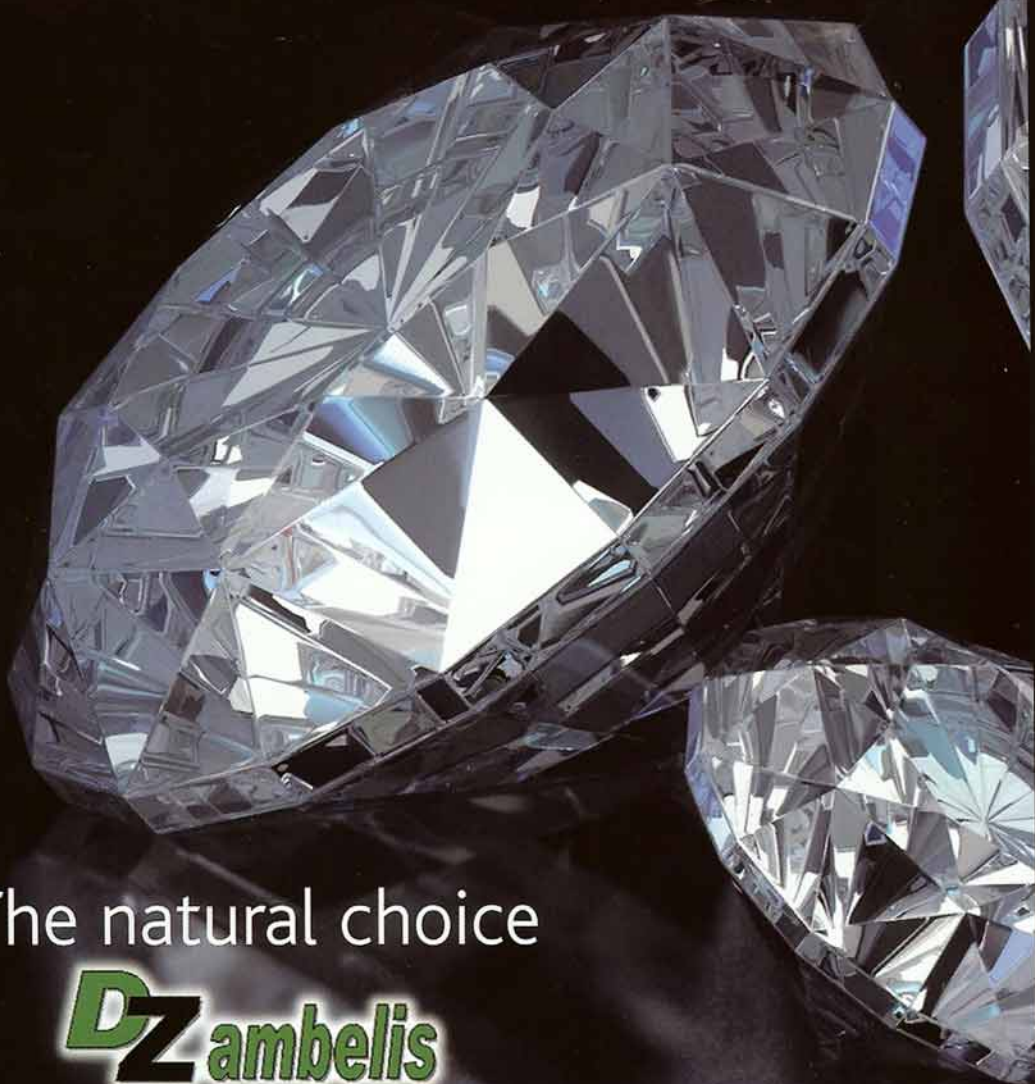
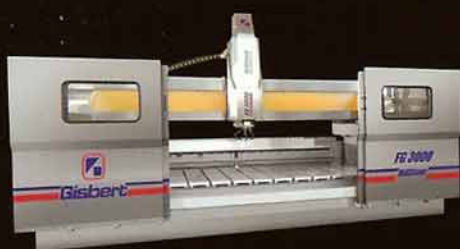


# Natural Stone

January 2008

Specialist



The natural choice

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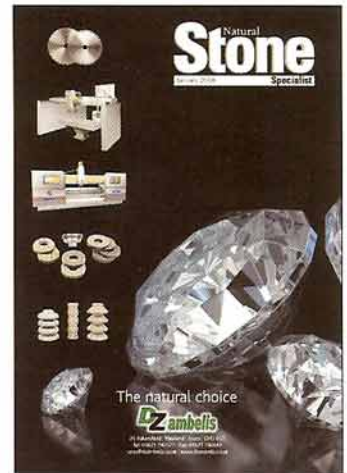
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INCORPORATING: STONE INDUSTRIES  
AND STONE FEDERATION NEWS

# a neo-classic masterpiece



The burnt out shells of 100 cars had to be removed from the site.



A new flying bridge in Portland limestone.

Phase two of the restoration of the Portland limestone Darnley Mausoleum is currently being carried out by PAYE Stonework & Restoration. They completed phase one – to restore, make safe and clean the structure – in the autumn, returning the vandalised building to its original design by one of Britain's most important Georgian architects, James Wyatt. Phase two will see the marble interiors reinstated and the building opened to the public. It should be finished in the spring. The architect, Richard Putnam from Purcell Miller Tritton, admits that when he first started at the mausoleum in 1997 he had expected to have moved on to something else long before now. "At times we thought it wasn't going to happen at all," he says, although he believes the result has been worth the wait. "Everyone agrees it's excellent," he says. ↔



## restoration : darnley mausoleum



There were times when it seemed as if the restoration of the Portland limestone Darnley Mausoleum in Cobham Park, Kent, would never get started, let alone finished. But eventually the project did get underway, with London specialists PAYE Stonework & Restoration appointed as main contractors.

They moved on to site in July 2006 and now the first phase, the structural repair, has finished and the second phase, involving the reinstatement of marble interiors and stained and painted glass windows, is under way and expected to be completed in the spring.

The final job will be the installation of a pure white marble reredos, inscribed by lettercutter Gary Churchman with the Lord's Prayer. It will be 1.8m tall and 900mm wide and made from a single piece of Bianco P marble with Belgian Black limestone beneath it. The original would presumably have been Carrara Statuario, but no piece large enough without veining could be found.

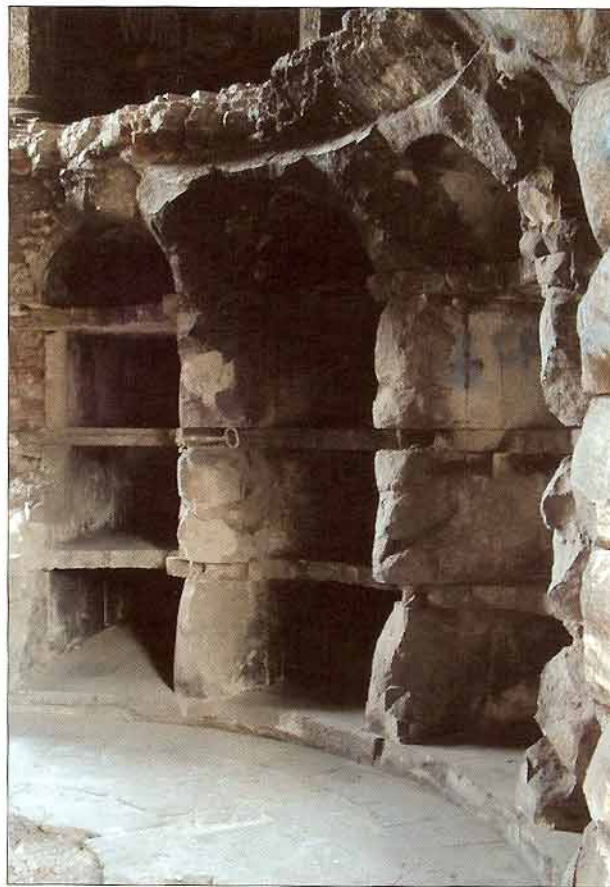
PAYE Associate Director Robert Greer describes the restoration of the mausoleum as "a mason's dream", adding: "Very rarely do you get an opportunity to do a project like this."

The project architect was Richard Putnam from the Canterbury office of Purcell Miller Tritton. He has been highly impressed with the work of PAYE and their skill at putting together some sizeable pieces of masonry, but says: "One thing that came out of this was admiration for the original masons. We have the technology to move heavy pieces of stone around with relative ease, but they were just using block and tackle. The tightness of the joints is absolutely top notch. It's the quality of their work that's kept the building together."

The building had remained essentially true, although it had dropped about 20mm in one corner – just enough to make the repairs a little trickier than they might have been.

The first steps towards the restoration of the mausoleum were taken 10 years ago when £750,000 was paid in compensation for the high speed rail link between the Channel Tunnel and London that cuts through Ashenbank Wood and the historic Cobham Park. The money was used to establish Cobham Ashenbank Management Scheme (CAMS) to oversee the restoration of the park and its monuments. In 2001 it provided the money (£150,000) for Gravesham Borough Council to purchase on its behalf the mausoleum and surrounding woodland.

CAMS comprises eight partners: Gravesham Borough Council, The National Trust, English Heritage, English



Above. The Portland limestone roof was removed to allow access to the bricks below. Although the familiar problem of rusting cramps had moved many of the stones, few had cracked and most were put back on to the roof.

Left. The crypt as it appeared once the debris had been cleared away.

Below. Following restoration of the crypt, PAYE's team occupy the spaces that Lord Darnley and his relatives never did.



Nature (now Natural England), Union Railways, Kent County Council, The Woodland Trust and Cobham Hall, which is now a privately owned school. It is intended that the mausoleum should be handed over to the National Trust once the restoration is complete.

The park was designed by Humphrey Repton, who succeeded Capability Brown as England's pre-eminent landscape gardener. Other work in it has converted a barn into a visitor centre and a house into a warden's cottage in order that the park and mausoleum can be opened to the public once the work is finished. Overall, the scheme is costing £7.5million. The building work on the mausoleum accounts for £1.8million of that.

Darnley Mausoleum is of significant architectural importance for its Enlightenment-inspired neoclassicism. It was designed by one of Britain's most important Georgian architects, James Wyatt, with George Dance, who is also well known, in charge of the construction. It was completed in 1786 at a cost of £9,000, which is the equivalent of something approaching £1million today.

Lord Darnley himself is believed to have left specific instructions about the design, referring back to the tomb of King Mausollus in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, after whom mausoleums take their name.

Darnley Mausoleum is a Grade I listed neo-classical structure with a pyramid roof and symbols of death (such as an extinguished torch) on the walls creating a powerful funeral presence. It is deceptively large – approximately 15.25m on each side and 23m high.

Alison Naylor, the CAMS scheme manager, describes it as epitomising neoclassicism. "It's a building that demonstrates the fundamental nature of neoclassical architecture," she says. Richard Putnam says: "The architecture is beautiful. It's incredibly well proportioned."

A further boost to the mausoleum restoration was provided by the BBC's first *Restoration* programme in 2003. The mausoleum did not win the £3.5million prize but, like other projects featured on the programme, the airtime raised its profile and provided the impetus to move ahead. More finance was provided by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and English Heritage.

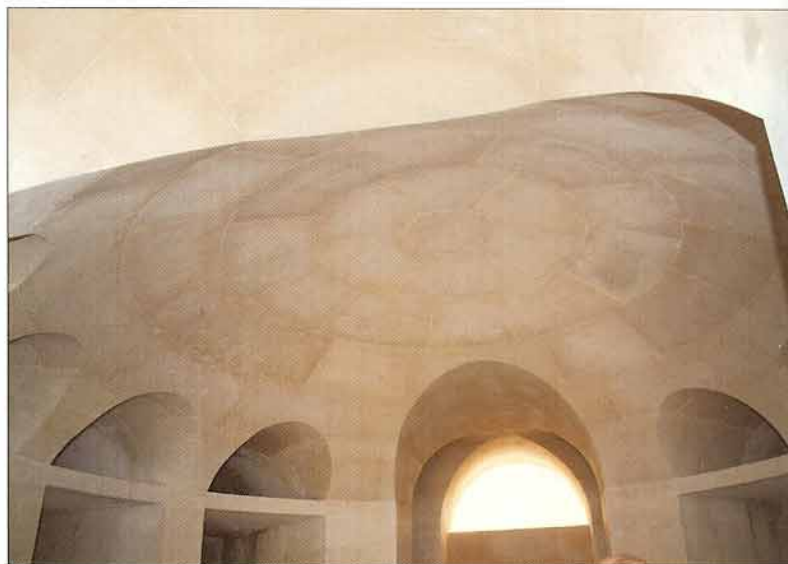
But before work started just getting to the site was a problem. It is a good half mile from the nearest road and an access track had to be cleared through woodland in order to get the portable cabins, security fencing and plant on to the site. PAYE bought a four-wheel drive vehicle just to get the masons and other operatives to and from the mausoleum – and at the peak there were 20 of them working on the project.

Once they were there, it was intimidating at first. Not because of the building's association with death because it had never actually been consecrated and was, therefore, never used. It is presumed that the Bishop of Rochester and Lord Darnley had some kind of dispute and the Bishop would not bless the building.

The reason it had become intimidating to the restoration team was that the area had been claimed by vandals and



The vaulted Portland stone over brick roof of the crypt supporting the stone floor of the chapel above had collapsed (above) in the face of extreme attacks. PAYE restored the roof, the floor above it and the severely damaged plasterwork of a dome over the chapel.





Above. In the chapel, damaged capitals and mouldings have been repaired and, where necessary, replaced. The plaster dome (pictured below) has also been repaired by PAYE. A white marble reredos and Brocatello cladding to the columns are now being installed in phase two of the project.



Left. A replacement coat of arms carved by Katie Worthington over the door.



vagrants – one of the council’s first jobs was removing the shells of more than 100 cars that had been burnt out around the mausoleum. The building itself had been covered in graffiti and fires had been started inside that can only have had the intention of burning it down.

One attack had involved piling up and setting alight car tyres in the crypt, resulting in a major collapse of the vaulted ceiling and the stone floor of the chapel above that it carried.

Richard Putnam, the architect, says: “In terms of an assault on a building I had never seen anything like it.”

The stone of the pyramid roof had even had foot and hand holds knocked out of it by someone who presumably climbed to the top. The mausoleum sits on a hill and PAYE’s Robert Greer, who reached the top by the safer method of climbing the scaffolding when the roof was

being repaired, says the view is spectacular.

A 3m-high palisade fence was put around the site because it was feared the vandals might try to reclaim their playground, but in fact there was only one incident when a stolen car was driven into the fence, apparently several times. The car ended upside down, but the fence held.

It is hoped the work being carried out to the building and the whole park will make it more attractive to sympathetic visitors and keep the unwanted visitors away.

Chris Gladwell, PAYE’s Contracts Manager on the project, said their first task on site was to remove the debris so they could see what was actually there and then measure up for the new stone they would need, although quite a lot of the existing stone was saved and re-used – on the roof, for example, the Portland stone was removed to repair the brick below and much of it was relaid.

New stones were produced for the top three layers, which had disappeared over the years. Under the apex stone Bert Goodwin, PAYE’s Construction Director responsible for the project, left a business card and a £10 note for posterity.

Most of the new Portland stone used is Coombefield Whitbed with carving carried out in the less shelly Perryfield, both from Portland stone quarry company Stone Firms. Some of the stone was worked by Ranco Stonemasonry of Uttoxeter, while Farleigh Masonry worked the stone for the crypt and Cambridge Masonry produced the flying bridge. Carvings were produced by Katie Worthington, Gary Churchman and Gary Lott.

PAYE’s Chris Gladwell says there was enough detail left to be able to work out most of the design and if there was any doubt there was an invaluable reference source of architectural drawings and photographs supplied by James Wright. In the 1940s as an architectural student he had chosen to study the mausoleum. He had measured it, drawn it and photographed it.

Nobody knew of his portfolio until he came forward and volunteered it after hearing about the restoration project. “He turned up at the end of a public meeting and announced he had all this material,” says Richard Putnam. “It has enabled us to know with confidence that what we put back is what was there before.” Except for the coat of arms over the door, which was already missing by the 1940s. The current Lord Darnley confirmed that the carving represents his family’s crest as it would have been in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The second phase of the work now getting under way will see the replacement of Brocatello marble cladding around the eight, 4m high Portland limestone columns with bases carved from Bianco P, like that being used for the reredos.

Brocatello is a red and yellow Spanish marble that is no longer quarried. But Ian Macdonald of Marlborough stone wholesalers McMarmilloid, who have a reputation for being able to source rare and exotic stone, were able to supply the marble from some of the last blocks of the stone that will ever be available. ■

## Credits

Clients: *Cobham Ashenbank Management Scheme*

Architect: *Richard Putnam of Purcell Miller Tritton*

Main Contractors and Specialist Stone Contractors / Conservators: *PAYE Stonework & Restoration*

Stonemasonry Suppliers: *Ranco Masonry, Farleigh Masonry, Cambridge Masonry*

Stone used: 1) *Portland Coombefield and Perryfield* 2) *Brocatello and Bianco P marble*

Supplied by: 1) *Stone Firms* 2) *McMarmilloid*