

CHURCH OF ST PETER  
DORCHESTER, DORSET  
GORDON MONUMENT



CONDITION ASSESSMENT  
&  
RELOCATION REPORT

MAY 2023

DORCHESTER, CHURCH OF ST PETER ~ GORDON MONUMENT  
CONDITION ASSESSMENT & RELOCATION REPORT

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*This report was commissioned by the PCC of the  
Church of St Peter, Dorchester.*



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Cover image: Monument to John Gordon in-situ on north elevation.

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## 1 SUMMARY

This report records the dismantling of the John Gordon Monument and the monument's relocation to Dorset Museum. It follows on from the report commissioned by the PCC of the Church of St Peter, Dorchester, to establish the condition of the wall monument to John Gordon and propose a method of removal from the wall and relocation to the Dorset Museum. Much of the information is duplicated from the initial report to enable a more comprehensive record.

This report does not include or comment on the reasons for the dismantling and relocation of the monument. The lengthy and comprehensive research, consultation and decision-making process is recorded elsewhere.

## 2 BRIEF

- 2.1 The aim of this report is to record the dismantling and relocation of the monument to Dorset Museum.
- 2.2 Humphries & Jones Ltd carried out the dismantling and transportation to the museum. The work was undertaken during the week commencing 15<sup>th</sup> May 2023.
- 2.3 Church Warden Val Potter  
Conservation Consultant Lynne Humphries ~ Humphries & Jones Ltd  
Conservation and dismantling Humphries & Jones ~ Emma Norris, Nigel Jaggard, Lynne Humphries  
Architect Daniel Cantrell ~ Crickmay Stark Architects

## 3 LOCATION & LISTING

Church of St Peter OS GRID: SY6925290750  
High West Street LISTING: Grade I  
Dorchester ID: 1119031  
Dorset, DT1 1XA What3words: ///cinemas.gurgling.wolf

Monument to John Gordon was mounted on the north wall of the North Aisle, between the windows, indicated in red on plan below.

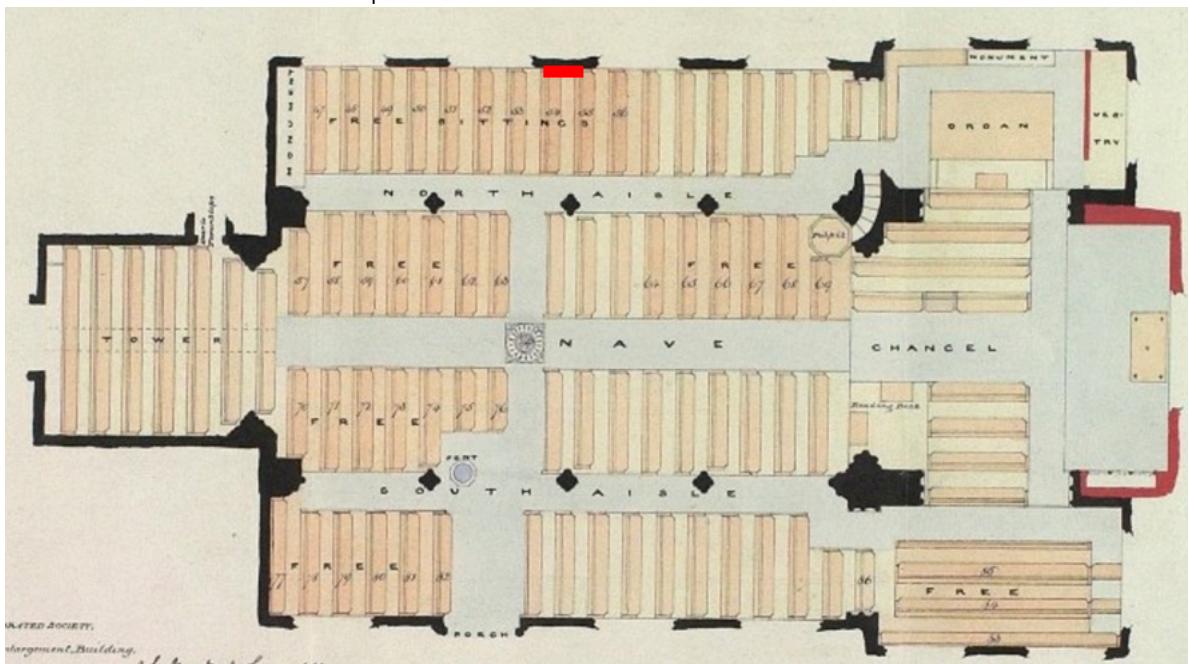


Figure 1~ Plan of St Peter's Church with location of Gordon wall monument indicated in north aisle (in red). Plan is from ICBS online and is dated 1857, by Hicks, architect.

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Figure 2 ~ North aisle, illustrating arrangement of wall monuments. John Gordon monument is indicated.



Figure 3 ~ Monument to John Gordon 1774, prior to dismantling.



## 4 HISTORY, DESCRIPTION & SIGNIFICANCE

### 4.1 GENERAL

The wall monument to John Gordon dates from c.1774. It is a standard style, typical of the late eighteenth century.

### 4.2 WALL MONUMENT

The wall monument to John Gordon comprises a white marble inscription panel with incised lettering, painted black and which bears the following words:

Near this place lies the body of John Gordon Esq<sup>r</sup>,  
Son of Robert Gordon Esq<sup>r</sup>, of Pronsey;  
Grandson of Sir John Gordon Baronet of Embo in Sutherland.  
He died at Dorchester Oct 4<sup>th</sup> 1774 aged 46.  
On his return to Jamaica,  
Where he had resided many Years In universal Esteem.

He was signally instrumental  
In quelling a dangerous Rebellion in that Island,  
In the Year 1760.  
A large Body of NEGROES  
Whom his BRAVERY had repulsed Finally Yeilding  
To their Confidence in his HUMANITY.

This Monument is erected as a Mark of Affection  
To the Memory of The best of Brothers.



Figure 4 ~ Detail of inscription.

Fluted architrave and capitals surmount these above which is a plainer cornice or mantel, supporting the grey marble obelisk ground, which backs a white marble urn with the words 'Omnes una manet Nox'. (The same night awaits us all.) See Figure 3.

The central inscription is flanked by two flat 'pilasters' supported on small corbel brackets with painted black details on the dentils.

Beneath the central panel is a white marble carved cartouche bearing a shield with 3 boars heads and a boar head crest. It is painted in blue, red and 'gold'/bronze paint. Evidence of gold leaf of an earlier decorative scheme, may be noted where losses have occurred.



Figure 5 ~ Detail of shield.

DIMENSIONS

Approximate dimensions:  
 Height ~ 1880 mm (including shield)  
 Width ~ 995 mm (mantel)  
 Depth ~ 110 mm

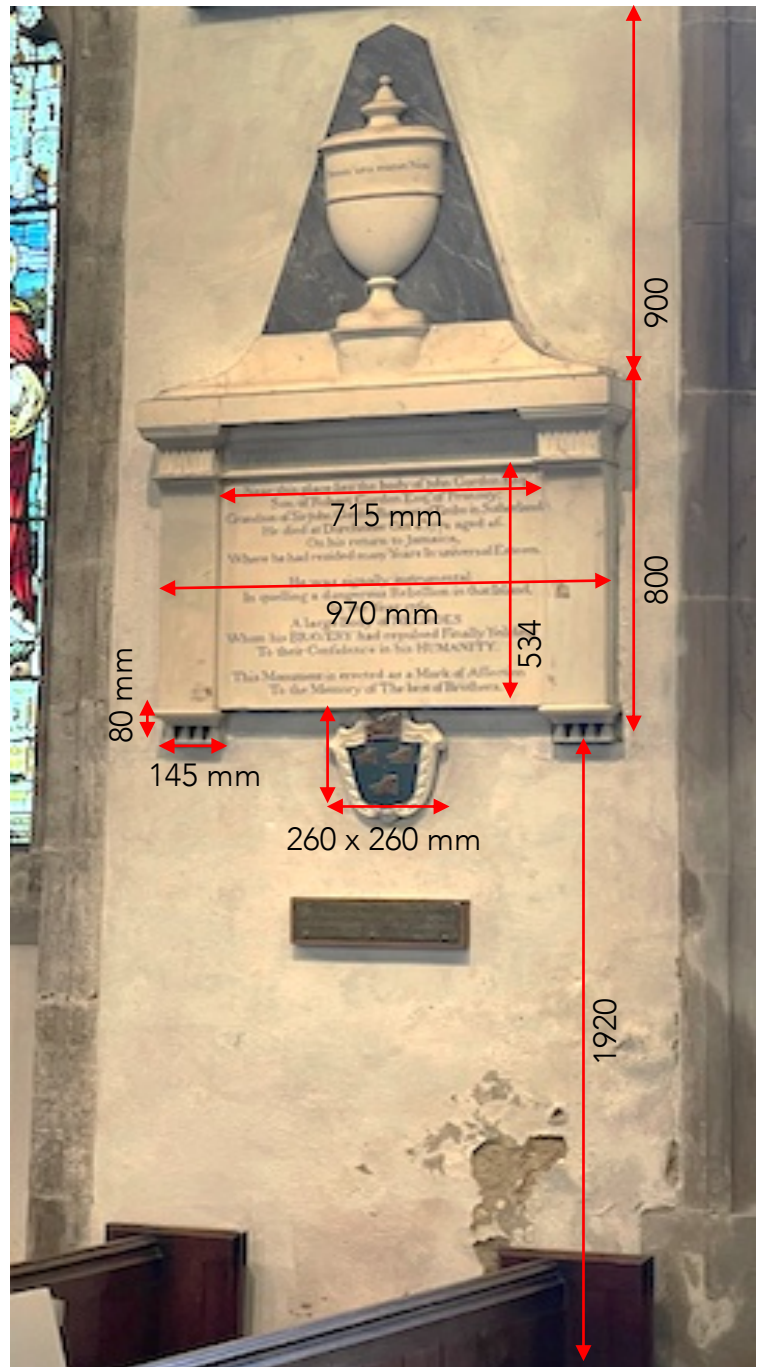


Figure 6 ~ Approximate dimensions taken in-situ.

to floor

4.3 SIGNIFICANCE

The monument to John Gordon is a standard style, typical of the late eighteenth century. However, it carries an inscription which references and records the atrocities of slavery, as well as utilising vocabulary which is unacceptable. It is for these reasons that permission has been granted for removal of the monument from a place of worship.

John Gordon had no known connection with Dorchester, other than, it is thought, he was passing through on his way to Plymouth, when he became ill and died<sup>1</sup>.

The lower half of the inscription has been covered over in recent years.

The church is adjacent to The Dorset Museum, who have agreed to add the monument to the collection within the Discovery Centre. It will be on loan from the church.

<sup>1</sup> Information gleaned from conversation with Val Potter, Church Warden and project co-ordinator.

## 5 CONDITION ASSESSMENT

GENERAL ~ The monument is in a good condition and well maintained.

PAST INTERVENTIONS ~ It was dismantled, conserved and rebuilt in 2000 by Sue and Lawrence Kelland (accredited conservators). The condition in 1993 and the conservation work undertaken in 2000 is recorded in their reports. See appendix for Kelland images of the wall prior to reinstating the monument.

A summary of the conservation undertaken, as taken from Kelland Report, 2000, is as follows:

- *Monument removed from wall.*
- *Evidence was found illustrating that it had been removed previously in order to build the brick chimney to the boiler house. Part of the wall was brick, whilst on the dexter side some original plaster with small remains of a text were noted. See Appendix.*
- *Top grey section is formed of three pieces, held together with corroding ferrous dowels which were replaced with stainless steel.*
- *The fixings of marble to marble are all bronze dowels (it is assumed that these were retained).*
- *The 'shoulders' of the white marble were found to have cracked, thought to have been caused by heat from the chimney.*
- *The monument was reinstated incorporating a damp proof membrane (DPM) of Hypalon.*
- *Stainless steel fixings were used.*
- *The marble was cleaned to remove the soiled was.*
- *The lettering was retouched where the paint was missing.*

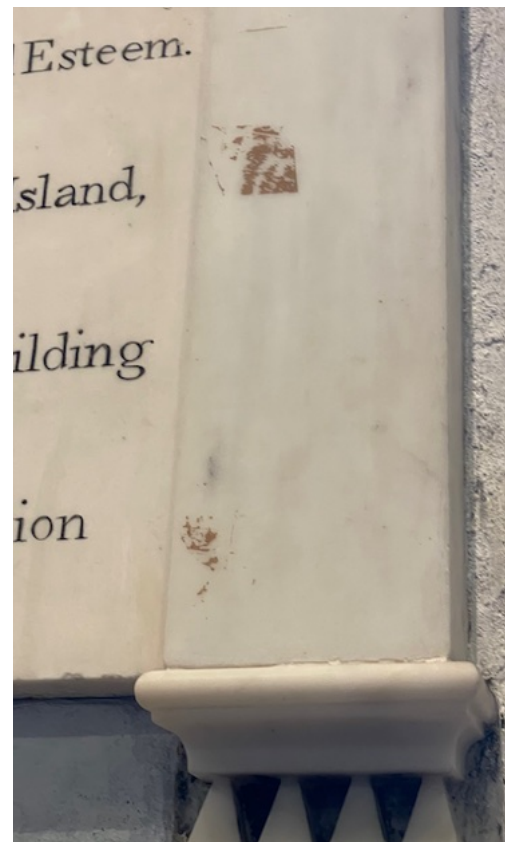
Figure 7 ~ Parcel tape marks on sinister side shaft.

SOILING ~ all areas are lightly soiled to varying degrees. Marks from parcel tape remain on the side shafts. An iron stain to the base of the urn, also mentioned in 1998, remains.

LOSSES ~ Past plaster repairs undertaken to missing upper /left dexter corner of inscription stone. No recent losses were noted.

FERROUS FIXINGS ~ All ferrous fixings were removed in 1998 conservation and replaced with stainless steel.

STABILITY ~ The marble and monument are structurally sound and no movement was noted to the joints or perimeter. However, cracking/fractures of the 'shoulder' sections as noted in the Kelland report.





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POLYCHROMY ~ The lettering on the inscription and urn are legible. The blue polychromy of the shield is blistered and flaking due to salt damage, with some areas of loss. An earlier scheme of red and gold leaf may be noted beneath the existing. See figure 7.

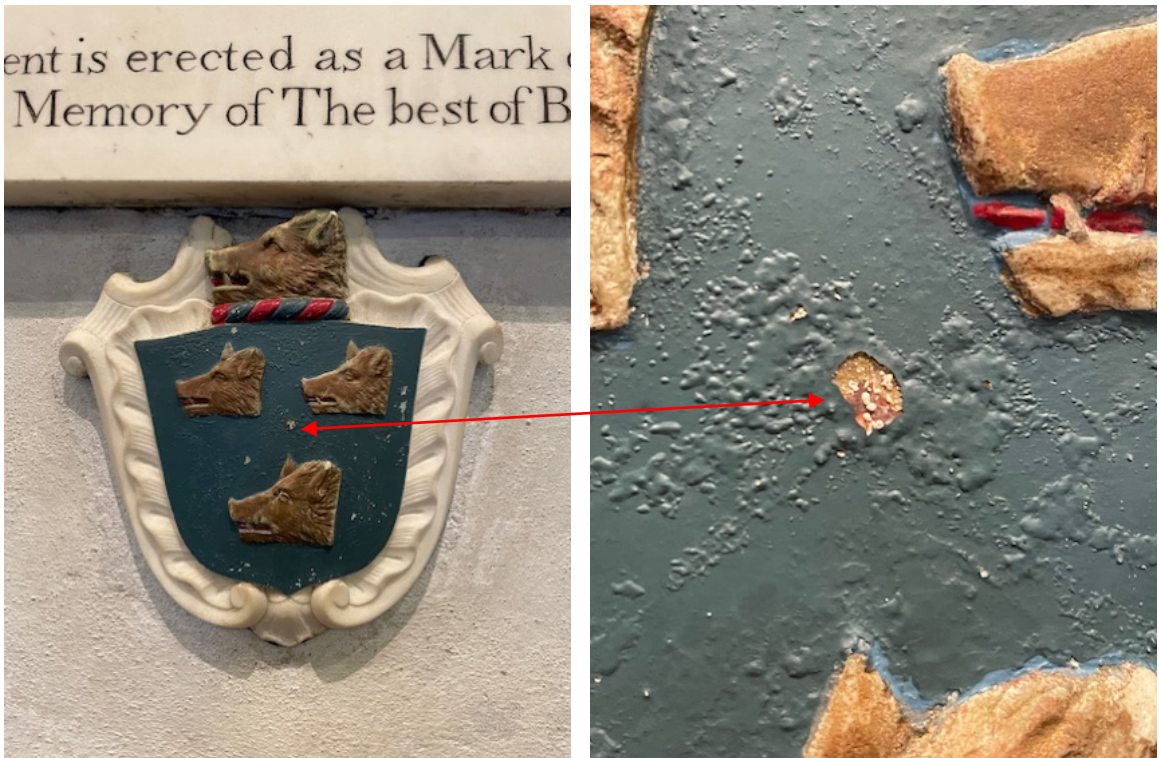


Figure 8 ~ Details of the lower shield, illustrating the blistering of the polychrome and losses, plus an underlying decorative scheme.

## 6 DISMANTLING AND TRANSPORTATION

The monument was dismantled from the north elevation of the North Aisle and transported to the Dorset Museum Discovery Centre where it was placed on the storage racking. The following outlines the steps undertaken.

### 6.1 GENERAL ITEMS

PROTECTIONS were applied to floor and surrounding pews.

BRASS PLAQUE beneath monument was covered with protections.

ACCESS SCAFFOLD was constructed beneath monument, spanning pews, enabling dismantled elements to be lowered to ground level to side of platform.

SOFTWOOD BATONS were used to place dismantled elements on.

DUST WAS HOOVERED as dismantling progressed to minimise spread throughout church.

### 6.2 DISMANTLING

- A ferrous detector established location of fixings, where not visible.
- A narrow band of plaster was removed from the perimeter of the monument to enable access to fixings. The plaster around the perimeter was not of historic importance, however the minimum necessary was removed.
- The elements were dismantled from the top down. The upper section of the white urn on the grey background was kept as a single unit. This had been dowelled and adhered with epoxy resin during the works of 2000.
- Stainless steel fixings were cut through whilst the elements were supported. Protections were applied to the marble to avoid scratching.
- Each section was lowered to the ground and placed on softening.
- A photographic record of each piece was made. The elements were not labelled. The Dorset Museum stated they would employ their in-house record/accession system.
- Tape marks were removed using acetone. Light cleaning undertaken to remove any grit or dust from the dismantling.
- The north elevation early polychromy, recorded in 2000 ~ An isolating layer was applied to this area prior to application of limewash or plaster.
- The Greek inscription in black (charcoal?) applied to the north elevation brickwork during the conservation work of 2000, was also protected with an isolating layer. This was kindly translated by Revd Keith Magee, and reads *In the beginning was the word.*
- The north elevation was to be replastered and redecorated by others.



6.2.1 ELEMENTS OF THE MONUMENT ~ 11 NUMBER

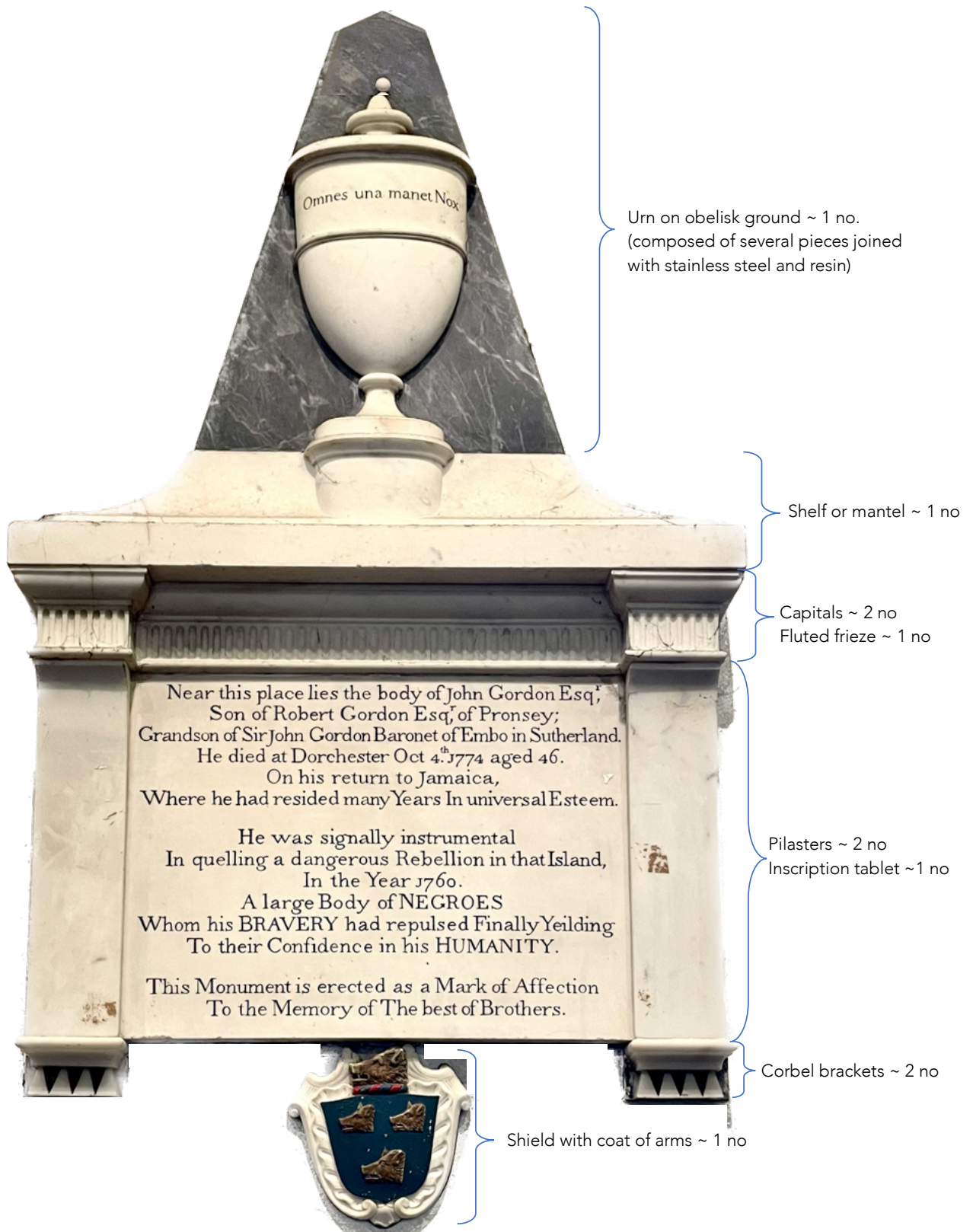


Figure 9 ~ Elements of the monument. 11 no.

6.2.2 ELEMENTS OF THE MONUMENT ~ 11 NUMBER ~ LAID OUT AFTER DISMANTLING

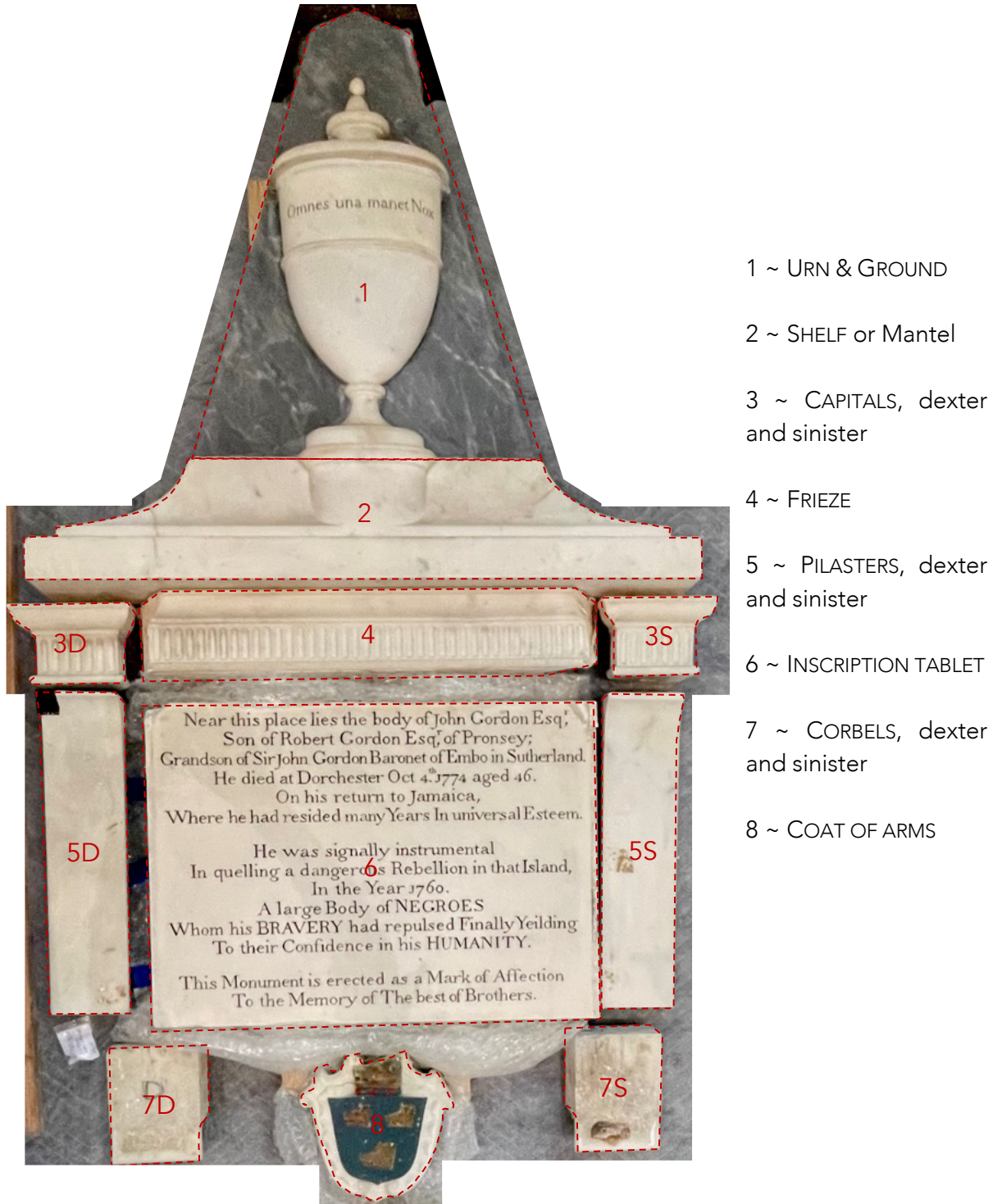


Figure 10 ~ Dismantled elements of the monument with reference numbers.



6.2.3 PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD OF SEQUENCE OF DISMANTLING AND ELEMENTS EX-SITU

1~ URN & GROUND

White marble urn comprising several elements on grey marble ground of 3 pieces. . They were dismantled and retained as one unit, having been previously doweled and adhered with epoxy resin.

Slight movement in joints noted and epoxy cracked on rear, but relatively secure.



Figure 11 ~ Details or Urn and Ground. Lower left image illustrates retaining cramp location.



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2 ~ SHELF or Mantel



Figure 12 ~ Image of mantel, in situ, of retaining cramp location, front face, rear face, historic cracks to left and right shoulders.





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3 ~ CAPITALS, dexter and sinister

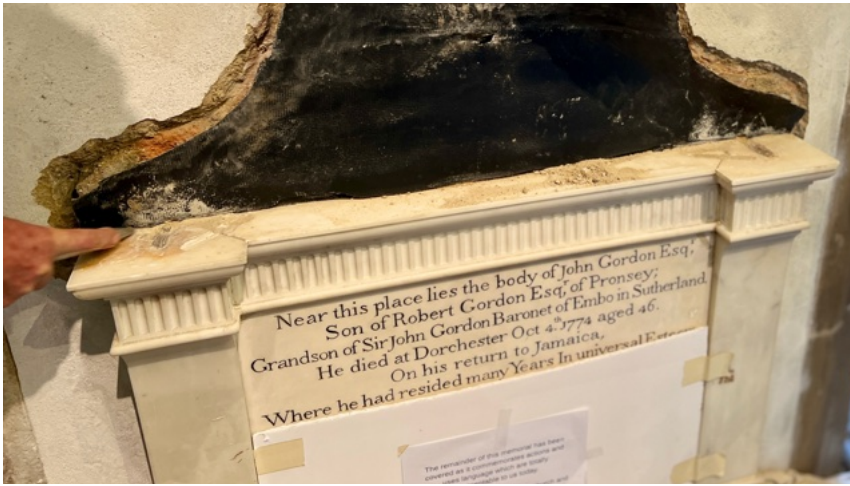
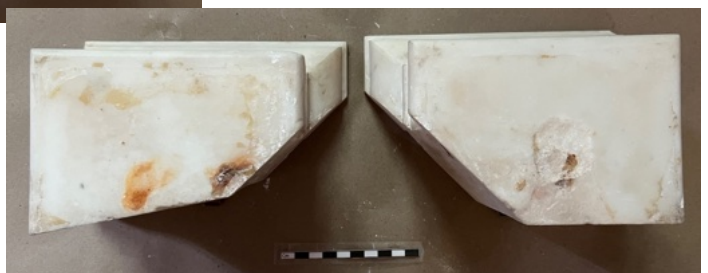


Figure 13 ~ Capitals flanking frieze in-situ, with details of: cramps to wall and to adjacent frieze element; front face; rear face; upper face; lower face.



4 ~ FRIEZE



Figure 14 ~ Details of frieze element; insitu, front, rear, upper, lower and side.





5 ~ PILASTERS, dexter and sinister



Figure 15 ~ Details of removal of pilasters and cramps.





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Figure 18 ~ Details of pilasters ex-situ. Upper image illustrates front face prior to removal of tape marks, upper left after removal.



Figure 17 ~ Detail of rear and side faces of pilasters.



Figure 16 ~ Detail of clamp recess on upper face.

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6 ~ INSCRIPTION TABLET

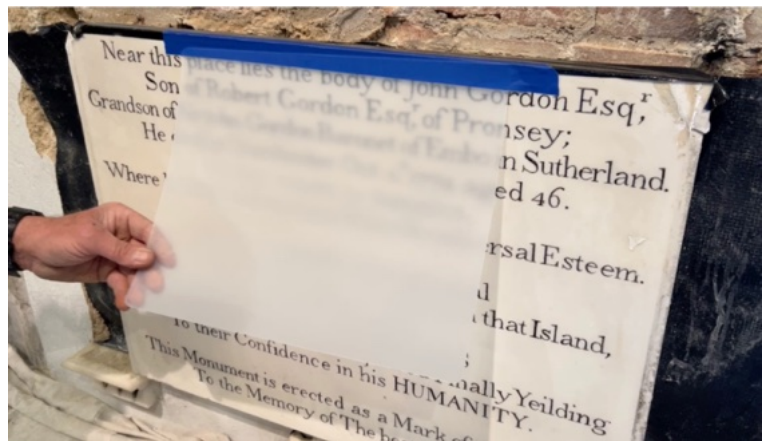
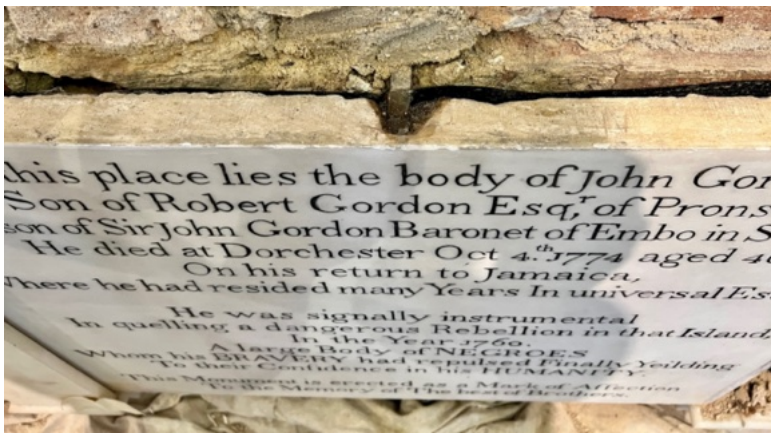
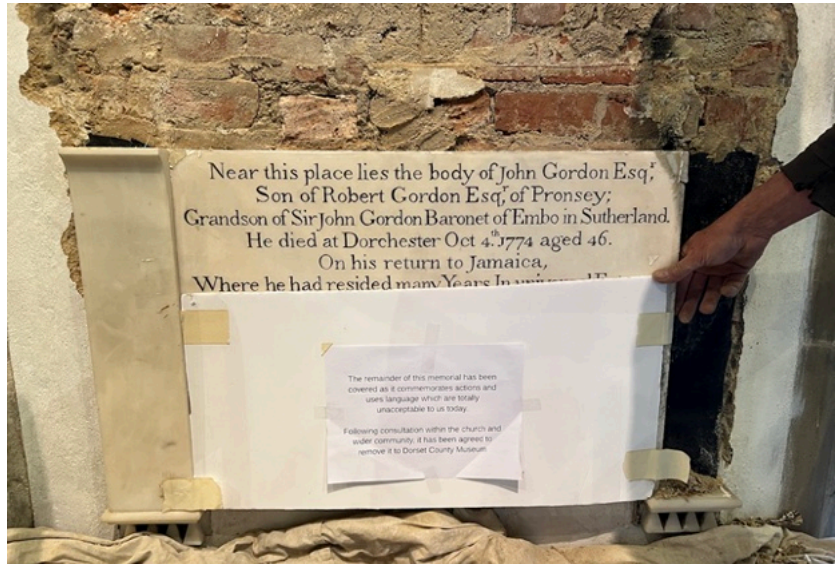


Figure 19 ~ Inscription panel. from top: in-situ; detail of retaining clamp; protections prior to cutting clamp; cutting clamp.



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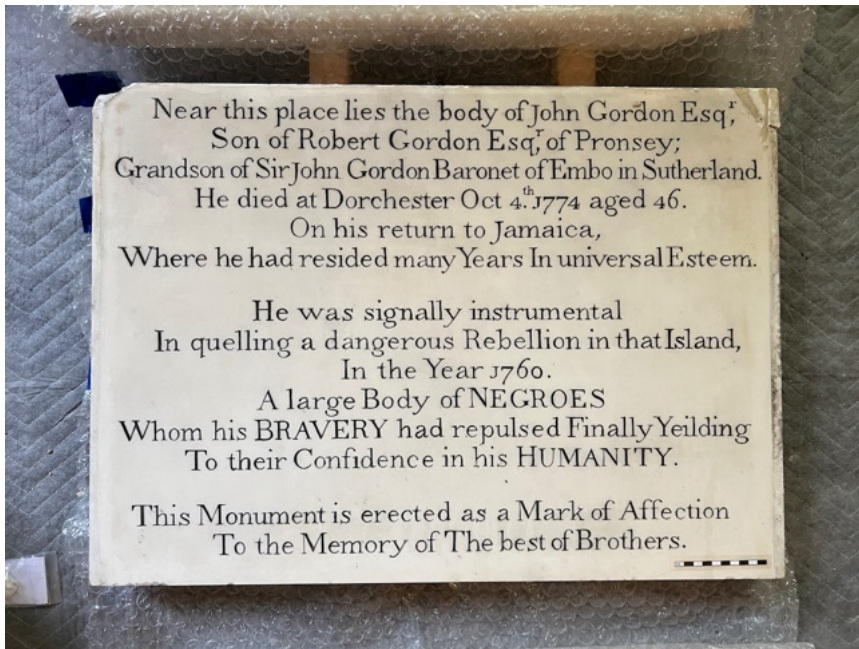
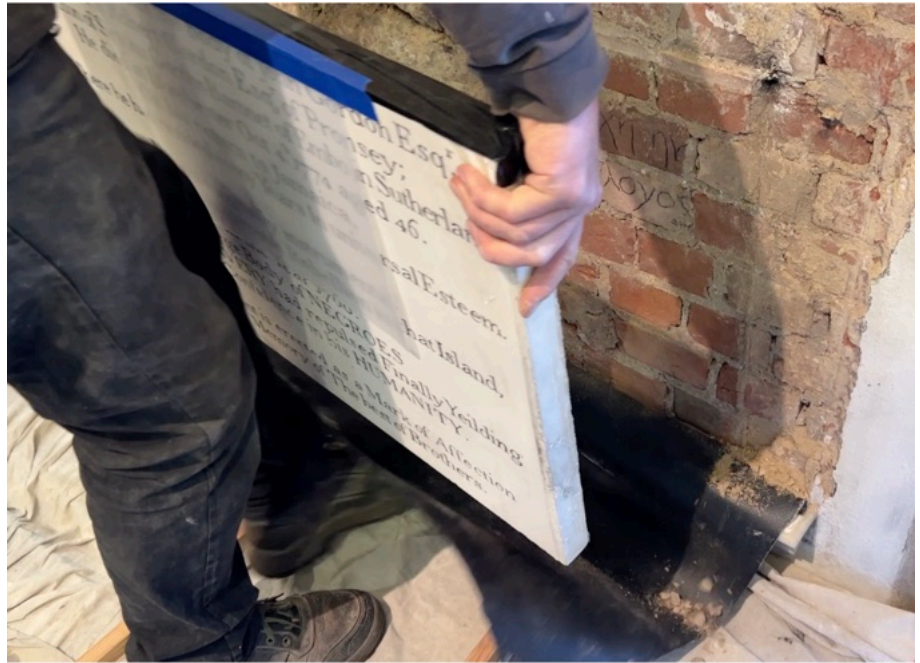


Figure 20 ~ From top: lifting off inscription panel, ex-situ; rear view (upside down).





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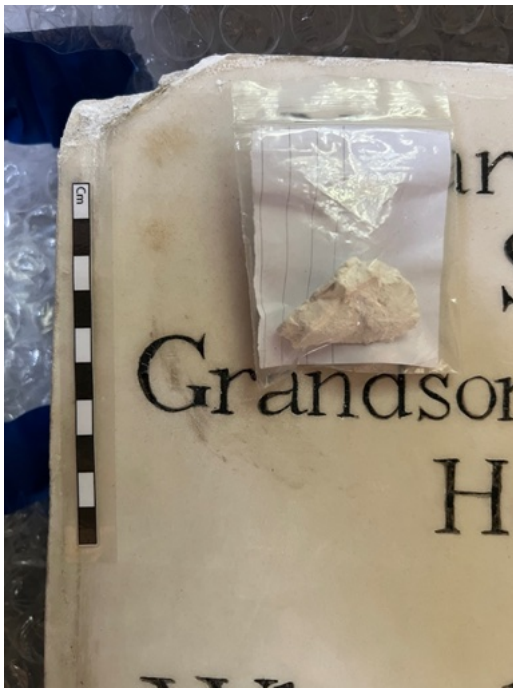


Figure 21 ~ Details of historic repairs to upper corners of inscription panel.

Above ~ upper left / dexter plaster repair detached and bagged.

Below ~ upper right / sinister corner repair.





7 ~ CORBELS, dexter and sinister



Figure 22 ~ Corbels. From top: detail of right corbel in situ; void after left corbel removed; front face; upper face; lower face.





8 ~ COAT OF ARMS



Figure 23 ~ Details of cartouche with painted coat of arms. clockwise from top left: in-situ, dowels after removal; rear face; ex-situ; detail of painted surface and minor loss; locating cramp.





7 MOVING TO DORSET MUSEUM, DISCOVERY CENTRE

The Dorset Museum and St Peter’s Church are adjacent to one another. The route between the two is relatively straight forward. The route was reviewed before transporting to ensure no changes had taken place since previous visit and it was still suitable for the soft wheeled trolley. The soft wheels are intended to absorb the surface irregularities, minimising vibration and protect the floors. Cast iron heating grills and ledger stones along the route were assessed before proceeding.

A ramp was utilised to overcome the step by the glass porch door of the church. The route was level to the museum entrance and through the lobby to the lift and again upon exiting the lift to The Discovery Centre on the lower/basement level of the museum.



Figure 24 ~ Boxed elements on trolley to be transported to museum.

Figure 25 ~ On shelved storage within The Dorset Museum Discovery Centre.





8 NORTH ELEVATION

The exposed wall where the monument was removed, is to be replastered and redecorated in lime plaster and lime wash by others.  
An isolating layer was applied to the historic inscription paint traces as well as the 2000 inscription in Greek.



Figure 26 ~ North elevation after removal of Gordon Monument, illustrating location of historic painted inscription, A, and more recent, 2000, inscription, B.

Images below are of the same areas after the application of an isolating later, to protect the inscriptions when the wall is replastered and decorated.





Figure 27 ~ North elevation after monument to John Gordon dismantled. Areas of historic painting and greek inscription are faced up with tissue as protective isolating prior to replastering.



Figure 28 ~ Notice placed near by PCC, explaining reasons for monuments removal.

9 GLOSSARY

BLIND CLEAVAGE	An invisible separation between the layers of paint, between the paint and ground, or between the ground and support. This may appear as a slight bulge in the paint surface.
CLEANING	Removing non-original layers from the paint surface. These layers may be surface dirt, varnish or over-paint. See surface cleaning, uncovering.
CLEAVAGE	A separation between layers of paint, between paint and ground, or between ground and support. Usually associated with cracks and losses. See flaking.
CONDITION REPORT	A report listing the observations of an inspection. It can be used as the first part of a Treatment Proposal and as a reference when objects are transported or loaned. Depending on what it is used for it can include a description of the object including historical background, assumptions about original techniques and materials, previous interventions including added materials, present condition that notes deterioration and changes, possible causes of deterioration, and recommendations for handling, storage and treatment. The format is often a combination of text, graphics and photographs.
CONSERVATION	"all measures and actions aimed at safeguarding tangible cultural heritage while ensuring its accessibility to present and future generations. Conservation embraces preventive conservation, remedial conservation and restoration. All measures and actions should respect the significance and the physical properties of the cultural heritage item." From International Council for Museums, Committee for Conservation, 2008, ICC.
CONSOLIDATION	Addition of an adhesive or consolidant to friable powdery original material such as water damaged plaster or rotten wood.
CROSS SECTION	A small sample of original paint mounted in a polyester resin so the layer structure can be examined under the microscope.
FACING	A reinforcing material, usually tissue paper, temporarily adhered to the surface of a painting. Facing ensures that loose paint particles are temporarily secured and protects the paint surface during conservation treatment.
FILL	Material replacing fabric or paint, so that the area of loss becomes level with surrounding area.
FIXING	The treatment of flaking paint that uses an adhesive applied beneath the flakes to reattach.
FLAKING	An unstable condition in which areas of paint or paint and ground become detached.
GROUND	An opaque white or coloured coating applied to the support as a base for the paint layers. The materials used for the ground vary. Also, called a priming layer.
INPAINTING	Applying new paint on areas where original paint has been lost or abraded. Other term: Retouching.
OVER-PAINT	Paint, not applied by the artist, which covers original paint and that is often an unnecessary alteration to the image. Over-paint hides areas of damage or is used to make cosmetic changes to the image. In wall paintings it can be a later paint scheme or lime wash that hides the original.
POLYCHROMY	Paint applied to a surface
PREVENTIVE CONSERVATION	Actions taken to remove or mitigate conditions that are causing deterioration. They usually require modifying the immediate environment or methods of handling and storage.
REMEDIAL CONSERVATION	Treatment that stabilises the condition of an object. Usually done when an object is in danger of immediate damage.
RESTORATION	Treatment that reinstates missing or damaged elements with the goal of facilitating the understanding, appreciation and use of an object.
RETOUCHING	A traditional term that has been used synonymously with inpainting. However, inpainting is more precise because retouching can also imply over-painting so that original paint is covered.
SURFACE CLEANING	Treatment that removes surface dirt.
SURFACE DIRT	A deposit of dust, dirt, grime, nicotine, soot, or other contaminant on the surface of a painting.
TREATMENT PROPOSAL	A report that makes recommendations for conservation treatment. It is usually added on to a condition report and may include an estimate of time and cost.
UNCOVERING	A type of cleaning that removes layers of over-paint. With wall paintings it often means removing layers of plaster or lime wash.



10 APPENDICES

Images from Kelland Report, 2000, before and after dismantling and during rebuilding.

