

## Editorial

What are the processes by which conservation practices change? When does a proposition or principle become received wisdom? Management of some aspects of the historic environment is marked by specific events. Occasionally the formulation of a charter or standard will define common ground around which a consensus will then coalesce. Landmark legal decisions may redefine the accepted meaning of words and phrases or how they are applied, to the extent that heritage practitioners must immediately change their procedures, interpretations or behaviour.

In other arenas, change is sometimes so gradual that the profoundness of the change is apparent only in retrospect, not being marked by any single significant or discernible step, but brought about through the quiet, patient, empirical evolution of soundly based research.

Dealing with the evolutionary and empirical first, the University of Bath group of Mike Lawrence, Dr Peter Walker and Dr Dina D'Ayala highlight the initial findings of a study of the *Non-Hydraulic Lime Mortars: The Influence of Binder and Filler Type on Early Strength Development*. The research forms part of the long and gradual retreat by the heritage sector back to traditional mortars from what had once been the unquestioning acceptance of the superiority of cement-based mortars.

Continued incremental development is also evident in the use of laser technology in conservation. The last *Journal* issue explored its use in cleaning, while in this edition, David Barber, Ross Dallas and Jon Mills set out the basis and practical application of both the hardware and software for *Laser Scanning for Architectural Conservation*. Ross Dallas had previously identified the potential while the technique was in its relative infancy, in a paper in 2003, but as with all emerging technology, the appropriateness of the application must be determined at the outset if reasonable expectations are to be fulfilled and the momentum of further use maintained.

For many UK practitioners the initials 'APT' will mean the Association of Preservation Trusts, the umbrella organization for the building preservation trust movement. These 'repairers of last resort', now nearly 300 strong, are often at the cutting edge of community-led heritage regeneration. Others in conservation will know APT as *The Association for Preservation*

*Technology*, a pre-eminent organization of professional conservation in North America. It has grown from a small information exchange network in 1968 to a core membership of 1,500 professionals; its structure, activities, special interest groups, publications, newsletters and peer-reviewed journal – the respected *APT Bulletin* – are described by Hugh Miller.

Do practitioners too easily forget that the past was once the future? Instead of perceiving yesterday on its own terms, they fall into the trap of viewing it from today's perspective. Frank Matero's wide-ranging paper *Loss, Compensation and Authenticity in Architectural Conservation* reviews in particular the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century concepts of conservation in terms of the aesthetic implications of intervention in the processes of natural decay. He examines the ways in which past ideas about preservation and consolidation impinge upon current considerations of weathering, patina and the idea, not to say ideal, of completeness.

In Western society views of heritage exhibit a continuous thread from the Enlightenment to the present, and a background of rationality and Eurocentricity. UNESCO's World Heritage List, although ostensibly an expression of universal cultural values, is notable in this, in its preservationist ethos and in the regional bias of its designations.

Recent papers, however, notably that by Seung- Jin Chung in 2005, made explicit a markedly different and equally valid set of values – political, cultural and religious – underpinning architectural conservation, where a tradition of continuous intervention and renewal has been expected.

Formulating principles for heritage conservation based on this fundamentally different cultural and social model, with a distinct historical background and building tradition, but related to long-established international norms, has been the recent challenge facing China. Considerable progress has been made in ways applicable to the particular circumstances of China's heritage, mindful of its eternal susceptibility to geophysical disruption as well as its architectural expression. Dina D'Ayala and Hui Wang's paper, *Structural Preservation of Chinese Architectural Heritage: A Critical Appraisal of the China Principles and the Structures Principles*, speculates on the significant impact of these two important documents. First promoted in 2000 and 2003 respectively, they are expected to have profound repercussions for historic building conservation practice in China. As the *Principles* are adopted, a debate will need to be initiated on better education and training if they are to be successfully applied. There will have to be more detailed guidance on their practical application and appropriate technical and practical skills must be nurtured. A recognition that such a debate is required, and that meeting such requirements will be a challenge, is one not confined to China and will have universal application.

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