



CHICHESTER STONEWORKS
STONEWORK, RESTORATION, CONSERVATION

Report in connection with a drinking fountain on Shafetsbury Avenue

Introduction

Chichester Stoneworks were commissioned by Kevin Stears of The London Borough of Camden to provide a condition report and feasibility study for the removal, storage and relocation of a drinking fountain currently located within Princes Gardens.

The inspection was carried out on the 3rd April 2019 when the weather conditions were fair.

The structure sits on an island site surrounded by railings at the intersection of Bloomsbury St, Shafetsbury Avenue and St Giles High Street. It is surrounded with reasonably modern York Stone paving in a radial pattern which appear to have been scribed around the structure. More historic pavements may still be present beneath the current layer.

It was built in 1897 by The Metropolitan Drinking Fountain & Cattle Trough Association. This organisation still exists today and its details can be found here <http://www.drinkingfountains.org/>. It was established in 1859 to provide a free source of good quality drinking water at a time when the existing supplies were polluted and carried Cholera and other diseases.

The structure is Grade II listed and its listing follows:

Overview

Heritage Category: Listed Building

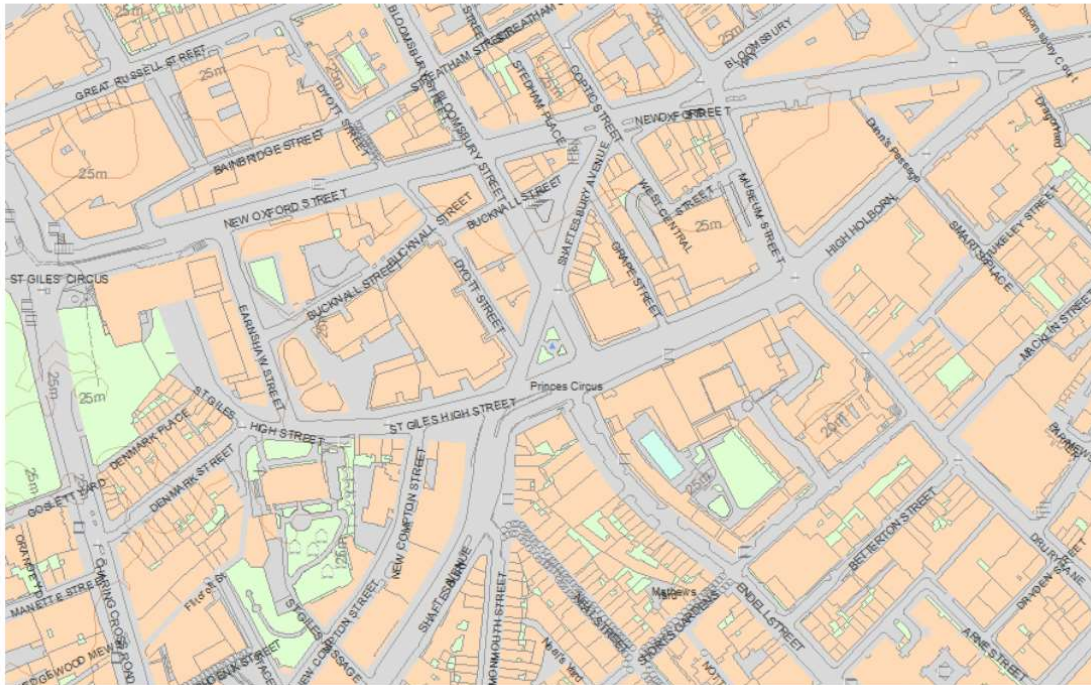
Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1113173

Date first listed: 01-Jul-1998

Statutory Address: DRINKING FOUNTAIN AT JUNCTION WITH SHAFTESBURY AVENUE, NEW OXFORD STREET

Map



Details

CAMDEN

TQ3081SW NEW OXFORD STREET 798-1/105/1207 (South side) 01/07/98 Drinking Fountain at junction with Shaftesbury Avenue

II

Drinking fountain. 1897. Presented by the St Giles Board of Works through the Metropolitan Drinking Fountain & Cattle Trough Association to mark Queen Victoria's two Jubilees. Polished red granite. Romanesque style. Rectangular stepped base with block steps to canopy with attached columns at angles supporting an entablature, the cornice of which rises to form segmental pediments to each face; surmounted by a gadrooned dome. Beneath the canopy each face with a shallow round-arched niche with incised decoration, water spout and projecting semicircular basin.

Condition Report

The fountain is constructed principally from a red/pink granite with the drinking bowls and their back panels being in a grey granite. The stone is probably from Scotland but a report from a geologist would be required to confirm this. It may be possible to pinpoint the quarry the material came from, but it is not likely the quarry is still worked as there are virtually no extant dimensional stone granite quarries currently in operation within Great Britain. Some aggregate quarries do still operate and it may be possible to get the small amount of material required from these. Salvaged material or similar new stone could also be used for minor repairs and piecing in.

The stone has a variety of finishes applied. It is mostly honed, but some areas are more polished. There are areas where a fine texture has been applied within polished areas to show contrasting naturalistic detail patterns such as within the grey back panels and the flat zone beneath the principal cornice mould.

The structure is generally in good condition, as is expected from granite which is a very durable material. The main defects are as follows:

- General soiling and accumulation of pollutants. Being in a central location the structure is susceptible to the deposition of atmospheric pollutant particles. This can be removed by means of sympathetic cleaning with a steam system such as Thermatech or DOFF. An application of a chemical cleaning agent such as PROSOCO Restoration Cleaner, which is available from Tensid www.tensiduk.com may be required to loosen more stubborn deposits.
- Physical damage. There are two sections of chipped stone to the edge of the cornice stone on the south facing elevation approximately 75mm x 50mm. These may result from shrapnel impact during WWII or impact damage by some other means. If required, they could be cut out and indented with new stone. However, they are relatively minor and part of the history of the structure, so it may be preferred to leave them as they are.
- Erosion of inscribed patterning. In areas the contrast between the polished face and the finely textured leaf patterning is diminished. Cleaning the structure may improve this, but it may also be necessary to repolish the faces and gently tool the inscriptions to reinstate the contrast. It is preferable to do this once the stone has been dismantled as access to the areas will be easier.
- Missing metalwork. Most of the original metal work associated with its use as a drinking fountain has been removed, and the resulting holes filled with cement mortar. This is likely to have included a drinking cup on a chain, a faucet and a tap. The fixing points to which the chain would have been attached still survive, although they are showing signs of corrosion. It may be possible to manufacture replacement items for these following research on their form which may include consulting the Drinking Fountain Association and viewing other drinking fountains where these items remain in place.

Feasibility of Proposals

Having viewed the structure insitu we are confident it could be safely dismantled (with the assistance of a small crane or Hi-Ab equipped lorry) stored and reconstructed. It would also be possible to reinstate its function as a drinking fountain if a source of potable water together with adequate drainage is provided. Costings have been provided separately.

Images of the structure as found April 2019



South facing elevation



East facing elevation



North facing elevation



West facing elevation



Detail showing the two granite colours and chain fixing point



Cement repairs where faucet removed