

St John at Hampstead “John and Caroline Hodgson Memorial” Conservation Works

Design and Access Statement (incorporating Heritage Statement)

St John at Hampstead Parish Church dates from 1745-45 and was designed by John Sanderson. The church, along with 59ft of railings on an eighteenth century wall and two 9ft gates, are grade 2 listed. The railings and gates were purchased from Cannons, the Duke of Chandos' house, and altered to fit the front of the church.

The churchyard is the oldest to survive unspoilt in the centre of Greater London. While many of the monuments pre-date the existing church, the majority in this area are Georgian ledger stones and chest tombs. Some are of great historic significance such as those of the artist John Constable and the inventor of the marine chronometer John Harrison. The old churchyard was officially closed in 1878.

John Hodgson and his wife Caroline's memorial stone is Grade 2 listed. Made of Portland stone, it is decorated with scrolls, angels and a winged cherub's head. (refer to English Heritage listing text no. 476970)

The gravestone is currently leaning forward and even if it is not in any immediate danger of falling over, we do not know how it is jointed to the base stone and it is this weak point that could potentially fail in the future. For this reason it is proposed that works are undertaken to remove the temporary timber prop and restore the stone in vertical position.

Description of the works:

The Structural Engineer (Mason Navarro Pledge) carried out an appraisal of the current situation: it appears that the gravestone is attached to a stone base which we think extends over the top of the grave. A large granite slab has been placed over this base stone and extends either side of the grave. The weight of this slab and the stone have gradually compacted the soft earth either side of the grave causing the headstone to lean forward. This has been further complicated by the tree (now removed) whose roots undoubtedly extend into the grave.

Several options were considered, and a solution to the problem was identified as follows:

It is proposed to remove the headstone from the base. Remove any dowels or spigots from the base that currently fix the headstone in place. Build up the base stone using a high strength mortar so that the headstone base is level. Drill and resin fix new dowels into the base stone and headstone. Re-seat headstone on newly levelled base. (Refer to the Structural Engineer detailed proposal for the works.)