

# NEWSLETTER

*Issue 28 February 2007*

IHBC

WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH

INSTITUTE OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS CONSERVATION

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## DIARY DATES

### 1<sup>st</sup> BRANCH MEETING 2007

- ❖ *Tuesday 13th March 2007.* At Ludlow, from 10.090am at the Offices of South Shropshire District Council. To be hosted by Colin Richards. Featuring Green Conservation and technical developments in practice as deployed at Ludlow Castle.

### URBAN TRIPPERS EVENT

- ❖ *Trip to Ljubliana, Solvenia.* 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> March 2007. Cost about £215. Further details from Roger Cullimore, telephone 01926 456508 or Email : [roger.cullimore@wardwickdc.gov.uk](mailto:roger.cullimore@wardwickdc.gov.uk)

### DAY SCHOOL 2007

- ❖ *Contemporary Design in an Urban Context.* Date and venue to be announced. Enquiries to Roger Cullimore, telephone 01926 456508 or Email : [roger.cullimore@wardwickdc.gov.uk](mailto:roger.cullimore@wardwickdc.gov.uk).
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## PEOPLE

Congratulations! To:

- ❖ *Karen Holyoake*, our retiring Branch Representative, who has recently been awarded a PhD and so is now Dr Holyoake.
  - ❖ *Claire Hines*, who is on maternity leave from Walsall MBC following the birth of her son *Samuel James* on 14<sup>th</sup> January.
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## CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

Ian Kilby

### SHADES OF GREEN

It has been an interesting time for the branch and the Institute generally as we continue to respond to an increasingly testing climate, both politically and environmentally.

The recent consultation on the Planning White paper highlights a number of the issues that we have considered from time to time as a branch where we have discussed the tension that can exist between the two faces of conservation. That is the need to conserve resources and tackle (if that is the

right word) climate change – balanced against our objective of preserving the historic built environment. The two meet head on in Part L of the Building Regulations and through a series of events, presentations by guest speakers and discussions with Building Control Surveyors. It seems to me that there is still a long way to go and a lack of empirical data hinders our understanding and ability to quantify the true environmental cost of new build versus repair and reuse. For example, what weight should be attributed to the embodied energy in an existing building? It has been suggested that it takes the energy equivalent of one gallon of petrol to produce 6 bricks. The embodied energy in the bricks of a typical Victorian terraced house would drive a car more than 10 times around the world. Fascinating but not really dealing with the point. There needs to be level playing field - a clear and accurate means of comparing the performance of different forms of construction and in particular looking at the overall energy "costs" of a development.

It was encouraging to learn therefore that South Shropshire District Council has recently appointed an Energy Surveyor who will look specifically at the energy performance of historic buildings and new "green" buildings. SSDC is leading on the latter with the construction of three prototype buildings, two at Acton Scot museum and a temporary exhibition space at Ludlow Castle. The Acton Scot buildings will be of particular interest, one being a straw bale construction, the other of rammed earth. Both will be occupied buildings and need building regulations approval and it will be interesting to follow this development and here learn more about any conclusions the Energy Surveyor draws in the coming months in the coming months.

### THE BRANCH

Turning now to the branch there are changes to announce. *Karen Holyoake*, our branch representative and consultations secretary is standing down at the AGM. A regular at our meetings Karen's contribution to the branch and the work of the Institute has been significant over the last three years – those who have seen the number of consultations she has responded to will be aware of her commitment to the role! I shall be sad to see

Karen go but to those of you at there who would like to get more involved – now is your chance and I am sure Karen wouldn't mind discussion what is involved.

On a personal note I shall also be standing down as Chairman at the AGM. After three years and 12 meetings throughout the region from places as far afield as Coventry, Leek, Birmingham, Oswestry and Codsall it is time to hand the baton over. I would like to thank all those who have supported me over the previous three years, in particular the branch officers who put in a lot of work outside the day job to maintain the profile of our branch as one of the most active in the Country. We have tried to mould the branch activities to reflect the needs of its members – key changes being:

- the acquisition of a lap-top computer for the secretary and for use at meetings to illustrate casework;
- the introduction of training as part of the branch meetings;
- the introduction of CPD certificates for attendance at training sessions;
- meetings that are held regularly, spread throughout the region and shared between urban and rural locations;
- publication of a regular newsletter – via e-mail or paper copy if required;
- all papers are now circulated electronically unless otherwise required;
- development of the web site with examples of good/bad practice.

I had hoped to change the format of meetings to make these more interactive. A greater focus on casework, issues and opportunity for discussion should be encouraged to maintain the vitality of the group but perhaps this is something that will come in the future.

All the best.

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## EDITORIAL

Particular thanks in connection with the contents of this issue go to our Guest Speakers at the 30<sup>th</sup> November Branch Meeting – *John Meadows* and *Phil Ogley*, both of whom who took the trouble to check and correct your Editor's summary notes, with the result that they accurately reflect what was said on the day.

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## BRANCH MEETING

30<sup>th</sup> November 2006

Took place at the 112 Colmore Row Birmingham offices of English Heritage, by arrangement with John Yates. John was not unfortunately present to host the meeting as he was travelling in the USA.

The meeting was an 'inside' day with presentations by *John Meadows* of English Heritage on tree-ring dating and *Phil Ogley* of Oxley Conservation on the updated Building Regulations Part L.

The No 112 'front of house' reception area contained a hot water urn, which, watched by many people anxious for tea or coffee, took an unconscionable time to boil!

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## VIEW OUT OF THE WINDOW

30<sup>th</sup> November 2006

The ground floor conference room at 112 Colmore Row is at the back of the building. Fortunately, it had openable windows, as around 40 people in a smallish space generated quite a lot of heat. These

windows opened on to a very narrow light well. Rising up on the other side was a late C20 brick wall in stretcher bond, the bricks being dark red and quite highly textured. It wasn't just a blank wall. Openings had segmental heads in brick and were timber-framed with sash-pattern windows, providing natural daylight to offices. One wonders why the specifiers went to the trouble of this kind of brick and window for a non-public light-well elevation.



*View out of 112 Colmore Row Conference Room window*

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## NEXT DOOR

30<sup>th</sup> November 2006



*Eagle Star Building, Colmore Row*

Actually, in the same frontage but not quite next door was W R Lethaby's remarkable Free Style *Eagle Star Building*, with its ground floor room now operating as a restaurant. It is a pity that EH weren't able to set up their regional office in this very special building. No 112 is agreeable and Early Victorian, at

least in outward appearance, but it is just good townscape rather than anything very special.



Eagle Star Building - Ground Floor detail



## DENDROCHRONOLOGY – as used for building dating

John Meadows,  
EH Scientific Dating Team  
30<sup>th</sup> November 2006

The initial application of dendrochronology by English Heritage was for dating waterlogged timbers discovered during archaeological work. Now English Heritage uses dendrochronology mainly on historic buildings, for example in response to Planning/LBC consultations. Usually, a consultant dendrochronologist is hired to visit and report on the building in question.

Basically dendrochronology is the 'science of dating tree rings'. Each ring represents a year's growth, and each year's growth is influenced by the weather of that year. A long sequence of good and bad years for tree growth is never repeated exactly, so a sequence of tree ring-widths acts as a kind of 'bar code' that can be read off with the appropriate equipment and techniques. Despite the potential for regional variations, at a given location tree rings for a single year usually reveal similar characteristics.

An essential tool is a database of tree-ring reference chronologies. The more the better. This provides a 'master' profile of annual tree-ring variations against which the ring variations displayed on a single tree or piece of timber can be checked. This process is called 'matching' and is usually done statistically by computer, though, visually, a plot of tree-ring widths from the individual sample can be compared against the reference chronologies provided by the database. Statistical comparison is expressed in 't-values', the higher 't-value' indicating the greater the likelihood of the match.

Part of the process involves the comparison of several samples from a single site, called 'cross-matching'. This gives far better results than from a single sample, as it averages-out the readings provided by timber from several trees, helping to reduce variant readings resulting from events affecting the growth of individual trees. Cross-matching creates a 'site chronology' which is then compared to the database to produce an accurate date 'fit'. The best fits should be found with local and regional reference chronologies. However, oddities sometimes occur when a site chronology best matches characteristics from *another* region, which can indicate that the timber was imported!

It is only possible to work out actual felling dates if individual samples go right to the bark edge (rare). Bark-edge samples give the precise year and may indicate the season in which the tree was felled. Since sapwood only contains a known and limited number of rings samples containing sapwood provide a felling date range. Where there is no sapwood in the sample then the last surviving heartwood ring is dated, indicating that the tree was felled at a time after that date (the felled-after date is the minimum number of sapwood rings after the last heartwood ring date).

Trees were traditionally felled for a particular project. Green oak timber was far easier to work than seasoned oak. This means that the date of felling is very close to the date of construction, the felling date being, effectively, the construction date. Only very large projects, such as cathedrals, contain significant amounts of stockpiled timber from a range of sources.

Timber was of course recycled. Part of the site sampling process involves examining the

timbers to identify the recycled wood by means of disused notches, smoke blackening or other features. Reused timbers are usually not sampled.

Tree ring dating gives results far more precise than radiocarbon dating. A minimum of 50 growth rings per sample is desirable. It is also essential to take samples from timbers representing several trees. 8-10 samples are desirable when working with oak.

Regional tree-ring databases are variable. That for the West Midlands is very good. In fact, the West Midlands has the highest national concentration of historic timber-framed buildings. Databases also have age-related strengths and weaknesses. Coverage is excellent for Roman Britain, and Medieval and early post-Medieval Britain, declining again from the Stuart period. Softwood from Northern Europe began to be imported and used in the post-medieval period. Dating of this wood depends on tree ring data being made available from the source countries – Russia, Estonia, Sweden and so on. And the issue is complicated by the use of softwood from multiple sources – including, by the C19, North America.

The great majority of tree-ring work is done on oak, the principal UK structural timber. But, as stated above, softwood also appears in more modern construction. Some traditional buildings however use elm. So part of the job of sampling involves identifying the timber type, too.

Samples are taken by using a hollow-core electric drill. The core is removed and polished for the purpose of recording and reading. The hole left in the structural timber may be plugged. There are no structural consequences. Some timber, particularly that involved in fixtures and furnishings, is too sensitive to be subjected to that technique. So either a similar micro-drill is used or, where portable, the wood is taken to the laboratory to be examined under a microscope. Occasionally, photographs or impressions are used to record tree rings.

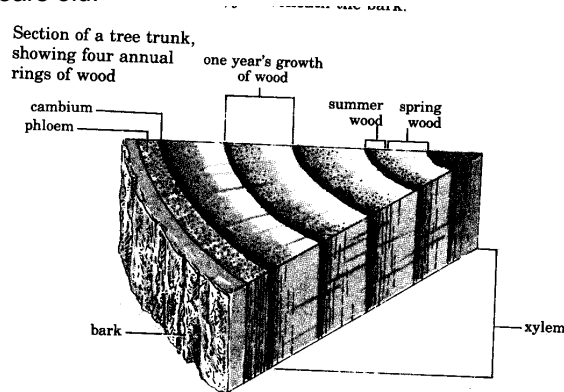
It is important and valuable to record the positions of timbers sampled on drawings. Particularly for a larger and more complex building, this can give clues as to construction sequence.

Technical reports on dendrochronological investigations commissioned by EH are published in a standard format and copies can be obtained on request (<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/nav.9596>). Individual dendrochronology laboratories also publish their results in the journal *Vernacular Architecture*.

The English Heritage Scientific Dating team, based in London, commissions dendrochronological investigations in response to requests from EH regional offices. General advice on dendrochronology can be obtained from John Meadows (020 7973 3299; [john.meadows@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:john.meadows@english-heritage.org.uk)). Technical advice can also be obtained from EH's dendro adviser, Cathy Tyers, at Sheffield University (0114 276 3146). In 1998 EH published a booklet giving dendrochronology guidelines. This can be viewed through the EH website at [http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/upload/pdf/Dendrochronology\\_Guidelines\\_on\\_producing\\_and\\_interpreting\\_dendrochronological\\_dates\\_2004.pdf](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/upload/pdf/Dendrochronology_Guidelines_on_producing_and_interpreting_dendrochronological_dates_2004.pdf)

During questions, John said that there was a separate branch of tree-ring study called dendroclimatology which could be used to help reconstruct the weather patterns of the past. Trees like yews (which were subject to considerable mythological speculation) were very difficult to tree-ring date unless felled. They had complex multi-stem forms which resisted the normal core-drill sampling

technique. Where ring-recording had been possible, a reputed 1,000-year yew was identified as just 200 years old.



The Editor's special thanks to John for checking and correcting this summary of his talk.

## UPDATED PART 'L' - and the Implications for Historic Buildings

**Phil Ogley, Oxley Conservation**  
**30<sup>th</sup> November 2006**

*These notes of his presentation were prepared by the Editor*

Oxley Conservation are consultants to English Heritage. They are currently working on a update of the original EH publication *Building Regulations and Historic Buildings*, in response to the revisions to Part 'L' promulgated on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2006. Consultations on the revised document are underway with publication due in the Spring of 2007. The new publication will be more detailed and comprehensive than the original publication.

The present revisions to Part 'L' have been driven by EEC directive 2002/91/EC - aimed at reducing climate change through a radical reduction of carbon dioxide emissions by buildings. The issue is energy efficiency and energy conservation by both active and passive methods. The target is a 60% - preferably 90% - reduction in energy consumption by buildings by 2050.

Conforming just new construction to the required standards will not be nearly enough. Two thirds of the UK's year 2050 building stock exists now. Just about 21% of the UK's existing dwelling stock was built before 1918 - is therefore of traditional construction. 25% of this pre-1918 stock is either Listed or within Conservation Areas. The 75% balance is unprotected, a matter of significant concern. That said, pre-1918 buildings form such a significant proportion of the whole as to necessitate their inclusion in programmes of energy expenditure reduction.

The revised Part 'L' was a rush-job. Although a long consultation culminated in a "final" draft issued in September '05, a radically different draft was circulated in March 2006, followed almost immediately by promulgation in April '06. As promulgated, it contains both inconsistencies and unclear definitions. A consolidated revision with corrections is impending.

**Windows.** The revised u-value requirement for REPLACEMENT windows is 2.0 W/m<sup>2</sup>.K. Which means, in effect, double glazing and nothing but. There is no such requirement for REPAIRED windows. The moral is to repair existing traditional windows. However, careful draught-stripping can

result in useful U-value gains, so this should be included in repairs.

**Walls & Roofs.** The required U-value for walls is  $0.35 \text{ W/m}^2\cdot\text{K}$ . Translated into traditional construction, this would mean a 2.25m thickness in brick and no less than 4m thickness in Limestone! This is totally impracticable, so some kind of insulation is necessary if solid walls are to comply with the regulations. Any kind of exterior insulation would destroy the appearance of a traditional building – with the very partial exception of a render-finished property. Internal wall insulation (“dry lining”) is little less problematical, isolating the thermal mass of the solid wall from the interior and creating risks of condensation within the wall, as well as a requiring the loss of internal joinery and plasterwork to accommodate the insulation. The target U-value for a warm roof is  $0.20 \text{ W/m}^2\cdot\text{K}$  - which involves 150mm of insulation between and 50mm over rafters. This can only be done if a whole roof is stripped and relaid. A ‘cold’ roof is set at  $0.16 \text{ W/m}^2\cdot\text{K}$ , requiring 250mm of loft insulation. This is comparatively easy to do.

**Floors.** The specified U-value is  $0.25 \text{ W/m}^2\cdot\text{K}$ . This can be attained by 75mm of insulation beneath a solid floor and 150mm under a suspended floor. Installation could be expensive.

**Importantly** wall, roof and floor insulation is required IF as little as 25% of the area of the wall, roof or floor is undergoing *refurbishment* (windows and doors only have to meet target standards if they are being replaced in their entirety). The current edition of the Regulations does not define “refurbishment”. However, even quite localised stripping of a roof for repairs or replastering of an internal wall could trigger the requirement.

There are *exemptions* from the regulations, the wording of which derives from the original EEC directive. Exemption is available when work would “*unacceptably alter the character or appearance*” of: listed buildings, *all* buildings in conservation areas, and scheduled ancient monuments. However, somebody has to decide when a proposal is *unacceptable*. Since LA Building Control Surveyors control Part L, this decision would normally fall to them. However, input from the Conservation Officer of the relevant LA is important. Assessment of impact should use the criteria published in PPG15, whether for an LB or an unlisted building in a CA. *Unconditional exemption* from Part L is available to Churches and conservatories.

Even so, it ultimately falls to the building owner to decide whether or not an application needs to be made for Part L approval. And this involves the owner knowing in the first place Part L requires. A very high proportion of internal works could inadvertently evade the *25% rule* in this way.

The Regulations contain special consideration to “historic buildings”: *Work on historic buildings should aim to improve energy efficiency where and to the extent it is practically possible. [but] not to prejudice the character of the historic building, or increase the risk of long-term deterioration to the building fabric or fittings*”. And certain items of work to “historic buildings” are specifically allowed: replacing lost elements; rebuilding lost structures; making provision to allow buildings to ‘breathe’. In fact, reinstatement of missing features and structures can be done to full traditional standards. Failed aluminium or UPVC double glazing could be replaced by single-glazed timber sashes!

But, “historic building” is no longer defined. Problem! The *previous* definition included: LBs; all CA buildings; locally Listed buildings; buildings of architectural or historic interest within national parks, AONBs, world heritage sites. To these categories

might be added buildings subject to Article 4 Directions and structures within Registered Parks and Gardens. Until the definition can be reinserted, DCLG have advised that the old definitions be used.

**Good Practice.** English Heritage are keen to encourage owners of historic buildings to make improvements where they can. Positive advice on how to approach this will make up the biggest portion of the new guidance.

As with any project in a historic building it is important to develop an understanding before any decisions are made on works. Analysis and measurement can reveal the building’s existing energy performance and can help target resources on the precise areas that need improvement. Fuel bills are a good starting point. Logging of temperature and humidity over a heating season is revealing if time permits. Fan pressurisation tests are a good way of investigating draughts. British Gas recently used this test on a compliant modern building and on a Tudor period half-timbered building. It was the Tudor building that proved to have fewer cold leaks! Then there is thermal imaging which can show up damp areas downgrading the building’s performance. On top of these is dampness testing and occupier feedback itself. Only then decide on the necessary works. One measurement that isn’t very helpful is a standard “SAP” calculation. The SAP methodology includes an inbuilt presumption that traditional-construction buildings are inefficient. It will therefore show a performance rating lower than is actual.

A large amount of energy can be saved by installing a ‘Class A’ boiler. That saving can be doubled by using sophisticated controls, including thermostats on individual radiators. There is no problem for an historic building here except perhaps in the steam plume from the boiler flue!

Suitable passive measures to insulate cold roofs include sheep’s wool, cotton and hemp insulation, which are both hygroscopic and breathable. But don’t block any vents – eaves and others. Creation of a warm roof is possible using wood-fibre boards in combination with the quilt insulants, but it does involve an expensive full stripping and re-laying, along with a potential rise in roof level.

Energy-efficient lamps and bulbs can be fitted everywhere to very good effect with no negative HB impact. And very low-energy LED lighting for domestic use is under development and quite close to being practicable. But, think! Floodlighting for both Scheduled Monuments and landmark historic buildings consumes lots of energy.

On windows, secondary glazing works well for both sound insulation and draught exclusion, fitting secondary glazing in existing window reveals can be tight. Draught-stripping can provide similar thermal benefits at a lower cost.

Materials performance proved a major issue in debate. Certainly, modern impervious materials have been tested in the laboratory, but there is a great shortage of empirical data for actual *in situ* performance. Actual performance is also related closely to workmanship – its quality or the lack of it. All too often, the use of impervious modern materials resulted in condensation or trapped dampness leading to timber rot. It was safest in most circumstances to specify traditional, breathable substances. Conservation Officers could *suggest* alternatives to treatments assessed as damaging or degrading, but would not necessarily have the expertise to do so in every instance.

The Editor's particular thanks to Phil for carefully checking his notes and making numerous corrections and clarifications.

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## SCULPTURE CORNER

30<sup>th</sup> November 2006



*Charles Gore statue – Stirling Lee, Sculptor*

Round the corner from Colmore Row in the Churchyard of St Philip's Cathedral, Birmingham, is a bronze statue of Bishop Charles Gore, first Anglican Bishop of Birmingham. It is the work of sculptor *Stirling Lee*, one of the 'New Sculpture' practitioners who came to the fore in the last quarter of the C19. The Gore statue is a late post-1920 work, and it shows the increased simplicity characteristic of British sculpture by that date.

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## ENGLISH BAROQUE

*The Editor*

St Philip's Cathedral in Birmingham is a rare example of the full-blown English Baroque, architect *Thomas Archer*. Like that of his near contemporary Nicholas Hawksmoor, Archer's work is strongly sculptural, for example remarkable concave faces to the west tower. The articulation of the aisle walls is strong and chunky. The chancel is a C19 addition by Birmingham architect J A Chatwin echoing Archer's manner.

Unexpectedly, a very great treasure internally is four big, blazing windows designed by the pre-Raphaelite artist Burne-Jones was Birmingham-born, which is perhaps why he was given the commission. His paintings can often be oppressively effete, but not so these particular examples of his stained glass!



*St Philip's Cathedral – west face of tower*



*St Philip's – North aisle elevation.  
Rusticated arches set within pilasters supporting heavy entablature.*

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**JOSE PLECNIC**

## The Editor

The 'Urban Trippers' visit to Ljubljana, Slovenia 15-18<sup>th</sup> March 2007, gives an excellent opportunity to view much of the work of that remarkable early C20 architect *Joze Plecnic*. A native of Slovenia, born during the latter years of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Plecnic became a pupil of the famous Otto Wagner in Vienna, subsequently establishing his own practice and doing important work in both Vienna and Prague, Czechia. However, Ljubljana was his home town, and his greatest concentration of designs is here. Plecnic's work is hard to characterize. Perhaps, ultimately, it is a very pure and sculptural use of stripped Neo-Classical forms with a strong Art Deco accent. But expressed in volume and relief rather than as decorative stick-on.

There is a full-length study of Plecnic in English. It is :

*Title:* Jose Plecnic  
*Author:* Damjan Prelovsek  
*Publishers:* Yale University Press  
*Published:* 1997  
ISBN 0 -300-06953-7 4

This book is in many ways tiresome. It is a translation from an original German text. The author's thesis is that Plecnic's architecture is a result of giving practical to application to the theories of the C19 German architectural writer Gottfried Semper. To your editor this approach is both exasperating and very wrong-headed. Plecnic had a very clear and individual architectural creativity that owes very little to anybody's theories. Not only this, but many of the illustrations are inadequate, with quite a few poor photographs. That said, and the author's prejudices filtered-out, the work serves as a useful introduction. And provides a 'shopping list' of Plecnic buildings in and around Ljubljana.

More helpful in many ways are two single volumes in the Phaidon 'Architecture in Detail' series. See :

*Title:* National & University Library, Ljubljana,  
Jose Plecnic

*Author:* Mel Gooding  
*Publishers:* Phaidon  
*Published:* 1997  
ISBN 0 -7148-2938-2

And

*Title:* Church of the Sacred Heart, Prague  
*Author:* Ivan Margolius  
*Publishers:* Phaidon  
*Published:* 1995  
ISBN 0 -7148-3351-7

The former describes this very significant Ljubljana building and gives a taster of some others in the city as well. The latter gives a good picture of St Francis Church, Siska, Ljubljana.

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## A VISIT TO LISIEUX

### The Editor

I was in Lisieux, Normandy France, on a brief pilgrimage at the end of January, travelling via Paris.

#### **Musee d'Orsay, Quai Anatole France, Paris**

I spent an afternoon here. The Musee is devoted to the fine and applied art of the latter half of the C19 and the beginning of the C20. The building has an unusual history, being the purpose-built terminus station of the Paris-Orleans Railway, opened in 1900. The architect was Victor Laloux. Redundant as early as 1939, the building faced a very uncertain future until a decision was taken to convert it into an art gallery. The conversion architects were the *Agence ACT*, and the designer of the exhibition spaces *Gae Aulenti*. The new art gallery opened in

1986. The impressive vaulted space of the main train shed was preserved largely intact, complete with the original ornate pendant clock. The original station hotel ballroom and dining room were refurbished, with the latter being returned to its original use. Additional gallery space was created above the side blocks of the original train shed. The exhibits include a large sectioned model of the famous Paris Opera House, architect *Charles Garnier*, together with a scale model showing the Opera in its townscape setting.



*Musee d'Orsay, main hall*

### Lisieux

Being a communications centre immediately to the south of the Normandy beaches, Lisieux suffered terrible bomb damage in 1944, with about three-quarters of the town centre being destroyed. The rebuilding of the 1950s and 60s however complements what survives from the past in scale, variety and layout. The northern part of the town, including the early Gothic Cathedral, survived the bombing intact, as did part of the quarter surrounding the Carmelite Convent.



*Lisieux - Post WWII rebuilding*

Lisieux is today an internationally important pilgrimage centre through the posthumous witness of one Carmelite nun – St Therese of Lisieux. She died of TB at the age of 24 in 1897. Her spiritual autobiography – *The Story of a Soul* – was published a year later, and had an extraordinary impact. Therese was Beatified in 1923 and Canonized in 1925. Pilgrimage has taken place since 1923.

Lisieux is also the principal market town and service centre for L'Auge district of Normandy. It is a busy place. But, fortunately perhaps, there is no 'plastic window' plague. The historic streets that survive are largely on the shabby side, and retain a very high proportion of their original frontage features. Money is also being spent on the

refurbishment of historic public buildings. The C18 Hotel de Ville was emerging from a comprehensive repair programme which appeared to include 100% repointing, albeit well done. The former Bishop's palace adjoining the cathedral was comprehensively shrouded in scaffolding, and work was taking place in the formal C18 garden of the Bishop's Park, usually open to the public. The Cathedral itself, like all ancient French churches, is in the physical care of the State but in use as a place of worship.



*Historic C18 street near the Cathedral*

**The Basilica**

Carmelite nuns live an enclosed contemplative life. The advent of mass pilgrimage in 1923-5 immediately caused problems. The solution was the erection of a separate place of worship for pilgrims. There was a massive fundraising campaign, the purchase of a new site on the hill above the town, and the appointment of architect and contractor. Building started in 1929 and was substantially complete in 1939, though decoration of the interior continued until 1956.

The appointed architect was *Louis-Marie Cordonnier-Lussigny*, of Lille. The architectural style was basically Angevin Romanesque. Construction was in reinforced concrete, with stone cladding externally and mosaic finish internally. The Basilica is unaisled and immensely tall, with shallow transepts and an apsidal chancel, topped by a huge central drum and dome. Nave and chancel are spanned by deep transverse arches. The west door is at the top of a high flight of steps and faces over a wide terraced forecourt. The west front has lower flanking wings with open arcades.

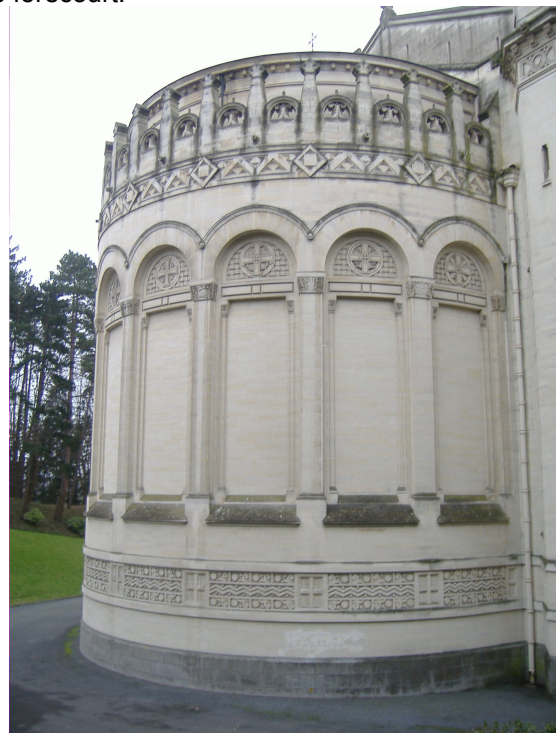


*Basilica – SW wing with open arcades*



*Basilica – from the (liturgical) west*

The fall of the ground means that the apse is terraced into the hill slope whilst the west front stands high and proud of it, giving space for a substantial crypt which is used as a 'winter church'. The crypt is a three-aisled vaulted hall, clad in mosaic, some of the older ones being 'Art Nouveau Survival' in character. To the (liturgical) east of the Basilica is a large and imposing set of outdoor Stations of the Cross. They are in a virtually pure Art Deco style free of period references. The same very strong Art Deco flavour is also very evident in the sculptural detail of the exterior and the 'lamp piers' in the forecourt.



*Apsé – Art Deco surface treatment*



*Art Deco lighting piers*

The main Basilica interior has rich and good quality stained glass with strong red and blue accents. The post-1945 mosaics are rather less happy, stylised and using a harsh and limited colour range. The artist in both media was *Pierre Gaudin*.

### **Les Buissonets**

Another but very different pilgrimage destination is *Les Buissonets*, Lisieux, the family home of Therese before she entered Carmel. This is a modest C19 villa tucked away in a back street. It has been carefully repaired and refurbished to its late C19 condition, with much authentic furniture. Pilgrims are actually invited to negotiate a very narrow winding stair! In addition to its spiritual resonances, it gives a good idea of the bourgeois style of living of the time.

## **EDITOR'S SHOPPING LIST**

Your Editor welcomes, for the next Edition of the Newsletter (No 29), to go out in April 2008, the following:

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

Material for inclusion in No 29 should, preferably, arrive not later than the end of March 2008. Please contact your *Newsletter Editor* : Peter Arnold, 16 Elmbank Road, Walsall WS5 4EL; 01922 644219; [pdarnold@care4free.net](mailto:pdarnold@care4free.net)

## **TOOLS OF THE TRADE**

### **The Editor**

Some while ago I gave some brief details of the *Brompton* folding cycle and its usefulness for site visiting in urban and rural situations. This British-

made machine has since been further developed, and there are some new after-market accessories available too. The *Brompton* is now available with front and rear forks and seat pillar in titanium, which makes for lighter weight when carrying folded. Braking is improved through an after-market drum braked front wheel, made in Australia using an adapted Sturmey-Archer braked hub. UK agents for this conversion kit are *West Country Recumbents* operating out of Melbourne Derbyshire. Email [www.wrhpv.com](http://www.wrhpv.com). An increasingly large number of tyres are now available to fit the *Brompton*, which has 16" wheels (349 bead seat). *Schwalbe* do a seriously puncture-proof type and *Greenspeed* supply a fat slick tyre aimed at low rolling resistance.

## **PICTURE POSTSCRIPT**



*Eagle Star Building, Colmore Row*



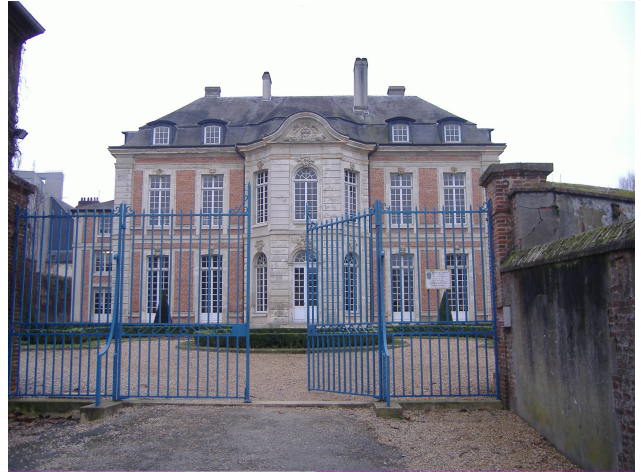
*Musee d'Orsay – Restaurant*



*Norman urban half-timbering. Rue du Dr Lesigne, Lisieux*



*More Norman half-timbering, in Rue du Carmel, Lisieux*



*Recently-refurbished Rococo town house, Lisieux*



*West front, St Peter's Cathedral, Lisieux. Shrouded scaffolding around the former Bishop's Palace to the left.*



*Contrast in Lisieux villas. Circa 1900 to the left with a strong Art Nouveau flavour. Mid-C19 Neo-Renaissance to the right.*

