

St Michael & All Saints Church, Thornhill.

Conservation report on the internal monuments

Section 5

Monuments 2, 3, & 4 in the Savile Chapel



Prepared for:
Thornhill Parish Church Council
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DRAFT (rev)

Monument number 2 - Sir George Savile Bart of Rufford (died 1743).

Location.

North east corner of the Savile Chapel.

Dimensions.

Tbc

Description.



The memorial is set across the north east corner of the Saville Chapel; fixed directly against the walls and the void apparently filled with masonry. It is in the form of a black and gold marble sarcophagus raised upon a plinth of veined Carrara marble with an inset statuary Carrara marble inscription panel. The background is formed from a dark mottled grey/black marble with statuary Carrara marble pediment inset with the same black marble and with supports in the form of white marble scrolls. The whole monument is set upon a sandstone base.

The inscription is incised and filled with black paint.



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The surface of the marble is extremely discoloured with absorbed dirt and with deep staining.

There are a number of areas where the surface is discoloured as a consequence of rust stains caused by the corrosion of internal ferrous cramps. These will be detailed throughout this report but two typical areas can be seen in the adjacent photograph – in the centre of the inscription and on the pediment as indicated by the orange arrow.

It appears that rudimentary cleaning has been carried out around the text on the main inscription and the inscription on the base.

As with the other marbles within the church the surface has lost most of the polish it would have originally had – this is likely the consequence of condensation and may also be partially due to previous cleaning – this is particularly noticeable on the black and gold sarcophagus which would appear a rich colour when originally finished but is currently barely distinguished from the background. The dirtiness of the surface currently leaves the memorial bland and without the contrast it would have been intended to have.



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There are a number of impact damages across the surface. Many are old and discoloured but as can be seen clearly here there is recent impact chip on the North West corner of the plinth (white arrow).

The back fill behind the memorial has been rendered to simulate the form of the monument; (black arrow).



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Detail of the north west elevation.

The figured marble is showing signs of deep brown discolouration particularly on the vertical corner adjacent to the inscription panel. The veins in the marble are generally an iron mineral and the discolouration may be a consequence of corrosion and movement of minerals within the structure of the marble. Corners in built structures tend to be points of increased evaporation encouraging moisture to migrate towards them thus transporting and concentrating dissolved minerals.

This type of discolouration would remain even following cleaning.



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Detail of the south east corner.

Discolouration of the marble is comparable to the opposite elevation as detailed above.

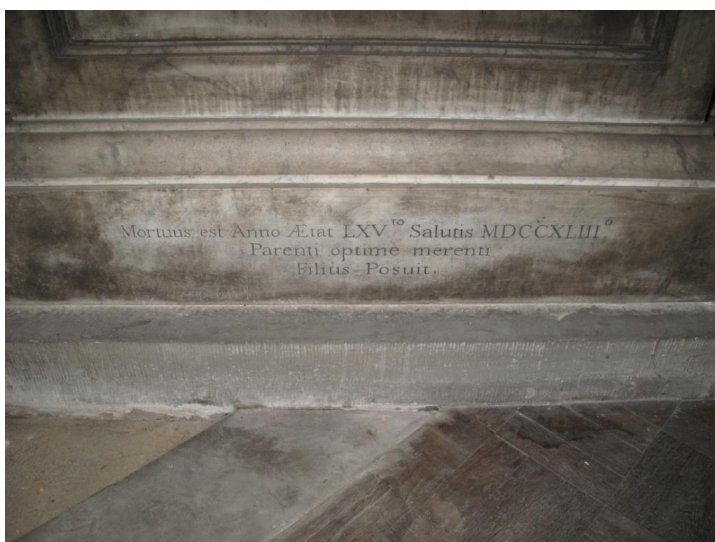
Note also the chipped corners which in this case appear not to be so recent.

The cable in this photograph is temporary and associated with works to monitor the adjacent stained glass window by the use of sensors and data loggers.



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General view of the front elevation of the plinth.



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Detail of the inscription on the plinth

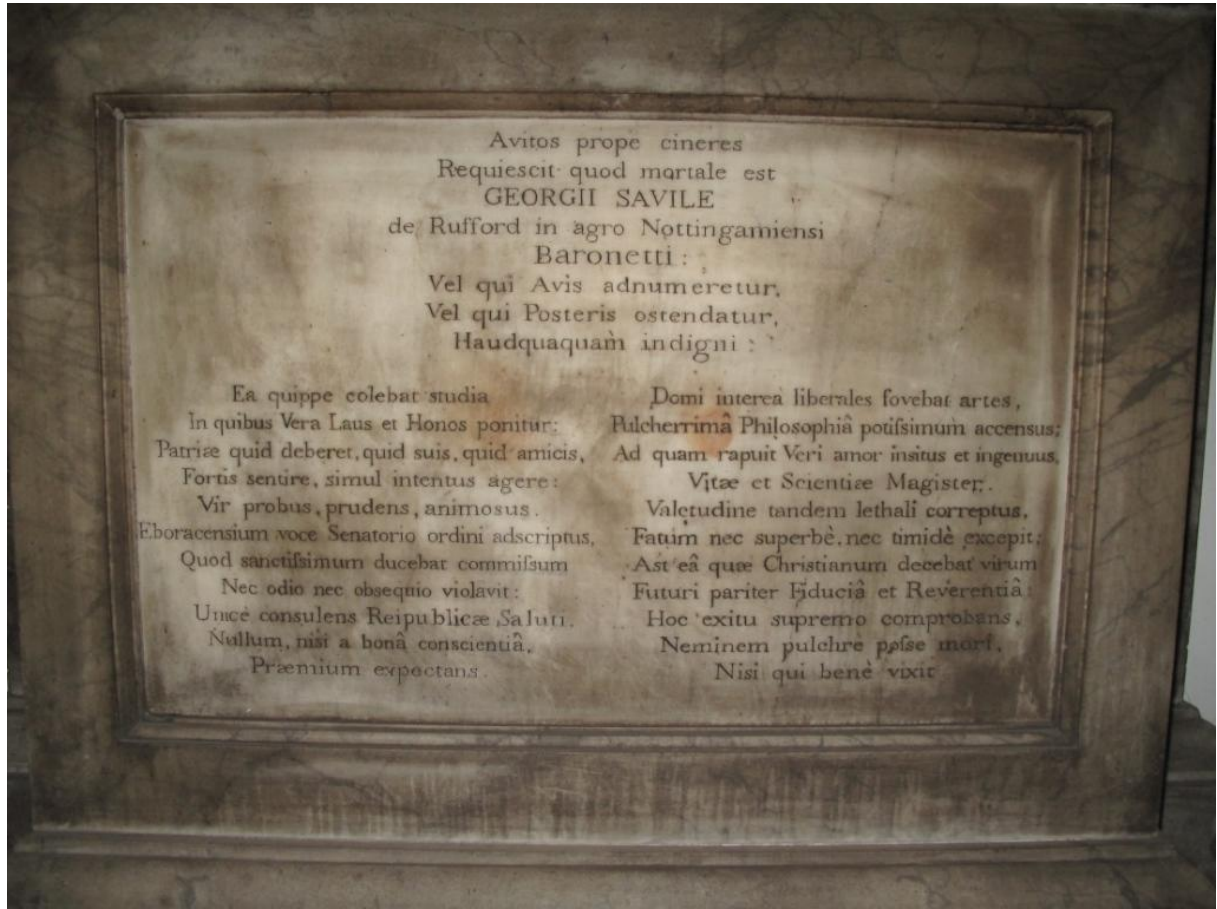


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Signature of the maker on the western scroll.

W. BARLOW.

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Detail record of the inscription panel. As discussed above the intense rust stains are associated with buried ferrous cramps.



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Detail of the north-west corner of the plinth top and sarcophagus base with the impact damage as discussed above.



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Detail of the south east corner.



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General view of the front elevation of the sarcophagus.



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General view of the south east elevation of the sarcophagus.



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Detail of the north west elevation of the sarcophagus.

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General view of the back ground tablet and pediment.



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Left and below are detailed photographs of the north-west end of the pediment.

Note the gaps in the joints as indicated by the arrows. The internal cramps are corroding and jacking apart the stones.

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The joints are relatively clean indicating a progressive and comparatively recent movement.

The following photographs record the movement at other points in the structure.



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Detail of the south east end of the pediment showing movement in the joints.

Note also the intense rust stain in the marble in this area.



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Detail of the south east corner of the pediment.



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Detail of the south east corner of the pediment viewed from the east side.



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Overall view of the centre of the pediment which shows the movement in all the joints.



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Detail of the south east corner of the sarcophagus showing the movement in the joint between the lid and the main section.



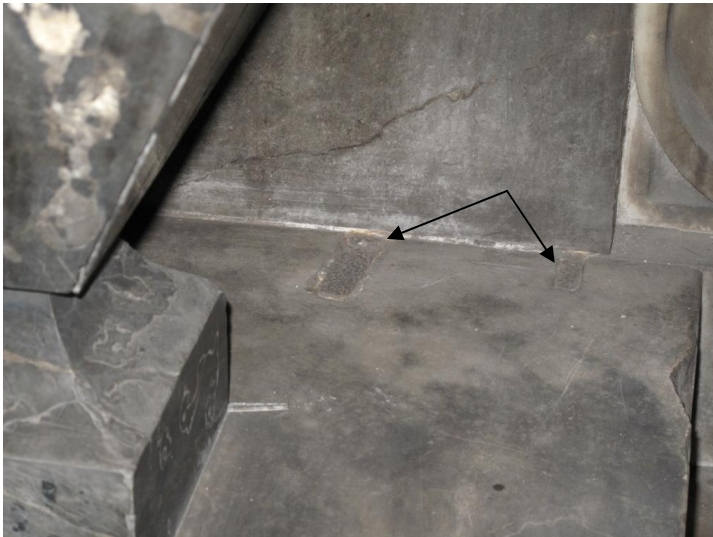
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Detail of the east elevation of the sarcophagus showing the jacking upwards of the lid along the front joint.



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Photograph looking down on top of the pediment showing the rendered and painted infilling between the marble and the wall.



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Looking down on top of the main chest at the joint with the back panel adjacent to the south east corner of the sarcophagus; this shows visible iron cramps which although exposed remain in relatively good condition.

Monument number 3 – Anne Savile (1878) and Henri Savile (1881).

Location.

North wall of the Savile chapel, west end.



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Dimensions.

tbc

Description.



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Gothic revival low relief alabaster framing with two inset brass inscriptions; the lettering is filled with pigmented wax.

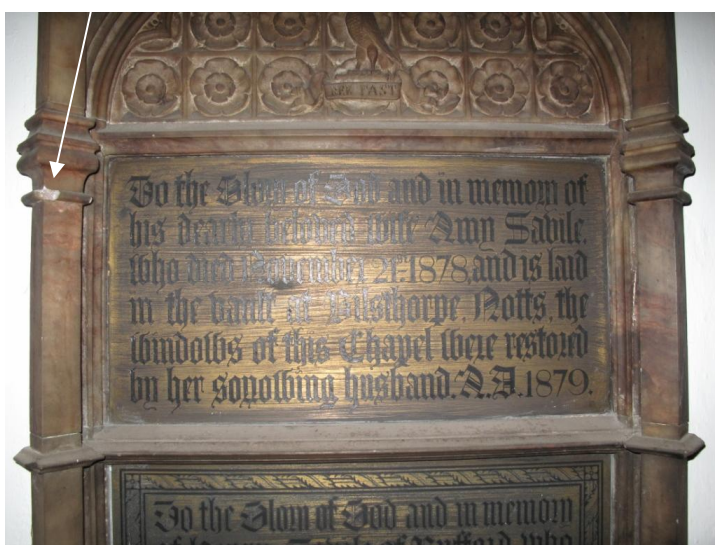




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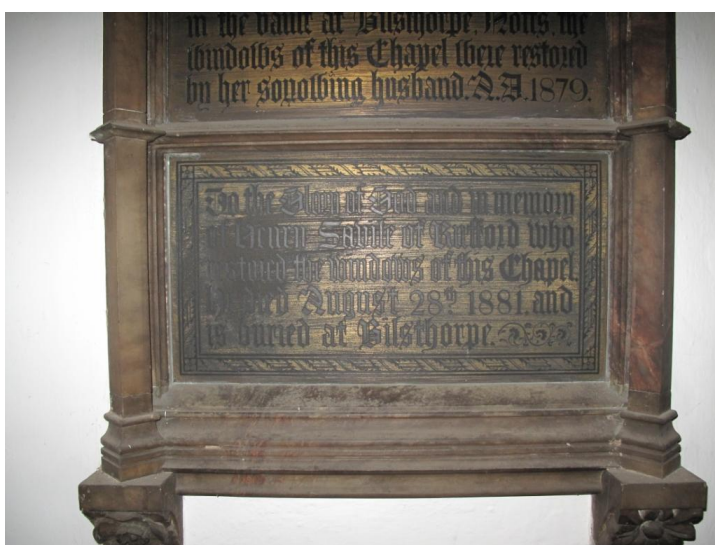
The alabaster is heavily discoloured with dirt which covers the natural appearance of the veined stone and distorts the details of the gothic carving.

Generally the monument remains in good physical condition but with some minor chipping (white arrow) in common with other memorials in the church.



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The brass inscription panels are discoloured and have a distinct horizontal streaking. The latter may be the consequence of an applied coating which is discoloured.



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The painted or pigmented wax filled lettering remains in good condition.



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Detail of the pediment section showing the family crest – an owl.

Monument number 4 – Sir George Savile 8th Bart (1784)

Location.

North wall of the Savile chapel between the square headed windows.



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Dimensions

1040mm by 100mm by 1870mm

Description



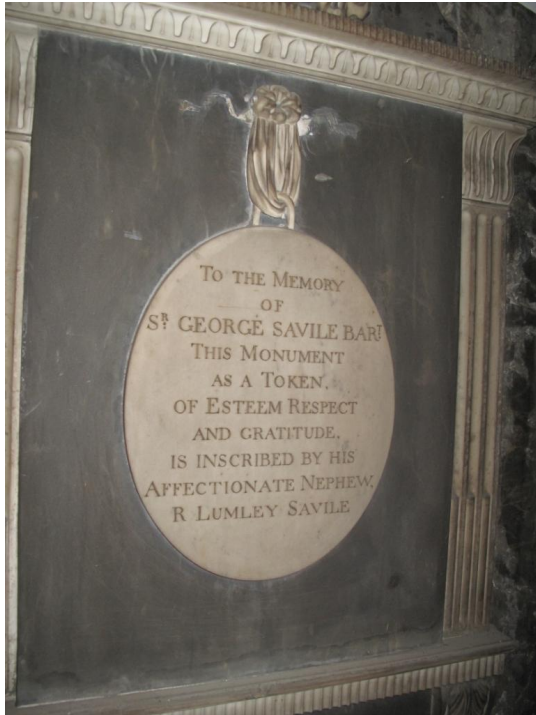
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A dark mottled polychrome marble backing panel with curved 'pediment' top supports a Belgian black marble tablet surrounded by a Carrara marble moulded frame and with a white marble inscription panel in the form of a medallion hung on a ribbon. On the pediment is a relief carving of the family emblem – an owl – in this case resting its foot on a skull.

Signed; Fisher. Sculpt.

York.





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The surfaces all have a heavy covering of ingrained dirt consistent with all the other memorials in the church. The upper surfaces of the owl are particularly noted for the discolouration and soiling by dirt (see further details in the following photographs).

The level of soiling destroys the intended polychrome effect of the chosen marbles.

The ribbon from which the medallion hangs has been partially lost but the original form is retained by the residue of plaster originally used to adhere it to the background.

At the time of survey part of the detached ribbon rested on the white marble cornice.



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The contrasting colours of the memorial are lost due to the covering of dirt.



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A small restraint fixing has been exposed by the loss of the marble from around it.

Treatment options for Monuments 2, 3, & 4.

Monument number 2 - Sir George Savile Bart of Rufford (died 1743).

The monument is suffering from corrosion jacking in the joints of the pediment and the sarcophagus. At the current time the joints are expanding to accommodate the pressure and there is no sign of damage occurring within the sections of marble. However it is probable that the turn down sections of the cramps will begin to corrode and it would be likely that the pressure exerted would then break the marble.

The possible sources of moisture causing the corrosion would appear to be either atmospheric moisture or from moisture entering the structure at low level and migrating through the core to the upper levels where it is evaporating from the higher joints where evaporative forces are perhaps greatest – (note that moisture was observed to be evaporating from high level on the Sir George and Lady Anne memorial opposite). On balance it is most likely to be atmospheric humidity as there is currently little sign of similar corrosion in the lower cramps and little disruption to the decoration in the adjacent wall surfaces.

It is not likely to be possible to control the problem by modifications in the environmental conditions. Ambient humidity and condensation are the most likely current causes of the problem and the relative humidity would be difficult to control in such a large space.

Due to the risk of failure in the structure from ongoing corrosion of the cramps it would be advisable to plan to deal with the problem by full or partial dismantling of the memorial enabling the replacement of the ferrous cramps with non-ferrous cramps. While it would be possible to effect repair of the currently corroded cramps by partial dismantling it should be considered prudent to prevent future problems by undertaking a full dismantling and replacement. It would also enable the provision of a damp proof membrane between the memorial and the floor and walls of the building.

This memorial would benefit greatly by being cleaned to remove the surface dirt. On site trials would need to be undertaken to establish both the appropriate method of cleaning and the most acceptable level of cleaning.

Following cleaning the marble surfaces should be treated by the application of a micro-crystalline wax in order to provide a measure of protection to the surface against both humidity and to inhibit the absorption of soiling in the future. For the black marbles a pigmented wax would be most appropriate.

Monument number 3 – Anne Savile (1878) and Henri Savile (1881).

The stonework of the memorial remains in reasonably sound structural condition.

The visual appearance of the memorial would greatly benefit from cleaning of the alabaster followed by an application of micro-crystalline wax.

The brass plaques are somewhat disfigured by the discoloured streaky coating that appears to have been applied to the surface making them increasingly difficult to read.

The coating should be examined and if possible removed from the brass plaques. The brass may require gentle polishing followed by an application of micro-crystalline wax.

During the works the pigmented infill to the plaques should be checked and consolidated if required.

All pointing should be checked and if defective replaced with similar material – most likely to be plaster of Paris.

The structural fixings of the memorial should be closely monitored to ensure they remain stable.

Monument number 4 – Sir George Savile 8th Bart (1784)

The memorial is badly disfigured by dirt and would greatly benefit from cleaning. On site trials would be required to ascertain the appropriate method and level of cleaning. It is likely that a variety of techniques will be required to ensure a balanced cleaning. Considering the current condition it is likely that some deep staining will remain in the marble.

The structure of the memorial remains largely sound and not requiring work at the current time but close monitoring will be required in future to ensure that it remains sound.

The detached sections of marble ribbon should be adhered back to the memorial in order to ensure that they are not lost. The outline preserved in the plaster remains should be carefully preserved and consideration given to restoring the integrity of the design by reforming the missing sections of ribbon. This could be carried out in carved marble or more cost effectively in plaster painted to simulate the colour of the surrounding marble. Resin replication is an option but most resin casts discolour with time and it is considered better to use a painted repair which although not initially visually so close to the appearance of marble will remain generally more stable in the longer term.