

# NEWSLETTER

*Issue 30 August 2007*

*Ihbc*

## WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH INSTITUTE OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS CONSERVATION

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### DIARY DATES

#### BRANCH MEETINGS 2007/08

- ❖ Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> September at Lichfield District Council, starting 10.00am. For further details see the *Agenda*;
- ❖ Friday 30<sup>th</sup> November;
- ❖ Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2008, to include Branch AGM.

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### CHAIRMAN'S COLUMN

Dave Burton-Pye

#### MENU – AND SHOPPING LIST

September is often a mixed month. Weather variable and work disrupted by much needed holidays (whether recent – and hence the topic of discussion, current – and hence we are very unavailable, or anticipated – and hence the topic of even more discussion!) Worst of all in my book is the fact that it almost represents the halfway point of the year when it seems that no sooner have budgets been set and agreed than we start looking at next year's and putting in bids. It also means that I must be halfway through my first year as chairman, mulling over where the branch is going and how we're getting on.

In mid July the branch officers got together to discuss how we might ensure that branch meetings are properly focussed, with a specific theme for the day. Charles Shapcott's report from Council will update us all on how things are progressing at a national level and whilst some old stagers like me may sometimes despair of "business plans" and their ilk, the fact remains that they are embedded in current culture and if IHBC needs one then it must be prepared.

Charles has also volunteered to give us his engineering perspective on conservation via a series of articles in the branch newsletter and inputs to the casework slot at our meetings. I've done a separate article about three particular appeal decisions and I'll have the drawings available to project at the next meeting. I'm also very keen to try and carry forward the best practice exemplars that Ian Kilby had advocated so strongly when he was in the Chair. I firmly believe that all of you must have at least one example of a particularly fine piece of work in your area. Whatever it may be and whatever issue it illustrates please consider forwarding it to me – our newsletter is an excellent production and this and/or

the website is an ideal vehicle to disseminate this sort of knowledge. Don't be shy - hiding them under a bushel etc – we've all got access to digital cameras in one form or another, so make sure you take one on site and let's have the results out in the open for all to see and learn from.

One of my aspirations is that the branch meetings should resurrect the ability they once had to accurately represent the views of its members, and for this to happen we need to ensure as good an attendance as possible at the meetings. It's also vital that we maintain a rural/urban balance and indeed that the venues are well spread. It's always beneficial to be able to see examples on the ground and my longstanding view has been that it's invaluable to pick up on different approaches throughout our wide and varied region. If it's been a while since a meeting was held in "your patch", please think hard about volunteering for November 30<sup>th</sup> or March 11<sup>th</sup>. As branch officers, we identified two areas that might prove useful for future meetings. One would be local lists, how they are progressing/lessons learned etc and secondly a day to outline basic drawing/presentational skills. We'll never all have Roger Cullimore's artistic abilities, but an understanding of basic matters might be very useful.

So – I look forward to seeing you at Lichfield and would welcome ideas about the branch at any time. E-mail/phone/fax/letter whatever you prefer – I'm pretty approachable!

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### EDITORIAL

Newsletter 30 is a meaty edition, thanks to contributions by Branch Representative Charles Shapcott (on the Engineer's Point of View) and our Branch Chairman (the saga of Codsall Station Footbridge together with summaries of three Appeal decisions). These increase the variety and extend the coverage of the Newsletter's content. Thanks to them both. And also to Roger Cullimore, for the graphics illustrating aspects of the Branch visit to Wolverhampton on 7<sup>th</sup> June.

Thanks to the fact that this is now essentially an E-newsletter, the increased content, in both text and illustration, does not cause problems in connection with printing, envelope-stuffing or postage.

I myself spent a few days in Ireland at the end of July and accumulated various potentially sharable experiences. Watch this space!

## BRANCH MEETING

### Day Theme : Contemporary extensions to Listed Buildings 7th June 2007

The 7<sup>th</sup> June Branch Meeting took place in the Green Room of the Civic Hall, North Street, Wolverhampton, hosted by Mizzy Marshall and Nick Hogben of Wolverhampton City Council – to whom our thanks are due for organizing the day.

Business mostly involved casework and aspects of policy, with an information exchange on the 'historic impact' information that should be required to be submitted with Planning and LBC applications; together with feedback on Planning Enquiry decisions concerning replacement windows. [See Meeting Minutes for details].

There was a fascinating illustrated account by Branch Chairman David Burton-Pye of the repair and reinstatement of the 'accidentally demolished' Codsall Railway Station footbridge (Grade II, ex-GWR), covering a remarkable range of metal-working techniques. Fuller details appear (Part 1) in this *Newsletter* and (Part 2) in *Newsletter 31*.

The morning concluded with a presentation by Nigel Brown of Wolverhampton CC on the rescue and reinstatement of the former Molineux Hotel (Grade II\*, Building at Risk) with details of the just-started conversion into the City Archives Centre [further details see below].

Lunch was at the *Wanderers* pub, next door to both the Wolverhampton Wanderers Football Club and the Molineux Hotel. This gave the opportunity to view the reinstated Hotel externally. Branch members virtually trebled the pub's lunchtime custom, and we were splendidly looked-after with lavish and remarkably cheap hot lunches. Special thanks to Branch Treasurer Mizzy Marshall for organizing payment of the lunch bill.

The afternoon session involved a short walkabout back into the town centre to the City Art Gallery, where Pat Jones gave us a presentation on the new, contemporary style Art Gallery extension [for further details see below].

## VIEW OUT OF THE WINDOW

7<sup>th</sup> June 2007



View on to Mitre Fold

The Civic Hall's Green Room was part of the contemporary-style enhancement of the 1938 original building. There was a narrow continuous

clerestory window opening on to the street called *Mitre Fold* (anything to do with table napkins!?). The buildings on the other side of the street included a free-standing clone of Wolverhampton Civic Centre (yawn!) and a modest Neo-Georgian building with a nice roof ridge clock turret (better!).

## CIVIC HALL, North Street, Wolverhampton

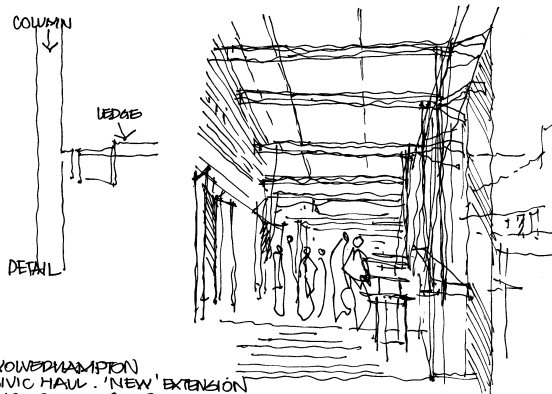
7th June 2007

The Civic Hall occupies a whole island block between North Street and Red Lion Street. It is a purpose-built municipal auditorium dating from 1936-8, designed by local architects Lyons and Israel. It was Grade II Listed when Wolverhampton was re-surveyed.

Stylistically, it is difficult to categorize, combining stripped Neo-Classical with Art Deco and 'Moderne', with perhaps the Moderne predominating. Facework is brick with Portland stone dressings and steel window glazing. The main North Street frontage has a splendid 'Ionic' portico fronting a largely glazed screen. Behind the screen is the entrance hall, perhaps the building's finest interior. It rises through two stories, with rows of brick pilasters on the long sides, stairs at either end. The main auditorium retains some delightful chrome steel handrails of Art Deco character. The ventilation grilles on the stairs are very decorative, but are perhaps more 'Moderne'. In the *Buildings of Staffordshire*, Nicolaus Pevsner remarks that the design was "inspired by Tengbom's Stockholm Concert Hall of 1920-6".

By C21 the Hall was feeling its age, with facilities not up to the standards expected by audiences and artists. Additional accommodation was badly needed. Unfortunately, as the building occupies a complete street block, it was not possible to build out sideways. Fortunately, the two return elevations of the almost entirely symmetrical original design had single-storey street frontages. This enabled the design solution – building on top of the single-storey ranges along the flanks of the main auditorium.

Architects for the new facilities were *Penoyre & Prasad*. A contrasting contemporary style was chosen, involving exposed steel framing and wholly glazed outside walling, featuring stone 'slats' at the ends. It proved possible to create two stories of additional bars, toilets and artist facilities by countersinking down into the original ground floor range.



The Green Room used for the Branch meeting was part of the lower level of the extension, with the clerestory lighting running on top of the original parapet. We had the opportunity to inspect the Bar and sitting-out area on the next level, with its

glazed wall and long strip roof light. Furniture was part of the structure, with a 'shelf' in the same stone as the exterior 'slats'.



*New Bar Area*

The new accommodation is of very high aesthetic value and complements the original building very well. Though there was some compromise – the original had doors and ironwork balconies on the auditorium flanks, and these had been removed as part of the conversion.

The conversion has made the Civic Hall an extraordinarily successful performance venue, with bookings virtually every day, from wrestling to conferences and concerts.



*Civic Hall – main frontage*



*Civic Hall – return elevation showing new second floor extension*

## WOLVERHAMPTON ART GALLERY – New Extension

7th June 2007

The Art Gallery occupies purpose-built accommodation of 1883-85 designed by J A Chatwin of Birmingham in an eclectic Classical style. The

main frontage is to Lichfield Street with a significant return frontage on to St Peter's Churchyard. A block in contrasting Venetian Gothic brick-and-terracotta turns the corner from the Churchyard into Wulfruna Street. Until recently, a very crude and basic triangular service yard opened on to Wulfruna Street, flanked by a three-storey late Georgian terrace to the east.

The Art Gallery had three significant 'wants': (1) creation of a craft studio suite; (2) improvement of very sub-standard artefact storage; (3) exhibition space for the most important English Pop Art collection outside London. Unfortunately, cash was limited, so fulfilment of this 'wants list' had to be broken up into individual phases.

Craft studios were created by upper floor conversion of the repaired Georgian terrace. *Niall Phillips Architects* of Bristol were commissioned to design enhanced basement area storage and conservation facilities, together with new gallery accommodation. Design solution was infill of the former triangular service yard, involving a ground level 'vehicle port' on to Wulfruna Street, flanked by a full-height triangular feature projecting on to the street. This included upper floor glazing to the new exhibition space. Internally, an atrium provided a new circulation and staircase area. Backland at the rear of the Georgian terrace provided a new paved access forecourt and steps opening on to Wulfruna Street.



*Wulfruna Street frontage with new wing*

Exterior design is sharply contemporary, with very strongly horizontal terracotta panel cladding, on top of a stone-finished plinth. Scale and colouring complement both the Georgian and Victorian blocks flanking the new extension, adding a very distinctive C21 contribution to its early and late C19 neighbours.

Internally, the atrium is finished in polished white plaster contrasting with wood block flooring and stained wood panelling on the ground floor. Soffiting of the atrium stair and balconies is inset with coloured light panels.

The new Wulfruna Street access is up steps (passing through a full-height sliding and folding security screen executed in galvanized steel). Both the steps and the entrance yard are finished in a 'stone-effect' concrete.

Externally and internally the new extension is aesthetically very successful. It has also, clearly, complemented the building's circulation system with a huge public lift (with double-wheelchair and carers capability) this lift also acting as a heavy-duty lift for artefacts in and out of storage.

However, the atrium circulation does not accommodate one transition between levels very successfully. A 'bridge' from an existing gallery necessitates both 'steps down' and 'steps up' on the

same balcony. This means that some disabled users have no choice but to use the lift. During our visit the sliding security gates had jammed in an 'almost-shut' position. Next to the vehicle portal a shallow panel in the 'stone effect' concrete plinth had been knocked-in by a vehicle strike. And the new 'stone effect' steps had strained through coffee or coke spillage.



*Atrium interior*

The end result is clearly a very attractive and valuable addition to the Art Gallery's facilities. That said, some queries remain over functionality and durability. Some of these may, perhaps, be the result of limited funding. Your editor didn't at all like the pastel-coloured lighting panels in the atrium soffit. They added a tacky element to the visual purity of plaster, steel and wood making up the ensemble.



*Exterior – another view*

The Branch visit involved participants crossing Lichfield Street and standing facing the Art Gallery looking up. Not quite on the dot of 3.00pm, there was a whirring of machinery and an artificial sheep appeared, eventually suspended in mid-air wriggling its feet. At which point the belly split in two,

and, in a puff of smoke, a wolf appeared, looking from side to side with nefarious intent. And then the reverse. This installation is a Millennium Year inheritance. A sort of C21 version of the Wells Cathedral Clock.

Thank you to Pat Jones for giving us a presentation on the extension scheme and taking us on a guided tour – including behind the scenes to see the new basement facilities.

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## **MOLINEUX HOTEL, Wolverhampton**

7th June 2007

Nigel Brown gave a presentation on the past, present and future of this Grade II\* Listed Building, which had been "At Risk" for almost 25 years. Its recent history, involving acquisition by Wolverhampton City Council and its repair and consolidation, was described in detail in a previous *Newsletter* number.

Originally a town house dating from the mid C18, and converted into a hotel in the mid C19, the building had earned its Grade II\* Listing by means of two major rooms – the plaster *Rococo Room* and the panelled *Oak Room*. Upon closure in 1979, damage and decay was instant and serious. Ownership passed from hand to hand, but no one owner succeeded in executing a scheme. One company did make a start on site, but promptly went in liquidation, doing the building's future a good turn thereby. The timber interiors were stripped out and removed off site for storage.

Upon acquisition by Wolverhampton City, Phase I was executed. This was the stabilisation, consolidation and repair of the historic fabric, including the reinstatement of the two major period rooms (the project budget prohibiting any more extensive interior reinstatement) at a cost of just over £2m.

The City's future objective was an ultimate use which would make the building accessible to the public. After some research, it became apparent that the City Archive was in substandard and inadequate accommodation, with insufficient public access to meet demand. Accordingly, it was resolved that the end use of the Molineux Hotel would be a new home for the City Archives, with fully adequate public access and storage meeting the stringent demands of BS5454, including no less than 10,000 square feet of archive storage.

A Phase 2 scheme costed at £5.3m had gone on site just two weeks before the branch meeting. This involved the conversion and fitting out of the existing building for public use, and the construction of a new wing for archive storage. Architects were Donald Insall Associates of Shrewsbury and the contractors Linford Bridgeman of Lichfield. Insalls had also been the architects for Phase I (contractors Sapcote of Birmingham) having been originally engaged by the West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust to undertake a feasibility study on the rescue of the building.

BS5454 required the provision of a windowless climate-controlled box for archive storage. Location was the site of the former early C20 manager's house, which had *not* been repaired under Phase I. The house was demolished and a large hole was being dug out of the slope to accommodate much of the bulk of the storage area below ground level.

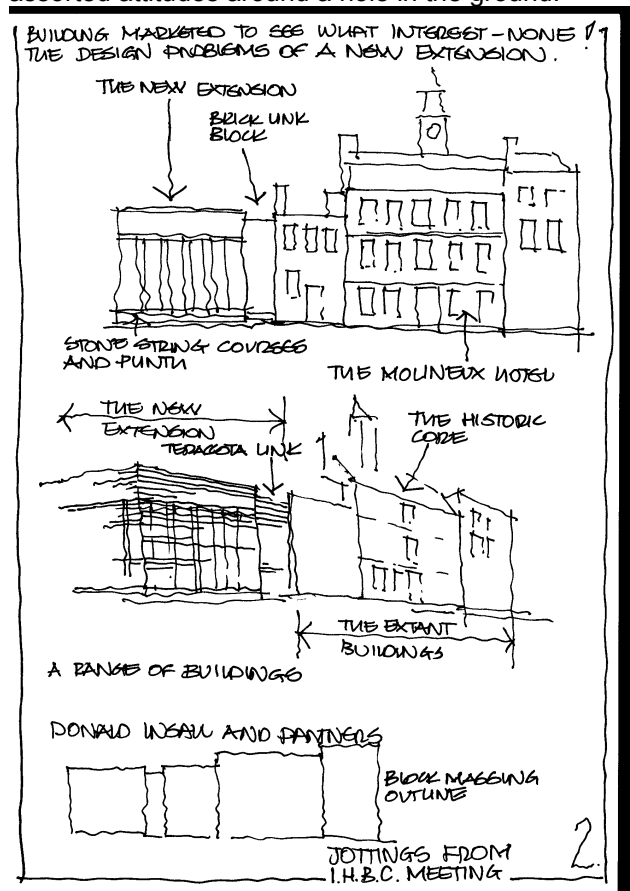
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Visually, the Molineux Hotel was a string of linked units. The design solution for the storage 'box' was a visually distinct end unit with a separately coded 'link' to the original fabric. After much debate, the exterior design of the box was finalized. This involved a panelled brick skin on a stone plinth and using a stone string course – this choice of materials relating to those used for the original house. The link block was to be clad in terracotta panels. There would be a shallow pitched roof invisible behind a parapet. Massing is organized so that the box is slightly lower than the main C18 frontage, its bulk being accommodated partly underground and at the rear.

The 10,000 square foot storage figure was designed to accommodate many years of archive acquisition at the current rate. Present holdings would use about one-third of the space that would be created, leaving the balance to be rented-out giving the completed scheme earning potential. The radically enhanced level of public access would involve new archive-related jobs.

The fitting out of the reinstated C18 building would use as many re-usable historic items as possible.

All that could be seen on site on 7<sup>th</sup> June was the contractor's site fencing, a 'scar' on the end of the consolidated building, and several JCBs in assorted attitudes around a hole in the ground.



**Comment.** The design solution to the addition of a very large box of accommodation to an existing historic building involved a choice amongst options. It is possible that an approach akin to that adopted for the Art Gallery extension might have been more interesting aesthetically. However, the important thing is what the end product will look like.

The present scheme involves the killing of two birds with one stone – a sustainable use for a C18 historic building and a radically enhanced City

Archive Service with high quality accessibility to the public.

## WOLVERHAMPTON Walkabout

- 7th June 2007

Buildings passed included St Peter & Paul Roman Catholic Church of 1825-7, architect Joseph Ireland. In a Neo-Classical 'Roman' style, SSP&P is embedded in the rear of the 1728 Giffard House, the town house of the RC Giffard family of Chillington Hall (itself the subject of a West Midlands Branch visit).



SS Peter & Paul, Giffard House to right

Another example of new construction in a town centre setting was a new block of Wolverhampton University fronting the northern end of Wulfruna Street and forming one side of a paved public area. The frontage was an almost wholly-glazed windowed wall topped by deeply-bracketed eaves. Less visually happy was an adjoining shallow apse faced in cream concrete blocks – rather tacky.



## STATUARY

### The Editor

A highlight of 7<sup>th</sup> June Wolverhampton visit was access to some interesting statuary.

On the west steps to St Peter's, the town centre Parish Church (a medieval Collegiate foundation in succession to an Anglo-Saxon minster) there was a late C20 statue of Lady Wulfrun, the city's effective founder. One of the feet was signed, but I wasn't able to read the signature. It is possible that this figure is a very late work by *Charles Wheeler*, the C20 Wolverhampton-born sculptor.

Inside St Peter's there was an unexpected treasure – a life-size bronze of Admiral Sir Richard Leveson (in full armour) of c1634, sculptor Hubert Le Seur. This was comparable in quality to the Le Seur statues of James I and Charles I commissioned for Winchester Cathedral, and still to be found there. In other words, this is a bronze of significant national importance.



*Le Seur – Admiral Leveson*

On display in the Art Gallery's 'Artefacts to Touch' gallery were two items by the early C20 Wolverhampton sculptor R J Emerson. Emerson was in the right place at the right time, receiving many commissions for War Memorials in the aftermath of World War I, including, to my knowledge, two in the Walsall MBC area. I suspect creating War Memorials was the 'bread and butter' side of his output, the two items on display – a stone 'Mother and Child' and a dramatic bronze head entitled 'Flight' - showing genuine creativity.

Charles Wheeler too was represented in the sculptures on display. In the 1885 stair hall was an idealized life-size 'Athlete' male bronze very typical of his work.

## ST PETER'S, Wolverhampton

### The Editor

Having travelled to Wolverhampton by train on 7<sup>th</sup> June (visiting by car involves expensive parking and is not to be recommended) I had time to spare on arrival. The town centre church, St Peter's, proved to be open. It was an unexpectedly rewarding experience.

The Diocese of Lichfield was founded by St Chad in the C7. Chad organized his jurisdiction on the Celtic model – establishing a series of 'minsters' serving large areas. Monks and clergy based at these minsters travelled out and about ministering to the surrounding country. This 'Minster' system survived almost to the end of the Middle Ages, with St Peter's, as one of these Minsters and operating as a Collegiate Church, having prescriptive rights to baptisms, marriages and burials (with their associated fees). In addition, the status of late medieval Wolverhampton as a wealthy wool town had put substantial resources at the building's disposal.

St Peter's retains its early medieval cruciform plan, on the crossing of which is superimposed a very tall early C16 tower, still a very impressive local landmark. The nave is a rebuild of a slightly earlier date and the north transept partly post-Reformation. The chancel on the other hand is a mid-C19 new build to the designs of *Ewan Christian*. Its apsidal form and window tracery mimic the Lady Chapel of Lichfield Cathedral, where Christian was also involved.



*St Peter's – Apse & Central tower*

Entering St Peter's was a good experience. Town Centre churches can so often be dusty and dead mausolea in character. However, it was very clearly under positive management, even passing

that acid test for spiritual vitality – the presence of people at prayer. There was a brand-new and exotic set of Stations of the Cross and candles were burning before the image of Our Lady. Spiritual vitality is a very necessary ingredient for the physical preservation of historic churches. Without it, redundancy looms, with all its associated problems.

As mentioned above, the memorial sculpture included a major Le Seur work of the Carolean period. In fact, there were all sorts of interesting artefacts and fittings, including the heavy and almost grotesque carving of the timber pillars supporting the West Gallery – Jacobean? Particularly rewarding were three World War I memorial stained glass windows, all with a strong sense of colour and design. Unfortunately, Pevsner does not name the designer or designers.

The glass in the Apse windows looked good from a distance, but was less good close up, its best feature being a series of foliage panels. However, Christian's design of the apse roof, executed in timber with its trusses and carving painted and gilt, was lively, a contrast to his bland and stodgy exterior stonework.

## ENGINEERS – HOW WE THINK ABOUT BUILDINGS

*Charles Shapcott*

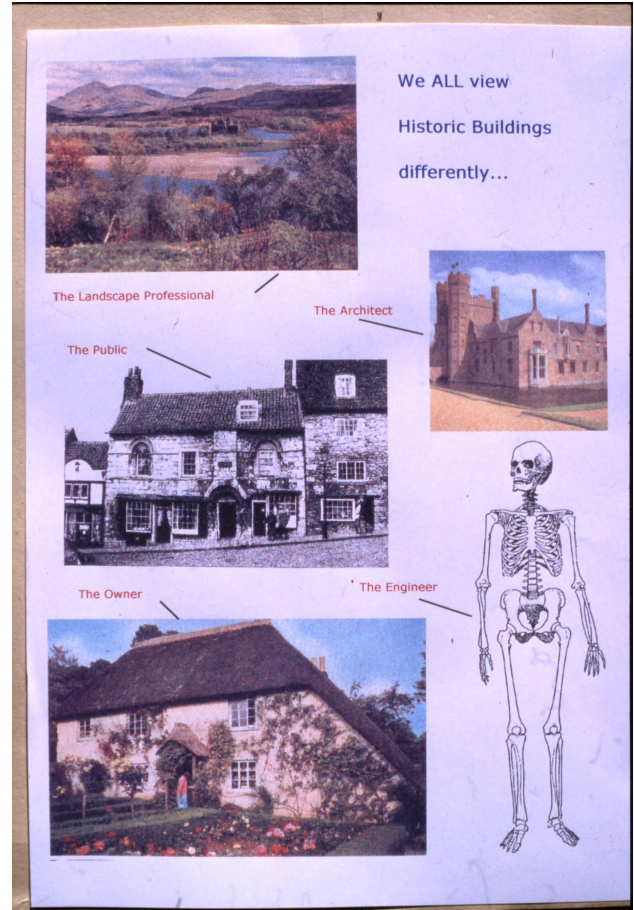
Our upbringing to be an engineer is science-based, even at an early age, to get onto the 'higher education ladder' to the eventual aim of becoming qualified. My route was with 'O levels' from school and then into a 'day release scheme' for 6-years finally leading to qualification. That route closed soon after I completed my training. Now, it's 6<sup>th</sup> form education followed by a 4-year degree, then mentored guidance up to eventual qualification.

We, by virtue of the above route are very much maths-biased, and constrained by rules of how matter behaves, or should behave. During my training we were taught about concrete and steel with the likes of timber and masonry very much glossed over, all very much biased towards new construction. I am old enough to have been taught in Imperial and still, unfortunately for you younger ones, think in those units - only converting when I see a blank look on your faces.

I am always sceptical when an engineer says he '*has put it through the computer*' as we are generally dealing with buildings that predate recognised calculation, but built on experience. Formal calculation, verified by testing, was in its infancy in 1890's when dockyards and others were doing testing of fitch beams and similar. General office calculations developed from then to 1920's, with early steam-computing only coming on stream after WW2. Calculators were new and were exorbitantly expensive in the 1960's. It has been known, with the power of modern computing, that using the same data but in different programmes can provide a 'pass or a fail' of the same design.

It was luck in some respects during my training that I was seconded to a building maintenance group dealing with existing structures where new works were occasional rather than the norm, so it taught me the benefit of research. When I went to a new works operation, for the experience, it surprised them that I had progressed so far '*doing the sort of work that I had been doing*'. New works is relatively easy as you have a blank sheet of paper to work on, but with existing buildings you need to

make sure you understand how they work before any interventions are made.



*How people look at buildings*

The understanding comes from a survey – either a 'walk through' one or one done in some detail. In a survey always start from the bottom, or the lowest level possible and progress up the building. Always be aware of your surroundings and have adequate light and time, also try and sketch at least a plan at each floor level. The bottom-up start is so that you can see what is happening where it hits the ground and at the same time inspect, from below, the next level you are going to walk on, and assess if it's safe. This is partly why engineers like to see drawings marked '*ground floor plan showing first floor construction*' or similar. At least, this accentuates the load path from that floor down to the next level below. One over-riding point is that one has to know what is normally expected in said building before one can categorically say '*that's wrong*' or similar – that only comes with experience unfortunately, and takes time.

There is a very good skeletal cut-away section of a building in the CIRIA Report 111. This is essentially a 'standard Georgian building' if there is such an animal but this is the sort of thing that I try and achieve in a 'short hand' version during a site visit. These notes are only an aide-memoire and only intended to be short term, if not translated into a report ASAP after the visit, their value is lost.

A few of useful and very truthful paraphrases:

- ❖ We have the better built historical buildings remaining, the others having fallen down.
- ❖ Keep its head and feet dry and the bit in the middle will generally look after itself.
- ❖ You service your car so it won't let you down. Why not service the building, decorate 5-yearly, check gutters twice-yearly? You are legally obliged to have a vehicle MoT; it's a pity that one

isn't required for a building. The new SIPS process only happens when buildings change hands and won't pick up the detail required, for effective maintenance.

- ❖ Hard onto soft doesn't work – particularly applicable to mortar, pointing, renders and some of the modern 'stone paint' finishes.
- ❖ Floor joists - the span in feet plus one is the depth of the joist in inches – doesn't make too much sense in metric however.
- ❖ To estimate the height of a building - count the brick courses – four courses to the foot or 300mm is not a bad estimate – but check a couple of areas as it could be a bit out either way with either large or thin bricks.
- ❖ One from a Church Inspecting Architect – the number of feet above ground level is the number of years between detail inspections or works being carried out on that element – work that out in metric!
- ❖ Computers execute human errors quickly and with surprising mathematical accuracy.

Above is a copy of my first slide that I use in any lectures hopefully it gives the right impression, of how differing professionals might view a building.

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## LETTER

### POUND FARM

I read your report on the IHBC visit to Pound Farm with great interest: I am very pleased that you thought it a successful project. You raised one or two points that I hope I can answer:

#### **Concrete Stone Tiles**

There is no doubt that the house was stone tiled when photographed in the 1930s, but these had been replaced with a small concrete tile some time just before or after WW2. Ideally, we would have liked to use a new local stone tile, but the cost would probably have made the whole project uneconomic. In addition, the concrete tiles used are approximately 2/3 the weight of stone, which meant we could reduce the extent of repair/strengthening required to the structure. The concrete tiles used (Celstone) seem to be bedding in well (given that quite a few Conservation Officers weren't sure if they were stone or concrete!) after a couple of years, and within a few more should have weathered in completely.

#### **"New" wing**

The wing at the north west corner and the associated lean-to is actually old, probably C18th, and in its original position. We managed to retain all the original framing, rebuild the plinth under and re-clad in weatherboard. The only new part is the lean-to attached to the north end of the main house that forms part of the kitchen and creates the link to the wing. The north bay of the house had collapsed completely: we were able to re-assemble and repair all the surviving C15th timbers. Unlike the rest of the east elevation of the house, the roof of this bay was not raised in the C18th, but the west pitch was raised (along with the rest of the west elevation) in the C19th. In the rebuilding, we retained this asymmetric arrangement.

#### **Solar Gain**

So far there have been no problems with overheating on summer afternoons. The blinds are primarily to reduce glare, and the opening top hoppers to vent hot air out under the eaves. These were developed specifically for this project, and are now produced commercially. We did make provision for an extractor fan to draw warm air out of the building via a redundant chimney flue, the idea being to fit a heat

exchanger to provide hot water, but so far, this has not proved necessary.

#### **Barn**

The barn, of which the plinth walls remain, had collapsed and disappeared long before the present owners bought the farm.

*Robert DeMaus*

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## IRONBRIDGE CONSERVATION COURSES

### October 2007- March 2008

The Ironbridge Institute offers both lecture based and practical two day conservation workshops which can be attended individually by members of the public or as elements of CPD training. Speakers from the National Trust, the Heritage Lottery Fund, Cadw, English Heritage, the SPAB, SAVE and many others will provide the most up to date information on the theory and practice of conservation of the historic environment.

#### **WORKSHOPS:**

- ❖ 5-6 Oct Mod 1.2 THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT
- ❖ 12-13 Oct Mod 2.1 DEFECTS AND REMEDIAL MEASURES
- ❖ 2-3 Nov Mod 1.2 CONSERVATION ETHICS AND PHILOSOPHY
- ❖ 9-10 Nov Mod 2.2 SUSTAINABILITY AND ADAPTATION
- ❖ 30 Nov-1 Dec Mod 1.3 CONSERVATION LEGISLATION
- ❖ 7-8 Dec Mod 2.3 FINANCING BUILDING CONSERVATION
- ❖ 11-12 Jan Mod 2.4 PROJECT AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT
- ❖ 18-19 Jan Mod 1.4 SPECIFICATIONS AND CONSERVATION PLANS
- ❖ 8-9 Feb Mod 1.5 UNDERSTANDING BRITISH BUILDINGS
- ❖ 15-16 Feb Mod 2.5 HERITAGE MANAGEMENT

*For information about any aspect of the courses please contact:*

Harriet Devlin, Ironbridge Gorge Museums Trust,  
Coalbrookdale, Telford TF8 7DQ  
01952 435969

[harriet.devlin@ironbridge.org.uk](mailto:harriet.devlin@ironbridge.org.uk)

*All two-day courses cost £170*

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## CODSALL FOOTBRIDGE - ITS DEMOLITION & REPAIR

### Part 1

#### **David Burton-Pye MBE DipTP MRTPI IHBC**

The Grade II listed footbridge at Codsall Station straddles the operational Wolverhampton to Shrewsbury railway line.

#### **Prologue**

In December 2004, Network Rail had contacted me by e-mail enquiring about repairs to the bridge to enable it to meet current safety requirements. In response to my questions asking them to outline the extent of the proposed works, it transpired that what they actually wished to do was to remove the bridge and replace it with a steel replica that would meet current standards. I made several points, namely that :-

1. the bridge was listed and that consent would be needed for any repairs

2. that replacement of the bridge would constitute demolition and that there were absolutely no circumstances under which I would recommend that Listed Building Consent should be granted for such a proposal
3. I was singularly unconvinced by their engineer's theoretical assessment of the bridge's load capacity which apparently indicated that it was incapable of safely carrying more than five persons. I generously offered to provide photographs that I had taken shortly after the official opening of the adjacent station as a (very fine) public house, when the landlord had arranged for a steam train to travel along the line and a crowd of over two hundred had gathered to watch, including scores of whom who were standing on the footbridge without any obvious failure of said structure.
4. any suggestion of replacing the structure could only be considered after empiric testing of the components as its theoretical capacity seemed to be grossly underestimated.

### **The Accident**

Early on the morning of the 5<sup>th</sup> June 2005 a rail contractor's vehicle, which was carrying concrete sleepers used in track repair/maintenance, travelled along the track with its jib raised. The jib smashed into the footbridge, cracking the cast iron columns on which the footbridge was supported and causing the structure to collapse.

Immediately after the accident, the collapsed bridge was "supported" by a large multi-stemmed sycamore tree growing alongside the platform, but on the other side of the line there was nothing to stop it falling and the structure came down onto the platform. The effect of this "differential settlement" caused the footbridge – a mainly wrought iron structure - to "fold" under its own weight, thus deflecting the main members from the "straight and narrow" and transforming them to the "bitter and twisted".



*After the Accident*

### **Aftermath**

The bridge was cut into sections to enable its removal and was taken from site during Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> June. First thing on the morning of Monday the 6<sup>th</sup> June 2005 I, and my assistant, Dr Paul Collins, visited the site to view the damage for ourselves.

Following the removal of the main span of the bridge, the remaining components were subsequently taken to the large railway yard adjoining RAF Cosford where, at our request, they were roughly sorted and laid out so that they could be photographed, inspected and assessed.

On introducing ourselves at Codsall Station and explaining the purpose of our visit we were

confronted by a somewhat belligerent representative either of Network Rail or Galliford-Try (the contractors whose vehicle had caused the damage) whose principal concern seemed to be that we were wearing the wrong colour high-visibility jackets. Apparently fluorescent yellow was incorrect and we could only attend the site if wearing orange! Paul reminded said operative that we were slightly more concerned about the damage than the colour of our coats, but I obliged by putting on an orange vest over my yellow coat to cover all anticipated emergencies. We photographed the remains of the bridge, making sure that we had comprehensive coverage of all elements that could be seen and returned to the office to contact Network Rail and arrange a formal site meeting for all interested parties.



*Site without the footbridge*

### **Assessment**

This assessment process was crucial and led to a rather prolonged debate with invaluable input both from Alan Taylor, the English Heritage Inspector of Historic Buildings for Staffordshire and his colleague Charles Shapcott an English Heritage Engineer with a hard line in ensuring that as much as possible of the original fabric should be retained.

The significance of this rigorous assessment of the "bits and pieces" was both legal and technical with the main aim being to ensure that the rebuilt bridge would retain its status as a listed building – albeit one that had undergone significant repairs. Technically, if too much fabric were to be replaced then what was put back would not be listed. In fact in these circumstances, strictly speaking, the original would have been illegally "demolished" without the work having been authorized by the granting of listed building consent, and hence the District Council would have been at liberty to prosecute Network Rail (or their contractors) for breaching the relevant legislation.

Clearly it was in everybody's interests to try and reach an agreed, negotiated conclusion rather than have all sides battling out the legal niceties of a complicated situation in a courtroom. Although as a negotiating tactic I did point out that where necessary my authority would prosecute, and indeed had a successful record in such cases as did go to court.

### **Discussion**

At this point discussions became delayed. We had requested that the pieces should be covered with temporary sheeting to provide weather protection since the cast iron spandrels in particular were

suffering from accelerated corrosion on account of being laid out flat rather than standing in their accustomed upright, upright position

We did not reach an impasse, but there was a period of several months when little progress was made other than moving the bits to Hednesford Station where Network Rail felt that they would be more secure as it had a lockable compound.

The delays were essentially frustrating and caused a frequent succession of enquiries to Paul and myself from keenly interested local residents, the Parish Council, members and officers of the District Council, the Friends of Codsall Station (a committed group of enthusiasts who open the old booking office when they can on a morning to keep it alive) as well as staff at The Station Pub with whom I have always maintained frequent contact!



*Original column bases in situ*

### **LBC Application**

Eventually, thanks to the keen interest shown by the local Member of Parliament, Sir Patrick Cormack and Sir Neil Cossons (Chairman of English Heritage) the necessary application for Listed Building Consent was eventually submitted to the District Council. It seems that even Network Rail can be forced into action when prompted by the combined forces of two Knights Bachelor and their respective contacts in the relevant corridors.

Coincident with submission of the formal applications, the remains of the bridge were moved once more to a contractor's workshop at Coleshill. Supablast (as they are called) were engaged to clean up the components so that their condition could be more thoroughly examined. Once again Charles Shapcott's expertise was called for and a general agreement was reached about how repairs might be effected.

My abiding impression from two meetings at Coleshill was how incredibly durable wrought iron is. Grit blasted back to its bare state most of the metal looked like new and the main causes of its degradation could largely be attributed to inappropriate maintenance techniques and the use of unsympathetic materials, particularly where water had lodged between metal members. It was therefore agreed that these principal members should be split or separated so that as much of the original material as possible could be cleaned back to bare metal.

The most important agreement was that wrought iron would only be replaced with steel if the former could not be obtained. The areas where rust had taken its worst toll would be metal sprayed to reinstate their original profiles as closely as possible and then painted with the best systems available. It was important to do this in a workshop so that

maximum protection could be achieved and also because any subsequent maintenance operations would be carried out on site where quality control of materials and techniques would inevitably be less rigorous.

It was clear from the shattered remains of the eight cast iron supporting columns that only three of the originals could be retained and/or repaired. Metal stitching is a recognized repair technique (and was used on a limited scale on the cast iron plates of the adjacent listed railway bridge at Codsall 4 years ago) but this would have had limited value on the footbridge because of the extensive nature and location of the fractures in the old columns. It was agreed that five new columns would be cast. Paul Collins and I also visited the refurbished Moor Street Station in Birmingham, at the invitation of the main contractor there to see how they had replicated the original iron components in steel.

I strongly advocated production of a "log book" for the bridge so that there would be a permanent record of the work, the decisions that had been taken and the rationale for them so that future repairs and/or maintenance could be informed in the full knowledge of the works now proposed. This philosophy is an increasingly important element of conservation work and I was keen to do what I could to secure its production but as a matter of fact I do not know whether this has been done.

Whilst the proposal that had been formally submitted had my full support in principle there were numerous meetings with the design engineers, Network Rail, and other interested parties before the details could be satisfactorily resolved. Where replacement was needed our guiding principle was to insist on the use of similar materials ie wrought or cast iron for the more decorative elements, whilst agreeing to the use of steel for the stair stringers which would also enable the bridge to be put back some 12 inches taller than the original to maintain current requirements for headroom/clearance above the tracks. A decorative wooden valance with pierced "dagger boards" had been part of the original footbridge but this had been removed many years ago. There is still one in situ at Albrighton Station (next along the line from Codsall) and, as an element of "planning gain", it was agreed that a valance would be reinstated on the Codsall footbridge.

*Part 2 follows in Newsletter 31*

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## **THREE APPEAL DECISIONS**

**David Burton-Pye MBE DipTP MRTPI IHBC**

### **Introduction**

Three appeal decisions in South Staffordshire in the last twelve months or so have given useful pointers regarding thinking on density, layout and design.

#### **1. Ounsdale Road, Wombourne**

Bellway Homes had proposed a large four (reduced to three) storey block of apartments. Surrounding residential property is mainly two, with some three, storey houses. In considering outlook the inspector found that the proposal "*would dominate the rear outlook from nearby houses, the occupants of which would look up onto a substantial towering expanse of unrelieved wall ..... which would be quite overbearing.*" With regard to character and appearance the site is close to – but outside of – the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal Conservation Area. On these matters the inspector stated that whilst PPG 3 advises on density "*it is the effect a particular density may have on the area*

which is important rather than the development's intensity per se" and she concluded that the "overall scale and massing ... would be out of all proportion to their surroundings and would not adequately integrate with them. On the contrary they would have a dominating and overbearing effect on the character and appearance of the area". With regard to the conservation area, the inspector noted that "it is only a short distance away and the site overlooks it and can be clearly seen from it. Consequently it has an effect on its setting". She quoted the advice in PPG 15 about proposals outside conservation areas affecting their settings and the need here for preserving/enhancing and found that "the proposals would not achieve this objective". Further, she went on to "take the view that the site is equivalent to a conservation area gap site" and given that "new buildings should be designed with respect for their context .... The proposals fail and are unsuitable" and that their "scale, massing height and design would significantly harm the character and appearance of the area".

I was pleased with this decision as I had raised strong objections (along similar lines to the inspector) to the proposed scheme, but it had been recommended for approval and refused at Committee (ie against officers' recommendations)

Appeals reference numbers  
APP/C3430/A/05/1173642 and  
APP/C3430/A/05/1195645

## **2. Lansdowne Avenue, Codsall**

A large garden at the back of surrounding residential properties was proposed for what I would term backland or tandem development. Here, the same inspector commented as follows. On character and appearance she found that "whilst there is no uniform building line .... The dwellings form a general linear pattern with most having open rear gardens devoid of backland development." She also considered found the Lansdowne Avenue street scene "is of paramount importance" The proposal included demolition of one house to gain access to the land. She felt that "despite the variation in nearby plot widths, replacing No 14 with a much narrower plot, containing a smaller modern house, would detract from the surrounding environment." Again referring to density she stated that "new housing development must be informed by the wider context. It is the impact of a particular density on the area which is most important, as opposed to the density figure itself. The pattern of the proposed schemes would not respect the overall linear character of Lansdowne Avenue, and the scale and layout would relate poorly to the surrounding properties. The backland form would appear cramped behind existing frontage dwellings significantly reducing the spaciousness of the locality". The case also raised interesting and detailed consideration of the effect of the proposal on a large TPO'd tree. With regard to other matters she accepted "that the site is on previously developed land in a sustainable location and in this respect complies with the requirements of PPG 3. The schemes also satisfy other national guidance as well as development plan policies. However on balance this does not outweigh the significant harm which would result from the proposals". In her conclusions she also found "that the harm that would arise to the character and appearance of the area and the oak tree is compelling"

So once again, the same inspector gave a clear indication that density is not the be all and end all and that the local context is important. My involvement in this case came very late in the day

(not having commented on the application) but had I provided evidence I would have concentrated on historical maps from 1880 onwards – available from our GIS system – which would have clearly demonstrated that there is very little precedent for this form of development in the wider surrounding area.

Appeals reference numbers  
APP/C3430/A/06/2005468 and  
APP/C3430/A/06/2017419

## **3. 'White Land' at Brewood**

The latest decision was an application for approval of reserved matters on 1.17 ha of "white land" at Brewood. In essence the plans showed standard house types to which I had raised objections and following negotiations with the applicants they changed some doors, windows and brick details but the houses stayed the same. The application was refused and whilst the appeal was going through a further application was submitted with house types designed specifically for the site. There is a Village Design Guide adopted for Brewood.

At the hearing (but not as evidence) I emphasised roof spans and pitches on traditional buildings having taken dimensions from maps overlaid with aerial photographs and also by measurement from planning applications/listed building consents on buildings in the conservation area which is close ie some 300 metres from the site but not visible. In other words this site does not affect views into or out of the conservation area.

The inspector's decision states that "The central core of Brewood has a distinctive architecture in both the form and scale of its buildings and their detailing..... it is notable that many buildings nearby built in recent decades do not reflect these distinctive and traditional features. To simply replicate the appearance of nearby dwellings would not therefore reflect the distinctive architectural and historic character of the village or engender a sense of place and would not, in my view, be in accordance with PPS 3 in this respect. During the application process the appellant made significant changes to the detailing of the individual dwellings adding diversity to the design by amending windows and other details but made fewer amendments to their overall scale and mass. It was the scale and form of the buildings, rather than their detailing that was the focus of the council's dispute at the hearing.... The proposed roof spans have a significantly greater width than those of many of the older village buildings as may be seen in Stafford Street in the historic core nearby. The larger roof spans as proposed would result in a significant difference in the scale and massing of the buildings and their roofscape from that of the distinctive architecture of the historic core. I consider that the proposed house types should reflect these elements of local distinctiveness of the traditional architecture, and that these are especially crucial in the prominent and elevated frontage to Engleton Lane ..... PPS 3 states that design which is inappropriate in its context or which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions should not be accepted. For the reasons I have identified, the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area. It is therefore contrary to PPS3, and to the objectives of Policy BE26 and the VDS in this respect." In her conclusions she found that "the harm that I have identified to the character and appearance of the village and the surrounding area is significant and overriding" and dismissed the appeal.

So another good decision, homing in on character and local distinctiveness.

Appeal Reference Number  
APP/C3430/A/07/2036740

### Conclusion

I consider these are important decisions highlighting matters of principle as well as detail. I have shown plans for the Ounsdale Road Wombourne proposals at one of our meetings, and if possible will have some available for the other two at our next meetings for discussions in our casework slot.

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## EDITOR'S SHOPPING LIST

Your Editor welcomes, for the next Edition of the Newsletter (No 31), to go out at the end of November 2007, 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 31 should, preferably, arrive not later than the beginning of November 2007. Please contact your *Newsletter Editor* :

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01922 644219; [pdarnold@care4free.net](mailto:pdarnold@care4free.net)

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## PICTURE POSTSCRIPT



Foyer – Wolverhampton Civic Hall



Lady Wolfrun Statue, St Peter's Steps, Wolverhampton



A taste of Ireland – St Kevin's 'Kitchen', Glendalough