

NEWSLETTER

Issue 33 October 2008



· INSTITUTE · OF · HISTORIC ·
BUILDING · CONSERVATION

WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH

DIARY DATES

BRANCH MEETINGS 2008

- ❖ Thursday 16th October 2008 at Stourbridge. See meeting agenda for further details.
- ❖ Thursday 11th December 2008
- ❖ Monday 3rd March 2009

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

Dave Burton-Pye

EHTF AND OTHER MATTERS

It's been a long time since I had to start any sort of article with an apology but this time I have no option, so I'm sorry that our June meeting didn't happen. The reasons are simple and inevitable but all of you struggling with enormous workloads, competing priorities and a shortage of days per week will hopefully sympathise, empathise – and move on to a reprimation-free zone.

I was in fact struggling to find a few words until 7 days before our next meeting (now scheduled for Thursday 16th October) but attendance at the English Historic Towns Forum in Lichfield a couple of days ago provided me with ample material for this article and also gave food for thought about the main topics that were discussed.

The programme was excellent and covered many burning issues of the moment and if the proceedings are to be published I would recommend that you seek out a copy for your own edification. Inevitably all delegates will have their own views on the individual papers that were presented but for me the highlights on Thursday were Gordon Somerville's reprise on Townscape in Trouble sixteen years after its publication, Michael Loveday and the success of the Norwich Lanes' Pilot project and Andrew Dick's carefully researched survey on the use of Article 4 directions. The latter in particular confirmed the importance of empirical evidence and was a refreshing change from the moans and groans that we sometimes rely on which tend to be anecdotal, prejudiced and frequently based on third or fourth hand Chinese Whispers.

Friday started with a first hand account of progress on the Heritage Protection Bill from Harry Reeves, one of the Civil Servants at the very heart of its preparation and following on from that the issues that I found of greatest interest were Steven Bee's

account of the English Heritage "Historic Environment Traineeships", David Chapman's (Urban Design Skills) amusing but very thought provoking presentation on Capacitycheck. Pete Boland's experiences on Local Listing were (as always) absolutely spot on, not just for the results achieved but also the information on the processes that Dudley MBC have gone through to ensure that they are firmly bedded into planning policy – helped by productive working relationships between planning policy, development control and building control.

Away from the presentations themselves and from discussions with other delegates and colleagues (as well as some of the formal question and answer sessions) I also came away with some interesting thoughts. Firstly my wholly rural experiences displayed some remarkably close analogies with those working in city environments – especially on the speed and velocity of snails when compared to progress on enforcement cases. I developed a depressing suspicion that the success or otherwise of conservation areas may be dependent on the demographics of the resident population, and realised that I am fortunate to work in an authority where the member/officer relationships that can be so critical to successful conservation have been amicable and productive.

Delegates came from all over the country and it was rewarding to know that so many of them were favourably impressed by what they saw here in one of Cathedral City gems..... which leads neatly into a plea for volunteers to host future meetings. Our next meeting will be held in Stourbridge on the morning with an afternoon visit to South Staffordshire and the remarkable stable block at Four Ashes Hall, followed by a look at ongoing work at a farm complex that is at the centre of a small scale but important rural regeneration project. In December we go to Shrewsbury – but it would be good to visit a city for our AGM in March as well as continuing to move around the region, ideally to an area that we haven't seen for a while.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at Stourbridge.



EDITORIAL

IHBC is at the cutting edge of green energy!

Sudden rises in energy costs! Making 21st Century living more expensive and more difficult. Enter architectural conservation. Whereby embodied energy is recycled for the functional use and cultural nourishment of present and future generations. And it doesn't stop there. Local, vernacular building materials require only a comparatively small carbon footprint through extraction and transport. And again, skilled traditional craftsmen, using local vernacular materials, can indefinitely extend the benefits of the energy embodied in existing buildings.

Perhaps one area of energy conservation needs to be in researching the most efficient and economical way of firing high-quality and long-term durable bricks and tiles. Coppicing, making charcoal, and firing in small clamps? Or some new form of ultra-high technology? I have just been reading an item about using complexes of mirrors to create focussed high heat from sunlight.

And then, water. Water as power. Large potential reserves of free, natural power are locked up in disused watermills and disused windmills, particularly the former. Enter the Environment Agency, who require substantial fees for water use if a water mill is reactivated – whether for electricity generation, corn grinding or even hammering. Such fees are a serious disincentive to exploitation of green energy. Please, Government, do some joined-up, holistic, thinking!

PEOPLE

At the AGM the existing Committee were voted back into office *en bloc*, with the exception of Treasurer *Mizzy Marshall*, who stepped down. The Branch is now looking for a volunteer to take over as Treasurer. A full briefing to those interested is available from Mizzy.

BRANCH MEETING

Day Theme :
SECONDARY GLAZING
11th March 2008

The 11th March Branch Meeting & AGM took place at the offices of Wychavon District Council in Pershore, hosted by *Carol Marsden*, to whom particular thanks for providing such an agreeable venue. In the absence of Branch Chairman Dave Burton-Pye (in Prague), and Vice-Chairman Philip Belchere (recuperating from a knee-op the previous Friday) Charles Shapcott stepped in to chair the meetings. Thank you, Charles! Caterers brought in a buffet lunch, which enabled us all to stay together on the premises and continue 'networking'. There was a large member turnout. After the two meetings there was a presentation by Storm Windows on their secondary glazing product. Following lunch we drove through the Worcestershire lanes to visit the Grade I Mere Hall, which had received a comprehensive outfit of Storm Windows secondary glazing. Thanks to owner *Dean Butler* for opening up the building and the grounds to us.



VIEW OUT OF THE WINDOW

11th March 2008

We met in the Wychavon DC Council Chamber. A room that was a fascinating experience in itself, featuring an octagonal lantern poised over a square plan. The lantern was supported on two tiers of laminated wood beams, all doubled and bolted, with the timbers radiating out from a central steel cylinder. A remarkable side effect was the excellent acoustic, which rendered the ordinary speaking voice clearly audible in what was quite a large floor space. There was, however, an idiot-proof amplification system available at every seat.



IHBC in session, Wychavon Council Chamber



That roof construction!

Windows looked out on two sides, both on to grass and shrubs. The better of the two views included a small service building with a turret topping a pyramid roof.



Looking out of the window to a service block

At first view, the Council offices appeared to be a fairly average Neo-Something in brick and tile. However, two clearly distinct building phases materialized on inspection, the most recent of the two being of architectural interest, this phase including the Council Chamber. However, the entrance vestibule and reception area was within a two-storey gabled block entered through a two-storey brick archway. The

vestibule had a partially glazed roof. Unfortunately, the exterior of the Council Chamber did not match up to the interior – an octagonal lead-clad flat-topped box stood uneasily atop a tiled pyramid roof.



That ugly hat!

STORM WINDOWS PRESENTATION

11th March 2008

Storm Windows specialized in designing, manufacturing and fitting bespoke secondary glazing. The company had been in existence for six years. It had been founded, using USA know-how, by the American-born owner of Grade I Listed Mere Hall, Dean Butler, who had perceived a need for such secondary glazing in his newly-acquired historic home.

The product is designed to add thermal and sound insulation to buildings of historic interest where original windows need to be retained, without resulting in a significant or material change in appearance. To assure discreet installation, each window is tailor-made, matching the shape of the opening and conforming to the alignment of glazing bars, taking into account warping and bending in three dimensions.

The system is based on thin-line extruded aluminium beading with a powder-coated finish aimed at blending in with surrounding colours and finishes. A variety of glass types are used – usually Pilkington 'K' type with enhanced thermal properties, but sometimes also toughened glass or curved glass. The simplest version is a 'lift-out' type that is taken down in the summer. However, a variety of permanent sash-type or horizontally sliding installations are also available.

Performance of the Storm system was said to equal if not surpass that of conventional double glazing, particularly with the help of 'K' glass and neoprene sealing strip. One abstruse point was that 'K' glass needed to be clean to operate most effectively.

Being slim-line, the system could be fitted within the staff beading of sash windows, providing enough clearance for internal shuttering to remain in use. Framing was adjusted so that, to normal sightlines, it was directly behind, and concealed by, the bars of the historic window.

An additional role for the product was in historic public buildings fitted with an inert gas fire suppression system. It could resist the gas pressure generated when such a system was activated – historic glazing would simply break under the pressure and the fire would not be suppressed. A further refinement involved the addition of UV-filtering film to the glass, to protect light-sensitive artefacts indoors.

The system could also be used on the outside of a building to meet two particular needs – security and keeping moisture off the lead comes of stained glass windows. Toughened glass was fitted with a neoprene strip into the same extruded aluminium, the

glass resisting missile impact and the neoprene protecting the toughened glass from the edge-cracking or chipping that would destroy it. To give lead comes the right environment, the neoprene strip was slotted so as to enable the air in the sandwich to breathe out moisture, helped by the daily sunlight-warming cycle.

Aluminium strip framing could be configured to curve to match the curves of stone tracery windows in churches, the powder-coating being adjusted to match the colour of the stone.

For sash installations, the constraints of the slim-line system mean that only the upper or lower half can slide. Since units are heavy, hands of users are protected by spring-loading.

Specially curved glass can be used in similarly curved framing to match originals that curve in plan or elevation. In some cases, it is practicable to affix panels directly to the back of the original windows, moving with them.

Damp can be an issue, as historic windows are not air-tight and can sometimes introduce water through capillary action in stone or defective timber. With water entering the air 'sandwich' by this means, there can be condensation. This can sometimes be tackled by wiping off the condensation and taking the moisture out of the sandwich. But repair of the historic window may be necessary to make the system effective.

When called-in, Storm Windows inspect, measure up and design a solution, providing a quote. They also point out any problems likely to arise from the condition of the historic windows. In some circumstances they can install themselves. However, as they are based in the West Midlands, long-distance travel puts the price up! For large contracts involving a main contractor, their status is usually as nominated suppliers.

Cost varies. Standard-type windows can usually receive Storm secondary glazing for about £300 each ex-workshop. Large windows require heavy panels with special transport and installation needs – perhaps £1,200 per window.

Comment

Clearly, Storm windows secondary glazing is one of a range of options – to be considered where the need is for thermal insulation, sound insulation, protection from missiles, or protection from fire suppression system gas pressure. Particularly interesting is the use for exterior protection of stained glass, a large and continuing problem. The afternoon visit to view the system *in situ* at Mere Hall did raise a question or two! Equally clearly, the Storm system is better in some situations than others.

PERSHORE

11th March 2008

Pershore is a significant historic town – for at least two reasons – (1) the substantial survival of the Medieval Benedictine Abbey; and (2) an amazingly intact Georgian townscape. Whole streets are flanked with rows of red-brick Georgian houses. Perhaps the railway passed Pershore by at a sufficient distance as to fail to fuel a Victorian development boom. Historically, the town appears to have developed where the Worcester-Evesham road crosses the River Avon on a bridge.

Whilst the nave, north transept, Lady Chapel and claustral buildings of the Benedictine Abbey failed to survive the Reformation, what is left is very substantial. The ornate central tower has striking similarities to that of Salisbury Cathedral, and what little survives of the nave makes it very clear that, like Gloucester and Tewkesbury Abbeys, it had a giant

Norman arcade. The present short apsidal Lady Chapel is a Victorian add-on replacing the medieval original. The chancel has an apsidal end and is stone-vaulted. The Abbey precinct is now mature grassland with trees, acting as a town centre park. The Abbey church forms a group with the former St Andrew's Church, the latter creating a pinch-point on Church Row. St Andrew's now serves as the Parish Hall. Externally, at least, it shows few signs of Victorian 'restoration'.



Pershore Abbey, from SW

It is enough to say that the eastern part of the High Street is a very substantial Georgian survival indeed, particularly the north side, with the houses rising to a minimum of three stories and showing few signs of damaging intervention.



Eastern High Street, Pershore. Continuous Georgian brick!

The back streets contain smaller-scale Georgian and Victorian cottages, with half-timbered survivals here and there. For quantity and concentration of historic buildings, Pershore is hard to beat.

MERE HALL

11th March 2008

Listed Grade I, Mere Hall is a large three-storey timber-framed house dated to 1610. Perhaps the most spectacular feature is what looks like a second floor long-gallery with a continuous line of casements topped by a row of five gablets.



Mere Hall – main entrance front

I thought I could identify three main phases, of which the 1610 fabric was the most substantial. A second phase appeared to have involved an Early Victorian Gothick make-over involving cast-iron windows in the main frontage and diagonally gridded sashes at the side and rear. A third phase, c1900, had created a handsome forecourt with corner gazebos under ogee roofs, and a new central front porch with barley-twist timber columns.



Mere Hall – forecourt pavilion



Mere Hall – from the rear

Secondary Glazing

The Storm Windows system made the most sense in the context of the main hall on the ground floor at the front. The leaded casements were large and in a wall that had deflected sharply outward. The three-dimensional tailor-made properties of the system dealt with thermal insulation of these windows very effectively. The large cast iron Gothick windows were another suitable application. However, all the sash windows installed in 'phase 2' had excellent operational interior shutters. These shutters had the potential to be used to create an insulating air 'sandwich' after dark, in addition to the curtains. Given the existence of these shutters, perhaps there was not so much a case for the secondary glazing here.

GARDEN WALLS & THEIR STABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

Charles Shapcott

Every property has a boundary of some description, and if it has a wall it is often historic, and often under threat. The value of the wall in historic terms should be ascertained, many can also be considered to enhance the visual amenities of the area and demand efforts be made for their retention.

Free-standing bonded masonry garden walls are a moderate source of structural problems; in as far as they are often accepted as being maintenance free and relatively indestructible. A vertical wall with even ground levels to each side has only destabilising forces resulting from wind and/or impact to make it fall. Once a wall is out of vertical these additional forces have to be moderated to retain stability.

There is adequate published information provided in design codes and general guidance for building of new structures, with older structures, not necessarily very historic ones, a search for old text books, for a guide to previous 'design rules' is invaluable. The Building Research Establishment has produced a series of Good Building Guides (GBG) documents for both new and older construction. These documents are intended for lay persons, and other building professionals not necessarily engineers. In engineering terms they are rather coarse, dividing the UK into only four wind zones and assuming a global Factor of Safety of TWO against failure.

The surrounding environment for the wall is usually far from ideal. It can easily range from earlier well intentioned decorative planting, to mature trees, very close to the structure, combined with root action or branch impact damage. The structure can be covered with a water retaining creeper or ivy & even being within the drip line of a large tree can have an adverse effect, if the coping or wall top is not sealed or sheds the water ineffectively, therefore not protecting the construction below.

There is documentation, with an engineering bias towards new build domestic structures from the NHBC, giving data tables for tree type, water demand and zones of influence. These can be applied with a deal of common sense to existing structures remembering that older construction relies on the softness of the historic mortar to absorb and distribute movement without damage to the individual masonry units making up the wall structure.

With a visual and plumb line assessment made on the structure as found and with historic guidance from other professionals, structural judgements can then be made about how the wall could be best saved.

The 'Middle Third Rule' is that which is applied by Engineers and others to get an early idea as to the potential for instability of a structure. A lean of this magnitude does not produce tension within the mortar bed joints of a sound construction. To comply fully the wall has to be constructed with full bed joints and faces of masonry units. Those we look at are usually far from this ideal state.

The CIRIA leaning wall is a set of dry stacked masonry units with a factor of safety of ONE, and cannot be sustained in a safe condition, other than in windless laboratory conditions.



Mere Hall – interface between Storm Windows secondary glazing and early C19 'lattice' sash

Timber Frame Issues

The exterior of the timber framing proved to be a museum of inadequate repairs. The infill panels appeared to be a kind of white-painted fibreboard which was reaching time-expiry point, loose and cracking, with poor sealing to the frame. Two peg-ends had dropped out of the framing and were lying on the ground. Some rotted areas had been built up in a buff-coloured mortar, roughly scored to give the vague effect of wood graining. There was extensive patching with machine-sawn oak plank, fixed into position with pencil-size dowels. A lead-substitute flashing had been run along the sole plate without a drip detail, the strip in some cases kicking-up at its outside edge so that ponding could take place against the timber.

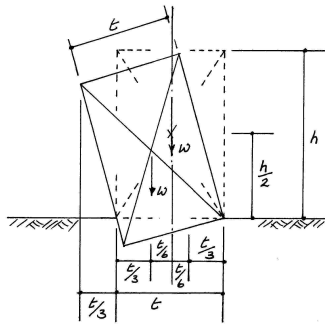
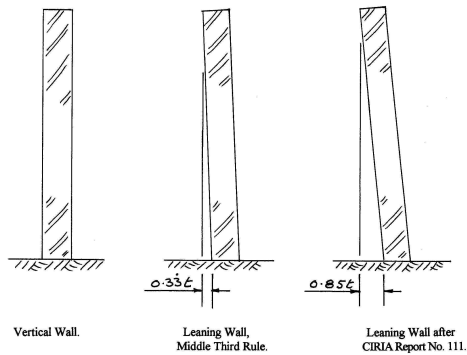


Flashband – and moss growth demonstrating water retention



Mortar patching to framing





Leaning Freestanding Walls. Middle Third Rule Explained.

Figure 1

This following chart is a direct representation of the data in BRE GBG 13, for walls up to one-and-a-half bricks thick. The data has been extended to both provide for the increased height and wall thickness, which is more common in historic work. The deviation, of the straight-line projection above the 3m height also recognises the change in UK wind loading factors in structures above 3 metres high.

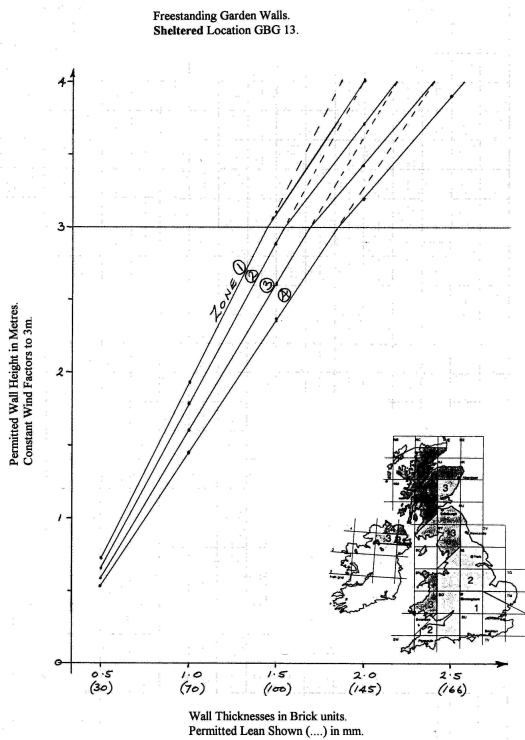


Figure 2

This sheet represents a sheltered construction with many windbreaks, small towns, and outskirts of large cities. Surfaces covered with numerous obstructions. Examples are well-wooded parkland and forest areas,

towns and their suburbs with the general level of rooftops and obstructions is assumed to be about 10m.

For walls with random masonry has possibly two veneers with a rubble core take the thickness of the wall as read from the chart but only 75% of the maximum 'permitted height' on the chart.

Based on the advice given so far a general 'quality of the wall assessment' can be made. With the low number of areas in the UK used these values can be improved upon by 10-15%, using the simple Engineering Principles in terms of stability. The next phase will then be in Conservation Engineering, to check the structure for stability if it were properly repaired.

Wall Constructions

All the present UK Codes of Practice consider that the walls are constructed of uniform units that conform to another Standard, most historic walls are not. There is guidance given here as to how these should be approached, but it is more a case of Engineering judgement and the confidence value that can be obtained from a detailed examination of the construction.

Brick Masonry

A thorough survey of the wall comprising a simple dimensional check may not reveal all. It is also not unknown that while walls may appear of a conventional bond on both sides, there can be many deliberately snapped headers thus giving the construction and structural effect of two or three independent leaves, most apparent on walls over 9" thick. With the potential of voids behind these 'headers' the wall can delaminate because of water penetration and the subsequent action of frost.

The orientation of the main faces of the wall can produce microclimates to either side of the wall. Often these differing climates can affect the wall so much, that it should be recommended that if the construction of the wall is very suspect it should be plumbed both sides simultaneously to check for local de-lamination and bulging. As with buildings the 'south' face gets most thermal movement, but it must not be forgotten that the 'north' face always in shadow and in winter can freeze causing differing elongation of that face as well. The freeze thaw cycle degrades bricks, accentuates any poor quality firing as much as insensitive pointing. In exposed areas wind erosion can be a disruptive cause of the demise of a wall. If walls are well-bonded they will often bend away from the heated or wetted surface.

Seasonal cyclical movement and some extended periods of either wet or dry weather need to be considered. Previous freak weather instances, in the life of any historic structure may have occurred, when the subsoil is affected to a depth at which the structure is founded and subsequent movement can occur. Hidden service trenches in the subsoil can equally affect the volumetric changes in the soil, especially clay strata, and can provide the same scenario as post shrinkage rain.

These two walls are both 9" or 225mm thick but the one on the left has only 60% of the mass than the one on the right as it is hollow inside. The mass or weight of a wall is all it has to resist wind loading or people trying to push it over.

Illustration next page

DEAD SHEEP FLOOR AT THE OLD HALL, WEM

A short informative prior to conservation

Philip Belchere

Within the porch of The Old Hall, a grade II listed 17th century house in the centre of Wem, there lie the remains of several long forgotten sheep. This was for me a rare find; however, following my cry for help to other IHBC members it appears that, although unusual, animal by-product flooring was not exceptional.

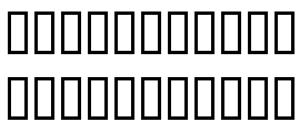


It will be readily appreciated that a long line of bricks simply placed in contact in winter will increase in length in the heat of summer. When the next winter arrives each brick will shorten, but the overall expanded length of the line is virtually unaffected. In any wall debris can get into the gaps created by the expansion, and thus prevent the re-expansion into the previous year's void. This sort of ratchet action even on a short wall can build up quite an accumulation of 'extra' length over many years. Many older structures took longer to construct, unless they were speculatively built but then quality really suffered. There are exceptions when post kilning moisture absorption causes expansion when the bricks were used when too fresh from the kiln, and this has transmitted itself into another form of expansion in the wall.



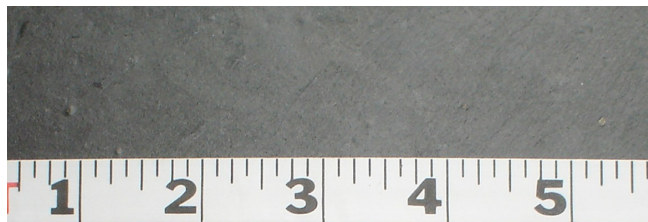
Walls were often built with their courses other than level, especially in hilly areas. The sloping course walls tend to creep down hill under both gravity and the non-recovery of thermal expansion displacements. Curved corners of walls often have a mind of their own, however thick they are, and react in unpredictable ways. Firstly if it is a tight radius corner it can often just be a series of header bricks one above each other with very little overlap or continuity. If it is a fairly gentle curve it will be of stretcher and header bricks and plenty of voids where the close fit of the adjacent units couldn't be achieved. These corners can also be subject to the pinching action of the lengths of wall to either side of it, whether resulting from thermal or sliding action – take a careful look at them before making any snap decisions. Even if repaired they may crack again unless they are reinforced or the design changed in some way.

End of Part 1 [Part 2 follows in Newsletter 34]



oor of Old Hall

The floor forms a pattern utilizing vertebrae on edge with panels of teeth and vertebrae. I believe now that the teeth and bone come from one species only. Weather and wear have loosened the teeth and it can be seen that the exposed edges will rapidly follow.



Tooth detail



The Old Hall, Wem

From a trawl of literature to hand and advice from my colleagues I was able to identify a number of other similar floors.

There are the remains of a bone floor, probably dating from the late 17th century in the mid 13th century stone building known as King John's House in Romsey. The floor, in an eastern ground floor room is formed of cattle bones inserted into a composite of clay and earth with their knuckle-ends upwards. The small spaces between them were then filled with sheep bones similarly positioned. It is suggested that this floor was chosen for being hard wearing, non slip but free draining suitable for the 'industrial' uses to which the building was put in the 17th and early 18th centuries.

It has also been suggested that this type of floor was used for 'cock fighting' as at *The Fighting Cocks* Public House in St Albans. However, it appears that you will be more likely to encounter this type of floor in garden follies such as the *Bear's Hut* at Kiljerton House, Devon or *The Weir*, Hereford or *The Shell Grotto*, Pontypool Park.



The Rustic Hut, The Weir, Hereford

The Rustic Hut which was created in the 1950's and includes a small outlining of horses teeth around cobble patterns is overshadowed by the extraordinarily evocative late 18th century Shell Grotto. Julian Bagg put me onto this one, they appear to have laid the floor in a similar fashion to the porch of the Old Hall by outlining the pattern in vertebrae and in filling with teeth and vertebrae (IHBC visit?).



The Shell Grotto, Pontypool Park

Apart from the obvious wearing benefits, ease of 'cleaning' and the 'Gothic' factor, why would this type of flooring be chosen? Ian McCaig has suggested that animal bones built into the foundations of buildings are sometimes seen and it has been suggested that these were good luck charms intended to drive away evil. The location of the bone/teeth floor in the entrance porch of the house might indicate a similar motive here - clearly they were taking no chances!

I came across this bizarre superstition myself when converting a range of 15th -17th century farmhouse buildings and discovered a small coffin under the threshold.

Edmund Simons has suggested that these floors, not surprisingly, seem to be associated with slaughter houses and game larders. Kathy Davies points out that bone floors are found in areas of livestock farming, which makes the Old Hall example quite special as Wem is not particularly associated with livestock.

I cannot say that I have a clear picture with regard to repair, although we now have a few theories. More importantly is to decide on the conservation philosophy, whether to take a minimalistic stance or to take the opportunity to consolidate the floor.

Finally we come to the major stumbling block, in these days of rules and regulations where can we get hold of replacement teeth and vertebrae. Lesley Durbin at Jackfield Conservation Studio has come up with a novel dental methodology and has suggested replacing missing material with mortar casts taken from undamaged areas.

I agree with Lesley Durbin that far rarer than the floor itself is the conservator who can repair it. It seems to me that this may be an opportunity for a number of like minded IHBC members to carry out some hands-on cpd. Any volunteers?

Thank you to all those who passed on comments.

ST PANCRAS RENEWED

Peter Arnold

I recently travelled to Paris on *Eurostar*. I walked into the refurbished St Pancras Station from the Underground. I saw rough semi-circular brick arches, not the sophisticated alternating stone and brick of Gilbert Scott's Venetian Gothic design. Seeing this, I was reminded of what I had forgotten - that St Pancras was built with a basement-level goods terminal, on top

of which had been positioned the Midland Railway passenger platforms and concourse.

With Euston being the main terminus for rail services to the NW, St Pancras had been left largely redundant, creating problems for this most architecturally special of all English terminus stations, with both its magnificent Gothic spired station hotel forming the street façade *and* its single-span wrought iron train shed expressed in pointed arch form. The partial answer to the problem of the functional redundancy of St Pancras was to convert it into London's long-term *Eurostar* terminal, to take over from the provisional terminal at Waterloo. Plans are also now in hand to re-convert the Station Hotel into both a new hotel and private apartments.

The design solution to *Eurostar* conversion was to adapt the existing full-width goods basement, characterised by a forest of cast-iron pillars supporting a deep grid of cross beams, into a low-level concourse, security/immigration zone, and departure lounge. Parts of the basement structure were taken out to form both light wells and upward escalator access to the *Eurostar* platforms. The platforms themselves are sited as in the original station, above the new departure lounge. The train shed roof was refurbished with its glazing reinstated. The covered area was extended beyond the existing roof span by a flat-roofed (and much darker) section.

There was public access at platform level, with security segregation from the actual arrival/departure platforms provided by 2m+ fully-glazed screens. At this level there was too some new statuary – including a not-too-serious bronze of John Betjeman looking up and admiring the Victorian vault; and a giant and rather tacky bronze effect group of a couple in 1940s costume saying goodbye. Finish to the vault metal-work was in blue-grey paint.



Trainshed, with light well cut into the former Goods Cellar

As a user, I felt that the *Eurostar* conversion worked fairly well - but! It was a warm day, and the lounge contained passengers for two successive *Eurostar* departures. So it was rather full, with virtually all the available seating taken up. The mixture of summer temperatures and a large mass of bodies in a fairly low space mean that it was hot and sticky. The conversion scheme, I suspect, had not given the lounge enough floor space and had not designed-in sufficient natural ventilation to cope with summer heat build-up.



Departure area, with original CI columns

Conversion of the goods basement had been simple, with all the modern add-ons being in strictly contemporary style, which was all to the good. The innumerable retail outlets presented nothing special in design terms, their signage being of standard high street (lack of) quality. Perhaps this major Grade I building deserved better.



Eurostar train sets at original platform level

Eurostar itself was a very impressive piece of engineering, providing smoothness and comfort as well as formidable speed. Paris Nord terminus station was a different experience altogether. The conversion work there had been minimal, and it looked as though the station had not been cleaned or decorated since the 1950s. An enormous contrast to the spick, span and extensively refurbished St Pancras!

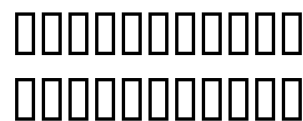
EDITOR'S SHOPPING LIST

Your Editor welcomes, for the next Edition of the Newsletter (No 34), to go out in November 2008, the following:

- ❖ Personal news of moves, retirements, arrivals;
- ❖ Copies of announcements and press releases;
- ❖ Case Studies;
- ❖ Letters;
- ❖ Articles on Law and Techniques;
- ❖ Book Reviews.

Material for inclusion in No 34 should, preferably, arrive not later than the end of October 2008. Please contact your *Newsletter Editor*:

Peter Arnold, 16 Elmbank Road, Walsall WS5 4EL;
01922 644219; pdarnold@care4free.net



PICTURE POSTSCRIPT



Pershore. Abbey grounds. Dead tree recycled as a sculpture



Pershore. Largely intact C18 street



t Pancras. A bronze John Betjeman



Mere Hall. What happens when you chop an early C19 hole into a C17 timber frame



t Pancras. Contrast between Scott's Venetian Gothic and Barlow's more functional wrought iron



Mere Hall – featuring an early C19 Gothic sash

