

Editorial

In a moment of self-reflection Isaac Newton wrote, ‘ ... *I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the sea shore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell, whilst the greater ocean of truth lay all undiscovered around me.*’

Many of us experience architectural conservation rather like Newton’s boy, in that we become involved with certain projects, acquire knowledge and experience, and hopefully master some of the subject disciplines necessary for us to play a constructive part in the process, but are only too aware of the greater ocean of knowledge and skill that lies beyond our command. As always, by offering up a regular diet of conservation-related papers, the Journal hopes to provide readers with opportunities to explore selected areas of that ocean. In pursuit of this aspiration the present volume provides five contrasting papers. While one examines the adaptive reuse of an urban building, another provides a guide to the stabilization of the standing remains of more rural buildings; a third demonstrates the value of detailed physical on-site investigations when researching painted interiors; the fourth examines how new technology can be applied to the appraisal of a building’s structural integrity; and the fifth paper chronicles an attempt to re-learn lost knowledge and craft skills associated with the repair of the external lime-based renders.

When adaptive reuse is proposed for a historic building, its form, in addition to its internal and external features, may impose considerable constraints. Some degree of compromise will inevitably have to be reached if a viable reuse is to be realized, but this must avoid inflicting significant damage to the archaeological, architectural, artistic and historic interest of the building. Hugh Feilden analyses the factors that led to the adoption of the final scheme for a recently completed project to convert London’s Middlesex Guildhall to accommodate the newly created United Kingdom Supreme Court. The paper not only outlines the complexities of public projects of this nature but also highlights tensions that had to be resolved to reach an acceptable solution.

The ruined remains of buildings have long held a fascination for romantic artists, poets and landscapers alike, and since many of these ruins are of

great importance, they are worthy of conservation. Jon Avent provides an insight into how to safeguard the future of such ruins by first examining the issues and challenges surrounding their conservation. Drawing on his substantial engineering experience, Avent offers generic guidance on how best to approach the development of an appropriate programme of repair works and demonstrates the practical resolution of problems typically encountered when consolidating and stabilizing ruined structures.

Making assumptions about buildings based only on surviving drawings and contemporary written records is poor conservation practice, as Richard Ireland and David Gundry illustrate in their paper chronicling work on the painted interiors of Headfort House in the Republic of Ireland. Only by very detailed physical investigation of five Adam-designed rooms did it become possible to establish the original decorative schemes and differentiate them from the subsequent campaigns of overpainting.

Considerable developments have taken place in recent years in the equipment for gathering survey data and the software packages available to process and plot them. One very significant technique is 3D terrestrial laser scanning. John Smits provides an informed and practical discussion on the application of laser scanning for the survey, recording and documentation of buildings. In particular, the paper explains how the technique provides a convenient and effective way to map building surfaces in order to locate and measure deformations. Such information is invaluable when seeking to understand and assess the significance of any movements in a structure, in order to diagnose its cause and ultimately inform the selection of an appropriate course of remedial action.

In the past the knowledge of how to prepare and apply external renders based on hot-lime mortars was passed from master to apprentice. With the shift in the twentieth century to stronger, faster-setting and more consistent cement-based mortars, this accumulated craft-based wisdom was lost. At Läckö Castle, which dates from the seventeenth century, the opportunity has been taken to regain some of this knowledge. Full-scale repair and conservation works have been initiated using hot-lime mortars to replace failing hard, cementitious external renders applied in the 1960s. In their paper Ewa Malinowski and Torben Hansen report on the project and what has been learned so far about the use and performance of hot-lime mortars, compared with mortars based on slaked lime run to putty.

Professor Peter Swallow