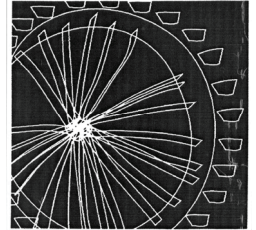


LONDON BRANCH Newsletter



Spring 2009

TALL STOREYS - Do high buildings complement the historic environment?

Following on from the previous successful conference this years conference related a topic which has caused more angst for conservation professionals working in our large metropolitan areas over the last ten years than tall buildings. This is particularly the case in London, so it was particularly apposite for London Branch to choose it as the subject of its fifth annual day conference. Or at least it was until the current investment and banking crises bit.

We who attended enjoyed presentations on all aspects of tall buildings and their relationship to the historic environment:

- Jonathon Glancey provided an amusing insight into the psychological imperative to build and build high, amusingly illustrated by building blocks! In conclusion Glancey exhorted us to think before we build.
- Susie Barson of English Heritage who researches and speaks on the history of high buildings provided a fascinating insight into the development of tall buildings in London. Barson closed by quoting one of the architects of the Empire State Building who exhorted architects to collaborate and not to seek to control.
- Rosemarie MacQueen highlighted the effects of tall buildings upon Westminster. She pointed out how, once site was given over to a tall building it was rare for it to be redeveloped at a lower height. Rosemary endeavoured to end with a note of hope; height can, for podium and slab buildings be reversed; new tall buildings if sensitively sited and designed can make a contribution to London; but, due to their longevity and the terrible consequences of failure, it was very important to get it right.
- **John Devlin** talked knowledgably about tall buildings as the product of ego, a desire to impress, nationalism and political pride, the wish to leave a legacy, to challenge and as a symbol of the era. He identified the key design issues of how they meet the sky, turn the corner and meet the ground.
- Ken Shuttleworth was keen to stress that you must get the context, massing, geometry and the architecture completely right. He was commendably pragmatic in his approach to each scheme – spotting well, it seemed to me, when architectural contrast can add a frisson that enhanced both old and new, when to be bold and when a simple refurbishment of the existing was the appropriate response.
- Esther Kurland offered a few words of wisdom from her experiences at the GLA and subsequently. This included the basic principles of how to assess tall buildings including considered location, isolation or cluster, tall or dense and other urban design issues as well as the financial viability of the current crop of tall buildings.
- John Hare provided a highly technical visual presentation of the elements of involved in the London View Management Framework.
- Chris Miele presented an overview of the means of assessing tall building proposals in practice. He stressed that visual impact assessments relies to a great extent on subjective judgements and this is where the skill lies.

A full review of the conference has been provided in latest edition of Context.



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CHAIRMAN'S NOTE

How times change! The front page of our summer newsletter featured a summary of the Heritage Protection Bill which we all expected would be mentioned in the Queen's Speech. Unfortunately it did not appear due to pressure for other legislation to deal with these difficult economic times. Still, English Heritage has put a brave face on it and issued a statement in December which sets out its response. You can see it online at www.english-heritage.org.uk/reform

One of the key announcements of the statement was that work would start on a new PPS to replace PPGs 15 and 16. A draft for public consultation has been promised before the Easter recess. Whilst this might seem like a rather short timescale, the PPS is just about as important as the Heritage Protection Act itself. Why? Because this document will influence how we prepare policies and guidance on the historic environment. It will also be a key factor in determining planning and listed building applications and of course it will be picked over endlessly by lawyers at public inquiries. The input of IHBC members both individually and collectively will be crucial over the next few months.

Another effect of the credit crunch was a reduced attendance at our Annual London Conference. However, it was a successful event and did manage to 'wash its face'. We had the bonus that Jonathan Glancey, our keynote speaker mentioned it in his weekly column in Building Design. Well done to all those who helped organise and run the conference.

There will be no London Conference in 2009 as we will be working on preparations for the 2010 IHBC Annual School which will take place in the capital. So, despite the recession there will be lots of work to be done. Despite the gloomy economic prospects I hope that 2009 will be a successful year for all of you.

David McDonald

New Listings in London

The Mayor of London's urban design body Design for London has published a new report entitled **New Listings in London** which records nearly 100 historic properties/structures in Greater London that were listed by the DCMS/English Heritage within the last 12 months, including photographs and full list descriptions.

Heritage Advisor Edmund Bird has compiled the report to provide the GLA group, London boroughs, local and national amenity bodies and other interested parties throughout the capital with a comprehensive overview of the building types, their historical periods, architectural styles and architects which have met the current listing criteria and achieved listed status. He notes that individual borough conservation teams and local amenity societies are usually aware of listings within their own jurisdiction or local area but often have little idea of what types of buildings are listed in other boroughs.

The report also showcases examples of the very diverse and rich architectural history of London which have only recently been recognised and protected by listed status. This snapshot of successful listings between 2007 and 2008 encompasses a huge variety of building types ranging from churches, schools, pubs, private houses, a town hall, a hospital, a dance hall, a railway station, shops, memorials and a public convenience, spanning nearly five centuries - the earliest being a C16th Century wall in Chelsea and the most recent, the statue of Sir Winston Churchill in Parliament Square erected in 1973.

The London Borough of Lewisham achieved the highest number of new listings (27) with Camden, Westminster, Hackney and Bromley each having a tally of between 5 and 10.

For further details contact Edmund Bird
edmund.bird@designforlondon.gov.uk.

VICTORY AT SMITHFIELD

A conservation victory after a public inquiry in the City of London is a rare, almost unprecedented event. Full marks are to be awarded to the Inspector, Ken Barton, who in a lucid report recommended that planning permission, conservation area consent and listed building consent be **refused** for the demolition of the threatened Smithfield Market building.

The threatened buildings were designed by the eminent Victorian architect Sir Horace Jones as part of his celebrated market complex on the north-west edge of the City. Developer Thornfield Properties (London) Limited must now lick its wounds and even abandon its plans for re-development, having spent a rumoured £5m on working up the aborted proposals.

The Inspector concluded that the existing building on the existing buildings on the site made a significant contribution not only to the character and appearance of Smithfield conservation area but to the settings of adjoining conservation areas and listed buildings. The 'lids' over the railway below could – after much bitter argument at the inquiry – be repaired and had suffered from lack of maintenance on the part of the City Corporation. The viability of the scheme was shown to be borderline. The City Corporation had not offered the buildings to the market as they were obligated to do. Moreover the proposed was held to 'detract' from the character and appearance of the conservation area. The Secretary of State endorsed the Inspector's recommendations and refused permissions and consents.

Such a resounding triumph brought jubilation to English Heritage. Save Britain's Heritage and others who opposed the scheme and gloom to the City Corporation that backed it.

With the effects of the credit crunch and the sharp slide in commercial values any come back or revised scheme may be delayed.

But vigilance will be necessary. Buildings left empty and unprotected can be subject to unauthorised entry, vandalism and arson, and the Smithfield area is empty of people during the evening. So if you are passing by, have a quick check and report any suspicious findings to English Heritage and to Save Britain's Heritage. Meanwhile everyone hopes that common sense will prevail and that the developer will rapidly draw up a conservation minded regeneration scheme for this very lively and important part of the City of London. The area might even become an attractive venue for visitors to the Olympics, as London's latest attraction.

Jenny Freeman IHBC

Repairs to the Chapel Floor, Old Royal Naval College, Greenwich

At the end of October, we organised a visit to the Old Royal Naval College, Greenwich, through Neil Coe who is the Director of Building and Estates for the Greenwich Foundation. We were given a fascinating tour of both the Painted Hall and the Chapel, first by one of the Greenwich Yeoman guides and then with Neil and Ayaka Takaki of Giles Quarme Architects. Ayaka gave us a very detailed account of the repairs to the floor of the Chapel which was very enlightening. She kindly agreed to write a synopsis of the work being carried out to the floor for our Newsletter as this might be useful information for our members when considering historic floors. A lot of the damage seemed to be down to sailors' mops. Read on!!!

The Chapel of St Peter and St Paul is located in the Queen Mary Court of the Old Royal Naval College, Greenwich, one of the best examples of English Baroque architecture of the 18th Century, designed by Sir Christopher Wren and his celebrated successors, such as Hawksmoor, Vanbrugh, Ripley. The Chapel was originally fitted out between 1746 and 1751 and completed to Thomas Ripley's design in 1752. Unfortunately it experienced extensive internal fire damage in 1779. The reconstruction was subsequently carried out in a Neo-Classical style using Greek motifs to the design of James 'Athenian' Stuart. The chapel was completed and re-opened in 1789. Today, the Old Royal Naval College is run by the Greenwich Foundation, and this includes the maintenance of the entire complex.

In 2006, the Greenwich Foundation raised concerns over the loose and damaged marble floor tiles in the Chapel and commissioned Giles Quarme & Associates to provide conservation advice and to specify the repair work. The main aim of the repair work was to treat the worst damage and to prevent unnecessary loss and further damage of the significant historic floor. Alongside the more obvious damage-such as cracks, chipped stones, loose stones, and open joints, tilting perimeter kerbstones were also identified. Subsidence of the substrate was evident in a number of places and those locations were all to be found at the perimeter of the floor where it interfaces with the timber boarding. But it was not easy to spot what caused the subsidence of the substrate, which had so loosened the bedding mortar in the first place.

In one particular site meeting in November 2007, Dr Robyn Pender of English Heritage said, "It must be the 'water' from mop washing the floor by the Navy!" There is certainly no doubt that the floor was regularly washed with damp mops during the Royal Navy's two hundred-year-long occupation! We believe that this water seeped through the joints and made the substrate unstable by washing out the lime from the mortar mix. Through further investigation, we found that the cause of the instability of the substrate is the dry loose fill, which seems to have shifted sideways into the gap between the adjacent timber joists. Here, we carefully lifted the existing tiles and its substrate and fixed a sheet of 6mm plywood to the existing timber joists using stainless steel nails. This will prevent dry loose fill substrate from shifting into the gap between the timber joists in future.

An issue of particular concern during the restoration was the stability of the adjacent stones while the loose tiles were lifted. A "domino" scenario whereby tiles become loosened one after another was raised. To avoid this, damaged stones were lifted with extreme care by a skilled stonemason and the extent of lifting was closely monitored.

In addition, temperature control was crucial to the re-bedding process as the heat from the central heating system made the new lime mortar bed set too quickly. In order to overcome this particular problem, a two stage re-bedding system was used. The first coat applied was ordinary NHL 3.5 hydraulic lime and fine aggregate mortar (1:3) mixed with polypropylene fibre. It was important to wait 24 hours and examine the condition of the first coat bed before applying the second coat. The second coat was made of a stronger mix, of NHL 5 hydraulic lime mortar mix, and it was much wetter than the first coat to achieve better bonding between the bed and the back of the stone. This mix was directly buttered to the backside of the marble.

Authentication of the stone sourcing is possibly one of the most common dilemmas of stone conservation—the amount of stone needed for a scientific analysis far exceeded the amount of damaged original stones that were scheduled to be replaced. The British Geological Survey (GBS) requested that a minimum of half a kilo of original stone be used for their identification tests. GBS noted in their report that the black stone sample was indeed "limestone", most probably from Tournai in Belgium. We obtained several stone

samples from quarries in Tournai; however, we found that the modern Tournai stones were too grey and unacceptable. Our team managed to secure a good matching stone from nearby, Noir De Mazy and the replacement works were carried out using it. The replacement stone is a very close match and the best available.

Preventative measures were also addressed as part of a wider approach to the maintenance of the floor. For example, entrance mats were introduced to eliminate dirt from the sole of shoes was identified as a potential problem causing surface damage – as much as 85% of all the dust and grit brought in on visitor's shoes can be removed thereby significantly reducing wear and tear and minimising the impregnation of dirt into the pores of the marble.

The Greenwich Foundation is currently fundraising for repairs to the vestibule and gallery landings. The marble floor repairs were funded by the Pilgrim Trust. Additional support has been received from the Mercers Company and CHK Charities Limited. The careful conservation works were carried out by the specialist conservation contractors DBR (London) Limited.

Our thanks to Doug Black for initiating this event and to Neil Coe and Ayaka Takaki for welcoming us and giving us such an interesting evening. We finished off with a jolly supper at The Trafalgar. An added bonus was being at the Naval College at night – it was wonderfully atmospheric. I recommend an evening visit.

Ayaka Takaki

GILES QUARME & ASSOCIATES
ARCHITECTS & CONSERVATION SPECIALISTS

Welcome Home!



Thanks to Doug Black for sending in this example of architecture imitating life.

Do you have any other examples of anthropogenic buildings that you would like to share send them in.

Gloucester Heritage Urban Regeneration Company: A Holistic Approach to Heritage-Led Regeneration

Of 19 Urban Regeneration Companies across the country, Gloucester Heritage URC (GHURC) is unique in having placed heritage at the heart of its company name, a move that reflects the central role of the city's extensive architectural and archaeological heritage in the GHURC's plans for development. Alan Baxter were recently commissioned to produce a report on the significant work undertaken by the GHURC to date. The findings raised a number of broader issues about the role of heritage in regeneration.

Heritage-led regeneration is conventionally understood as the refurbishment and re-use of individual buildings. The GHURC has gone further, taking a deeper, holistic approach through in-depth urban characterisation work, which sees individual heritage assets in their broader historic urban context. This is especially important in a city damaged in the 1970s by large-scale redevelopment that neglected the historic urban grain and street patterns. The influence of context is especially clear in the Docks, where significant effort is being made to link this area, with its refurbished warehouses, to the city centre. Docks were designed to stand apart from cities and can present particular difficulties when they take on a different function.



A key finding of the report is the difficulty in quantifying the benefits of heritage-led regeneration. Methodologies do exist but can be convoluted, and developers, investors and local stakeholders need easy-to-digest evidence of value in order to get on board. Currently there are no clear benchmarks for heritage-led regeneration, which risks the important work of the GHURC being undervalued. At present indirect measurements – increased student intake and tourism numbers, for example – may be the clearest indicator of success.

Finally the importance of local community and stakeholder engagement cannot be underestimated. An active community engagement strategy has been rolled out and maintaining momentum in this area will be crucial. Without local enthusiasm, regeneration can only ever be superficial: whilst rescuing a derelict building is in itself valuable, it can only truly 'come alive' if it is visited and valued by local residents. Archaeology, especially, is notoriously costly and its benefits are largely intangible – yet activities such as community digs have a crucial role to play function in raising awareness of a city's assets in the eyes of its inhabitants. Until a community connects with its own heritage, it is difficult to expect others to do so. Regeneration involves revitalising perceptions as well as buildings.

Alan Baxter www.alanbaxter.co.uk
GHURC www.gloucesterurc.co.uk

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Valence House - A New Future for the Past

Valence House is a Grade II* listed moated manor house originally set in park and farm land but surrounded in the 1920s by one of the biggest social housing initiatives of the twentieth century. The Manor of Valence was the largest of six established by the end of the thirteenth century in the parish of Dagenham and is the only one to survive.

The present house is the product of several different building phases since the fifteenth century and the character of the building internally is predominantly of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Valence House is a good example of a minor gentry house and the historic moat and parkland setting are rare survivals.



Having been used as a public museum since 1938, Valence House has been unsympathetically adapted and maintained and now needs sensitive repair and appropriate refurbishment. The relationship of the house and its historic parkland is compromised by a swathe of redundant industrial buildings and the historic gardens within the moat have lost their clarity.

The Valence House Redevelopment Project is led by the Creative-Reuse Studio at Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios with their Client, the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. Following a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund and substantial support from the Borough, construction works for the £7m project start on site in November 2008.

The Valence House Redevelopment Project will create a rejuvenated museum within Valence House and improved visitor and education facilities in a new building nearby. Two of the industrial buildings will be retained and adapted for the storage of the Borough's museum and archive collections. A section of the historic moat will be reinstated and a new landscape scheme which responds to the historic gardens will improve the setting of the House and connect it to the new buildings.

The Valence House Redevelopment Project offers a major opportunity to enhance, protect and interpret an important heritage site and bring new life and significance to one of the very few buildings of historic Dagenham to survive.

Valence House and the new facilities will reopen to the public in Spring 2010.

Miriam Kelly, FCB Studios

Pope's Grotto - Memories of a Visit

IHBC London Branch visits can be quite technical and specialised but it seems that the recent visit to Pope's Grotto was a little different and one of our members found this little note tucked into a crevice as he left.

*Though I have dwell'd in this deep shaded grott' too long
(at least my shade has done while my REPUTATION only grows)
I stirred to see you, strangely clad – so practical but now so dull*

Stand shiv'ring by that pastiche ale house that has stole my name.

While a cold sun burns the misty air off my beloved translucent Thamisis.

That awful copy may have my name but I own it not at all, I wait here

Quiet beneath the empty school – another aberration of these 'planners'

(I've heard the word but I can see little evidence of their taste or style)

And welcome fellow antiquarians ,saviours of the eccentric and grotesque

Though I'm long gone, my house rebuilt, and my last corner here a store

For childhood games and schoolboy scribbings, and bat and ball games.

My precious view is blocked, the watery scene destroyed by ugly blocks,

My quiet secret passage to my garden and my grove extended, crudely,

'Neath a 'motor road' (I know not what 'tis, but hear its roars above)

And its plot and arbours lost in what I hear you call 'development'.

But now that you are here in my safe shaded grott' (a little scuffed, And lacking streams and flickering candles) it will I hope still call you

Back these two long centuries of dark neglect - maybe me ,perhaps?

Don't struggle please to reconcile the plan and sketch with what you find,

My good friend and draughtsman, Kent, did love to sip too much, his pen Would oft' EXAGGERATE for effect - and he had no contract

As other draughtsmen I heard did have for quite licentious gain-

But he could capture what was in my mind if not always in my skill –

I'm sure that old deception has not passed or been COMPUTED out..

Best then you have no dates, no details of what was laid when and how,

For all is airs and shadows. Fairies – or are they just gnats? – are here,

My only companions now: I fear that though my good keeper Wilson

Means well, your RESTORATION may rebuild the substance,

But loose the spirit. There would be no LOVE in't: for you may find

The perfect mix of puddle and of lime, seek just the stone, cut it to effect,

But I fear that it will extinguish my own GENIUS OF PLACE

(I'm sure you've read of THAT). If that be your intent then leave me here,

Do not awake me again next time, instead go and see how they do prod,

And poke and scrape and fix up old WALPOLE'S mansion, just nearby;

Or look across the fence and see how modern discord has aped the parts

Has copied all the so call'd rules of taste, but has in doing sold its SOUL, and ask yourself (I have heard your so called singers amplified scream)

"Who, who do you love?"



Book Reviews

Shop Horror—The best of the Worst of British Shop Names', Guy Swillingham (ISBN 0-00-719813-2)

Everyone working in conservation will agree that the state of Britain's shopfronts is dismal. This book contains a whole range of motley examples that would make any hardened conservation office grimace. However, no matter how bad the shopfront is these premises will put a smile on your face— examples include the 'Kumquat Mae' vegetarian restaurant, a the chip shop called 'Battersea Cod's Home' and the 'Thistle Do Nicely' gift shop. A must for any conservation coffee table!

Doug Black



Living Buildings. Architectural Conservation: Philosophy, Principles and Practice
Donald Insall

Having had a copy of the book kindly hand delivered by Donald himself I set about reading it with gusto. Much to my delight unlike many books on this subject this is an immensely pleasurable read. This book presents an unusual approach for a conservation text book being almost quasi-autobiographical in format.

This book sets out the basic philosophical and theoretical underpinning of modern conservation practice as well as the practicalities of applying these to the myriad of jobs faced by (primarily) conservation architects. Each of these activities is linked to a number of jobs undertaken by the practice during its life and provides valuable insight into the work and career of Donald Insall.

The book is lavishly illustrated with photos, plans, surveys and detailed hand sketches (something of a dying art these days) with each case study having numerous dedicated illustrations to elaborate upon the textual description.

As well as detailed conservation case studies this book contains a few surprises, including the origins of a job many of us have first hand experience with - architecturally aware planners, or as they are more commonly known, conservation officers.

It is not really possible to justice to this book in such a small space but in closing I feel that it book belongs on every the bookshelf of every conservation student and historic homeowner - not to mention most professionals involved in this field.

Marc Timlin

NEW BRANCH MEMBERS

A warm welcome to :-

Joanne McAuley - Montagu Evans LLP
Ian Dungavell - Victorian Society
Kirsten McKnight
Amanda Raby - Conservation Works Ltd
Rowena Schrimshaw - LB Richmond-Upon-Thames
Rachel Case - LB Richmond-Upon-Thames
Michelle Sadlier
Adrian Browning - Church Commissioners
Jessica Cook - MRDA Architects
David English - Westminster City Council
Steven Handforth - Scott Wilson
David Hills
Dale Ingram
Kristian Kaminski - Victorian Society
James Buxton
James Lawrie
Victoria Simon
Lucie Carayon - English Heritage
Lucy Haile - Harrow Council
Sebastian Knox - Gerald Eve LLP
John Nicholls - LB Camden
Jan Schneidewind - Richard Griffiths Architects
Jude Johncock - Archbishop's Council

RECENT MOVES

Here is the latest update on London moves: —

Rachel Godden has taken up the position of LB Lambeth's Head of Conservation and Urban Design Team.

Please e-mail any changes in your details to me as soon as you can. Updated details should also be sent to -

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Thanks

Philip Ridley

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for the IHBC London branch.

The information in its articles are the views of the authors
and not necessarily the view of the IHBC.

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images as jpegs.