

I've listened to Williams's contribution at the ICPRCP today, Wednesday 18 May, 2022 and here are some comments:

His generalisation, about what proportion of the sculptures was already 'on the ground', is impossible to quantify or even substantiate, as there was little in the way of documentary record from the time. The major exception is that of the metopes removed from the S side of the Parthenon (Lusieri's first target), where we do have the horrified accounts of Dodwell, Clarke and other visitors on the irreparable damage to the building from which they were in the process of being violently detached.

The frieze is a different matter, because the best evidence is what we can still see today, in the shape of the sawn-off blocks in the BM. To reduce the weight for transport, Lusieri had the back of most blocks sawn across and discarded, so as keep intact just the sculpted face. (Pandermalis was able to recover, from the Acropolis stone collection, one of these rejected half-thickness backings, which many will have seen in the Acropolis Museum). In itself, this does not mean that **every** block had first to be lowered from its place on the upper part of the building; but the state of preservation of the vast majority of the BM slabs is surely enough to show that they had not fallen from 40 feet above, but had been carefully detached and lowered, to be sawn on the ground. The shortage of contemporary documentation of the frieze explains why William St.Clair's treatment of it is so brief. but see Christopher Hitchens's 2008 edition, p.26 and bottom of p.33, for the ironical fact that we depend on a former Keeper of Greek and Roman at the BM (A.H.Smith) for the fullest account of the whole process.

The pediment figures are a different story again, as several of them, being free-standing statues, had indeed fallen to the ground, in or after the 1687 explosion; but the BM has the lion's share of what survives (Hitchens pp.124-5).

So, all in all, it's incorrect to say that much of what Elgin took was already on the ground.
Anthony