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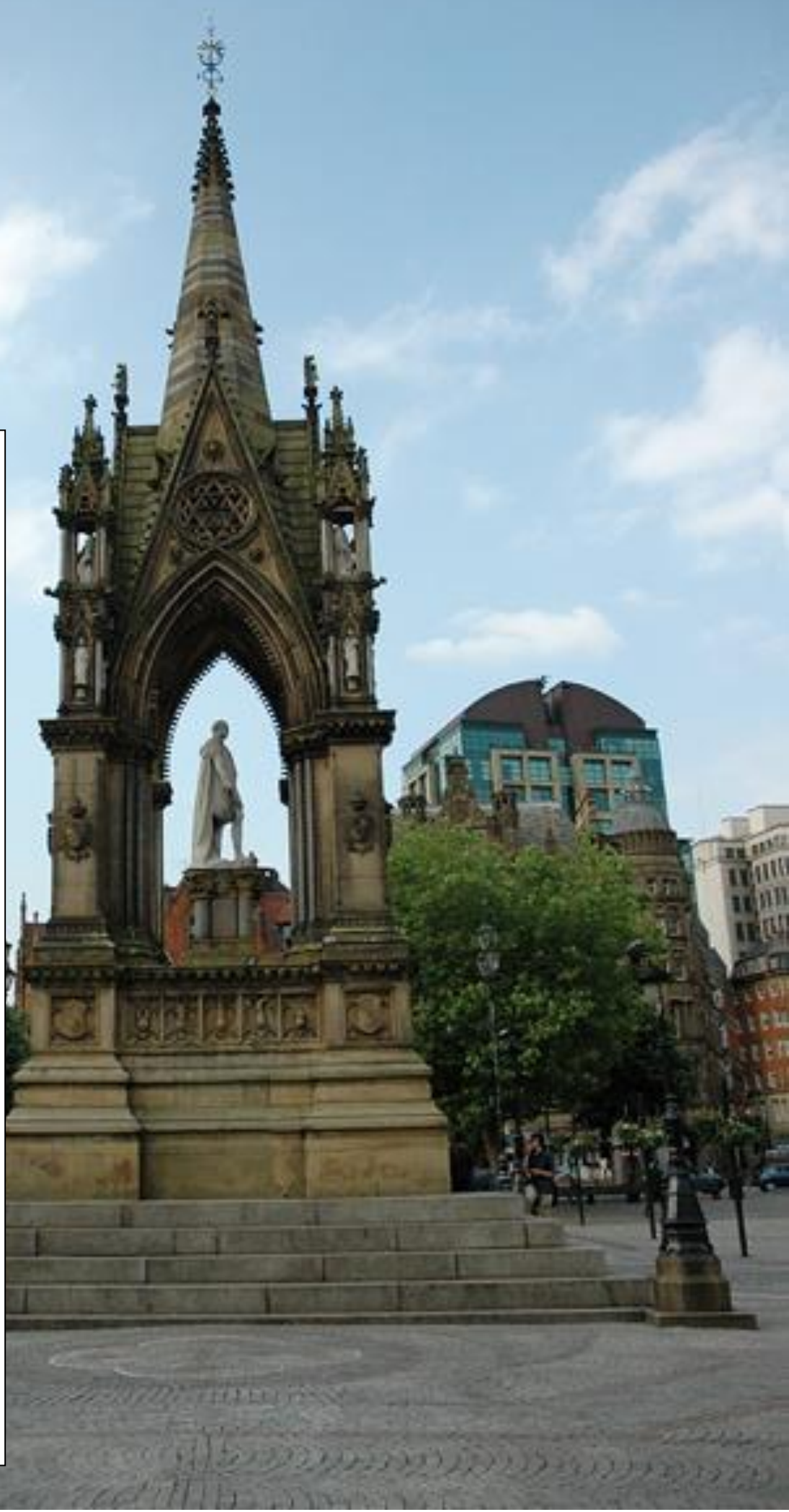
Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Manchester Albert
Memorial

Client:
Bullen Conservation

Author:
Graham Mottershead

Report No:
SA/2021/69



Location: The site is located at within Albert Square, Manchester

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Project: Manchester Albert Memorial

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Manchester Albert Memorial

Archaeological Watching Brief During Relocation

Introduction

As part of the ongoing renovation works being carried out at Manchester Town Hall, Bullen Conservation have been contracted to take down, and later re-erect, the Albert Memorial in Albert Square, Manchester (Figure 1). As part of the archaeological condition for these works it was required that an archaeological watching brief be carried out during removal of the statue in order to examine its structure. Salford Archaeology were commissioned by Bullen Conservation to carry out this work. The watching brief was carried out during September 2021.

Background

The Albert Memorial was first proposed shortly after Prince Albert's death to typhoid in 1861. Although originally intended to be erected in Piccadilly it was later decided to locate the statue in what is now Albert Square. Works began for the construction of the Town Hall and Square in 1864, with the clearance of earlier housing, warehouses public houses and other small industrial premises. The Albert Memorial was officially opened in 1869, a year after construction of the Town Hall commenced, and the Town Hall opened in 1877 (Plate 1).

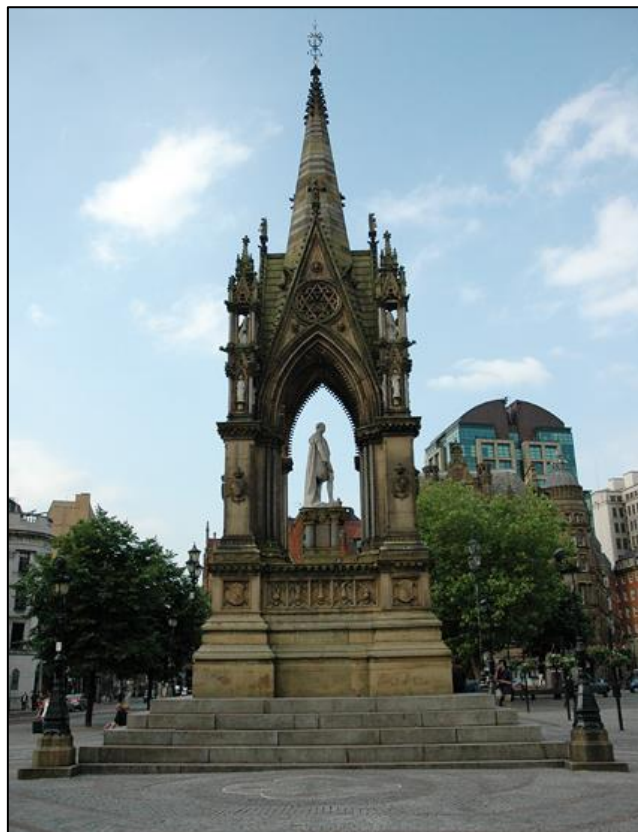


Plate 1: View of the Albert Memorial looking south

The monument comprises a statue of the Prince Regent, designed by Matthew Noble, standing on a plinth facing west, within a medieval-style ciborium, designed by Thomas Worthington. The memorial is topped with an ornate spire, and on each side a gable with canopied pinnacles on colonettes. Figures representing commerce, science, art and agriculture are set within the canopies and below them are four figures representing the four arts, the four sciences, the four seasons (representing agriculture) and the four continents (representing trade). The monument sits on a stepped five tier marble base and around it is square of coloured setts depicting England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales.

Watching Brief Results

Observations were made during the controlled dismantling of the memorial. The statue and marble stepped base were built onto and around an inner core of brick. This comprised five tiers of hand made bricks bonded with lime mortar (Plates 2 and 3). Each of the tiers was three brick courses in height and the bricks were laid in a stretcher bond. A fine cement had been laid over the bricks before the outer marble steps were placed upon them (Plate 4).



Plate 2: Brick base below the marble stepped base and statue – west side looking north



Plate 3: Tiered brick base – east side, looking west



Plate 4: Cement layer over brickwork - east corner looking west

Discussion

The construction for the base of the memorial is as expected. The use of handmade bricks and lime mortar is interesting as this was built at a time when the transition to machine made bricks and the use of Old Portland Cement in brickwork was underway. The Manchester Bricklayers Protection Society donated 50,000 bricks for use in the memorial, most of which were used in rectifying construction difficulties associated with all the drains and culverts found to be running below the area. Due to this, in 1865, money was also raised for extra construction materials to complete the monument. As this was during the Cotton Famine, a time of extreme hardship in

Manchester, it may be that the brickyards and brick workers donating the bricks were using up 'old stock' of handmade bricks in favour of the new machine made bricks.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Bullen Conservation for commissioning the work, and in particular to Norman Whitely for his support during the project. Thanks also go to Ian Miller of Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service for his advice and support.

The watching brief was carried out by Richard Carter. The report was written by Graham Mottershead with illustrations from Sarah Mottershead. Graham Mottershead also managed the project.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Mottershead', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Graham Mottershead

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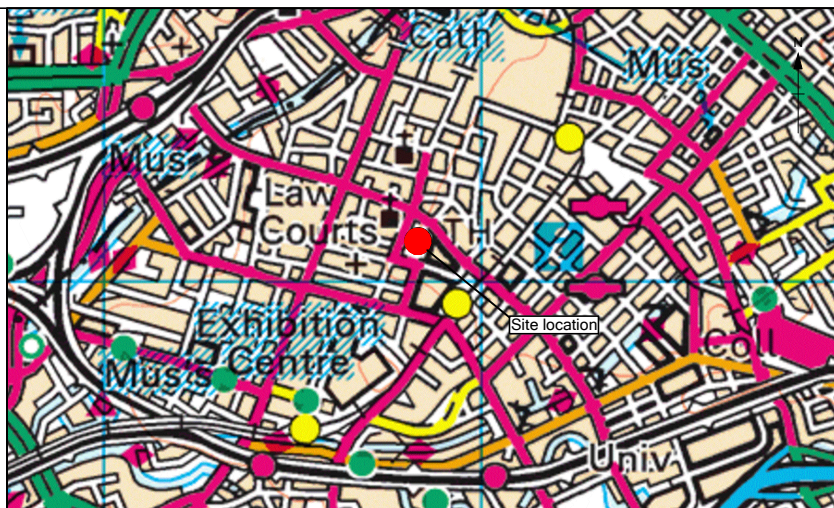


Figure 1:

Site location and location of Albert Memorial

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