

Monument # 4 Sir George Savile 8th Bart † 1784

The Works

A wall mounted monument, comprising of white marble, dark-grey carboniferous limestone, grey decorative marble and black paint within the inscription. The monument was cleaned using a combination of solvents, Solvol Autosol, Sepiolite clay and steam.

1 Monument Description

- 1.1 The monument comprises of a shaped, light-grey veined marble background, with a shaped dark-grey carboniferous limestone, central vertical element. A carved owl and skull stands above a cornice with fluting and stiff-leaf decoration. A central elliptical incised, inscription panel is held by a drapery loop and is flanked by a pair of fluted pilasters with stiff-leaf decoration. The bottom fluted horizontal moulding is supported by a pair of small corbels also with stiff-leaf decoration. A central load-bearing corbel which is situated beneath the surface presumably provides additional support to the whole assemblage.

2 Location

- 2.1 The monument is located on the north elevation of the Savile Chapel, between a pair of tracery windows. The bottom bed is 2.20m above finished floor level.

3 Condition Assessment

- 3.1 Once a 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 elements were solid, with no signs of resonance when banged with a clenched fist.
- 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 light-grey decorative marble (not a building material) has survived poorly due to the inherently weak geological nature of this particular marble. Fissuring can be seen at random over the surface although these areas are still solid. Vertical water marking can be clearly seen on the viewers' right-hand side, with the lighter grey areas where all surface polish has been lost. The darker areas are where some surface polish remains. The fluting to the lower, right pilaster is sucrose at random, in small areas and as such was not up to low-pressure steam cleaning.

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 marbles (which responded well) and the coating to the brass panels.
- 4.3 The whole monument was degreased with acetone applied on cotton wool pads. All elements were then cleaned with 'Solvof Autosol' applied by a mixture of soft stencil brushes and cotton wool pads, and neutralised immediately with white spirit. Any residues in the carving was removed with the aid of a vacuum cleaner and stiff bristle brush, followed by cotton wool swabs dampened with white spirit. After preliminary cleaning, the owl was observed to be unacceptably dirty still, due largely to the poor finishing of the surface, having trapped dirt within the pore structure.
- 4.4 The dirty residues over the owl were degreased further with solvent soluble 'Nitromors', after this a poultice of Sepiolite clay was applied and left for a period of twenty four hours to soften the dirt, this allowed successful removal with a low-pressure steam cleaner.

5 Consolidation

- 5.1 The isolated areas where disaggregation had taken place on the right-hand pilaster were consolidated with two brush applications of a 2.5%w/v solution of Paraloid B72 dissolved in Acetone : IMS 50 : 50. The consolidant was allowed to polymerise before steam cleaning took place. The Solvol Autosol was used up to these islands of deterioration and not over them.
- 5.2 Despite the poor condition of the light-grey marble there were no signs of textural breakdown, more micro-fissuring along mineral veins and injecting a consolidant would have done nothing to arrest this.



General views before and during cleaning. The image on the right shows the light-grey background has been cleaned down to surbase level (indicated) the lighter areas above are where all original surface polish has been lost, the darker grey (cleaned) areas are where original polish remains, the lower sections and the owl are still to be cleaned.



Detailed view of the poor (geological) quality of the light-grey decorative marble, with historic loss of material to the unusually weak calcite component. This is across the whole surface area of the slab and is not isolated to this area. Despite its dramatic appearance deterioration is not accelerated or progressive and these areas still remain solid. The deterioration may even be due to the original polishing process.



Context view of cleaning trials in progress when the range of solvents/materials known to work on the different materials present are trialled and then evaluated to determine the safest most effective technique/material.



Cleaning trials in progress around the perimeter of the elliptical inscription panel, note how heavily soiled the dark-grey background panel was prior to wholesale cleaning.



More cleaning trials to a discrete, heavily soiled area of the white marble, with trials starting at the far left-hand side (indicated) with more gentle, volatile materials, gradually increasing in strength to the abrasive paste at the far right-hand side.