

Crail Preservation Society

Mural Monument XVI to Lun, Reid, Chiene families, Crail Kirkyard, Crail, Fife



CONDITION REPORT & CONSERVATION STATEMENT

AUGUST 2024

JOHN RENSHAW ARCHITECTS

90a CONSTITUTION STREET
LEITH, EDINBURGH EH6 6RP

Telephone: 0131 555 2245
Email: designteam@johnrenshawarchitects.co.uk

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1. Introduction

The mural monument appears to be dedicated to the Lun, Reid and Chiene Families, and originally dates from c.1636-1654. It is located in the southeast section of the kirkyard wall, northeast of the main entrance from Marketgate North, which also forms the rear boundary of the back gardens to the adjoining houses.

The mural monument forms part of a Category A listed structure, comprising part of significant grouping of graveyard, walls and mural monuments which provide the setting of Crail Parish kirk, also A listed.

The Crail Preservation Society (CPS) is a local community group, committed to working with Fife Council to conserve the Conservation Area of the Royal Burgh of Crail in order to protect the village's unique character and beauty. CPS had previously led a number of projects to repair selected mural monuments (carried out during 1973–1978, again in 1993 and most recently in 2022).

A growing concern over during the 2010s about the poor condition of the churchyard's mural monuments prompted CPS to seek expert guidance on the main conservation priorities for each monument. A conservation statement for the Mural Monuments of Crail Churchyard was prepared by Dr Susan Buckham & Spectrum Heritage dated July 2018. This notes that the cultural significance of the collection of mural monuments is arguably second only to those of Greyfriars Kirkyard Edinburgh in terms of the large number that survive and the quality of their workmanship. It also provides a brief summary on the existing condition of each monument and recommends prioritised conservation treatments. This resulted in the conservation of mural monument XI to Sir James Lumsden of Airdrie being carried out by F. A. Sweeney stonemasons and Graciela Ainsworth Sculpture Conservation Studio under the direction of John Renshaw architect as a result of generous financial assistance from Fife Council, Fife Bereavement Services and the Pilgrim Trust.

John Renshaw Architects (JRA) were subsequently appointed by CPS in November 2023 to prepare a detailed condition report and supervise the urgent and necessary conservation works to mural monuments XVI and XIX and the following report provides a condition survey report for mural monument XVI to the Lun, Reid and Chiene families and recommends conservation treatments and repairs to conserve it in its existing condition.

A similar methodology has been adopted to that successfully used for the conservation of the Lumsden monument (No. XI).

AOC Archaeology were commissioned to provide a photogrammetric survey of the monument which provides a detailed and accurate record of the monument and its condition prior to the planned conservation works. The photogrammetric survey was undertaken on 22nd May 2024 and was preceded by John Renshaw visit to site to clear vegetation, that could be removed by hand, which was obscuring the detail of the monument and to carry out a detailed condition survey and assessment. Graciela Ainsworth Sculpture Conservation Ltd were also commissioned to provide specialist advice on the conservation treatments required to preserve the carved stonework of the monument.

The following report is based on survey report provided by Will Collier of Graciela Ainsworth Sculpture Conservation Ltd following a visit on 5th April 2024 and the condition survey undertaken by John Renshaw Architect on 24th April 2024.

2. Designations

The Crail Parish Kirkyard walls and gravestones are Category A listed (LB23245) and were added to the inventory of HS/HES listed buildings on 9th May 1972. The group listing includes mural monument XVI which was erected c. mid 17th century and comprises part of a larger B group extending to 233 items.

The Kirkyard, the rubble built enclosing walls and funerary monuments contained therein are all significant in their own right and provide the setting for the Parish Church, also Category A Listed. It is situated at the north end of the Crail Conservation Area and contributes significantly to the special character and appearance of the Town and the Conservation Area and their architectural and historic significance.

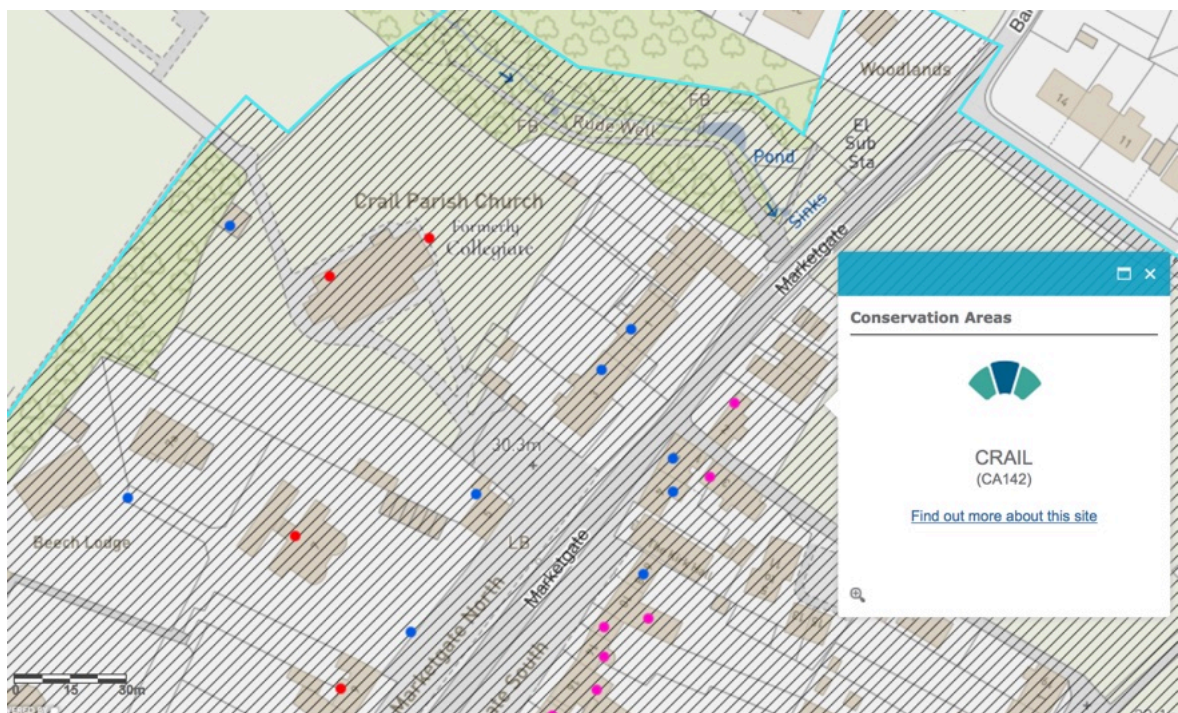


Figure 2 - Plan showing extent of Crail Conservation Area and location of listed buildings (HES).

3. Description of the Mural Monument XVI - Lun, Reid, Chiene families

The mural monument in memory of the Lun, Reid and Chiene Families, erected c.1636-1654 is located in the southeast wall of the kirkyard northeast of the main entrance into the kirkyard from Marketgate North; see figure 3 below identifying its location between mural monuments XV and XVII.

Note: Erskine Beveridge comprehensively recorded and researched the churchyard, including its mural monuments, and his work was published in 1893. This report uses Beveridge's numbering system (e.g. EB I to EB XIX see figure 3).

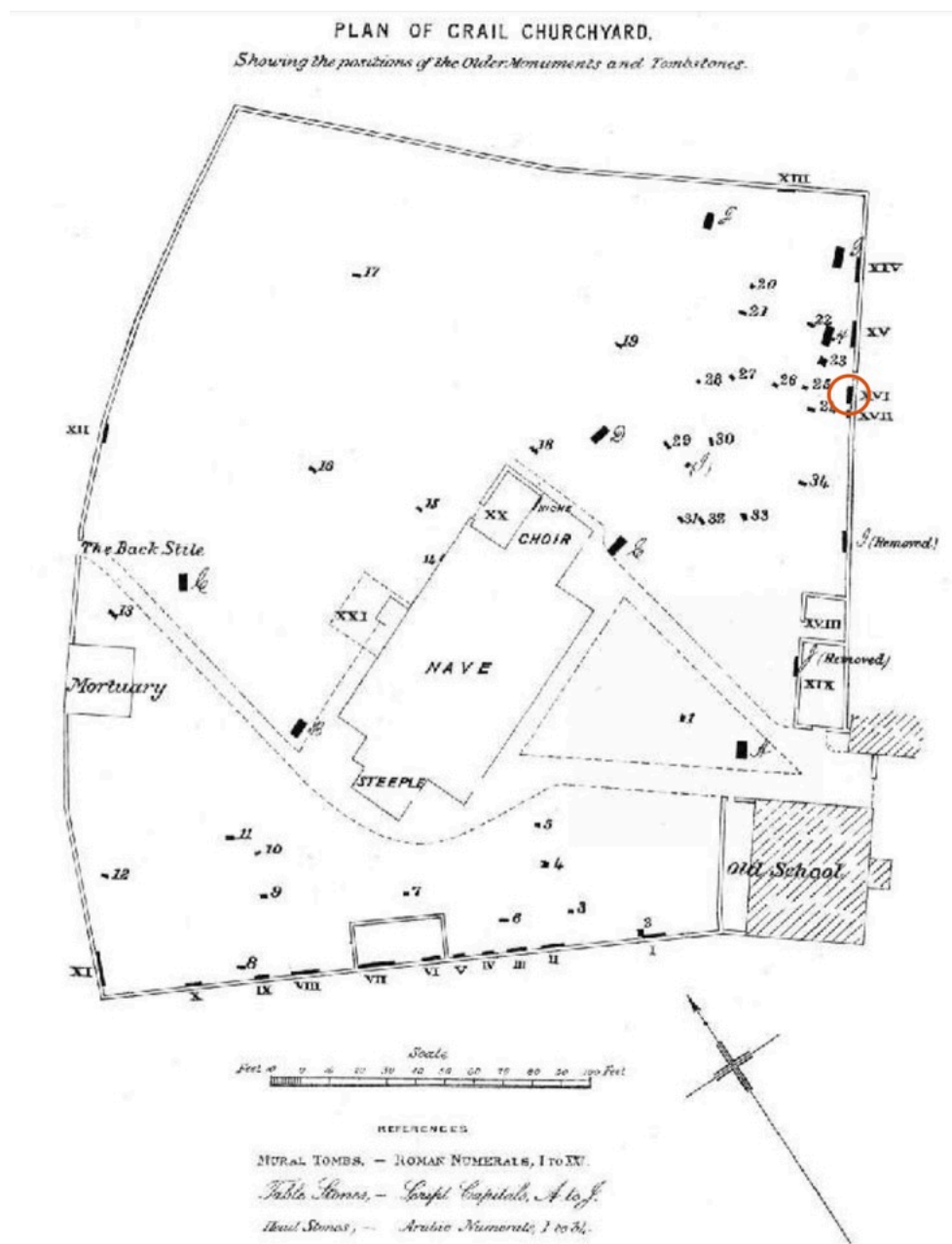


Figure 3 - Plan of Crail Churchyard showing the positions of the older monuments and tombstones (Erskine Beveridge).

The design of this monument is stylised with central recess, a type previously only identified in 17th century monuments in Greyfriars Kirkyard, Edinburgh. It is suggested that the original monument had a pair of colonnettes on either side of the middle stage and an inscribed marble panel within the central recess which has long since disappeared.

The mural monument measures approximately 3.1m (h) x 2.75m (w) and is built into the northwest facing rubble masonry of the kirkyard wall. The wall stands approximately 2.96m high above the ground level in the kirkyard. The ground level in the garden behind the wall is approximately 435mm lower.

It comprises three stages - the base and middle stages surmounted by an aedicule with entablature. The base and middle stages are flanked by pilasters surmounted by scrolls and the aedicule is also flanked by S scrolls. The aedicule is supported by a buttress of roughly coursed and bedded rubble stonework which projects approximately 525mm above the cope of the wall.

The aedicule contains an escutcheon, (a shield forming the focal point) but its carving is now weathered and undecipherable; it could have been the coat of arms of the Reid or Lun families, alongside the Myrton coat of arms.

The frieze to the middle stage may have been decorated with an image of a winged soul, now barely visible and the recessed panel below appears to have originally contained an inscribed marble panel, long since stolen or lost. A pair of colonnettes to either side, are also missing leaving the capital heads cantilevered and moss covered.

The bottom stage comprises advanced bases for the missing colonnettes with prismatic rustication, flanking a central panel of three units, the central one of which contains much weathered carving, now largely undecipherable containing a skull and possibly crossed bones or sexton's tools.

A door opening, with lined, edged and braced timber door is located on its proper right (PR) side (note: proper right denotes the right hand side of the monument or left hand side as one faces towards it). The masonry opening is formed with rebated jambs and roughly shaped stone lintel. An ashlar panel with carved anchor in relief, possibly part of a larger carving, is located above the door lintel. The door leaf measures 750 (w) x 1675 (h) and is in poor condition with small opening cut in into its lower, presumably to provide access for a cat.

To the (PL) side of the monument, is another fragment of a undecipherable carved stone with a crudely formed hood comprising two projecting red sandstone units to either side with moss covered cream sandstone projecting head piece, all heavily overprinted with dense cementitious mortars.

4. Historical Background

Erskine Beveridge, in his research into the history of the Crail Mural Monuments in 1890s, traced the original ownership of this monument back to the Lun family. On the 28th of October 1667, Alexander Geddie and his wife Margaret Lun (daughter of Admiral-Depute Robert Lun) transferred a portion of the Lun hereditary property to Alexander Reid, a merchant-burgess of Crail. It is then recorded in Crail's Sexton's Book as belonging to the Reid family. Through the marriage of Agnes Reid and John Chiene in 1723, the monument passed into the ownership of the Chiene family. In Beveridge's time, it was remembered as the Chiene tomb.

Beveridge (1893) states that when the tomb was rebuilt in 1883, the right-hand pilaster was found to be part of an old stone coffin.

The Conservation Statement of the Mural Monuments of Crail Churchyard carried out by Dr Susan Buckham & Spectrum Heritage provides the following information on the recent history of the monument:

c.1636-1654	Mural monument constructed in kirkyard.
No Date known:	Former marble inscription panel stolen.
1884:	Part of stone removed by sculptor for another monument.
1883:	Prof Chiene funded work to rebuilt the family tomb.
1890s:	Erskine Beveridge comprehensively recorded and researched the churchyard.
1971:	Condition survey notes it is weatherworn but otherwise in good condition – requires small amount of pointing.
1975:	Restoration not yet started.
2018:	Conservation Statement prepared by Dr Susan Buckham & Spectrum Heritage.
2024	Condition surveys carried out by Graciela Ainsworth Studio & JRA.

The historic photos retained in the Canmore Archive include photos from the Erskine Beveridge collection c.1890s and provide a visual photographic record of the condition of the monument and its deterioration over the last 130 years.

	<i>Chronology of historic surveys and photographic records</i>
<i>Date</i>	<i>Creator or source of image</i>
c. 1890	Erskine Beveridge (CANMORE Catalogue No SC 739314)
	 https://canmore.org.uk/collection/739314
	Note: Erskine Beveridge record photograph clearly shows the condition of the monument at the end of the 19th century.

1998

Stuart Farrell collection (CANMORE Catalogue No SC 1855129)



<https://canmore.org.uk/collection/1855129>

Note: Detail of mural monument c.1998, Crail Parish Churchyard.

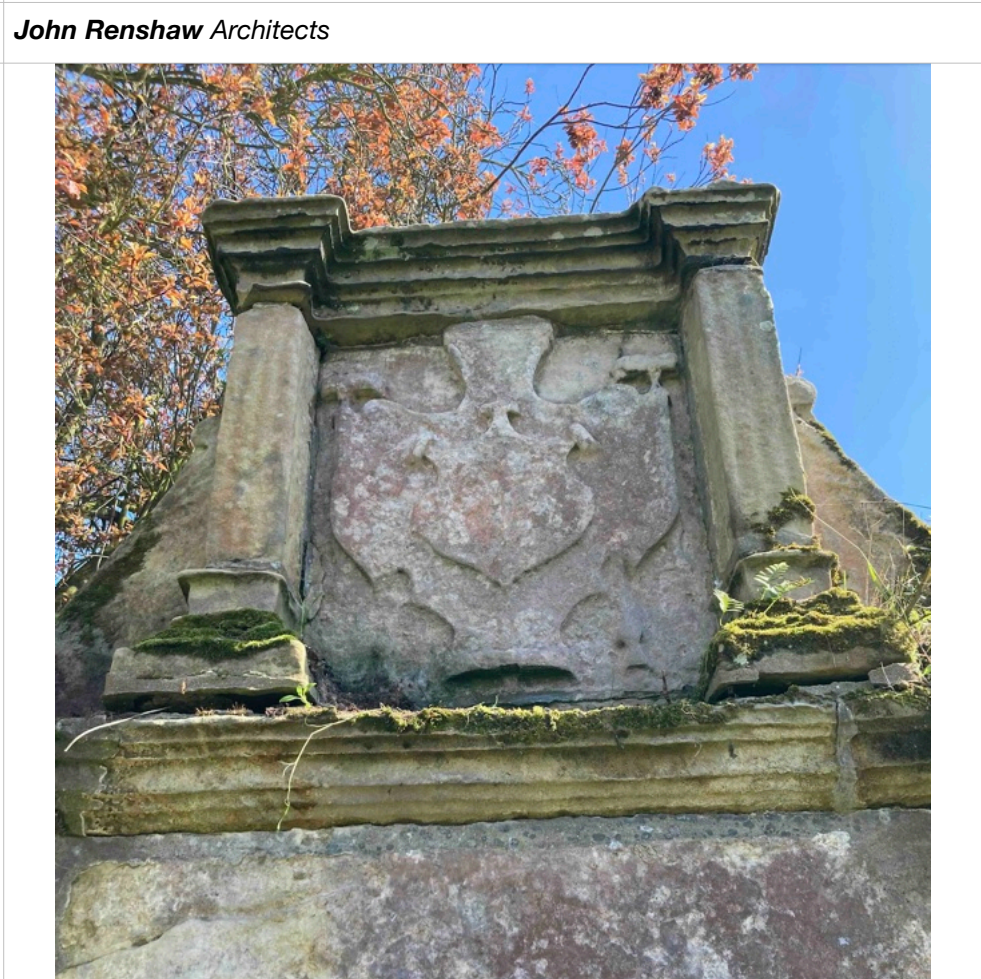
2018	The Mural Monuments of Crail Churchyard Conservation Statement Dr Susan Buckham & Spectrum Heritage
	
	Note: The Conservation Statement notes that structural damage to its upper stage, threatens its stability and preservation, and poses a risk to the public.

2024

John Renshaw Architects



Note: View of mural monument XVI, at time of condition survey carried out by JRA on 24th April 2024.

2024	John Renshaw Architects
	
	Note: View of mural monument XVI with adjacent door at time of condition survey carried out by JRA on 24th April 2024.
2024	John Renshaw Architects
	
	Note: View of mural monument XVI after removal, by hand of woody vegetation and saplings from upper stage of mural monument, 24th April 2024.

5. Existing condition of the monument

The monument is in very poor condition with structural defects and movement; woody plant and vegetation growth; stone decay to the carved surfaces arising from environmental and biological processes, further exacerbated by decay arising from previous application of dense cementitious repair mortars; and historic damage or theft of elements of the mural monument.

The upper section or aedicule, which projects above the kirkyard wall, leans backwards as a result of woody plant and tree growth, including red valerian, and ash and sycamore saplings has forced the bed joints to the pilaster bases open and pushing the masonry above backwards; the PR side leans backwards by 5 ° and the PL side is still roughly vertical, so it is twisted and leaning backwards towards the rear gardens. The rubble buttress behind the aedicule is poorly built, possibly unbounded with salvaged brick, rubble stones and dense cementitious capping and pointing mortar. There is also evidence of cut back stems of woody plant growth in the adjoining wall copes with potential to further disrupt the integrity of the wall and monument. This part of the monument is considered to be at risk and poses a safety risk to the owners of the adjoining private gardens.

The pilasters to the middle stage are also slightly, although not significantly out of alignment; the PR side leans backwards by 1° and the PL side leans forwards by 1°. The removal of the colonnettes and central recessed (possibly inscribed marble) panel, a significant period of time ago, has not compromised the structural integrity of the lower stages of the monument.

The surviving carved detail and integrity of the carved ashlar stonework is threatened by ongoing stone decay which is exacerbated by the extensive dense cementitious repair mortars and climate change.

The ashlar stone surfaces are severely weathered with significant disaggregation to the upper mouldings and corbels. The surface erosion, however, is not due entirely to the elements – the hard cementitious (OPC) pointing is not only very unsightly but is exacerbating the erosion at the adjacent stone.

The photos here show the pointing around the edge of the central panel and the associated scaling of the stone (above) and the disaggregation of the stone at the corbels and around the upper moulding (below). These upper areas are likely to be continually damp due to the abundance of vegetation and mosses which will further deteriorate the stone due to freeze/thaw cycles and cryptoflorescence of soluble salts within the surface zone of the ashlar stones.

The S-scroll at the PL side is exhibiting especially severe disaggregation.

There is a significant open crack at the PR scroll section where the cement fill has failed and been lost and is allowing water ingress.

The lower of the 3 carved panel sections has almost lost all of the carved detail through weathering and the stone surface is disaggregated leaving only the suggestion of a carved skull.

6. Cultural significance

The Conservation Statement for the Mural Monuments of Crail Churchyard by Dr Susan Buckham & Spectrum Heritage dated July 2018 summarises the aesthetic, historic and social values represented by individual designs, monument groups and the Crail assemblage as a whole. It also considers how the monuments at Crail contribute to our wider appreciation of the development of post-reformation mural monuments in Scotland.

Monument XVI is one of six monuments with stylised central recesses, a type previously only identified at Greyfriars Kirkyard, Edinburgh. Although less ornate and later in date than those at Greyfriars, the monument is of high local significance and as part of the assemblage in Crail kirkyard it is of national significance.

The main threat to the significance of the monument is the continued deterioration of its condition and loss of the little serving detail of the carved surfaces.

The mural monument XVI should be preserved for current and future generations in accordance with the principals of the ICOMOS International Charter for Cultural Heritage (2022).

7. Conservation strategy

The proposed conservation strategy for the monument has been developed from the recommendations of the Conservation Management Plan, 2018, the condition surveys carried out by Graciela Ainsworth Studio and John Renshaw in 2024 and the lessons learned from the conservation work carried out to the Lumsden mural monument completed in 2023.

The proposed objectives are to:

- a) Provide a full 'as existing record' of the monument, before, during and after the proposed conservation works based on digital and photographic surveys;
- b) Conserve the structure and detail of the monument "as found";
- c) Remove woody vegetation and (inappropriate) repair interventions which are damaging to the structure, its design and carved details (eg. cementitious mortars); &
- d) Provide modest and sympathetic additions, possibly including interpretation which will improve the setting of the monument and facilitate its better appreciation.

8. Proposed scope and detail of conservation works

1) Introduction

The proposed conservation works comprise -

- i. the careful dismantling of the upper stage of the monument to enable the roots of woody vegetation and saplings to be completely removed without damage to the structure and masonry units of the monument and then rebuilt to match the existing/original profiles and details incorporating stainless steel pins to strengthen the partially free standing *aedicule*;
- ii. the removal of cementitious mortar and replacement with appropriate lime based mortars matching as closely as possible the original historic mortar;
- iii. removal of soluble salt encrustations and disaggregated stone;
- iv. filling of delaminated stone with a reversible consolidant (eg. Paraloid B72);
- v. The removal of dense cementitious mortars to the adjoining and rear sections of rubble masonry of the kirkyard wall and repointing with appropriate lime based mortar including sections surrounding the carved fragments to either side of the mural monument; &
- vi. Repairs and decoration of the lined, ledged and braced timber door and frame.

2) Detail scope of conservation treatments

a) Carefully record each masonry unit, using planning frames, number and dismantle stone by stone to facilitate the complete removal of all saplings, tree roots, woody vegetation and mosses.

Rebuild stonework to the recorded profiles so the completed works exactly match the as existing / original structure. D/2 Solutions biocide would then be applied to all stone surfaces to deter future organic growth.

b) All areas of disaggregation would be brushed back and, where deemed necessary, consolidated with Silres BS OH 100 (ethyl silicate) stone strengthener. Subsequent annual monitoring should be undertaken in case further consolidation of disaggregating areas/treatment of salts is required.

c) The crack at the PR scroll and the delaminations at the edges of the central panel would be filled with Paraloid B72 (6% in acetone), mixed with fine sand, which would be textured and pigmented to match the surrounding stone.

d) All cementitious pointing will be carefully raked out and all open joints repointed with an appropriate lime putty or lime mortar.

e) The dense cementitious mortars to the boundary wall will be raked out, the rubble stonework will be consolidated as necessary and repointed with lime mortar.

Note 1: *refer to Appendix B for the proposed specifications for the proposed "As Found" conservation treatments, repairs and maintenance works to the mural monument.*

Note 2: *access will be required to the adjoining private garden to erect scaffolding and a lifting beam. It is also recommended that the rear/garden face of the wall is repointed with hydraulic lime mortars to allow the monument and wall to respond to thermal movement at a similar rate.*