



**PÖIDE
2003**

Workshop on plaster conservation

22-27 April 2003, St. Mary's church of Pöide, Estonia

Report

National Heritage Board
Tallinn
2003

I CONTEXT

St. Mary's of Pöide

St. Mary's church of Pöide was in constant use until 1940 when it was struck by lightning and burnt. After the war it was put to secular use, a new roof was built, but hardly anything else was done. The church was restored to the congregation in the early 1990s.

In spite of the fire and neglect the church has preserved large areas of historical plasters, which date from different periods, the oldest ones are medieval. The church has been lucky, as it has not been rendered with strong cement mortars, which were widely used from the late 19th century onwards. The historical plasters have been preserved both in the interior and exterior of the church.

An international workshop on plaster conservation was planned to take place in Pöide on the above mentioned reason as well as on more practical ground as there is a real need to conserve the northern façade of the church and to keep as much historical plaster as possible. This conservation project differs slightly from





**The research area
on the northern
façade**

the usual conservation praxis in Estonia and this was one of the reasons to invite international experts to this site. This kind of international exchange of professionals on this subject took place for the first time in Estonia.

The research area was located on the northern façade at the joint section of the nave and the tower.

II HISTORY OF ST. MARY'S CHURCH IN PÖIDE

Pöide church has a complicated history. At first a small Romanesque two-bayed church was erected in the second quarter of the 13th century. Its walls form part of the body of the present church. The remains of walled up round-arched Romanesque portals and windows can be found on the northern and southern walls of the present church. In the second half of the 13th century a stronghold of the Livonian Order was erected to the northern side of the church. The stronghold was probably destroyed during the uprising of 1343 and was never rebuilt again, but the date of destruction can be much earlier, too.

Probably in the first half of the 14th century great reconstruction works took place and the small church was rebuilt into a magnificent parish church. As a result the church was enlarged by adding two bays on the eastern and western sides of the previous building and the walls were heightened. Later, apparently in the late Middle Ages the tower was added above the western bay.

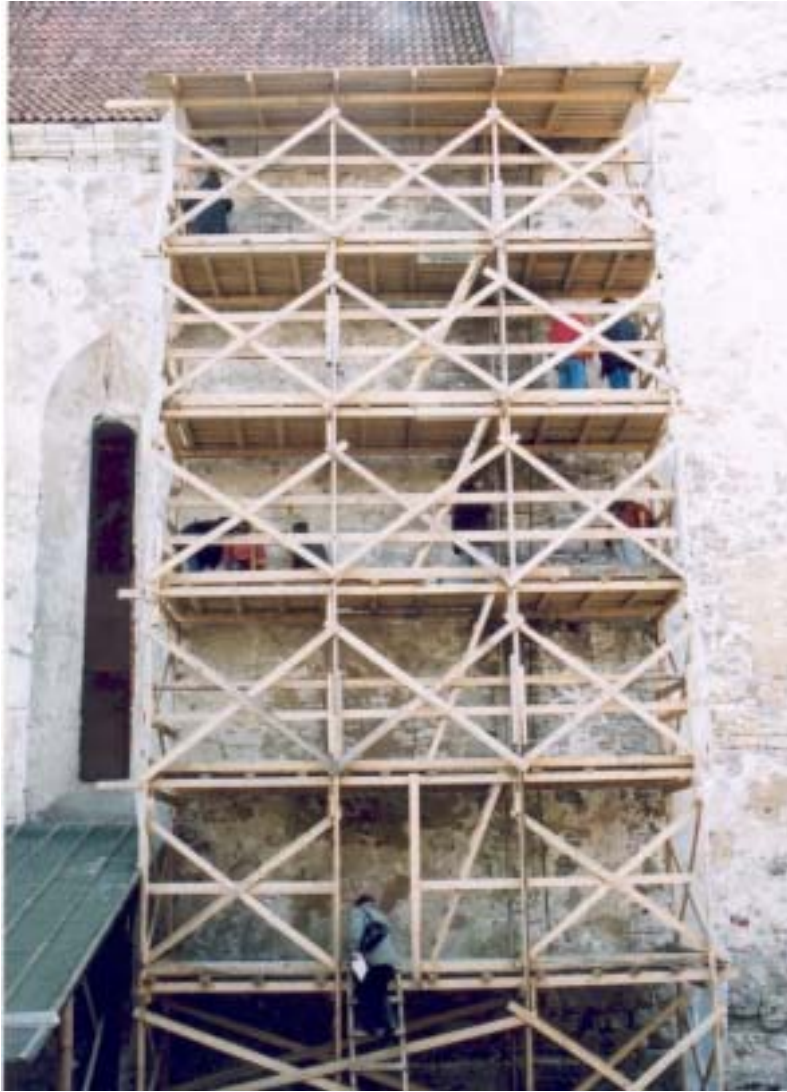
In 1940, lightning struck the tower and caused damaging fire. The church was roofed again in 1958-1960. During this period concrete ceilings were inserted in the tower. During the period of Soviet occupation the church was used as a warehouse. In the 1990s the conservation works started again. From 1990 to 1994 rescue conservation works were carried out. The roof tiles of the nave were changed and in the tower a damaged upper concrete ceiling was replaced with a new one. In 1995-1998 the chancel and the sacristy were conserved.

III AIMS

The aim of the workshop was to investigate the existing plasters in the exterior of the church and to develop a programme of conservation of these plasters. Likewise, the question of replacement plasters for the areas, where no render has been preserved, was addressed.

The aims in more detail:

- the investigation of the historical mortars and plasters on the northern façade of the church (partly already carried out by the Estonian conservators)



Scaffolding in the research area

- decision on the amount of historical plaster which can be conserved
- the investigation of the state of preservation of the plasters
- the choice of materials and methods for conservation
- the choice of materials and methods for the new replacement plasters
- the preparation of the necessary documentation for the practical conservation works

Scaffolding was raised to the research area on the northern façade in summer 2002 and a preliminary study of the preserved historical plaster was done. Plaster samples from the northern façade were compared with the mortar samples from the church interior.

IV WORKSHOP PREPARATIONS



V PARTICIPANTS

The workshop on plaster conservation at St. Mary's church of Pöide took place in the framework of a joint project *Baltic Sea Heritage Co-operation*, within the working group *Building Preservation and Maintenance in practice*. Participants came from five countries: Finland, Latvia, Norway, Sweden and Estonia. The workshop was aimed at professionals who work on the conservation of historical plasters.

The participants were:

Kristin Balksten, Göteborg University, PhD student on conservation, Gotland

Terje Berner, master mason, restorer, Norway
Ragnhild Claesson, National Heritage Board, stone conservator, Sweden

Elisa Heikkilä, National Board of Antiquities, conservator, Finland

Juhan Kilumets, OÜ Rändmeister, art historian, conservator, Estonia

Keneth Klasén, craftsman, Gotland

Thorborg von Konow, Tureida, researcher, conservator, Finland

Linda Krage, Riga Technical University, stone conservator, Latvia

Håkan Lindkvist, Byggnadshyttan på Gotland, lodge master, manager, Gotland

Eva Mölder, OÜ Vana Tallinn, conservator, Estonia

Brita Nyquist, Directorate of Cultural Heritage, conservator, Norway

Ewa Sandström Malinowski, Göteborg University, architect, researcher, Sweden

Taiga Skane, Bauska Castle Museum, museum specialist, Latvia

Kaire Tooming, National Heritage Board, senior inspector in Saare County, Estonia



**Acid testing of
plaster samples**

VI WORKSHOP ARRANGEMENT AND PROBLEMS DISCUSSED

VII RESULTS

The participants were divided into different working groups:

- mapping and describing historical plasters;
- the analysis and mapping of the conditions of historical plasters;
- collecting of samples for the tests;
- acid-tests to analyse historical mortars and plasters.

Working groups which worked with the analysing and mapping of the conditions of historical plasters and with acid-tests, also worked on the recipe for infill conservation mortar which can be used for the conservation of the façades of Pöide church.

The plaster conservation works carried out in recent years in other churches on Saaremaa (Kaarma, Karja, Valjala) and mainland Estonia (Hanila) were also presented for discussion.

The main results of the workshop:

- mapping and description of the condition of preserved historical plasters;
- on the basis of the study of plaster layers lose parts of the plaster which will be removed, were mapped;
- plaster samples were collected, mapped and photographed;
- acid-tests were used to determine the consistence and approximate proportions of the component parts in different mortar types;
- different materials were tested to work out recipes for conservation mortars: it turned out that the properties of Estonian lime putty (contents of water, adhesiveness) differs from the properties of lime putty used in Scandinavia;
- general positions on conservation of historical plasters at Pöide church were discussed.

The most important result of the workshop is international co-operation between experts.

2004:

- mapping and description of the condition of preserved historical plasters on the northern façade by the methods worked out during the Pöide workshop in 2003;
- additional collecting of plaster samples, if necessary;
- analysis of the collected plaster samples and summing up of the results;
- testing of mortar samples according to recipes worked out in the Pöide workshop 2003.

2005:

- evaluation of mortar samples made in 2004 during the next workshop on plaster conservation;
- elaboration of a recipe for conservation mortar;
- conservation of preserved historical plasters;
- conservation of the whole northern façade.

VIII PLANS FOR FUTURE

Recording plaster samples

