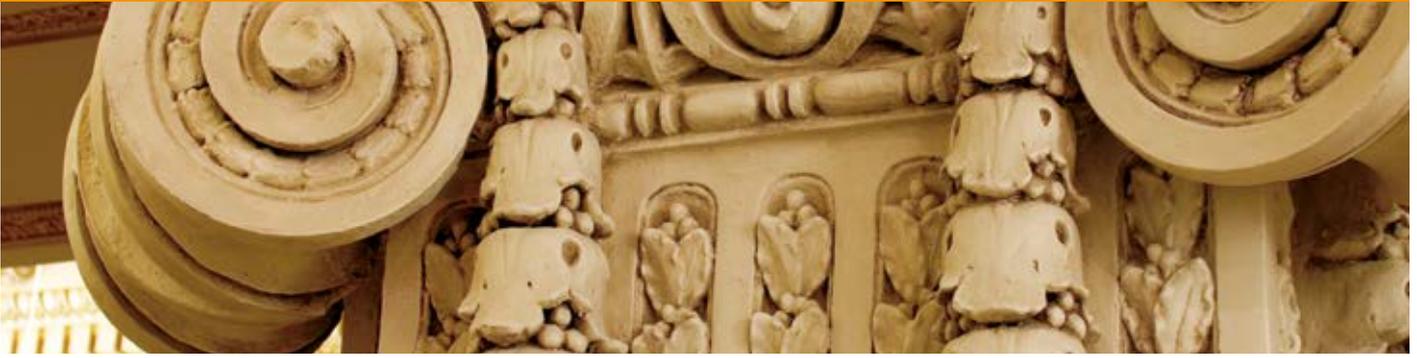


Case study – Raynham Hall



Described as one of the outstanding houses of its period, Raynham Hall in Norfolk was built in 1622 for Sir Roger Townshend and was the first house in England to be inspired by European architecture. Extensions and lavish interior decorations were completed later in 1730 by William Kent, once a painter of coaches who turned his talents to designing furniture and houses. Much of his finest work can be seen in Raynham Hall, most particularly the ceiling of the Marble Hall, which is regarded as one of his masterpieces. The Grade I listed house has remained in the same family for over 300 years and is now occupied by the 8th Marquess Townshend.

The consequences of an overflowing bath

In June 2014, during a period when Lord Townshend was away from the property, the hall was under the stewardship of a butler, who occupied the property overnight. Shortly before 9am one morning, the daily housekeeper arrived for work to discover that water was leaking through the famed ceiling of the Marble Hall. She immediately notified Lord Townshend who, on his arrival shortly afterwards, quickly realised where the water was likely to be coming from and ran upstairs to find an overflowing bath.

By the time of the discovery, water had entered the voids below the bathroom floor and started its inevitable progress through the plaster of the ceiling below. Immediate emergency work, including the removal of the bathroom floorboards, was carried out by staff at the hall and Ecclesiastical was informed of the event.

Due to the nature and historic significance of the building, it was immediately apparent that a specialist loss adjuster would need to be appointed. Ecclesiastical's claims team selected an appropriate expert firm, which was soon on scene to evaluate the extent of damage and estimate the work that would be required to restore the ceiling decorations.

A lengthy process

Inspection of the damage required the erection of scaffolding so that specialist plasterers could inspect the ceiling. This inspection identified an area of approximately 3m² which showed signs of hollows having formed due to delamination between the base lath and plaster coat and the ornate second plaster coat below.

The initial requirement was to carry out strengthening works to the affected area of the ceiling and repairs of surface cracks, before the lengthy process of restoring the ornate ceiling could begin. The water had also run down the walls, staining the decorations, and onto the marble tiled floor. Before any attempt could be made at restoring the décor, consultants had to be appointed to take paint samples and prepare the specification of a system of preparation and redecoration. In the meantime, valuable art and antique furniture had to be removed from the hall by specialist removers and placed in store for the duration of the building work.



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