

Client: National Trust

Property: Basildon Park

Project: Balustrading Strengthening to the Great Staircase

Service: Design, Detailing, Procurement & Inspection

Property Listing: Grade 1 (exceptional interest)

Significance: Described as one of John Carr’s most monumental Palladian interiors, Basildon Park is particularly noted for its original neo-classical plasterwork and elegant great-staircase.

The cantilevered staircase is crafted from Purbeck-marble limestone, with neo-classical gesso work to the gallery undersides, and wrought-iron balustrading incorporating intermediate medallions of putti and classical figures in moulded lead, the stair is of national architectural importance.

Value: £ 32,000



Issues & Operational Needs Arising & Addressed:

The balustrade, removed and reinstalled, provided little lateral resistance, along a principal visitor route. Safety and insurance requirements necessitated strengthening works.

A sensitive balustrade conservation repair scheme was developed incorporating the conservation governances of minimal intervention, respect for integrity, avoidance of devaluing or falsifying significance, with all changes both sympathetic & reversible.

The scheme involved the replacement of plain rectangular balusters, whilst retaining contemporary decorative panels. New balusters were head-fixed using existing slots, and either at the base within resin filled pockets with intermediate threaded rod and resin fixings into the adjacent step nosing, or at the base to a steel bracket, bolted to earlier support steelwork.

The design allowed the scale and arrangement of the original design to be maintained.

Scheme trials, between property events, were carried out to finalise the specification, assess vibration risks to adjacent decorative gesso work, and firm up budgets & programmes

Stonework interventions were refinished with a lime, stone dust & fine sand mix, feathered in, whilst new balusters were painted and lacquered, both reflecting the colour, tone and texture of contemporary finishes.

The delivery programme necessitated co-ordination of protection, scaffold, repair and making good works, during tight timescales within the property closed-season, necessitating seven day working, good communication and supervisory controls to avoid programme slippage.

Delivered to:

- Budget
- Programme
- Conservation Standards
- Quality Standards
- Health & Safety Standards
- Operational Needs

