



HISTORIC BUILDINGS
COUNCIL

for Northern Ireland

2013-2016

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NINETEENTH REPORT

MMXVI

Members 2013-2016



(From left) Bronagh Lynch, Grainne O’Hagan, Liam Campbell, Rosie Ford-Hutchinson, Joseph Birt, Marcus Patton (Chairman), Ken Boston, Noelle Houston. (Inset, from top) Brian Banks, Cathal Crimmins, Alistair Lindsay, Mike Martin, Colm Murray, Peter Tracey and Patricia Warke.

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Functions of the Historic Buildings Council

The Historic Buildings Council is established under Article 198 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. Its function is

to keep under review, and from time to time report to the Department on, the general state of preservation of listed buildings; and

to advise the Department on such matters relating to the preservation of buildings of special architectural or historic interest as the Department may refer to it.

The Council's nature is defined under Schedule 5 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011:

It shall consist of a Chair appointed by the Minister and such number of other members so appointed as the Minister may determine. Members are appointed for a term of three years but are eligible for re-appointment. The Council may appoint sub-committees which may include persons who are not members of the Council, and the Council may regulate its own quorum. It must prepare and submit to the Department a report on its activities and the Department shall lay a copy of every such report before the Assembly.

The Council is required to be consulted

1. under article 80 (3) of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 on the compiling or amendment of the list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest;
2. under Article 84 (3) of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, before the Department issues any certificate stating that it does not intend to list a building;
3. under Article 104 (5) of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 on the making, varying or cancelling the designation of a conservation area.

Chairman's Report

The Historic Buildings Council has a fascinating job in assessing buildings for their historic or architectural character, considering how to interpret planning legislation concerning the protection of listed buildings, and analysing the clues buildings throw up to their history and significance. Our decisions are not binding on the officials who administer the historic buildings legislation, but they are involved in our discussions and over the course of a Council term much common ground is established.

It is no wonder that many HBC members find the process quite addictive and leave with reluctance. My father was on the first Historic Buildings Council here and was quite annoyed when he was told that his term was up and that he would have to make way for new members. When the late Dick Oram and I finished our two terms as members in 2010 we were firmly told that we would not be able to come back on *in our lifetimes*, so it was with some surprise as well as considerable pleasure that I found there was a way to come back without recourse to haunting (which Dick may well be doing), when I was appointed as Chairman of the Council in 2013.

Having said that, this has been a disheartening period, with historic buildings grants decimated and much time spent considering the reorganisation of local government instead of architectural aesthetics. On top of that the Second Survey has continued to bring forward buildings that have been mutilated rather than protected and are now candidates for de-listing. Where the Council once travelled the province to visit different areas it is now restricted to a few DoE premises to avoid the expense of hiring rooms, and some members have noted that the lunches that refreshed our meetings of old have been replaced with sandwiches. However there was also much lively and erudite discussion and some views passionately expressed. The Historic Buildings Council remains a vigorous forum for debate about the buildings that encapsulate the character of the towns and cities of Northern Ireland.

We have considered some 400 buildings over the term of the Council, happily agreeing to many new listings and more reluctantly agreeing to the de-listing of others. In many cases the exterior of the buildings is familiar but seeing slides of the interiors is often surprising and can give rise to lengthy analysis, as Bronagh Lynch has suggested in her article (p.29).

In most cases there is discussion but little debate about new listings. The most difficult ones are buildings which are relatively recent or "typical" rather than exceptional. There are many bungalows surviving from the 1950s, but they are constantly being changed and if any are to survive in original condition they probably need to be listed now. Buildings are at their most vulnerable when they are seen as being old-fashioned rather than historic, and a change of ownership can lead to new kitchens, bathrooms and of course plastic windows. So although recent buildings do have to be looked at more critically than older ones it is important to protect what appear to be the most interesting and original examples.

On a few occasions we have agreed to the listing of comparatively ephemeral buildings, such as a summer house in Lisburn. A once common feature of suburban gardens has become rare.

Some years ago buildings were being de-listed because plastic windows had replaced the original ones. Now as well as leaving such buildings on the list, we have listed a number despite their new windows. New window designs are a dramatic change that is never for the better, but occasionally buildings do have other characteristics that enable us to set aside the windows in the interest of the ensemble.

Two general issues have been on our agenda throughout the term and I hope will soon lead to productive outcomes. The first is ecclesiastical exemption, the procedure which allows churches in use to make changes to their listed building without Listed Building Consent. This seems to work satisfactorily in Great Britain, but has led to mutilation of many churches here, and we were asked to approve a considerable number of delistings as a result of works which were

carried out presumably with every good intention, and often at considerable expense, but have removed every shred of historic character. The exemption made it virtually impossible to intervene in alterations to 1st Antrim Presbyterian Church proposed in 2013 which will effectively amount to the demolition of a very fine classical church. It is hard to see why churches should be exempt from legislation that applies to every other type of building, and we asked the Minister to consider removal of the exemption. A document is now out for public consultation, and if approved it will also make a good case for funding churches in the same way as secular buildings.

The other problem is finding a future for thatched cottages. Once a ubiquitous feature of our landscape – there were an estimated 30,000 of them in 1950 – there are now barely a hundred surviving, and many of those are undoubtedly at risk. There have been many studies and reports on the matter over the years, and Michael Martin and Grainne O’Hagan have added their thoughts in this report. We are calling for an active process that will ensure the future of these iconic and distinctive buildings.

Many planning applications for individual buildings have given rise to concern. One example was the Tropical Ravine in Belfast’s Botanic Gardens (see cover). Surprisingly, this unique building devised by Charles McKimm in 1887 was not listed till 2011, and almost immediately an application was made to insert a staircase and lift to enable disabled access to it. On the face of it, a worthy objective - but strange in a building that already had level access at its upper level. Instead of visitors looking down into its mysterious jungle from above, people will be able to walk through the plants, and public access to the lower level will necessitate wide paths and fewer plants.

The grade-A Killeavy Castle near Newry has been another cause for concern, with the admirable intention to restore the building being tempered by proposals to cut away part of its landscape setting and to build substantial new buildings nearby. Proposals to extend a Lanyon building in Queen’s Square and another to gut the Ewart’s warehouse, both in Belfast, have also

been opposed. We hope that our views will provide encouragement to our colleagues in HED, and that they in turn will help the planning authorities to understand the importance of these valuable buildings.

Sometimes groups of buildings are under threat, and the Royal Exchange area in Belfast is one such which we have asked officials to monitor. The former Assembly Buildings, one of the oldest buildings in the city, is only one of those that has been lying derelict for many years awaiting the arrival of an anchor tenant for a large development that may not now proceed. Planning blight often puts buildings under unnecessary risk.

We were pleased to support the NIEA over a number of Building Preservation Notices (served on unlisted buildings considered to be at risk of loss) by confirming listings, and in at least one case this appears to have led to a sympathetic restoration proposal.

A reminder that the process of listing is still incomplete was the proposal in 2014 to list a Baptist church in Great Victoria Street and the ironwork of the former public toilets in Shaftesbury Square - both of which were demolished almost immediately after, and before the listing could take effect. More seriously, already-listed buildings can be victims of fire and decay. The elegant Herdman’s Mill in Sion Mills suffered a second major fire in the autumn of 2015, and the future of Crumlin Road Courthouse after severe fires remains a major and very current concern.

The Buildings at Risk project run by NIEA in partnership with the Ulster Architectural Heritage Society is an effective marriage broker between derelict buildings and excited new owners, and it is unfortunate that funding for that has been severely reduced this year, and with it the effectiveness of the project.

The loss of historic buildings grant is a particularly serious blow but we recognise that this arises from serious cuts to all government expenditure, and will have to look for opportunities to reinstate the grant when the climate becomes more favourable. It is

an essential grant for private owners looking after buildings that are often of great public importance, and it is important to point out that historic buildings are not just a hermetic end in themselves - historic buildings are also houses, offices, theatres, shops and public buildings.

Finally, we are entering a new world in the operation of planning in Northern Ireland. The old NIEA has been broken into its built and natural divisions, and the Historic Environment Division is about to move from the Department of the Environment to the new Department for Communities. Last year planning devolved from the DoE to the 11 new “super-councils” and each council will be drawing up its own planning policies. It remains to be seen how this will operate, but it is to be hoped that local councils will see their historic buildings and conservation areas as being key to tourism and regeneration in their areas. Their planning officers will certainly have a more focused awareness of their heritage as they are dealing with smaller areas.

I would like to thank the members of the Council for their varied and helpful contributions over the term; and also the NIEA and HED staff for their support, and in particular Manus Deery, Geoff Sloan, Jenni Kirk, Paul Rice and Peter Anketell who have patiently sat through our discussions and fielded our questions or criticisms.

Marcus Patton



A rare surviving cast iron water fountain dating from c.1870 by engineering firm Glenfield Company Limited was listed in Waterside, Coleraine. Square on plan with ornate decoration including a distinctive lion-head surround to the spout, typical of that used at this time. Of interest as it predates mains water installation and is thought to have drawn spring water – according to locals the water had healing qualities. Significant from a social perspective, drinking fountains were prevalent in the late Victorian era as the only supply of fresh water for many people.

Temperance societies were reputed to be the main benefactors of these structures to encourage people not to drink beer, which at the time was the main alternative to water and generally safer. This particular fountain in Coleraine is located at the pavement edge next to the site of a former brewery.

FAÇADE RETENTION

The developer's panacea or an act of vandalism?

Despite the downturn in the economy and subsequent reduced demand for town centre commercial accommodation, a significant number of redevelopment schemes have been brought to the Historic Buildings Council for consideration during this term. These have ranged from new build projects in proximity to and considered to have an impact upon historic buildings, to the major alteration and extension of significant town centre buildings of some note. The latter proposals often involved a major level of intervention including partial demolition and alteration to the extent that the loss of historic fabric and identity have led to the HBC being asked to consider a recommendation for delisting a building that may previously been considered a landmark in the urban streetscape.

Considerable debate as to the acceptability of permitting substantial alterations to historic buildings has led to the rather emotive argument as to the place, if any, that façade retention has in securing the future of a building. What is the value of a mere façade, often masking what is in reality a modern building with all of the facilities and features demanded by the discerning commercial client?

Opinions held by members of the HBC and conservationists generally on façade retention are often extreme, and as noted by Highfield D. (1991), often depends on the stance taken as either a 'purist' or a 'realist', with a number of commentators finding difficulty in reaching compromise to retain a remnant of an historic building at the expense of the total loss of the greater part of the superstructure and associated historic identity.

The purist, wishing to retain an historic building in its entirety, often advocates that demolition is a more humane termination of a building's life than retaining streetscape with little or no original fabric behind the façade. Orbasli (2000) describes facadism as the '*Disney Glorification of Urban Heritage*' with no real value behind the '*stage-sets of townscapes*'.

However the realist accepts that for a variety of reasons it is not always possible, or indeed economically sustainable, to retain an entire building of historic significance but that the external perimeter

envelope, or part thereof, has a contribution to make to an established streetscape. Such extreme levels of development also raise the issue as to the future status of a statutory listing pertaining to a building where the only remaining historic or architectural element of significance, the external walling, is otherwise devoid of many of those features that may have contributed to the initial statutory listing.

The HBC has recently been faced with this dilemma and on many occasions been presented with the argument that the building is within a conservation area and will therefore be afforded protection even if it is delisted.

Reasons supporting the proposed adoption of a façade retention scheme are obviously unique to the actual building under consideration, but in general the main argument often revolves around the need to retain streetscape while also having a building that is both functional and with a long term economic future. Given the nature, not least the age and former use, of many historic buildings, it is often difficult to clearly identify a continued use for a building that was designed and constructed to meet the specific needs of a commercial or industrial use that no longer exists. This is considered within the following brief case studies.

Façade retention may be appropriate in certain circumstances, including :

Internal layout of building unsuitable for proposed use with little prospect of achieving the space requirements through the rearrangement of internal structural elements. This is particularly difficult when attempting to adapt buildings of load bearing masonry walling with no skeletal structural framing.

Statutory listed status unlikely to be revoked on application for delisting. Bearing in mind that within PPS 6 Policy '*Planning, Archaeology and Built Heritage*', BH10 outlines the presumption in favour of retaining listed buildings, *demolition being exceptional*. On consideration of the criteria cited within a listing of a particular

building the internal features may not have been significant, with the façade and external features being the main reason for listing, although the building would of course have been listed in its entirety.

Buildings, deemed to make a major contribution to local streetscape or contributing to a level of group value that would prevent demolition from being an option, but perhaps not listed or within a Conservation Area, may be suitable candidates for façade retention.

Where the internal features of the building that were previously considered important within the criteria supporting the listing have been lost through extensive fire damage, vandalism or prolonged neglect. BH8 sub paragraph 6.15 would appear to reinforce this consideration: *...the preservation of facades alone and the gutting and reconstruction of interiors, is rarely an acceptable approach to the re-use of listed buildings and will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances*. Where this approach has been accepted in the past by the Department it has applied mainly in cases where historic buildings have sustained unintentional major damage. A current example of a building that has been extensively damaged but still retains a viable ornate facade to be incorporated within a development scheme is the Crumlin Road Court House.

Economic appraisal of returning a building to an acceptable level of repair is such that the viability of complete retention is prohibitive. Few buildings can be retained as simply a 'museum piece' and most must have a sustainable economical future. The option of providing additional floors within the height of the existing façade greatly enhances the viability of a façade retention scheme.

Since the 1970's façade retention has been a feature of many urban regeneration schemes throughout European cities. Redevelopment within Belfast was probably slow to address the many challenges

associated with façade retention.

One of the first, and probably most significant, major façade retention schemes within Belfast was that of the former Methodist Church, at Donegall Square East, currently part of the head office of the Ulster Bank. The original church, designed by Isaac Farrell of Dublin in 1847, with an imposing portico and arcade behind, was one of the last neo-classical ecclesiastical buildings to be built in the city. Faced with the general demographic changes within the city, the overall reduction in the level of church attendance, the slim prospect of a comparable reuse of the building in its entirety and opposition to the delisting of the church to make way for the complete redevelopment, façade retention was seen as the option to retain, at least in part, a building falling into an increasing state of disrepair. Although ridiculed by some (issue 9: *The Vacuum*) the portico façade has remained a landmark feature within Donegall Square, its level of success being judged only in the eyes of the beholder.



Albert Bridge (Creative Commons Licence)

The proposal in 2015 to delist the remaining façade was opposed by the HBC and in August 2015 the Environment Minister, Mark H Durkan, announced that the portico of the Ulster Bank on Donegall Square East, along with an array of buildings considered for delisting, would remain listed, as despite having been altered over the years with loss of historic fabric they were still of significant historic interest.

On quite an elaborate scale in terms of retention, the façade retention scheme at the Four Corners building located at the junction of Donegall Street and



Waring Street, clearly demonstrates eventual progress in the long awaited redevelopment within the Cathedral Quarter. Built in 1871 by Thomas Jackson and having remained in a state of dereliction for 12 years to the extent that its internal features were no longer in a state capable of restoration, the retained façade provides a contribution to the streetscape within this area. Albeit at an estimated cost of £15m, the redevelopment of the site to provide the Premier Inn’s hotel and restaurant has obviously enhanced an area of the City that will be subject to further redevelopment in the form of the extensive Royal Exchange complex that may include the complete demolition of notable buildings, not least the derelict Grade B2 listed North Street Arcade. It was suggested at the *Heritage Revisited* seminar (PLACE 2011) that ‘façade retention is a good thing in Belfast and that the Four Corners project should be complimented’, perhaps indicating that the opinions of the purist and the realist are not totally poles apart.

The Former Corn Exchange, a grade B1 listed building designed in 1851 by Thomas Jackson, having outlived its former use required a transformation



to provide a long term economic function. The additional floors provided within the existing height of the building and the extension and additional storey provided did little to detract from the external appearance, but unfortunately the building remained partially vacant until recently leased by the Ulster Scots Agency.

It is interesting to note that the Historic Buildings Council minutes, available for scrutiny within the public domain, record concerns regarding an initial proposal to carry out a façade retention scheme to the Haymarket Building at Royal Avenue, Belfast.



The most decorative building within the group, having lost its interior as a result of fire damage, had been replaced with a steel structure. The remaining buildings, although having historic floor and wall elements, retained little internal detail of note. The proposal included retention of facades, recreation of a pitched roof similar to that which would have originally existed and the formation of commercial floor space at ground floor level with apartments above. HBC, following considerable debate, concluded that the proposal was inappropriate for a number of reasons. In particular, the planned development would have compromised the integrity of the building and the contribution that it made to the streetscape of Royal Avenue. Concerns regarding the economic argument forwarded in support of the application were also raised.

Given the extent of the redevelopment that is planned for Belfast, not least in the Cathedral Quarter in general and particularly within the footprint of

the proposed Royal Exchange development, it is possible to identify many buildings, some of which are listed, that may be the subject to applications for façade retention or demolition. In particular the Grade B1 listed buildings on Lower Garfield Street are certainly in poor condition generally, but may have potential for an innovative façade retention scheme to preserve an appropriate streetscape. This is true of many of our remaining buildings in Belfast, Derry City and provincial towns. All too often above the rather mundane commercial shop fronts there are magnificent facades, sadly vacant and in a poor state of repair. Facade retention has become a more recognized principle within urban redevelopment, endorsed by some of the successful schemes already undertaken and, for example the relatively recent scheme within the City Conservation Area at Bishop Street, Derry.



However not all façade retention schemes can be deemed a success and maybe the purist has a valid point supported by the incongruous example at Artillery Lane, London, where a facade was retained without any attempt at integration.

Facadism: is it good or bad? Are buildings ‘saved’ from complete demolition making a significant contribution to streetscape, linking to former urban

styles or are they just a token gesture to our built heritage? The real answer probably lies in one’s own perspective, be it that of the ‘purist’ or the ‘realist’. The options are: a modern building complete with an original Victorian facade or a demolished Victorian building replaced with a building of contemporary design. This is demonstrated by the reality that having now lost the argument to retain the façade of the 1932 art deco Orpheus Building in York Street, the streetscape there has changed to the extent that local identity and much of the social importance associated with the ‘ballroom of romance’ has been lost forever.

Considering the net loss to built heritage through the period of our turbulent past and the extensive period of destruction prior to the introduction of statutory listing with the 1971 Planning Order, some 24 years after such listing was introduced in Great Britain, façade retention might be a compromise, but is a real alternative to demolition.

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“IT WAS SOMEONE’S HOUSE....”

Place, identity and the local in vernacular architecture.

*The rooms where we come to consciousness, the cupboards we open as toddlers, the shelves we climb up to... the secret spots we come upon on our earliest solitudes out of doors, the haunts of our first explorations in outbuildings and fields on the verge of our security... At such moments we have our first inklings of pastness and find our physical surroundings invested with a wider and deeper dimension. (S. Heaney, ‘The Sense of the Past’, *History Ireland*, 1, 4 (19913), 33)*

The late Seamus Heaney’s very particular rendition of the power of place and buildings, especially local place, in our lives expresses a kind of organic link between people and place, where time and space are inextricably interwoven in memory and experience, ‘the replayed shards of feeling arising from a particular place’ (I. Hunt, *Somewhere Else*, 1998, 49)

Until the present century, rural buildings across the country were regionally varied and steeped in tradition. House styles evolved slowly as adaptations to the local environment and economy, with distinctive forms transmitted as part of a communal tradition. I use the term vernacular here to signify the ordinary buildings of the countryside, erected within the limits of indigenous traditions that changed slowly until at least the mid nineteenth century.

*Vernacular architecture comprises the dwellings and all other buildings of the people. Related to their environmental contexts and available resources, they are customarily owner - or community - built, utilizing traditional technologies. All forms of vernacular architecture are built to specific needs, accommodating the values, economies and ways of living of the cultures that produce them. (Paul Oliver, *Encyclopedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World*, Cambridge, 1997)*

Local designers using the local material knew intuitively what the local client required and as Alan Gailey once said, “the designers, builders and clients were often one and the same”.

In a situation where landlord and tenant relations

were often poor, the ordinary folk of the countryside were discouraged from expending much effort in providing substantive homes. Much has been written about these houses and indeed few vernacular houses earlier than the late eighteenth century survive. Irish vernacular buildings utilized plain proportions with an unintended but almost classical restraint. They were and are carefully integrated into their environment. Good proportions and environmental balance in combination conferred a notable aesthetic appeal. Ake Campbell (no relation!), the great Swedish folklife scholar, observed that the vernacular house, ‘never stands out in bold relief against its background but melts into it even as a tree or a rock. Wherever the old building traditions are faithfully maintained, its features are of a fine simplicity.’ Until recently, the majority of people lived and worked in vernacular buildings.

Nobody knows just how few cottages have survived development pressures over the past twenty years or more but we do know that the dramatic decline of thatched cottages in Northern Ireland was from over 30,000 in 1950 to 150 in 2005 (EHS 2005). However it is to their simplicity and import in the landscape that I wish to address in this article.

I live in the Sperrin Mountains a few miles from the Ulster American Folk Park, which I admire greatly and never tire of visiting. However, it is all too easy for me to see these examples of vernacular architecture in this artificial setting and to miss what is on my doorstep, albeit in a much less preserved state. It is all too easy for me to become tied up in sentimental musings such as the ‘sparkling white cottages that dot the landscape’ notion. As someone who spent many years in rural research, there was a real wake up call for me when a local project opened my eyes to something that was staring me in the face. I am amazed at how many of these wonderful buildings that used to sit in states of dereliction beside the new house are now being cared for in many creative ways.

“Glenelly Our Home”, which explores the past homes of the Glenelly valley between Plumbridge in Co Tyrone and Draperstown in Co Derry, is an innovative project from the Glenelly Historical Society -

(www.glenellyhistoricalsociety.org.uk). What began as a few folk taking photographs of the old home ruins of the valley has blossomed into an exploration of the meaning of the local through ideas about a sense of place, identity and belonging, memory and home. This is how it was recently described by one visitor to the site: “Photographs of old houses, some of them just a pile of stones, are put on the face book site. These photographs bring back memories of families long gone and have created a link with folk from all over the world. In recent weeks some family photographs are starting to appear, creating further discussion and links.”



Marcus Patton

Landscape near Carnlough, Co Antrim

We can summarize some meanings of the local in terms that are familiar to many. The local is often the first place, a place of first memories and first lessons in the importance of space and place. Memory is embedded in place, laden with associations for family, neighbour and community. In this way, these ruins in the landscape become place through interaction with its occupying community, which helps it acquire a depth of social meaning, and helps to embed it in the community’s consciousness and memory. This making and shaping has frequently featured in the imagery of artists and poets, such as John Hewitt:

*Once alien here my fathers built their house,
claimed, drained, and gave the land the shapes
of use....
(‘Once Alien Here’, in *The Selected Poetry of John Hewitt*, Belfast 1981)*

Or more recently, Willie Doherty’s reflection on the stone walls:

*They represent the blood and sweat of countless
generations.
For all this
Land is ‘made’ hand made.
(They’re All the Same, *Somewhere Else*, p.22)*

These places are culturally significant and deeply territorial. It is about the material physical space of the house, ‘taking part in the landscape’, is most

intense. The significance of this material landscape of wallsteads is best seen in the search for roots, for personal and family identity.

The primary template of locality in the Northern Irish countryside must be these buildings. All the changes taking place with rural housing today, all the growth of ‘non-locals’ or ‘blow-ins’ (of which I am one!) are taking place within a landscape of these buildings. An important measure of localness is how these places are named and the stories of these buildings remembered and told. A question can be asked, as to how many of these expressions of locality are still valid ? How relevant are they for many of us and for many places today? I would argue that given the experience of the Glenelly project that they are very relevant.

Looking back helps to provide a kind of benchmark against which to measure the nature of change and the meaning of something like local place and identity today.

Some say that there is a process of ‘de-localisation’ taking place, where there is a clear disconnection from locality in an often depopulated and abandoned landscape. Our relationship with the local may have been irreversibly altered in the past few generations but we still need to be grounded in the local, in a sense of place.

Little had I realized that I was regularly passing some of the most interesting remains in our landscape. But once my eyes were finally opened, a wonderful and vast treasure trove of the more recent past appeared. It was the value of the wallsteads. The most interesting part of our vernacular architecture, they are invariably abandoned, falling into decay or ruined. Yet, precisely because they have not been renovated or by some miracle have escaped time and ‘progress’ they frequently contain rare survivals of an era that many readers might remember; and as one man on this wonderful project said, ‘These were someone’s home’. These humble buildings, though often in ruins, are not only lovely in themselves but are also a very significant part of Irish social history and can engender a wonderful sense of the local and place. Great events can happen in the simplest of places, not always in the big house or cathedrals.

Another great poet, Patrick Kavanagh, understood more than many the realities of rural life and small-scale farming, especially in times of economic and social hardship. This sensitivity to everyday objects was already evident in his first published poem (1929), *An Address to an Old Wooden Gate*. These things are at the heart of existence and I was delighted to see in the new edition of *Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape* (Allen, F.H.A., Whelan, K. and Stout, M. eds Cork University Press, 2011) – a chapter titled *The Joy of*

Marcus Patton



Small Things. Vernacular buildings include a wide variety of structures. The traditional house is the most important one but we should not forget forges and farm buildings, sweat-houses and lime kilns, gateposts, fishing-weirs and many other structures. These are as much part of our history as our big houses, castles, cathedrals, factories and round towers.

So, where does the Historic Buildings Council fit into all this? Many of these buildings are listable and have been listed, and indeed there has been a renewed desire in the Second Survey to list them. Listing can protect them but more of the general public need to be aware of them. They can be protected by local interest in the social and cultural history associated with them in them. This is a core criteria of the listing process – not just architectural merit. Material culture and rural social history are undergoing a renaissance and we must get out the message from the Department and the HBC that we are there to help this interest. We need to get into the communities and identify new champions, who may not initially come from an architectural background.

The new councils will depend on their heritage for tourism and stimulating the economy; the HBC is looking to find a future for these kinds of buildings but has no role in advising councils except over conservation areas: so how can the HBC develop links to councils that will enable it to press productively for the future of these buildings?

We could do well by looking at the ethos of The European Landscape Convention which was adopted in Florence on 20 October 2000. If we can put these buildings into this landscape ethic which we have all signed up to then the role of the HBC in advising councils could go much further than advising on conservation areas. The preamble to the Convention states that:

The landscape... has an important public interest role in the cultural, ecological, environmental and social

fields, and constitutes a resource favourable to economic activity and whose protection, management and planning can contribute to job creation;... contributes to the formation of local cultures and... is a basic component of the European natural and cultural heritage, contributing to human well-being and consolidation of the European identity....

But it crucially states that it is

...an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere: in urban areas and in the countryside, in degraded areas as well as in areas of high quality, in areas recognized as being of outstanding beauty as well as everyday areas. (ELC, Florence, 2000).

It therefore concerns not just remarkable landscapes, AONBs or conservation areas but also ordinary everyday landscapes. Councils and central government should take note – others are!

Projects such as the Glenelly one have produced an interest in local landscape and homes almost as an antidote to the placelessness and facelessness of global culture. There is a renewed awareness of the value of inherited material culture in the landscape that surround us, in the ‘joy of small things’, from wallsteads to posts to road markers.

I think we have almost certainly come full circle through all the big changes and we have probably seen a reaction against the placelessness of the global and a search for connectedness to the local.

It is amazing how the interest in an old wallstead can nurture and reinforce our interest in the local. The recently deceased poet Dennis O Driscoll, author of *Stepping Stones – Interviews with Seamus Heaney* (Faber and Faber, 2008), has a wonderful poem called *Roads not taken*:

*How tantalizing they are,
Those roads you glimpse
From car or train, bisected by a crest
Of grass perhaps,*

*keeping their
destinations quiet.*

*You remember a brimming
Sea on the horizon
Or an arch of trees
In reveries of light;
then a bend that cut
your vision off
abruptly.*

*Some day you must return
To find out how they end.*

This is where we often have to go to find these places. Planners and surveyors take note of these worthy places. They are often not on any map, according to Ishmael’s lines in Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick*, “it’s not down on any map, real places never are”.

These buildings have a future as well as a past but we all need to share the locations and histories, and their import needs to be realized at local and national statutory level. When they are gone, they are gone.

Dr Liam Campbell teaches cultural and heritage landscapes at the University of Ulster and has extensive knowledge of European landscape legislation.

Marcus Patton



THE INTERRELATED PROBLEMS OF DAMP, DRY ROT, INSULATION AND ENERGY CONSERVATION IN HISTORIC STRUCTURES

Large historic buildings on substantial sites throughout Ireland have, in recent years, been targeted by developers for residential or office development. There is usually a demand to subdivide the historic buildings into separate houses or apartments in residential developments and to open up original spaces where open plan offices are required. Developers demand maximum comfort standards in these structures, as the older buildings are likely to be in demand and most expensive. There is a desire for the buildings to be totally dry, warm, soundproof, free from all defects and up to modern standards, even where building regulations do not require these standards. Apart from the negative impact on the setting of the buildings and of inappropriate alteration, there are technical demands that cause difficulties in terms of conservation in the conversion of the old properties. These are mainly control of damp, especially rising damp, energy conservation, insulation, and control of sound and treatment of timber decay. These interrelated technical issues pose difficulties for the conservation architects who have to advise on and deal with these matters. Conservation architects need the support of legislation and conservation officers to control the aspirations of developers and to ensure that works are to a reasonable conservation standard, minimizing disturbance to existing fabric. Historic buildings must be treated in a holistic way. Moisture and air movement and their impact on traditional construction must be properly understood. Therefore, a conservative approach based on knowledge and experience is necessary to determine what is important and how changes can be made with the least effect on the character of the building.

Building regulations in the UK and Ireland require that buildings must be designed and constructed so that there will not be a threat to the building or occupants as a result of moisture penetration. While this is possible in new building by the use of damp proof courses and membranes, the insertion of these could be detrimental to historic fabric. Developers often demand cement based tanking layers, chemical injection, electrolysis or similar products to eliminate ground damp. A full study of the building is required before any action is taken to ensure the source of damp is identified. Raised outside ground level, defective underground and over

ground drainage, condensation, lack of ventilation and impervious plasters and other finishes may be the cause of the dampness. After dealing with the more straightforward aspects of defective roofs, drainage gutters, plasterwork, and services, the following should be considered:

Timber floors should not be replaced with insulated and damp-proofed concrete floors as this may drive moisture up the walls. Developers usually want an insulated floor, perhaps with underfloor heating. Suspended timber floors should be retained and properly ventilated. Suspended ground floors should be heavily insulated. Rigid insulation can be added between the joists. Solid floors, such as those laid with stone, tile, terrazzo and brick, cannot be insulated without first excavating them. Where floors are solid stone flags or tiles on a lime mortar base they should, if possible, be retained as they allow the passage of moisture. Replacing the base with damp proofed concrete or putting an impervious layer over will trap moisture and prevent evaporation. Generally this should be avoided. There are also systems of floor heating with pipes in metal trays, but these only work with engineered flooring and not with historic floorboards.



The rising damp and timber decay industry frighten homeowners with red flashing moisture meters and often recommend destructive damp proofing treatments.

Most historic buildings have solid but porous walls with internal and external finishes such as lime plaster. This breathability has helped to keep many buildings in good condition. Externally, lime plaster absorbs rainwater and allows it to evaporate. Internally, lime plaster helps to stabilise moisture levels in rooms and often averts surface condensation. Moisture can also pass through the wall and evaporate both externally and internally as conditions allow, as can any rising damp. By ascertaining the source of the water and the severity of the problem, recommendations can be made to resolve damp issues without resorting to irreversible damp-proofing treatments. The lowering of outside ground levels and the insertion of well-designed French drains may be enough to prevent the damp. The ground should fall away from the buildings. Retaining walls in basements are difficult to deal with, especially where the outer high ground level is in another property. Often these basements are converted to open planned kitchen and family rooms and in these cases the dampness has to be removed. Applying an impervious finish or tanking to the inside of a traditional wall will be detrimental to the fabric and drive moisture to the upper levels. Chemical damp proof injection is never successful in rubble walls. Cavity drained mesh heavy duty membranes are sometimes used, and approved of by conservation officers where aggressive water is expected. These methods have a floor and wall membrane and require drainage under the floor and a sump that is pumped or connected to the drainage system. The gap between the membrane and the wall has to be ventilated to allow the fabric to breathe. The systems are recommended by the manufacturers either as a drained system when active ground water is anticipated or as a lapped system (they call it 'ventilated' even though little air could flow behind it) to provide a dry and salt free surface where there is only rising damp and no significant free water. The membrane is intended to protect against rising damp with minimal intervention as is appropriate for a historic building.

It is certain that many of the older houses would have some decayed embedded timbers at some stage. This is inevitable when a building may have a two hundred year history with undoubtedly varied



maintenance. If buildings were to be stripped out in case there was some concealed historical damage and with no signs of distress to justify the exposure, then there would be little point in legal protection. Dry rot (*S. lacrymans*) is a destructive decay fungus with environmental requirements, but it has a reputation for frightening home-owners, partly brought about by the dry rot treatment industry who sell the products that deal with decay. Incorrect treatment has led to the destruction of much historic fabric. If a building has constant water leaking into it from rainwater goods, roof or services dry rot may cause considerable damage but it needs moisture content of excess of 28% to allow germination. It will not spread to dry parts of the house and without constant water it will not survive. The treatment of timber decay is often far more destructive than the dry rot itself. The timber decay treatment industry sells chemicals and their requirement for treatment of dry rot is that all hidden timbers be exposed, furthest growth of the fungus be exposed, decayed timber to be removed and all other timbers to be treated to 1.5 meters back from the dry rot with walls extensively chemically irrigated. If any other signs of decay were to be uncovered then



the treatment would be continued. The mass irrigation of walls fills them with water and has no greater effect upon the fungus than the removal of decaying timber – its food



Marcus Patton

source. It is not a procedure to be recommended, and certainly not in a historic or legally protected building. Actively growing fungus might tolerate moisture contents down to about 25% but if the timber and structure is drying then the fungus must die. Dry rot needs significant and persistent water penetration. The sight of dried timbers cracked in cubical form seems to cause further panic in householders and dry rot 'experts'. The erroneous idea that fungus is aggressive because the timber is distorting is incorrect - it is a sign of timber desiccation as it dries. A timber skirting board splitting with vertical and horizontal cracks shows that the fungus is dying or dead. This occurs because tangential grain shrinkage is twice that of radial grain shrinkage. Other timbers decayed by



rot may not be distorted because they remain wet. If these timbers were dried then the fungus would die and the wood would also break into 'cubes'. The optimum growth rate of dry rot averages 5mm - 9mm / day but is entirely limited by the extent of wet building fabric. Active dry rot is limited. Often further opening up of

old buildings will reveal a history of earlier decay. Dry rot tends to produce fruits when it is stressed by drying and it is quite likely that fruiting occurs because water penetration has finally been halted.

It is water that is the important factor, not the fungus. A small amount of active fungus will not spread from the localised zone of water penetration and infect other timbers. Dry rot requires a substantial and ongoing source of moisture or it will die. If untreated timbers, even new timbers, are placed in direct contact with an area of wall that is still very damp and contains viable dry rot, then the problem will continue. It might perhaps encourage the dry rot to flourish and fruit where heating is involved, but it would remain localised in the zone of damp masonry.

The developer's wish is to insulate to Building Regulations levels even where it is not required for listed or protected structures. All conservationists support the aim of conserving fuel provided that it does not compromise the character and appearance of historic buildings. The right balance is needed between reducing energy use and conserving our heritage. The performance of the whole building must be assessed in a holistic approach to dampness, heating, ventilation, insulation and energy efficiency. Limiting the heat losses through the fabric caused by conduction and air infiltration is by far the most common area of conflict between building and energy conservation. Thermal insulation, heating and ventilation must be considered together.

Insulating walls internally is usually not possible as it interferes with the historic detailing of cornices, architraves and skirtings. Where traditional walls have been insulated, condensation and damp has caused them to lose insulation qualities. Buildings of masonry construction have a high thermal mass allowing the building to retain heat from the sun and internal heating and later release it. Lightweight modern walls with the same u-value have a different response to internal space heating.

Moisture needs to pass through the wall and evaporate both externally and internally as conditions allow, as can any dampness rising from the earth.

External and internal insulation may have a negative effect on the character and the physical properties of a wall. While external insulation has certain benefits in terms of thermal efficiency there usually are impacts on eaves and cills. Where plaster has already been removed there are possibilities of using breathable insulation, but this is untried in an Irish climate. Re-plastering in lime improves insulation. If internal re-plastering is being carried out where nothing of historic interest survives, there may be opportunities to incorporate contemporary 'breathable' internal insulation where no features are affected, but interstitial condensation; control of humidity and temperature may remain an issue.

Developers often want to replace all doors and windows but the conservation advice is to refurbish and draught proof them. Old glass is of interest and is becoming increasingly rare. It is of value not just for its age, but because it has more richness and sparkle than today's flat sheets. Where it survives, it must be retained and alternative means of thermal improvement considered.

Where possible, windows should be repaired and continue to be used. Air infiltration through old windows is often excessive, so draught proofing and weather stripping can be very effective in reducing not just heating bills by limiting the number of air changes per hour, but also in reducing levels of noise and dust. However, care should be taken to provide adequate ventilation to remove internally generated moisture and pollutants, together with additional moisture from sources such as rising damp. Some local authorities have now allowed the use of slim double-glazing, usually 11mm that provides a reasonable value. Planning permissions often require that no original glass is replaced and that the frames and astragals can take the unit, so that single pane Victorian sashes are more suited than the earlier multi-paned windows. The seals should be black as opposed to silver for aesthetic reasons and the weights need to be increased. Secondary glazing is allowed and improves insulation, draught proofing and noise control, but can have a visual impact unless very carefully detailed. Timber secondary glazing tends to be more obvious while

contemporary slick metal systems can be more discreet. It should be designed so that divisions in the glazed panels are hidden behind meeting rails or glazing bars. However, not all windows are suitable for secondary glazing, owing to the narrowness of the internal sill or reveals; the difficulty of accommodating the new panes within an oddly shaped or unduly protruding architrave, or clashes with internal shutters. The use of shutters, curtains and thermal blinds will reduce heat loss and should be considered instead.

The destruction of historic structures in Ireland caused by treating dampness and timber decay and providing measures to reduce heat and energy is often unnecessary. This is due to the ignorance of developers, contractors, the timber decay and damp proofing industry, insulation experts and unfortunately many architects, engineers and other professionals in the construction industry. An understanding of how historic buildings behave and how moisture and air moves within the fabric is necessary in dealing with our built heritage in a holistic manner.

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PROTECTING OUR BUILT HERITAGE:

The role of the Ulster Architectural Heritage Society and its partners

In 1968 the conservation of Northern Ireland's traditional built environment faced unique difficulties. The Troubles and subsequent bombings had destroyed some important buildings and monuments, and countless small vernacular buildings.

At this time Ulster people were only one or two generations removed from the land and keen to shake off the small farm image and create in the towns and villages where they lived a new vision of bungalows with low-pitched roofs and large windows. In the existing houses, new glass, aluminium and plastic window frames and doors replaced old glass and wood.

Those who were sensitive to the values - architectural, historical, social and cultural - of the individual buildings and groups of buildings which were disappearing were few and far between. However, in 1967, prior to the Troubles, a small group of committed conservationists got together to form a pressure group which would draw attention to the great loss to the environment by the replacement of the traditionally-constructed buildings by new ones which did not acknowledge the existing visual harmony. This was the beginning of the Ulster Architectural Heritage Society.

The Society, which is interested in all nine counties of Ulster, was founded at a time when there was virtually no public or government provision for such activity in Northern Ireland. In advance of any legislative protection of historic buildings, the Society began Northern Ireland's first recording and monitoring of historic buildings and began to publish lists of these in 1968. It also started to identify and profile our most vulnerable built heritage. One of the first buildings saved by the Society's lobbying was the Palm House in Botanic Gardens. The Society also supported the restoration in 1976 of the Grand Opera House by the Arts Council.

In 1991 the Society put forward a proposal to the Department of the Environment for funding to create a Buildings at Risk Register. This was the start of the computer-based inventory we have today. In 1992 the Society got the go ahead to appoint a Buildings

at Risk officer to work with the Environment and Heritage Service: Historic Monuments and Buildings, with a responsibility to identify and record historically important buildings in Northern Ireland which appeared to be at risk. This important partnership between the Society and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency has existed for over twenty years, and continues to play an important role in documenting and encouraging the re-use of our most endangered historic buildings

In 1993 the first catalogue containing a selection of buildings drawn from the list was published and widely distributed free of charge. It was greeted in the press and the wider community with considerable interest. Between 1993 and 2008 some eight volumes were produced. An online register was launched in 2004 but prior to that the catalogues were the main source of information on buildings at risk, now known as Built Heritage at Risk Northern Ireland, or BHARNI.

The Society is now firmly established as the leading independent voice for the protection of built heritage in Northern Ireland. Through the BHARNI partnership with the Department of Environment, the UAHS has acted as a catalyst for regeneration, tourism, skilled job creation and creative re-use. The BHARNI partnership provides help and advice for existing owners who may wish to embark on a suitable repair scheme and offers assistance to potential new owners who are looking for a property to restore. Another aim of BHARNI is to highlight the reuse potential of neglected buildings and to persuade the owners of these buildings to invest in their restoration, or where necessary to part with them so as to enable funding towards their restoration and reuse. Often in these cases BHARNI works with Building Preservation Trusts (BPTs) to help find sustainable futures and funding.

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency's European Heritage Open Days showcase some of the work done to safeguard heritage buildings, demonstrating what can be achieved when a proactive approach is taken to preserve our most vulnerable buildings. Each year the UAHS holds a targeted



Sion Mills Stables before and after restoration



event for EHOD, as part of the BHARNI agreement. This year, for example, it joined with Hearth to acknowledge the anticipated restoration of Riddel's Warehouse, Ann Street, Belfast, and joined with the Department to profile Northern Ireland's 'Heritage Heroes', showcasing the valuable work of BPTs in putting our most endangered buildings back into use.

In recent years the Department of Environment has been able to grant-aid all listed buildings, giving priority to those at risk, which has facilitated their restoration and reuse. These funds help address the so-called conservation deficit resulting from the need to carry out repairs to the correct specifications, using the correct materials. These funds not only support owners, but can be used as a source of match-funding to encourage the support from other funders. A good example of match-funding is Portrush Town Hall which was restored by Hearth through a successful partnership between a building preservation trust and the local council. Another is the stable block at Sion Mills where the Northern Ireland Environment Agency served its first compulsory purchase order. This enabled a partnership to be formed between Hearth and the local BPT, which has turned this building into a successful educational and tourist attraction.

Major cuts to funding in the 2015/16 Department of the Environment budget have resulted in the historic buildings grant being suspended. Removal of these funds will have a significant effect on the protection of our built heritage. For many owners it is the sole financial support available to maintain the

listed building which they have a legal requirement to protect. The lack of these grants has already increased the workload of the Society, as worried owners enquire how they can combat the effect of the cuts. In addition, funding allocated to the valuable BHARNI partnership has also been reduced by half, limiting the help that UAHS can offer to owners at this time of uncertainty.

Marcus Patton from Hearth reinforced the value of listing building grants, pointing out: "The positive grants of the last few years have seen buildings restored, eyesores magically converted to silk purses, new pride generated in places. The lack of grants will leave things in limbo for too long, leading to loss of historic fabric and general social decline." This is a view shared by the Society, which continues to campaign and lobby for the reintroduction of listed building grant-aid.

Nikki McVeigh from the UAHS highlighted the unfortunate timing of major cuts in the context of opportunities afforded by Northern Ireland's local government reorganisation and the transition to a community-led planning system. "Opportunities such as community planning, community listing, community asset-transfer, and the upcoming transfer of built heritage responsibility to the Department of Communities in 2016, signals the start of a new context in which built heritage must be promoted at local level. It represents an unprecedented opportunity for BHARNI to work with local groups to proactively encourage the re-use of buildings."



The Society has sourced funding for a review of its work from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Despite significant reductions in funding for BHARNI by the Department, the UAHS continues to seek a future where it can fully resource BHARNI and embrace the opportunities afforded by working more closely with local councils.

As Frank Lloyd Wright once stated, “Architecture is life, or at least it is life itself taking form and therefore it is the truest record of life as it was lived in the world yesterday, as it is lived today, or ever will be lived.”

The UAHS continues to play a vital role in preserving Ulster’s architecture for the future.



The following are some examples of buildings at risk which have been saved:

Crumlin Road Gaol (above) - now a successful conference centre and tourist attraction

Ballyquin Monument at Limavady (before and after; below left) - a fine classical obelisk recently restored by the Follies Trust

Some examples of buildings still at risk:

Crumlin Road Courthouse (below) - a part of Belfast’s social history, sadly neglected over the last ten years. It has suffered from vandalism and numerous arson attacks.



Cairndhu (above), formerly the Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Hospital - a fine Victorian house on the Coast Road near Larne, in need of urgent restoration.



Down Hospital (above) - unused and in a state of deterioration due to vandalism.

Seacoast Road, Magilligan, Co. Londonderry (right) - a rare example of an owner occupied vernacular cottage now in a vulnerable state because of a collapsed roof.



I would like to thank the following for their assistance with this article: Primrose Wilson, Nikki McVeigh, Marcus Patton, Leah O’Neill and Andrew McClelland.

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DATING HISTORIC BUILDINGS - Why and How

On a recent visit to Herculaneum, I was struck by how little the guide referred to the dates of the surviving buildings and roadways and how little the extent 20th century re-building seemed to matter to her. She described in very great detail the various frescos and mosaics we saw in the buildings but not the buildings themselves, and seemed completely unaware of what was original and what was modern re-building or support. In the College of the Augustali, she described the fresco in very great detail, but made no mention of the 2000 year old timbers supporting the walls at the upper levels - heavily carbonised no doubt, but still supporting the clerestory. In the Men's Caldarium, much of the vault had gone and what remained was conserved using 20th century steel armatures (now rusting) and mortars. When asked, she theatrically gestured to the vault and stated that it was 'all original', to the ire of another visitor who said he was a structural engineer and that the armatures were modern. In fairness, while the Romans were great engineers, I do not think they cracked the manufacture of the steel or threaded nuts and bolts that could be seen.

Two years earlier I had visited Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and went to the Bonnet House and Gardens. Here, the 'antiquity' of the house was fully recognised and, perhaps, over emphasised. It is one of the earliest buildings in Fort Lauderdale, the oldest surviving being the Stranahan House dating from 1901. Speaking with my aunt (the purpose of my visit to Fort Lauderdale) afterwards, it was only when I reminded her that it was built in the 1920's, when she would have been 6 or 7 years old and at the same time her parents were building the bungalow she lived in as a child, that the antiquity of the building was put in its context.

So the question is does the date of a building matter? To some extent, it should not. Works of great architecture are works of great architecture whether they are being built, 50 years old, 500 years old or 5000 years old, although the appreciation of buildings as works of great architecture may take time to be fully appreciated. However, things are never as simple as that and other factors come into play. In the context of countries such as America and Australia, buildings dating from the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries are the

earliest survivors, apart from the simple indigenous buildings that predate the European's arrival and which tend to be relatively simple structures. This enhances their importance in that culture. In Ireland, we have many 18th century buildings, but less 16th and 17th century building, although our stock includes significant survivals from medieval times and some earlier, so our medieval buildings are to us as important as the 18th century survivals are to America and Australia. So each culture values its historic buildings in terms of its own particular history - Italy and the Roman remains, Greece and the classical Greek remains, Egypt and the temples and pyramids and so on back to Mesopotamia. Therefore, the matter of dating buildings is of importance to the particular history of the place.

But other factors also impact. Early examples of a particular architectural style or construction are deemed to have a greater importance than the mainstream and the last examples are also deemed to have enhanced importance. Associations with personalities or events also enhance the importance of the building, though sometimes that association can be quite fleeting. For example, construction of Martello Tower South 11 at Sandycove, Dublin (*below*), commenced in 1804. It is now universally known as James Joyce's Tower even though Joyce only lived there for 6 days in 1904 when the accidental discharge of a gun prompted his rapid departure, events that, reputedly, are the basis for the opening of *Ulysses*.



Marcus Patton

Therefore if, in particular contexts, the date of a building is important, how is the building, its original construction and the various changes, alterations, additions and removals, dated? The dating should not rely on a single piece of information, but should be the summation of a number of pieces that may or may not be conclusive - there is no point in concluding that, as the building with the correct footprint is shown on an 1866 Map, it must pre-date that date if there is a legal document stating it was built in 1879. In such situations, this dichotomy has to be resolved or the date cannot be conclusively given.

Sources can be divided into three categories: documentary sources, the fabric as an historic document, and people. Documentary sources are probably the most informative and diverse. They would include historic maps, both estate maps and ordnance maps as well as older sources such as the Sir William Petty's Down Survey, legal documents such as estate records, deeds, indentures, wills, inventories and the like, primary sources such as authors' descriptions, historic illustrations and photographs, directories, State records such as electoral lists and Valuation Office records and others. Architect's drawings are particularly valuable if they can be located. The fabric as an historic document is more difficult to interpret and requires an amount of knowledge about building styles and construction methodology, but sometimes is the only particular record available. People are useful sources, but have to be carefully considered as memories can be inaccurate and word of mouth is not always the most accurate source, but they can be of enormous assistance in advancing the research of a building's history.

In researching the date and history of a building, my first actions are to see what Ordnance Survey and older maps are available and to do an internet search of the building by name and location plus any personalities associated with the building. At the same time, I request sight of all available legal documents. There are a number of sources for historic maps of which I mostly use Trinity College Dublin. Street directories are available as far back as the 18th century for Dublin, but the early directories such as Slater's

and Wilson's (sometimes found in the Treble Almanac) only list by name so finding a particular building means ploughing through every inhabitant until you find the building you want - always assuming the address or number in the street was not changed after the directory was published. Later directories, such as Pettigrew and Oulton and Thom's, list by street which makes identifying the building easier. I always start at the current date (or as near as possible) and work backwards which allows changes in numbering to be identified by comparison of occupants. Similarly, working with other records such as the Valuation Office, working backwards helps to eliminate the address alterations. Census records or Tithe Defaulters lists can also be useful as can the records in the Registry of Deeds. Changes in ownership of a building or family events such as births, marriages and deaths can be an indicator of changes in a building which give dating evidence. In this respect, the Registry of Deeds can be invaluable, but it is a skill to be able to read the writing in some of these documents.

The National Archives in Kew and Dublin and the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland have considerable collections and Kew is particularly good on old military establishments if that is relevant. Local and National Libraries, as well as the more specialised libraries such as the Linen Hall Library in Belfast and the Dublin City Library are important repositories, as are bodies such as the Irish Architectural Archive who have a significant collection of architectural drawings and photographs of buildings. Photographs tend to be useful as they are reasonably reliable, whereas illustrations (prints, paintings etc.) can have 'artistic licence'. The Lawrence Collection recorded Ireland in the late 19th and early 20th century as did others such as the Firth Collection and, of course, the various newspapers. Significant buildings may have been recorded in publications such as *Country Life* or the *Irish Builder* and similar publications. Topographical Dictionaries such as Lewis (1837) or Carlisle (1818) can be useful, but only tend to note the major buildings, and the same is true of the various journey through Ireland books such as Young (*A Tour in Ireland*, 1789), Inglis (*A Tour Through Ireland*, 1834) and Pococke (*A Tour in Ireland*, 1752). Other standard sources such as

HOW IMPORTANT IS A BUILDING'S INTERIOR IN THE ASSESSMENT FOR LISTING?

the Beranger prints and Austin Cooper's Diaries can be useful depending on the particular building.

The fabric as an historic document is, in many respects, a primary source for dating evidence, but buildings can be coy about revealing their past, particularly if you cannot strip later coverings such as 20th century plaster and renderings. Stylistic dating is also a useful tool, but has to be used with care and knowledge.

In analysing the building as a historic document, one has to have a knowledge of historic building materials and construction techniques as well as the physical evidence surviving, its characteristics and content. One needs to know what adze marks on timbers look like and the timescales when they were used, when horns change on windows, when gypsum and scrim replaced lime and hair, when floor boards were first tongued and grooved and many other detail of materials and construction. In terms of stylistic dating, one needs to have a knowledge and understanding of the various architectural styles and their dating, also the process of evolution from one style to another. One needs to understand the prevalent architectural theories of the time and their influence on the building's size shape and proportions, also on

the decorative features used in both the internal and external features. So, for example, in considering at the Temple of the Winds in Mount Stewart (*below*), one needs to know that James 'Athenian' Stewart only returned from Greece in 1755 so, should there be suggestions that the building was earlier, one would have to find very convincing arguments to show how this could have occurred.

This necessary knowledge is built up over time and cannot be learned from books alone, but requires the leaven of researching and repairing buildings to gain a sufficient understanding and cannot be given in a short article such as this.

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Marcus Patton

Each month when presented with new buildings for listing, the Historic Buildings Council is tasked with the challenge of assessing each one against the statutory criteria and making a judgement as to whether or not the building meets 'the test'. In making this assessment we need to consider both the building's interior and its exterior, along with wider issues such as group value.

The test is, as set out in Article 42(1) of the Planning (NI) Order 1991, whether or not the building is of 'special architectural or historic interest'. The key word in this statement is 'special' – what makes each building special and worthy of listing?

When assessing against the criteria of architectural interest key areas to look at are set out such as style, proportion, ornamentation, plan form, spatial organisation and interiors. The guidance states:

'Buildings can be given added significance because of the quality and survival of their interiors. Sometimes the interior of a building can be more important than the exterior. Interiors may be regarded as significant if they are largely intact or if they add to and reinforce the character of the building. They may also be considered important in their own right because of the quality and standard of constituent features such as a plaster ceiling or staircase. Industrial buildings with surviving machinery will often be regarded as more significant than similar structures with such fixtures removed.'

In assessing a building's historic interest, criteria such as age, rarity, authenticity, historic importance, authorship or historic association are some of the points to consider. All of these can apply to both the building's interior as well as its exterior. Historic Scotland describes why historic interiors are important in their document 'Managing Change in the Historic Environment':

'The interior makes a substantial contribution to the special architectural or historic interest of a building. Its style, detailing, and the use of materials help us to understand when and how the building was constructed and adapted, its social and cultural

significance, what it was used for and how this has been influenced by advances in technology and changes in fashion.'

The quality of a building's interior in some instances determines the grade of listing and the guidance in measuring a building against each grade identifies the interior as one of the key points to consider, but is it possible to list a building solely on the quality of its interior?

Grade A: Buildings of greatest importance to Northern Ireland including both outstanding architectural set-pieces and the least altered examples of each representative style, period and type.

Grade B+: High quality buildings that because of exceptional features, *interiors* or environmental qualities are clearly above the general standard set by grade B1 buildings. Also buildings which might have merited Grade A status but for detracting features such as an incomplete design, lower quality additions or alterations.

Grade B1: Good examples of a particular period or style. A degree of alteration or imperfection of design may be acceptable. Generally B1 is chosen for buildings that qualify for listing by virtue of a relatively wide selection of attributes. Usually these will include *interior features* or one or more features which are of exceptional quality and/or interest.

Grade B2: Special buildings which meet the test of the legislation. A degree of alteration or imperfection of design may be acceptable. B2 is chosen for buildings that qualify for listing by virtue of only a few attributes. An example would be a building sited within a conservation area where the quality of its architectural appearance or *interior* raises it appreciably above the general standard of buildings within the conservation area

It is important to note that once a building has been approved for listing, the statutory protection covers

the complete interior and exterior whether or not the listing description itemises interior features, and can extend to fixtures or free standing objects within the curtilage of the building. This guidance on protection is consistent with that in the UK and Scotland.

Assessing a building for the list therefore in my view should always include a report on the interior. The surveyors tasked with carrying out the survey of Northern Ireland's historic buildings are given guidance in the Department's document 'Instruction 11', on the key features to note when surveying an interior: doors/ fireplaces/ stairs/ architraves/skirtings /cornice or notable roof structures, as this is often very key in telling the story of the building. However, so often the survey team cannot gain access either because they are denied it or because despite repeated attempts they cannot contact the owner. This leads to records which could be considered incomplete and for HBC the challenge of trying to judge the quality and special characteristics of the building is more difficult in these circumstances.

Can a building really be assessed properly for listing or de listing without a report on the interior?

Our focus when assessing new buildings for the list is primarily the exterior – the 'public' face of the building - but what about hidden gems? Are we overlooking any of these because we have no interior report to assist us? Many of our buildings could have a fairly plain exterior but unique interior and are these being judged differently – e.g. mill buildings with unusual brick vaulted interiors or rural properties such as original post offices with interior fittings remaining?

The Gas Office in the Ormeau Gasworks is a surviving example of the complex industrial development of the city of Belfast during the 19th century and is listed Grade B. The red brick building, with its distinctive clock tower, was the elegant street frontage, long and narrow in plan with some detailed terracotta panels to the road side. Its inner facade is more utilitarian as it faced the working gasometers. The exterior does not though give any clues to the elaborate Victorian interiors which survive in two

of its remaining spaces, the Governor's entrance staircase and the 'Governor room,' where the original gas equipment is still intact. Each of these spaces is adorned with highly coloured Victorian tiles on the walls and ceilings and they are now unique in the city. Along with its historic interest in telling the story of the history of the production of gas in the city of Belfast, the quality of this interior is fundamental to why the building was listed.



Research and survey work can identify how a listed building's interior originally looked and uncovering glimpses of finishes or details in survey work can often reveal lost splendour. At the Guildhall in Derry the room described as the 'Minor Hall' on initial inspection had a flat timber ceiling which covered window arches and was not original to the building. Exploratory investigations above this flat ceiling revealed the room's original roof structure and painted decoration and this was used to inform the restoration of the space along with the documentary evidence that revealed this was the original council



chamber location. The trusses were restored and the decorative scheme reinstated, so this interior, a unique part of the building's history, was revealed once more to tell part of the story of the Guildhall's development over time.

The grading description notes the effect which inappropriate additions or alterations may have on deciding what level of grade is applicable and this is especially true of interiors which in many cases have to be adapted over time to make the building sustainable or for conversion to a new use. The important aspect is managing this change. Where listed buildings are being restored or adapted there are many aspects to be considered to ensure the fabric is protected and the interest or character of the historic interior is maintained. These include recognising the significance of the interior plan form, especially when internal alterations or subdivisions of rooms are being proposed. The decorative schemes within the rooms and unusual fixtures which tell a story of the materials and craftsmanship used in the building are significant and should be recorded and protected as far as possible. Upgrading building interiors for fire or security protection is very often essential to meet current regulations but these measures can usually be integrated with minimal visible disruption to the character although this takes some thought and care to ensure it is carried out sensitively.

Each of these potential changes to an historic



building represents challenges to the integrity of the interior, so how can this be policed? The requirement for listed building consent is the primary means to do this but often minor schemes for redecoration may never be brought to NIEA so is there a danger of interiors being lost or removed without any consultation? The owners of listed properties are key to this protection and being informed about how best to manage change in their buildings and still retain their historic integrity is essential.

Considering an historic building's interior is a key part to understanding its significance and defining what makes it 'special'. The interiors give an insight into so many levels of the history of a building, from materials and craftsmanship, to archaeological potential showing its development through time. The cultural and social associations of an interior can also form a significant part of their interest, such as the setting or context for an historic event or activity which becomes more legible when the interior is evident.

So, in answering the question set out, in my view the quality of the interior is paramount to understanding the quality and significance of each building presented for listing and striving to record and survey these as an integral part of the listing process is essential.

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THATCHED ROOFS



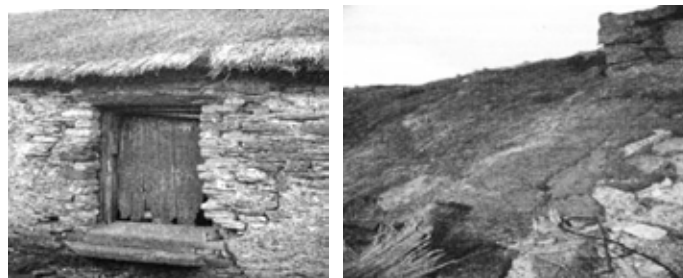
The thatching of roofs is one of the oldest forms of roof covering. It has been used for centuries and is a tradition that has existed in Ireland for over 9000 years. It is basically the covering of a roof structure with some form of vegetation be it heather, straw, combed wheat or water reed, with the type of material used being mainly dependant on the type of material which is readily available in that particular area of the country. In some coastal areas marram grass which was readily available from costal dues was used. A diversity of styles developed over time, coupled with different material and distinct regional characteristics.

Early buildings in rural areas of Ireland were mainly single story cottages. They provided homes of character and comfort which varied from one region to another in response to local climates and conditions. The materials used in construction varied across the years, depending on what local materials were readily available and upon the wealth of the family. For the walls, lime mortar and stone was the most desirable but also the most expensive material. A popular alternative was mud tempered with strengthening agents such as straw, reeds or animal matter. The use of local building materials meant that they blended effortlessly into the landscape of which they were a part.

For roofs the basic timber construction was often

covered with overlapping layers of sods on top of which went the straw thatch. This was derived from a variety of materials such as wheat, rye straw or flax as this was readily available after the harvesting of crops, though there were regional variations in different parts of the country, such as water reed which was cut from the river Sur and was used for generations in the areas of Waterford and Kilkenny. In parts of Ulster flax was widely used when the harvest could not be sold for the production of linen.

Thatched roofs were of either pitched or beehive construction The trade of thatching was usually passed down through the generations from father to son and provided a family with a fairly steady income as thatching was very labour intensive. It could often take as many as 5,000 handfuls of the straw to complete a roof; also thatches need to be repaired or replaced anywhere from five to twenty years depending on the material and its condition.



The consequence of this was that many differing styles of thatch and types of material could be found throughout the country. In seaside and exposed locations where the thatch was exposed to strong winds, ropes were tied down over the thatch and anchored to boulders which were placed on the ground to the front and rear of the property. Some cottages had stones



protruding from the top of the walls to which the ropes could be anchored. Some examples have been found where nets have been placed and tied down over the top of the thatch as an additional means of protecting it in exposed locations.

As transportation in Ireland improved, slate became popular as a more durable and long-lasting roofing material and so thatch started to decline in the more populated and prosperous areas of the country. Another form of roofing material that became available was corrugated iron and this was often used where an old thatch roof was in need of repair or replacement. Many examples have been found throughout the country where corrugated iron sheets

have been put on top of the old thatch providing a good form of insulation as well as a long lasting roof covering. Where such roofs have been identified with reasonably intact roof structures they have often been listed as “tin over thatch” buildings and can provide evidence of techniques and materials used in the past.

Due to the rapid decline of traditional thatched properties in Ireland a research project on the history of thatching in Ireland was jointly funded in 1996 by the DOE (N.Ireland) and DACG (Ireland).

This research on thatching in Ireland followed roughly the same approach as that used by English Heritage when looking at medieval thatch, but with greater emphasis on recording the in situ evidence which survived from every historical period and highlighting technical issues which could improve the performance - and hence the economic viability - of thatch vis-a-vis common alternatives.

The core of the field work involved surveying a selection of multi-layered thatched roofs in each of the four provinces of the island of Ireland. Each building was ‘excavated’ as thoroughly as possible in order to establish a chronological sequence of the materials and techniques used at each rethatching. Essential constructional aspects of the building and roof structure were also recorded, along with details of the local environment and agriculture that would help to situate the building in its historical and economic context. Wherever possible, local people were interviewed to obtain more detailed information on the building and thatching materials and practices once used in the local area.

For the purposes of the study, buildings surveyed fell into three categories:

- a. derelict buildings that were sampled and recorded in detail;
- b. inhabited dwellings that were surveyed, but which provided limited sampling or recording opportunities;
- c. buildings with modern thatched roofs (i.e. replaced within the last 50 years).

As much time as possible was devoted to the recording of level (a) buildings as they would soon be lost due to general dereliction. Unfortunately, these buildings were not always easy to locate. Level (b) buildings also provided data of technical, historical or botanical interest.

In general, sampling went more slowly than originally planned due to logistical difficulties and the need to develop local contacts. Locals were invariably aware of buildings suitable for surveying, whether derelict or inhabited, and home owners were almost always happy to provide access, but these contacts took time to develop and were difficult to pursue during short sampling visits. A number of contacts were provided by Mr. Peter Brockett, a thatcher and thatch instructor, who unfortunately passed away in the summer of 1996. Many buildings were also located through historians and individuals with a strong interest in vernacular architecture. In contrast, and with a few notable exceptions, the response from county councils for assistance in locating suitable buildings was less than enthusiastic.

The in situ record of thatching in Ireland turned out to be far richer than had been expected, both technically and materially, and Irish roofs clearly hold treasure troves of data useful to historians of agriculture, the landscape and vernacular buildings. Equivalent diversity in England and the Continent appears to have been stripped away long ago, and Irish roofs are thus unique in a wider context in having preserved methods and materials once much more widely used throughout Western Europe.

The evidence suggests that wheat straw was more commonly used than oat straw in many areas in the last century, along with barley and rye straw. Somewhat surprisingly, combined barley and wheat straw was still used in some areas until very recently. Truly appalling examples of straw thatching are not difficult to find in Ireland. Cases exist of newly applied thatch that could not withstand a winter without major repair, and the oat straw currently used rarely lasts for more than five to seven years. In contrast, straw roofs in Wales and Western England - districts with 'Irish'

rainfall and shallow-pitched roofs - routinely last for 20 years with minimal maintenance. Ethnographic records suggest that roofs were expected to last from 10 to 15 years at the beginning of this century, and the reduced longevity is at least partially linked to the introduction of modern hybrid varieties with straw too short for use as thatch.

In general, the in situ ethnographic and historical evidence suggests that 'traditional' Irish thatch once performed better than is commonly believed, and a relatively small number of material and technical changes could increase significantly the average longevity of such roofs while preserving the visual, technical and material continuity with ancient Irish thatching traditions.

Modern Irish thatch is largely derived from oat and rye straw, whereas many of the older roofs excavated so far have a basal coat of wheat straw. This suggests that the shift to oat for thatching is a relatively recent one in many areas. Contemporary thatchers would certainly use straw of 'tougher', longerlasting varieties if these were available, but unfortunately almost no stocks of ancient Irish wheat or oat varieties survive in Ireland. One must turn to gene banks in Wales, Scotland and England for small samples of varieties similar to traditional Irish varieties that must then be multiplied over several years to reach production level.

Fortunately a good number of traditional thatched cottages can still be found in the more remote parts of Ireland and in Donegal where some have been preserved in heritage style sites such as Glencolmille Folk and Village Museum, Lurganvale cottages in Kilmacrennan and the Doagh Famine Village on Doagh Island. Many other examples can be found in holiday locations where cottages have been restored as holiday lets, as well as relatively new properties where thatched roofs have been added to modern roof constructions for their iconic appearance.

With fewer than 1,500 thatched cottages left in Ireland - and perhaps only a hundred in Northern Ireland - it is even more essential that as many as possible are preserved and kept in a weather proof state.

Grants for rethatching are awarded on the basis of the criteria set by the granting body and information on grants in the Republic of Ireland can be obtained from the following: Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, The Heritage Council, Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and local authorities. In Northern Ireland grants have been available from the Department of the Environment. The Historic Building Council is active in listing thatched buildings which are brought to their attention, in order that as far as possible they are not allowed to be knocked down or reach a stage of disrepair where they may be lost.

Unfortunately listing is not enough in many cases, because the cottages are often small or isolated and their owners, in many cases, are elderly people who hope that the thatch will "last their day" without further repair and often a property is lost. It is not enough to just monitor thatched cottages now that they are so rare and under such threat. Concerted action is needed if these iconic buildings are to survive for another generation.

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Several war-related structures have been listed in the Londonderry area including the Cross of Sacrifice at Derry City Cemetery and a group of three 'blister'-type aircraft hangars built for Eglinton Airfield (now City of Derry Airport). The limestone war memorial cross designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield (*above*) was erected c.1928 and was and is one of several identical memorials erected to commemorate the victims of World War One. A similar cross is listed in Belfast City Cemetery.

The former hangars (*below*) survive relatively unaltered, and they are fine examples of early pre-fabricated structures, retaining their spaciousness as they have never having been subdivided by internal partitions. Blister-type hangars such as this are rare in Northern Ireland and Eglinton has the highest surviving concentration. Eglinton Airfield was of national strategic importance to Britain during World War II.



NIEA

THE NARA DOCUMENT

on Authenticity and Northern Ireland

There are a number of international charters which seek to guide building conservation practice, the best known being the Venice Charter, which celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 2014. The Nara Document on Authenticity, drafted by ICOMOS in 1994, celebrated twenty years in existence at the same time. It is one of the more difficult charters of international good practice in building conservation. It seems to say very little that is relevant to the day-to-day decision-making as to how to conserve buildings. In 2014, it celebrated its 20th anniversary, at the same time as the Venice Charter turned 50. Both documents were critically appraised at the ICOMOS¹ General Assembly in Florence in November 2014. The Venice Charter must now be read in context² as a document of its time, critically weakening its relevance to practitioners. In contrast, the Burra Charter (1979), which speaks of recognising and negotiating the protection of the values of a place, is readily accepted as a relevant approach to the resolution of complex decision-making about sites with multiple layers of significance. It underpins the practice of the ‘Conservation Plan’, a methodology of proven worth in clarifying priorities in special places, and is most familiar to us as the prerequisite for Heritage Lottery Funded projects. Most



Marcus Patton

Derry city walls in 1968

conservation practitioners will reach for Burra, and the Conservation Plan methodology, when presented with conflicts between different forms of heritage significance. The Derry City Walls Conservation Plan, drawn up in 2005, is an example. It contains 47 recommendations to ensure that the significance of the place is maintained and enhanced.

Why is Burra more useful to practitioners than Venice? One reason is that Burra is ‘owned’ by ICOMOS Australia, who exercise the right to bring it up to date, as they did in 2013, and ensure that it is relevant to the evolving practice of conservation in Australia. The rest of the world benefits from the narrow focus of the Australians. They produced more detailed guidance on the meaning of its terms, and ironed out procedures to get the best results from it.

Another reason for Burra’s pre-eminence is that its core concept is attuned to what might be termed the ‘communicative turn’ in conservation theory. In Burra, the starting point for the processes of conservation lies in the assessment of significance. This looks at the different ways that a place is meaningful to people. The official reasons for listing a building are that it is architecturally or historically important, but this is just a starting point. The Conservation Plan method demands openness to multiple expressions of value³, including the ‘social’ value that the inexpert public might put on a place. English guidance⁴ described such values that people might see in a place in a memorable phrase – ‘The familiar and cherished scene’. This emphasis changes from the so-called ‘inherent’ quality of places, sites or buildings to the values that are more generally ascribed to them. Their importance is not vested in their ‘inherent’ qualities, usually taken to be the material fabric that survives from the past, but in their capacity to communicate with us symbolically about ‘who’ ‘we’ ‘are’.

This, in broader terms, is supported theoretically by the concept of ‘intangible’ heritage; the practices, skills, traditional knowledge, care and active living curatorship that complement the tangible things. For the same reason, communication about heritage - the presentation and interpretation of heritage in museums, visitors centres and site signage - has taken

on a greater importance in the work of managing heritage.

The concept of ‘Authenticity’ has not retained a globally-stable meaning. It has crumbled under the pressure of the implementation of the World Heritage Convention since 1972, because cultural practices in different places do not measure ‘truth’ and related concepts by the same standards. How ‘Authenticity’ is recognised in objects, sites or places is different in different cultures. The rebuilding of Japanese Shinto shrines on a 23-year cycle, for many hundreds of years, represents



a truth and beauty in Japanese culture, that is different in nature to the Stones of Venice, with their surfaces weathered by the ages, that so appealed to John Ruskin in our part of the world in the nineteenth century. Its acknowledgement of cultural relativism makes it ‘post-modern’. The Nara Document, thus, is an attempt to maintain a framework of objective-scientific criteria within which to make expert value judgments, whilst recognising the autonomy of different societies.

Nara also appeared very shortly after the publication of ‘Dissonant Heritage’ by authors Tunbridge and Ashworth. This dispelled the myth that heritage was all things to all people, and pointed out that it was, in its own way, an expression of power. Who gets to decide what to commemorate, or protect? Nara’s answer was that the diversity of different forms of heritage is part of the ‘spiritual and intellectual richness of all mankind’. This perception was captured and extended in the Council of Europe’s Framework Convention on the Value of Heritage for Society (known as the Faro Convention). This situated cultural heritage in the context of human rights, dignity and respect for difference. The signal representation of these ideas in Ireland was the handshake of Taoiseach and First Minister at the site of the Battle of the Boyne (*above*), a place of special interest to one community, conserved and curated by a different community, perceived to be the descendants of those vanquished

there. As we become dislocated from places of ancestral memory, we rely on other inheritors to take care of them. Who with an interest in great places has not withered inwardly at the news that the Temple of Baal at Palmyra has been demolished, no matter that so few of us have actually visited it?

The Nara Document doesn’t set out to answer practitioners’ problems in heritage conservation, but rather the background questions that influence the intellectual environment (regulation, selection for listing, concepts and values) in which conservation takes place. But it is not the final word. The ICOMOS 20th anniversary reflections on Nara produced the Nara+20 document⁵. This identified five problems that have no ready answers yet:

- i. the diversity of the social processes that produce heritage,
- ii. how we deal with the value ascription process when there is on-going change in the values we ascribe to places,
- iii. how to encourage meaningful participation from all stakeholders,
- iv. the conflicting claims and interpretations that are made of heritage, and
- v. the role of cultural heritage in sustainable development.

These are the unanswered questions of cultural

heritage theory now. The following is a subjective discussion of how answers could be sought in the work of the Historic Buildings Council and to issues in the care of Northern Ireland's architectural and cultural heritage.

Diversity of heritage processes

Cultural heritage is diverse in its forms and processes, and its management must increasingly take into account the social mechanisms with which it is produced, used, interpreted and safeguarded. The social processes are affected by the technology by which it is accessed and experienced. These also affect perceptions of authenticity. My five year-old daughter, for example, came away from the Giants Causeway interpretive centre with the tale of Fionn McCool and the Scottish giant, Benandonner, firmly remembered because it was told in cartoon form on a large screen. Who's to say that this is not an incorrect way of remembering a most special place, especially if we continue to name it the 'Giant's Causeway'? Are the houses and streetscape on Cypress Avenue in Belfast more worthy of special attention and protection as a result of the place being evoked in the song of Van Morrison? The Historic Buildings Council took this into account in its discussion on a recent recommendation.

Implications of the evolution of cultural values

There is a growing realisation that cultural heritage undergoes a continuous process of evolution. The listing process requires that at the time of inclusion on the list, a building contains architectural or historical value. It is a snapshot in time. But the flow of time envelops our world and these decisions. The buildings decay, the economy demands utility of its resources, people's expectations change, and buildings become symbolic to us of other ideas.

For example, the State can only list vernacular thatched houses, but can only rarely, if at all, take direct action to make them useful and therefore meaningful again. It is powerless to sustain the tradition and skills which in turn sustained the buildings. They have become exemplars of a building type and a mode of life that has disappeared and is effectively dead. The

values of our culture and our society have effectively moved on and the thatched house building type is left meaningless. They have nothing to say to our society, except to remind us of a receding past.

More interestingly, new reasons for action and care are ascribed to places that are already protected, which influence how they are used, managed and even changed. The Heritage Lottery's Townscape Heritage Initiatives (THIs) have mobilised social and community values to make attractive streets. Yes, architectural and historical values are at the core of these projects, but only as initial markers of the quality of a place. The actions in THIs are social, economic and aesthetic. The values that motivate action are developed out of, but qualitatively different from, the initial perception of the character of the place. No conflict emerges from these shifts in value, but is it not a pity that the statutory designation process cannot harness the positive energy of communities to take care of their own places? For example, the Richhill THI has seen improvements in the village's townscape, harnessing much voluntary effort for the benefit of the place. The public funds leverage private effort. The 'private' and voluntary contribution is donated as a social or cultural value. One might describe the architectural and historical value as the virtually invisible foundations upon which the social and cultural value is built.

Involvement of multiple stakeholders

It is generally accepted now that the management of heritage is not a matter for experts alone. Certainly, at the level of professional engagement with conservation, it is a basic lesson that no single form of knowledge can adequately deal with a conservation problem. Collaboration is key, as when an architect and stone mason work out together the best approach to the particular repair of an ashlar wall in the particular circumstances of a unique building with its own history of exposure to the elements. More generally, there are multiple stakeholders in the care-taking of special places. These different communities of interest have different relations to the places they are involved with, from remote to intimate, from technical to emotional. The different communities are, by virtue of their difference, more or less empowered

or disempowered in their relations. Those with authority have an ethical responsibility to engage with all stakeholders in processes of conservation, to share power at the micro-level of the project, or at least to redress imbalances of knowledge and to provide opportunities for engagement, no matter how awkward this is. Because it is a very special place, the Causeway Coast is now of interest to fans of geology, mythology, potential visitors, and so on, in all corners of the world. The designation as a World Heritage Site is an expression of these remote interests. How can this multitude be brought to the table when negotiations are needed on the evolution of the site?

Conflicting claims and interpretations

The Burra Charter emerged from the pressure of two vastly different cultures attaching significance to the same places – two different communities of Australians, the white settlers who have claimed the place since the eighteenth century, and the Aboriginal peoples who have lived on the continent for 35 or more centuries before. The two have different world-views, senses of the sacred, views on how to farm, and of man's relationships with nature. More recently, there have been more intractable conflicts, and heritage has become the specific target of hostile action. For example, the library of Sarajevo was intentionally targeted because of its heritage value in the Balkan unrest of the 1990s. The last 20 years have provided serious challenges to the idealism in Burra that all conflicts over significance and value can be resolved. Useful, credible and transparent processes are needed to mediate disputes. The 'Limavady Declaration' which emerged from the 'Heritage Practice in Contested Spaces' conference, organised in September 2013 by the Causeway Museum Service, gives guidance in the form of open-ended questions as to how 'practice' or 'interpretation' can be approached. These ideas need



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A clash of cultures in Melbourne - the Burra Charter is Australia's attempt to rationalise diverse cultural heritages.

to be dignified by being promoted and tested in other situations of conflict. They represent modest, but hard-won, 'learnings' from Northern Ireland.

Role of cultural heritage in sustainable development

The relationship between heritage conservation and ecologically sustainable development is not addressed in Nara, but has become more important since. A most pithy and positive expression of this relationship is that '*the most environmentally benign building is the one that does not have to be built*' – because it already exists⁶. Lydia Wilson of the UAHS made the case in a booklet *Lose or Reuse: Managing Heritage Sustainably* based on Northern Ireland examples in 2007. Much needs to be done to ensure that 'The use of cultural heritage in development strategies must take into account cultural values, processes, community concerns, and administrative practices while ensuring equitable participation in socio-economic benefits'. The trade-offs and synergies between cultural heritage and ecologically sustainable development need to be more fully explored.

Internationally, the UN are re-setting 'Sustainable Development Goals', and there is a campaign for the relevance of human culture, and cultural practices, to be

Venice, Burra, Nara - the conservation charters in brief:

The Venice Charter of 1964 set out modern ethical principles to govern decision-making in building conservation. It introduced concepts like ‘repairs should be in the materials of our time’ and says that monuments ought to be conserved ‘in the full value of their authenticity’.

The Burra Charter, first drawn up in 1986, intended to chart a course where there are conflicting or diverse views of why a place ought to be conserved, as between aboriginal and colonial views of Australia’s landscapes.

The Nara Document on Authenticity was drawn up to guide the World Heritage Committee as to what the true basis for understanding the cultural practices that underlie conservation in diverse cultures, such as the ritual re-building of a timber shrine in Japan. This might be preceded by a quite different thought process or set of cultural precepts to those involved in conserving the durable stone of a Gothic cathedral.

stitched into the standard analysis of what sustainable development is: to add ‘culture’ to the three other components of sustainability as currently understood – ‘Environment’, ‘Society’ and ‘Economy’. The global trends indicate that human beings are becoming urban beings, and it is in towns and cities that the question of the human ecological footprint is most clearly understood. It is likely as a result that ‘sustainability’ and ‘heritage’ are going to intersect at the level of urban policy. The key questions then for heritage conservation and sustainability are likely to be asked as much at the level of the individual building as at the level of urban areas. The holism and coherence that we see in cities and towns, as ‘wee worlds of their own’, may be a quality that has to be understood better, alongside their aesthetic and historical character, the better to make the case for protecting what is special about them, and what is relevant to saving our planet.

Why do we protect heritage places anyway?

As far as I can see there are four reasons why we cherish and seek to protect our heritage:

a) Heritage provides us with a means to explore and declare our identities; to answer the question ‘Who are we?’ We may even discover that sometimes there are multiple answers to this question. Buildings are meaningful to us, they communicate with us through their symbolism, at a series of different levels, from the unconscious, the phenomenological, the practical to the ideal. The durability of those meanings, and their transmission to our descendants, are matters that preoccupy us, and, philosophically, are part of the ‘Good Life’ that we might strive to lead.

b) Heritage represents a cultural and material resource. The built environment that surrounds us has endured in large percentage from before our lifetimes, and will endure afterwards, providing structure, shelter, ornament and symbolic meaning to our predecessors, ourselves and our descendants. Buildings in particular are useful, are meant to be useful, and derive their meaningfulness to us through their utility. But they also demand and teach people skills, know-how, stewardship and respect. These are an intangible cultural heritage that is also of durable value, and is applicable outside the realm of heritage. A well-made modern masonry wall is a substantial material contribution to our culture and landscape.

The capacity to juggle competing values and the attributes that are likely to be found in a place or building of any maturity can be exported from the realm of conservation to that of design. It is for this reason that heritage management and conservation are being increasingly recognised for their contribution to sustainable development.

c) In a narrower sense, protecting heritage is protecting evidence of the past. This is qualitatively different from the expressive, symbolic identity-forming property mentioned above. It depends on the *preservation* of places, exactly as they are now, and in their authenticity. In the realm of archaeology, we know that deposits hidden by sedimented layers guard secrets; but old buildings, with their additive layers

do so too, and we set out to protect these, by leaving fabric undisturbed. Authenticity really matters in the case of our stewardship and understanding of the material evidence.

d) The final reason to protect heritage is quite abstract - its ‘institutional public value’ - has been described in the Demos⁷ report in 2005 for the Heritage Lottery Fund. It refers to the capacity of heritage to command organised endeavour, whether by the State or the voluntary sector to achieve communal aims. Importance of a different kind can be attached to this tendency of heritage (along with other public causes)

Conclusion

The Nara Document was never definitive enough to become a charter, though it contained the best thinking on conservation of its time. It is a tribute to its quality that critical re-evaluation after 20 years led to the formulation of a set of more clearly defined questions, rather than answers. The questions posed of Nara after 20 years seek to make heritage more central to our understanding of our societies, by recognising its communicative value and symbolic content, by asserting that the durability of heritage objects must be of some relevance to sustainable development, and that somewhere in there the issue of the evidential value of our inheritance – its authenticity, if you will – still has some power to communicate the past to us.

1 The International Council of Monuments and Sites, an international NGO which devises and disseminates international good practice in conservation (www.ICOMOS.org), and which operates through national committees. It holds annual international conferences, called ‘General Assemblies’.

2 Jukka Jokilehto, 10th November 2014, public speech at Teatro Verdi, Florence

3 The architectural protection legislation in the Republic of Ireland uses eight value concepts, nearly all borrowed from the Burra Charter – artistic, archaeological, cultural, historical, social, scientific, technical, and architectural.

4 PPG 15 (1992) ‘Planning and the Historic Environment’

5 https://www.academia.edu/8972643/NARA_20_ON_HERITAGE_PRACTICES_CULTURAL_VALUES_AND_THE_CONCEPT_OF_AUTHENTICITY. The five headings come from the abovementioned document

6 Grammenos and Russel, Building adaptability: a view from future, proceedings from the second international conference: buildings and the environment, June 9-12 1997, Paris, Vol. 2. Pp. 19-26

7 <http://www.demos.co.uk/files/challengeandchange.pdf?1240939425>

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The concept of authenticity was important in two decisions that the HBC took in the last three years. The NIEA proposed to delist buildings at the corner of Shipquay Street and Castle Street in Derry, due to bomb damage in 1982, exacerbated by damage caused by a further bomb in 1987. The building was rebuilt as part of a Townscape Heritage Initiative in 2005, and was praised for its fine proportions in a gazetteer of the city in 2013. However, the HBC voted to retain the building on the list not only for this reason, but also because ‘the individual character and history of the building was also important, and that this included its history during the Troubles. ... [T]he loss of the interior ... was an important part of its history. The building had retained what had survived the bombs.’

The second example is Kelly’s Cellars (see p.46), a bar in Bank Street in Belfast. The NIEA recommended that this be removed from the list due to the loss of many older features as a result of a 1990 renovation. Nonetheless, the structure survives, and the historical associations, and ‘character’ that the interior retains, holds an atmosphere that is compellingly historic. The spirit of place, in this case, provides its own authenticity. ‘The story of the building continues’ was the perception of the committee.

In both these cases, ‘authenticity’ is not equated with physical integrity, but taken to refer to the narrative value – their capacity to evoke memories – that the buildings or places embody.

THE FUTURE OF THATCHED COTTAGES

The thatched cottage is an important part of our rural built heritage. For some it represents a romantic link with the past, a symbol of an older gentler time, though to others it is a symbol of poverty and deprivation with little relevance to our modern way of life. Whatever your point of view, these modest vernacular buildings are an important part of our history, built environment and ‘sense of place’.

The loss of these buildings has been well documented. In her article for the IHBC’s *Context* magazine in 1995: *A Dying Tradition: Thatching in Northern Ireland*, Michelle McFaul stated that the thatched house in Northern Ireland had reached a critical point since she reckoned that 115 thatched properties remained at that time.

Michelle McFaul undertook a monitoring programme of thatched properties for the NI Environment Service. The objective of the programme was to establish the condition of these buildings and to monitor them so that any action could be taken proactively rather than re-actively.

She identified the greatest concern as being the future of these buildings once their elderly inhabitants die. “Will their children be prepared to put up with these basic living standards or will they want to make improvements so it no longer represents the more modest way in which their parents lived?”

She also recognised that adapting or extending these buildings to meet modern living standards was “more likely to lead to loss of original fabric than to conserve it.”

Further threats included the cost of thatching materials and the dearth of thatchers. Thatch has become an expensive material and most thatched roofs have a short lifespan – less than ten years.

In a more recent article, Leah O’Neill of the Ulster Architectural Heritage Society advised that thatched cottages are now the vernacular building most at risk (see *High Risk - High Potential*, in *Perspective* Nov–Dec 2014).

“Out of sixty thatched buildings on the Built Heritage at Risk Register, thirteen have been successfully reused or restored. Four have been demolished.”

Up until recently, the NIEA recognised the ‘at risk’ nature of these buildings by offering owners grant assistance of 75% for thatch repairs and up to 90% for those on income support. NIEA grant assistance has had a very positive impact on the protection of thatched cottages and the ability of owners to maintain them.

Current financial pressures within the Department of Environment have had a devastating impact on grant assistance for listed buildings. For buildings that do not provide a community benefit, such as most thatched cottages, grant has now been frozen. Owners rely heavily on such grant assistance to repair and maintain their properties, and the loss of grant assistance will lead to alarm among owners and loss of confidence in the NIEA and their ability to support the owners. It will be a challenge for the NIEA to get that confidence back.

So what is the future for thatched cottages? Inspiration lies in previous successful restoration projects.

Robb’s Ferry Cottage in Portadown is a grade B1 listed, single-storey, mud walled cottage with a corrugated iron over thatch roof. It was on the Built Heritage at Risk Register and had lain vacant for



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many years. Permission had even been granted for its replacement. However new owners rescued the building in 2006, completing a sensitive restoration using traditional materials and building techniques. The new owners found the restoration project to be challenging but satisfying. They have demonstrated that these modest vernacular buildings can become a home with all the modern amenities. Robb’s Cottage was built sustainably from local materials – mud, lime, stone and straw – and it was restored with those same materials. Re-thatching of the roof is planned for a future phase of work.

Magherabally Cottage in Banbridge also demonstrates the successful rescue of a vernacular thatched cottage from the Built Heritage at Risk Register. This cottage is a long single-storey structure, one room deep with a typical hearth-lobby plan form complete with jamb wall and spy hole. It had been extended longitudinally over its lifetime with stone-built buildings to one side. Again new owners took on the challenge of restoring the cottage, including underpinning the external walls and re-thatching the roof. It is now a self-catering cottage with 3 en-suite bedrooms, a living room, kitchen and storage space.

Clearly the sustainable reuse of these buildings is critical. New life has been breathed back into these buildings by new owners with the vision to see

their potential and the tenacity to secure a positive outcome.

Education on the importance of preserving this part of our heritage and the skills required to do it, are key. Both owners understood the importance of using traditional materials and skills. The cottages have also been modified to include modern amenities but in a manner sympathetic to the original buildings.

However, both projects received grant assistance and it is this incentive that helps in both attracting additional private investment and ensuring that works are carried out in accordance with best practice.

The Ulster Architectural Heritage Society continues to lobby for the protection of thatched cottages, with its Planning and Heritage Officer liaising with local councils to raise awareness of ‘buildings at risk’ including these vernacular buildings. Local Planning Authorities should be encouraged to promote the importance of these buildings both as part of their built heritage and possibly as part of a wider conservation or tourism initiative within local council areas. This would be within the context of current planning policy which looks to encourage the retention of vernacular buildings under PPS 21: Appendix 2: Vernacular Buildings.

Training in traditional skills must continue to be developed and promoted. The UAHS Directory of Traditional Building Skills draws together a wide selection of those working in the fields of historic building conservation, ranging from architects to quantity surveyors to specialist sub-contractors. Owners need to be better educated to understand that only contractors with the required expertise and competency should be employed.

The Mourne Homesteads Project was a huge success, restoring seven vernacular buildings using traditional skills and materials and raising awareness of the value of our rural built heritage. The difficulty in applying this model to thatched cottages is the dispersed nature of these dwellings. A more regional approach may be required starting with an owner’s forum to communicate and share experience, possibly

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Magherabally Cottage before restoration and (right) after.

through a Thatched Cottage Trust which could be partnered or co-ordinated by the Association of Preservation Trusts for Northern Ireland and the UAHS. Previous successful restoration projects can be used to inspire and encourage other owners and provide support through shared knowledge.

The greatest challenge for owners will be how to source funding for the repair and maintenance of their properties. As most are privately owned they are not seen as providing ‘community benefit’ and will no longer attract NIEA grant assistance.

The Rural Tourism Scheme is part of the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020. It provides investment for conservation of small scale built heritage where it acts as a key driver for rural tourism. Projects must be Council-led and are not open to private owners. There is, however, an opportunity for creative thinking in how some of these thatched cottages could be incorporated into a wider tourism project.

Previous examples of restored thatched cottages

which would have fitted the profile for this grant are Arthur’s thatched cottage in Ballymena, which is used as an interpretive centre and tells the story of President Arthur and his road to the presidency. This cottage is unique in terms of its historical story. Also, Curry’s Cottage a 300 year old, Grade A listed thatched cottage in Co Tyrone, which was acquired by Hearth Association from the original owner in 1998, is one of a small number of cruck frame cottages still surviving today. The cottage can

be hired for use by school parties, artists, local history and story-telling groups as well as self-catering accommodation. A kitchen, bathroom and bedroom are provided in an annex alongside the cottage. However the focus of the farmstead remains the old kitchen of the cottage. Both cottages have been successfully restored to protect their heritage value but have been reinvented to ensure a sustainable future.

Other thatched cottages, such as the B1 listed thatched cottage at Seacoast Road Magilligan, now listed on the Built Heritage at Risk Register, are deemed to be of national and international interest and as such have great tourism potential. The difficulty is in reconciling the private ownership of these properties to the conditions of grant.

For enterprising owners, Invest NI offers financial support for conversion of an existing dwelling to provide a minimum of 2 self-catering units. This financial support could assist in the restoration of existing thatched properties, combined with low level and sensitively designed enabling development to provide the additional accommodation required by

Invest NI. Magherabally Cottage in Banbridge and Curry’s Cottage in Co Tyrone have demonstrated that these buildings can be successfully restored as self-catering cottages.

Incentives need to be found to encourage owners to restore our thatched cottages. Current VAT policy encourages new build works through zero-rating new-build but applying 20% tax to all repairs. VAT can be reclaimed for repair and maintenance of Church buildings through the Listed Places of Worship scheme, and additional funding has also been released through the Listed Places of Worship Roof Repair Fund for urgent repairs to church roofs. Current grant assistance recognises the community benefit of these buildings and the urgent need for financial support, but the thatched cottage also provides community benefit by reminding us of our shared history and sense of place, and as such has significant tourist potential.

However, as with Church Buildings, this benefit needs to be recognised through funding. Government should also be encouraged to direct funding to assist people with advanced levels of need and to protect built heritage most at risk. Thatched cottages and their owners typically meet both criteria.

The future of the thatched cottage is challenging. Great work has been done by the UAHS, NIEA, APT, Hearth and many dedicated and well-informed owners. However in the light of the current economic climate a new creative approach needs to be found to ensure that the thatched cottage remains a living part of our rural built heritage.

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DELISTING -

A failure of the planning system?

If you ask most members of the public what listing a building means, they will reply that it means the building is protected and cannot be altered.

Some people assume that it means that quite literally, resisting their building being listed in case they might ever want to put in a new kitchen or add another bathroom. But almost everyone is of the opinion that it means the building is going to be preserved in perpetuity and protected from unsuitable alterations.

At least, that is what most people assumed until the controversy over proposed delisting of some twenty buildings in Belfast in one month of 2015. Not all the buildings were well known, but many were and perhaps the most prominent was Kelly's Cellars in Bank Street (*below, in 1985, and inside today*). The owners of Kelly's had long trumpeted their pub as the oldest in Belfast, and took pride in its history and character. Customers relished the whitewashed walls, coal fire and dark timbers. Tourists flocked to it.

Whether it went back to 1720 as claimed or to 1780 as seemed more likely, the pub had been there since the days of the United Irishmen and when the NIEA proposed its delisting last year many people were horrified. A campaign was set up in the social media and rapidly attracted support, and the owners themselves were shocked that their building might lose its prized status.

Why was the Department even considering delisting such an historic pub? Were they right in



advising the HBC that it was “no longer a Georgian, or even a Victorian, public house”? Well, it has to be admitted that the first floor had been extensively altered in recent years, and that much of the structure appears to be much later than 1780. Yet somehow, without being made twee or obviously altered, the changes had happened over time and in such a way as to retain much of the character of an 18th century pub. While much of the material is not original, the whole is much more than a stage set.

Buildings are listed for their “special architectural or historic interest”. In other words they may have historic interest with virtually no architectural quality, or they may have architectural quality with very little historic interest. In most cases of course they have both, but there is nothing in the legislation to say that a listed building must have an interesting interior, or all its original windows, or that it must be unchanged from the time it was built.

In fact the Second Survey historical notes of a building may record with interest additions made in the 18th century or improvements made in the 19th, and they will be considered as adding to the historic interest of the building. While changes made in the 20th or 21st century may strike us today as ugly or banal, some of them will undoubtedly be of interest to future historians. What is important is that the character of the building should survive, or possibly even be enhanced by later changes.

Is there a limit to the number of buildings that should be listed? There seems not, particularly since at present there isn't even the economic argument that listing a building may open the Department to potential claims for grant aid. Is 97% too small a percentage



of the building stock to leave untrammelled by listed building regulations? Do we list buildings simply to make a catalogue of the Top 8000 which may vary from year to year, or is it a list of our best buildings which we have undertaken to protect for future generations?

I believe that once a building is listed every effort should be made to look after it, because each one is unique and tells a story about our past. But changes do happen, because of legislation or fashion, or simply wear and tear – the challenge is to make the changes while retaining the essential character of the building, and to absorb them into its history. And listing provides the framework within which this can happen, because by common consensus these buildings are special and must be looked after.

I started this article by stating the general understanding of listing. Until the Kelly's Cellars affair few people realised that just as the value of shares can go down as well as up, buildings can be delisted as well as listed.

It is of course right for the legislation to provide for delisting, and there are several scenarios when it is an obvious and correct course of action: for example if the listing was made on incorrect grounds in the first place, or if the building has been demolished and replaced by something completely different. There is also the scenario where after consideration it is decided that a structure should be scheduled as a monument rather than listed - it will remain protected, but under different legislation. After that it gets more difficult.

Some buildings were listed in the early days of the First Survey because they were seen as being key to the conservation areas that were proposed but not then in operation, and under the Second Survey some of these have been proposed for de-listing. Then there are buildings that have been altered to an extent or which have no historic interiors - this gets more controversial. Finally there are buildings which have been repaired after suffering severe damage from fire or bombs and no longer contain much historic fabric.

Once these buildings are delisted a can of worms is opened up. “Why was my neighbour's building

Marcus Patton



A unique Arts and Crafts terrace at Tennent Street by Hill & Kennedy, listed in 1984 and delisted in 2015.

delisted while I am not allowed to change an iota of mine?” Oh, it was because he put in plastic windows and added an ugly extension. “So why is his building delisted instead of him being prosecuted? If I gut the inside while you're not watching will you delist mine too?”

Much of the delisting proposed to HBC is of buildings that have been altered illegally but where the Department has decided not to prosecute. That sends out a very dangerous signal that damage to listed buildings will be rewarded by removal of all the controls that should have prevented the damage in the first place. A considerable number of other cases arise from alterations that actually received planning approval, where the owner complied with all the planning regulations and yet carried out works that were so damaging as to lead to the delisting proposal. Is our planning system really as weak as that? Well, yes, it seems that it is. [It remains of course to be seen how local councils under the 2015 planning system will protect the listed buildings under their guardianship.]

It has been suggested that leaving badly altered buildings on the list will devalue the list as a whole, but I do not believe that to be the case. Buildings change over the course of time, and very few materials in an 18th century building will be original. Buildings are listed for their architectural or historic character, and while historic fabric cannot be reinstated, architectural character can. A severely altered Georgian house may still have more character and historic interest than an

unaltered office block of the 1960s, and if there are reasonable records of the building it will be possible to reinstate much of its character with a degree of accuracy.

It can be argued that there is no guarantee of a future owner coming forward with restoration plans, but the same could be said of many derelict farmhouses that are listed because of surviving interiors which may not survive many more years - we cannot see into the future and need to leave as many options open for future generations as possible.

A HIERARCHY OF REASONS FOR DELISTING:

A: *Bureaucratic delisting* - The structure is being delisted prior to scheduling as a monument:

The item remains protected but under more appropriate legislation: this is acceptable.

B: *The building was listed pending conservation area designation* and now enjoys that protection:

Conservation area designation controls demolition but does not in practice protect detail such as sash windows, so the building should remain protected. [Under the 2015 legislation it is possible for Councils to use Article 4 Directions to maintain the character of such details in Conservation Areas, and there is an argument for some delisting once such alternative protection is in place.]

C: Delisting proposed because of *undesirable but minor changes*:

Are the changes reversible? Can the architectural character be reinstated from photographic or other evidence? If so, the building should remain listed and new owners be given every encouragement to make good the damage.

D: Building externally similar to others in a terrace but *lacking interior detail*:

Since "policing" of interiors is virtually impossible, there is every likelihood that some of the buildings remaining listed will be similarly gutted over the next few years, leading to an overall decline in

the quality of the terrace. Delisting would remove protection of the remaining external detail as well, thereby affecting the setting of the remaining listed buildings in such a group. Terraced houses are not free-standing entities and the "building" is in practice a number of properties in different ownerships. Retaining listing on the whole terrace will encourage some owners to restore missing features and others to retain what they might otherwise have discarded.

E: Building *substantially altered but with planning permission*:

The owner believed that what he did was correct and was not warned that it could lead to the de-listing of his building. He probably incurred additional costs that he is now told he needn't have bothered with – this is a kick in the teeth to the owner and should not be allowed to happen.

F: Building *substantially altered without planning permission*:

The owner decided to ignore the law and damage his building. If the building is then delisted, he is effectively given permission to finish the job. The building should remain listed and the owner be obliged to reinstate the damage, if necessary through a charge on the land that would be deducted in future at the point of sale. [There can be debate about whether the building was statutorily listed at the time of the alterations or whether they took place in the interim between the survey and the legal listing, but often there is no such doubt].

G: Building demolished following for example bomb or fire damage but (perhaps in a group) *replaced with a replica*:

The owner did his best to repair and tried to reproduce architectural character. If the building is delisted, he is effectively being told that he shouldn't have gone to that trouble. It can be argued that such damage and reinstatement is only a chapter in the life of the building - where it happened a century ago it is usually merely recorded as part of its history.

H: Building has been *demolished and replaced by something quite different*:

There is nothing left to list other than the historic site. If appropriate the owner should be punished, but after that the listing is academic and may be removed.

I: Building *listed on incorrect grounds* in the first place:

...it should be delisted as soon as possible!

If sufficient records survive architectural character can be recreated, but it has to be accepted that historic fabric is irreplaceable. To an archaeologist that is a critical failure, but with buildings change has often to be accepted as part of the life of the structure. But the listed building legislation refers to "architectural or historic character", not to original fabric. What then is historic character?

In Australia a bridge may be rebuilt using modern materials so that it can withstand modern traffic, yet remain listed - because they list places rather than just buildings. In Japan a building may have been rebuilt frequently to apparently the same design, and yet be considered historic. Have we been too hung up on the concept of historic fabric, perhaps because archaeologists are the "senior service" of the historic built environment in Northern Ireland?

The Second Survey has involved detailed historical research, recording complex social history around buildings. If the building is physically changed, that historical background does not change; in fact the recent alterations can be seen as a result of historical changes, triggered by changes of ownership, social conditions or redundancy. Of course a building which has not changed is of greater interest because of its rarity, but are the physical changes not without some interest in themselves? I am not suggesting that we should encourage change, but that we should not abandon buildings that have seen alterations. Even ugly changes become history in time, and a building going back to the 18th century still retains that history until it is actually demolished.

The number of listed buildings has remained fairly constant despite the delisting of some 650 buildings over the last fifteen years. This is partly because some early listings were group listings (eg a terrace which counted as one entry is now broken into individual buildings). Sadly many new listings have less local character and individuality, many being 20th century buildings. That is not a value judgement about the quality of more recent buildings: it is a fact of life that many have less local identity and could have been built anywhere in western Europe.

If a building has been altered so severely by the owner that delisting is considered - why is the owner rewarded by delisting instead of being reprimanded? If planning permission was given for changes that are so severe as to suggest the building should be delisted, that is not the fault of the building or even its owner - it is a failure in the planning system which permitted the changes and not a reason to delist the building.

What seems clear is that delisting a building is in some measure a failure of the planning system. While there are extreme circumstances when the total loss of a building should be recognised by delisting of its site, in most cases listing should mean that owners and government are encouraged to do all in their power to retain the beauty and fascination of our most intriguing and unique buildings.

Marcus Patton is an architect with over forty years experience in conservation and housing, much of it as Director of Hearth. He is the author of several publications for the Ulster Architectural Heritage Society.

WORKING IN A CONSERVATION AREA -

External Details

The writer has been living and working in Derry City for the past 25 years as an architect in private practice. I have been involved in a number of refurbishment schemes within the city's conservation area and this article is my contribution to the Historic Buildings Council Report 2015.

The paper will look specifically at external details in projects in which I have been personally involved and also at other schemes and details which have impacted on the external environment of the Clarendon Street conservation area in particular.

The Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) is funded by the Heritage Lottery whose objective since 1997 has been to deliver economic and social regeneration in Northern Ireland through the restoration and repair of historic buildings. The Walled City Partnership (WCP) was set up to manage the Initiative in Derry and is essentially a partnership between the Foyle Civic Trust, Derry City Council and the City Centre Initiative.

In 2002, approximately 100 years after it was built, the owner of the Northern Counties Hotel building in Waterloo Place was approached by the Walled City Partnership to see whether he would be interested in taking on a refurbishment project to safeguard the building's future and prevent it from suffering from the same fate as the recently demolished Tilley and Henderson Factory at the end of Craigavon Bridge.

This was to be the flagship project for the first phase of the THI. The benefits were: "not only to enhance the visual appearance of the immediate environment, but to improve the physical, economic and social conditions of the Conservation Area in which the scheme is in operation. The purpose being that the areas may succeed as retail, cultural and residential areas, with an emphasis on vibrant mixed use economy, providing a safe and attractive environment in which to work and live while injecting a pride

of place and supporting independent shops and small businesses with unique identities and styles." (Extract from WCP website)

During my research of the building the old photographs showed the NCH was a handsome, prominent building in a very civic setting in Waterloo Place with the neo-classical Ulster Bank opposite, the Northern Bank adjacent and the sturdy architecture of the GPO and surrounding shops and pubs. Horse and carts, trams, buses and bunting, all added to the evidence that Waterloo Place, with its proximity to the



river and docks business was, "the" shopping centre of the city.

It was built for a Mrs Gibson a docks merchant in 1902, to the designs of a local firm –Ashlin and Foreman in the Victorian/Arts and crafts style which was then in full swing. With its Porte-Corchiere and colonnaded façade it was very much an up market hotel and it is reported that aviator Amelia Earhart stayed there after her historic flight across the Atlantic from Newfoundland in 1932.

Waterloo Place bore the brunt of the bombs and fires in the early years of the troubles and the Ulster Bank was destroyed (and infamously replaced with a brown bricked bunker of a building immediately adjacent to the Walls). The Northern Counties Hotel itself was very badly damaged by several bombs which resulted in the loss of much exterior ornamental detail and the Porte Corchiere.

The building continued as a hotel up until the late fifties/early sixties and then the upper bedroom floors changed to office space; the City Council's accountancy department was housed there up until the completion of the new Council offices in 1996.

When I went to see the building in 2003 it was evident that the exterior was suffering badly and internally the condition was particularly poor. The well ordered and proportioned façade gave way to a chaotic arrangement internally with a multitude of level changes, dark rooms, tiresome circulation routes, precarious external fire escapes, leaking roofs, dry rot and infestation of pigeons.

The solid brick walls of the façade were in poor condition with a number of cracks and deteriorating pointing.

The smooth rendered bands and trimming to the 2nd and 3rd storey arcades and windows, the balcony balustrades, stringcourses, cornices and pediments to bays and dormers were cracked and spalling due to them having been repaired/replaced in sand cement render which had allowed water to get in behind, freeze and expand and subsequent loss of adhesion from the

brickwork behind. Moisture was gaining access to the interior with no way of getting back out through the cement render and was damaging internal finishes.

The original Bangor Blue slates had been replaced in the early 1970s with asbestos cement with mineral felt on the flat roof section which was a tremendous source of water ingress as well as the badly neglected rooflights.

It was difficult to know where to start.

Whilst we had useful early conversations with the EHS on specific historical details it soon became clear that the main issue was how the building was going to comply with Building Control regulations and in particular escape from the upper floors of a 4 storey building which had only one staircase, without the loss of valuable commercial ground floor space and consequent impact on the original ground floor shop design which we wanted to try and recreate.

This was further complicated by the seemingly ad hoc and piecemeal rear extensions and alterations which had been carried out on the building over the years, the poor construction of same and which were the source of much water ingress. Disability access throughout the building was also an issue.

Again early and on-going discussions with the Building Control officer was essential in coming to a successful resolution with a budget which was now looking increasingly small.

We took a pragmatic and practical approach-retain and restore the existing historic facades to Waterloo Place and Custom House Street, re-instate the Porte Corchiere and restore the main entrance to Waterloo Place, restore the shop fronts and get rid of the fortress like external shutters; restore the principal spaces behind including the first floor dining room; demolish the rear extensions and build a new 3 storey glazed extension which would resolve disability access and fire escape issues, whilst giving the rear façade, particularly when glimpsed from Custom House Street between the GPO and Northern Counties, a new contemporary dynamic when juxtaposed against

the existing historic fabric and open up views across the river to St Columb's Park and Ebrington and Benevenagh to the north.

We prepared a crisp set of drawings as part of the planning application and listed building consent which fully explained the scheme and created enthusiasm for it. Due to our early and detailed discussions with the



various stakeholders prior to submitting the application (EHI, Planning service, THI, DSD, tenants Building Control) there was a speedy planning approval.

The repair works included re-roofing with asphalt and natural slates, repairing sections of brickwork with resalvaged brickwork from demolished parts of the building, repointing the existing brickwork with a lime mortar mix to allow the building to breathe, overhauling the sliding sash windows, restoring and repairing internal decorative cornicing, rationalising the interior of the ground floor shops.

The result is now a refurbished, restored and extended building with high quality office and retail space naturally ventilated and daylit. There has been huge interest from potential tenants for both the office and retail areas and many floors have now been let.

The original *porte cochère* could not be found and we prepared new drawings based on the historic photographs and had a replica built and this together with the public realm scheme has seen Waterloo

Place become one of the city's main commercial thoroughfares with café terraces, street entertainment, public art and colourful bustling shops.

The following projects were also carried out under the THI scheme. The first phase consisted of 3 properties on the corner of Waterloo Street and Castle Gate and was particularly successful due to the WCP being able to persuade 3 adjoining owners to carry out the works as one larger contract which would attract greater grant aid. Apart from the economic advantages of pooling resources this also had a bigger feel-good impact on the street as a whole and encouraged other owners to improve their premises through the THI scheme.

The works consisted of re-instatement of historic shopfronts with roller shutters removed, repointing of brickwork with lime mortar, replacement of cement render with lime render, repairs to sliding slash windows and cast iron rainwater goods; removal of asbestos slates and re-instatement of traditional Bangor blue slates, installation of breathable roof membrane and increased thermal insulation in roofspace, repairs to chimneys and repairs to rotted wallplates and ends of rafter feet.

It was difficult to appreciate the subtle and historic details of these simple but elegant buildings due to the amount of inappropriate additions/alterations over the years. In particular the fabric and harmony of the street had become disrupted due to the multitude of different treatments at ground floor level associated with the individual shops. Therefore, instead of being able to appreciate the quality of the whole street through architecturally controlled townscape, the visitor (and local) was confronted with a chaotic, eclectic, heavy mix which was visually disturbing and potentially off-putting to investors to the area. The Historic Walls had thus become choked with unwelcoming, modern, metal and plastic shopfronts to the detriment of the overall townscape fabric.

Whilst researching the projects and carrying out consultations it was clear that the owners and the tenants of the properties were very much in favour of a more considered holistic approach to refurbishment



particularly at street level and shopfront design including signage.

However there was one major problem during the consultation process – roller shutters and the security requirements of same and their impact on the overall streetscape and shopfront signage and design.

Again the owners wanted to do away with the shutters entirely. However, their concern was that the shop windows would be a target for vandals incurring significant costs and loss of insurance cover.

At the time the pedestrianised zone, paradoxically, contributed to anti-social behaviour particularly at night when there was no through traffic. This has been addressed somewhat with the completion of the City Centre Public Realm Project for the areas which has increased lighting, security cameras, and vehicular traffic.

The lack of a proper policing service in the latter half of the 20th century (in other words the presence of the police patrolling these areas tended to lead to further social unrest and damage to property) also made it difficult for the owners to run with a shutterless shopfront. The result was a soulless city centre.

For the first refurbishment project it was agreed (as part of a pilot scheme) to go with a strong toughened glass shopfront with no roller shutters and the WCP would cover the costs of any breakages to the glass in the first six months. Apart from the first weekend after completion when one of the panes was broken there have been no breakages since (almost 10 years on.). This quickly encouraged other property owners to sign up to the scheme.

The result for Castle Gate and Waterloo Street are shopfronts and signage which are as close to the original detail as possible; the colour scheme is coordinated and the shutters are internal. Therefore instead of each of these adjacent properties looking fragmented, individual and small, the new appearance is now one of a quality civic fabric and streetscape which interplays with and takes its place alongside the solidity and mass of the City Walls.

Irvine's Printing Works in Waterloo Street was brick faced on the upper floors but had been rendered



with sand cement during the 1970s. This render had broken down and was falling into the street. Unfortunately due to the strength of the cement it had also pulled the face off the brickwork. We were left with little option but to render the façade but with lime render mix to allow the wall to breathe. The original detail in the ground floor columns together with the shopfronts was recreated. The shops and the upper floors are now fully let.

The photograph below shows a group of six properties in Clarendon Street the owners of which



pooled together in 1990 to have improvement works carried out externally. Again the works involved repointing of brickwork, rebuilding/repairs of boundary walls, repairs to sliding sash windows and cast iron rainwater goods, repairs to chimneys, roofs and roof timbers, and re-instatement of cast and wrought iron boundary railings.

According to reliable primary sources the iron railings were removed from the properties during World War 2 to help with the war effort, though it is understood they ended up in the local dump. The railings were an integral part of the original dwellings and help give a distinctive feature within the Clarendon Street Conservation area. This scheme again was the catalyst for further improvement works to several other of the properties within the Clarendon Street and Queen Street areas and it certainly presents a harmonised Georgian elegance to the city's townscape.

It is a credit to these private property owners and also to the EHS for financial support in looking after their respective assets.

However there are still instances of outrage in the area with sliding sash windows being replaced with UPVC, brick facades being rendered with sand cement; and historic cast iron street lights being replaced with replicas for no apparent reason. More worrying it would appear to be Government departments who are the main culprits in carrying out works without consultation or listed building consent!

The photograph below shows an interesting extension to the rear of 48 Clarendon St (this author was not involved) built approximately 12 years ago.



It is a bold attempt to introduce a contemporary architecture into the Georgian surroundings although it is let down somewhat by the weathering capabilities of some of the materials and detailing.

The three-storey brick building to the left of the glazed extension was built later and I am sure there is a debate to be had on the merits of building in a pseudo period style over a contemporary style in a conservation area. The astragals are too thick due to the double glazing, and the door heads are just not correct. My own view would be that the more of the original historic fabric which is retained, the easier for contemporary architecture to be absorbed into the townscape.

The Culturlann (2008) by O Donnell & Tuomey on Great James Street is a fine example of a contemporary building taking its place with confidence in a conservation area (below). The rebuilding of the red brick building immediately adjacent in the 1990s this time reinforces the traditional building line and helps absorb the new reinforced concrete structure into its historic environs.



I will finish on a cautionary note. The vibrancy and future of our cities and conservation areas are under threat from out of town shopping centres and business parks, and the demand for grade A office space, disability access and parking. One has only to walk around the conservation areas in Derry's city centre to see the number of "to let" and "for sale" signs as people feel restricted on how listed buildings can be adapted to suit modern office, medical or community

facilities with the plethora of rules regulations associated with compliance with various legislation.

We must take a progressive look at how we encourage investors to work in the city and listed buildings. In many instances the fine proportions and harmony of the front facades can give way to cluttered, messy rear facades with timid extensions which are of little architectural merit. These in turn open up into dilapidated mews lanes which are generally rubbish strewn and ugly.

Emphasis should be placed on encouraging high quality architecture design to the rear of these listed buildings, of appropriate scale, which will provide Grade A city centre office space and give a new dynamic to the rear mews.

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A number of churches in a range of styles and from various architectural periods have been listed in the Belfast area. These include examples from the late 19th century, Woodvale (top) and Ballysillan Presbyterian Churches in Gothic Revival style by architects Young & Mackenzie and Samuel Stevenson. The Cavehill Methodist Church (above) and Newington Presbyterian Church built in the 1950s, also by Young & Mackenzie and in an eclectic modern style, are a departure from their typical style. The 20th century churches at Dominican College, Fortwilliam, and Orangefield Baptist Church (left) by William Brady and Gordon McKnight represent post war Modernist architecture in Northern Ireland.



SUPPORTING THE RESILIENCE OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Climate change projections for the United Kingdom in the 21st Century indicate a shift to wetter winter and drier summer conditions with an overall increase in average annual temperatures, coupled with greater day-to-day and year-to-year variability (UKCP09, 2009). Climate change is not a concern for the future but is something that is already having an impact on the UK's weather patterns. This impact is manifest in a greater frequency of extreme rainfall events during the autumn and winter months with an associated increase in flooding of susceptible areas. For example, since the 1960s the average winter precipitation in northern Scotland has increased by 70% (Historic Scotland, 2012).

This change in conditions has long-term implications for building and infrastructure resilience and requires owners or those with a duty of care for historic buildings to plan for these challenging conditions. The following is an overview of the key issues that need to be considered when dealing with historic masonry structures. Although space constraints preclude an in-depth analysis of each of these there is a wealth of literature and guidance available and just a few of the key websites are included at the end of this article.

In the context of climate change and extreme storm events, emphasis has typically been placed on the destructive effects of flooding. However, although this is the most obvious threat it represents just one of a host of potential threats to historic masonry since an excess of moisture can have much more insidious effects – effects that can often go unrecognized until deterioration is established and damage has been done.

Masonry, specifically porous stone such as sandstone, when able to dry between rainfall events can hold large quantities of moisture within its pore structure. Consequently, under 'normal' conditions stone has a large buffering capacity enabling it to protect the interior fabric of a building, hence its historic and continuing popularity as a durable construction material. However, as UK weather patterns change to a regime dominated by a greater

frequency of extreme wind-driven rainfall events, drying opportunities are reduced and wind-driven moisture penetrates more deeply, resulting in more prolonged and deeper wetting of stone, conditions that can persist for several months especially during the winter period (McCabe et al. 2013). This can result in the natural buffering capacity of masonry being overwhelmed with excess moisture drawn further into the building creating conditions conducive to the degradation of other structural components such as timber (wet rot) and metal work (corrosion) as well as causing damage to internal decorative elements.

When dealing with historic masonry an added issue is the fact that the masonry components (stone and mortar) already possess complex histories of exposure to the external environment including factors such as loading with contaminants from the atmosphere and groundwater. As a consequence of the small-scale structural and mineralogical changes that have occurred during decades and possibly centuries of exposure, historic masonry is often more susceptible to moisture penetration because of changes to its porosity characteristics and weakening of intergranular bonds. The combination of aging masonry and changing weather patterns poses a significant management issue for those responsible for the upkeep of these historic structures.

The key question is how the resilience of historic masonry can be supported in the face of changing weather patterns without compromising the



A hierarchy of intervention stages in the life of a building highlighting the importance of basic maintenance in supporting long-term resilience. (Ewan Hyslop, Historic Scotland, pers comm.)

authenticity and aesthetic properties of the historic materials? In addition it is crucial that any interventions do not contribute to deterioration of either the stone or mortar.

There is a hierarchy of possible stages in the life of a historic building that reflects increasing levels of intervention and impact on authenticity (*below far left*). The critical stage that can slow or even prevent progress through the subsequent stages is basic building maintenance but, sadly, so many of the threats to the resilience of structures reflect failure to establish a robustly practised maintenance strategy.

Proactive building maintenance is central to a structured and effective moisture management strategy and, as part of this, there are several issues that need to be considered. The following are non-invasive, obvious and commonsense actions but it is the basic failure to apply these that can result in significant damage to fabric and threaten long-term material resilience:

Ensure that the rainwater goods are of sufficient capacity to cope with extreme rainfall events despite the current rarity of such events. Where possible complex down-pipe and gutter geometries and junctions should be avoided as, under extreme conditions this may lead to back-up and overflow.

Regular inspection of the exterior of the building is essential – it is important to get to know your building especially when there are no maintenance

issues. This is best achieved through regular inspection of the exterior, especially following a period of stormy weather when roof tiles, guttering and downpipes may have been dislodged or damaged. Aside from this, basic inspections of the roof and rainwater goods should be undertaken every six months (Curran et al 2010; Historic Scotland 2014). This inspection should include checking that drains are patent as it defeats the purpose of well-maintained rainwater goods if excess moisture from a roof is not effectively removed at ground level because drains are blocked by leaves or litter (*below left*).

Linked to the point above is recognition of damp that appears on the inside of a building as this can be symptomatic of damage or deterioration of the external fabric – this is something that needs to be promptly addressed to avoid more costly repairs.

Severe weathering-related loss of definition of cills and stringcourses over time lessens the loss of excess moisture being shed via drip-fall and allows it to remain on masonry surfaces where it can be absorbed and increase the moisture load of the stone.



Jv Curran (Consarvc)



Something as simple as litter blocking a drain cover can slow the removal of excess water during heavy rainfall events and, if left unattended, can contribute to increased moisture loading of masonry materials.

Ensure that the architectural detailing, particularly the drip detailing is working effectively to shed water efficiently from the building surface. Weathering of such features may significantly reduce their effectiveness over time and extend the dwell time of moisture on the building surface (*above*).

The growth of trees and shrubs too close to buildings should be restricted as this can inhibit the free movement of air around the building exterior and create conditions of higher humidity. Restricted airflow can slow the drying of wet masonry surfaces and also enable weathering processes responsible



Proximity of shrubs to a building, particularly on north facing aspects where more humid conditions naturally occur, can slow drying of masonry and exacerbate deterioration.

for stone and mortar deterioration and breakdown to operate for longer (above).

Associated with the point above is the prompt removal of vegetation such as ivy ‘growing’ on or in masonry as this can damage mortars and provide points of access for moisture, especially in porous materials such as sandstone.

These basic actions will become increasingly important in future years as weather patterns change and our historic masonry structures are exposed to more extreme events with increased moisture input.

Further down the hierarchy shown in Figure 1 is the ‘Protection’ stage. This refers to the point where basic maintenance, however effectively implemented, cannot keep pace with the greater extremity of external conditions that structures are exposed to and the increasing age and fragility of the masonry materials themselves. When this stage is reached other more radical actions may need to be considered to manage surface moisture and these fall into two groups:

The application of a sacrificial render (lime) or harling – these are breathable coatings traditionally applied to external masonry surfaces to prevent moisture ingress and provide protection. This is a tried, tested and very effective technique but if it wasn’t a part of the original construction its application may be a challenge to public perception because of the significant aesthetic impact. However,

the effectiveness of such protective coverings is reliant on the appropriate choice of material. For example, at The Hill House in Helensburgh, Scotland, designed by Charles Rennie Mackintosh and built in 1902, the original application of a hard cement render over poor quality clay-rich sandstone and associated brickwork resulted in cracking of the render and problems with moisture ingress from an early stage in the life of the building. This mismatch of materials has created significant and costly ongoing management challenges (below).

In the context of moisture management, another more controversial approach to protection is the use of surface water repellent treatments. Although there is a new generation of fluoropolymer water repellent



The Hill House in Helensburgh, Scotland, designed by Charles Rennie Mackintosh and built in 1902. Cracking of inflexible cement render caused by expansion of underlying masonry materials. This enables moisture to enter the structure where it is held because of the lack of breathability in the cement render, thereby leading to problems of damp in the building’s interior.

coatings on the market that are advertised as allowing vapour exchange, there are several key concerns with them:

Their application is not reversible and to retain a level of effectiveness they would need to be reapplied every few years.

A great deal of uncertainty exists about their impact on the long-term weathering response of stone, especially historic stone with its complex exposure history. Although their use may be well intentioned there is the danger that, until we have a much better understanding of these surface treatments, they may actually reduce the resilience of historic masonry material.

Insufficient empirical evidence exists of their actual efficacy.

Currently, such treatments are not recommended but as weather patterns change in the forthcoming decades and our understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of these treatments improves, they may eventually form part of a larger moisture management ‘tool-kit’.

In the decades to come historic masonry structures will have their resilience tested as they continue to age and the environmental conditions they are exposed to become more severe. However, there is much that can be done to support their resilience and, for the most part, this relies on the implementation of rigorous and proactive maintenance. It is also important to encourage architects to ‘future-proof’ new buildings that will become the historic buildings of the future by using appropriate masonry materials (e.g. less porous stone types) and by including design features that will more effectively remove excess water from the exterior of the structure.

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Climate Northern Ireland (Climate NI): <http://www.climate-northernireland.org.uk/aboutus/>

Met Office: Climate Science: <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate-guide/climate-change>

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB): <http://www.spab.org.uk>

Historic England: Maintenance Plans for Older Buildings: <http://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/buildings/maintenance-and-repair-of-older-buildings/maintenance-plans-for-older-buildings/>

Ulster Architectural Heritage Society (UAHS): <http://www.uahs.org.uk>

Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) Technical Notes: http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/built-home/conservation-2/buildings_advice-3/technical_notes.htm

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Andrew McClelland

Buildings at risk...

Although the bulk of the Council's work is in considering changes to the statutory List, it is also consulted on major planning applications. Current applications include extensions and alterations to Sir Charles Lanyon's bank in Victoria Street (*above*), while proposals for the Ewart's Warehouse (*below*) in Bedford Street would result in complete loss of its interior.



Marcus Patton



Marcus Patton

It is not practicable for HBC members to visit every building under consideration, so members depend on photographic presentations to make their decisions, not only on listing but also on proposals to alter buildings. For the most part this works well, particularly in facilitating viewing of interiors. However there are cases when only actual experience of a building enables a full appreciation of its character.

A case in point is The Tropical Ravine in Belfast's Botanic Gardens, alterations to which were considered by the HBC in 2014. It is a unique Victorian structure, designed to give visitors walking round its balcony the impression of being in the canopy of a tropical jungle, looking down into the luxuriant steaming foliage below. Members who hadn't been in the building saw little problem with a proposal to provide a new entrance in its lower gable, necessitating insertion of a new staircase and lift. On the other hand members who knew the building were strongly opposed to the proposal when level access was already available at the upper gable, and the changes would result in an inevitable loss of the romantic mystery that Charles McKimm had created in his Ravine.

Although the HBC benefits from a wide variety of expertise in its membership, perhaps this was a case where we needed a horticulturalist and a set designer as well to arrive at a definitive decision.



One that got away...

In 2014 the Council was asked for its views on including the Baptist Church in Great Victoria Street on the statutory list. The Council agreed that William Hastings' 1866 building met the test, but a few weeks later, before the listing could be implemented, the wrecker's ball went into the front elevation. The sexton's residence (*top left*) which tour buses used to point out as the smallest house in Belfast was smashed, along with the bunch of sculpted flowers that used to ornament its gable.



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The front cover shows the forest canopy in the Tropical Ravine in 2014.

