



JESUS COLLEGE
CAMBRIDGE

RUSTAT MEMORIAL: FACULTY APPLICATION: INTRODUCTION

In May 2019, the College Council of Jesus College Cambridge set up the [Legacy of Slavery Working Party](#) (LSWP) to undertake an extended review of the College's historic links to enslavement and its long-term impact. The LSWP provided an [interim report](#) in November 2019, and a [further set of recommendations](#) in November 2020. Among the recommendations is action to be taken with respect to the large memorial to Tobias Rustat, which is featured on the west wall of the College Chapel.¹

Tobias Rustat (1608–1693) was one of the College's largest benefactors before the twentieth century. Rustat was also an investor in several trading companies including the Company of Royal Adventurers of England Trading into Africa, commonly called the Royal African Company, which was chartered in 1663 and reincorporated in 1672 as The Royal African Company (RAC). The Royal African Company played a major role in the slave trade at the time. The fact of Rustat's involvement both with the College and in the slave trade is not in doubt. Further historical information and analysis by the Legacy of Slavery Working Party can be found in Appendix 1.

By the time of the LSWP's recommendations in November 2020, the Church of England had called for a critical dialogue over memorials which 'have links to slave trading or the exploitation of people,' noting that such dialogue 'must have real outcomes' which 'may include re-interpretation, or gaining permission for the alteration or removal of monuments'.² Since then, the report of the Archbishops' Anti-Racism Taskforce, *From Lament to Action*, has been published (April 2021). 'Regarding monuments and the built environment,' the report notes, 'deciding what to do with contested heritage is not easy. While history should not be hidden, we also do not want to unconditionally celebrate or commemorate people who contributed to or benefitted from the tragedy that was the slave trade.'³ In May 2021, the Church of England's Director of Churches and Cathedrals, commenting on its formal guidance on dealing with contested heritage, noted: 'Our church buildings and cathedrals are the most visible part of the C of E, a Christian presence in every community. The responsibility to ensure they include, welcome and provide safe spaces for all is a vitally important part of addressing the way historic racism and slavery still impacts people today.'⁴ The College's deliberation, discernment, and decision about the Rustat memorial have been undertaken in this spirit.

This Introduction will outline the memorial's context and history, the College's consideration of possible actions in response, and its decision to develop a proposal for its permanent relocation, for which it now petitions for a Faculty.

The Chapel Context

Pastorally, the Chapel stands as an inclusive and welcoming space in the heart of the College. It originated as the priory church of the convent which preceded Jesus College, and forms part of a group of buildings that have always been at the centre of the College and its activities – its cloisters connect it with the Dining Hall, the Old Library, the Master's Lodge, accommodation for Fellows' guests and official College guests, meeting rooms, and the Chapter House (used as a Fellows' social and work space).

¹ <https://www.jesus.cam.ac.uk/sites/default/files/inline/files/November%202020%20-%20update%20on%20implementation%20of%20LSWP%20actions.pdf> (November 2020) p.7.

² <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/news/update-church-and-cathedral-monuments> (June 2020).

³ <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-04/FromLamentToAction-report.pdf> (April 2021) p.53.

⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/09/remove-or-alter-your-slavery-monuments-churches-are-told> (9 May 2021).

The Chapel is a place where students are regularly (and pleasantly) surprised by the lively and open ethos, as well as the power of its stillness and beauty of its surroundings. In addition to its more obviously religious purposes, Chapel hosts many historic and ceremonial occasions within College life - the election of the Master, the admission of the Master and Fellows, the awarding of Scholarships and Prizes to students and choristers. The nave in particular provides a place of wellbeing and creativity within College life, hosting concerts and recitals, welfare activities and student arts festivals, as well as serving as a quiet space during the annual May Ball. If the presence of a memorial (or any other feature) is perceived to be a barrier to members of our community participating in these central functions of College and Chapel life, and experiencing Chapel as a place of welfare and pastoral care for all College members, this must be taken seriously.



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The Constitution of the College (Statute 1.2) declares that the College 'is a place of education, religion, learning and research'.⁵ This is reemphasised in the College's charitable objects, that is, the aims and purposes of the charity in law, being 'to establish a College within the University of Cambridge for the advancement of education, learning, research, and religion'.⁶ The designated legal beneficiaries of the charity of the College, and thus the Chapel's priority in its mission, are current and future Fellows and students of the College. It is in this context that the College Council, as the charity's board of Trustees, has taken the view that:

- the retention of the memorial in the Chapel is inconsistent with the charitable aims and purposes of the College in the advancement of education and learning in that the memorial is a hindrance to participation in the pastoral and community activities of the College which take place in the Chapel;
- the retention of the memorial in the Chapel is inconsistent with the tenets of the Christian faith, and, to the extent that the memorial may hinder members of the College from engaging in prayer, worship and the sacraments in the Chapel, the relocation of the memorial to an alternative location within the College contributes to the fulfilment of the College's charitable aims and purposes in the advancement of religion.

Further information and reflection on the pastoral and missional context of the Chapel, and the inconsistency of the retention of the memorial with the ministry and witness of the Chapel within the College community, can be found in Appendix 2.

Tobias Rustat's Memorial

Tobias Rustat commissioned the monument during his lifetime (c.1686), including its inscription⁷ (with the exception of the final two lines with his date of death):

⁵ <https://www.jesus.cam.ac.uk/sites/default/files/inline/files/Jesus%20College%20Statutes.pdf> p.6

⁶ <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/3999698/governing-document>

⁷ Renfrew and Robbins record that the inscription was composed, 'or at any rate drafted' by Sir William Dugdale, Norroy King of Arms: Jane Renfrew and Michael Robbins, 'Tobias Rustat and his Monument in Jesus College Chapel, Cambridge', pp. 416-423 in *The Antiquaries Journal*, Vol. 70, Issue 2, September 1990, p. 419. Morgan and Morgan believe Rustat to be the author: Iris Morgan and Gerda Morgan, *Stones and Story of Jesus College Chapel*, Cambridge, 1914, p. 229, p. 330. See too William Hamper, *Life, Diary and Correspondence of Sir William Dugdale*, London, 1827, p. 40.

Tobias Rustat, Yeoman of the Robes to King Charles the Second, whom he served with all Duty and Faithfulness, in his Adversity as well as Prosperity. The greatest part of the estate he gathered by God's blessing, the King's Favour and his Industry, he disposed in his Lifetime in Workes of Charity; and found the more he bestowed upon Churches, Hospitalls, Universities, and Colledges, and upon poor Widows and orphans of Orthodox Ministers, the more he had at the year's end. Neither was he unmindful of his kindred and relations, in making them Provisions out of what remained. He died a Bachelour, the 15th. day of March, in the year of Our Lord 1693. Aged 87 years.⁸

For the last eight years of his life, the memorial resided at his house at Chelsea.⁹ By the time of its commission, Rustat was already a major donor to the College (though not a Jesuan himself, his father was). Most scholarship concurs that it is the work of Grinling Gibbons, with perhaps some other minor contributors.¹⁰ Rustat was buried somewhere in Chapel and his monument installed by Society (the body incorporating the Master and the Fellows).¹¹ His will, written the October before his death (in March), expressed his desire to be 'reverently buried in the Church or Chappell of Jesus College in Cambridge, where my tomb is in readinesse to be sette up'.¹²



Previous relocations of the memorial

The monument was originally installed in its current location on the west wall, displacing the protruding window that now sits between Upper Hall and the gallery to the Hall. (The west wall had been put in when the convent became a College and the nave was reduced to form a Master's Lodge.) The memorial was then moved, at least once, perhaps twice: two early 19th century authors locate it in the north transept (the section where the *Pietà* statue now resides)¹³ and during later Victorian restorations it was removed to the south transept (the opposing section, where the piano now resides).¹⁴ It only moved back to its current and original location in 1922,¹⁵ when a large nave organ (installed in 1887) was removed from the west end of the nave.¹⁶ After the latest floor tiling occurred (possibly also 1922), a small tile in the chancel was inscribed with Rustat's name and

dates. (It is likely that this reproduced an inscription in the previous floor tiling, and that this is near where Rustat is interred; we may note the memorial is almost as far from Rustat's remains as it is possible within the Chapel to be.)

The College considers that, in contrast to Rustat's appearance on the donors' wall in the Cloisters, his memorial in Chapel represents a celebration of him:

⁸ This inscription employs the 'old' calendar, as used for references to the events of Rustat's life throughout this application; the modern dating of his death is 1694.

⁹ Renfrew and Robbins, 'Tobias Rustat', p. 418.

¹⁰ Renfrew and Robbins, 'Tobias Rustat', p. 421. The most recent edition of Pevsner (cf. 1954 edition) concurs on the likely authorship of Gibbons; Simon Bradley and Nikolaus Pevsner, *Cambridgeshire, The Buildings of England* (series), London: Yale University Press, 2014, p. 117.

¹¹ Morgan and Morgan, *Stones and Story*, p. 229.

¹² David Green, *Grinling Gibbons, His Work as Carver and Statuary 1648-1721*, London, 1964, p. 157.

¹³ W. Hewitt, Jr., *Memoirs of Tobias Rustat Esq. Yeoman of the Robes*, London, 1849, p. 86; also Daniel Lysons and Samuel Lysons, *Magna Brittainia*, Vol. 2, Pt. 1, London: Cadell and Davies, 1808, p.119.

¹⁴ Morgan and Morgan, *Stones and Story*, p.229, p. 330.

¹⁵ Renfrew and Robbins, 'Tobias Rustat', p. 423, n. 31. Hewitt, for some reason, thinks it had been replaced on the nave's west wall 'lately' before 1849, which would mean it had had some five installations in its life by now. Hewitt is likely wrong in this, since his account fits no other information.

¹⁶ Arthur Gray and Frederick Brittain, *A History of Jesus College Cambridge*, Cambridge: Silent Books, 1988, p. 197.

‘At the Society Meeting in November 2019 several options were debated, including that of its removal for which, at that stage, no support was expressed. However, views about statues and memorials have been evolving fast all spring and summer, and many Jesus members are increasingly vocal in seeing the current location of Rustat’s memorial as incompatible with the experience of Chapel as an inclusive community and a place of collective wellbeing. The placement of the memorial forces visitors to the chapel literally to look up to Rustat, and its proportions make it hard to ignore.’¹⁷

– *LSWP Report, November 2020*

Options for permanent action

In July 2020, the College Council first discussed options for contextualisation, interpretation of the memorial, including its potential relocation, and decided to continue to explore various practical solutions and consult the Society. In October and November 2020, the Society and the College Council respectively received and extensively discussed the recommendation of the LSWP that the memorial be relocated to a suitable educational exhibition space within College.¹⁸ Both bodies voted by an overwhelming majority for the memorial’s relocation to an educational space that would allow the College to acknowledge its past and offer proper contextualisation, as well as signalling its commitment to an anti-racist future for the College. The memorial’s removal to an external museum was also considered at that stage but this course of action attracted less support.

Discounting alternatives to removal

At these meetings of the Council and the Society, consideration was given to potential options for the memorial which did not include its removal from Chapel. Reasons for discounting these as solutions were given both as a matter of principle and of practicality, and will be summarised here. In a principled sense, consultation with the Society suggested strongly that fostering an inclusive dialogue and culture within the Chapel and College could not be achieved if the memorial remained within Chapel, where its presence, even if contextualized, carries a significance and dominance of the space. Student representatives reported a very strong consensus among BAME students¹⁹ that the Chapel was perceived to be the heart of welfare and pastoral support to the College community, and that the memorial’s presence was incongruous with this, and a barrier to the sense of inclusion the Chapel and the College more widely seek to foster.²⁰

In a practical sense, three options were considered which did not involve removal of the memorial:

- *Contextualizing installation (art, or poetry)*

This option was discussed quite thoroughly, particularly during initial discussions in July 2020, but posed several difficulties:

- It would continue to emphasise the central and elevated position of Rustat’s memorial which is so key to the problematics of its current location, and would place Rustat at the centre of the continuing narrative. This would seem to foster the very opposite of a sense of inclusion.

¹⁷ In response to the intensification of public debates over statues and memorials during 2020, it was felt that the Rustat memorial could not be left without immediate contextualisation. The LSWP produced a leaflet which provides contextualising information on Rustat, which is available for any visitor to the Chapel. The LSWP also prepared a plasticised sign for a metal stand in front of the memorial, which directs visitors’ attention to the leaflet.

¹⁸ Society meeting on 26th October 2020; College Council meeting on 2nd November 2020.

¹⁹ We note that terminology around ethnicity and race is a sensitive matter. Throughout these petition papers, terms used vary for the most part in accordance with the usage and descriptions used by the various reports or analyses to which the papers refer.

²⁰ Society Minutes, 26 October 2020, 3.vii, p.4.

- Given the scale of the monument, any substantially commanding artistic installation that sought to respond to it would create something of an overbearing focus; to do so would create significant visual, architectural and liturgical impact both on the focal Morris & Co ceiling above that rightly draws the viewer in the nave to look heavenwards, and to the architectural compass of the building which encourages the visitor toward the focus of the sanctuary. It was noted that an artistic installation might unhelpfully obscure the memorial, rather than contextualise it.
- Given the pace of developing thought in critical engagement with legacies of enslavement, and the infancy of contextualization, any artistic engagement with the memorial would easily and quickly seem dated; in a decade, one might be faced with needing to commission a new form of installation, or look once again at relocation of the monument. This was, thus, not deemed an option with any sense of long view.

- Critical plaque

This option was felt to be an insufficient response given recent developments in thinking around responses to contested memorials of this kind. Contextualizing words, it was noted, would still leave unanswered the principled question as to why such a celebratory object was located in a position of veneration and elevated so prominently.

- Installation of a large curtain covering

Whilst this option would remove the memorial from sight and yet ensure it was still viewable as an artistic and educational object, it was agreed that covering the memorial would suggest the College were seeking to hide its history rather than facing up to its difficulties with honesty and seeking to reshape the future in the light of it. There were also some practical difficulties to the solution, given the depth of the protrusion of the memorial from the wall, and the obstruction therefore by a large curtain of the south-west door (traditionally used for the entrance of a coffin at a funeral). Again, this solution also did not address the principled objection that the memorial's presence in itself creates a pastoral and missional barrier to many members of the College community.

The possibility of relocating the memorial to an alternative position within Chapel was not included for consideration by the College Council or the Society because of the lack of appropriate and viable wall space elsewhere within Chapel. The memorial's probable former location in the north transept has since been uncovered to expose arches in the oldest section of the Chapel (towards the Chapter House), within one of which is now displayed the 18th century former altarpiece by Jouvenet; the memorial's only likely former south transept location now displays a coffin lid long held to be that of one of the priory's nuns. There are no other installation options available within Chapel other than its current location.

Relocation proposal

At its meeting on 2nd November 2020, College Council minuted its agreement 'that the memorial should be removed from its current position and stored for the time being in College, and that thought should then be given to where it should be stored or displayed on a more permanent basis' (Council Minute 10279).

On the basis of this proposal to apply for temporary permission to remove the memorial pending a permanent solution, the consultation period for heritage advisory bodies occurred (concluding 18th December 2020), a period of public notice was held (ending 23rd January 2021), and the Diocesan Advisory Committee provided its notification of advice (29th January

2021). Responses were largely sympathetic to the pastoral and theological challenges of the memorial's history and current location, but sought a clear and permanent proposal for where and how the memorial may most effectively be contextualised.

The current petition being submitted has been developed and honed in response to this advice, to further demonstrate the unsuitability of the memorial's Chapel location, and to offer a suitable permanent exhibition space within College where the memorial can be contextualized and viewed by the public. At its meeting on 15th February 2021, the College Council first considered a draft form of the current proposal to make use of the Song School in East House as an extension of the College Archive facilities, and considered this further at its meeting on 15th March 2021. At its meeting on 26th April 2021, Council received and considered a copy of the draft petition to relocate the memorial to the expanded College Archive facilities, and, after further consideration, agreed by majority vote to proceed with the petition to relocate the memorial.

In a supporting statement from the College's current and former Curators of Works of Art (Appendix 5), Dr Berenbeim and Dr Cooper note:

‘[We] would strongly support the option of an expanded archive facility in East House. The College has a significant and distinguished curatorial history of art exhibitions—indeed, exhibitions of sculpture in particular. It also has a hugely important archive, reaching back to the female monastic foundation that preceded the College. The proposed new East House exhibition room could situate the Rustat Memorial in both of those contexts—curatorial and archival, artistic and historical—in a setting and physical display that would facilitate its closer examination.’

Relocation, therefore, would provide an opportunity to facilitate a greater level of public engagement with the memorial both as an artistic piece and an educational vehicle for discussion on the legacy and history of enslavement. The proposed relocation will also present an opportunity for conservation and study of the memorial and its construction, as urged by responses from heritage advisory consultations. This is especially pertinent given the tercentenary of Grinling Gibbons' death in 2021.