

**Monument # 7**  
**Reverend John Michell † 1793 & his brother Gilbert Michell † 1792**

## **The Works**

A wall mounted monument, comprising of white marble, a dark-grey/ochre decorative marble (not a building material) carved timber, oil gilding and black paint. 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 curvilinear pediment complete with a central heraldic shield with stiff leaf embellishment, and a winged horse, and crest above. A deeply moulded cornice sits above a plain frieze. A central incised inscription panel is flanked by a pair of plain pilasters, each with a moulded cap and base. A plainly moulded horizontal base is supported by a pair of large, load-bearing corbels.

### **2 Location**

- 2.1 The monument is located on the north elevation of the tower, to the right of monument number six. The bottom bed is 3.20m above finished floor level. This monument does receive direct, diffuse sunlight in the late afternoon, which may account for the levels of deterioration present to the dark coloured marble.

### **3 Condition Assessment**

- 3.1 Once a fixed access scaffold was safely erected, a fingertip survey of all surfaces was possible. A more detailed photographic survey was undertaken before works commenced.
- 3.2 All architectural elements were solid, with no signs of resonance when banged with a clenched fist. However the winged horse and small, circular marble background were loose on a single dowel, although not at risk of detaching and falling.
- 3.3 The decorative marble of the pediment, frieze and pilasters displays a degree of breakdown along cleavage planes, due to the inherently weak geological nature of this decorative marble. The ochre coloured geological component is raised in many areas and it is these areas which are softer than underlying black marble.

### **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 gilded and painted areas.

- 4.3 The whole monument was degreased with acetone applied on cotton wool pads. The pediment, cornice and skyface of the bottom horizontal moulding were poulticed with a single application of the sepiolite clay, with a dwell time of twenty-four hours. Although out of sequence, the poultice areas were steam cleaned to remove the softened dirt. The pilaster caps and corbels were relatively clean and only required cleaning with the Solvol to achieve a comparable level of cleanliness. The incised inscription was cleaned with the V & A solution (white spirit: de-ionised water 50 : 50 with 1% Synperonic A7 applied on large cotton wool swabs to avoid affecting the paint remains in the inscription.
- 4.4 The carved softwood of the winged horse and the black and gold decoration to the heraldic shield were cleaned with the same V & A solution applied on cotton wool swabs. The gold was well attached to the substrate and the black paint displayed no signs of cupping, flaking or of being fugative.

## **5 Consolidation**

- 5.1 The winged horse and background panel were re-bedded utilising the original copper dowel on a bed of casting plaster. Excess material was struck off when the material was 'green'.
- 5.2 The vulnerable left fore-leg of the prancing horse had detached and was discovered on the top bed of the cornice. It was re-attached successfully using a single brush application of a 10%w/v solution of Paraloid B72 in Acetone : I.M.S 50 : 50 on both sides of the break.
- 5.3 Despite the poor condition of the black/ochre coloured marble there were no signs of significant textural breakdown, more micro-fissuring along mineral veins. Injecting a consolidant would have done nothing to arrest this and may have been counter-productive. Efforts were made to keep moisture away from these elements as the raised areas indicate swelling, caused by repeated heating/cooling cycles over many years, possibly from a clay component in the marble.



General view before and after treatment, note again the brown cast to the light coloured marble on the left-hand 'before' image and the marble looks fresher after cleaning.



Detail of the pediment and cornice before treatments, note the curvilinear pediment looks like a dark-grey carboniferous limestone but is in fact a heavily veined marble the same as the pilasters. Note also the heraldic representation of the horse is completely lost despite being gilded. Despite looking attractive, the frieze highlights the weak nature of this 'metamorphic' rock with a poor (large) crystalline structure having cooled quickly when formed originally.



A cleaning contrast to the inscription panel, with the right-hand side having been cleaned from top to bottom.



Detail of the winged horse and disc of marble behind, both having been removed, cleaned and re-secured.



Context view of the pediment, note the veining is visible in the pediment once again, although the surface polish has long since gone, again possibly due to direct sunlight playing over the surfaces, with heating/cooling cycles setting up surface condensation over a prolonged period of time. This is a clearly a decorative marble and not that robust evidenced by the pilasters.