

Franks Forages No 20A Plinths.

In the Great Hall are six stone plinths supporting the busts of George Lucy, Mary Elizabeth Lucy, Joyce Acton, Alice Spencer, William Shakespeare and the Florentine alabaster vase.



Three of the plinths are of **Imperial porphyry** (Mary Elizabeth, Joyce and Alice).

That on the left supports the bust of Mary Elizabeth; that on the right is one of two supporting the plaster busts of Joyce Acton and Alice Spencer. Imperial porphyry was quarried by the Romans from the 1st century AD using slave labour and is from the eastern Egyptian desert. The Romans used the stone to make columns for their buildings and it is from the ruins of these buildings that these columns were recycled, many being brought to this country



by the gentry on their Grand Tours.



The plinth supporting the bust of George Lucy is a granite known as **Granito rosso antico** from the Nile Valley in Egypt. This is the most famous red granite in the world and has been quarried since the third millennium BC. Used extensively for columns and obelisks, Cleopatra's Needle was made from this stone. The Greeks and Romans quarried this stone and hundreds of columns have been found in Rome and elsewhere. Obviously, this column was procured during the Grand Tour of 1841-2.

The plinth supporting the gypsum alabaster vase is a nice example of **Chipollino verde**

quarried at Euboea, Greece. The Italian stone-cutters called the stone chipollino because of its likeness to an onion (cipolla in Italian). The Romans first utilised this stone and huge columns were used in a temple that Agrippa dedicated to Neptune in the Forum of Rome. Stones from ancient Rome were re-used by later generations.



The plinth supporting the bust of Shakespeare is **Griotte** a limestone from the French Pyrenees. Its rich red colouring is reminiscent of the Griotte (morello) cherry. There are traces of fossils. Quarries have been worked since the 17th century and the stone adorns many churches and palaces in France, including Versailles. (I don't know how or when this plinth was acquired but there may be records somewhere.)

All the plinths are supported on bases of **Carrara** marble. Some Carrara marbles have greyish or black veining, popular in 19th century England. The White tiles in the floor are of this stone. (The pink tiles are a limestone known as **Rosso Verona**, rich in fossils including ammonites.) The plinth supporting the bust of Mary Elizabeth has an additional supporting slab of **Bardiglio Fiorito**, a grey marble from Tuscany, coloured by disseminated graphite. *Frank Storr*

Note. All details are from 'The Sourcebook of Decorative Stone' by Monica T Price. Published by Firefly Books Ltd.2007. pp124, 175, 202, 220