

Autumn 2013 Update from Nicolas Boyes Stone Conservation.
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NICOLAS BOYES STONE CONSERVATION LTD. AUTUMN 2013 NEWSLETTER

The team at Nicolas Boyes Stone Conservation has taken on many exciting projects in 2013 and we'd like to share just a small snippet of these with you, including some of our ongoing work. Peter Burman, Architectural Historian and advisor to NBSC, gives his thoughts and reflections on our work.

NBSC SELECTION OF COMPLETED WORKS 2013



Rosslyn Chapel, Midlothian: Project Completed August 2013

After four exciting years of conservation works to the external masonry of Rosslyn Chapel, made famous in recent years by Dan Brown's bestseller 'The Da Vinci Code', it is time for the NBSC team to say goodbye to the site following completion of the work. This project has seen a range of exciting discoveries including hidden

carvings on the internal surfaces of the stone and twenty-two (previously unknown) beehives discovered within the pinnacles as they were conserved. As part of the conservation process conservation lasers were used to reduce damaging dark pollution crust, liberating the 15th Century carvings beneath (the right-hand side of the stone detail shown above has had its pollution crust reduced using the conservation laser). The right-hand image above records the visit of the Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs, Fiona Hyslop MSP, and her in-depth conversation with Nic Boyes and with Ian Gardner, Director of the Rosslyn Chapel Trust, on 5th September.



**St. Bernard's Well, Edinburgh:
Project Completed June 2013**

St Bernard's Well, 1789, was designed by the well-known Scottish artist Alexander Nasmyth as a key visual element in the gardens which were evolving on both sides of the Water of Leith, Stockbridge, and as a pump room for residents and visitors wishing to 'take the waters' after the discovery of a chalybeate spring with natural healing properties. The Category A Listed structure is now owned by the City of Edinburgh Council, who appreciate it as one of their best-loved landmarks and its conservation was made possible with the aid of a grant from Edinburgh World Heritage Trust along with other private donations.

NBSC undertook conservation works to the external masonry, timber and lead roof, pump room interior including mosaic and marble detailing and the marble statue of Hygieia.

The Pump Room is not usually accessible to the public but for anyone who's keen to take a look it will be open this weekend as part of the 2013 Edinburgh Doors Open Day.

Jubilee Gates, Victoria Park, Glasgow: Project Completed August 2013

The Jubilee Gates were erected in 1887 in honour of Queen Victoria's 50 year reign. They were produced by Walter McFarlane & Co who were then the largest manufacturer of cast iron in Scotland, exporting their

work across the globe. The gates had previously been restored in 1987 at their centenary but had lost their original colour scheme.

NBSC restored the gates back to their former glory; replacing missing castings, repairing cracks and breakages, and applying paint and gilding decoration to the gates and pillars. The striking colour scheme was based on microscopic analysis of paint samples bringing the original design concept back to life.



**National Galleries Scotland:
Project Completed July 2013**

NBSC has recently completed a project conducting remedial masonry works and replacing numerous stones throughout the National Galleries Scotland estate. Most notably NBSC carver masons and apprentice have all worked together to replace the front legs of one of the sphinxes on the west elevation of the Category A Listed Royal Scottish Academy, which lies in one of the most prominent positions in Edinburgh city centre (pictured).

NBSC SELECTION OF CURRENT PROJECTS



Argyll Mausoleum, Kilsyth, Argyll: Project Started November 2010

NBSC has been involved with the conservation works at the Argyll Mausoleum, the resting place for the Dukes of Argyll, for some years. The project has been divided into several phases of work necessarily influenced by funding income. The first phase involved removing the artefacts from the mausoleum and placing them into safe storage. We are now in the second phase of works, which is the conservation of these items. The collection is an interesting combination of wooden, metal and stone sculptures and miscellaneous items - all of which are being carefully conserved. The photographs above show one of our conservators undertaking the conservation of one of three boars' heads from the collection.



Glasgow School of Art: Project Started July 2013

Charles Rennie Mackintosh's Glasgow School of Art is one of the most easily recognizable buildings in Glasgow, particularly in terms of the tall library windows on the west elevation. NBSC is conducting their removal, reconditioning and replacement, doing so in such a way as to retain as much authenticity as possible.

Old Bathgate Parish Church: Project Started November 2012

Situated 1 mile to the east of Bathgate, West Lothian, lies Old Bathgate Parish Church, also referred to as Kirkton Old Parish Church. Parts of this structure are believed to date to the 13th century. NBSC have already undertaken work to conserve the roofless ruin. Cement mortar capping the wall heads and

within the construction joints was removed. The walls were then capped with turf after the masonry structure was repointed using lime mortar. Structural consolidation was achieved by inserting stainless steel dowels and following good masonry practice. Conservation treatments to a 13th Century effigy are complete and the conservation and presentation of an early medieval grave marker are ongoing in our workshop.



Doric Pavilion, Queen Street Gardens, Edinburgh: Project Started November 2011

NBSC has been commissioned to undertake conservation works to the Category A Listed Doric Pavilion in Queen Street Gardens. The pavilion was designed in 1824 by Andrew Wilson, an eminent Scottish landscape painter, as a gardener's tool house. Our works have been phased over two consecutive summer working seasons and have included cutting back over-arching trees, graffiti removal, extensive repointing works and selective stone replacements including replication of detailing. Usually accessible to key-holders only, Queen Street Gardens Central will be open to the public for Edinburgh Doors Open Day this weekend if you'd like to take a look at the newly installed capitals.

REFLECTIONS



Dr. Peter Burman MBE FSA, advisor to Nicolas Boyes Stone Conservation on policy and art historical and philosophical aspects of the firm's work, has contributed the following reflections:

'This newsletter shows something of the vast variety of work currently being undertaken by Nicolas Boyes Stone Conservation. This is one of the attractions of the connection, but what I also enjoy is the passion which Nic Boyes and his team – which includes conservators of stones and metals, stone masons and carvers – bring to their work.

It is remarkable that the long-sustained programme of conserving and repairing the external stonework of Rosslyn Chapel entailed the total replacement of only a handful of stones, five to be precise, three of which were already 19th Century replacements. It is also encouraging that the Rosslyn Chapel Trust has taken on board absolutely the commitment to regular ongoing monitoring of the state of repair, a programme to which the firm has much to contribute. All too often, major programmes of conservation repair are succeeded by relative inactivity, which generally causes a backlog of problems, with consequent loss of authenticity.

It is a joy that the NBSC multi-national, multi-talented and multi-disciplinary team includes some exceptionally able carvers at the present time. A few days ago I happened to see the replacement capitals for the exquisite little temple-like structure in the Middle Section of Queen Street Gardens, Edinburgh. They were superb! Their replacement was recommended by Nic Boyes and myself only after some considerable heart-searching. But sometimes replacement, especially of a load-bearing stone, is absolutely essential for responsible conservation: and then it must be done to the highest possible level of quality and achievement.

NBSC's watchwords for the work it does to some of Scotland's most precious buildings and public works of art are: openness; debate; good communication; collaborative working between different aspects of conservation and with other specialist professionals; authenticity; quality of decision-taking; quality of workmanship; quality of the Conservation Assessment Reports and of the post-work Conservation Records, which are deposited with the Royal Commission on the Ancient & Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) to form part of the public record.'

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