

Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council

Roads, Footpaths and Commons Committee Meeting 20/10/2022

Fairground Footway

Agenda item 22/018 2: To receive a report on cleaning the War Memorial and agree any actions to be taken.

BACKGROUND

The parish council office was asked to look into the cleaning of the War Memorial at the junction of Hammonds Heath and The Street.



The War Memorial is made from Portland Stone and metal plaques are attached to each face of the base. The bronze winged figures at the base represent Honour, Justice, Fortitude and Victory.

The memorial was unveiled at a public ceremony held on 9th October 1921.

There are currently some deposits of lichen, dirt and stains on the surface of the stonework. Some mortar between the step slabs is breaking up and several have weeds beginning to take hold in the gaps.

From extensive information provided online by the War Memorial Trust it is believed that the current condition of the memorial would fall under their classification of 'Scenario 6 – minimal deposits of lichen and dirt' as outlined in their guide Cleaning – stone.

The office sent an enquiry to the Trust for advice and supplied some photographs for their evaluation, featuring close ups of different areas of the stone showing lichen, pollution deposits and metal stains from the plaques.

A conservation officer from the Trust wrote back and confirmed that from the photographs:

- The deposits are minimal, and it does not appear that cleaning is required at this time. War Memorials Trust only recommends cleaning where the deposits are

harmful or obscuring inscriptions. but recommends cleaning where the deposits are. If in the future cleaning is required, then hand washing with water and soft natural bristle brushes would be the most appropriate method. Conservation guidelines - <http://www.warmemorials.org/uploads/publications/625.pdf>

- It appears that there has been some loss of mortar to the joints. It is important that joints are kept in good condition. Lost mortar can allow water to enter the structure and result in damage through freeze thaw action. Any lost mortar should be repaired using an appropriate lime mortar.
- To keep the bronze elements to the memorial well maintained, it will be necessary for the protective micro crystalline wax layer to be renewed on a regular basis. The regularity of this depends on environmental factors. Conservation guidelines - <http://www.warmemorials.org/uploads/publications/124.pdf>

Additionally, it was noted that, in partnership with SmartWater, the War Memorials Trust runs a project called **In Memoriam 2014**. The project protects memorials at risk of theft or damage by marking them with a forensic liquid called SmartWater. The crime prevention fluid is made available at no charge. This acts as a deterrent to those considering desecrating war memorials by increasing their chances of detection and subsequent arrest. <https://smartwaterfoundation.org/in-memoriam>.

RECOMMENDATION

From the advice given by the War Memorial Trust, based on the current condition seen at the memorial, a basic maintenance plan could be put in place to include regular monitoring to identify any problems early and oversee basic works.

A good maintenance plan should include simple, safe cleaning on a regular basis (perhaps annually) due to its location beside a main traffic road through the village. This should help to keep lichen and dirt to a minimum without damaging the memorial. This type of cleaning would be by hand using water and a natural bristle brush. This can be done by a custodian or volunteers. No chemical or household products should be added to the water as these can get into the stone structure and cause damage.

The issue of gaps/weeds in the mortar should be fixed as soon as possible and monitored as part of the maintenance plan.

It is understood that should major repairs or cleaning be required; this would involve employing professional services.

Associated Documents:

War Memorial Trust guide – Cleaning Stone

Photographs of War Memorial (September 2022)



Figure 1: lichen and stains on steps at base



Figure 2: lichen and stains on plinth



Figure 3: lichen and deposits on plinth v2



Figure 4: lichen and stains around base



Figure 5: build up on stone surface



Figure 7: Lichen and fractures on base



Figure 6: metal stains



Figure 8: Lichen and broken mortar on base steps



Figure 9: detail of build up

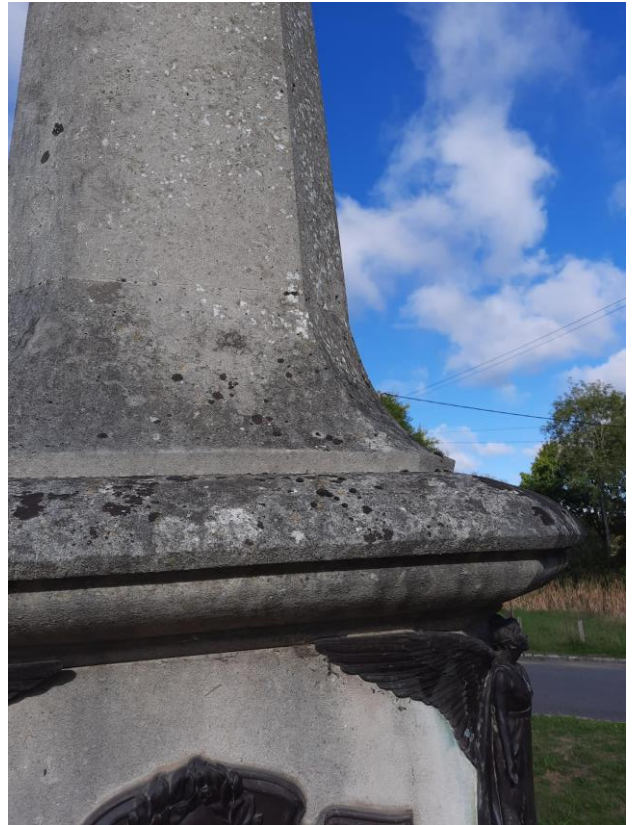


Figure 11: deposits and dirt



Figure 10: deposits and cracks



Figure 12: close up of stone at base