

Editorial

As the year draws to a close, the Journal continues to offer up its customary and diverse mix of papers. In this issue, the opening paper unpicks the confusing use of terminology to describe historic plasterwork; this is followed by two papers that draw on case studies to investigate structural issues in a seventeenth and two nineteenth-century buildings respectively, a fourth paper examines the reliability of guidance available for ventilating historic buildings and the final paper considers contemporary stonework conservation in Jerusalem.

When reading the first paper I was reminded of something the Irish playwright Oscar Wilde wrote in *The Canterville Ghost* (1887): ‘*We have really everything in common with America nowadays except, of course, language.*’ As this sentence indicates so drolly, words can convey alternative meanings to different groups of people and they can change their meanings over time. Claire Gapper and Jeff Orton’s paper examines the meaning, origins and confusion surrounding the various terms relating to plasterwork in written documentation, particularly prior to the eighteenth century. In so doing they bring together a wealth of references to help clarify the way plastering terminology has been used historically in Europe.

In Elizabethan England (1558–1603), rich and aristocratic subjects vied for royal favour by building grand houses in which to entertain their queen and her retinue as the court made its summer progress around the kingdom. Of these ‘prodigy houses’, each seeking to outdo the other in style, ornament, splendour and scale, none is more fantastical than Wollaton Hall, Nottinghamshire. Here a three-storey high central hall projects above the roof of the main block and gains its light by clerestory windows. The addition above of a turreted ‘Prospect Room’, seemingly used solely for the view it afforded over the surrounding parkland, accentuates the building’s romantic, fairy tale castle skyline. In our second paper, Ed Morton describes how the unusually constructed floor of the Prospect Room was analysed. He then discusses a programme of work put in hand to remove intrusive steel trusses (inserted in a previous campaign of repair) reinstate the structural integrity of the floor and

permit public access once again so the room's landscape views can be enjoyed.

In the third quarter of the nineteenth century, engineers in the US developed cast-iron façades for use in forming the principal elevations of buildings with load-bearing masonry side walls. Despite offering possibilities for moulded architectural decoration and larger windows for daylighting, or the display of merchandise, this form of construction was largely spurned by European designers. Some isolated examples do exist outside the US, which provided glass-fronted stores in high street locations. These were often adaptations to existing brick-built constructions as can be seen in two English instances: Jesse Boot's original chemist shop in Goosegate, Nottingham (1882) and the Arighi Bianchi Warehouse in Macclesfield (1892). Marie Ennis and Donald Freeman, in our third paper, discuss the structural characteristics of cast-iron façades and illustrate some of the issues associated with their conservation and repair with case studies.

The environmental behaviour and performance of traditionally constructed buildings is imperfectly understood. All too often designers tasked with upgrading these buildings to meet client aspirations and regulatory obligations, driven by the climate change agenda, will find little reliable data is available to inform their decision-making. In our fourth paper, Diane Hubbard presents and analyses data from a case study exploring the air permeability of the walls of a stone-built row of houses in northern England. Her results challenge the reliability of a long-held rule of thumb that for historic buildings twice the normal level of ventilation is appropriate, and emphasizes the need for further research.

Conserving stonework can be a challenging business at the best of times, and is particularly so in places like Jerusalem. Here the Palestinians, increasingly conscious of the need to conserve their cultural heritage, are contending with both material and skill shortages against a background of continuing political unrest. In our final paper, Shadi Sami Ghadban and Marwan Ashhab of Birzeit University in the Palestinian Territories describe their research into the conservation of stonework in the Old City of Jerusalem. Despite having limited laboratory facilities for testing stones and mortars, they demonstrate how appropriate replacement stones and mortar mixes could be selected in a more informed way than in the recent past.

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