

Monument # 3 Anne Savile † 1878 & Henri Savile † 1881

The Works

The wall mounted monument, comprising of alabaster and brass with inlaid paint, was cleaned using solvent and mechanical means to reduce accumulated dirt and disrupted paint. A protective, conservation-grade wax was then applied and dusted with purified talc.

1 Monument Description

- 1.1 The monument comprises of a pair of flanking pinnacles, complete with crockets, an ogee headed top displaying the Savile motto and repeat, stiff-leaf decoration, both carved in low-relief. Below that are two horizontal mouldings, which form part of the border for two brass inscription panels, with inlaid painted decoration. The whole is supported by a pair of small, carved load-bearing corbels, spanned by a deeper horizontal moulding.

2 Location

- 2.1 The monument is located on the north elevation of the Savile Chapel, at the west side adjacent to the entrance arch. The bottom bed is 2.070m above finished floor level.

3 Condition Assessment

- 3.1 Once the temporary access scaffold was safely erected, a fingertip survey of all surfaces was possible. A photographic survey was undertaken before works commenced.
- 3.2 All architectural sections were solid and well held, the brass panels were slightly loose within their alabaster borders but could not go anywhere, due to the construction of the monument.
- 3.3 There were numerous paint and plaster splashes (concentrated on, but not limited, to the sky faces) from different phases of decoration.
- 3.4 The alabaster, although heavily soiled was in a sound condition, with no signs of deterioration. When viewed under magnification it became clear the brass panels were visually impaired by a coating smeared over the surface. It would appear a well-meaning protective coating has been applied to the brass by brush, the solvent component had effectively re-solubilised the inlaid coloured decoration, re-distributing it over the surface of both panels. Black is the main colour within the lettering and brush marks can be seen over the surface with the same tone of black as visible in the lettering.
- 3.5 It was noted there was minor blistering to the plaster adjacent to monument, with isolated areas sounding like de-bonding had taken place.

4 Conservation Works

Cleaning

- 4.1 All elements underwent a preliminary dry clean with a vacuum cleaner to remove the heavy layers of dust.
- 4.2 A series of cleaning and solubility trials were conducted on representative areas of the alabaster (which responded well) and the coating to the brass panels.
- 4.3 All alabaster elements were cleaned with 'Solvol Autosol' applied by soft bristle brush and neutralised immediately with white spirit. Any residues in undercutting of the carving was removed with the aid of a vacuum cleaner and stiff bristle brush, followed by cotton wool swabs dampened with white spirit.
- 4.4 After the solubility trials it became clear the coating applied to the brass would not respond to any of the solvent/solvent-mixtures/compresses available to us. Small discreet trials were carried out by paring back the coating mechanically with scalpel blades and nylon pad. After consultation with the architect it was decided to solvent clean the coating only, to render the inscription legible once again. The brass panels were cleaned with Industrial Methylated Spirits (I.M.S) applied on cotton wool swabs. This did nothing to affect the coating or re-solubilise the inlaid decoration beneath, but removed the layer of overlying airborne dirt.

5 Waxing

- 5.1 Once cleaned the alabaster was given a single brush application of 'Renaissance' micro-crystalline wax, this was dusted with purified talc such that the inevitable airborne dirt sits on the coating and not the cleaned alabaster.

6 Maintenance Considerations

- 6.1 Even though 'Renaissance' wax is a conservation grade material it would be prudent to remove the coating from the alabaster ideally on a five yearly basis and definitely every ten years. It should then be re-applied and dusted with talc as previously. This is a simple process carried out using White-Spirit applied on cotton wool swabs, and wouldn't need to be carried out by a conservator but someone competent under the guidance of a conservator.



General view of the monument before and during treatment, with a cleaning contrast clearly visible to the upper elements. Note how the carved detail to the panel within the ogee arch, are completely lost due to the heavy uniform soiling.



Detail of the repeat foliage decoration incorporating the Savile family motto, note how the rich veining within the alabaster has been restored visually.