

HARRISON HILL LIMITED

Conservators & Restorers of Sculpture

St. Peter's Church, Little Oakley, Northamptonshire NN18 8HA.

Tel. 0536 743876

THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS

30th October, 1984

THORNHILL, WEST YORKSHIRE

REPORT TWO

MONUMENT TO SIR GEORGE SAVILE, 1622

This monument was designed by Maximilian Colt and is constructed in alabaster with carboniferous limestone and coloured marble in set panels. It is situated on the north wall of the Savile Chapel.

Height 390 cms

Width 270 cms

Depth 75 cms

Description

A climbing effigy on a rather plain base with two columns supporting a canopy above which are pinnacles and three achievements of arms. The back panel bears the inscription and is surrounded by very fine trophy panels.

Present Condition

Although the monument is built into a deep damp wall, there are no serious signs of disruption as a result of this. The panels in the lower section are losing a little of their surface and there is some efflorescence. The rate of deterioration will, however, accelerate. A major problem here is the movement of the monument as a result of slight settlement in both the monument and the wall. Both ends of the monument appear to have dropped under the weight of the columns and load above, and the canopy has sagged in the centre giving the whole monument a most odd perspective. Measurement showed a variation of 3 cms between the

distance from the top of the column to the base and the face mouldings in the centre of the monument. There are fresh fractures both to the left and right-hand base panels below the columns. The top moulding of the base section is fractured in several places and there is considerable movement in one piece. The back panel between the pilasters has only one fracture in the lower moulding, but the centre bulges out approximately 5 cms from its true plane. The right-hand trophy panel can be moved slightly. There is also a slight pressure crack to the upper section of the right-hand pilaster. The settling of the canopy is the most serious aspect of the monument. This has caused the right-hand capital to crack vertically, but it may have been assisted by an expanding iron dowel. Because the architrave is made up of several independent mouldings the pieces have moved against each other than fractured, the lower pieces with the coffering, however, have some bad cracks running in more than one direction. Some follow veining in the alabaster, but others are definitely stress fractures. The central achievement of arms and the smaller shields flanking it on top of the monument are well tied to the wall and do not appear to be in any danger.

The effigy is depicted in armour lying on a rush mat, the legs from above the knee and the foot end of the rush matting are original piecings. There are two fractures in the left leg above the ankle and one below the knee, but these have been badly repaired with plaster. There is also a break across the rush matting at ankle level. Both joints at the knee are loose and could easily be separated. There is a crack along a weak vein of the alabaster at approximately thigh level and the hands have been repaired with plaster, but are loose. Polychrome, there is a great deal of colour and gilding to the heraldry, the capitals, and the rosettes in the coffering, but I suspect that most of this is restoration. There are small traces of red on the garments of the effigy which are possibly

original. There may be other traces revealed on cleaning.

Recommended Treatment

The monument should be completely dismantled and returned to our studio at Little Oakley. Once there, all traces of iron, plaster and mortar will be removed. Tests will then be carried out to ascertain the safest and most efficient method of cleaning the alabaster which I would suspect will be solvent cleaning. Where there are traces of polychrome these will be fixed using paraloid B72 acrylic resin prior to cleaning. Broken sections will be repaired using Sintolit polyester resin adhesive and stainless steel ties and dowels as required. Where there are cracks in the alabaster that have not yet developed into breaks these will be reinforced by tying across the back with stainless steel ties and possibly feeding into the cracks a polyester resin to strengthen them. Where this occurs the surfaces will be filled with a polyester resin based filler using ground alabaster aggregate and colour-matched to the adjacent alabaster. Once cleaned and repaired, the monument will be returned to the church at Thornhill and reconstructed in position with a Code 4 lead damp-proof membrane protecting it from any possible future damp in the wall. The core of the monument at lower level will be Celcon block set in a polyester resin based mortar and to this the lower sections of the monument will be tied using stainless steel ties. The purpose of the resin mortar is to avoid entrapment of water between the monument and the damp-proof membrane. The sections of the monument will be bedded on a specially prepared mix of polyvinyl acetate and fine sieved silica sand. The same mix will also be used for the final pointing.

ESTIMATE

For the dismantling, conservation, repair and reconstruction of the above monument as set out in our section 'Recommended Treatment' above:

£9610-00 + VAT

P. L. Harrison

