

Planning and the Historic Environment 2002

An Agenda for the 21st century – 17 May 2002

A Common Grounding ? – Principles, Standards and Training

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1 Introduction

This talk combines a personal perspective on the interfaces between the professions involved in the Historic Environment, with a summary of the latest developments and issues in relation to training and accreditation. I have been involved in development of the national training agenda and standards for Building Conservation for 10 years, representing ACO and IHBC, and also as a trustee of COTAC. I have been involved for twenty years in historic environment and architectural education initiatives at local level, and for the past 5 years I have had close involvement with professional archaeology as the City Council's project manager for the Cambridge Urban Archaeological Database. More recently I have been the IHBC representative on the Historic Environment Forum and the Archaeology Training Forum.

Through the HEF, I became aware of the “*Archaeology and Culture*” document produced by some of its members, and through the IFA, I was co-opted at a late stage on to the organising group for the “*Social Housing and the Heritage*” conference. I was amazed to find both the document and the conference aiming to connect archaeology to the future, but in ways which seemed to omit any meaningful (at least from my perspective) references to either how change is managed, or to the issues and skills involved in the preservation and enhancement of the historic environment, and in the creation of new and valued environments. These omissions from what purported to be overviews of the historic environment could, if widely publicised, have confirmed the views of some of my

conservation colleagues who already refer to “archaeologists taking over the world.” One of the reasons why I am so pleased to be involved in today’s conference is the opportunity it gives to avoid such potentially damaging impressions, to help clarify roles, to increase understanding, and to work together in promoting the interests of the historic environment.

2 Archaeology and Conservation

To work together effectively, we need to have a clear understanding of the differences, and the overlaps, between Archaeology and Building Conservation.

This diagram shows some of the overlaps.



I’m going to concentrate for a moment on recording and education. The gathering, management, and dissemination of information is a key concern for both professions. More vitally in terms of today’s theme and the future, any “joined-up” approach to the historic environment needs a holistic approach. We need an integrated approach to records management, including archaeological records, records and information built up through the planning system, and other records such as the Building Plan and Notice Drawings held by Building Control which can be invaluable when dealing with 20th century listed

buildings. I was very disappointed, as manager of the Cambridge UAD, that English Heritage were prepared to fund only the inclusion of listed buildings from 1700 or earlier - when what we had been hoping for was a database that would include all the City's historic buildings. This perhaps should have prepared me for a greater disappointment. "*Power of Place*" was able to make two equally welcome recommendations, for Historic Environment Record Centres and Architecture Centres, with no apparent realisation that these could be directly related, or even better, different aspects of the same thing. Should not a centre for the study of a place be also a centre and focus for study of and involvement in issues affecting that place? There is an obvious precedent, the Hackney Building Exploratory, an inspirational model rightly praised in '*A Force for our Future*'. I find it depressingly revealing, however, that CABE praise the Exploratory for the way it encourages awareness of design, without acknowledging that this is rooted in encouraging awareness of the area's past and present character. I know my archaeological colleagues have been desperately keen to secure statutory status for Sites and Monuments Records. But surely we need to have a much broader vision, in which there is a real dynamic with the study of the past and present together, increasing involvement in and understanding of both current developments and the future?

(Time for a quick plug for this year's IHBC Annual School "Community and Heritage" in partnership with British Waterways, from 4-7 July, at which Nicole Crockett, Director of the Hackney Building Exploratory will be speaking.)

In working towards such a vision, we need to be aware of some fundamental differences in outlook and approach. To make a very simplistic comparison: An archaeologist might ask in relation to a historic building or site:

- 1) what was it like?
- 2) what was it like at different times in its history?

The answers to these questions might lead to a series of overlays, by period.

I can identify with these questions (I was asking them myself when I was clambering around timber framed buildings as a founder member of the Suffolk Building Recording Group) but not with the temptations to follow them up by

- 3) Removing later fabric to uncover earlier evidence, and perhaps
- 4) Restoring or reinstating a past state.

In contrast, a conservation adviser might ask

- 1) what is special about it now?

(In many cases, this will be an accumulation of work, each of which will have its own significance, from different periods)

- 2) what are the issues involved in managing it for the future: what changes may be needed, and how can we minimise the impact of changes on its special features?

More precisely, much archaeology involves *curation*, in the public interest, of artefacts and evidence, and *dissemination* of knowledge to a generally interested public.

Conservation involves *stewardship*, usually working with individual private owners (and very often against their immediate perceived interests) and balancing the range of interests and priorities which impinge on buildings and sites that have to earn their keep.

3 Standards and Procedures

We need a firm basis on which to consider the balance between these, and other views of the historic environment. Time for a straw poll: how many of you have a copy of BS 7913:1998? BS 7913:1998 is the British Standard “*A guide to the principles of the conservation of historic buildings*”. Its definitions of “archaeology” and “conservation” help to draw out the distinctions; its analysis of the objectives of conservation is even more helpful. Considering the reasons for preserving a building on cultural grounds, the *historical* component is a matter for both archaeologists and conservation advisers, but I suggest that the *aesthetic* component (including the design aspects involved in both assessing it and managing it) is outside the competence and training of archaeologists.

The British Standard provides an excellent structure and basis for both proponents of schemes and regulators to balance different values, and to assess a range of key issues affecting archaeology as well as conservation - but is prohibitively priced at £66 for 28 pages to non-BSI members. If only it could be made widely available at a reasonable price, and cited by Government in policy guidance as a key basis for good practice, the climate for informed decision-making in relation to the historic environment would be improved beyond measure.

Considering current Government Guidance, PPG16 (*Planning and Archaeology*) encourages early consultations with the local planning authority (para 19), desk-based assessments (para 20), and field valuations by professionally qualified archaeologists (para 20). “*Evaluations of this kind help to define the character and extent of the archaeological remains that exist in the area of a proposed development, and thus indicate the weight which ought to be attached to their preservation. They also provide information useful for identifying potential options for minimising or avoiding damage. On this basis, an informed and reasonable planning decision can be taken*”. The need for prior information in taking decisions relating to historic buildings is just the same as for archaeology. Colleagues involved in building conservation have often looked enviously at the PPG16 provisions for prior investigation and assessment, which are not paralleled in PPG15 (*Planning and the Historic Environment*) introduced 4 years later. There are also no equivalents in PPG15 to the PPG16 requirements for evaluation by professionally qualified specialists, and for systematic record-keeping through SMRs.

The impending review of the PPGs might not be quite as much of a threat as some may perceive, if (and it is a very big if indeed) it takes on board the very significant developments in best practice since PPG 15 appeared in 1994. These include the Conservation Plan approach, the associated work on Management Agreements, and the British Standard. However the signs are not good, with the Planning Green Paper focussing so strongly on speed of decision-making, and on the possible amalgamation of the planning and listed building control regimes, without considering the wider

ramifications. This is particularly worrying in relation to the historic environment, in which successful conservation so often depends on pro-active negotiation with building owners, and reconciling the requirements of different control regimes - including the building regulations and environmental health requirements. I find it amazing that both *Power of Place* and *A Force for Our Future* concentrated so much on involving the wider community that they seemed to completely overlook the issues and concerns affecting most owners of listed buildings. For these people the new possibility of charges being introduced for listed building consents must seem yet another burden. We need to be pro-active in encouraging owners to care for and understand their buildings, and wouldn't it be an excellent start if English Heritage could publish a short and user-friendly summary of last year's excellent "*Informed Conservation*" by Kate Clark, for distribution to all owners of listed buildings?

More positively, the balance achieved in the new Building Regulations Part L between energy efficiency and historic building interests is welcome, but has not fully resolved the question of how to define the "competent person" to make the judgement between the competing interests. We wait for the publication of English Heritage's promised guidance, and with bated breath to see the forthcoming consultation draft on Part M for disabled access. I hope this includes similar balance to that achieved for Part L, with similar cross-referencing to the British Standard.

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4 Comparing the professions

Archaeology

This involves *monitoring* change: investigating and studying the past, and in doing so enriching the life of the present, through promotion of public interest and knowledge. It is a recognised single profession, comprising a range of specialisms working in both public

and private sectors. Its Institute (the IFA) set up in 1982; has received major financial support from English Heritage, and has full-time staff. Its work on Training and Standards developed through a series of fully-funded projects and reports.

Special circumstances for archaeology:

- 1) Almost always working for the public sector and to briefs defined by the public sector - although frequently with developer funding.
- 2) A very large number of undergraduate courses (under 98 different titles), but comparatively few students go on to become professional archaeologists
- 3) Low-paid, often short-term contracts. The professional role is recognised, but improved *status* is needed.
- 4) Distinct specialist roles within the field - not everyone needs all the skills
- 5) Combination of professional and voluntary sectors, with potential tensions in relation to accreditation etc.
- 6) Archaeologists' work involves *research agendas* as well as the project in hand: setting individual projects / discoveries into a wider context; preservation and / or recording of evidence allows for later interpretation and / or reassessment.

Building Conservation

This involves *managing* change: maintaining and adapting that which we have inherited from the past, and working to ensure that (wherever possible) the quality of changes and new work adds to the quality of our historic environment. It is a specialist sub-set of a range of existing professions, plus one distinct and new professional role (the conservation officer). The Association of Conservation Officers (ACO) was formed in 1981 by and for conservation officers; its successor Institute (IHBC), set up in 1997, seeks to promote awareness of and high standards in building conservation in the public and private sectors. The first formal recognition of the distinct new professional role came in 1982 with the ICOMOS training guidelines. Areas of Competence were defined from 1994 onwards in conjunction with the development of NVQs in Building Conservation. A survey of professional status was funded by English Heritage in 1995; all other work on developing standards has been carried out on a voluntary basis without project funding.

Special circumstances for building conservation:

- 1) Building conservation specialists work mostly on projects initiated for and by private owners, mediating between the owner's aims and the public interest.
- 2) There is no formal definition or recognition of the conservation officer's role (apart from the 1995 guidance to new unitary authorities), and there are no local performance indicators for conservation - effective definition and validation of the public sector role are still being sought.
- 3) Very few undergraduate courses, and a small number of post-graduate courses
- 4) IHBC members have a variety of professional and training backgrounds (in 1995, mainly planning and architecture, with 62% having more than one degree or diploma, and the average being 2.7).
- 5) Full IHBC membership requires all the knowledge, skills and experience required to perform the conservation officer's role.
- 6) Although 50% of construction work involves refurbishment or alteration of existing buildings, construction sector training is focused almost entirely on new work. There are major skills and awareness deficits at both professional and craft / trade levels.
- 6) Development of standards and accreditation for conservation has involved and been hampered by major inter-professional sensitivities, particularly in relation to design skills.

5 Development of Professional Standards and Qualifications

Government requirements have impinged on standards for both Archaeology and Building Conservation, through the development of National Vocational Qualifications. The excellent basic premise of these qualifications (proving competence in the workplace) has been largely negated by their tortuous language - to the extent that the Archaeology NVQ failed for lack of uptake, and although the Building Conservation NVQ standards have been approved, no candidates have yet taken the qualification. The suite of Building Conservation NVQs for professionals comprises Conservation Consultancy (at level 5, the highest level) and, at level 4, Conservation Control (the first qualification developed

specifically for conservation officers) and Building Site Management (Conservation) - a specialist variant of an existing qualification.

6 Conservation and Archaeology in the Public Sector

The Conservation Control NVQ was developed in close conjunction with work on first the ACO and now the IHBC's Areas of Competence, and is cross-referenced to the IHBC's Outline of Knowledge Skills and Experience required for membership. Its standard was intended to provide a template for public sector conservation work, even if the qualification failed. One of the aims of the IHBC's 2001 Annual School "Setting Standards" was to seek English Heritage support for the NVQ standard as a template for public sector conservation service delivery, but this was not forthcoming. One outcome of the School was that EH agreed to finance a joint project with IHBC to survey Local Authority Conservation Provision, as an extension of its existing survey of Archaeological provision. This survey, although very welcome, has not met the urgent need in the context of Best Value, the Single Status Review in Scotland, or cadw's proposed delegation of decision-making on grade II buildings in Wales, for agreed standards of service delivery and local performance indicators.

IHBC (and ALGAO) subsequently contributed to the Planning Officers Society's Draft Matrix for Excellence in Urban Design and Conservation, now published for comment on the POS website - <http://www.planningofficers.org.uk> IHBC's involvement achieved very significant improvements to the first draft of this Matrix, which was prepared with Best Value and the Audit Commission in mind. A late and worrying development was the addition, at the last moment, of the word "Urban" to the title: Urban Design is a sub-set of Design, but the reverse is not the case, and the strength of the document in relation to Design has been diluted as a result of the change.

7 Conservation Standards and Accreditation in the Private Sector

There are existing registers of accredited conservation professionals (RIAS - Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland; RICS; and most recently AABC - Architects Accredited in Building Conservation - originally intended to be under RIBA auspices), entry to all of which involves submission of a portfolio of evidence to an examining panel, who use the ICOMOS international training guidelines as the framework for assessment. All of the registers have struggled to attract members.

During the 1990s Historic Scotland became very concerned at the poor quality of work being carried out with grant aid, and decided to tackle the quality issue at both craft and professional levels. One consequence was that the 1998 Historic Buildings Council for Scotland Annual Report included a commitment that within 3-5 years the lead professional in all grant-aided schemes should be accredited in conservation. Historic Scotland commissioned Edinburgh College of Art and Heriot-Watt University to draft an Accreditation Framework to fill this need. This framework, which has UK-wide relevance, has been the subject of wide consultation among a wide range of professional bodies. It comprises 5 Units.

Unit 1: Cultural significance

Unit 2: Architectural qualities and value

Unit 3: Investigation, materials and technology

Unit 4: Social and financial issues

Unit 5: Implementation and management of conservation works

The framework has been endorsed by all the bodies involved, apart from English Heritage and the Architects Accredited in Building Conservation, both of whom have objected to the inclusion of a design unit “architectural quality and value” within the framework. The Royal Institute of British Architects has declined to take part, objecting to the inclusion of alterations and extensions as part of “conservation”. This framework provides a very promising basis for a shared inter-professional approach to accreditation.

8 England

English Heritage has given a commitment that from 1 April 2003 architects in charge of grant-aided conservation projects should be members of the AABC Register. This would put architects on the same basis as surveyors (for whom RICS conservation accreditation is required if they are to act as lead professional on EH grant projects). This has led to an increased number of enquiries about AABC membership, but little take-up so far (although the new guidance on Grants to Places of Worship may give a further boost to AABC membership). EH's commitment is severely flawed, for 2 reasons: 1) AABC accreditation relates only to repairs of historic buildings, not to the regeneration work which has been the focus of much EH activity; and 2) EH's reach, in terms of the number of historic building repairs which it grant aids directly, and for which AABC membership would be relevant, is much smaller than Historic Scotland's. It is therefore hard to see EH's commitment, in its present form, having significant and widespread benefits. The worrying corollary is that, again unlike Historic Scotland, EH does not appear to be carrying out any systematic quality audit of the outcomes of its investment in conservation activity, in relation to either quality of work on the ground or the quality of additional staff being funded through EH resources.

9 Conclusion – current issues

a) accreditation

The developments in conservation accreditation have been paralleled by the development of archaeology standards, prepared on a similar basis to those for building conservation. The modules in the Archaeology Qualifications Framework, and the Units in the Building Conservation NVQs (Conservation Consultancy and Conservation Control) are appended to the text of this paper. We are getting to the point where both professions are developing a systematic framework for accreditation and assessment. This leaves us with one major issue. Getting assessed and putting a portfolio forward involves a major commitment of time. Most people are hard pressed anyway: certainly in the private sector people ask 'why should we do this?' 'what benefit will it bring to us?' It will only happen if there is sufficient financial inducement.

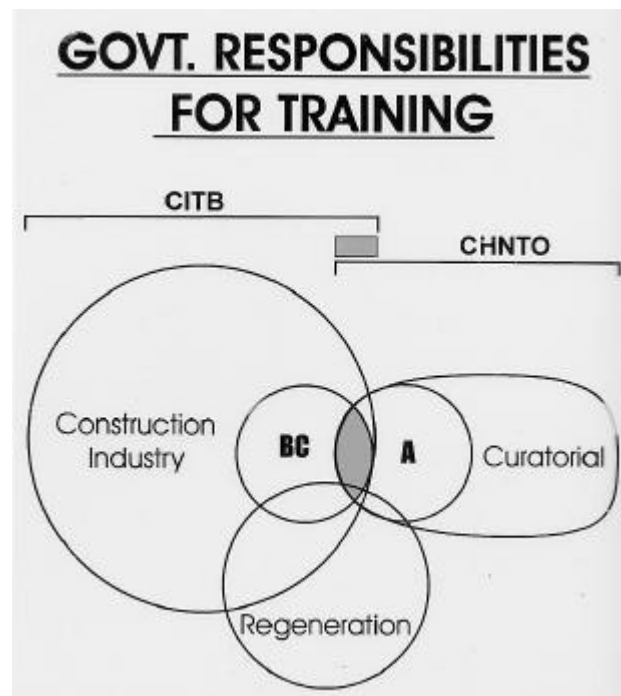
The new English Heritage – Heritage Lottery Fund joint scheme for Places of Worship is making accreditation a condition on being the lead professional on a grant-aided project - but English Heritage's reach in terms of grant-aid for building conservation is fairly limited. It is not going to address the major quality issue for works affecting the historic environment: that the listed building control regime provides for negotiation of a scheme satisfactorily to the point of decision, but no control as to whether it is going to be supervised by the person who designed it, or even by someone who is competent. This seems unlikely to change unless and until there is a much greater emphasis on quality assurance, based on outcomes rather than process.

b) training opportunities and CPD

In the meantime, the current ideas for using grant-aided works for developing training are promising, but there are obvious differences in the scope of the potential opportunities offered to the different professions: compare a major excavation offering potential for a full training package for students, to a grant-aided house repair lasting a much shorter time and with much more limited scope for training. I cannot stress strongly enough the value of proper CPD frameworks, and this is where the work going on in terms of local authority standards for both archaeology and conservation is so important. However a CPD framework will only work effectively if employers back it, and they back the staff to get the qualifications.

c) the national context

The other uncertainty is that our responsibilities are mixed across government sectors. It is only in the last week that we have had confirmation that the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) is going to be the new Sector Skills Council for the construction industry. CHNTO, the cultural heritage national training organisation is still seeking partners. Here is another version of the diagram I showed you earlier, this time setting Conservation and Archaeology into their wider context.



Conservation has to reach out to the construction sector, trying to get high standards out there: CITB is the logical place for us. But the problem we have got is that the government arrangements for training say that Sector Skills Councils must be largely down to employers; there is an obvious temptation to lump us all into a local government Sector Skills Council. CITB has plenty of building contractor subscribers, and we are having to work on them, again with the help of English Heritage, to make them more aware of the professional level. But we still have this gap. How does the cultural heritage element of building conservation sit in relation to CHNTO and CITB ? – there are obvious curatorial implications in relation to archaeology and the museums’ world. We need to keep those links and also reach out to the construction industry.

That is the major challenge.

Modules in the Archaeology Qualifications Framework

Module 1	Develop Policies and Plans
Module 2	Propose and carry out research projects
Module 3	Propose and carry out analysis and interpretation
Module 4	Specify requirements and contract for projects
Module 5	Evaluate and plan projects
Module 6	Carry out site investigations
Module 7	Contribute to site investigations
Module 8	Handle and store items
Module 10	Characterise the archaeological resource and advise on its conservation
Module 12	Advise on and maintain compliance with archaeological requirements
Module 14	Specify and implement conservation procedures
Module 15	Conserve items
Module 16	Develop and implement systems and procedures for recording information
Module 17	Record data and make available to others
Module 18	Manage collections
Module 19	Devise and plan education and learning programmes
Module 20	Contribute to interpretative, learning, and promotional activities
Module 21	Develop and promote the archaeological organisation
Module 22	Resource and control the finances of the archaeological organisation
Module 23	Manage teams
Module 24	Manage projects
Module 25	Manage and develop yourself

Conservation Consultancy NVQ Level 5

- CA1 ADVISE ON CONSERVATION POLICY AND PLANS**
- CA2 INVESTIGATE AND ASSESS FACTORS AFFECTING CONSERVATION**
- CA3 ADVISE ON THE SELECTION OF CONSERVATION SCHEMES AND PROCESSES**
- CA4 ADVISE ON CONSERVATION METHODS AND PROJECT COMPLIANCE WITH QUALITY STANDARDS**
- CA5 ADVISE ON REQUIREMENTS FOR CONTINUING CONSERVATION AND PLANNED MAINTENANCE**
- CA6 SURVEY CONSERVATION SITES**
- CA7 SPECIFY TESTS RELEVANT TO CONSERVATION AND INTERPRET DATA**
- CA8 DOCUMENT THE CONSERVATION SITE**
- CA9 CONTRIBUTE TO ADVANCES IN THE BODY OF KNOWLEDGE AND CONSERVATION PRACTICE**

Conservation Control NVQ Level 4

CORE UNITS

- CC1 Promote Conservation Policy**
- CC2 Maintain Compliance with Conservation Requirements**
- CC3 Investigate Conservation Factors**
- CC4 Advise on Proposals for Conservation**
- CC5 Maintain Relationships and Resolve Complex Problems Within an Ethical Framework**

OPTIONAL UNITS - TWO UNITS MUST BE ACHIEVED

- CC6 Monitor, and Develop Conservation Policy**
- CC7 Investigate and Advise on Property Management Factors**
- CC8 Assess and Agree A Brief**
- CC9 Co-ordinate the Project Development Process**
- CC10 Manage the Performance of Teams and Individuals**
- CC11 Assess the Condition of Property**
- CC12 Document the Conservation Site**

ADDITIONAL UNIT - SUPPLEMENTARY TO THE AWARD

CC13 Contribute to Advances in the Body of Knowledge and Practice