

*Re: The Rustat Memorial, Jesus College Cambridge, [2022] ECC Ely 2*

[129]. This present case provides an object lesson in the potential dangers of failing to undertake “robust, inclusive research to understand as much as possible about the heritage in question” (to quote from the introduction to *Contested Heritage*) before reaching any decision on a proposed course of action. I acknowledge that the College engaged in a process of appraising other options than the removal of the Rustat memorial from the west wall of the College Chapel and its relocation to an exhibition space in East House. However, I find that it did so on the basis of an incomplete assessment of the full extent of Rustat’s involvement in companies engaged in the slave trade and the financial benefits that this had brought him at the times: (a) he made his generous donations to the College, (b) he commissioned the memorial and drafted its inscription, and (c) of his death. The College also proceeded in reliance on a statement of significance which does not even refer to the memorial and thus without the benefit of any “robust Statement of Significance founded on an appropriate level of research into the object in question and its physical and historical context”. Most importantly, I find that the College has relied upon views expressed by student members of the College, and at least one of its fellows, that were founded upon the entirely false narrative that Rustat had “amassed much of his wealth from the Royal African Company”. Although this was never explicitly stated by the College, I also find that it created the false impression that Rustat’s generous donations to the College may have been derived, at least in part, from his involvement in the Royal African Company when it stated (in the LSWP’s November 2019 interim report, which was made available to the student body) that “... we can be clear that Rustat had financial and other involvement in a slave trading company over a substantial period of time, including at the time when he donated to the College”. I find that the false view has taken hold, amongst some at least of the student body, that Rustat was “heavily involved in the horrific crimes of slavery” and that it is this that has led to the view that it is wrong for him to be “glorified in the heart of” the College community. Although the Dean refused to accept this, I find that the members of the College, and especially its students, have not been given a true picture of Rustat’s financial life; and that the false picture they have been given has contributed to the College’s perception, and concerns, that the continued 90 presence of his memorial in the Chapel is having a demonstrable negative impact upon its mission and ministry