Report on the state of preservation of the carving of the
Annunciation at Rievaulx Abbey (July 1976)

The carving is on a north-facing wall, about 7m above the
ground (Picture 1). It is approximately 70 cm wide, 130 cm high
and is made of calcareous sandstone. Above the main block is a
separate carved lintel .

The carving is of a typical Annunciation scene. At the top,
the Hand of God appears from undulating clouds. Below, the Angel
appears on the left to Mary standing at the right under an arch.
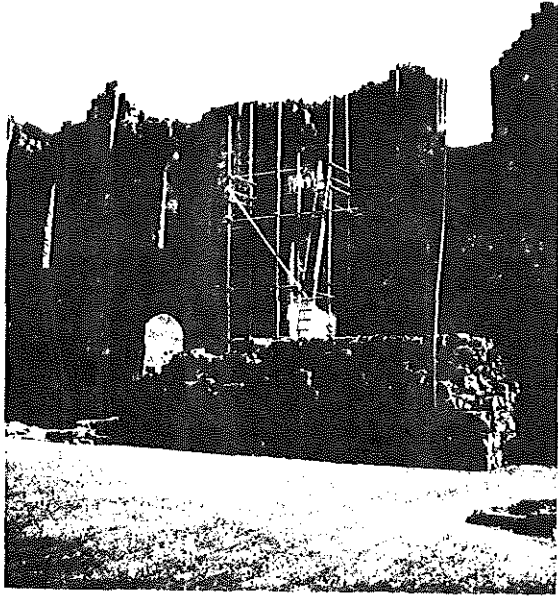Between them is a lily in a pot.

The stone is in very bad condition, being soft and crumbly,
with loose weathering crusts. The finest details have already been
lost, and the remaining features are cracked in places. The head
and upper body of Mary have broken off, and the lily-pot is about
to do so. The main block itself does not appear to be cracked,
however.

On the upper part of the carving (Picture 2), which is
somewhat protected by the overhanging lintel, ther are patches of
moss and lichen and areas of fairly solid dirt. This is not in as
bad a condition as the lower part (Picture 3) which is decaying
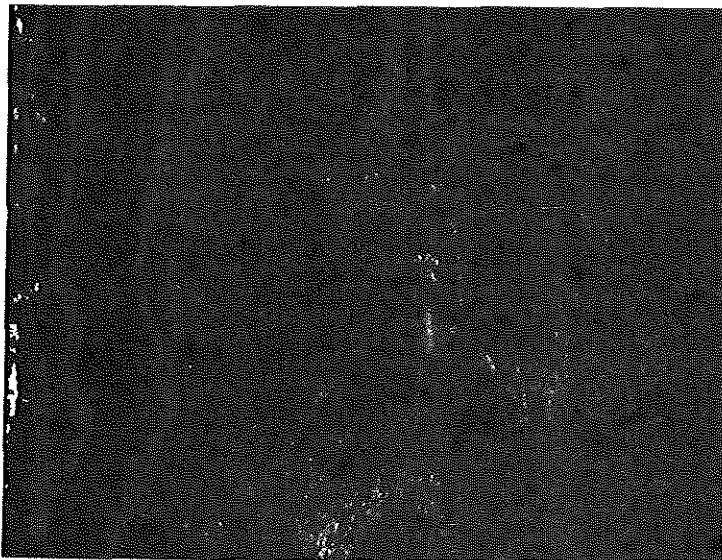rapidly, having loose crusts of weathered stone.

There are two proposals for the future of the Annunciation.
The first is to make a mould of the carving in its present state
in order to make a fibreglass replica for display in the museum.
The second proposal involves removing the whole block from the wall
in order to preserve and display it under cover, and replacing the
original with a replica.

Before any attempt is made to make a mould, the carving will
have to be consolidated and loose dirt removed. Whether a temporary
consolidant should be applied just for the purpose of taking a
mould, or whether a more permanent method should be employed in situ,
is a matter for discussion with those who have more experience of this
kind of problem, such as the stone conservators at the Victoria &
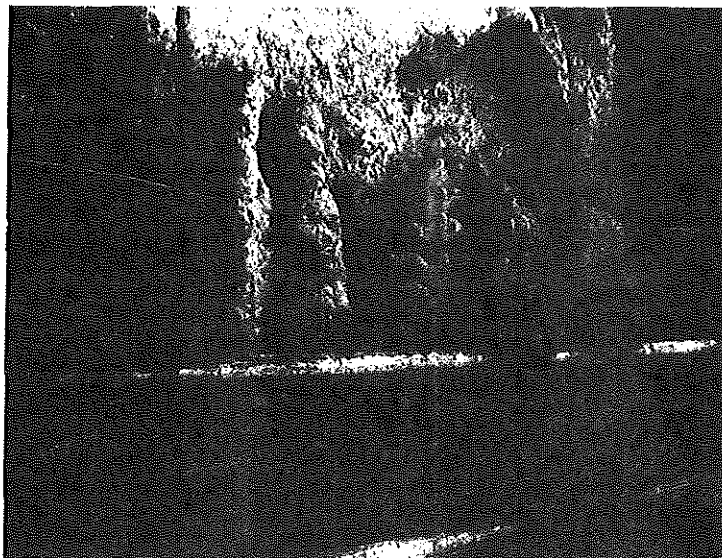Albert Museum.


B. Knight (Asst. Conservation Officer)

Picture 1



Picture 2



Picture 3