

NEWSLETTER

Issue 54 July 2015



· INSTITUTE · OF · HISTORIC ·
BUILDING · CONSERVATION

WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH

DIARY

- ❖ Next Branch Meeting – Friday 10th July. At Attingham Park, Atcham, near Shrewsbury. See Branch Meeting agenda for details.
- ❖ Annual School Meeting – 11th August at a venue in Worcester.

CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

Sarah Butler writes:

Philip stepped down as Chair at the March 2014 AGM, agreeing to a temporary vice-chair role to steer the ship whilst waiting for someone to take up the gauntlet. A year later at the Ludlow AGM he sat looking out at members with a sense of *deja-vu*, the Chair post still remained vacant, then he caught my eye!

Firstly – I would like to take this opportunity to say a big thank you to Philip for his incredible contribution and positive drive whilst in post during the recession, not an easy task. I would also like to welcome the team, you know who you are, and look forward to working with all of you.

I would like to say that I readily accepted the



post however I did so with some trepidation. I have

been one of those members that took advantage of attending meetings and events without necessarily giving back, using time as my principal excuse, and skimming along the surface – dipping in and out. I decided to then offer help towards the 2016 Summer Annual School when it began to gear up in 2014 and enjoyed getting involved, and now here I am as your Chair. Have I formulated my aspirations for the next 3 years as Chair? Not really, I am still reflecting on this.

Since the Ludlow AGM I have helped to facilitate the recent IHBC WM Membership Seminar and joined in at two Annual School 2016 meetings. The energy and enthusiasm at these occasions is a very positive experience, the underlying objective – to promote conservation of our heritage – but executed with a sense of engagement, fun and purpose.

Our branch, and therefore by default our Institute, is only as good as our participation and involvement. Not by the few core folk, but by us all. I have to say up until now I was charged 'as guilty' but I hope during my term as Chair I can rectify this. So if you cannot answer the following with 'yes' then please come on - join in, engage and get involved:

- ❖ Did you attend the last IHBC WM Branch meeting?
- ❖ Have you been on the IHBC website in the last month?
- ❖ Have you explored the IHBC's WebStarter – quick guide to conservation online?
- ❖ Have you contributed to the newsletter recently?

For those that do not know me a bit of background: I have been in private practice for 25 years, 15 of these have been as a qualified conservation specialist. I am an Associate Director with Donald Insall Associates, AABC accredited, on the Lichfield DAC, and recently became an associate member of EASA. My passion lies not only in the repair and care of our heritage but also ensuring that we can find respectful and sustaining solutions for change to allow the historic built

environment to serve and survive into the future. I love the challenge faced in resolving the tension between our modern living requirements, demands and fashion with the need to protect the significance of our heritage.

An observation I am sure noted by all, and a reaction/result of the fall out of the recession, is the shift of membership from the emphasis on the conservation officer to that of private practitioner.

Does this shift bring a different perspective to the IHBC and to this Branch?

This shift, centred round money, is a perceived saving; a focus on the essential needs of our country and people at a time of austerity: heritage must look after itself. It could be felt that this sends out a message that heritage does not matter, an erosion of our 'policing' and protection of the historic environment.

Why does the built heritage need so much protection? Why is the general public not as passionate and respectful about this environment? Is it that we fail in communicating effectively its worth and value, the hidden potential and opportunities that our past can offer?

It will be interesting to see whether the re-branded *Historic England* with public announcements and fanfare can stimulate a louder and growing voice, a clearer path of communication in order to champion and promote our heritage. And to see if the new *English Heritage* – a self-financing charity charged with looking after the National Heritage Collection - can underpin that voice with a message that heritage can successfully look after and pay for itself and has a deserved place in the evolving financial world order.

EDITORIAL

Welcome to *Sarah Butler* as Branch Chairman and the beginning of a new regime. Thank you, Sarah, for providing such a helpful introduction.

As always, this Newsletter issue records experiences from the previous Branch Meeting at Ludlow on 18th March. I have added to this record some exotica from Michigan USA.

Thank you too to *Dave Burton-Pye* for a thought-provoking article on '(un?)sustainable growth' in University and related cities.

Your Newsletter continues to welcome case studies and technical articles. Over to you, the members!

The Editor

PEOPLE

Philip Belchere retired from all forms of Chairmanship at AGM 2015, having served nine years as Chairman or Vice-Chairman. We owe a great deal to Philip for his Branch leadership in times difficult as well as exciting. Thank you, Philip.

Hello (sort of) to *Harriet Devlin*, who accepted election at the March AGM as our new Vice-Chairman. See you soon, Harriet!

Committee elections resulted in a mixture of old and new. *Chris Partridge* takes over as Branch Representative on National Committee, in succession to *Charles Shapcott*. We do not lose

Charles totally, though, as he will be giving Chris a helping hand as he settles in. Again, we owe Charles a lot for representing us nationally for quite a few years now. *Rachel Parry* stepped down as events organiser, but we hope to see *Stephen McLeish* take over. Rachael has put in a massive amount of work organising our quarterly meetings and other events, so she really does merit a round of applause.

For the rest, your Committee contains the familiar names of *Roger Cullimore* (Education); *Jan Ratcliffe* (Treasurer), *Debbie Boffin* (Secretary) and your Editor, who continues for another year.

VIEW OUT OF THE WINDOW

Ludlow Castle

18th March 2014

The venue for the March 2015 Branch meeting was the Beacon Room in Ludlow Castle, part of what could be called the 'function suite'. Entry was through a smallish arched doorway in the outer wall of the outer bailey, but the inside seemed to be an modern insertion into an older building, albeit with many period details that I found perplexing until I realized that they were all-new and often to a high standard of execution. The dull gold floral swags were particularly effective.



Beacon Room, Ludlow Castle Function Suite, complete with traditional-style swags and doorcase

Glazed doors set in mullion-and transom grid windows gave a view of outer bailey grass terminating in the stone structures of the Inner Bailey, over which an early Spring sun shone brightly. Later, viewed from the outside, this part of the Castle seemed to be a mixture of C19 and earlier work, heavily gabled and stone rubble faced, backed against the inner face of the outer bailey wall.

The theme for the day might be described as 'managing Historic Ludlow' with presentations on the Castle, the Town and St Laurence's Parish Church from *Bill Klemperer* (IAM, EH); *Sonja Belchere* (Castle Custodian); *Dan Lloyd* (Ludlow Civic

Society); *James Caird* (Ludlow Conservation Area Advisory Committee); *Stephen Treasure* (Treasure & Sons, conservation contractors); and *Shaun Ward* (Co-Ordinator, St Laurence' Parish Church Vision Project). We got a free lunch courtesy of the 'Rooflight Company', which included a talk on the flexible usage of this conversion option, including its insulation properties.



Looking out from the Beacon Room on to the grass of Ludlow Castle Outer Bailey

After lunch we went out on foot, first exploring the Castle with 'Lady Caroline' and then going into the town with Stephen Treasure and Shaun Ward.

Special thanks to *Rachael Parry* for organising this action-packed programme. We welcomed IHBC Director *Sean O'Reilly*, both as contributor to our morning's Branch Meeting and AGM, and as a participant in our day's activities.

MANAGING HISTORIC LUDLOW

18th March 2015

Bill Klempner explained that EH were in discussion with Ludlow Castle trustees over an exciting new project to roof in the remarkable cylindrical Norman chapel. The Chapel was largely intact with the exception of a stretch of parapet and its square chancel, both of which were missing. Several options were under discussion, including (1) a contemporary scheme; (2) a traditional timbered structure with a lantern evoking old illustrations; (3) a late medieval type leaded flat roof; and (4) a timber-framed conical roof that got round the issue of needing to reinstate the missing section of parapet involved in the other options.



C12 Circular Chapel, Ludlow Castle

In the 1990s EH had carried out a 'risk assessment' of the 250 or so Castle sites in the Welsh Marches, and had identified four (Wigmore, Wilton, Hopton and Clifford) for urgent attention to secure their preservation. Wigmore was the earliest to be tackled, with tree and undergrowth clearance followed by repair and consolidation, including a new and effective 'soft capping' technique'. A small excavation had accompanied this work, providing rich results giving a large amount of information about the use and temporal occupation of the castle, as well as a substantial intact wall face. Wilton had been repaired in collaboration with the private owner. Hopton had been acquired by a single-project charitable trust which had been able to draw down £1.3m Architectural Heritage Fund and EH grant aid for a project involving repairs, stabilisation and opening to the public. A hard-capping system had been tried, but it failed and had to be replaced within six months.

Work was also taking place at Richards Castle, Kilpeck and Snodhill. At this last undergrowth clearance had revealed that part of the curtain wall had survived to full height, an entirely new discovery.

Sonja Belchere said that part of her job was to maximise revenue over and above conventional visitor admission charges. The rolling maintenance programme was costly and significant new initiatives such as the re-roofing of the chapel needed funding. The Castle hosted two regular annual festivals, was available as a wedding venue, and was home to a martial arts group specialising in spectacularly authentic medieval combat. A former prison range dating from c1500, and an empty shell, had been reroofed and glazed in 1994 to create a new Castle Shop, providing a source of trading revenue. Residential accommodation formerly occupied by Council tenants had been converted by the Trustees into short-let self-catering apartments. A five-year plan, extended into a 10-year development plan, is in operation. Visitor levels were currently running at about 56,000 a year.

James Caird said that the Ludlow Conservation Area Advisory Committee ("LCAC") had been established in 1987 and now been operational for 28 years. Personnel had changed over the years, but not totally, and relationship with the local authority had changed too. The LCAC was now virtually an informal stand-alone body operating on a self-servicing basis, but continuing to advise on Listed Building Consent and Planning Applications within the Conservation Area. The remit had more recently been extended to include pre-planning consultations. The majority of applications were no longer ill-designed or poorly specified, as had many in the earlier years. The LCAC had established the significant point that a genuine historic town had visitor pulling-power and hence the economic vitality that a poorly-conserved town would not have. Potential applicants were realizing that prior consultation meant that an application could be submitted on the basis of the advice given, and so have a good chance of approval. A particular enterprise was the annual *Ludlow Heritage Awards* which attracted considerable interest and gave the LCAC a sort of AGM – which, in turn, provided a platform for recruitment and co-option.

Dan Lloyd of Ludlow Civic Society described the Society's new building condition survey operation. Volunteers (not just Society members) gathered together to receive training and organise and implement external visual surveys using a standard record form, in which local knowledge was an

important ingredient. This was enabling the Society and its partners (including Shropshire Council) to get a clear picture of the condition of the town's fabric (including about 1,500 properties) and identify 'buildings at risk' for further action. Ludlow contained a whole series of rear courtyards that needed to be penetrated. Sometimes it was necessary to find a high viewpoint to check on the condition of roofs not visible from sometimes very narrow streets.

The Society had a record of pro-active activity, the current project being the formation of a public garden on a disused stretch of land.

Stephen Treasure said that his company had passed from father to son since its establishment in 1746. However, it had only been located in Ludlow since 1937. Members of the principal trades (masons, joiners, plumbers) were employed in-house and the joinery workshop was equipped to replicate historic mouldings exactly. Much depended on materials. It was usually far better to retain and re-use what was already in a building, rather than attempt to replace it. C19 softwood, example, was usually slow-grown and hence far more durable than the fast-grown C21 equivalent, with its wide-set growth rings. Hardwood was proving a problem, with traditional imported timber such as teak running out as being no longer sustainable. More limited quantities of truly sustainable hardwoods had to be actively sought-out, and the situation was changing all the time. A requirement for double glazing meant that the minimum-size glazing bar had to be more substantial than the original in a single-glazed window. Much stone used in Ludlow in the past could no longer be obtained as the quarries had closed. Equivalent stone, such as Hollington sandstone, had to be sought out and matched as far as possible to the colour and texture needed.

Shaun Ward said that he had been 'head-hunted' to run the St Laurence' Church 'Vision Project' as Co-Ordinator. He also acts as organist and choirmaster but had received training in architectural conservation. St Laurence' dates from 1199 but was greatly enlarged using the proceeds of the town's late medieval wool trade in C15. It became a collegiate church with its own choir school. A Georgian intervention resulted in the installation of an organ in 1760. Gilbert Scott ran a significant restoration in 1860, followed by further work undertaken by his son Oldrid Scott and then by Sir Arthur Blomfield. A particular treasure was the large amount of surviving C15 stained glass.

Numerous repair and conservation programmes were on-going, and a particular current concern was energy consumption. The late C19 hot water radiators and pipes had survived and remained in use, but the very old-fashioned boiler had been taken out of use and replaced by a temporary experimental installation involving three domestic-size boilers under computer control. It had been found possible to stand down one of the three by means of the principle of having the heat on 24/7 and using the building's massive stonework as a heat sink, which only thereafter needed modest topping-up. Negotiations are taking place with the DAC about the design and specification of a permanent heating system. The shallow-pitch lead roofs are largely out of sight-lines, and have potential to accept solar heating panels. Another project is an internal re-ordering creating a sanctuary under the tower accompanied by flexible seating.

The Vision Project is involved in raising the building's profile and maximising its use. There is an established concert programme and this is being extended by retail fairs and children's play activity. A

volunteer-run Church shop is in operation. These create an income stream that can be fed back into the repair, conservation and development of the building. Visitor numbers are currently running at 65,000 a year, despite the fact that the church, so conspicuous a part of the townscape from a distance, is invisible down a side alley from close-to.

LUDLOW WALKABOUT

18th March 2015

The Castle

Our guide for the tour of the Castle was 'Lady Caroline'. She appeared dressed in a full-length green velvet gown, with a late medieval horned head-dress on her head, complemented by a square-shouldered 1950s fur jacket and an improbable pearl rope. Her approach concentrated on the seamy side of medieval life, with its unhygienic ways, with a calculated and effective series of punch-lines. Her main theme was the life of the medieval castle as illustrated by its surviving structures.



Ludlow Castle. 'Lady Caroline' in action

The Castle was first built by the baron who had been granted extensive lands in the Welsh Marches following the Norman conquest, choosing a defensible height above the River Teme. The Castle had later expanded over part of the town that had been erected outside its gates, to create a sizeable inner bailey and an enormous outer bailey.

In the C12 a large gatehouse/keep was built, which survives as an intact shell with a number of Norman details. Perhaps almost contemporary with the keep is the free-standing circular chapel – a tall stone cylinder lacking its roof and with its rectangular chancel reduced to ground level. Everything else is still there – 'west' doorway with zig-zag moulded arch, internal blind arcading, and a remarkable chancel arch that curves in plan as well as elevation, a very tricky problem for a C12 master mason working with round arches. The chapel has been used in recent years for 'carols by candle-light' services, and the current proposal to put a new roof on seems to be very worthwhile.

'Palace' apartments were created by the rich and notorious baron Roger Mortimer in the C14, of which quite a few features survive. In the Elizabethan period grand lodgings were built against the inner bailey wall by the then tenant. Again, interesting C16 details survive.

In the outer bailey, features are more modest. One range, post-Elizabethan, backs against the inner face of the wall. Besides being converted into a 'reception suite' this range includes a modern café, separated from the outer wall by a narrow passageway over which a contemporary-style glazed roof has been installed. The other side of the main

gate opening into the town is occupied by the Castle shop, a modern construction within the shell of a C16 prison.



Ludlow Castle.

C12 'Gatehouse Keep' as seen from Inner Bailey



Prison block converted into Ludlow Castle shop

The Castle seems to be in the hands of a lively and innovative management, running programmes of repair and development, funded by income streams generated by an increasing variety of activities and uses.

The Town

Ludlow its origins providing 'services' for the Castle, but, with the C14 boom in sheep farming, became a major trading settlement in its own right, with money to spend on half-timbered town houses and the impressive St Laurence' Church. Ludlow exhibits a medieval planned layout, with a grid of streets around a central spine.



Market Hall, Ludlow, return elevation as framed by frontages

In his portion of the walkabout, Stephen Treasure pointed out that as fashions changed, the wealthy had altered their houses to suit – placing render over half-timbering and then replacing the render by Georgian brick. In consequence, most town-centre buildings are multi-period, and can come up with some significant conservation problems, particularly when shutting-in behind render has let to rot of the timber frame. One town centre building retains its side elevation timber frame, but has a modern frontage with render over blockwork – in response to the situation!

The strategically-placed early C18 Market Hall was, interestingly, built in Grinshill sandstone from the other end of the county – long before the arrival of the railway. Since Grinshill quarries remain open, the supply of stone for the repair of this particular building is not a problem!

St Laurence Church.

We had the opportunity to enter the upper chamber of the hexagonal South Porch, via a spiral stair accessed from the South Aisle. Here, the remains of medieval wall paintings were currently being uncovered and consolidated, including a frieze of roses and a saint's head. We went on up to the stair to the lead roof above, where we could view the masonry of the south clerestory, south transept and the tower.



St Laurence, Ludlow, Central tower from below

All clerestory windows had huge lead aprons, one of several responses to the problems caused by the inadequate rainwater disposal system. Capacity was being increased by additional chutes and channels in a rolling programme. Until recently, massive quantities of water had been passing under the cills of the clerestory windows and falling down inside, causing inner stonework decay.



St Laurence South Clerestory seen from aisle roof, featuring Sean O'Reilly!

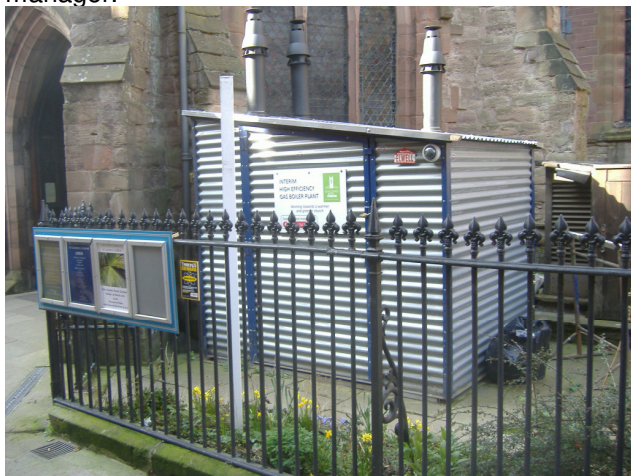
In his 'restoration' programme Arthur Blomfield had completely re-surfaced the tower faces in replica, using a local stone of rather indifferent quality. Recently, de-frassing and patch repointing had been necessary, involving about half a ton of loose stone, all done by abseiling from above. A great many of the nave and transept pinnacles were C20 and C21 replacements for defective predecessors. Clearly, the care of St Laurence's exterior stonework is an unending 'Forth Bridge repainting' type operation.

Internally, the building felt warm, indicating the effectiveness of the experimental heating installation. Whilst re-ordering and pew removal are operations that often cause problems with the Victorian Society, I did not see that either the nave stalls or pews were of such quality as to justify opposition. What is far more important is Gilbert Scott's encaustic pavement, which does require maximum care.

C19 interventions had included an early Victorian removal of the carved reredos screen to the east wall, with odd, naïve statuary. Stained glass consolidation was a major element in the current series of fabric programmes.

Energy saving had recently involved installation of 100% LED lighting, thereby achieving a large saving in the electricity bill – using the old circuitry.

Substantial sums of money are clearly being raised and spent on a rolling programme of fabric repair and consolidation. It would be good to know more about the 'Vision Project' and the way in which it funds Shaun's very varied work. He seems to be a remarkable mix of project manager, project development officer; publicity officer; revenue development officer and events programme manager.



St Laurence. Temporary Boiler House

THE SUSTAINABLE GROWTH OF CATHEDRAL CITIES AND HISTORIC TOWNS

Dave Burton-Pye

Possibly not the sort of snappy title to grab a reader's attention and make them want to devour every page, avidly searching for the answers to life and the universe, or new uses for cable ties. Nonetheless, a completely random phone call just over a year ago from someone I had never met led to a very interesting commission and a chance for me to engage in something other than the Heritage Assessment and/or Planning Support Statements that have formed the core of my business for the last

four years (alongside designing a couple of 'bespoke' houses on sensitive sites in conservation areas ...)

In short a consultant from Kent – namely Richard Bate of Green Balance - was tendering for an English Heritage research project under the aegis of the National Heritage Protection Plan 2A1: Development Pressure and NHPP 6B1: Conservation Area erosion and wanted an ex-local government planner with conservation expertise to cover the Midlands and north of England. My name was suggested to him and happily our bid was successful. I still recall the wording of his email which started with "hold onto your hats we've won the tender".

The full details of how places were chosen for study, the criteria that had to be fulfilled in terms of their size and planning status (in terms of having a post NPPF Local Plan or Core Strategy adopted) are all set out in the final report which runs to 180 pages.

This article outlines my own thoughts on the process that we went through and some of the lessons learned. It represents my personal reflections on the work that we did and the experiences gained. In essence we were seeking evidence to show whether the National Planning Policy Framework was capable of reconciling two of its main aims that are potentially in conflict with each other – namely delivering the Government's growth agenda whilst conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

To do so one member of the team reviewed the scale of development anticipated in fifty towns covered by up-to-date development plans. Richard and I looked at the weight given to 20 whole historic towns in the plan-making process by looking at all relevant heritage policy documents, Development Plan Documents (including sustainability appraisals) and saved policies from earlier plans. We conducted telephone interviews with development management and/or conservation staff as well as a representative from a local voluntary sector body such as a Civic Society. In doing so we wanted to try and establish whether in their approaches to determining planning applications council's were doing what the development plan said on the tin – did they practice, in decision-taking, what they preached, in decision-making? The voluntary sector view on this was important in giving an "independent" view on how locals viewed this issue and I think we were experienced enough to distinguish between genuine concerns and contrary views on individual proposals where someone may have had an axe to grind.

Inevitably approaches to heritage matters were extremely varied. Some local plans were easy to read with a clear focus on the historic environment, others paid scant regard to such matters. Some places had heritage at the heart of the Core Strategy, elsewhere it didn't merit a mention. Many places had a good (sometimes very good) evidence base but the detailed approach to policy often evident in old style development plans is not carried forward into the newer breed of plan. Its possibly invidious to single out examples but I thought how clearly the plans for Whitehaven (ie Copeland Borough Council) address the issue of setting, how well written is the Core Strategy for South Gloucestershire, and the neighbourhood plan for Thame is, in my view, an exemplar of its kind – focussed, concise and simple. Almost how planning used to be before evidence bases had to be carried in crates before being consigned to skips – and as far as the historic environment is concerned, some that I've seen could cut out the middle man and go straight to skip!

Unsurprisingly, the key finding is that councillors and their approach to heritage is what helps to safeguard its role. Where it is viewed as critical to the well being of a town it is well supported, but in some areas – especially where a local economy may have been devastated by the loss of its former core industrial base – the creation of jobs in crinkly tin sheds on the edge of a historic town centre can be seen as an essential component in its regeneration.

The third and most detailed element of the research was to look at the different methodologies employed in reconciling growth and heritage interests in eight small cathedral cities. We looked at four each, mine being Chester, Durham, Lichfield and Oxford and as well as the methodologies, I found the dynamics fascinating.

Chester and Durham had both become unitary authorities since the former local plans were adopted and their respective approaches to preserving the setting of their two cities post-NPPF were completely different with Chester choosing to spread the load to settlements beyond its former boundaries. Within the city itself a wealth of reports about its character and special qualities had been produced over a great many years. I thought it was notable that some of the mid-late twentieth century developments, lauded at the time for their innovative approaches to materials and form, were now decried as the monstrosities that, in my opinion, they always were. Many new developments now seem to be achieving much higher standards but interestingly some interviewees expressed a view that good quality development is easier to negotiate when markets are booming and developers have more “wriggle room” to pay attention to such matters. In harder times there can be a fear that developers will simply walk away bringing political pressure to bear from councillors who were expecting sites to be delivered. The most recent (2012) characterisation study of Chester provides a good evidence base for decision making and I was interested to see that whilst it still uses some of the criteria established in the seminal report by Donald Insall in 1968, the technology now available via GIS systems enables data to be captured and used much more rigorously. On a personal note, it was flattering to be invited as the guest speaker by the Chester Civic Trust to their AGM last October to outline these thoughts.

A visit to Durham was the icing on the cake giving me chance once again to see the iconic views of the cathedral and castle on their spectacular clifftop setting above the sweeping curve of the River Wear. The city has some fine examples of new development (as well as the inevitable turkeys) and had always kept a very close rein on development with its tightly drawn Green Belt boundaries. The new unitary authority however had a different political imperative and sought to release Green Belt land close to the city – an approach which has been found to be unsound by the inspector there. It's probably best if I keep my thoughts out of print until matters are eventually resolved other than to say I'm not surprised by the inspector's findings.

Lichfield seems to benefit from the sound evidence base established through the comprehensive characterisation reports, in various guises, that are available throughout many towns and villages within Staffordshire – excellent resources produced by the County Council in partnership with some districts - which I have used on numerous occasions. In conjunction with a well founded approach to urban design some of the large new developments there cleverly incorporate and maintain views to the cathedral's three spires that

are such an important element of the city's character and setting.

Oxford's view cones were identified in the 1960's and various planning policies restricted the heights of buildings in the city. Unfortunately these heights were seen by developers as 'the norm' resulting in poorly articulated roofscapes with long expanses of roofs that are ill at ease with the jumbled variety of its traditional buildings. To address this, the city has developed/is developing new tools to guide and assess new proposals but whilst these are comprehensive and well intentioned they are rather complex and only time will tell how effectively they are used by developers and the council itself in preparing and determining applications. This is crucial because some parts of the city, beyond the immediate confines of “The Dreaming Spires”, comprise woeful buildings and an uninspiring public domain. On the city wide scale, the growth agenda requires a very high level of development, and in a city confined by both its tightly drawn Green Belt and administrative boundaries, it is not apparent that the political differences between the (Labour) City Council and its (Conservative) neighbours are likely to address the duty to co-operate. I certainly interpreted my interview with Oxford Civic Trust as a “cri-de-coeur” for all of the authorities there to get their acts together and provide a strong and united approach to the issues affecting the city.

Over and above the issues raised in individual places some things really struck a chord. In the university cities it is clear that New Labour's adage about education, education, education, was not obviously correlated with the older adage about location, location, location. The universities collective imperative to “put bums on seats” (for which read “pounds in the universities pockets”) was not obviously complemented by adequate strategies as to address where those extremities would be put in the hours beyond the chalkface. As a consequence, the design and location of purpose built accommodation blocks and the effects that “studentification” has on large areas of the cities through its impact on housing markets as well as the social and physical fabric of the buildings and areas affected, raise very real concerns and issues that have no well established mechanism through which they can be adequately debated and resolved.

I was also interested, as stated above, by the shifting political approaches wrought by the establishment of new unitary authorities at Chester and Durham. I strongly suspect that during the course of the next parliament the even more draconian cuts to public services, that will inevitably result, will lead to more unitaries being established. If this is the case I do wonder how it will affect decision making in the planning system.

If you're interested to see the full report it's on the following link:

<http://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/sustainable-growth-of-cathedral-cities-and-historic-towns/>.

Professionally I found it hugely rewarding to be pushed quite a long way out of my comfort zone into the sort of research that I've never undertaken before and, realistically, I don't anticipate that I'll be involved in the like of this again. I'm glad the opportunity came along and it's an interesting addition to my CV and website, but now it's back to the daily business of heritage assessments and planning applications that keep my wheels turning and pay the bills.

MICHIGAN VERNACULAR STONEMWORK

Peter Arnold

I was in Michigan, USA, for six days this April. During this time I discovered a local vernacular stonework technique. This was not through careful scientific enquiry, but through a series of revelatory encounters.



Baptist Church, Palo, Michigan, USA. Roughly-dressed boulders set upright alternating with cobbles

The settlement pattern in south central Michigan is rather Irish. That is, there is a network of small towns and a countryside featuring frequent homesteads, with clusters of homesteads (hamlets) and bigger clusters (villages) being rather rare. However, one such village, Palo, was near to where I was staying. From what I could see it had a timber-clad chapel and a significant brick house or two, so I stopped off for a few photographs. Whilst I was taking pictures of the timber Methodist Chapel a local resident directed me at a "stone church" a way up the next road. By the way she said it, this church was clearly something special. So it was. A partly cruciform Baptist Church with a stumpy square tower in the angle between two gables. The fascinating thing was that all the exterior walls were formed of roughly-dressed boulders bordered by large cobbles, all set in mortar. The alternation between boulder and cobble formed a regular pattern.

After this eye-opening encounter, I began to see other structures using the same technique – usually houses, boundary walls and retaining walls.



Gable wall of 1847 Schoolhouse, near Ionia, Michigan, USA

My next revelation was the discovery of an isolated purpose-built School House dated to 1847 – seriously old for this part of the USA. A range of small boulders and large cobbles were set in a

quantity of mortar. But what struck me was the huge geological variety. There were three different kinds of granite, some quartzite and what seemed to be a big lump of flint or chert, along with other more nondescript specimens. Clearly, this was a simple, practical structure put together using materials immediately available locally. I realized I was looking at a legacy of glaciation, in which moving ice had reduced this part of Michigan to a gently undulating plain suitable for clearance and arable cultivation. Obviously, field clearance had resulted in a stock of cobbles and boulders ('glacial fallout') that were at hand for building.



Detail of geological variety

However, polite ashlar stonework was also to be found, a commercial sandstone quarry opening up near Ionia, Michigan, furnishing stone for the very large county courthouse and also for the quarry proprietor's villa. Masoned stone was quite a frequent occurrence.



Vernacular cobblestone-built house in Crystal, Michigan. Tin-plated sheet metal roof with raised seams is also a local vernacular technique



House in Saranac, Michigan, using alternating rough-dressed boulders and cobbles.



Very gently undulating Michigan rural landscape cleared for cultivation

MICHIGAN 'SEASIDE'

Peter Arnold

During my stay in Michigan USA, I found an inland waterside resort. A characteristic of the gently undulating landscape of South Central Michigan is its scatter of small lakes, sometimes clustered into mini 'lake districts'.

One of the larger lakes in the locality was Crystal Lake, probably a mile wide and two miles long. There was no beach as such, just a six-inch soil 'cliff' against which small waves broke. No tides here! Clearly, this stretch of open water had its attractions, both as a place to live and somewhere to visit. Houses clustered thickly around the shores, and a small resort town, Crystal, had grown up on the eastern shore, a large public park forming an interface with the water. Up the slope from the waterside was a single main street, with a spired chapel, a cinema made up out of an old 'Nissen' hut and a few banks, filling stations, and shops.

A special feature was a row of bathing huts, jealously placarded as "*Crystal Heights Association. Members only. Private. No Trespassing.*"

Along the main street I found two vernacular stone houses and a complex timber framed structure that could have been a school room. In the side street leading to the park and the water was the public library, a former *cottage ornee* built of local brick topped by a vernacular sheet steel roof with raised seams. Round the corner and fronting the water was a disused timber shop or Chandler's store with a characteristic raised fascia on the frontage. This vernacular building was sitting there waiting to fall down – or so it seemed.



Crystal Lake, Michigan



Presbyterian Chapel, Crystal, Michigan



'Nissen Hut' cinema, Crystal, Michigan – see curved corrugated iron structure to left.



Crystal public library



Row of private bathing huts, Crystal



Timber former schoolhouse (?) Crystal



Disused chandler's (?) premises, Crystal

EDITOR'S SHOPPING LIST

Your Editor welcomes, for the next Edition of the Newsletter (No 55), to go out in Autumn 2015, the following:

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

Material for inclusion in No 55 should, preferably, arrive not later than the end of August 2015. Please contact your *Newsletter Editor*: Peter Arnold, 16 Elmbank Road, Walsall WS5 4EL; 01922 644219; peterdeearnold@yahoo.co.uk

PICTURE POSTSCRIPT



Ludlow. On the way from the railway station. Whilst visible from afar, St Laurence is so deeply tucked into the urban fabric that it disappears!



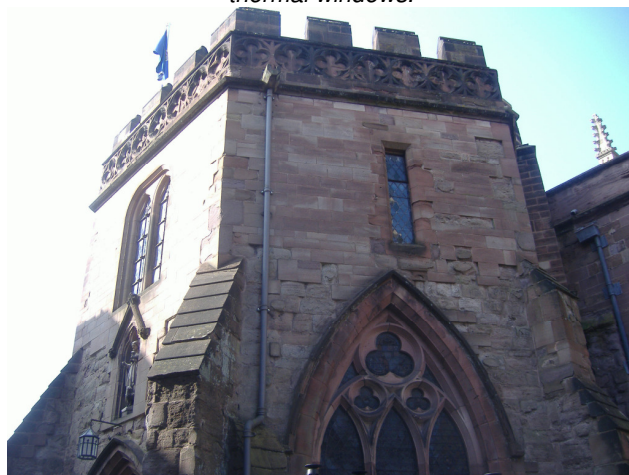
Ludlow Castle Chapel. Blind arcading inside



Victorian Ludlow. Opposite the Castle gate.



Single-storey office on Castle Square with (Neo-Classical) thermal windows.



Hexagonal porch at St Laurence Ludlow.



IHBC expeditionary force prepares to breach the outer bailey defences of Ludlow Castle