V.C.H.) has traceried openwork. Brass corona of c.1862. Mid C19 stalls and pews. Mid C19 octagonal font has moulded base and top with traceried frieze.

Sources: V.C.H. Warwickshire, Vol. VI, pp.97-99; Buildings of England: Warwickshire, p.296; Kelly's Directory of Warwickshire, 1892, p.101

Listing NGR: SP4924266996

2.2 The Reredos - 1849

The very fine elaborately carved reredos is in the form of a Caen stone Gothic arcade with four cusped ogee arched openings enclosing four painted panels depicting the Lord's Prayer, Decalogue and Creed. The reredos was erected in 1849 below the east window and is ornately carved with four crocketed arches and four pinnacles between these and at each end. The pinnacles are richly decorated with stylised acanthus leaves and animal heads.

In the centre there is a representation of a stylised tree of life with a carving of *The Pelican in its Piety* (see photo right) pecking at her breast and so drawing blood to feed her five young chicks. The depiction of the pelican wounding herself for the sake of her young became symbolic of the redemption of Jesus Christ and his sacrificial death and resurrection.

The four zinc tablets and are painted with an off-white ground, probably in imitation of the Caen stone, the inscriptions executed in black letter or Gothic text. The decoration appears to have been executed on the panels in lean oil with gilding. The text is decorated with stylised floral designs in red and green and ornately decorated rubrics are executed in red and gold.



3.0 Condition

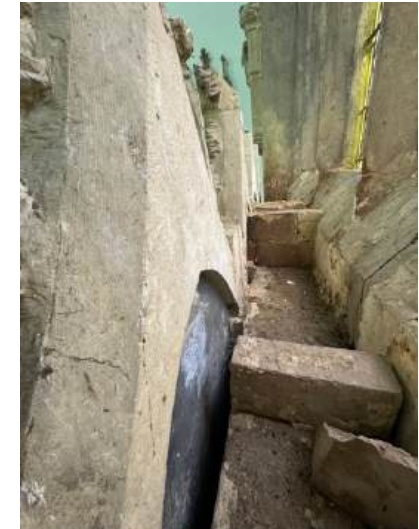
The reredos had suffered damage due to minor localised structural movement, there were cracks beneath both the northernmost and southernmost panels of the east window (see *photo upper right*), and an apparent forward movement at the top had resulted in cracking to the front of the uprights in places (see *photo below right*). The reason for the forward movement was thought to be corrosion of iron cramps within the structure. On dismantling the reredos the cramps became evident, with the expansion of the rusting iron exerting pressure on the stonework of the upper arcade.

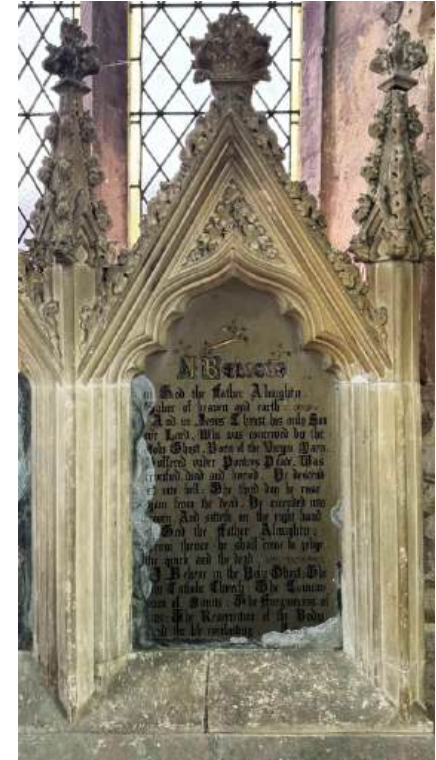
The source of the humidity problems was not immediately evident and although past issues with damp were evident in the chancel, which has had much of its plaster removed up to a height of 2m to expose the stone, the building appeared to be dry. There is no obvious evidence of water ingress and the source of the humidity appeared instead to be condensation forming on the east window running off onto the sill below and penetrating the rear of the reredos where the Caen stone mullions were in contact with the wall.

The reredos appeared to be partially secured to the east wall up to sill level behind each of the five uprights. The painted panels were loose-fitting, in slots within the stonework, with gaps between them and the earlier wall structure behind. Each was held in place by simply having been wedged at the rear with a brick at the top of each panel (see *photo upper right*).

On dismantling the reredos it was discovered that 3mm thick zinc panels were used for the painted texts. However, where the fronts of the panels were in contact with the adjacent Caen stone structure and where this has been affected by damp humidity has been transferred to the paint layer resulting in localised losses around the lower edges and at the sides up to the level of the arches. The arches themselves are above the level of the windowsill at the rear and so have not been adversely affected by damp and paint loss in the same manner.

The humidity had caused soluble salts to mobilise within the wall structure and the resulting surface efflorescence had caused both a whitening of the surface and localised damage to the stonework (see *photo below right*). The humidity and salts had caused significant paint losses around the edges of the panels, but otherwise the surviving paint layer appeared to be relatively stable. The surface was very discoloured and generally dirty and there were obvious urine splash marks as a result from bat activity. High quantities of fresh bat droppings throughout the building indicated the presence of a large and active colony of bats living within the church.





Note the damage had mainly occurred across the central areas of the reredos, at the level of the painted panels, where affected by high humidity and salt efflorescence in the past. The plain stone base and upper arcading, crockets and pinnacles had been less affected but had retained relatively higher levels of surface dirt and grime. The upper elements of the structure making up the pinnacles were loose in many places and one of the acanthus leaf carvings at the top was missing from the pinnacle between the Lord's Prayer and the first Decalogue panel.

4.0 Conservation Treatment

The reredos had suffered localised damage and it was agreed that it be carefully cleaned, repaired and conserved. The primary issue appeared to be related to past issues with humidity and its adverse effects on both the stonework and the paint layers. The issue appears, in part, to be linked with the formation of condensation on the east window, running off onto the windowsill and lower east wall and it has been proposed that the leaded windows be fitted with drip trays, discharging to the exterior to reduce the risk associated with this in future.

Humidity within the east wall had transferred to the reredos where the two were in contact, primarily where the mullions met the wall across the centre of the structure. It was therefore agreed that the reredos be temporarily dismantled to allow corroded iron fixings to be replaced with a corrosion resistant alternative and for stone repairs to be carried out.

It was agreed that the upper and central portions of the limestone structure be temporarily dismantled to allow the removal of the four painted panels for conservation and restoration at our studio. Once access to the rear of the central structure was possible the condition of the wall behind was assessed and appropriate repairs made to missing areas of pointing, rebuilding areas damaged by the corroded iron fixings and measures taken to minimise future transfer of humidity to the reverse of the reredos. The introduction of a simple damp proof membrane (DPM) behind the mullions was sufficient to isolate the wall from the stone reredos. The corroded iron fixings for the mullions were replaced with stainless steel threaded bar fixing secured with Resapol RBS P400C styrenated polyester resin.

The limestone elements were detached and repaired on site, with lime-based mortar repairs carried out during reassembly of the structure. Cracked and splitting elements currently detaching from the fronts of the uprights were re-adhered using Elkay marble and stone adhesive.

The conservation work required the altar to be temporarily moved forward so that a scaffold could be erected to facilitate access above and to the rear. Moving the large later altar forward high-lighted the negative impact it has on the appreciation of the 1849 reredos. The large box-like structure, a later replacement for the significantly smaller Victorian altar (see *B&W photo on p.1*) covers a significant proportion of the lower carvings and text.

The general overall appearance of the stonework of the reredos was very patchy and uneven and it was agreed that it be cleaned. Areas of superficial deposits such as dust, plus candle wax, etc. were carefully removed mechanically and then the surface was cleaned of ingrained grime using a Derotor steam cleaner. After cleaning areas of loss were repaired as detailed below and cracks filled and toned in to match the existing finishes.

The following conservation treatments were carried out using a range of materials and methodologies listed below in no particular preference:

- 4.1 Assessment A further assessment of the nature, extent and causes of damage or deterioration was carried out as part of preliminary documentation ahead of any conservation treatment.
- 4.2 Surface cleaning Superficial cleaning was carried out to remove accumulated dust and dirt. Surface deposits such as candle wax were carefully removed using mechanical methods (small spatulas, scalpel, etc.) in combination with solvents such as white spirit applied and cleared using cotton wool swabs.
- The painted surfaces were cleaned using deionised water in combination with other cleaning solutions to remove ingrained dirt, bat urine stains, etc. from the decoration on the painted panels. The cleaning mixes included white spirit (to remove wax), tri-ammonium citrate solutions (5% in deionised water) and deionised water with 5% non-ionic detergent Synperonic-A7⁵.
- The limestone structure was carefully cleaned to obtain a more even overall appearance using a Derotor Steam cleaner⁶. This was carried out in advance of the reassembly of the pieces of the reredos so that new lime-based repairs could be matched in to the cleaned surface during reconstruction.

⁵ Synperonic A7 is a water-soluble non-ionic surfactant. A 100% active alcohol ethoxylate of a fully saturated C13/C15 alcohol. Like its predecessor, Synperonic N, it is an effective wetting agent, surfactant, emulsifying and dispersing agent. It is widely used as a mild detergent in powder detergents and heavy-duty liquids. It is generally used for the removal of tar and ground-in grime.

Synperonic A7 An alcohol ethoxylate, 100% active solution which like its predecessor. Synperonic A7 was introduced to replace the original 27% active N grade which is widely and successfully used for a variety of conservation processes including as a detergent, wetting agent, surfactant, emulsifying and dispersing agent. Synperonic A7 is a 100% active alcohol ethoxylate and like its predecessor, Synperonic N, it is a mild detergent generally used for the removal of tar and ground-in grime. In conservation it has also been used as a wetting agent and to eradicate ground-in stains on a variety of substrates including textiles, paper, chinaware and porcelain, encaustic floor and fireplace tiles, and glass. Synperonic A7 is readily biodegradable

⁶ The Derotor Steam Cleaner offers highly controllable cleaning with steam, heat and pressure providing a gentle, chemical free, method to clean surfaces. This portable machine does not saturate the object. The handle and nozzle which emits jets of steam, connected by hose from the machine, is directed at the object's surface to remove ingrained dirt in cracks, textured surfaces and to help soften previous restoration adhesive. Conservators find these units useful for various works in stone, sculpture, archaeological, wall papers and other areas of conservation.

- 4.3 Surface repair Where necessary minor pitting to the surface of the painted panels was filled with Flügger™⁷ before priming and retouching
- 4.4 Retouching Localised retouching of the losses to the painted panels was carried out using Golden™ Artist's Acrylics⁸. Several types of finish are available and appropriate levels of matte or gloss were determined after the surface had been cleaned. .
- 4.5 Regilding It was necessary to regild some of the missing ornate lettering on the panels. Tests were carried out to determine the type of gold leaf – 23¾ carat – with the closest colour match to the existing gilding. Smaller losses and scratches were retouched using Colibri⁹ gold powders to match the existing finish.
- 4.6 Stone repair There were several areas where the Caen stone frame was missing or damaged. Where the form was missing completely areas of loss were repaired with a repair mix comprising Portland stone powder, plus silver sand and NHL 3.5 hydraulic lime (3:1:2 ratio).
- One of the acanthus leaf carvings at the top of the pinnacle between the Lord's Prayer and the first Decalogue pane was missing. The lost the piece was replaced with a new carving in Lepine limestone to match the existing acanthus leaf carvings.
- As part of the rebuilding of the reredos repairs to the wall were made using a lime-based mortar comprising sharp sand : Charing building sand : Lafarge NHL 3.5 (2:1:1 ratio). The pointing mix for the stone work was Portland stone dust : silver sand : Lafarge NHL 3.5 (2:1:1 ratio).

Thomas Organ ACR

3 September 2025

⁷ Flügger™ - a reversible acrylic filler with low shrinkage consisting of a calcium carbonate aggregate with a butyl methacrylate binder

⁸ Golden™ Acrylics are high quality artist's paints made using powdered earth and mineral pigments in a pure acrylic binder.

⁹ Colibri iridescent pigments are based on mica (Muscovite - hydrous potassium aluminium silicate - a type of natural quartz in the form of thin sheets) which has been coated with iron oxide and/or titanium white to produce a range of gold silver and copper shades. Unlike many other gold substitutes they are stable to light and do not tarnish or oxidise. Available as Lascaux Perlacryl and Kremer Iriodin® water colour.



Plate 1 - St Peter's Church Grandborough

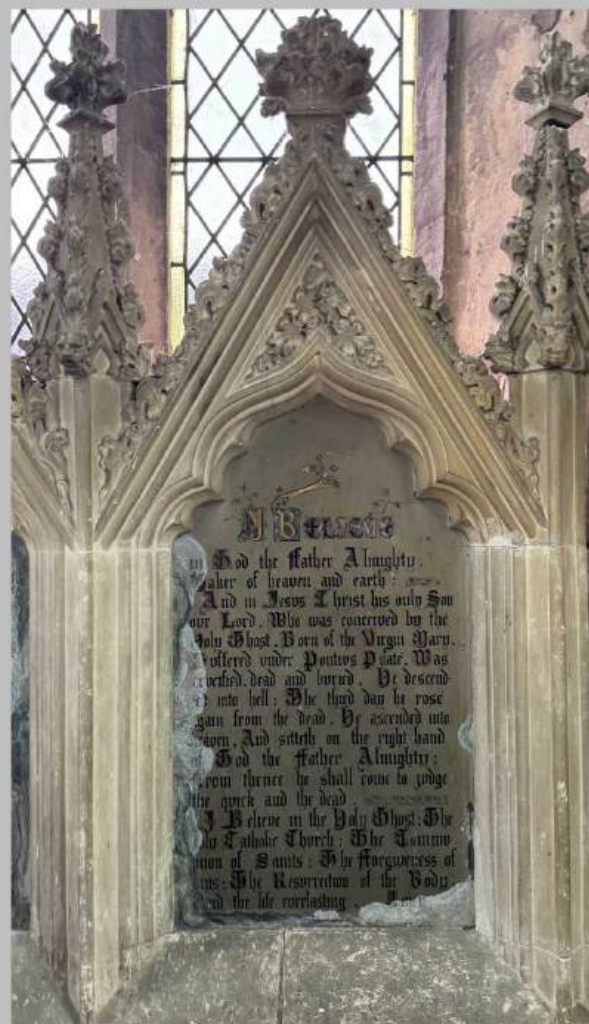
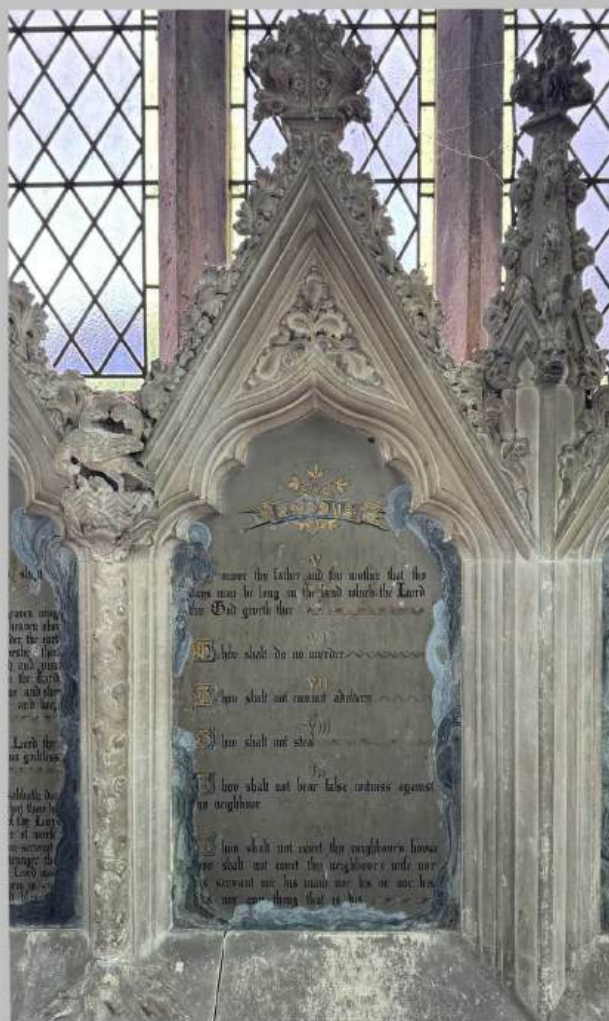
The reredos at the east end of the chancel before conservation

Photos Copyright©2024 Tom Organ



Plates 2-3 - St Peter's Church Grandborough - 1849 Reredos

Details showing the condition of the Lord's Prayer and Ten Commandment panels which have suffered paint loss due to damp where in contact with the Caen stone surrounds



Plates 4-5 - St Peter's Church Grandborough - 1849 Reredos

Details showing the condition of the Ten Commandment and Creed panels which have suffered paint loss due to damp where in contact with the Caen stone surrounds



Plates 6-8 - St Peter's Church Grandborough - 1849 Reredos

Details showing the Pelican in her Piety (centre) with localised areas of damage to Caen stone mullions caused by rusting iron cramps within the structure and areas of paint loss at the edges of the panels

Photos Copyright©2024 Tom Organ



Plates 9-11 - St Peter's Church, Grandborough - 1849 Reredos

The damage to the reredos is centred along the line where it meets the east wall

At the rear the painted panels are held in place with brick wedges
Where the mullions meet the wall moisture transfer has caused the iron cramps to corrode with expansion tipping the stone arcade forwards

Photos Copyright©2024 Tom Organ



Plates 12-14 - St Peter's Church, Grandborough - 1849 Reredos

During the dismantling of the reredos the upper arches are removed and carefully steam cleaned using a Derator steam generator, the painted panels are gently lifted out and the mullions removed to reveal the loose rubble wall construction behind



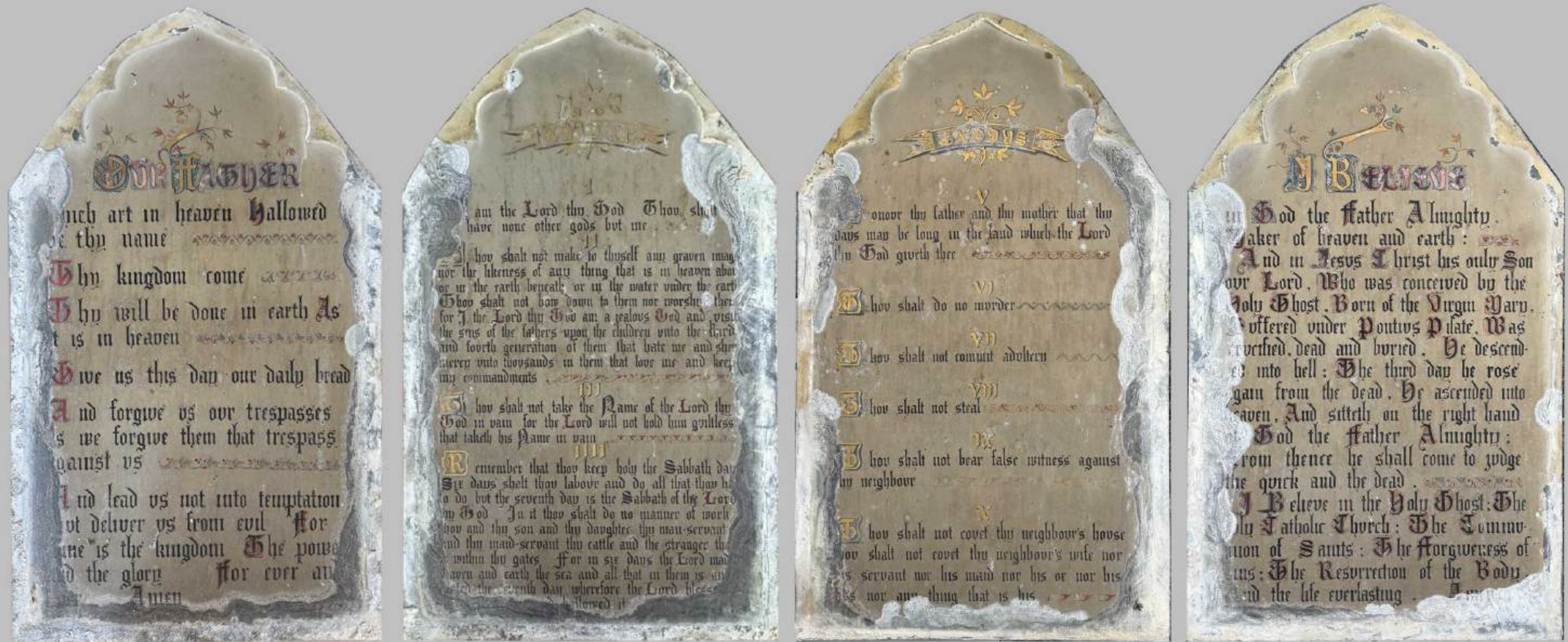
Photos Copyright©2025 Tom Organ



Plates 15-17 - St Peter's Church, Grandborough - 1849 Reredos

After dismantling the reredos each piece is carefully steam cleaned using a Derator steam generator to remove ingrained sooty dirt and waxy deposits from candles

Photos Copyright©2025 Tom Organ



Plates 18-21 - St Peter's Church, Grandborough - 1849 Reredos

The four painted zinc panels at the studio prior to treatment
 after removal from the reredos

Photos Copyright©2025 Tom Organ

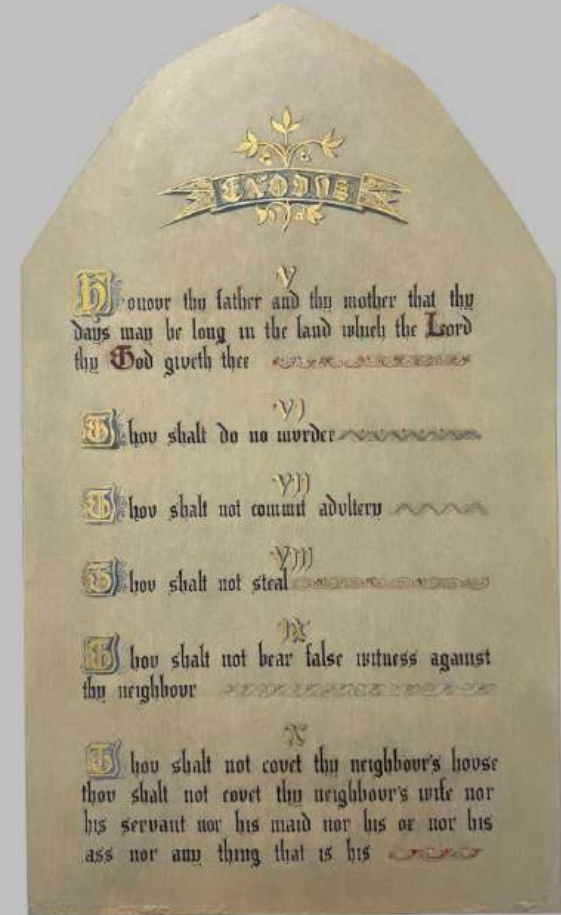
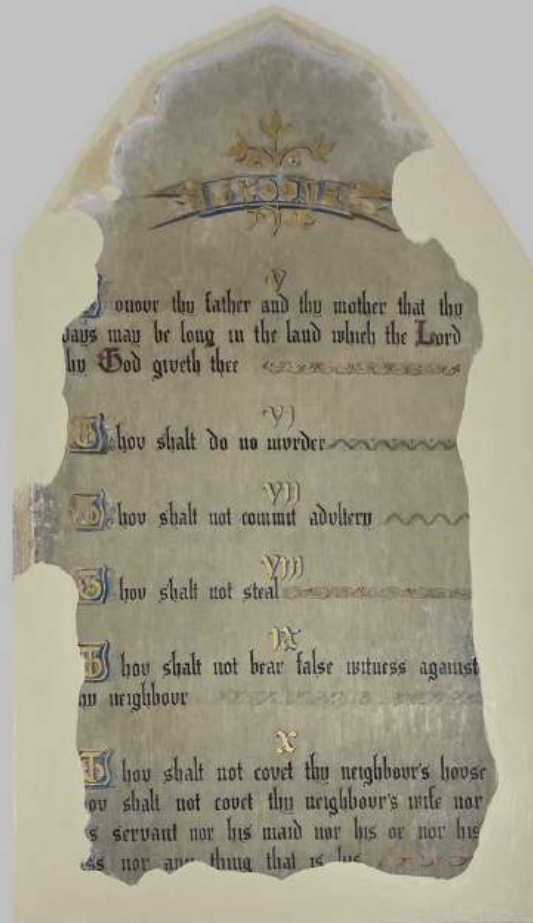


Plates 22-26 - St Peter's Church, Grandborough - 1849 Reredos

The Lord's Prayer during cleaning to remove ingrained dirt, which reveals deep staining and dark splash marks (centre above) within the background colour as a result of bat activity. Further cleaning tests indicate that retouching the background is the only viable option to disguise the dark splash marks (right)



Photos Copyright©2025 Tom Organ



Plates 27-30 - St Peter's Church, Grandborough - 1849 Reredos

The painted zinc panels are cleaned and stripped of corroded material
holes are filled and a tinted background primer is applied before
areas of loss are reconstructed, with text copied from the original





Plate 31 - St Peter's Church, Grandborough - 1849 Reredos

The cleaned and restored panels are placed within the loosely fixed mullions and positions adjusted before securing the stone

Photos Copyright©2025 Tom Organ



Plate 32 - St Peter's Church, Grandborough - 1849 Reredos

After fixing the mullions securely the stone arches are reinstated

Photos Copyright©2025 Tom Organ



Plate 33 - St Peter's Church, Grandborough - 1849 Reredos

The reredos after cleaning and conservation

Photos Copyright©2025 Tom Organ



Plate 34-35 - St Peter's Church, Grandborough

The restored reredos and the view circa 1910 (right) when a smaller Victorian altar was in place. The Victorian structure was incorporated into the present 1927 altar

Photo above Copyright©2025 Tom Organ

Photo Right - Interior of St Peter's Church, Grandborough, looking east. 1910s
IMAGE LOCATION: (Warwickshire County Record Office)



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