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BUILDING · CONSERVATION

**NORTHERN BRANCH**

# **NORTHERN NOTES**

**ISSUE 7 SEPTEMBER 2010**



*Berwick Barracks Photo taken by Ken Hutchinson*

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the second newsletter of 2010. We hope you all had a great summer. Thanks again for the kind compliments we received following the last newsletter and special thanks to our contributors for their excellent articles on what is happening out there on the ground. As always we welcome any contributions from those interested in the conservation of historic buildings. As usual we try to include items from all parts of the region and this newsletter includes articles from Berwick, Carlisle and Cumbria. Our special feature report in 'CONFLAHB' ( **CON**servation of **F** **LocAl** **H**istoric **B**uildings) features Clay Dabbins in Cumbria. Any suggestions for further improvements to the newsletter will be welcome.

If you know of anyone who might be interested in reading the newsletter please forward a copy to them.

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### 1. What's On:

- Heritage Skills events continue throughout the year. For details of this years programme contact Andie Harris, Heritage Skill Coordinator for details at [admin@nect.org.uk](mailto:admin@nect.org.uk). Tel. 0191 2329279
- Conservation Forums hosted by English Heritage. Further details can be obtained from Clair Botham at English Heritage at [Clair.Botham@english-heritage.org.uk](mailto:Clair.Botham@english-heritage.org.uk) tel. 0191 2691234
- IHBC Council Meeting to be held in Northern Region 24 September 2010

- IHBC Networking Reception and Day Conference: 'Conservation: Bridging the Recession' September 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>
- IHBC Summer School to be hosted by Northern Branch in 2013.

If you want to keep up to date with all that is happening in the 'Heritage World' log on to the **IHBC NEWS BLOG** on the IHBC national website [www.ihbc.org.uk](http://www.ihbc.org.uk) . Up to date information is given including links to other sites to get all the information in full. You can even read all the back issues of Northern Notes on the North Region part of the website. IHBC members can get regular updates as they are published by signing up to the BLOG on their e-mail [newsletter@ihbc.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@ihbc.org.uk) .

## 2. Committee meeting dates 2010

- 15<sup>th</sup> September at Blackfriars, Newcastle 2.30pm

All IHBC members are welcome to attend any meeting.

## 3. Day Event at Berwick

By Ken Hutchinson

On Friday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2010 a seminar was held at The Maltings Art Centre in Berwick to hear about the Berwick Futures Initiative and visit the town and see the magnificent walls. The meeting was a joint venture involving both the North and Scottish Branches and members had the opportunity to meet colleagues from the adjoining Branch and take part in cross border discussions.

The meeting started with Annette Reeves, Project Conservation Officer, giving an overview of the Berwick Future Initiatives. The scheme aims to encourage economic and social change which will over 20 years create a more competitive, distinctive and well connected town and borough that is enterprising ambitious and inclusive. The scheme involves grant assistance given to aid conservation led regeneration and the repair and restoration of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century buildings in two areas between the river and the Market Place. English Heritage and One North East have awarded £600,000 towards a four-year partnership in the Bridge Street/ Castlegate area. This complements the Heritage Lottery funded Townscape Heritage Initiative in the Bridge Street, Bridge End and West Street cross road area where £625,000 has been awarded.

Local Architect, Bain Swan then gave a talk about a detailed restoration scheme to convert the former grade II listed Dewar's Lane Granary into a 42 bed youth

hostel, multi cultural visitor attraction, bistro, arts and exhibition space. The £4.7million project is mainly funded by the Northumberland Strategic Partnership and is the major flagship scheme in the area. He gave a detailed insight into the many problems encountered not least the installation of a new steel frame to help overcome the 1.2metre lean on one of the main walls.

Annette and Bain then led the group around the two Conservation Area Schemes to see examples of restoration to date, buildings that still need help and the work in progress at the Youth Hostel.

After an enjoyable lunch and chat in the Maltings the group was joined by Jim Herbert a local historian who took the group on a guided tour of both sets of walls surrounding Berwick, firstly the Elizabethan walls then the medieval walls beyond including the impressive Bell Towers and the grisly Murder Tower. Everyone then took refuge in the Free Trade Inn, one of the most historic pubs in Berwick, to continue the cross border discussions and admire the fixtures and fittings and reflect on a very successful visit to Berwick.



*Photo of Dewar's Lane Granary restoration by Ken Hutchinson*

#### 4. Petteril House and Cumbria's New Archive Centre

By Richard Majewicz - *photos supplied by the author*

Members of Cumbria Conservation Officer's Group (CCOG) were guided around the Grade II\* Petteril Bank House, which is to be brought back into use as a Resource Centre in conjunction with the new County Archive building after many years of redundancy since its last use as a workshop for blind people. This late Georgian villa, built in 1829 in the Gothic Revival style and extended in the 1890s is thought to have been designed by the influential C19th architect, Thomas Rickman. The house formed part of a small estate on the southern edge of Carlisle which has now been largely replaced and surrounded by council housing estates. Despite its years of emptiness, the building has proved to be a well loved and respected landmark, commonly referred to as Lady Gillford's House, and has suffered little from vandalism as a consequence. Accordingly it has required little in the way of repair and alteration with the majority of the work confined to redecoration. The large timber paneled former billiard room in the later extension to the main house is to be used as a function suite and wedding chapel.



Of critical concern at design stage was how best to break through the building to link it to the proposed new Archive Centre. Fortunately this has been done with care and respect to the historic fabric with a glazed box that fits neatly behind quoined returns on the building's eastern elevation. A platform lift at first floor level helps to link the new building with the different levels within the original building and its later extension.



*photo - Roger Higgins, Urban Designer, Carlisle City Council*

The clean, mainly glazed, contemporary lines of the north facing façade of the Centre are framed by white painted concrete ‘goal-posts’ which tie the different elements of the building together but this treatment is in stark contrast to the rear, less successful south façade, which encloses the archives area with a split faced brick and rendered elevation. Internally, spaces have yet to be occupied, but staff appear happy with their large, open and well lit public spaces and workshop areas, and two floors of archive storage featuring electronically operated moving shelf systems which should allow a further 25 years of storage space.

Externally, staff and visitors will enjoy the restored parkland setting and the raised formal planted terraced area to the south which overlooks the valley beyond.

## 5. Brisco Hill in Carlisle

By Richard Majewicz – *photos supplied by the author*

### **BRISCO HILL - AN EVOLVING CONSERVATION PROJECT:**



CCOG Members continued on to visit Brisco Hill, a former 18<sup>th</sup> century mansion which had been extended twice during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and which the current owners wished to repair, alter and extend. There was much for members to consider and comment upon during this particular visit.

The project was approved in principle with conditions relating to the submission of full working drawings so that the selected contractor could be retained for the duration of the works, and in order to complete the rebuilding of the front elevation of part of the building before the winter period. Delays in providing the relevant detailed drawings meant that rebuilding work was carried out during a fortunately reasonably mild winter, and progress on the first of the extensions had also been delayed as a consequence of proposed amendments to the original design.



Work completed already includes the controversial rebuilding of the front elevation of the 1830's extension, deemed beyond practical repair by the structural engineer, and the straightening of the bowed first floor by inserting steelwork to strengthen the sagging timber beams and provide a level platform for the existing joists to sit on. Members felt that EH's structural engineer should have been asked to comment on the local engineer's proposals.





Current new work takes the form of a new 'orangery' and loggia at the rear of the house which also includes the perhaps even more controversial relocation of an original, but undated, bay window from its original south west facing position to its new home on the north west elevation of the projecting rear wing of the building. Stonework details to this extension are a 'work in progress' and due to the lack of a supervising architect, no recording has been undertaken of original fabric disturbed during the works.



The consensus view amongst members was that the front elevation should have been repaired rather than rebuilt as a facade to a cavity blockwork backing wall and that as so much of the original fabric had otherwise been lost, then the building should now be de-listed.

A further extension, proposed to match the detail of the orangery, has been approved in principle for the north east elevation of the building as a replacement for the late Victorian extension which had been demolished in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, detailed drawings are again awaited.

Perhaps, in defence of the constructive criticism raised during the visit, this project could be considered as a continuation of what had gone on before – the extension and alteration of the building in similar, but different styles, using similar materials in a different way, reflecting some of the feature of the original, but using late C20<sup>th</sup> rather than traditional construction methods? The reader can decide, and the Conservation Officer will approach matters differently in future.

## 6. CONFLAHB – Special Feature

‘CONFLAHB’ (**CON**servation o**F** **LocAl** **H**istoric **B**uildings) Clay Dabbins in Cumbria.

By Peter Messenger – *photos supplied by the author*

### Clay Dabbins in Cumbria

Over the last few months several builders have been working on the first clay building to be constructed in Cumbria for well over a century. This is part of an English Heritage project to promote greater awareness of Cumbria’s Clay Dabbins to those who own these rare buildings and also to re-introduce the skills to construct, renovate and repair a type of building that has, sadly, been much neglected. This initiative is the result of several years of collaboration between English Heritage and the City’s Principal Conservation Officer investigating the survival and significance of these buildings. The current training project is part of the Heritage Skills Initiative and has been organised by the North of England Civic Trust.



Clay Dabbins were once very common across the north of the county and over the border in Dumfries and Galloway. They have virtually disappeared on the Scottish side of the border but handfuls (probably about 400) survive in Cumbria. Some of these date back to the sixteenth century and they were still being built in the nineteenth century. Since then however the skill of using clay as a building material has disappeared. At the same time the use of lime for rendering these buildings was gradually replaced by the use of cement renders, much to the detriment of these clay buildings for which it is completely inappropriate.

The trainer is Alison Davie (of Little and Davie from Fife) who has many years experience working on earth buildings in Scotland. Together with the trainees, she has constructed a small clay dabbin using the same techniques that were used centuries ago. The training also included making clay blocks for use in repairing and rebuilding sections of existing clay walls. The completed structure was then rendered, initially with a clay based render followed by a lime and clay render. The group of trainees included participants from Historic Property Restoration, Stockdale Builders and Coverdale Masonry.



With the continuing support of English Heritage, it is now intended to build on this work and to involve owners, local communities and voluntary organisations in developing an interest in this ancient local building material and raising awareness of the solutions that are now available.



## 7. New Members and Movers

**Thanks** Elaine Hogg for all her excellent work and as Secretary for the IHBC North Branch over the last 3 years. Not only has she carried out efficient and effective duties as branch administrator, keeping us all organized and informed through excellent minutes, she has also found time to organize a number of events herself including the memorable visit to Bowes Museum. Elaine will be sadly missed on the Committee who send their best wishes to her in her retirement.

**Welcome** to Val Robson as the new Secretary and all new members.

## 8. Caption Corner



Have a go at thinking up suggestions for this recent photo taken during the IHBC Visit to Berwick in June.

e.g.

“Sunshine and a shower of IHBC members in Berwick”

“The Sun shines out of a Back Side Street in Berwick”

“Bring me Sunshine in my smile,  
Bring me Restoration all the while,  
In this world where we live,  
There can be more happiness,  
Bring me Sunshine,  
Bring me Grants and Planning Gain!”

*Photo by Ken Hutchinson*

## 9. Contact Details

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