

PEOPLE' S HISTORY MUSEUM
TEXTILE CONSERVATION STUDIO

CONSERVATION REPORT AND ESTIMATE

Conservation No: TCSOC119

ST. LEONAR'S CHURCH, DOWNHAM

BENEVOLENT SOCIETY BANNER

SIZE: Approximately 280cm X 204cm

The banner was examined whilst on display in, the church, 4th October 2011. Although suspended from the top pole, some of the weight of the banner fabrics and lower pale had been supported on kneelers. A cotton sheet secured at the pole hung behind the other side of the banner, protecting and largely concealed painted detail on this side.

Description

Signed Skerrett, Bury, the banner is made from a single layer of blue rep—woven Silk fabric seamed from 58cm wide vertical panels and bordered with red rep—woven silk fabric, complete with white selvedge stripe down each outer edge. The banner is fixed by 13 pole loops of 2cm wool or cotton tape secured to the silver—painted wood pole, which is finished with brass cuffs. A sleeve formed at the foot of the banner contains a second 3cm diameter wood pole. 14.5cm deep fringe made from crimson silk wrapped over cotton core trims the lower edge. All stitching is by hand using silk thread. The banner is painted on each side with different images.

Painted image (on exposed side)

The main panel, edged with gold, shows The Good Samaritan. Silver mantling curls from the silver upper text scroll 'GO thou and do likewise', worked in red uppercase letters. A text panel of red, edged with silver states 'In commemoration of the Centenary of the Benevolent Society Downham 1B85' worked in uppercase gold letters. The banner makers name is painted in the lower right of the main panel.

Painted image (concealed side)

A blue-grey main panel edged with gold bears the inscription 'On Commemoration of the Benevolent Society' in gold uppercase lettering. Below on a separate panel is 'Downham 1885' worked in fawn lettering on a beige ground. Silver mantling similar to the opposite side drapes the panel.

Condition

The banner is soiled, faded and fragile due to age and use. Narrow diameter rolled storage and tensions exerted by repairs have caused creasing. Although largely intact, the blue silk is beginning to split across the top edge, at stress points created by the pole loops and beside the painted motifs. Most splitting has occurred across the lower section around the text panel, where approximately half the width of the panel has detached from the ground silk. Splits in this area of the banner extend into the painted panel and have been previously repaired with self—adhesive tape. Stains from the tape remain in the surrounding silk, most noticeably on the concealed side. Stitches forming the lower pole are smaller than the main constructional stitching and may not be part of the original

construction. Cobbled repairs at each end of the lower sleeve are causing distortion and fracturing of the silk. A patched repair made to the lower right (exposed side) has deteriorated and torn.

The paint feels dry but is mainly in good condition being securely anchored to the silk and having suffered only minor scratching. Oil painted areas are masked by a whitish opaque bloom, especially over the red shades. The silver mantling has blackened, suggesting a high silver metal content: or silver leaf that has tarnished.

Storage: The banner was taken down from display and rolled, interleaved with a clean white linen sheet. As the banner is nailed to the top pole, polyester wadding was incorporated from the pole through the first part of the roll to build up the pole diameter and minimise tight curvature the paint. Note of the banners natural tendency to curl according to habit from previous storage was noted and followed to minimise stress. The Old sheet that hung behind the banner whilst on display was used to fully enclose the banner to help keep out light, dust and insect pests. The rolled banner fit snugly into the original box, which was placed temporarily on top of the screen between a side chapel and alter, and later moved to the organ loft for storage. Introduction of wadding and the snug fit of the roiled banner into the box eliminated the need to prop up the ends of the pole to prevent damage to the banner by its own weight. The current arrangement of storing the banner in the organ loft will probably provide the most stable environment available within the church.

Advice was given regarding keeping the banner package horizontal and to hold the banner package by the pole ends rather than by grasping the body of the banner. Also that it is not advisable to store textiles in polythene as this is liable to create a microclimate and trap in moisture.

Future improvements/alternative Storage option

In the long term the banner could be laid flat between boards of inert material, padded with suitable material and with allowance made for the poles. Alternatively the banner could be removed from the pole and rolled, interleaved with acid-free tissue around a wide diameter tube (20cm is ideal) with a top cover of white cotton sheeting to keep out dust and light.

Recommended conservation treatment

The degree of intervention needed will depend on, future use of the banner. More remedial conservation will be required if the banner is to be free hung and therefore supporting its own weight. The possibility of devising a portfolio type storage structure that could also support the banner at a near horizontal level when displayed would require less strengthening support of the fabrics as the amount of handling and gravity stress would be considerably reduced.

Option 1: Full remedial treatment recommended for hung display

Document banner before, during and after treatment Test fabrics, dye and paint stability to determine most appropriate methods for cleaning and support

Remove poles

Clean and if necessary consolidate paints

Clean and smooth fabrics

Prepare conservation support fabrics (transparent silk or nylon fabrics to retain visibility of both sides of banner coated with conservation grade adhesive)

Apply support to reverse of banner avoiding the main painted panels if these retain sufficient strength.

Augment with fine stitching as required

Stitched support of borders

Apply new fabric sleeve across the reverse top edge to bear the weight of the banner evenly whilst hung and secure the original Loops so visible when viewing the banner from the front.

Estimated cost, including time and materials: £8460.00 + VAT . This is based on our current charge of £36.00 per hour, which is reviewed annually.

Option 2: Minimal treatment recommended for near horizontal display

Document banner before, during and after treatment

Surface clean fabrics

Clean and if necessary consolidate paints

Localised support of splits and tears through main silk and borders by combination of adhesive and stitched methods

Apply new fabric sleeve across the reverse top edge to bear the weight of the banner evenly whilst hung and secure the original loops so visible when viewing the banner from the front.

Estimated cost, including time and materials: £5300.00 + VAT. This is based on our current charge of £36.00 per hour, which is reviewed annually.

Vivian Lochhead

Senior Conservator

23 November 2011

Updated June 2013.