

Method Statement

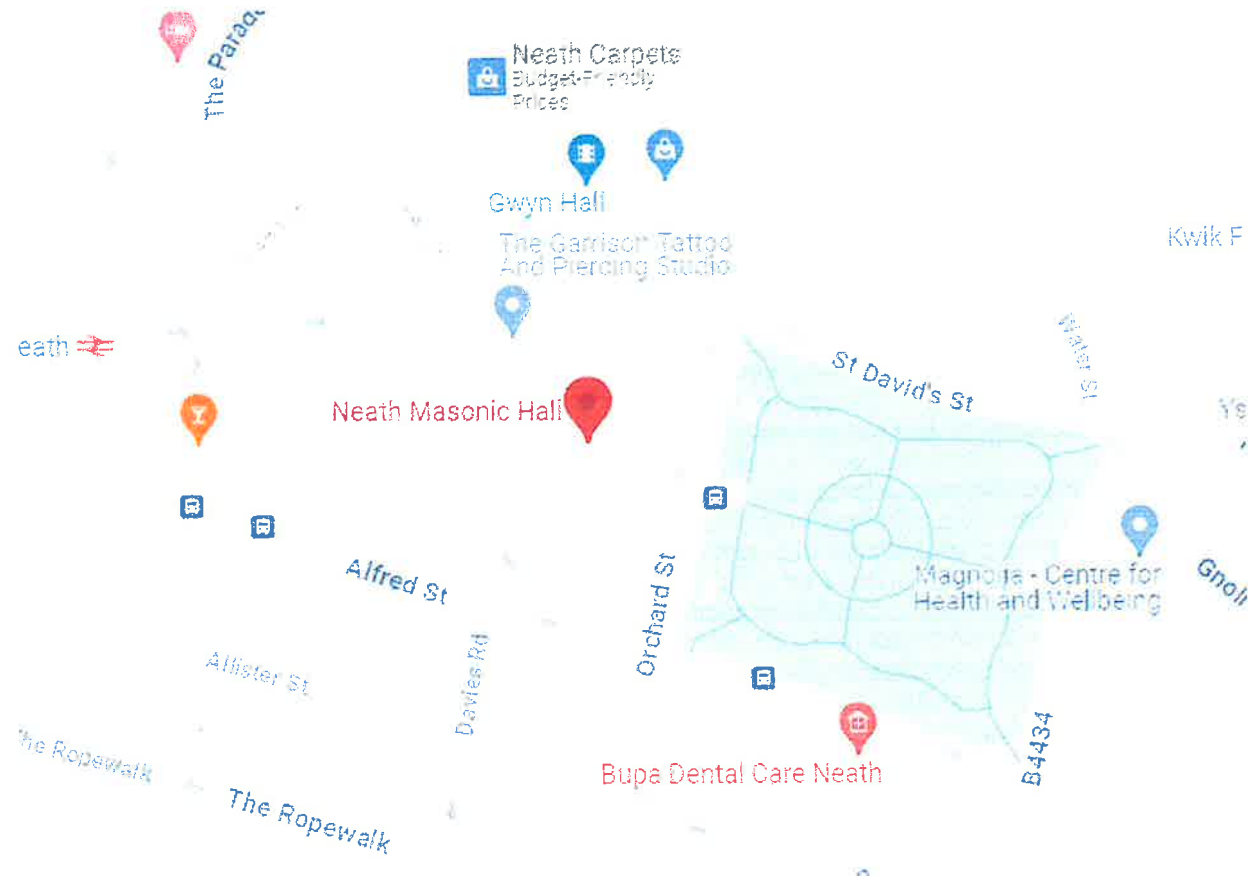
Neath Masonic Hall

Description

The Masonic Hall was built in 1848. It is a two storey five bay facade, with snecked masonry, regular stressed quoins, and plinth, with painted ashlar dressings. It has a stylised entablature with modillion like band. A central shaped gablet with returned round arch hoodmould over medallion bearing oculus motif. The outer bays are advanced slightly. Recessed tall arches to the central bays, ashlar keystones and impost blocks. The centre bay is flanked by ashlar pilasters rising to Ionic derived capitals under gablet. Medallions inset under arches with detached scrolls beneath, bearing lettering included Erected AD 1848, with Masonic motifs of spheres and callipers to the medallions.

Cambered stone lintels with stressed keystones are across recessed arches to the ground floor, and the walls are ramped inwards underneath. A recessed doorway is in the right-hand archway only.

Building position



The building is situated on a pedestrian section of Queen Street in Neath town centre. It has a visual impact to people that regularly use the Town. The work needs to be carried out for both safety and aesthetic reasons. The high-level masonry is in danger of deteriorating at an increasing rate if the Buddleia if it is not dealt with soon. It would also have an uplifting effect to the street to see it being brought back to a state of good repair.

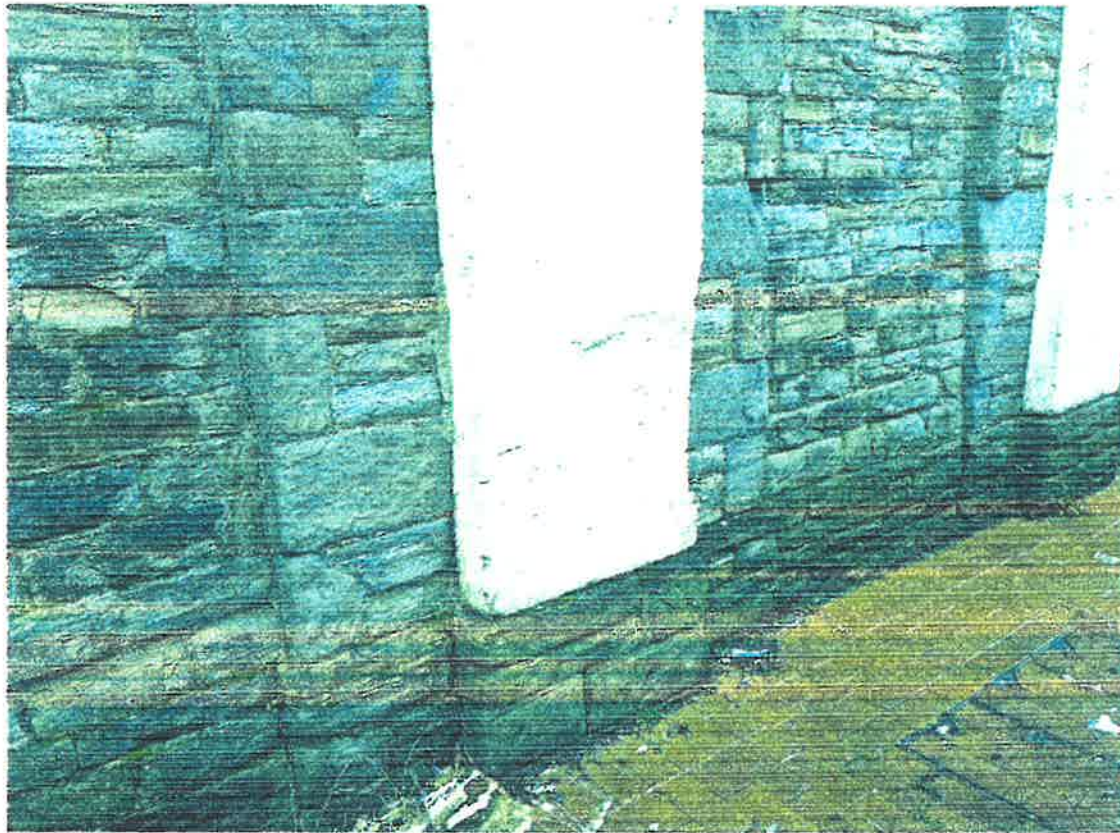


Condition

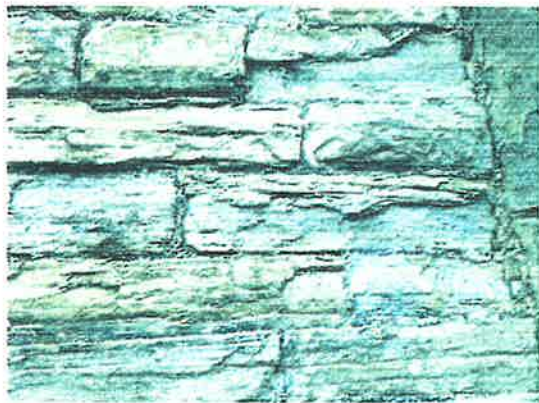
The Bath stone masonry has been painted over in the past and has started to blister in various areas. Generally, this happens when the stonework has become dirty, carbonated, or damaged with the repairs carried out using a general filler, such as a cement-based mortar. The paint is then used to mask this over and make the masonry look clean. Unfortunately, this does not help the oolitic limestone beneath as it is prevented from breathing adequately. It is impossible to determine the amount of damage that has occurred. Especially until the paint has been stripped off the surface to show the stone below.

Any damaged stone will need to be cut out and replaced by indenting the damage with new matching Bath stone.





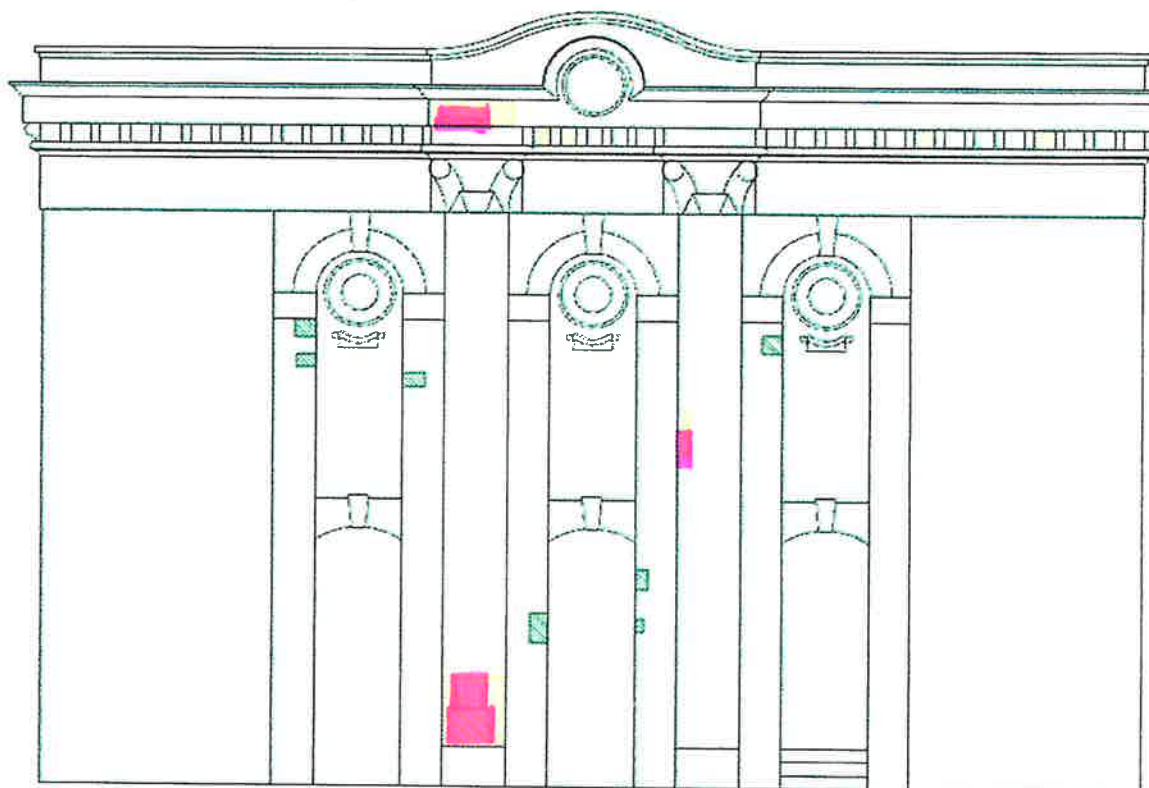
The pennant stone needs to be checked over and defrassed. Much of the rubble has weathered over the years with temperature expansion, contraction, frost, and rain erosion. This allows many of the stone faces to start peeling away. Much of it has become loose and therefore becomes a hazard to the public as it detaches from the surface. Defrassing is the process of removing these flakes, and pieces of loose stone before they have a chance to fall. In many areas the pointing has become soft leaving many open and defective joints. This is particularly bad to the 'plinth' areas of the wall where it has also been affected by salt on the road/pathway. Once the stonework has been fully defrassed the wall will need all of its defective masonry joints raked out and refilled with a matching lime mortar. Care must be taken to leave no ledges and water traps where moisture can settle. There has been an estimation of 40% of the wall is in need of repointing. The new mortar for repointing will be as close as possible to the existing both in colour and in aggregate content. The new mortar will always show a slightly lighter colour difference to the original until the lime content has toned back.



There are a number of quoins that will need to be replaced/repared as the weathering process has left them without structural integrity or significant sections missing.

No visual inspection was able to be undertaken to the damaged caused by the roots from the Buddleia infestation. This is especially the case with view to the parapet walls and the structure behind. These plants will need to be treated with a suitable biocide to kill off all roots. If this does not happen, and any roots are left alive, the plants will be back within a short period of time. There may be some need to dismantle areas of the masonry, remove the root systems, and rebuild. I cannot determine this until a full, up-close inspection can be carried out.





The diagram above shows the approximate areas of the damaged stone that is in need of replacement or indenting. The red indicates where Bath oolitic limestone has been damaged and the green is where the pennant stone requires attention. This may vary slightly once the high-level masonry has been inspected in greater detail.

Sequence of work required

1/ Carry out a full scaffold of the façade to gain access to all areas. This would require netting to allow containment of paint flakes and grit effecting the public whilst the façade is being cleaned. Also, access should be maintained through the doorway if required.

2/ Use a glyphosate herbicide on the plant growth to the façade and leave for a recommended time period for the plants to die back. This may not work fully the first time and may need a second application. Once the plant has died back, remove the branches and stems. Remove as much root as possible. The masonry elements may need dismantling and rebuilding where the plant growth has caused separation to the components.

3/ Remove the paint from the masonry through the use of a DOFF cleaning system. The paint will need an initial test period to determine how easy this process will be. The DOFF system uses pressurised steam to soften and detach the paint.

4/ DOFF clean the pennant masonry

5/ Defras the pennant random rubble stone. Using hand tools, test and remove all loose flakes and stone faces where there is a risk of detachment.

6/ Replace/indent all identified elements of Bath stone noted for repair. All stone is to be pinned in place with stainless steel threaded bar and resin.

7/ Replace/indent all identified elements of Pennant stone noted for repair.

8/ Repoint all open and defective masonry joints. Bath stone will be repointed with a buff-coloured non-hydraulic lime mortar. (Possibly Ty-Mawr London mix)

9/ Repoint all open and defective joints in the pennant rubble work with a suitable mortar. A fat lime mix is suggested to match existing.

10/ Once all work has been completed the façade will be given a light clean over to wash off any excess lime residue.

The overall impact

The objective is to give the building a new lease of life with only the minimal amount of disturbance to the actual fabric of the façade. All materials are to be a match for the existing materials, both in type and colour, minimising any change to the historical aesthetics and allowing the natural age of the building to show through.

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The proposed works to the Neath Masonic building are intended to rectify the centuries of wear on the fabric of the buildings frontage, to return it to good decorative and structural standards, to the necessary specifications that such a CADW listed building requires. Within that intent is not only the return to presentable condition, but also one of safety for users of the building, and the public that pass it on a frequent basis, given it's town centre location. Also necessary is the removal of improperly applied 'protective coatings' that have in fact added to the deterioration of the façade in part. It cannot be considered acceptable for it to remain in the current unsightly and hazardous condition, though safety measures are in place to prevent access to the perimeter area.

