

Architectural Conservation

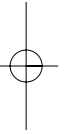
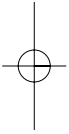
Issues and Developments

Edited by

Vincent Shacklock

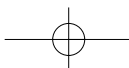
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The launch of the *Journal of Architectural Conservation*, April 1995, at the Centre for Conservation Studies, Leicester, attended by visitors including leading figures from Italy and throughout the UK. Foreground (r-l) Jill Pearce (publisher), Professor Kenneth Barker (Vice Chancellor), Professor Vincent Shacklock (Centre Director), Sir Bernard Feilden (Patron) and Dr David Watt (Editor).

Cover illustration Swarkestone Pavilion, Derbyshire. Built circa 1630 for the Harpur's of Swarkestone Hall, and attributed to John Smythson, the pavilion provided a grandstand view of events within the large, stone-walled enclosure (from within which this photograph has been taken). Suggestions for use of this lawned space range from jousting to bear baiting, but the most credible evidence suggests a 'bowle alley house'. Swarkestone Hall was demolished by 1750 and the pavilion was a bare shell at the time of its purchase by The Landmark Trust in 1984. Today visiting occupants gain roof access via the left-hand turret, allowing them to take in surrounding countryside, peer down upon the walled enclosure, and gain access to this holiday home's only bathroom facility in its right hand partner: a chilly walk in the wee hours of the morning, but a conversion typical of the uncompromising conservation approach taken by the Trust. Interestingly, the Swarkestone Pavilion has been and remains a popular let, and visitors remark quite positively on the roof-top jaunts. (Vincent Shacklock)

Foreword

Lessons from York Minster, 1965–1972

Sir Bernard Feilden

As this issue of the *Journal* was at the planning stages, Vincent Shacklock asked me to set out what is most likely my last contribution to a journal I helped found and launch in 1995 at his postgraduate Centre for Conservation Studies in Leicester. I was delighted that Donhead considered a refereed journal in architectural conservation a realistic proposition, and am pleased it has developed successfully with subscribers worldwide and a reputation for quality and breadth of coverage.

I was asked to write about a special project of mine and have no hesitation in choosing aspects of the 1965–1972 work at York Minster, working with Poul Beckmann – in particular, the strengthening of foundations. This gives me the chance to discuss a project that caused me the most careful thought and gave a team of rather special individuals a technical challenge of huge proportions. I believe other guest contributors to this issue of the *Journal*, drawn from various aspects of practice and education in architectural conservation, have each been asked a common question relating to conservation practice in 2006. This is a clever idea and I look forward to reading their inevitably varied responses.

York, one of the largest Gothic cathedrals north of the Alps, was first completed in 1080 with a single (16 m) wide nave. Later rebuilt in several stages, it retained much of its Norman fabric, particularly the foundations. The central tower collapsed in 1406 and was rebuilt much bigger and heavier than before, on original foundations by then already 325 years old. The wide central spans, inherited from the Normans, may have caused some anxiety to the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century builders. Whatever the reason, the nave, choir, transepts and central tower were all vaulted with timber rather than stone.

My personal, stone-by-stone, inspection of the whole Minster took place over two years and revealed a list of defects. The East End, leaned out

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650 mm at eaves level. This could be restrained by shoring, but the large and widening cracks in the central tower, caused by settlement, appeared far more threatening as there was no way that the 18,000 tonnes weight of the tower could be given alternative support.

After acquiring a second opinion from the distinguished cathedral architect, Robert Potter, my fears were confirmed. Lord Scarborough, High Steward of York Minster, established an appeal to raise £2 million (an estimate I generated personally). A multi-disciplinary team was assembled with Ove Arup & Partners as structural engineers, the archaeologist supported by RCHME under the eagle eye of Sir Mortimer Wheeler, and a very able quantity surveyor.

I recall visiting the City Engineer accompanied by Poul Beckmann. We explained that we could not comply with bye-laws and building regulations. He understood our problem and waived compliance provided that I wrote him a letter, accepting full responsibility for the works! This allowed us to tackle the problem from first principles. I thought it advisable, however, to take a £2 million insurance policy, so that contributors to the appeal would get their money back if we failed. I also reflected carefully to myself that I was mortgaging my own family's future.

Shepherd Construction, a well established local contractor, was appointed on a cost-plus basis. Similarly, all consultants were paid on an hourly basis, because I considered it equitable. I was pleased that the final fee for the conservation team worked out at just over 10% of the cost of the works.

Having ascertained the soil conditions, and established that the cause of the cracking was differential settlement of the tower piers (one of which was partially founded on a Saxon cesspit), Arup's designed a way to enlarge the failing foundation laterally by placing reinforced concrete blocks in the re-entrant corners of the crossing Norman foundation walls, thus creating 14 m square footings under each pier. This was necessary, because the foundation pressures were grossly excessive and had to be drastically reduced.

The new foundation blocks needed to be linked by stainless steel post-tensioning rods, placed in holes drilled through the old foundation walls, some of them over 12 m long. Nearly 400 of these rods would be used. There were mass concrete pads underneath the reinforced concrete blocks, separated from these by Freyssinet flat-jacks which, when inflated, would pre-load the clay and thus prevent further settlement.

I called a meeting with Shepherd's men and explained the project to all of them, saying 'It is a difficult project and if you think anything is going wrong, please report it through the proper channels, and I promise you will be listened to.' The conservation team: architects, archaeologists, contractor, engineers and quantity surveyor, met every Tuesday for a site

lunch of beer and sandwiches, and this promoted collaboration and teamwork.

This was just as well, because an anxious time followed. While the work was proceeding, the tower settled further, because 4 m of overburden had to be removed in order to put in place heavy concrete blocks. Despite the energy and experience of Ken Stephens, our site manager, only 8 of the 400 holes had been drilled in 6 months. I called in a mining engineer to assess the situation and he reported that we had good men, all the drilling equipment he knew about, and then some more, which he was glad himself to learn about. He felt that it was a difficult project. I decided on no more consultants' conferences as these were demoralizing Shepherd's staff. I explained to the men that we had done what we could and it was now up to the drilling teams. A night shift was set up, and the noise inside the Minster was continuous, but despite this disturbance it is worth noting that church services were not suspended all the years of our work.

The decision to proceed cleared the air. Drillers emerged with a new combination of drill bits, and from then on progress was remarkable, the holes were drilled, the rods were tensioned, and at last, the Freyssinet flat-jacks were inflated. The settlement reduced by the excavation was halted at a maximum of about 25 mm and very slightly reversed by about 1–2 mm. The central tower was stabilized. Soil tests and the calculations had shown that the pressures under the foundations had approached the ultimate limit, leaving no margin for a possible rise of the water table. The pads when loaded by inflation of the Freyssinet jacks were forced down by about 25 mm, thus preventing further settlement. The tower had only just been strong enough to survive the surgery; our hard work essential and timely.

The foundation for the Western Towers and for the East Wall were also enlarged, and the Great East window was strengthened against wind suction by a means of a system of almost invisible wire ropes, devised by Poul Beckmann of Arup's.

After seven years of work, to celebrate the successful conclusion, my partners agreed to give a dinner in York Assembly Rooms for all of those involved: drillers, mechanics, masons and other craftsmen. Anyone who had worked for one year or more was eligible. To my surprise I found that everyone had been with the team since the beginning of the rescue project seven years earlier. They could have gained more financially from building houses, but they were involved in our success. I wish I had thought of giving each a medal, so that he could tell his grandchildren what he'd done.

Years later, when I wrote to Shepherds to commiserate on the death of our project manager, Ken Stephens, they responded saying that this had been the happiest job they ever had. It seems that I was right to put my faith in Yorkshiremen. Much credit goes to Dean Alan Richardson, who

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gave us his trust and support, and to Lord Scarborough and Lord Halifax who led the fundraising campaign. Their efforts saved an outstanding church from crisis. I had the great pleasure to lead a team of professionals and craftsmen on a project of scale and quality seldom managed in the UK or elsewhere, to work upon one of the greatest buildings of our European heritage.

*Sir Bernard Feilden
Patron of the Journal of Architectural Conservation*



Figure 1 Bernard Feilden with a group of people who were largely responsible for the restoration of York Minster.

Facing up to Challenges in Architectural Conservation

Vincent Shacklock

Sir Bernard Feilden's project, described in his 'Foreword', to strengthen the foundations of York Minster in the period 1965–72, was one of the most significant and challenging interventions in a British cathedral in the last 200 years, undertaken by a matchless team, devoted to the building's protection, both professionally and emotionally. I recall visiting this project a few years after its completion in the company of my tutor Professor 'Jimmy' James, of the University of Sheffield. A York Minster guide skipped quickly over the pioneering techniques, huge technical challenges and breathtaking complexity of the work that had been undertaken, concluding it was a job well done, and noting how very pleasing it was that the Minster was back to its normal routine. Jimmy, the former government Chief Planner, described variously by Dick Crossman as 'brilliant' and 'first rate', who had chaired the high-level conference at Churchill College Cambridge first defining the need to protect historic towns, chose to wait until we were back on our journey before observing that the awe-inspiring achievement of Bernard Feilden and his team in saving this great church would, very quickly and appropriately, slide into relative obscurity. 'That is the mark of good conservation', he told me. At that time, I was not able to understand.

Tasks on the scale of the York stabilization are exceedingly rare but, across the country, in every city, town and village we daily draw upon the vision, skills and imagination of architects, engineers and craftsmen to provide timely and expert interventions in staving-off decay, rectifying failures, repairing damage, replacing features, and managing wear and tear. At Lincoln, in my role as a Fabric Council member over the last twelve years, I am very conscious of the value of education and training, having seen many of my own graduates employed on a cathedral which, less than twenty years ago, was in peril of rapid decline, but now enjoys good health, careful management, and a skilled and utterly dedicated team of craftsmen.

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Stable leadership is essential in these cases, and Lincoln's Dean and Chapter, Clerk of Works, Cathedral Architect, Chief Executive and Fabric Council members have worked tirelessly to repair, monitor and guide investment, drawing upon the best advice available, and using every opportunity to discuss and debate the programme of maintenance and individual projects. Good conservation practice frequently follows upon stable and informed management, and Lincoln's in-house building works/crafts team is highly trained, well briefed and, as a result, feels valued, secure and engaged. Individually confident that their labours contribute to the mission of the Church and are valued by clergy, worshippers and visitors alike, they enjoy the sense that they make a small but identifiable contribution to the nation's heritage with each completed task. For these reasons, they are content, hardworking, constantly refining their skills and always keen to take on challenges.

Nationally, our objective should be the same *writ large*. The nation (through its government and institutions) must: be clear about the value it places on its architectural heritage; have systems of training, organization and representation in place; adequately fund essential work (in the interests of society and the economy as a whole); keep ahead of threats through commissioning diligent study and research; be aware of, and learn from, experience elsewhere in the UK and abroad; and make use of eager and committed groups and societies to facilitate needed work, overcome obstacles and ensure volunteer energy is channelled to achieve desirable outputs.

Readers might observe that the papers included in this publication follow very closely this list above. Many great churches and well-loved secular buildings are managed in a manner that is mindful of this approach. Strangely, this easy lesson about benefiting from advice, support and assistance has, in very recent years, not only been ignored by the UK government, but leading politicians have increasingly questioned sector opinions, attempted to devise their own philosophies, and proposed policies based on prejudice and suspicion of the sector's attitudes and ambitions.

This publication appears at just the moment we expect a White Paper on Heritage, a document whose lengthy gestation has been marked by greater uncertainty, confusion and political ambivalence than we have witnessed for some years. In the lead-up to the White Paper, some government politicians, seemingly uncomfortable with physical heritage as defined in recent decades, have wrestled with ideas intended to re-define the nation's heritage in a manner that would be more inclusive of society's many social and ethnic groups. Bob Kindred's very fine paper, 'What Direction for Conservation? Some Questions', enquires into the origins of this suspicion and its potential implications, commenting on it with a skill and deftness of touch borne of many years careful observation of aspiring politicians

and their methods. His assessment is elegant and well-reasoned: significant figures in government believe heritage problems have been largely resolved; the impending scale of investment required for the 2012 London Olympics demands fundamental reconsideration of expenditure in the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS); and to achieve this, transfer of funds away from historic assets is appropriate and essential.

With a policy review imminent and legislation likely to follow, the paper from Professor Malcolm Airs, 'Protecting the Historic Environment: The Legacy of W. G. Hoskins', assesses the development of the English landscape over several centuries; and, in particular, Hoskins' stimulation of debate at a time when few peers in this field existed. The final chapter of his groundbreaking book *The Making of the English Landscape* was devoted to the changes and threats he perceived, and this plainly caused him great distress. I read his work as a student in 1971, felt his despairing, pessimistic gloom and took his concerns at face value. But times and society were already changing, and these would bring a raft of new interests, controls and protections into place over the following twenty years that would steer countryside, town and village landscapes more positively. Malcolm Airs, a one-time research student of Hoskins, handles this with the skill and judgement we would expect from such a distinguished academic and commentator.

Adam Wilkinson's paper, 'SAVE Britain's Heritage and the Amenity Societies', points out the importance of having well-organized and committed amenity societies, capable of turning their minds and resources to issues swiftly, bringing understanding and expertise, and ensuring that issues are not overlooked in statutory or other decision-making. Although many countries have voluntary organizations representing public interests in heritage protection, the United Kingdom benefits from a broad and unique range of period-based and theme-based bodies, which are more often than not able to work collaboratively where circumstance requires. The UK is particularly unusual in the manner in which certain key societies have been drawn into the statutory planning process as formal consultees. Effective conservation in the UK has depended in large measure upon a committed, educated and inspired voluntary sector, capable of handling casework on a daily basis, turning resources to urgent threats and undertaking or commissioning research projects as circumstances demand. SAVE Britain's Heritage is part of this movement, yet distinct in its methods. It is long established but abhors convention, undertaking a particular role of its own in a bold fashion now recognized as the hallmark of its operations.

Washington DC-based Donovan Rypkema, a prominent development consultant dealing with the re-use of historic structures, compares and contrasts UK and US models for architectural conservation, observing that

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the aims are the same but the methods decidedly different. His paper, 'The American Contrast', is timely and thought-provoking, vividly depicting, and accounting for, a successful working model in the US which is, in marked contrast to our own, largely local, bottom-up, incentive-driven, and private sector. Contrasts in approach could hardly be greater, but returning UK visitors often remark on the stunning success of individual private and community-based conservation projects, and Rypkema improves our understanding of how this occurs. Rypkema is also an author and professor at the University of Pennsylvania, and his balanced and informed assessment strengthens this publication's significance as a commentary on UK practice.

We are fortunate to have two outstanding scholars of historic gardens and landscapes, David Lambert and Jonathan Lovie, the former and current conservation officers of the Garden History Society, pool their skills to provide a paper examining achievements in defining, identifying and protecting gardens and landscapes in recent years under the title 'All Rosy in the Garden? The Protection of Historic Parks and Gardens'. The authors, however, express important, perhaps grave concerns in some areas, as English Heritage cuts resources, the Heritage Lottery Fund tightens its belt, and the National Trust finds itself struggling to sustain maintenance income. Their fear is that parks and gardens will suffer disproportionately in this dilemma. At a local level, the authors advise us that planning authorities remain hamstrung by a dearth of conservation expertise and are struggling to cope with known threats and proposals, while not having the time needed to identify and understand their own stock of historic parks and gardens. If this is not sufficient to worry us, Lambert and Lovie warn that large-scale and harmful proposals for altering historic parks and gardens are, once more, on the rise.

But times do change, and we deal with the world as it is. Today we do have a professional Institute for Historic Building Conservation and a reasonable spread of professional training courses relating to architectural conservation and heritage management, but John Preston's paper, 'The Context for Skills, Education and Training', reveals a frightening absence of craft skills, no holistic analysis of skill needs for the sector, and no convincing case made for building conservation, repairs and maintenance as considered separately from general construction. Efforts to improve skill levels through accreditation have, as yet, failed to make any significant impact. We are bereft of comfort or basic reassurance that the development industry can devise a strategy, let alone a successful plan of implementation, for the development and sustenance of craft skills.

Professor Peter Brimblecombe and Dr Carlota Grossi of the School of Environmental Sciences, University of East Anglia, look at the research-base of practice in architectural conservation, calling for a more

comprehensive research agenda that balances past achievements with emerging issues of the future. Their paper, 'Scientific Research into Architectural Conservation', reveals weaknesses and worrying gaps in research on conserving the built environment along with proposals on what future strategies must encompass. Issues in relation to research dissemination are of particular concern.

An Appendix, 'The Listing of Buildings' by Bob Kindred, provides a general outline of the way in which listed buildings in England are currently protected.

I remember first seeing the opening pages of John Delafons' *Politics and Preservation: Policy History of the Built Heritage, 1882–1996* when it was first published, and commenting to a colleague that I had found it impossible to focus upon the opening paragraphs of this outstanding review without being drawn repeatedly, to the impressively well-selected cartoon on the left-side page.¹ A burly Viking warlord, in battledress, stands at the head of a column of marauders – their axes, swords and spears a potent declaration of destructive intent. A longboat on the beach disgorges additional, heavily armed marauders. But observing a public notice board, the leader has come to a stop and, resting his weapon on the floor as he digests the message, explodes in angry frustration: 'Bugger me... This is a conservation zone!' We are, of course, encouraged to imagine the Viking horde taking reluctant heed of the notice, returning to their oars and departing to pillage and destroy an unfortunate settlement elsewhere, one unencumbered by such a restrictive statutory designation.

It was with this cartoon in mind that during an informal gathering between IHBC members last year, I asked innocently whether preventing unauthorized harm within conservation areas was more difficult now than in the past. Had historic buildings been safer then, simply by virtue of their appearance on the Statutory List? Did inclusion in a Conservation Area in those days make owners more cautious than now of making even minor changes without careful check with the local planning authority? Conclusions were difficult to draw, but the feeling tended to the view that conservation area designation and/or listing was once rather more of a check on hasty, unplanned and unauthorized alterations. It was felt that twenty years ago, the development process was more predictable. A generally slower pace of change, planning officers' frequently impressive local knowledge, the more positive regard in which they, conservation specialists, in-house architectural advisors, and other 'experts' were held, had meant that a measure of discussion and guidance usually informed the owner's understanding, and led to a less harmful building intervention.

Since then, our society has changed enormously. The plastic window phenomenon, together with its stable-mates – plastic eaves, guttering and doors – and a bewildering stream of television programmes encouraging

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them to 'd.i.y. their way' to greater comfort, convenience and resale value, has force-fed the idea that property is an investment, to be coaxed to ever greater return. So, the gathering hesitatingly concluded, rogue owners of historic properties had been slightly fewer in number, or at least easier to identify, influence and manage. But though this applied at the local and domestic level, there was less sign of it applying more widely; furthermore, and rather worryingly, it was suggested that the time available to a conservation or planning officer to give advice to a building owner was, in many cases, less with each passing year.

In the ten years since Delafons skilfully drew our attention to the achievements and failings in our protection of our architectural heritage, his publication remains the most impressive critique of strategy and policy in the UK. But the nature of our economy and society has changed more in the last ten years than in the previous thirty. Government in the UK, at all levels, now functions in constant flux, and architectural conservation finds itself within a turbulent confusion of organizational structures, policies and practices. Managing English Heritage is unquestionably more complex in this climate.

It was Michael Heseltine, then Secretary of State for the Environment, responding to a proposal from Maurice Mendoza, Director of the of the then Ancient Monuments and Historic Building Directorate, who set in place the generally helpful process of change leading to the creation of English Heritage. A resultant 1982 document – *Organisation of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings in England: The Way Forward* – set out ideas and provided reassurance for many readers.² The new body would manage around 400 monuments, including castles, abbeys, burial mounds, hill forts, and so on, presently in the care of the Secretary of State. All held with the brief to bring them more 'alive' so that they were better visited, appreciated and understood. It would also: make grants for the preservation of historic buildings, areas and monuments; act as adviser to the Secretary of State on listing and scheduling; guide matters of policy; and inform statutory decision-making. Heseltine had the advantage of being, more than most other ministers of the period, visually literate, understanding of architectural heritage, and interested in the environment as a whole.

The argument that professional expertise and greater commercial-mindedness would be more evident if undertaken by an agency, rather than a government department, was not lost in the radical Thatcher years. Peter Rumble, the first English Heritage chief executive, confirms that the parliamentary debate did not really cover the rationale for division of responsibilities, and seemed to revolve around the assumption that if an action benefited an individual or organization, it could be given to an agency, but if, on the other hand, it could be deemed harmful, particularly in relation to property rights, it should rest with a minister accountable to

Parliament.³ The National Heritage Act was given Royal Assent in May 1983, with the agency we would soon know as English Heritage coming into place on 1 April 1984. By the same day in 1986, staff committing themselves to continued employment in this new organization ceased to be civil servants, and, with the demise of that thorn in the Prime Minister's side – the Greater London Council (GLC) – the GLC's Historic Buildings Division became, albeit reluctantly, part of the new body.

English Heritage's mission has always fallen across several ministries and so has been obliged to engage, inform, educate or defer to a range of ministers. This can never have been an easy task, particularly when so many secretaries of state and ministers have come into the job, particularly in recent years, without much interest in the field. Michael Heseltine and Peter Brooke seemed to have had an intellectual understanding of the UK's physical heritage. Dick Crossman was interested, well informed, and had a keen eye for a building of quality. Despairing at the lack of a good private secretary, he wrote in his diary 'Thank God...' on news that he acquired the services of John Delafons.⁴ But even Delafons might have had difficulty with the cross- and multi-ministry practices of the modern government and civil service.

I have some sympathy for the English Heritage director who recently and positively expressed the view that

...given the cross-cutting nature of the historic environment, which has never been easy to keep within administrative boundaries, it was... particularly encouraging when in 2003 ODPM [the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister] and DEFRA [the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs] joined DCMS as joint signatories of English Heritage's funding agreement ... It was probably this that marked the historic environment's real coming of age as a proper concern for government.⁵

I risk being considered dreadfully naïve, but I cannot find real evidence of conservation being a concern for government in a manner that might attract critical praise; as for the identification, protection and support of the nation's architectural heritage being dependant upon effective collaboration between three Whitehall ministries, collaboration even within one is sometimes quite a cause for celebration.

For this special publication, more than a dozen figures who have made their contributions as politicians, policy-makers, commentators, writers and so on have gamely agreed to respond to the question: 'It has been said that anxiety pervades the British conservation sector in 2006. What changes would you most welcome or most strongly resist, and why?' There are some intriguing replies, and I am grateful to them all for taking up this

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challenge. It is interesting to see the VAT issue come up again, and to see reinforcement of some of the principal themes emerging from the main papers.

As for what more we might have done in this publication, it would have been good to include greater coverage of issues in relation to churches, world heritage, contemporary design intervention in historic buildings, and matters of new-build architectural design in important historic areas. The Editorial Advisory Board does, however, plan to return to these areas in due course.

Finally, I should record the warm thanks of the publisher and all members of the Editorial Advisory Board for the advice, guidance and encouragement provided by Sir Bernard Feilden over the last dozen years, covering the *Journal's* early development, editorial advisory board appointments, and its establishment here and abroad as a publication of choice in the broad field of architectural conservation. Though he has now stepped down from his former active role, we are all most pleased he has agreed to remain our Patron.

Biography

Professor Vincent Shacklock MA, DipLandArch, IHBC, FRTPI, FRSA

Vincent Shacklock is Dean of Architecture, Art and Design at the University of Lincoln. He played a key part in establishing the Journal and is a founding Editorial Advisory Board member. Following work in three local authorities, he ran a private practice before being appointed Director of the multidisciplinary Centre for Conservation Studies at DMU, Leicester. He has led projects on the conservation of various historic buildings and gardens in Italy, and has been a member of Lincoln Cathedral's Fabric Council during the last twelve years of extensive repairs. He has lectured in the US and Italy on historic architecture and gardens.

Notes

- 1 Delafons, J., *Politics and Preservation – A Policy History of the Built Heritage 1882–1996*, E & FN Spon, London (1997).
- 2 Department of the Environment (Organisation Development Division), *Organisation of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings in England: The Way Forward*, HMSO, London (1982). This Division was also responsible for co-ordinating the setting up of English Heritage and the abolition of the Ancient Monuments Board and the Historic Buildings Council for England in 1984.
- 3 Rumble, P., 'The Creation and Early Days of English Heritage', in *Conservation Bulletin: English Heritage – the First 21 Years*, Issue 49, Summer 2005.
- 4 Crossman, R. H. S., *The Crossman Diaries. Selections from the Diaries of a Cabinet Minister 1964–70* (edited by Anthony Howard), Hamish Hamilton and Jonathan Cape, London (1979), p. 80.
- 5 West, J., 'England's Heritage. The Changing Role of Government', in *Conservation Bulletin: English Heritage – the First 21 Years*, Issue 49, Summer 2005.

Personal Perspectives

It has been said that anxiety pervades the British conservation sector in 2006. What changes would you most welcome or most strongly resist and why?

I am concerned at some of the ways we seem to measure our success as modern custodians of historic fabric; if it is by the eloquent rhetoric of conservation or the amount of media coverage, we are on dangerous ground; if by the amount of reorganizing, rationalizing and streamlining (however necessary and beneficial some of this may be) we will be sidetracked by the activity. Only by looking often and systematically with informed eyes at the condition of our historic buildings, monuments and landscapes will we ever know the truth.

We must also look carefully at ourselves. If there are historic property managers who barely know the significance and importance of their site, if there are architects and surveyors who do not understand the difference between the repair and maintenance of new buildings and ancient ones, if there are contractors who are not able to match the scope and quality of work of their predecessors in past centuries, if there are archaeologists who are more familiar with the reality of their computer screens than the fabric of their sites and if we let our advancing technology seduce us into believing that recording, investigating and researching relieve us of our duty of care, then we should all be concerned.

*Professor John Ashurst D.Arch RIBA
Ingram Consultancy, Salisbury*

One welcome new area of recent conservation thinking is the deeper understanding of historic towns and cities and how to care for them better. Building conservation has made great strides forward in the last generation but care of our urban fabric has been very poor. At last we are realizing how rich culturally and socially are our towns and how we can undo some of the damage inflicted on them by earlier insensitive interventions, 'Characterization Studies' have just begun to be a useful tool in which the

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history, quality and value of towns is first understood before designers and transport planners are let loose. The process is only in its infancy but has great potential to realize the enormous cultural inheritance of our urban places.

*Alan Baxter BSc, FStructE, MICE, MCONSE, Hon.FRIBA
Alan Baxter & Associates, Consulting Engineers, London*

Ever extended 'listing', general public enthusiasm and greater understanding of architectural characteristics have helped improve the conservation of vernacular buildings over the past 30–40 years. At the same time there is a danger that over-intrusive regulation and over-detailed control by conservation officers could work against a generally sympathetic public attitude. More and better education in this field, as in others, is the key to successful conservation of vernacular buildings in the future.

*Dr Ronald W. Brunskill OBE, MA, PhD, FSA, Hon.D.Art
Author on vernacular architecture, former Commissioner of English Heritage*

There are achievements to prompt optimism; trends which deserve anger. The latter includes the mindless weakening of professionalism in local planning authorities and other bodies (influenced by 'managers', various charlatans and political ineptitude). Added to this is the complacency of professional bodies. Conservation should long have been accepted as an integral part of planning. We must resist threats to professionalism, we should promote it.

Changes that would be welcomed: a national and effective grant system for the repair of historic buildings; and an acknowledgement that good contemporary design can be integrated within our historic buildings and townscapes.

*John Dean Hon.D.Art
Fellow and past President of The Royal Town Planning Institute*

We need much more tangible and long term Government commitment to our built heritage which is increasingly overshadowed by a 'quick win' culture in a department that seems obsessed by sport and gambling. We need an understanding by an anxious architectural profession that accreditation is not an establishment plot to secure restrictive practice but an essential path to protect our most valuable inheritance through a higher level of understanding. In an theory driven architectural education system, history and conservation are the Cinderella subjects which need proper recognition, alongside a greater understanding that the marriage of ancient and modern is the greatest challenge in the art of architecture but, when

successful, can produce the most brilliant results. I want to see national recognition of the huge contribution that good conservation and creative re-use makes to our civilization – and that conservation is as much to do with sustainability and skylines as it is to do with mortar mixes!

George Ferguson

RIBA Past President; Chairman of Acanthus Ferguson Mann; Director at Academy of Urbanism

I would like to see a strengthened understanding among decision-makers at all levels of how vital a good physical environment is in shaping our mental and spiritual well-being – both for individuals and society – and how much informed conservation has to contribute to that. This has special relevance to church buildings, which embody and support the memories of their communities as well as their present aspirations in a very tangible way.

Paula Griffiths MA (Oxon)

Head of the Cathedral and Church Buildings Division of the Archbishops' Council

I had the rare privilege of serving in the Department of the Environment on three separate occasions, twice as Secretary of State. I would like another chance to put right things I got wrong. I would transform the listed building and heritage arrangements. There would be two categories of licence.

Category A: Individual owners in either the public or private sector would be able to look after their buildings on estates within guidelines that would be drawn to high conservation standards.

Category B: Professional bodies or firms would be licenced to both approve and supervise such work.

Local authorities would have to receive notice and detail of work proposed and would have defined powers to intervene. Abuse by either of the two categories of licence holders would lead to revocation. Provided Category A licence holders reached agreement with a Category B licence holder and served appropriate notice on the local authority in a timely manner they would be free to manage their property as they saw fit. No one would prejudice their licence with the risk that they would revert to the previous arrangements which are expensive, slow moving and conformist.

I wish I had thought of it at the time.

The Rt Hon the Lord Heseltine CH

We must not be obsessed with identifying the heritage; there are now around 500,000 listed buildings in England, which is enough, at the present rate of demolition, to last for at least 5,000 years. Conservation areas have been degraded through over use – almost everywhere of any

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interest has been designated, along with much that is in no way 'special'. Public opinion is at present generally favourable to conservation; but pendulums swing and views will change. The real challenge is going to be to manage that process of change.

Good conservation is thus simply a facet of good planning – every proposal needs to be assessed in the light of its likely effect on all the relevant land and buildings, historic and otherwise. So there is no need for special consent regimes, and special conservation duties embedded in legislation, as these give a special place to historic buildings that is not justified, but also – paradoxically – marginalize the heritage. The whole system has undoubtedly become far too complicated.

The most welcome changes would, therefore, be for the conservation sector to become more open to allowing, and indeed encouraging, the enhancement, rather than just the preservation, of historic buildings and areas; and for the planning system as a whole (of which conservation is just a part) to be radically simplified.

Charles Mynors FRTP, MRICS, IHBC

Barrister, author, diocesan chancellor, visiting professor Oxford Brookes University

It's not all doom and gloom! Public interest in history and architectural heritage is exceptionally high – look at this year's Heritage Open Days and the *History Matters – pass it on* campaign. What I would like to see change is the official response to such enthusiasm. I'd like to see it recognized as bringing real and tangible benefits to society, not just nice for those who can. I'd like to see this played through to policy and public spending decisions – a longer tunnel at Stonehenge and more conservation staff in every local authority, for example. The quality of our built environment is a huge economic draw and provides enormous quality of life benefits – too often we are still brushing these considerations aside instead of focusing on the real, tangible value that they bring.

Fiona Reynolds

Director General, The National Trust

From the fund raising point of view, which is what I do and have been doing for Hackney for years, I am not conscious that the year 2006 has been a lot more dreadful than any of the last ten years. Abolishing VAT on repairs is still a proper, worthwhile and hopeless ambition. It would be the one measure which would show political commitment to renovation, recycling and repair rather than waste and neglect.

Eating up fields and allowing old buildings to fall into dereliction is encouraged by current legislation. God knows, there are 'initiatives', but

they seem to be to let back gardens designated brown field sites and acres of useable building bulldozed or rebuilt with shoddy replacements. Having worked on *Restoration Village* this year I think we should find more money for semi-private developments generally and smaller perhaps less distinguished vernacular buildings all round, but then, perhaps I would think that, wouldn't I?

But I believe that the huge amounts of cash poured into that iconic Guano extravaganza, Tyntesfield, for example, might be better spent repairing the whole county of Somerset's barns or preserving the façades of Weston Super Mare. For the same reason I long for some sort of institution to actively promote new thinking about re-use. Small conservation groups are often left struggling for ideas to save a building. We need to match need with available space. Someone needs to be coming up with good commercial ideas for old buildings and passing them around, especially places of assembly. But much of this is politically difficult. Lottery money cannot apparently be used to prop up private houses. Which brings us back to VAT. It is tax that incentivizes the majority. We need a break. It seems so obvious I suppose we must squat in the rubble and despair while ministers blame the EC.

Griff Rhys Jones

Presenter of the television programme 'Restoration'

I do not know who said anxiety pervades the British conservation sector but that is certainly not how I would characterize the mood of voluntary organizations concerned with our heritage. The voluntary conservation movement, much admired in other countries, is probably stronger now than it has ever been. The degree of co-operation, the enthusiasm and capacity to take on new projects, the willingness and determination to find ways of engaging with a much wider audience are greater than ever I can remember. Where there is cause for concern it is that the Government does not adequately appreciate what the voluntary sector is achieving, nor the extent to which the public in general cares about their heritage.

John Sell CBE

I would be thrilled to see the Government enthusiastically accept virtually all the recommendations in the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee Report on Heritage, and acknowledge that, in cutting expenditure on heritage, they have overlooked the benefits in terms of regeneration and place-making, tourism, education, civic pride, social stability and sustainability that flow from the care of historic buildings and landscapes.

I hope the Secretary of State will soon discover the delights of visiting historic places and notice the large numbers of family groups and foreign

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visitors enjoying themselves whilst learning how our rich and complex history has fostered the New Labour virtues of equality, democracy, creativity and tolerance.

*Les Sparks OBE, Dip Arch, DipTP, RIBA, MRTPI, FRSA, HonD.Des
English Heritage Commissioner and former CABE Commissioner*

Conservation thinking is now mainstream and accepted as part of the central focus of managing and moderating change. If anxiety pervades the conservation community it may perhaps be due to a perception that heritage is now owned by society rather than the preserve of the specialist. Television has broadened awareness and the internet has made technical information available to all.

A sensitivity to our past, but recognizing the need for appropriate change (including sustainability) should become the cornerstone of the education and ethics of every built environment professional. I would hope that future built environment education, at both an undergraduate and specialist level, would include a thorough understanding and appreciation of our past as a contributor to a better future.

John Worthington

Founder DEGW, Graham Willis Professor University of Sheffield

Education is the key to understanding, cherishing, enjoying and conserving historic places. I'd particularly like to see a real commitment from national and local government to primary school 'citizenship' projects on the history on our doorsteps, and how we can help those old places to lives new lives. For a tiny investment a whole community's eyes can be opened by their own children. Conservation is a public benefit, but it will not be a high priority for democratic government unless the wider public really values it, and tells our politicians how much we care.

And what scares me? It is ignorance – people who can't see or won't see the time dimension in where they are. They may be cost-led politicians or managers, under-trained construction people, or building owners consigning their history to the skip because they don't understand or value it.

John Yates

Chair, Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC)

The Context for Skills, Education and Training

John Preston

Abstract

Conservation skills remain in short supply within the construction industry. Progress in increasing the number of professionals with conservation expertise has generally been disappointing. The challenges relating to availability of conservation craft skills have been quantified, but as yet there is no holistic analysis of skills needs for the sector. Potential support for skills development has not materialized because the government has not been convinced of the case for building conservation, repairs and maintenance to be considered as a sector in its own right. Efforts to improve skills levels through accreditation have, as yet, failed to make significant impact.

Introduction

Key ingredients for good architectural conservation include: conservation-aware building owners; builders competent in traditional construction; and professionals able (according to the circumstances) to specify appropriate repairs, and/or to sensitively integrate new work within historic settings. The latter may involve anything from a minor upgrading of services in existing buildings (Figure 1), to the creation of new buildings of scale, proportion and detail complementing and enhancing an historic ensemble.

The UK is far from having this ideal combination of ingredients. Up to 50% of UK building and construction work comprises alterations, repairs and maintenance, but construction training is heavily focused on new builds. Training in conservation tends to be more of an optional extra, undertaken only by those with a specific interest, despite the need for such training having been clear for many years.



Figure 1 The need for awareness. New heating system and lighting in Grade I listed building, Kings College, Cambridge. The left illustration is as inserted by client and engineers without reference to architect. The right illustration is after remedial works designed and supervised by the architect.¹

Slow progress

In the first issue of this journal, Sir Bernard Feilden recalled a 1975 report recommending that every UK architectural office should have at least one person qualified in architectural conservation, and that specialized courses should be set up to provide them.² Thirty years on, far less progress has been made than we might have expected or hoped. The number of specialist conservation courses remains small in relation to the need, and conservation barely features in architecture degree programmes. Feilden returned to the issue in 1999, listing sixteen different types of professional involved in conservation in a table and relating them to the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) Training Guidelines.³ He identified five professions as being involved in all of the ICOMOS-defined tasks: architects, conservation officers, conservators, landscape architects and surveyors. In 2002, Orbasli and Whitbourn noted the lack of conservation training in architecture courses, the customary specialization in conservation at postgraduate level, and the higher demand for this in times of reduced economic activity.⁴ They raised particular concerns in relation to the architecture curriculum's heavy focus on design-based skills, and the lack of a framework for controlling standards of conservation

training and the conduct of conservation professionals. In 2004, authors from Historic Scotland and English Heritage outlined developments in conservation accreditation, their own organizations' requirements for lead professionals on grant-aided projects to be accredited, and the work of the pan-professional 'Edinburgh Group'.⁵ The Historic Scotland and English Heritage requirements for employing accredited professionals are responses to 'fundamental difficulties... experienced in seeking to achieve appropriate quality and standards in a number of Historic Building Repair Grant Scheme cases'.⁶

An unrecognized demand

Projects reached by Historic Scotland and English Heritage repair grants constitute only a tiny proportion of the total work carried out every year. England alone has nearly 500,000 listed buildings, and over 9,000 conservation areas containing around 1 million dwellings. This is a significant proportion (about 6%) of the total building stock. Nearly 5 million buildings in England (over 21% of the total) are pre-1919. England has over 14,000 listed places of worship, with Anglican churches alone making up 45% of Grade I listed buildings. In 2004–5, over 38,000 applications for change (nearly 35,000 applications for listed building consent and 3,400 for conservation area consent) were determined, and over 25% of the 645,000 planning applications made had conservation implications. Together, this suggests an annual total of around 200,000 projects affecting historic buildings and/or areas, but even this does not provide a full picture. It does not include schemes which require building regulation approval only, repairs requiring no formal approval, and works to churches exempt from secular control.

Conservation and the construction industry

Conservation has traditionally been seen as a very small specialist part of the building and construction industry, and considered separately from general repairs, maintenance and alterations. The Construction Industry Training Board (now CITB ConstructionSkills), dominated by large contractors, provides little voice for the small builders who carry out most works to traditional and historic buildings. This picture has improved since 2004 through the creation, by English Heritage and CITB ConstructionSkills, of the National Heritage Training Group (NHTG). The NHTG's 2005 *Skills Needs Analysis for the Built Heritage Sector In England* is a key report showing the economic significance of the sector.⁷ Total annual spend on listed buildings was estimated to be £1.72 billion for the 12 months before the survey, rising to £1.85 billion for the 12 months

after. For pre-1919 buildings, the estimates were £3.54 billion rising to £3.68 billion. The report highlighted: shortages of skilled sub-contractors (with 6,590 craftspeople needed over 12 months to meet immediate skills shortages); a lack of workers and trainers in the 30–45 age group (with a consequent risk of far greater skills shortages as older and more experienced workers retire); and a lack of apprentices due to the government's focus on maximizing the number of school-leavers entering university degree programmes, rather than undertaking skills-based training.

Parallel issues for repairs and maintenance had been highlighted in work for *Maintain our Heritage*, which proposes an English counterpart to the *Monumentenwacht* in Holland. This work has identified problems such as the lack of skills for understanding the significance of heritage properties, and inadequate practical understanding of the use and performance of traditional materials.⁸

The NHTG report did not consider conservation professionals, so missing a vital opportunity to provide a sector-wide picture of skills needs and availability. We do know (from English Heritage) that 1,700 out of 5,400 Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) registered UK architectural practices profess some conservation expertise, but there is no clear and independent basis for establishing this. Ten years after conservation accreditation schemes were set up in England and Scotland, there are still less than 300 RIBA Architects Accredited in Building Conservation (AABC), and fewer than 70 Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) members accredited in building conservation. The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) gave evidence to the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee which painted a bleak picture:⁹

Far too few professionals working on historic buildings have had any specialist conservation training. Much of the Society's casework is prompted by the actions of professionals with little or no grasp of conservation ideas or practice. Building conservation at even its most elementary level forms no part of undergraduate courses in architecture, surveying etc. The large debts facing newly graduated architects means that few can afford further specialist training. Many do not believe they need it...

The need for conservation awareness and training is now greater than ever, not just among the traditional professions, but also across a broader professional landscape. The scope of Feilden's analysis could now be widened to include structural engineers (identified as a priority by English Heritage), regeneration professionals, urban designers, building control surveyors, mortgage surveyors, facilities managers, and many others whose professional practice affects historic buildings or their settings.



Figure 2 The need for skills in local materials. A good materials match, let down by excessive pointing in works to listed flint estate wall, Rousdon, Devon.

The vernacular challenge

A vital part of the British landscape is the range of regional and local vernacular building materials and traditions, arising from the country's varied geology.¹⁰ Preservation and enhancement of this regional and local character depends just as much on appropriate repairs to lesser vernacular structures (cottages, outbuildings, boundary walls) and on appropriate construction of new buildings in historic contexts, as on the repairs of buildings defined by statutory measures. These local materials and construction techniques, which give historic places their character, were initially used because they were easiest and cheapest. Now it is these very local inputs that require special materials and skills.

The National Heritage Training Group was set up specifically to improve the situation, but has not yet achieved changes on the scale needed. Just one Centre of Vocational Excellence (the Building Crafts College) specializes in conservation. There is no regional network of centres focusing on local

building and conservation skills. In England, the government has set up Regional Centres of Excellence in Regeneration, as part of its Sustainable Communities initiative. These Centres of Excellence (as with Regional Development Agencies and Sustainable Communities as a whole) have focused almost exclusively on the creation of new communities, not the sustaining of existing communities and their historic environments.

The government context

Historic environment conservation sits across a series of governmental fault-lines. One fault-line is between 'construction' and 'culture': education, information and archive management, all of which are essential to support conservation, come under 'culture' rather than the 'construction' industry.¹¹ Another, this one within 'culture', is between new creativity and archaeological interpretation of the past, as distinct categories. The historic environment, its creative challenges, and the skills and resources needed to manage it fall through the gap in between the two, almost unnoticed in governmental and other strategies for arts and culture. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has conspicuously failed to realize the significance of these fault-lines, let alone try to bridge them. Within the sector, its Heritage Protection Review is considering the need for closer links between conservation officers and archaeologists, and 'new skills and greater capacity' within local authorities.¹² This bridging of gaps will be welcome if it happens, but (on its own) will have minimal impact on the wider need to build bridges across major governmental fault-lines, to change perceptions, and to develop momentum for improving skills across the sector as a whole.

Government skills initiatives have been focused on creating a more competitive workforce by means of 25 employer-led Sector Skills Councils, which are expected to develop occupational standards and training programmes in agreements with their workforces.¹³ CITB ConstructionSkills has been confirmed as the Sector Skills Council for Construction: this development has reinforced the domination of large contractors. The focus on new work has been further increased by separating repairs, maintenance and property management into the remit of another Sector Skills Council: Asset Skills. Cultural heritage aspects of conservation, including artefact conservation and archaeology, are the responsibility of yet another Sector Skills Council: Creative and Cultural Skills. Just when the NHTG report appeared to offer unequivocal evidence of an economically significant sector warranting special consideration, this fragmentation between different Sector Skills Councils has made it harder than ever to promote the conservation, repairs and maintenance of traditional buildings.¹⁴

This challenge has been made harder still by the government's encouragement of up to 50% of school-leavers to attend university. It rejected the Tomlinson Report's recommendations for enhanced vocational qualifications, which might have boosted entry into conservation trades. There has been little support for mature students and others interested in moving to a new career in conservation work. Postgraduate conservation courses have developed, but remain pitifully few in relation to the potential need. There is a wide and developing range of undergraduate and postgraduate courses in broader conservation subjects, but these vary greatly in content and the extent to which they could provide a grounding for young practitioners.¹⁵ At craft and trade level, efforts to develop Mastercraft qualifications in conservation have made painfully slow progress; there have been problems in getting both suitably trained teachers and potential trainees from busy employers.

The conservation sector

A fundamental concern is that there is no UK-wide lead body for the heritage field, and no clear voice for tackling UK-wide issues. English Heritage led the formation of the National Heritage Training Group (NHTG), but missed the opportunity for a holistic approach covering the full conservation sector spectrum from trades to professionals. This was hard to understand at the time, and it seems even more inexplicable now. It would have been so much better if the NHTG's 2005 report had covered the sector as a whole. This failure is, sadly, coupled with strategic failures to see, and seize, potential opportunities. Did English Heritage and Historic Scotland, as the sector lead bodies, promote the economic and workforce productivity importance of conservation repairs and maintenance, and hence the need for special consideration within the developing Sector Skills context? The outcome suggests not. How much better might it have been if English Heritage, in particular, had engaged with the process, achieved representation within the Sector Skills Development Agency (the overseeing body), and promoted a cross-sector approach.

Another missed opportunity, on the part of English Heritage and DCMS, has been the failure to secure a significant profile for the historic environment within the major government skills initiatives (the Egan Review and the Academy for Sustainable Communities) for delivering the review of the planning system and the Sustainable Communities agenda. English Heritage has tried to raise awareness of conservation among local politicians and public sector professionals through HELM (Historic Environment Local Management), but its combination of a website and one-off training events does not as yet seem to have had any significant

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impact on the target groups. By contrast, Historic Scotland (HS) has given a very positive lead through the technical conservation research and education work of the Scottish Conservation Bureau. It was Historic Scotland's quality-audit of grant-aided work that led to its requirement for conservation accreditation of lead professionals on its projects, and it has been HS which has brought the conservation professions together in the Edinburgh Group to explore accreditation. Some of the most significant work in building up a UK-wide picture has been carried out not by the national statutory bodies, but by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). Its 2000 report highlighted the key issues; now the HLF has put its principles into practice by investing £7 million in training bursaries.¹⁶ The most complete mapping of skills for the sector so far has been provided by Heritage Link, a consortium of voluntary bodies.¹⁷

The professions

What of the professions? Feilden criticized the failure of RIBA to appreciate the creative element in architectural conservation. In recent years, two of which were with a conservation architect as its president, the RIBA has entered into partnership with the AABC Conservation Accreditation scheme. Will this welcome change of approach continue? There is a long way to go yet, judging by the RIBA's comment to the Culture Media and Sport Committee that:¹⁸

Architects are highly-trained and have a special set of skills that they can use to benefit the historic environment. Conservation architects work all over the country to restore historic properties and extend their viability...

This seemed complacent at best, and was in sharp contrast to the SPAB view quoted earlier.¹⁹ The RIBA's comment might have had more validity if the Institute was making efforts to promote conservation within mainstream architecture courses.

The RIAS (Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland) has been more committed, with its long-standing accreditation scheme, at three levels, which both recognizes the importance of conservation and provides progression for architects gaining experience. The Royal Incorporation of Chartered Surveyors introduced its conservation accreditation to put its members on a par with architects in terms of access to conservation grants. The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) has produced a conservation good practice guide, but for non-specialists. Within these institutes, there have been conservation interest groups; however, these have not achieved major influence, either within their own institutes or in their external

collective activities (such as the Construction Industry Council). The RICS and RTPI did not even respond to the Culture Media and Sport Select Committee (see Notes 9, 18, and 20).

The Institute of Historic Building Conservation (founded in 1997) has 1,500 members and is tiny by comparison with the RIBA, RICS and RTPI. It is the only professional body providing a clear voice for architectural conservation.²⁰ Its journal, *Context*, has given extensive coverage to developments and issues relating to conservation training and accreditation.²¹ The IHBC has 'affiliate' and full membership categories, which provide an entry route for interested professionals. The IHBC's membership is multidisciplinary, including planners (33%) and architects (23%); around 40% of its members have specialist qualifications in building conservation.

Accreditation

Formal training is only part of the picture; successful conservation depends on a combination of academic training, practical experience and insight. Accreditation in conservation requires the submission of project evidence to show that these requirements have been achieved. The Edinburgh Group's Framework for Accreditation has the potential to provide a pan-professional basis for assessing competence in architectural conservation. The Group is developing web-based 'refresher' units to help professionals prepare for accreditation; these will have to be combined with practical experience. The Group's framework (unlike the RIAS's accreditation and the IHBC's membership categories) does not provide an entry route and ladder for interested professionals. Instead, Historic Scotland and English Heritage have focused on the perceived need of clients for a single common standard of professional, whatever the discipline. This single high level of accreditation does not cater for 'general practice' professionals who do conservation work; it has to be questioned in the context of the urgent need to draw more professionals into conservation. This need will become ever greater and more urgent as current shortages of conservation professionals are magnified by a 'retirement time bomb' (evidenced by analysis of the IHBC, which has a large proportion of members aged 50 or over) similar to that for the trades highlighted by the NHTG report.

The scope, development and relevance of accreditation have also been heavily constrained by a focus on building repairs, rather than the broad spectrum of conservation work. This has been driven partly by professions devising schemes (in the case of the RICS and AABC/RIBA schemes) to meet English Heritage and Historic Scotland's requirements for grant aid, and partly by English Heritage and Historic Scotland's reluctance to intrude on the RIBA's territory in terms of design. This focus purely on

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Figure 3 Refurbishment involves both repairs and design. Refurbishment at Willow House, Cambridge (listed Grade II*) included new external insulation, with all windows other than the one under the balcony replaced with double-glazed units and moved out to new positions.²²

repair (and within that on the limited number of projects grant-aided by English Heritage and Historic Scotland) has had very limited impact, by comparison with the need, on improving the availability of conservation skills. Accreditation schemes based only on building repairs do not ensure the skills needed to achieve regeneration of historic areas. The Heritage Lottery Fund does not require accreditation for the lead professionals on its own grant-aid schemes.

The current accreditation schemes are, as recognized by the sector lead bodies, based on adding a conservation overlay or 'vener' to professionals who are already qualified in architecture, surveying, etc. This approach has minimized sensitivities among the traditional professions, but it shows no sign of delivering conservation professionals in large numbers. A more radical approach may be needed to reflect the new professional landscape and the range of potential career entry routes into conservation. The issue of levels of accreditation has also to be tackled, to encourage and develop those professionals who are interested, but may be deterred by what can appear from the outside to be a 'closed shop'.

Drivers for change?

The key potential drivers for change will remain what incentives exist to encourage or require clients to employ appropriately skilled professionals; and what encouragement is given to potential new conservation professionals. None of these are fully effective at the moment.

Incentives

Grants reach only a tiny proportion of works to historic buildings. Tax concessions for appropriate work to historic buildings would be far more effective, but the UK tax system offers incentives (VAT exemption) only for alterations, not for repairs. Furthermore these incentives are given without any check on whether the work has been carried out as approved and is of appropriate quality. The government's failure to change the VAT regime in favour of repairs has been fully criticized elsewhere, but even if these changes were introduced, the quality control issue would still have to be addressed.

Strong regulation through the listed building consent system should be an incentive for quality. Time is invested in negotiating schemes, but local authority conservation resources (constrained by government funding and performance targets) are frequently insufficient to provide effective monitoring and control of works carried out. A review of listed building enforcement is long overdue; effective sanctions are needed to raise the quality of both aspirations and outcomes.



Figure 4 Training together – a model for the future. Revival of traditional skills, with student architects and builders learning and working together on repairs to a historic building. This practical module forms part of the architecture course. Banffy Castle, Bontida, Romania.²³

Encouragement to new professionals

Professional building conservation as a career has a very low profile. It does not feature in public sector promotion of construction careers, notably the websites of the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE, sponsored by DCMS) and the Academy for Sustainable Communities. Conservation receives minimal coverage in architecture courses, and accreditation does not offer entry and progress for those who are interested.

Conclusion

The present situation is untenable. Changes on the scale needed can only come through positive leadership, and resourcing, from the top. The forthcoming White Paper on Heritage Protection offers an ideal opportunity for the government (and for English Heritage) to address the issues, propose solutions and implement them. Will they meet these challenges? We wait to see.

Postscript

This paper is a brief overview of a very complex situation. Its focus mainly on England is due to lack of space; the issues affect the UK as a whole. A more comprehensive version will, in due course, appear on the IHBC website.

Biography

John Preston MA, DipTP, MRTPI, IHBC, FRSA

John Preston studied architecture and art history before becoming a planner and then a conservation officer. He has been involved in conservation education at all levels, including working in schools, lecturing, organizing conferences, acting as external assessor for courses, and representing the Institute for Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) in work on standards development. He is Education Chair for the IHBC and a trustee of the Conference on Training in Architectural Conservation (COTAC). He is Historic Environment Manager for Cambridge City Council.

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Appendix

The Listing of Buildings

Bob Kindred

This Appendix gives a brief general outline of the way in which 'listed' buildings in England are protected.¹ Several commentators have dealt with its evolution at length.²

Introduction

It was during World War Two that the government first legislated for a 'statutory list' of buildings of special architectural and historic interest, and the process commenced in 1946–7.³ The initial compilation took the government appointed investigators well over twenty years to complete, mainly because of a lack of ministerial commitment and there were often fierce criticisms of what was protected and what was not.⁴

The initial programme which ran until 1968, produced lists that were undoubtedly patchy – especially the earlier ones – and a second nationwide resurvey was therefore undertaken starting in 1969. The process was accelerated following the notorious demolition of the Firestone Factory⁵ in west London in 1980 and the remaining fieldwork done on an area-by-area basis was completed by the spring of 1989. Responsibility for compiling the lists was transferred outside government with the establishment of English Heritage in 1984.

Subsequently the focus switched to more precisely targeted studies of building types which analysis had indicated were under-represented in the lists.⁶ In recent years there has been an emphasis on identifying key buildings of the twentieth century for protection, including those of the post-war period; and at each stage recommendations for protection of specific buildings came forward.

Selection criteria

The basis for determining what should be protected (the selection criteria) has evolved considerably since it was first introduced in 1946 and the most recent government guidance dates from 1994⁷ (although this is currently under further review).

- *architectural interest*: the lists are meant to include all buildings which are of importance to the nation for the interest of their architectural design, decoration and craftsmanship; also important examples of particular building types and techniques (e.g. buildings displaying technological innovation or virtuosity) and significant plan forms;
- *historic interest*: this includes buildings which illustrate important aspects of the nation's social, economic, cultural or military history;
- *close historical association*: with nationally important people or events;
- *group value*: especially where buildings comprise an important architectural or historic unity or a fine example of planning (e.g. squares, terraces or model villages).

Not all these criteria will be relevant to every case, but a particular building may qualify for listing under more than one of them.

Application of the criteria

As a consequence of many years of application, PPG 15 makes clear that the older a building is, and the fewer the surviving examples of its kind, the more likely it is to have historic importance and that the following buildings should now be listed:

- *before 1700*: all buildings which survive in anything like their original condition;
- *1700 to 1840*: most buildings though some selection is necessary;
- *1840 to 1914*: only buildings of definite quality because of the greatly increased numbers surviving, greater selection is needed to identify the best examples of particular building types;
- *after 1914*: only selected buildings;
- *between 30 years and 10 years old*: only buildings which are of outstanding quality;
- *less than ten years old*: not listed.

This process has resulted in approximately 500,000 buildings (and other above ground structures) being listed – representing about 2% of all buildings in England.

Grades

Not all buildings are of equal worth. Listed buildings are generally classified into three grades: Grade I, Grade II* and Grade II although this aspect is non-statutory.

- Grade I buildings (representing about 2.5% of the total) are those of exceptional interest;
- Grade II* buildings (representing about 5.6%) are particularly important buildings of more than special interest;
- The remainder (representing 91.9%) are Grade II buildings of special interest, warranting every effort to preserve them.

There are claims that this system, which has evolved over 60 years, is not comprehensible to the public and that a new one with revised and elaborated criteria, and revised and simplified grades is required. Government and English Heritage has now spent several years evaluating and consulting on potential changes, but some of these will require legislation to be implemented and may take many further years to fully introduce, while the existing and new arrangements operate in parallel. For the present the inventorization of historic buildings in England will continue in the form outlined above.

Notes

- 1 The same general principles apply in Wales and Scotland.
- 2 Readers are referred to Earl, J., *Building Conservation Philosophy*, third edition, Donhead, Shaftesbury (2003), particularly Appendix 6 on the initial instructions to investigators; Delafons, J., *Politics and Preservation – A Policy History of the Built Heritage 1882–1996*, E & FN Spon, London (1997); Acworth, A. and Sir Anthony Wagner, '25 Years of Listing', *Architectural Review*, Nov. 1970; Harvey, J. *et al*, 'The Origin of Listed Buildings' *Ancient Monuments Society Transactions*, Vol. 37 (1993).
- 3 Local authorities had been given powers in planning legislation in 1932 to prepare local lists of buildings of special interest but very few did so.
- 4 Earl, *ibid*, p. 195.
- 5 This fine Art Deco building of 1928 was demolished over an August public holiday by the owner/developer Trafalgar House, the day before it was due to be protected. The relevant government minister, Michael Heseltine, accelerated the protection process with impressive results.
- 6 For example Lancashire Cotton Mills and Yorkshire Wool Mills.
- 7 Department of the Environment/Department of National Heritage, *Planning Policy Guidance Note 15, Planning and the Historic Environment (PPG15)*, HMSO, London (1994) paragraphs 6.10–6.16.

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