

Argyle Chapel, Swansea

This large 18th Century chapel had fallen into disrepair. To compound its problems, there was a major fire part way through a conversion project to turn the chapel into apartments.

I was asked to provide advice and costs for the cleaning of the Bath limestone front elevation of the chapel. I was faced with a stone building that had been heavily soiled by soot over the years, it had then been painted with a non-porous masonry paint. The paint had then been mostly burnt off over much of the elevation. Fire had also caused major cracking and spalling to some areas of stonework.

Over the next 18 months I led a team of other Cliveden Conservation Workshop conservators in the cleaning of the building together with considerable piecing-in of new masonry and carving. The whole elevation was then given a lime-based sheltercoat before the scaffold was struck. We worked alongside the refurbishment contractor who restored and converted the fire-gutted internal elements of the chapel.



A cleaned and consolidated capital, showing a newly pieced in section of Bath stone, carved so to be invisible from ground level but evident when seen at close quarters.

Rob Thomson, September 2006



Only operational trials would establish a range of cleaning techniques required to remove the mixture of historic soot blackening, unburnt paint, burnt paint and smoke blackened Bath stone.

The key to success on this project was gaining the trust of architect, client, quantity surveyor and main contractor—none of whom had any experience of this type of conservation work. This allowed the methodology and approach to vary until the most appropriate systems were found. A combination of Jos & Doff cleaning were found to be effective.



The chapel following completion—on time and on budget.