



Crack Investigation at Salisbury Guildhall

Salisbury City Council



The Value of Certainty.

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Version Control

Version	Date	Description of revision	Prepared by	Checked by	Authorised by
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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of a structural crack investigation undertaken at Salisbury Guildhall, Market Place, Salisbury, Wiltshire, following concerns raised by Salisbury City Council regarding the presence and apparent progression of cracking within several principal areas of the building.

The Guildhall is a historic structure of traditional masonry construction, and the assessment has been undertaken with due regard to the age, significance, and sensitivity of the fabric.

The inspection comprised of a visual examination of the Portico, Crown Court, Oak Court, Grand Jury Room, basement, and the roof void above the Banqueting Hall.

Several significant cracks were identified, the most notable of which form a continuous vertical crack line to an internal masonry wall extending from high level within the Crown Court which then extends through Oak Court. Additional cracking was observed within the basement, progressing vertically through a staircase and then on opposing sides of the wall in Crown Court. Including a separate defect associated with a masonry flue, and within the roof void above the Banqueting Hall.

The primary crack line through the Crown Court and Oak Court is assessed as being the result of long-term, progressive structural movement rather than an acute or recent failure. The consistent alignment through multiple storeys suggests differential movement within the loadbearing masonry, likely influenced by the underlying chalk geology with localised sand and gravel deposits, and potential historical changes in groundwater conditions. No evidence was observed to suggest imminent instability or an immediate risk of collapse.

Cracking associated with the basement flue is considered to be driven by a combination of moisture related deterioration, corrosion of the flue, and localised pressure on surrounding brickwork, exacerbated by raised external ground levels and the presence of hygroscopic salts.

The cracking within the Banqueting Hall roof void, while significant in width, does not extend down into the walls below and is therefore considered more likely related to roof structure behaviour rather than ground movement or subsidence.

Overall, while the identified defects warrant continued monitoring and targeted investigation, the building remains stable at the time of inspection. Recommendations focus on monitoring, moisture management, and proportionate repair using conservation-appropriate techniques, rather than intrusive or extensive structural intervention.

Introduction

The Commission

This survey and report were commissioned by Salisbury City Council following concerns regarding the presence and apparent increase of cracking in walls in various locations and a ceiling within the grand jury room observed in various parts of Salisbury Guildhall, Market Place, Salisbury, Wiltshire. The purpose of the commission was to obtain an independent professional assessment of the condition of the affected areas and to provide advice on the potential significance of the defects observed.

Currie & Brown Ltd were appointed to undertake a visual structural assessment of selected areas of the building, with particular regard to the nature, extent and possible causes of the cracking, and to advise on whether further investigation, monitoring or intervention may be required. The assessment has been undertaken in the context of the building's historic and listed status, with recommendations framed to support a conservation led approach.

The Brief

The brief was to undertake a visual, non-intrusive examination of the Portico, Grand Jury Room, Crown Court, Oak Court, associated basement areas and the roof void above the Banquet Hall within Salisbury Guildhall, in order to assess the condition of these areas and identify any structural concerns associated with the cracking observed.

The objectives of the assessment were to consider whether the observed cracking presents evidence of progressive or ongoing movement, to comment on the likely causes where this could reasonably be inferred from visual inspection, and to provide proportionate recommendations for monitoring, further investigation, or remedial action as appropriate.

Introductions/Limitations

This report presents the findings of a visual, non-intrusive structural assessment undertaken at selected areas of Salisbury Guildhall. The purpose of the inspection was to review the apparent cause and effect of cracking and related structural defects observed within the Portico, Grand Jury Room, Crown Court, Oak Court and associated basement areas, and to provide professional opinion on their significance based on observable evidence at the time of inspection.

The inspection was undertaken on a visual basis only and was limited to areas that were safely and readily accessible during the site visit. The assessment did not include opening up works, intrusive investigations, material sampling, structural calculations, load testing, or long term monitoring. As such, this report does not constitute a full structural appraisal or design verification, but rather an assessment of observable condition, apparent structural performance, and visible signs of distress, movement, or historic repair.

No warranty is given regarding the condition or adequacy of concealed construction, foundations, or historic repairs that could not be reasonably observed at the time of inspection. No liability is accepted for defects that were not visible or accessible during the visit, or for changes in condition occurring after the date of inspection.

Where risks have been identified, further investigation, specialist structural or conservation advice, intrusive inspection, monitoring, or access equipment may be required to fully understand the cause and extent of the defects and to inform appropriate remedial strategies.

Liability

This report is provided solely for the use of the Client and the Client's professional advisors, and no liability to anyone else is accepted. Should the Client not act upon specific, reasonable advice contained in the report, no responsibility is accepted for the consequences.

Complaints Handling Procedure

A copy of the firm's complaints handling procedure is available on request.

General

For orientation purposes the front entrance elevation is deemed to be facing due North with the rear elevation access facing due South.

The report should be read in conjunction with the appended photographic files

Inspection

This report has been prepared following an inspection of the premises on the 9th of January 2026. Weather conditions were dry, cold and overcast throughout the survey period.

Guidance to structural cracking

Cracking assessment and identification is determined in comparison with the BRE Digest 251 Assessment of Damage to Low Rise Buildings (August 1990). This should be referred to by the client when determining the severity of the cracking and intervention measures required.

Category	Described Degree of Damage	Approximate Crack Width	Significance
0	Negligible/hairline	Less than 0.1mm	Not visible externally. No action needed
1	Very Slight	Up to 2mm	Mainly aesthetic; often visible internally. Simple filler or redecorating resolves issue
2	Slight	2- 5mm	May require repointing externally or repair of mortar joints. Doors/windows may begin to stick slightly.
3	Moderate	5-15mm	Can indicate more significant movement. May require localised masonry repair or easing of joinery.
4	Severe	15-25mm	Structural movement affecting stability. Building elements may need partial reconstruction.
5	Very Severe	Greater than 25mm	Major structural failure. Requires significant structural intervention or rebuilding.

General Description of Property

Salisbury Guildhall, constructed circa **1795**, is a representation of late Georgian civic or municipal architecture. The building is of traditional solid masonry construction, reflecting the robust and enduring methods typical of the period. Historical records suggest that the Guildhall occupies a site formerly associated with a Georgian prison, which has since been demolished. It is likely that the current structure was built upon, utilised or adjacent to the original foundations, adding to its historical significance.

The primary structural fabric comprises solid external masonry walls, measured at approximately **624 mm in thickness**, constructed using Gault clay brickwork laid in English bond. These walls are founded on a substantial limestone stone plinth, providing a stable base for the superstructure.

The principal elevation of Salisbury Guildhall presents a symmetrical and imposing façade, characteristic of late Georgian civic architecture. The central feature is a portico comprising six fluted limestone stone columns of the doric order, supporting an entablature and a plain cornice. This portico frames the main entrance, which is set back within a recessed bay. Around the portico on either side are large arched sash windows which are consist around all elevations, each surmounted by a decorative.

Internally, wall finishes are predominantly lime plaster over hessian backing, consistent with original Georgian construction techniques. This breathable finish is characteristic of the era, allowing moisture regulation within the building fabric. Decorative elements such as ornate cornices, ceiling roses, and mouldings remain evident in principal rooms, underscoring the craftsmanship of the period. The ceilings appear of lime based plaster constituent with the banquet hall ceiling recently undergoing replacement within the last two-three decades, utilising the concept of lime plaster and animal hair mix.

While the building retains much of its original character and structural robustness, evidence of historic movement, moisture ingress and later alterations was observed during the inspection. These changes, typical of a structure of this age, include minor settlement cracks, areas of plaster deterioration, and interventions to accommodate modern services. The Guildhall's Grade II* listed status underscores its architectural and cultural importance, necessitating sensitive and informed conservation practices to ensure its continued preservation.

Environmental, Ecology and Statuary Matters

Salisbury Guildhall is a **Grade II* listed** building, first listed in 1952, reflecting its significant architectural and historic interest. As such, the building is subject to statutory protection, and any works affecting its fabric, structure, or appearance are likely to require Listed Building Consent. All structural repairs, stabilisation works, and associated interventions should therefore be developed and implemented on a conservation-led basis, employing materials and methodologies that are compatible with the original construction and that preserve historic fabric, load paths, and building behaviour. Early consultation with the Local Planning Authority and Conservation Officer is strongly recommended.

The underlying geology of the site is recorded as comprising chalk, sand, and gravel, in accordance with available Historic England records. Chalk geology is generally capable of supporting substantial masonry loads; however, it may be sensitive to fluctuations in groundwater levels, particularly where granular deposits are present. Such conditions can influence settlement behaviour and moisture migration within below-ground structures.

The site is located within an area identified as having groundwater flood risk, which is considered relevant to the moisture related defects observed within basement and lower level areas. Environmental Agency data indicates a very low annual probability of flooding from surface water, rivers, and the sea, with flooding from reservoirs assessed as very unlikely. While the overall flood risk classification is low, groundwater related moisture ingress remains a credible and influential mechanism affecting the long term performance of historic solid masonry structures, particularly where external ground levels are high relative to internal floor levels.

The environmental context is therefore considered a contributing factor to the elevated moisture levels, hygroscopic salt contamination, and associated masonry deterioration observed at lower levels, rather than an indicator of acute or episodic flood events.

Observations

Portico

The portico comprises of stone columns supporting a substantial projecting soffit, with decorative stone cornice detailing above. The stonework appears to be formed from large stone blocks, including shaped units forming an L-shaped configuration, with the curved return of the block located beneath the column head. This form of construction appears to rely on compression and accurate load transfer through the stone blocks and columns.

A structural crack identified within a stone block to the east elevation of the portico, measuring approximately 4 mm in width, being approx 400mm totalling in length. The crack passes through the face of the stone and appears to extend through the section of the block rather than being limited to surface weathering (refer to image P2-P4).

A corresponding crack was observed on the opposite elevation of the portico, within a stone block of similar form and location. This crack has previously been repaired using a lime putty joint, which is generally appropriate for historic masonry. The presence of a matching defect on both elevations suggests that the same issue has arisen on the opposite previously of the portico (refer to images P7-P8).

The cracked stone block appears to be L-shaped, with the base of the L portion positioned directly beneath the limestone column. This configuration may be susceptible to stress concentration where vertical loads from the column are transferred through the stonework.

No obvious displacement, rotation, or loss of bearing was observed to the columns, or soffit at the time of inspection, despite the separation between limestone blocks.

The soffit exhibited general age related cracking but no signs of instability (refer to image P1).

Structural Assessment

Based on the visual evidence, the cracking affects a load bearing stone element rather than decorative masonry. Given the presence of a similar crack on the opposite elevation, which has already required repair, it is considered likely that the cracking on this elevation has occurred due to the same underlying mechanism.

The most probable cause is long term compressive loading from the entablature above, coupled with consolidation of the ground below. The consequential compressive loads from above, coupled with restraint at the corners could introduce localised stress within the masonry, resulting in the separation. However, the precise cause of the cracking cannot be confirmed from visual inspection alone, and this assessment should not be taken as definitive.

At the time of inspection, there was no evidence of acute structural failure or imminent instability. Nevertheless, the crack represents a weakness within a primary structural element and provides a potential route for moisture ingress, which may lead to progressive deterioration if not appropriately managed.

Risk Rating: Medium to High

- Likelihood: Moderate (defect appears historic but potentially progressive).
- Impact: Moderate to High (cracking affects a load-bearing stone element in a prominent, publicly accessible location)

Grand Jury Room

The Grand Jury Room has a formal historic interior with a high level flat ceiling with ornate plaster finishes. The room is of traditional construction, with solid masonry walls finished internally in lime plaster. The ceiling is understood to be of traditional lath and plaster construction and incorporates substantial decorative plaster cornices around the perimeter together with ornate plaster ceiling roses located at chandelier suspension points (refer to images P9-P11).

Large segmental arched windows with decorative moulded and fielded timber linings are present along one elevation, contributing to natural light (refer to image P14).

The ceiling height within the room and the flat roof structure above precluded detailed inspection, so our assumption is a lime and animal hair based plaster over timber laths. This style of plastering technique relies on the integrity of its bond to the supporting timber laths above.

Cracks were observed across the ceiling surface, predominantly linear in nature and extending transverse across the width of the room varying in length (refer to images). They were hairline in nature across the ceiling. One prominent crack was noted to run transverse across the width of the ceiling and intersecting a central ceiling rose (refer to image P9). With some additional cracking observed from chandelier suspension points and locally along the perimeter of the ceiling adjacent to the cornices.

Isolated areas of minor staining were identified on the ceiling surface, considered likely to relate to historic water ingress (refer to image P13).

No evidence of active moisture ingress or dampness was observed at the time of inspection. The plaster generally appeared intact, with no significant delamination or loss of evident albeit observed from the underside due to the lack of access or vantage point above the ceiling.

The decorative plaster cornices were found to be generally in good condition, with no significant fractures, displacement or detachment observed. Minor hairline cracking was present at junctions between the cornices and the ceiling. The ceiling roses were intact and well preserved, with only minor surface cracking visible adjacent to their edges.

Structural Assessment

Based on visual inspection alone, the cracking within the Grand Jury Room ceiling is considered to be primarily associated with historic movement, minor deflection of the supporting ceiling structure, or long term shrinkage of the plaster finish rather than an indication of acute structural failure. The alignment of the cracks along apparent structural lines supports this interpretation. In particular the parallel cracking adjacent to the ceiling rose, would indicate differential movement or shrinkage between the plaster and underlying substrate.

There was no visible evidence of active or progressive structural movement, such as significant widening cracks, displaced decorative features, or distortion of ceiling planes and appears stable. However, due to the limitations of a non-intrusive inspection, the condition of concealed timbers, fixings and plaster keys could not be confirmed, and the potential for future deterioration cannot be ruled out.

Risk Rating: Low

- Likelihood: Low. The defects appear historic and stable, with no clear evidence of active movement observed during the inspection.
- Impact: Medium. While immediate structural risk is low, failure of ceiling plaster or decorative features could present a safety concern due to the use of the room and the presence of suspended lighting.

Crown Court

The Crown Court is a large formal space of traditional construction, formed with solid masonry walls finished internally with lime plaster. The walls extend to a significant height and incorporate arched openings and high level roof lights. The structural stability of the space relies on the mass and continuity of the masonry walls, which transfer vertical and lateral loads down to the foundations below.

The principal structural crack was identified on the east wall of the Crown Court. This crack is predominantly vertical and extends from high level below the clerestory window above the mezzanine through the wall face and descends to an approximate height of five metres (refer to images P18-P21).

The crack passes through the plaster finish and is considered likely to extend into the underlying masonry rather than being confined to surface finishes alone and manifests itself through the thickness of the wall into Oak Court section (refer to image P23-27).

Localised loss of plaster was noted adjacent to the crack, particularly around an arched opening. Secondary hairline cracking was also observed on the opposing west facing wall; however, these cracks are hairline fine, limited in extent, and are considered subsidiary and non-structural in nature. It is noted that the west wall was historically an external wall, which may account for minor shrinkage or thermal cracking within the plaster finish. These cracks are hairline, extending approximately 7.7 metres in length and manifest itself on the opposing side of the wall within a staircase and descends through to the basement. This appears to have been subject to previous monitoring via tell-tales fixed to the wall (refer to images P15-P17), however it is understood that the previous record of measurements have been lost.

Staining and signs of historic moisture ingress were observed at high level in the vicinity of the roof lights, suggesting intermittent water penetration. While no active dampness was recorded at the time of inspection, historic moisture ingress may have contributed to localised deterioration of plaster finishes in affected areas.

Structural Assessment

Based on the visual inspection, the crack within the Crown Court is considered to be structurally significant and represents the upper visible extent of a continuous crack line that extends through the thickness of the east wall onto the staircase and extends through the wall into Oak Court.

The vertical alignment and consistent location of the crack suggest that it is associated with long-term movement within the masonry wall rather than isolated failure of internal finishes (refer to images P19).

The underlying substrate beneath the building is understood to comprise predominantly chalk, with localised areas of sand and gravel. While chalk generally provides adequate bearing for masonry structures, the presence of granular deposits can increase susceptibility to differential movement over time, particularly where changes in groundwater levels occur.

It is considered possible that fluctuations in the local water table may have contributed to gradual settlement within the chalk strata, influencing the development and progression of the observed cracking as the building settles.

There was no evidence at the time of inspection to indicate acute instability, rapid progression of cracking, or an imminent risk of collapse. The crack is therefore assessed as being the result of historic or slow-progressive structural movement rather than an immediate structural failure which could attributed to thermal movement due to expansion of brickwork.

The crack observed within the Crown Court aligns with the same principal defect identified in the south-west corner of Oak Court, adjacent to the entrance door leading to the mezzanine level of Oak Court. This crack continues vertically downwards and corresponds with the significant cracking observed in the basement below. Further assessment of this continuous crack line is provided in the subsequent Oak Court section of this report.

The hairline cracking observed on the west wall appears to not exhibit characteristics consistent with structural movement, however it is seen on both sides of the wall, suggesting the cause is similar to the crack on the opposing

wall. The cracks are narrow, discontinuous and show no evidence of displacement, widening, or progression into the underlying masonry. There is no cause for structural concern at this time, however monitoring is required (refer to image P16).

Risk Rating: Medium

- Likelihood: Medium. The principal crack on the east wall is considered to be the result of historic or progressive structural movement. While no evidence of rapid progression was observed at the time of inspection, the continuity of the crack through multiple levels of the building indicates the potential for gradual progression over time, particularly if ground moisture conditions fluctuate. Could also be associated thermal movement over large expanse of brickwork.
- Impact: Medium. The crack affects a primary loadbearing masonry wall within a principal public space of a Grade II* listed building. Although there is no immediate risk to structural stability or occupant safety, continued movement could result in further deterioration of masonry and finishes if not appropriately managed.

Oak Court

Oak Court is a formal internal space of traditional construction, formed with solid loadbearing masonry walls finished internally with lime plaster. The room is located immediately adjacent to the Crown Court and is accessed via a doorway at mezzanine level and a further opening at ground floor level (see image P38 for overview).

Structural stability within this area is derived from the mass and continuity of the masonry walls, which transfer vertical and lateral loads down to the foundations. Openings formed within these walls, including the mezzanine level doorway, introduce localised areas of stress concentration within the masonry.

A significant vertical crack was identified on the wall immediately adjacent to the mezzanine level doorway within Oak Court. This crack aligns directly with the principal crack observed on the east wall of the Crown Court above and assumes to continue vertically downward, (no access was obtained below in the Visitors Centre). The crack is classified as 'moderate' (up to 15mm) and passes through the plaster finish. It is highly likely to extend into the underlying masonry rather than being confined to surface finishes (refer to images P23-P28).

The crack is most pronounced adjacent to the doorway reveals, where localised loss of plaster and widening of the crack were observed. Measurements taken of approximately 8 mm wide at this location (image P27). The crack narrows away from the doorway, indicating a concentration of movement around the opening.

Visual inspection also identified distortion to the doorway opening, with the frame appearing to have dropped at one corner by approximately 30 mm. This distortion is consistent with differential movement affecting the supporting masonry and further supports the conclusion that the cracking is structural in nature (refer to images P29 & P30).

Additional cracking was observed elsewhere within Oak Court. On the north wall, a crack measuring approximately 2.6 metres in length and up to 3 mm in width was identified. Tell-tale crack gauges have been installed at this location, indicating that this crack is subject to ongoing monitoring. Measurements taken at the time of inspection are recorded and referenced within Figure 1 and can be seen in images P31 & P33.

On the east wall, a further vertical crack measuring approximately 2.9 metres in height was observed. This crack is classified as 'very slight', with an approximate width of 1 mm, and is illustrated within Figure 2. This crack is considered secondary to the principal structural defect and can be seen in P32 & P34.

Evidence of historic water ingress was noted on the south wall, particularly within the south-east corner of the room. Wall coverings in this area were observed to be delaminating and peeling from the substrate, with a foil lining visible behind the finish (see images P36-P41). No active moisture ingress was detected at the time of inspection.

Further minor hairline cracking was also observed above the balcony on the west wall. These cracks are fine, discontinuous and limited in extent.

Structural Assessment

Based on visual inspection, the prominent crack observed within Oak Court forms part of the same continuous structural defect identified in the Crown Court above and assumed below. The consistent vertical alignment of this crack through multiple storeys indicates long-term movement within the masonry wall rather than isolated or localised failure of finishes.

The location of the crack adjacent to the mezzanine level doorway indicates that stress concentrations associated with the opening have influenced both the manifestation and widening of cracking at this level. The observed distortion of the doorway opening, including an apparent drop of approximately 30 mm at one corner, is indicative of differential movement affecting the wall fabric (image P30).

The underlying substrate beneath the building is understood to comprise predominantly chalk, with localised areas of sand and gravel. While chalk generally provides suitable bearing capacity for masonry structures, variations in groundwater levels and the presence of granular deposits may increase susceptibility to gradual differential

settlement over time. It is considered likely that long term ground movement, potentially influenced by changes in groundwater conditions, has contributed to the development and progression of the observed crack line.

There was no evidence at the time of inspection to suggest any instability, rapid progression of movement, or an imminent risk of collapse. The defects are therefore assessed as representing historic or slow progressive structural movement rather than an immediate structural concern.

The additional cracking observed on the north, east and west walls is generally finer in nature. With the exception of the monitored north wall crack, these defects are considered secondary and non-critical when compared with the principal structural crack.

Risk Rating: Medium

- Likelihood: Medium. The crack forms part of a continuous defect extending through multiple levels of the building, indicating potential for gradual progression over time, particularly if ground conditions or moisture levels change.
- Impact: Medium. The crack affects a primary loadbearing wall and has resulted in distortion to a doorway opening. While not currently compromising overall structural stability or occupant safety, continued movement could lead to further deterioration of masonry, increased distortion of openings and damage to historic finishes if not appropriately managed.

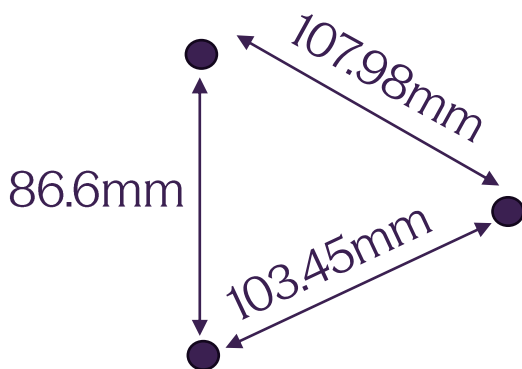


Figure 2: Tell tales recordings on East wall

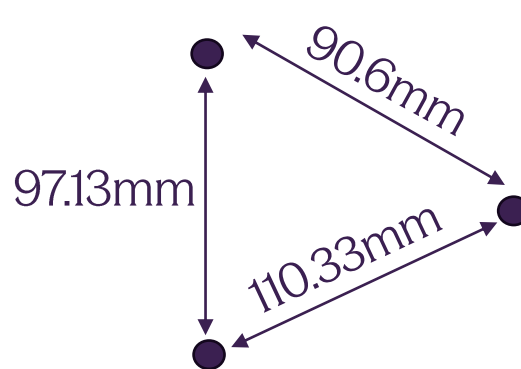


Figure 1: Tell tales recordings on North wall

Basement & Adjacent Staircase

The basement areas beneath Salisbury Guildhall are of traditional construction, formed with solid loadbearing masonry walls that form part of the primary structural fabric of the building. These walls extend continuously from the basement through the West walls of Crown Court above, providing vertical load transfer down to the foundations.

The basement includes principal internal spaces, a staircase linking to upper levels, and a corridor providing access to tunnels beneath the Guildhall. Wall construction is painted masonry, including around flue structures. Structural stability comes from the mass and continuity of the masonry walls acting in compression with each other.

External ground levels are understood to be raised by approximately 400mm across the building, which is a relevant factor in the moisture performance of basement walls (refer to image P53).

A crack was identified within the basement that forms the direct continuation of the principal crack observed in the Crown Court. The crack is predominantly vertical in orientation and extends through the plaster finish, with a recorded width of approximately 2–3 mm. Its alignment strongly suggests that it passes through the full thickness of the masonry wall rather than being confined to internal finishes. This crack represents the lowest visible extent of a continuous crack line extending through multiple floors of the building (refer to images P43–P45).

A second principal crack was identified within the basement, associated with masonry surrounding a flue. This crack extends through brickwork forming the flue structure and is also approximately 2–3mm in width (refer to image P45).

The flue itself appeared corroded (however only a small area was visible), with deterioration of the flue lining and associated metalwork. It is considered likely that corrosion related expansion with long term deterioration of the flue have exerted outward pressure on the surrounding brickwork, contributing to cracking and localised displacement.

Within the same area elevated moisture readings were recorded in the vicinity of the flue related crack, with readings ranging from 40%–60%. Evidence of salt migration was observed beneath the flue, with the presence of hygroscopic salts noted within the masonry (refer to images P49 & P50).

These salts indicate historic and potentially ongoing moisture movement through the wall fabric, with moisture related deterioration was also observed along the staircase when following the flue related crack upwards, suggesting vertical moisture tracking associated with the flue structure. The raised external ground levels are considered likely to contribute to moisture retention within basement walls.

Within the corridor providing access to the basement and tunnels beneath the Guildhall, additionally minor cracking was observed. This included fine diagonal cracks passing through masonry coursing on the left hand side of a critical window (refer to images P51 & P52). These cracks are localised and relatively minor in nature.

Structural Assessment

Based on the visual inspection, two distinct cracking mechanisms are present within the basement vicinity. One a continuous, vertically aligned structural crack extending from the Crown Court into the basement. The consistency of alignment, width, classified as 'slight' (2–3 mm) and located through multiple levels suggests long term structural movement within the masonry wall. This movement is considered likely to be associated with gradual differential settlement of the building (refer to image P45).

The other crack was a localised flue enclosure crack in the brickwork caused by deterioration and corrosion of the flue or iron pipework behind the brickwork combined with moisture ingress and salt crystallisation pressures within the surrounding brickwork which expands and cause stress on the brickwork (refer to image P47).

The underlying substrate beneath the building is understood to comprise predominantly chalk, with localised areas of sand and gravel. While chalk generally provides adequate bearing capacity, the presence of granular deposits and potential fluctuations in groundwater levels increase susceptibility to gradual differential settlement over time. This is

considered a plausible contributing factor to the development of the continuous crack line observed through the building.

At the time of inspection, there was no evidence of acute instability, rapid crack progression, or any imminent risk of collapse. The observed cracking is therefore assessed as being the result of historic or progressive structural processes rather than active structural failure.

The minor diagonal cracking observed within the corridor and tunnel access areas is considered secondary and non-structural in nature at this time, with no clear evidence to suggest a direct relationship to the principal structural defects.

Risk Rating: Medium

- Likelihood: Medium. The presence of a continuous crack extending through multiple storeys indicates the potential for gradual progression over time, particularly if groundwater levels, moisture conditions, or loading patterns change.
- Impact: Medium. While the cracks affect loadbearing masonry within the basement, there is no current impact on structural stability or occupant safety. However, unmanaged progression could result in further deterioration of masonry and finishes.

There is no immediate risk of collapse identified at the time of inspection.

Banquet Hall Roof Void

The roof void above the Banqueting Hall comprises traditional masonry perimeter walls supporting a historic timber roof structure. The masonry is formed in brickwork, with roof loads transferred via wall plates into the supporting walls. The Banqueting Hall ceiling below is understood to be of traditional construction and is structurally independent from the roof void masonry, relying on its own support system.

Within the roof void, a significant vertical, tapered crack was identified within a masonry wall. The crack extends approximately 1.8 metres in height and passes through multiple brick courses. The crack exhibits clear displacement of individual bricks rather than superficial cracking of mortar joints, indicating structural movement within the masonry fabric (refer to image P55).

The width of the crack varies along its height, measuring approximately 14 mm at its narrowest point and widening to approximately 35 mm at its widest point (as seen in image P56). This classification of cracking is deemed 'severe'.

The tapered nature of the crack suggests differential movement rather than uniform shrinkage. Crack monitoring fixings were present at the time of inspection, confirming that this defect has been previously identified and is currently subject to previous monitoring, assumedly via the estates team. Measurements taken during the inspection are recorded in Figure 3.

Importantly, the crack was observed to terminate within the roof void and does not continue down through the external wall or on the ceiling beneath into the Banqueting Hall (as seen in image P58).

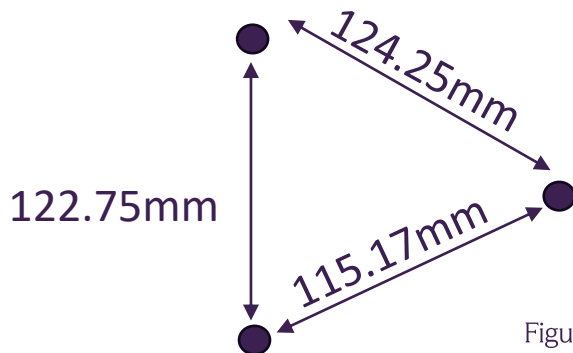


Figure 3: Tell-tales recording in ceiling void

Structural Assessment

The crack within the roof void was previously referenced within earlier reporting, which focused on assessing the structural stability of the Banqueting Hall ceiling. Based on the current inspection, there is no evidence to suggest that the crack has compromised the integrity or load-bearing capacity of the ceiling structure below.

The absence of crack continuation into the masonry beneath strongly suggests that the defect is not associated with foundation movement or subsidence. Instead, the crack is more likely attributable to movement at roof level, potentially arising from historic roof timber movement, thermal expansion and contraction, or long term redistribution of stresses within the roof structure and supporting masonry.

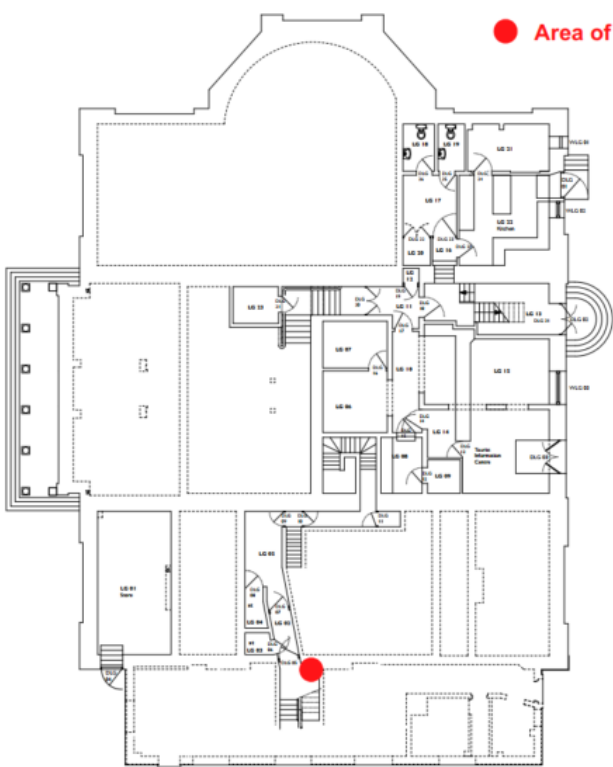
The degree of brick displacement and crack width indicates that the movement is structural in nature and has likely developed progressively over an extended period. However, no evidence of active or accelerated movement was observed at the time of inspection, and there were no visible signs of distress to the roof structure, wall plates, or ceiling finishes below.

Risk Rating: Medium

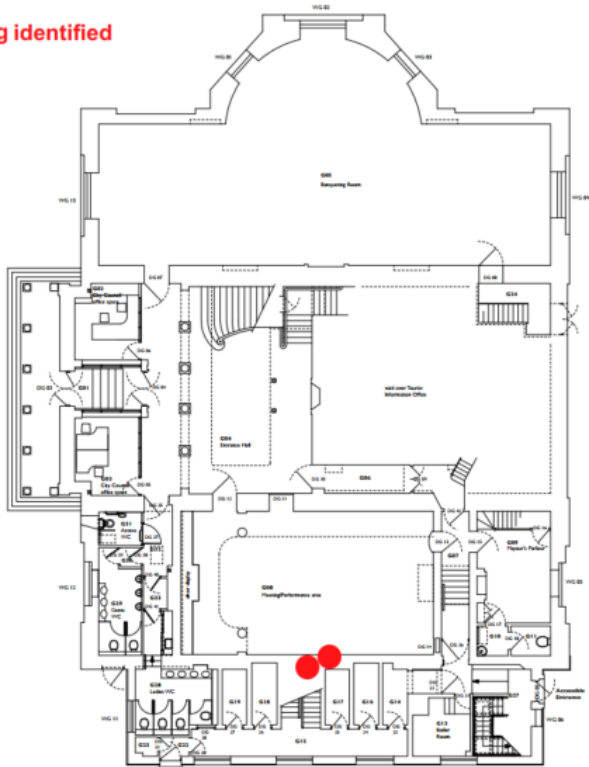
- Likelihood: Medium. The crack demonstrates historic structural movement at roof level and remains under monitoring. While no signs of rapid progression were observed, continued long-term movement cannot be ruled out without ongoing monitoring.
- Impact: Medium. The crack affects a loadbearing masonry wall within the roof void that contributes to roof load transfer. Although there is no current impact on the Banqueting Hall ceiling or overall structural stability, further movement could lead to localised deterioration if not appropriately managed.

Crack Locations

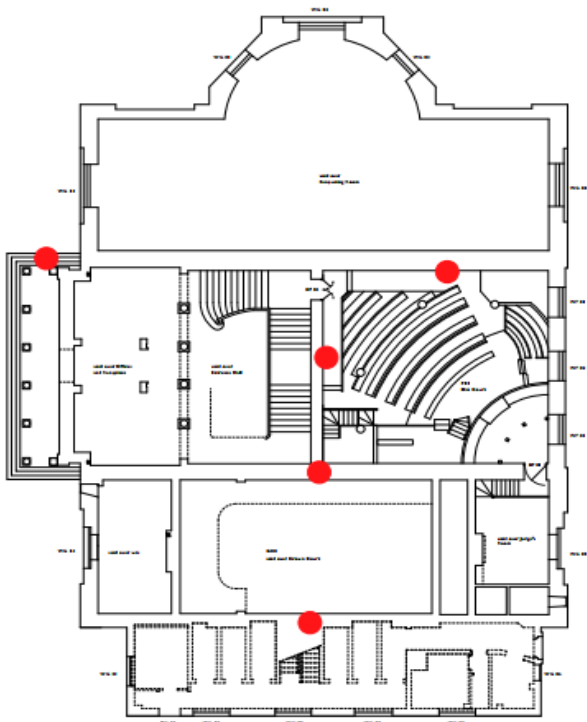
Identified below is each floor plan view of where the cracks are situated and correspond and link with each other for ease of view.



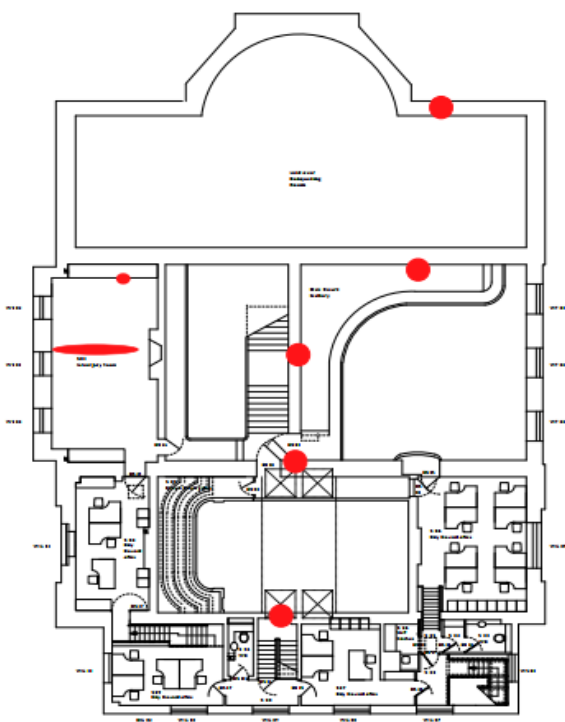
Basement



Ground Floor



First Floor



Second Floor

Conclusions and Recommendations

The visual structural assessment of Salisbury Guildhall identified a combination of historic, environmental, and the cracking observed within Salisbury Guildhall is predominantly structural in nature but is assessed to be the result of historic or slow developing movement rather than active or accelerating failure. The principal crack, extending from the Crown Court through Oak Court and potentially below, represents a single continuous defect within a primary loadbearing masonry wall. Its vertical alignment, persistence across multiple levels, and lack of acute distress indicators suggest long-term differential movement, likely influenced by ground conditions rather than isolated structural weakness. In addition, the cracking observed on the west wall of Crown Court will require to be monitored due to the crack being evident on the other side of the wall (see plan views for further clarification).

The underlying substrate is understood to comprise predominantly chalk, with localised areas of sand and gravel. While chalk typically provides adequate bearing capacity, variations in moisture content and groundwater levels can lead to gradual settlement over extended periods. This mechanism is considered a plausible contributory factor in the development of the observed cracking.

The impact of thermal movement in large span masonry structure could also be a factor in some of the vertical cracking that has occurred as there appears to be large areas of masonry panels, without means of thermal expansion provision and large section of brickwork will be subject to expansion along its length.

Cracking associated with the basement flue is considered to be a separate defect, driven by corrosion, moisture ingress, salt migration, and raised external ground levels, which have collectively contributed to localised deterioration and outward pressure on surrounding masonry.

The significant crack observed within the Banqueting Hall roof void, although wide and visually concerning, does not align with cracking to the external walls below. This strongly suggests that the defect is related to roof structure movement or historic loading behaviour rather than subsidence. This finding is consistent with conclusions drawn in previous reports focusing on ceiling and roof structural stability.

At the time of inspection, no evidence was identified to indicate imminent structural failure, loss of load-bearing capacity, or a requirement for immediate evacuation or propping. The risks associated with the defects are therefore considered manageable, provided that appropriate monitoring, investigation, and maintenance measures are implemented.

The recommended approach needs to be proportionate and must be conservation led, prioritising continued monitoring, management of contributory factors such as moisture, and targeted repair where appropriate. Immediate intrusive structural intervention is not considered necessary at this stage, provided that movement remains stable and the recommended monitoring regime is implemented, however remedial works in the near future are recommended.

Portico

The structural crack identified through the stonework of the front portico should be treated as a priority for monitoring due to its location within an externally exposed, loadbearing architectural feature. The presence of a similar crack on the opposing elevation, which has previously been repaired, suggests that both defects may have arisen from the same underlying mechanism, likely related to the weight of the portico structure and stress concentration beneath the supporting columns. While this interpretation is considered plausible, the precise cause cannot be confirmed on the basis of visual inspection alone.

It is recommended that the crack is monitored to confirm whether movement is ongoing. Subject to evidence that the defect is stable, remedial works may be undertaken to improve structural continuity and prevent further deterioration. Repairs should be conservation led and may include discreet stone repair or applying a lime based putty compatible with the original stone. Any intervention should be carefully detailed to preserve the appearance and significance of the portico and may require consultation with the local conservation officer prior to implementation.

Grand Jury Room

The cracking observed within the ceiling of the Grand Jury Room is assessed as being primarily associated with age related movement of the traditional lath and plaster construction and localised stress around chandelier suspension points, rather than active structural instability. The cracks are predominantly fine to moderate in width and follow linear patterns consistent with historic or slow-moving movement within the ceiling structure.

No immediate structural intervention is required. It is recommended that the ceiling continues to be observed as part of routine maintenance inspections, with particular attention paid to any signs of widening cracks, plaster delamination, or detachment around ceiling roses and lighting fixings. Any future repairs should be limited to localised plaster consolidation and making good, undertaken using compatible lime based materials to preserve breathability and avoid introducing excessive stiffness.

Where historic staining has been observed, the roof lights above should continue to be maintained to prevent moisture ingress, as prolonged dampness may accelerate deterioration of the ceiling fabric. Decorative repairs should only be undertaken once it is confirmed that no active moisture ingress or structural movement is present.

Crown Court

The principal crack within the Crown Court should be subject to a structured programme of crack monitoring to confirm whether movement is historic or ongoing. Monitoring should be coordinated with corresponding locations within Oak Court and the basement to assess the behaviour of the various crack lines through the building. Monitoring results should be reviewed prior to undertaking any permanent structural repairs.

Subject to the outcome of regular monitoring every 3-6 months and confirmation that movement has stabilised, repair of the crack may be undertaken. Repairs should be conservation led and designed to maintain the structural continuity of the masonry while accommodating historic movement. This may include localised masonry stitching using stainless steel bars, where appropriate, to provide restraint across the crack without introducing excessive rigidity. All crack repairs should be undertaken using compatible lime-based mortars and finishes.

No immediate structural intervention is considered necessary at this stage. However, should monitoring indicate active or progressive movement, further investigation may be required. This could include limited intrusive inspection, structural engineering review, or geotechnical assessment to better understand foundation behaviour and ground conditions beneath the affected wall.

Oak Court

The principal crack within Oak Court should be incorporated into the wider crack monitoring regime recommended for the Crown Court areas. Monitoring points should be installed across the crack adjacent to the mezzanine level doorway to assess any ongoing differential movement at this critical stress location.

Existing tell-tale crack gauges installed on the north wall should continue to be monitored, with readings recorded at regular intervals e.g. 3-6 monthly and reviewed alongside data from the principal crack line to identify any correlated movement.

No immediate structural intervention is required at present. This is subject to confirmation that movement is static and has stabilised through monitoring, over the subsequent months. Localised structural repairs are likely the best course of action. This may include discreet masonry stitching using stainless steel bars set within lime based grout to provide continuity across the crack while maintaining compatibility with the historic fabric and avoiding the introduction of excessive rigidity. Consultation with Local Planning department will be prudent on undertaking any conservation techniques.

Any making good to plaster finishes should be deferred until structural stability has been confirmed. All repairs should be undertaken using breathable, lime based materials compatible with the existing construction.

Basement and Adjacent Staircase

The continuation of the principal crack into the basement should remain under observation, with monitoring points installed at appropriate locations to assess any further movement and monitored every 3-6 months over a 12 month period. The separate crack associated with the masonry flue should be subject to further consideration, as this defect appears to be influenced by elevated moisture levels, salt migration, and corrosion related expansion of the flue structure.

Subject to monitoring confirming stability, localised structural repair may be undertaken. Once again repairs should be conservation led and include discreet masonry stitching across various points along the crack while allowing for minor future movement.

It is recommended that moisture management within the basement is reviewed, including drainage arrangements, and ventilation provision. Reducing moisture ingress will assist in limiting further deterioration of masonry and embedded elements. Specialist input may be required to determine appropriate remedial measures to allay moisture migration, however this be disproportionate to the cause and effect of the moisture. Form a cost perspective.

Banquet Hall Roof Void

The significant crack identified within the masonry wall in the roof void above the Banqueting Hall should continue to be monitored using the existing crack monitoring fixings. As the crack does not extend down into the Banqueting Hall walls below, it is considered more likely to be associated with roof structure behaviour rather than ground movement or subsidence.

No immediate remedial works are recommended at this stage. Monitoring data should be reviewed at regular intervals of 3-6 months to confirm whether movement is ongoing. Should further movement be identified, additional investigation into roof load distribution, bearing conditions, and historic alterations may be required to inform any future intervention.

A

Appendix A - Portico Photos





P1 - Crack can be seen Portico.



P2 - Corner of L shaped stone under entablature.



P3 - Close up of compressive crack in Portico.



P4 - Overview of crack from under Portico.



P5 – North Elev of Portico.



P6 – Overview of Salisbury Guildhall.



P7 – Crack on opposing side filled in with a putty.



P8 - Crack on opposing entablature side filled in with a lime putty.

B

Appendix B - Grand Jury Room Photos





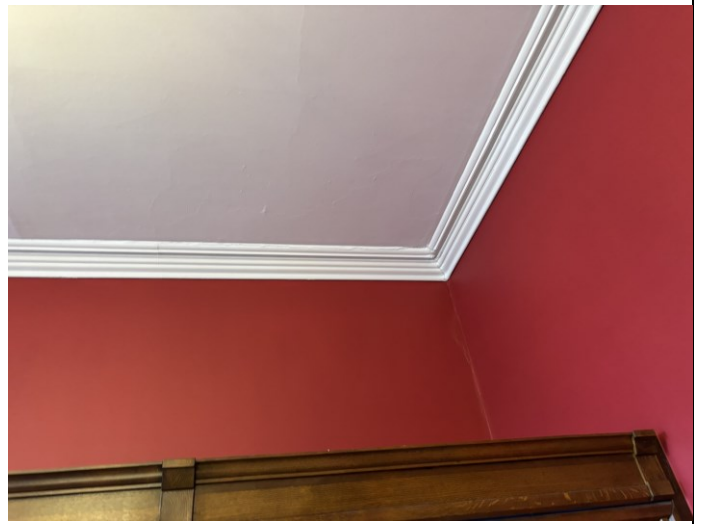
P9 – Hairline cracking in ceiling going to decorative rose.



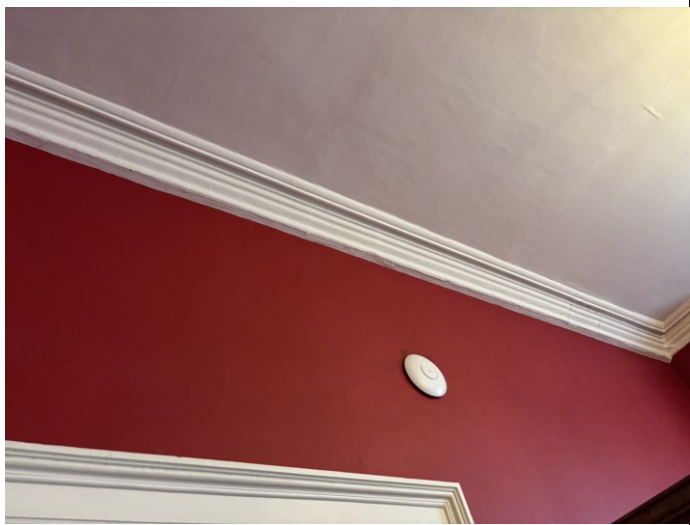
P10 – Hairline cracking in ceiling going to decorative rose.



P11 – Hairline crack extends through rose to the other side of the room in a horizontal line.



P12 – Further cracking in NE corner of Grand Jury Room.



P13 – Grand Jury Rooms cornices appear to have some hairline cracking within as well.



P14 – Georgian arched sash windows in Grand Jury Room.

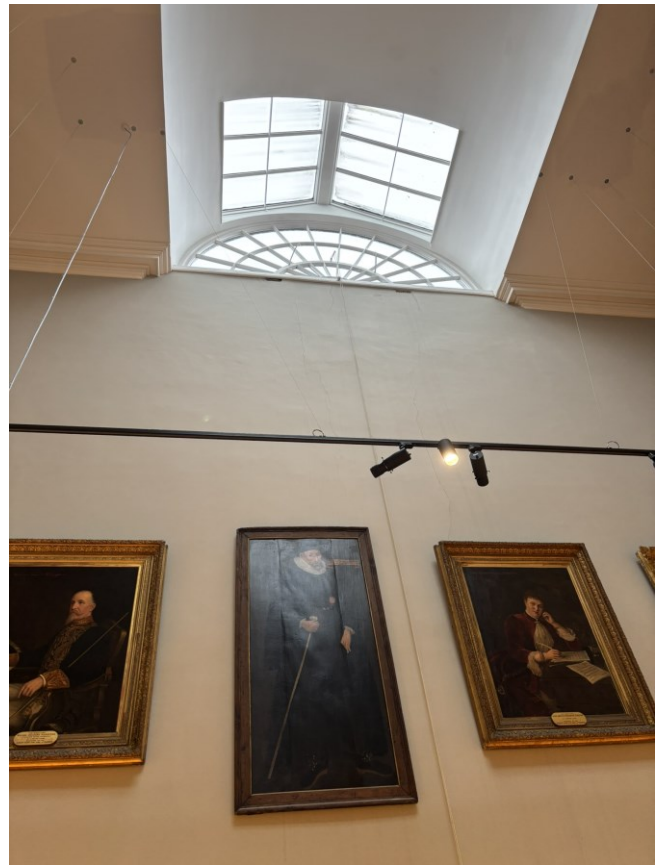
C

Appendix C - Crown Court Photos





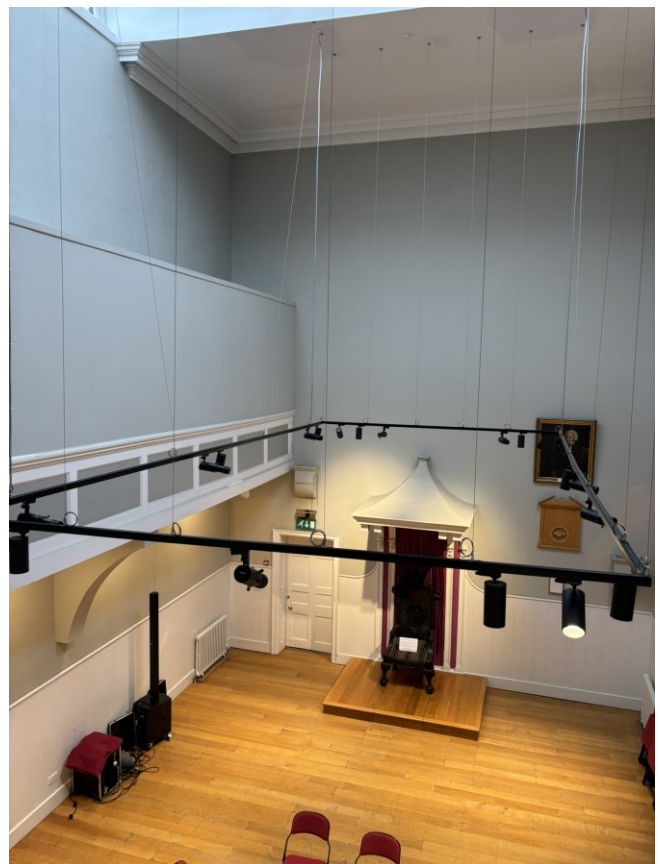
P15 – Various hairline cracks on West wall.



P16 – Non-structural cracks on West wall.



P17 – Longest crack here extends approx 7.7M



P18 – Overview of Crown Court room as seen from mezzanine.



P19 – Structural Crack as seen on East wall.



P20 – High level view of the Crown Court east wall showing vertical cracking extending down from the arched rooflight, consistent with the principal crack line observed through multiple levels of the building.



P21 – Principle crack as seen from ground floor.



P22 – Principle cracks are restricted to underneath the arched window and extend below.

D

Appendix D - Oak Court





P23 – Principle crack observed in NW corner of room.



P24 – Evidence of door dropped due to structural crack.



P25 – Overview of principle crack visible.



P26 – Evidence of door dropped.



P27 – Close up of structural crack behind door frame.



P28 – Hairline cracking coming off of principle crack.



P29 – Door frame has dropped approx 30mm.



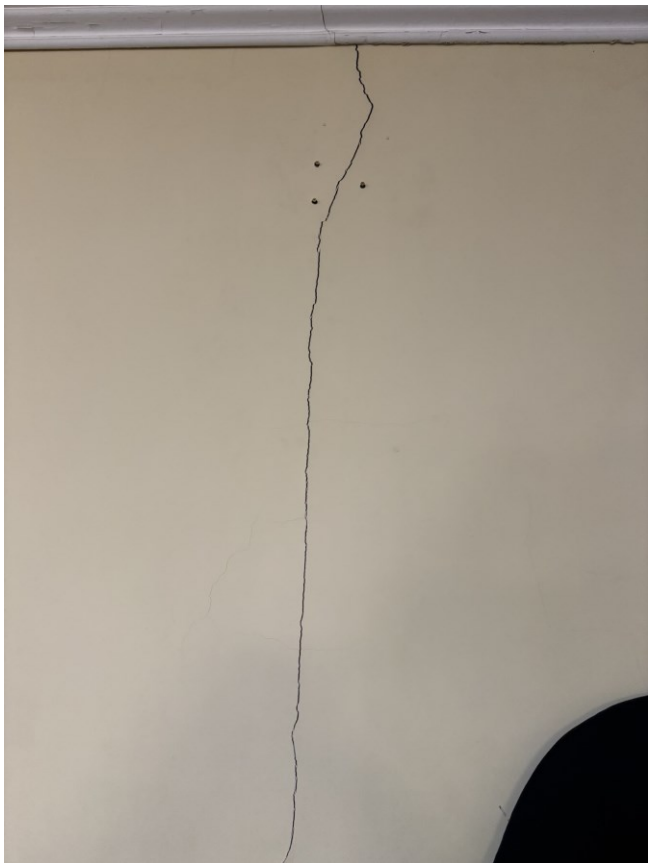
P30 – Door frame has dropped approx 30mm.



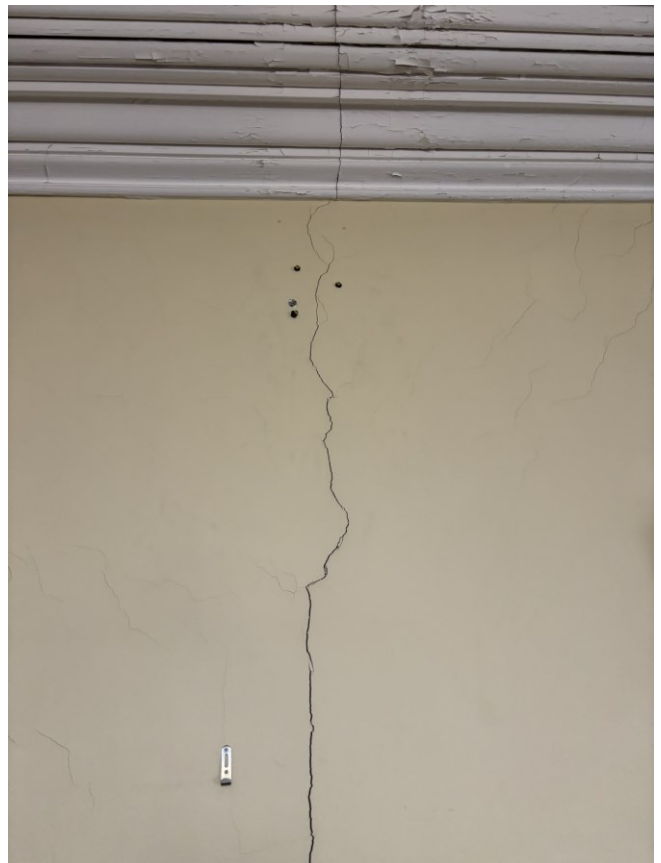
P31 – Digital callipers used to record crack width on North wall.



P32 – Digital callipers used to record crack width on North wall.



P33 - Overview of principle crack on North wall.



P34 - Overview of principle crack on East wall.



P35 – Hairline cracking observed on South wall.



P36 – Signs of previous water ingress on South wall of Oak Court.



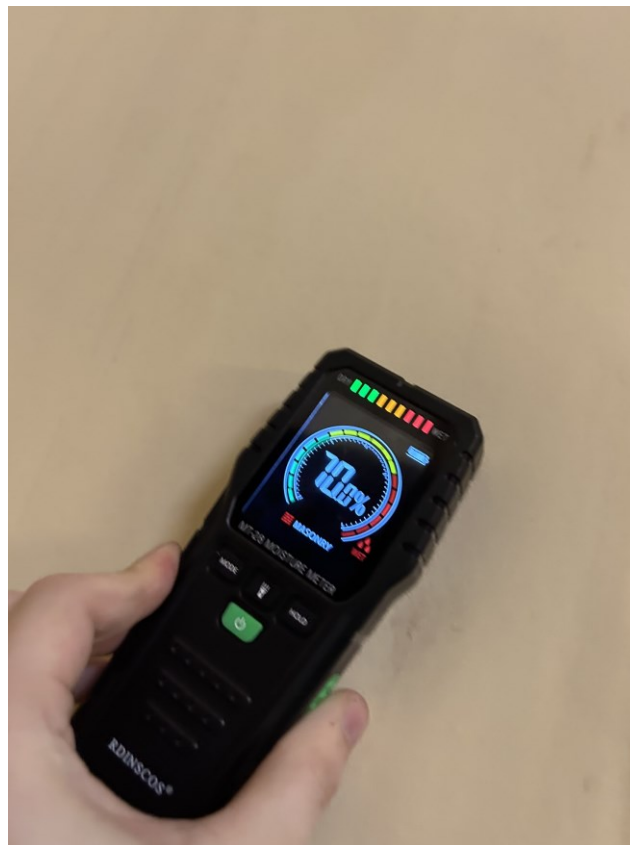
P37 – Signs of previous water ingress on South wall of Oak Court.



P38 – Overview of Oak Court.



P39 – High readings of moisture however results not accurate due to foil behind paper.



P40 – High readings of moisture however results not accurate due to foil behind paper.



P41 – Paper physically feels fine and no deterioration noted suggesting that the water ingress has been repaired.



P42 – Paper sheets on ceiling loose.

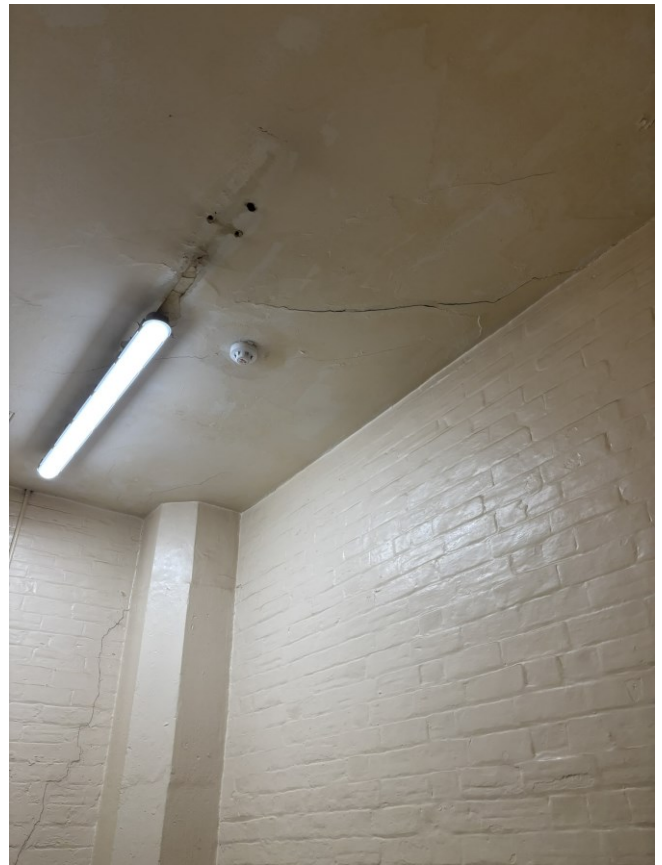
E

Appendix E - Basement & Staircase





P43 – Overview of crack in staircase.



P44 – Evidence of cracking in ceiling as well.



P45 – Crack gauges under monitoring.



P46 – Cracking extending beneath staircase and further on flue.



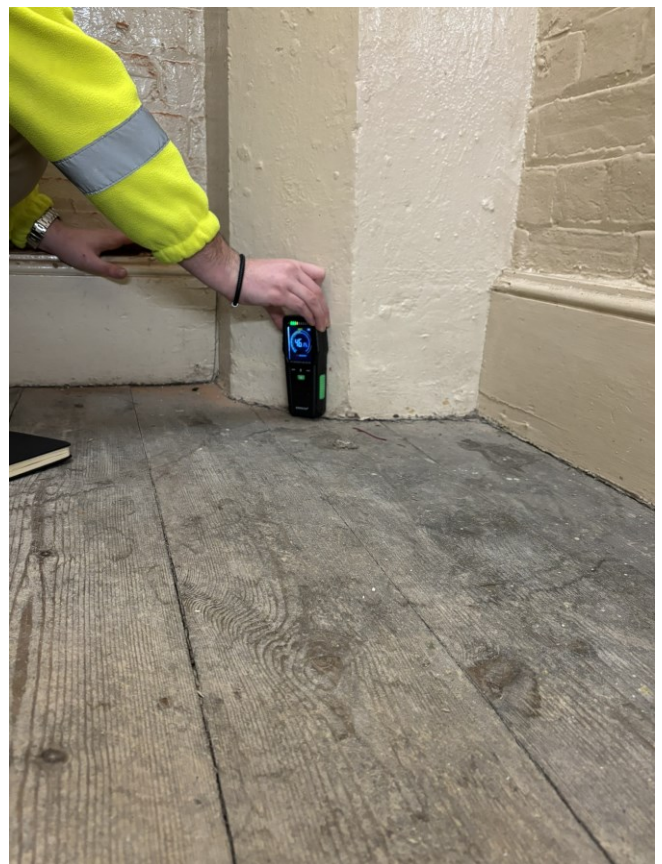
P47 – Evidence of corrosion on flue.



P48 – Stepped crack through course under staircase.



P49 – Elevated readings of moisture levels around flue.



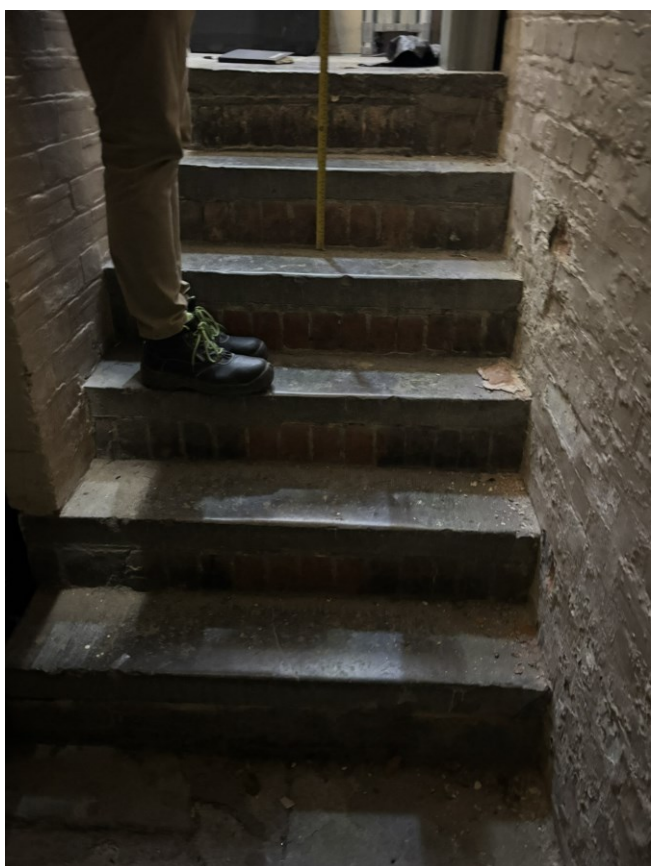
P50 – Elevated readings of moisture levels around flue.



P51 – Crack through course and brickwork underneath Crittle windows.



P52 – Crack through course and brickwork underneath Crittle windows.



P53 – Bottom of tape measure is actual ground level.



P54 – Elevated readings of moisture levels around flue.

F

Appendix F - Banquet Hall Roof Void





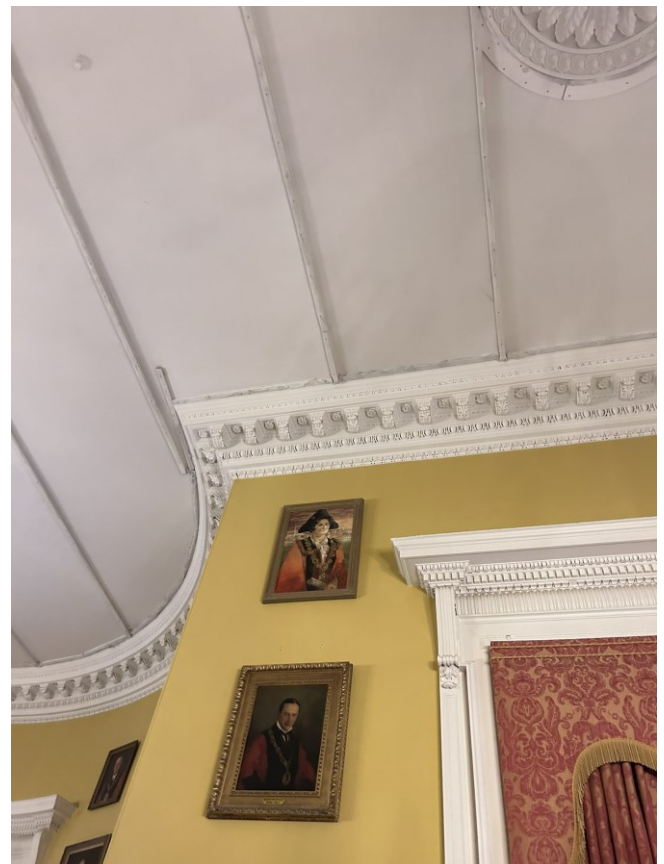
P55 – Crack through brickwork likely caused due to stress from roof.



P56 – Crack through brickwork likely caused due to stress from roof.



P57 – Crack width is 35mm at widest point.



P58 – No evidence of the crack extending beneath into Banquet Hall.

