# Tintern Abbey part 2: How was the abbey preserved in the past?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Tintern Abbey, Cadw’s most ambitious conservation project in decades. How was Tintern Abbey preserved in the past? | Information cards |
| Will Davies Inspector of Ancient Monuments  | Will stands within the abbey church facing camera |
| These structures, people come and visit them, and what they don't really realize is that they are subject to constant ongoing maintenance and conservation by Cadw and by our predecessors,  |  |
| often using very different techniques back in the day that we possibly would use now. | Archive photograph of abbey church exterior with wooden scaffolding |
| They’re also bottomless pits of money: you’re always spending on them constantly because they’re just constantly eroding, constantly decaying. It's time, effectively, that we're dealing with. | Modern photograph of the abbey church exterior with modern scaffolding. |
| To conserve a monument isn't to freeze it in time. It's effectively to slow and manage that process of decay | Photograph of Cadw stonemasons installing new stonework to an abbey window |
| Back behind me, what you can't see is the massive brick arcade,  | Will stands within the abbey church facing the camera. |
| not quite on the scale of the stone ones that we see today that were built in the 1920s, 30s to take down some of these great piers. | Archive photographs of large brick structure supporting the church. |
| It's a gigantic brick built vaulted scaffolding just to dismantle these pillars, to be able to rebuild them again with steel threads in the middle,  | Archive photograph of steel stanchion prior to restoration of the stone around it. |
| which again may have their own implications for the stability of the building now. |  |
| And, during that early period, lots of the site was repointed with quite hard cementitious mortar. So cement, lots of gravel; it's very distinctive, you’ll see it as you walk around. | Close up of stone joint with pale cement mortar thickened with gravel. |
| To address this, it's not just a case of phoning up our Masons in-house, or contracting Bob the builder to come out, put up scaffold to deal with it.  | Close view of scaffolding on the west end of the abbey church. |
| We have to look at lots of different things. The first approach is, well, what's happened in the past. |  |
|  |  |
| We’ve got a leading European monastic expert – he’s written our guidebook to the site - who’s basically undertaking a massive programme of documentary research. | Graphic: Reproduced by permission of the National Library of Wales, Creative Archives Licence.Engraving of the abbey church from the 18th century showing the abbey from the north |
| to understand exactly what's happened to this abbey in the last 200 years, who did what, why and where | Graphic: Reproduced by permission of the National Library of Wales, Creative Archives Licence.Engraving of the abbey church from the 18th century showing the abbey from the south. |
| The records of my predecessors, predecessors, predecessors and probably their predecessors are quite murky.  | Graphic: Reproduced by permission of the National Library of Wales, Creative Archives Licence.Engraving of the abbey church from the 19th century showing visitors viewing the church. |
| They didn't record like we do now, like they didn't do huge laser scans or photogrammetric surveys like we do today | Will stands within the abbey church facing the camera. |
| It was often the case of the labourers doing the work would also have been the people who excavated foundations. They'd make a note in a Foreman's report book in awful, illegible hand, and that's all you know. |  |
| We're not aided by much in terms of the records; very little formal excavation has been done at Tintern. So we know about the early church foundations from almost a survey excavation in the 1920s with a standard of recording which is, you know, back of an envelope, almost. | Graphic: Illustration by Terry BallReconstruction painting of the abbey church showing the construction of the new church around the old one. |
| So we know that somewhere down there we've got the Norman church walls and whatever went with them. But other than that, apart from a couple of burials that have been seen in the past, there's been almost no excavation here at all.End. | Will stands within the abbey church facing the camera. |