

Monument # 8 William Elmsall † 1817

The Works

A wall monument that is sunken beneath surrounding plaster. 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 triangular-headed, dark-grey carboniferous limestone background panel, with white marble for the remainder. A carved representation of an urn sits above a simple rectangular plinth above a simply moulded cornice. This projects above a plain rectangular, incised inscription panel, with black in-painting to the inscription.

2 Location

- 2.1 The monument is located on the south elevation of the south chapel, between a pair of tracery windows and is tight to the jamb of the window to the west.

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 The main architectural elements were solid, with no signs of resonance when banged with a clenched fist, the urn however was loose on an internal pin. As the carved urn was thin (and therefore vulnerable) and the whole could not be detached easily, a decision was taken to re-secure the urn using several, small spots of polyester resin inserted around the perimeter to secure it and prevent it detaching. This was carried out after all treatments, when the urn and background were dry.
- 3.3 There were numerous paint splashes on to the sky faces from different phases of decoration.
- 3.4 The white marble has survived relatively well and was lightly soiled. The viewer's right-hand external mitre to the cornice is missing, presumably from physical damage as there are no signs of textural breakdown, to the now exposed substrate.
- 3.5 After cleaning, vertical marking became more apparent over the surface of the inscription panel. The inscription panel in general, and the upper arriss of the cornice in particular, display a residual brown cast that did not respond even to poulticing. This may be linked to the monuments close proximity with the old solid fuel heater which I understand was located in the recess in the south elevation of the south aisle many years ago. Airbourne contaminants from this mixed with surface condensation, would certainly produce this kind of deep-seated staining over a prolonged period.

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 both marbles which responded well.
- 4.3 The whole monument was degreased with acetone applied on cotton wool pads. All elements were then cleaned with 'Solvol Autosol' applied by a mixture of soft stencil brushes and cotton wool pads, 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 carved urn 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 A single poultice of Sepiolite clay was applied and left for a period of twenty-four hours to soften the dirt, this allowed successful removal of residual dirt with a low-pressure steam cleaner.
- 4.5 The few paint splashes were removed from the top bed by a single application of water-soluble 'Nitromors', in turn neutralised with acetone.

5 Re-pointing

- 5.1 Once all wet cleaning processes were complete the urn was re-secured as described previously. The next day this was pointed in the resultant joint line using a mixture of 'Tetrion' and gilders whiting in the ratio of 3 : 1.



General view of the monument before treatments, note how the inscription panel in particular looks uniformly dirty.



A cleaning contrast with signs of vertical water marking visible on the cleaned part of the inscription panel now.