

MONUMENT TO SIR GEORGE SAVILE dd 1622  
by Maximilian Colt, Master Sculptor to the Crown.

1 **Location**

Set against the north wall of the north aisle, towards the east end (Savile Chapel).

2 **Material**

Alabaster, Black Carboniferous Limestone and English "Marble"

3 **Dimensions**

Height 4,880 mm Width 2,675 mm Depth 700 mm

4 **Description**

A large scale monument, incorporating a tomb chest which supports a single, reclining knight effigy beneath a straight canopy raised upon Corinthian columns and pilasters. The columns give support to the east and west ends of an horizontal entablature displaying an upper frieze and cornice and three armorial shields with flanking pyramids. A large, central armorial, comprising helm, crest, shield and mantling upon a cartouche is enriched by a pair of festoons connecting with the base. Pairs of small armorial shields within cartouche panels flank the central display and a pair of tall, narrow, pyramids are set outside them at the extreme ends of the cornice. There are flower-heads, painted gold, on the pyramid bases and strapwork mouldings on the frieze below the armorials. A dentil band below the main cornice has been painted gold and the frieze has inset panelling of black carboniferous limestone and polished limestone within alabaster frames, with gold painted mouldings. A banded architrave forms the front and side mouldings of a coffered ceiling, displaying rose motifs carved in relief within each panel. Column capitals are carved from alabaster with detail emphasised in gold, above shafts of polished limestone.

The effigy is carved from white alabaster and shown reclining on a reed mat, the ends rolled beneath the cushion at the head and neatly turned back below the heels. The head and shoulders rest upon an embroidered and tasselled cushion and the head is shown with a mane of curly hair, a flowing moustache and trimmed beard. The knight wears plated armour and has hands raised in prayer.

Behind the effigy, rear panelling is set into the north wall to create a niche and displays a large central inscription panel, framed by strapwork. Inscription lettering is painted gold on a black painted background. Alabaster panelling around the inscription is enlivened by trophies carved in relief. A series of black carboniferous and polished limestone panels, set within borders of alabaster have been used below a string-course as a backdrop behind the effigy. A matching set of panels, on a larger scale, complete the front and side panels of the tomb chest below the effigy. The tomb chest is set upon a substantial sandstone plinth.

## 5 Inscription

Here lyeth the body of Sr George Savile Knight  
and Baronet of Thornhill in the Countie of Yorke  
who had first to wife the Lady Mary daughter  
of George Earle of Shrewsbury by whom he had  
issue one sonne and afterwards he tooke to wife  
Eliz: daughter to Sr Edw: Ayscoghe of South Kelsey in  
the Countie of Lincolne Knight by who he had issue  
3 sonnes and 4 daughters. He departed this life the 12  
day of Nov: 1622 in the 72 year of his age to whose  
memorie the said Dame Eliz: Sa: by her last will  
and testamt. appointed this monumt. to be  
erected: who is likewise entom=  
bed in the Chappell of  
Herbery

## 6 Condition

At the top of the canopy the armorial display is set above a truncated entablature of cornice and frieze, carved from alabaster and constructed as a facing to a thin rubble wall. Behind the wall, the top of the ceiling panelling is exposed but filled with loose rubble and mortar. Three iron wall ties provide restraint to each of the three armorial shields, with some variation in fixing. The centre tie has one end embedded within the rear face of the armorial and the other into the masonry of the north wall but the outer ties are hooked into iron rings fastened into the north wall. A fourth tie bar extends from the north wall below the three armorial fixings and curves down to the base of the entablature. The tie bars are firmly attached to the wall and the monument. Mortars used to secure stone work and metal fixings appear to be lime or plaster based. The pair of pyramids at the ends of the cornice are carved from wood and painted or stained black. The ball surmounting the west end pyramid is dowelled in place but loose.

Small losses of detail and old repair sites are evident on the armorials and entablature. The shield at the west end has a plaster repair on the left side of the cartouche and a small loss to the right. Further repair in plaster can be seen to the festoon on the west side of the central armorial. Vertical joints are open in the cornice moulding and pointing missing. The same moulding is broken at the west end, below the pyramid. The decorative elements on the frieze are disrupted at the west end where detail is missing. Surface embellishment has fallen away and remnants of glue and plaster repair are visible. Joints are open in the architrave below and the alabaster sections are all out of alignment.

The heraldic fields of the central achievement of arms and the subsidiary shields have all been over-painted with modern flat and metallic paints. There is a considerable

amount of silver paint in place although it is peeling and flaking away, revealing on the west end shield for example, that it has been applied over charges originally coloured gold.

On the cornice below the heraldic display and supporting entablature, there are indications of disruption and disturbance to the main canopy detail. At the west end, the return section has dropped out of alignment near to the north wall and a vertical joint is open. A vertical joint is open on the front face of the cornice, at the west end and a section of alabaster is missing at the top of the joint. To the right of this joint there are crude plaster repairs to the cornice edge and open fissures visible to the centre of the moulding, extending down to the dentil moulding below. The vertical joint at the centre is plaster filled and appears to have been re-pointed. More fissures are visible to the right of the joint, but filled with plaster. The vertical joint towards the east end is open and mouldings are out of alignment here. The horizontal joint at the base of the cornice is opening, with pointing cracked or missing. On the east return, the vertical joint is out of alignment and crudely re-filled with plaster. A section of alabaster is missing from the corner and another from the projection at the north end. The cornice is clearly out of alignment with the frieze here and the horizontal joint between the two sections is open.

At the west end of the frieze, the return moulding against the north wall has dropped out of vertical, leaving a wide, open joint. A break through the frieze moulding extends diagonally across the face close to the south west corner. On the front face the decorative panels and alabaster frames have all moved out of vertical alignment, dropping to the centre of the canopy. Vertical and horizontal joints are open. Loose mortar and plaster fragments are found on the shelf formed by the architrave. The panelling and framing details are no longer square, with vertical joints open at each end of the frieze and fissures visible in the decorative panel faces in the centre and east end. Open fissures and an open vertical joint are visible on the alabaster at the east end return, where the mouldings should terminate against the north wall but extend into the open space of a window reveal.

At the west end of the canopy, the architrave moulding on the return has a vertical joint above the column capital which is open to 6 mm and filled with loose mortar. On the front face the moulding drops to the centre joint, which is filled with plaster, now cracked and loose. The underside of the architrave is carved to form the coffered ceiling and the central joint extends to the rear wall panelling. The joint has been plaster filled and there is disturbance at the back of the joint, close to the rear wall. Here, coffered detail is broken, falling out of alignment and partially filled with plaster. Temporary support has been provided to the canopy by inserting a timber bearer below the ceiling to transfer some of the loading to the floor.

The west end column and capital has a break in the base of the capital which extends into the top of the shaft, leaving a section of carving loose. The remainder of the capital and shaft are in good condition, with the shaft exhibiting small surface losses on the east side. Behind the column, a plain pilaster with recessed panels is carved in two sections with a horizontal joint at the centre. The west edge is smeared and spattered with wall paint, but the east edge, which shares a long, vertical joint with the rear wall panelling, is open with plaster falling out of the joint. The top corner of the joint, plaster filled to the ceiling, is marked by iron staining.

On the east column and capital, the capital is split vertically on the east side and has been roughly filled with plaster. The capital base moulding has broken at front and rear and the north east corner of the capital is out of alignment. The shaft is in good order, with only slight surface losses on the west side. A small section of moulding is missing from the base. On the pilaster behind the column, there are indications of an earlier repair at the top of the east edge where glue remnants and a drill hole are visible. A mortar line and fragmentary black paint on the edge do not relate to the north wall because this edge is set within the window reveal.

On the rear panelling, the inscription panel joints with the strapwork frame are open and the top section of strapwork moulding above the panel has moved forward by some 15 mm. The top edge of the moulding is held in place by the ceiling. The panel to the west, with trophy decoration, shares a disrupted joint with the west pilaster. The panel below the inscription is out of alignment, forward at the base and leaning back to the top with a vertical joint open on the east edge. The joint is also open with the strapwork above it. The trophy panel to east of centre has the bottom joint open with the string course below it and some rough filling in the east side vertical joint. All trophy detail is dark with dirt and grime but fragments of an earlier colour scheme remain visible. Black, red and green paint and gold leaf can be found within the detail of the carving.

The string course moulding has been disrupted at the west end where the top edge is broken and loose. The moulding is out of alignment at the centre joint and a triangular section of alabaster has broken above the joint. There is a vertical break through the moulding to the right of centre which has been plaster filled but is open again. The string course sections have moved out of alignment at the east end.

The contrasting panelling below the string course is marked by water staining and blooming. The alabaster frame joints are open and generally out of alignment. Two breaks are visible in the upper framing, one open and one filled with plaster. The vertical joint with the west pilaster is open and the one to the east is wide and plaster filled.

The effigy head is intact but the nose is a replacement, well modelled in plaster. The collar has lost detail on the edge where the alabaster has been chipped. A tassel is missing from the corner of the cushion below the head and there are slight losses of detail to the edge of the rolled mat carving below it. Spots and splashes of plaster are visible on the chest and the raised hands have been repaired roughly with plaster at the wrists. Repairs have failed, the plaster cracked and the hands are loose. Thumbs are missing on both hands and surface detail has been lost on the index and little fingers. Fragments of red paint are visible below the shoulders, on the sword belt and on the plate restraining straps across the breeches. A sword and scabbard on the proper left of the effigy is largely intact. The legs are jointed above the knees and the joints are open, leaving the lower legs loose. The proper left leg has plaster repairs to a break below the knee and at the ankle. A spur rowel is visible below the proper right heel but separated from the heel and carved into the reed mat. The effigy plinth is jointed beneath the knees and there are plaster repairs to the surface at the back of the joint. The plinth has also been broken across the full width at the foot end, below the ankles. Surfaces are dusty and darkened by grime.

At the top of the tomb chest, the cornice on the west end return has lost detail on the edge and the joint below the column base is open with the section out of alignment at the junction with the front edge. The front of the cornice is chipped and cut and missing detail. There is a break through the moulding below the cushion and an open joint east of the break where the moulding has moved out of alignment. The east end corner is missing and repaired with plaster. At the east return, edges and corners have lost detail, the moulding has broken and open fissures and failed plaster fillings disfigure surfaces. At the west end of the tomb chest, rough plaster filling has been used in the joint with the north wall and there are smears of paint from the wall on the edge of the panel. There is a break through the alabaster frame at the south west corner and the base moulding is smeared with plaster. The horizontal joint with the plinth is open and on the west return the plinth section has dropped below the level of the front section, enlarging the joint. The black limestone panel at the west end of the front of the tomb chest has a diagonal break through the inset panel and a loss of alabaster in the frame at the bottom right edge. The surface of the panel to the east is disrupted by spalling and friable surfaces partially filled with plaster, now decayed and loose. The centre panel has rough plaster filling to the vertical and base joints, which are slightly open. To the east the next panel has some spalling and friable surfaces now plaster filled and joints in the frames are tight but lack pointing. There is a rough plaster repair to the moulding below the panel. A break across the face of the black limestone at the east end has been plaster filled and there is blooming at the edges, with slight loss of alabaster on the east frame. At the east end of the tomb chest, fissures have been filled with plaster, now damp and disturbed. Pointing is loose in joints and base moulding joints are open. There is a break through the moulding close to the north wall.

The sandstone plinth is out of alignment at the west end. The top corner of the plinth has suffered abrasion and loss throughout the length. At the east end return the sandstone is disrupted and friable at the junction with the north wall. The plinth is raised upon a pavement of nine slabs at a higher level than the current floor level.

Surface moisture readings were taken at the following locations:

#### North Wall

At plinth level, east	20.6%
west	13.9%
At tomb chest mid-height, east	11%
west	17%
At tomb chest cornice height, east	21.5%
west	14.1%
At halfway height of the pilasters	
east	9.4%
west	10.2%
At cornice level, west	12.2%

#### Monument

Floor plinth	east 31.7%	centre 58%	west 21.4%
Sandstone plinth	east 17%	centre 11.5%	west 20.1%

Tomb chest panels	east 13.9%
Front 1	9.5%
2	12.4%
3	10.5%
4	14%
5	18%
West	11.2%
Monument	
East pilaster	8.4%
East shaft	10.7%
West pilaster	7.8%
West shaft	12.8%
Rear panelling	9%
Effigy	10-15%

## 7 Observations

My principal concern with this monument is the apparent instability of the canopy, a result of inadequate support for the weight of the structure, which could lead to collapse. The horizontal span of the ceiling and increased weight of entablatures and achievements of arms are supported at the extreme ends by the Corinthian columns but with little if any support at the centre. The canopy elements can be seen to be dropping towards the centre and that movement has forced sections out of alignment, opened joints and fractured panels and mouldings. To compound the structural problems, the monument does not fit the wall space allocated to it, with the east end of the stone at canopy level overlapping a window reveal.

The design of the monument, both floor-standing and wall-mounted, does make it vulnerable to penetrating moisture attack from both wall and floor. The north wall aspect is a cold and damp one. Whilst surface moisture readings are currently relatively low, (except for the floor) the structure will have absorbed a measure of rising and penetrating damp over four centuries, sufficient to disrupt fastenings, mortar, alabaster and decorative finishes. Component parts of the monument will be fastened together with iron cramps or dowels, which rust and expand under moisture attack. Breakdown of ferrous fastenings can lead to staining, loss of strength and disruption and damage to stone, all weakening the integrity of the structure. It is very likely that rising damp, carrying a burden of damaging soluble salts, has affected the core material within the tomb chest, establishing a reservoir of moisture within the monument. The use of plaster as a pointing and repair material has not been helpful. Plaster is hygroscopic, attracting moisture, leaching solutions into adjacent materials, (notably alabaster in this monument) and breaking down rapidly.

The overall appearance of the monument is dark and dull, especially when compared with the cleaned alabaster of the adjoining monument to Sir John Savile. Cleaning would be a sensible option for the monument; improving the appearance and allowing the interplay of colour between alabaster, limestone and decorative finishes to be fully appreciated. Cleaning would also remove potentially damaging accumulations of dust and grime from surfaces, reducing the risk of water retention on alabaster by absorption from such deposits.

The painted surfaces of the heraldic achievements give some cause for concern. The modern paint finish is bright, metallic and in sharp contrast with the overall colour of

the monument. I appreciate that heraldic display can be colourful and draw attention, but here the paint finish is hard, glossy and unpleasant. It does not seem appropriate to the age and appearance of the monument and I think the heraldry should be checked for authenticity and adjusted accordingly.

The most effective conservation treatment for the monument would be to dismantle, clean and repair the structure, install vertical and horizontal damp proof membranes, replace all fastenings with stainless steel and re-build above a new, dry core. The canopy will need additional support without any visible compromise of the original design. It will be necessary to transfer more canopy weight to the north wall, possibly using stainless steel fastenings anchored into the ceiling panels and attached to stainless steel beams cantilevered out from the north wall. It should be possible by such means to relieve the weight upon the columns and maintain the entablature in a stable, horizontal position.

Conservation work to the monument will be constrained by the situation of the structure within a chapel richly endowed with monuments, furnishings, Saxon cross fragments, medieval cross slabs and very fine stained glass. The church organ is positioned in the north aisle, in close proximity to the chapel. Space is very limited around the monument site, with the tomb chest monument to Sir John Savile within two metres to the west, the monument to Sir George Savile (1743) within one metre to the east and a full length reclining knight effigy, circa 1320, on the floor in front. There will need to be a considerable amount of protective covering provided to ensure the safety of the chapel, artefacts and church organ during dismantling and rebuilding work. Scaffolding will be necessary for access and lifting purposes and the choice of scaffolding contractor will be critical to minimize the risk of damage.

When dismantled, there could be approximately one hundred monument components and two cubic metres of core material requiring temporary storage space within the church. It is conceivable that all conservation work could be completed inside the church but it would be disruptive. A better option might be to crate the monument parts and transport them to a workshop for cleaning and repair, returning them for reconstruction after damp proof membranes have been installed. There are risks in moving historic sculpture away from site and transport costs to consider. The use of a specialist fine art transport contractor would minimize risk of damage and the cost might offset favourably against accommodation charges for conservators working on site over an extended period.

## 8 Recommendations

- 8.1 Instruct a building contractor to supply and install protective coverings to the chapel floor, monuments, furnishings, display units and cross fragments and dust protection to the chancel and organ.
- 8.2 Make a photographic record and measured drawing of the monument to aid reconstruction.
- 8.3 Instruct a scaffolding contractor to supply and erect an access scaffold around the monument, including provision for setting lifting tackles with SWL not exceeding ½ tonne.

- 8.4 Begin dismantling by removing the effigy first. Open joints and lift off the leg and plinth section at the east end. Lift off the hands. Raise the effigy with a bar and wedges, or hydraulic wedge and insert timber beams between the effigy base and the tomb chest top. Position the outer ends of the beams on a suitable trolley, insert slides under the effigy and draw the effigy along the beams to the trolley. Extract beams and slides and remove the effigy on the trolley to safe storage.
- 8.5 Dismantle the armorial shields and achievement of arms by cutting through cramps, opening joints and easing sections of alabaster off the monument and on to the scaffold. Lower through the scaffold to the floor.
- 8.6 Continue dismantling to cornice and frieze level, opening joints and numbering each section before lifting it down.
- 8.7 Provide temporary support to the columns, shoring or binding them to the scaffold before releasing the ceiling panels.
- 8.8 Insert soft slings and lift the ceiling sections off; using chain tackles to move them to the scaffold before lifting the columns away by the same means. Lower the ceiling panels to the floor and remove by trolley.
- 8.9 Take down pilasters and wall panels, followed by tomb chest cornice and top sections. Use lifting equipment, if necessary, to ease tomb chest panels out and move to store.
- 8.10 Photograph core construction and material. It is likely to be sandstone rubble, bound together with lime mortar, but could be surprising in form and content. Allow for inspection by the County Archaeologist. Extract core.
- 8.11 Dismantle sandstone plinth.
- 8.12 Instruct a specialist transport contractor to pack monument components in crates and transport to workshop.
- 8.13 Prepare floor and wall to receive horizontal and vertical damp proof membranes.
- 8.14 Consult and collaborate with the Church Architect on the design and installation of a new stainless steel armature to provide additional support to the canopy.
- 8.15 At the workshop, remove all remnants of ferrous fastenings from the monument sections and prepare existing sockets for re-use. Remove mortar and plaster from joint surfaces and repair sites.
- 8.16 Clean the monument by a combination of dry and solvent systems, using granulated rubber (Draftclean) and/or an emulsion of white spirit/deionised water/Synperonic N, acetone, methylated soap and white spirit, as appropriate. Clean the sandstone plinth sections by steam at low pressure. Apply microcrystalline wax (Renaissance) to cleaned surfaces to provide a measure of protection against handling, dust and atmospheric moisture.



- 8.17 Repair breaks by pinning sections together with stainless steel dowels (BS316) set in polyester stone adhesive (Akemi). Gap-fill with acrylic resin (Paraloid B72) and powdered alabaster, adjusting the filling to match using artist's acrylic paint (Rowney, Winsor & Newton).
- 8.18 Treat the painted surfaces of the heraldic achievements by consolidating flaking paint with acrylic resin (Paraloid B72) and setting down loose fragments with a heated spatula. Re-touch losses with artist's acrylic paint (Rowney, Winsor & Newton).
- 8.19 If it is revealed that the modern paint finish to the heraldry has been applied incorrectly, remove the over-paint by scalpel and/or solvent methods (Nitromors controlled with acetone) to discover whether remnants of the original scheme exist and treat accordingly. Consolidation with acrylic resin (Paraloid B72), surface filling, re-touching with artist's acrylic paint and re-gilding may be required.
- 8.20 Instruct a specialist transport contractor to crate, transport and deliver the monument components to the Savile Chapel at Thornhill and to remove the empty crates and packing material after delivery.
- 8.21 Instruct a lead-working contractor to supply and install vertical and horizontal damp proof membranes in lead sheet, code 4 and code 6 respectively, to isolate the monument from the north wall and the floor.
- 8.22 Treat the lead sheet with Liquid Asphaltic Composition (RIW) wherever surfaces will be exposed to lime mortar.
- 8.23 Set the sandstone plinth in place, bedding and pointing in lime mortar, supplying and fitting stainless steel (BS316) fastenings to existing sockets where possible and securing with polyester stone adhesive (Akemi). Lime mortar to be composed of one part St Astier NHL2 hydraulic lime to three parts selected sand.
- 8.24 Build a new core to support the tomb chest and effigy, using dry Thermalite block, set in polyester mortar (Nitomortar) to maintain a dry core.
- 8.25 Re-construct the monument, using stainless steel fastenings throughout (BS316), secured with polyester stone adhesive (Akemi), bedding and pointing joints with hydraulic lime mortar.
- 8.25 Incorporate new stainless steel (BS316) support beams and fastenings to the canopy stonework, relieving the weight upon the columns and providing stability and security to the monument.
- 8.26 Instruct the scaffolding and building contractors to remove the scaffold and protective coverings and ensure that the chapel and contents are left in a clean condition.

