

Assignment 4: Critical Reflection of Roles and Responsibilities

In 2020, an archaeological building recording was undertaken along Park Street, Old Hatfield, Hertfordshire (Podbury and Prosser 2020). The project was undertaken prior to the conversion of a dilapidated building into three flats. As specified within the project brief (Tinniswood 2018), and WSI (AS 2020), the project was to conform with the standards published by both ClfA (2020) and Historic England (2016). During observations following interventions to the fabric of the Grade II Listed Building, a well-preserved late 16th or early 17th century wall-painting was discovered. A series of professional and ethical judgements, in addition to interactions with colleagues and stakeholders, were made during the project that will be assessed against the aforementioned guidance, my moral principles, and the *Code of Conduct: Professional Ethics in Archaeology* by ClfA (2021). The pertinent sections of the *Code of Conduct* (ClfA 2021) and standing building guidelines (ClfA 2020) are reproduced in Appendix 1 and 2, respectively.

During the preparation stage of the project, I was conscious that my skills were perhaps below an acceptable level to conduct a Level 3 survey of a known multi-phased and timber-framed inn of probable 17th century origin (Fig.1). As noted by ClfA (2021), practitioners should not undertake an archaeological project that lies beyond their competence (Appendix 1.1.a). Although I was unaware of such guidance, I suggested to the Director of Archaeological Solutions (AS) that we employ the external historic building consultant we regularly worked alongside; this request was subsequently granted. The resultant project hierarchy, as defined within the WSI (AS 2021), is shown within Appendix 3. My role within the project was to conduct the on-site analysis in collaboration with the external consultant, produce the resultant report, report to AS management, and liaise with the relevant stakeholders.

The initial investigation identified previously unknown traces of domestic wall-paintings (Fig. 2-4). The identification of the remains was relayed to the building contractor, developer, and Conservation Officer (CO) immediately following the discovery. Importantly, the project brief noted that all interventions to the historic fabric that exposed further archaeological information must be recorded (Tinniswood 2018). As such, it was relayed to the contractors which parts of the development that could expose further historic fabric, and that any interventions must be reported to myself.



Fig.1: External view of 1-5 Park Street, Old Hatfield, Hertfordshire (Podbury and Prosser 2021: 34)



Fig.2: Fragmentary wall-painting above blocked-up fireplace – left (Podbury and Prosser 2020: 46)



Fig.3: Fragmentary wall-painting of fireplace return – right (Podbury and Prosser 2020: 47)



Fig.4: Fragmentary wall-painting above cupboard (Podbury and Prosser 2020: 47)

Subsequently, I received an email from the developer showing photos of a further wall-painting encountered during alterations (Fig.5). I informed the contractor and developer that all further alterations in this area were to cease and that the area should be protected prior to further inspection. I forwarded the photographs to the CO and a meeting between the relevant stakeholders – the developer, CO, and building contractor – was subsequently scheduled. The request for an indefinite cessation of works was a point of contention with the developer as this considerably affected the scheduled works, especially as a doorway was originally planned to pierce the associated wall. This suspension was, however, justified in a professional and ethical context. ClfA (2020) standing building guidance states that “archaeologist shall not cause *unreasonable* disruption to the maintenance of the work schedules of other contractors” (Appendix 2.1). If such a suspension in this area was not implemented, the painting may have been damaged – causing harm to the public and the profession via the loss of irreplaceable information. This would have been a direct contradiction of Principle 2 of the ClfA (2021) code of conduct (Appendix 1.2.a).

Although I was at the time unaware of such documentation, this decision also adhered to guidance within *Wall Paintings: Anticipating and Responding to their Discovery by Historic England* (2018). In hindsight, following the original discovery of the fragmentary wall-

painting, I should have sourced such guidance – this perhaps highlights that I was not adequately prepared, as necessitated by the *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2021) (Appendix 1.3.a)



Fig.5: The area of the wall-painting exposed by the building contractor (Podbury and Prosser 2020: 50)

During the secondary monitoring visit, a discussion occurred between myself and the building contractor about unveiling more of the wall-painting prior to the visit by the CO. Understandably, the contractors were excited to uncover more of the wall-painting they had discovered. Their keenness was perhaps bolstered by the ‘inevitability’ of the painting being eventually revealed, and that doing so at that time would speed up the archaeological recording project and wider development. To much frustration, however, I informed the contractor and developer to wait until the meeting as such efforts were not covered in their Listed Building Consent (LBC). Indeed, such a ‘destructive investigation’ would have contravened their LBC and breached CIfA (2020) guidelines (Appendix 2.2). Furthermore, the 18th century fabric overlying the wall-painting is significant historic fabric in its own right; any non-permitted damage to this fabric under my supervision would be unethical. This decision – while causing ‘harm’ to the developers’ timescale – protected them from legal ramifications and protected the wall-painting from potential damage.

Two weeks after the monitoring visit, the meeting with the CO occurred, by which time the development was essentially finished except in the area of the wall-painting. With permission from the CO, the overlying 18th century fabric was removed to reveal a rare grotesque wall-painting (Fig.6). It was at this point that the most salient judgements were required. As noted above, a door to a separate flat was originally intended to pierce the wall-painting. During the meeting, all agreed that the location of the door must change; all were not, however, in agreement as to where to place the new doorway. I was then asked by the CO during the meeting to identify areas of 'lesser significance' to position the door, which caused the developer great annoyance as their preferred options were being somewhat 'disregarded'. Not only was this request beyond the scope of our involvement in the project – we were to compile a lasting investigative record rather than formulate a strategy for conservation – I was asked to make meaningful decisions that would impact the already significantly delayed project of the client by whom we were employed. I, however, thought it was my moral obligation to assist in the protection of the wall-painting.

Ultimately, I suggested that the door should pierce an area of 19th century lath and plaster. This caused tension with the client as they had wanted it to be positioned in an area of 18th century lath and plaster, which was known not to be covering further wall-paintings. Although I acted with integrity and this decision conserved the heritage asset, in line with the professional standards (Appendix 1.2.a), upon reflection, I would perhaps have approached the situation differently. In hindsight, I may have tentatively concurred with the developer. Arguably, the demolition of a small section of 18th century lath and plaster – of which much was surviving throughout the building – would not have caused *significant* harm via loss of irreplaceable fabric. The positioning of the door in the area of the 19th century fabric meant that considerable alteration to the floor plan of development had to occur, and that the resultant floor plan was somewhat impractical – causing harm to the developer who had already been subject to significant interruptions, and arguably to those who would ultimately live within the developments, for relatively little benefit.



Fig.6: The exposed grotesque domestic wall-painting (Podbury and Prosser 2020: 49)

The discovery of the wall-painting and the resultant lengthy site visits meant that the archaeological project was considerably over budget. Considering the intrinsic significance of the wall-painting, I liaised with the project manager and director to ascertain whether further resources could be recuperated and assigned to the project; my request for funds was not granted. Although I was confident that the investigation would adhere to the ClfA (2020) standing building guidance (Appendix 2), using the appropriate methods and satisfying the stated aims of the project, I was unhappy that the detail of the recording was commensurate with its significance. Fortunately, we informed fellow member of the Vernacular Architecture Group (VAG), Dr Kirkham, about the discovery. As a regionally recognised domestic wall-painting specialist, she agreed to analyse the feature on-site and produce a description of the painting at no cost. Although this undoubtedly produces ethical and moral problems with regards to the lack of remuneration, this act meant that the project had input by a qualified expert (Appendix 1.1.a) and illustrates the benefits of communicating new findings to relevant specialists (Appendix 1.4.a). In compiling the final report, however, I believe I made an ethical and professional mistake. While I certainly named Dr Kirkham within the text, in retrospect I would have made her input clearer and credited her with an authorship. Although this omission was an oversight as opposed to a conscious decision, it contravened with the *Code of Conduct* (ClfA 2021) (Appendix 1.1.b) and was unfair to Dr Kirkham.

Notwithstanding the invaluable input of Dr Kirkham, I still believe – in the context of ethics and integrity – that the significance of the wall-painting necessitated further analysis, especially as the painting was to be sealed for posterity by the developer with permission from the CO. Our understanding of the wall-paintings would have benefited from a range of methods: for example, infrared reflectography could have clarified the form of the fragmentary wall-paintings (Falcone *et al* 2007; Catapano *et al* 2020) (Fig.7); and pigment analysis, could have aided our understanding of painting techniques and the relative expense of the artwork (Edwards *et al* 2002; Bruder *et al* 2007). In hindsight, I should have attempted to gain research grants to fund such analysis, perhaps like those offered by the VAG (2021). I believe in not doing so, the produced resource for study and enjoyment by the public and academic community was lacking.

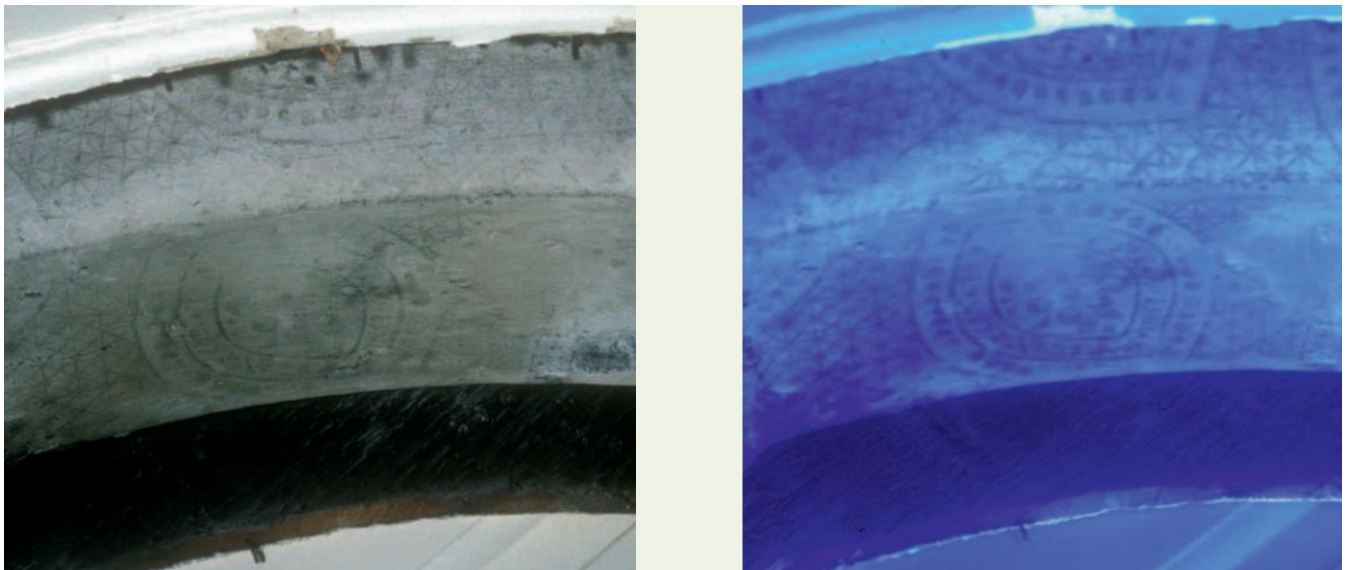


*Fig.7: An example of the benefits of infrared reflectography in relation to wall-painting
(Historic England 2018)*

Although following the *Code of Conduct* (ClfA 2021) (Appendix 1.4.b & 1.2.a), with an archive being created, the accessibility of the archive is certainly inadequate. While I fulfilled the brief, I believe that I should have made it publicly accessible through an online platform, such as the Archaeology Data Service (ADS). Archives are a ‘moral imperative’ in the context of ‘preservation by record’ (Swain 2012), and without such an easily accessible online archive, the impact of the archaeological record may be restricted. Online deposition of the archive is planned for the future. Regardless, the discovery was widely disseminated and directly communicated to Historic England – who subsequently upgraded the listing to Grade II* and extensively publicised the finding (BBC 2020; Historic England 2020). Subsequently, I received requests from the likes of Oxford Archaeology and MOLA for high-resolution photographs and reports. Although I was conflicted as to whether I should share the photographs prior to publication, I obliged as there would be a significant delay in publication and the discovery could make substantial contributions to the domestic wall-painting specialism. Fortunately, this decision was consistent with professional responsibilities noted by ClfA (2021) (Appendix 1.4.c).

While the ‘grey literature’ report for the release of the planning condition was completed to a satisfactory standard (Appendix 1.3.b & 1.3.c), there was no budgetary scope for a publication within a peer-reviewed journal. The problems related to the publication were compounded by the takeover of my employer, Archaeological Solutions, by Wardell Armstrong. This meant a change in priorities away from the wall-painting and the redirection

of resources. Such a transfer of commitments, from an ethical viewpoint, does not permit the negation of my moral and professional duty to publish the significant findings. The *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2021) notes that individuals are responsible for “publication of data derived from projects under their control”; however, both the company Director and Project Manager retired shortly after the completion of the grey literature report. As such, the publication is now my responsibility. Currently, Dr Prosser and I are compiling an article for the *Vernacular Architecture* journal during out of work hours, due to the lack of resources. Although it has been more than two years since the discovery, it is intended to publish the article well before the ten-year time frame specified by CIfA (2021) (Appendix 1.4.d).

A series of ethical and professional judgements were made in relation to the historic building investigation. Many of the judgements were necessitated by conflicts and contradictions inherent within developer-led archaeology – largely focused on timescale and budgetary constraints. Although alternative options are unclear and beyond the scope of this paper, within developer-led archaeology decisions are often based on the minimisation of cost as opposed to the quality of results and the dissemination of findings (Zorzin 2015: 126). While this dynamic is reasonably addressed within the *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2021), power relations and the primacy of the generation of profit mean that ethical and professional decisions are somewhat constrained. Regardless, I made a series of judgements which I would change in retrospect – these flawed decisions likely reflect my relative inexperience and my ignorance of the *Code of Conduct* (CIfA 2021) and the minutiae of the relevant standards.

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Appendix 1

The relevant sections of the *Code of Conduct: Professional Ethics in Archaeology* (ClfA 2021) are reproduced below:

1. Principle 1

- a. A member shall not undertake archaeological work for which they are not adequately qualified. A member shall have regard to their skills, proficiencies and capabilities and to the maintenance and enhancement of these through appropriate training and learning experiences. A voting member shall ensure that they carry out a minimum of 50 hours of continual professional development activity in any two-year period and shall be able to provide evidence of this to the Institute on request and according to such procedures required by the Board of Directors. A member shall inform current or prospective employers or clients of inadequacies in their qualifications for any work which may be proposed; they may of course seek to minimise such inadequacies by acquiring additional expertise, by seeking the advice or involvement of associates or consultants, or by arranging for modifications of the work involved; similar considerations apply where a member, during the course of a project, encounters problems which lie beyond their competence at that time. They should ensure in all cases that adequate support, whether of advice, personnel or facilities, has been arranged for any historic environment project in which they may become involved.
- b. A member shall give appropriate credit for work done by others and shall not commit plagiarism in oral or written communication, and shall not enter into conduct that might unjustifiably injure the reputation of another archaeologist.

2. Principle 2

- a. A member shall strive to conserve archaeological sites and material as a resource for study and enjoyment now and in the future and shall encourage others to do the same. Where such conservation is not possible they shall seek to ensure the creation and maintenance of an adequate record through appropriate forms of research, recording, archiving of records and other relevant material, and dissemination of results.

3. Principle 3

- a. A member shall prepare adequately for any project they may undertake.

- b. The member shall conduct their work in such a way that reliable information about the past may be acquired, and shall ensure that the results be properly recorded.
- c. A member shall ensure that the record resulting from their work is prepared in a comprehensible, readily usable and durable form.

4. Principle 4

- a. A member shall communicate and cooperate with colleagues having common archaeological interests and give due respect to colleagues' interests in, and rights to information about sites, areas, collections or data where there is a shared field of concern, whether active or potentially so.
- b. A member shall accurately and without undue delay prepare and properly disseminate an appropriate record of work done under their control, which may include the deposition of primary records and unpublished material in an accessible public archive. A member shall not initiate, take part in or support work which materially damages the historic environment unless reasonably prompt and appropriate analysis and reporting can be expected. Where results are felt to be substantial contributions to knowledge or to the advancement of theory, method or technique, they shall be communicated as soon as reasonably possible to colleagues and others by means of letters, lectures, reports to meetings or interim publications, especially where full publication is likely to be significantly delayed.
- c. A member shall honour requests from colleagues or students for information on the results of research or projects if consistent with their prior rights to publication and with their other archaeological responsibilities. Archaeologists receiving such information shall observe such prior rights, remembering that laws of copyright may also apply.
- d. A member is responsible for the analysis and publication of data derived from projects under their control. While the member exercises this responsibility they shall enjoy consequent rights of primacy. However, failure to prepare or publish the results within 10 years of completion of the fieldwork shall be construed as a waiver of such rights, unless such failure can reasonably be attributed to circumstances beyond the member's control. It is accepted that the movement of archaeologists from one employment to another raises problems of responsibility for the publication of projects. This ultimate responsibility for publication of a piece of work must be determined either by the contract of employment through which the work was undertaken, or by

agreement with the original promoter of the work. It is the responsibility of the member, either as employer or employee, to establish a satisfactory agreement on this issue at the outset of work.

Appendix 2

The relevant sections of the *Standard and Guidance for the Archaeological Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings or Structures* (ClfA 2020) are reproduced below. The Standard, the key section of the document, stated that: “A programme of archaeological building investigation and recording will determine, as far as is reasonably possible, the nature of the archaeological resource associated with a specified building, structure or complex. It will draw on existing records (both archaeological and historical sources) and fieldwork. It will be undertaken using appropriate methods and practices which satisfy the stated aims of the project, and which comply with the Code of Conduct, and other relevant regulations and by-laws of ClfA. The programme will result in the production of drawings, an ordered accessible archive and a report”.

1. “Where the archaeologist has, by instruction or agreement, the power to suspend development or repair work, he or she shall, in exercising such power, follow procedures previously agreed with the other contractors on the site. Within the constraints of the nature of the archaeological resource, the archaeologist shall not cause unreasonable disruption to the maintenance of the work schedules of other contractors.”
2. “In the planning and execution of destructive investigations where there is no immediate threat to the archaeological resource, the archaeologist must ensure that the investigation causes the minimum damage or destruction necessary to meet the stated research aims of the project. Be aware Scheduled Monument or Listed Building Consent may be required.”

Appendix 3

The project hierarchy as defined within the *Written Scheme of Investigation* (AS 2020), with the later addition of Dr Allison Kirkham mid-project:

