



TAYSIDE BUILDING PRESERVATION TRUST

Newsletter

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Dundee Conservation Lectures

This lecture series of which the Trust is one of the sponsors, continues to run. Topics covered this year include Shopfronts, Baronial Architecture, Energy Efficiency in Historic Buildings and the Lost Houses of Scotland. The series started in October and will run through to the middle of March.

Conference News

On the 21st May this year the first of what is to be a series of conferences run by Heritage Education and planned to be of benefit to the postgraduate programme on European Urban Conservation was held in the University Tower on the theme of the Repair of Historic Buildings. A second conference on the use of Conservation Specialists in Building Contracts was held on 26th November. Both were successful and two more are planned for 2009.

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Notes From the Chief Executive

It has been over three years since the last newsletter and by now people must be wondering if the Trust is still in existence. I can assure everybody that it is. In the interim, we have seen the completion of Gardyne's Land which we now have to stop thinking of as a restoration project and think instead of the superb facility that has been created. We are also at last, in a position to attempt the restoration of the Seamen's Chapel. Both buildings feature here. Also included is material on the Frigate Unicorn like the Chapel, an important part of Dundee's maritime heritage and St David's Halls, yet another forgotten Dundee building with the potential to reveal a great deal about the City's past and make a significant contribution to it's future.



The main reason why it has taken so long to produce this latest newsletter is simple - lack of time and money. Two postgraduate students Gemma Powell and Krzysztof Chuchra on work placement with the Trust have been responsible for producing this newsletter. Their efforts would not have been possible without the generous support of Brown Construction (Dundee) who was the main contractor at Gardyne's and whose involvement was a major factor in the success of the project.

The Trust has always regarded its role as not simply to restore and reuse buildings but also to stimulate interest and to inform on topical issues. I hope the newsletter reflects this and that you find it interesting.



Book a bunk at Gardynes!

In April of this year, after ten years of work for the Trust which began with an initial feasibility study in 1997, Gardyne's finally opened as a backpacking hostel. It was an eventful ten years with amazing highs, such as the eventual acquisition of all of the five buildings which comprise Gardyne's, the visit of Prince Charles and the award of over £1.5million of lottery money, mixed with some dreadful lows such as the realisation that the project might not go ahead when the Trust discovered that it could not provide the guarantees that were a condition of European funding. Thankfully the Council stepped in and completed the project with the Trust acting as consultants. It has been a remarkable exercise in teamwork which has seen over £4million pounds of investment attracted to the City resulting in the only hostel in a Scottish city with an international five star rating. Edinburgh Backpackers who trade under the name "Hoppo" will operate the hostel and the Trust wishes them every success. Interpretation facilities are planned and once they are in place, the public will be allowed access and will be able to judge the quality of the facility for themselves. Anyone wishing to learn more about Gardyne's and the Trust's involvement should go to <http://www.trp.dundee.ac.uk/Research/tbpt/tbpt.html>



Pot luck or Pot roost?

During the course of the work at Gardyne's the remains were found of a small pot set on its side, high up into the façade of the earliest (1560) building. It was decided that the most probable use for it was to encourage birds to nest, but it is possible they may have contained particularly unsavoury items which, on the basis that evil repels evil were there to bring good luck. A line of seven similar pots was then found on the earliest High Street façade beside the second floor windows. A number of these windows had once been doors suggesting that timber galleries existed, in which case the pots may have held candles or oil lamps. The spots where the pots were found on Gardyne's are marked by flat stone plaques inscribed with a circle.

Civic Trust Award

Tayside Building Preservation Trust was recently honoured by a special award from Dundee Civic Trust "for its outstanding contribution to the townscape of Dundee and its achievements at Gardyne's Land"





After what has been quite a lengthy time lapse following the completion of the Seamen's Chapel Feasibility Study in 2003, the Trust is relieved to announce it has taken over the Chapel at last!

Reasons behind the delays have in the most part been due to acquisition negotiations between the City Council, the Trust and

the current owner, which will result in the Trust being handed the Chapel in a wind and watertight condition.

The Chapel, built in 1881 by local Dundee architect David MacLaren and category B listed along with the adjoining Sailors Home are a prime example of Victorian social welfare provision in Dundee. Few, if any, purpose built Sailors Homes with adjoining chapels exist nowadays; they are very rare despite being fairly common in the nineteenth century.



The Chapel and the Sailors Home are also an important element of the City's historic harbour area, and represent Dundee's maritime heritage along with the A listed Customs House, the Clock Tower Warehouse and the HMS Frigate Unicorn.

Thankfully, the agreed work has now begun on site to make the Chapel wind and water tight; the dilapidated remains of the roof have been carefully removed and the decorative beams stored, and work will begin soon to erect a temporary roof to allow the building to dry out.



The process of removing the remaining roof provided a few surprises. What was thought to be cast iron fretwork ventilation strip along the ceiling was actually decoratively carved wood, and in surprisingly good condition.

The trusses with their turned bosses and wrought iron tie bars appear to have gold paint decoration on some of their carved wooden details, which will now inform a more accurate restoration of the interior closer to its former glory. The remaining decorated corbels, granite columns and capitals which were separated from the trusses and the decorative plasterwork will be salvaged as far as possible, boxed in for protection during preliminary works on site or safely stored away for future use.



It was identified in the feasibility study that the Chapel's best possible chance for a new lease of life would be as office space. The idea of a 'conservation centre' grew, aimed at providing the many amenity bodies, historical societies and Trusts in and around Tayside with a regular meeting space and/or individual office accommodation with storage. The proposal for a conference/seminar area downstairs should accommodate around 30 people seated, with ample space for presentations, and upstairs an area of open plan office space.

Work will now begin to secure funding for the restoration project, and the Trust is especially grateful to the Moncur Trust, amongst others for their generous donations so far.

In addition, despite the detailed feasibility study, no original interior photos or images have been found so far, and the Trust would like to appeal again to anyone with any links, photos or stories of the Seamen's Chapel to get in contact. Contact details on page 4.

Similarly, if any local amenity organisations or Societies are interested in the proposed end scheme and would like some more information, please feel free to get in touch.

Historic Scotland Inform Guides

The TBPT feel it is worth drawing attention to Historic Scotland's Inform Guides. These useful little guides provide easy to understand basic technical advice for property owners and anyone with a responsibility for traditional or historic buildings.

All Inform guides are free and downloadable from the Historic Scotland website. They provide homeowners with a good basic introduction to understanding traditional materials, traditional skills, how to deal with potential problems in traditional buildings and general maintenance advice.



New Inform guides expected to be published by Historic Scotland later this year include: Lead Work; Repointing Ashlar; Domestic Boundary Walls; Bird Control; Fireplaces; Terminals and finials; Corrugated iron; Timber floors; External Timber doors and a guide on Chimneys and flues.

For a full list of Inform Guides, and other relevant advice, see

<http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/publications>



Approached from a close off the Nethergate, the little known St Davids Halls is one of the two most complete pre 1700 secular buildings to survive in the City centre, the other is Gardyne's Land. An L-shaped complex, it partly embraces a sunken courtyard while to the rear there is an enclosed garden.

At first glance the structure does not appear that remarkable, but closer inspection either by

looking down on it from neighbouring tenements and seeing the variety of roofs or, with some difficulty, examining both side elevations and their array of blocked openings, quickly reveals the amazing layering of time within these buildings.

The clue to the most interesting part of the complex is in the arched pend entrance leading off the sunken courtyard. The pilastered square pier with its roll mouldings at the right hand side of this arch gives some indication of what lies beyond, an amazing undercroft of passages, vaulted chambers, a mysterious stair and the type of Renaissance doorways more normally associated with Edinburgh's Royal Mile. There is a great deal here which reflects Dundee's former status as Scotland's second city.



In 2006 European Urban Conservation students surveyed the buildings and one of them, Aishwarya Tipnis prepared a conservation plan for the buildings, which probably for the first time demonstrated their true importance and remains the most important single source of information currently available.

More work requires to be done, a Dendrochronological survey for example could be very revealing.

Since the early 1920s the buildings have been owned and used by St David's Masonic Lodge. Their involvement has ensured the survival of the buildings but proper maintenance is now beyond their means and the present condition is poor, they are on the Scottish Civic Trusts Buildings at Risk Register. Dundee Historic Environment Trust are currently funding some urgent works but the buildings require a new and imaginative use. Their potential to contribute to the life and economic activity of the City is considerable. They would for example make a fascinating tourist information centre which would make a superb hub for the City's other historic attractions, Unicorn, Verdant, Discovery, the Steeple and Gardyne's.



HMS Unicorn: UK National asset under-resourced and at risk

Launched in March 1824 in the Royal Dockyard in Chatham, Unicorn came to Dundee in 1873 as a drill ship for the Royal Naval Reserve and has remained here ever since. Decommissioned in 1968 and in danger of being scrapped she passed into the ownership of the Unicorn Preservation Society who have continued to look after her.

Having never seen active service, Unicorn lacks the romantic history associated with most great ships but



there is no doubt that she is of international significance. The oldest British Built Warship still afloat, she is one of only four sailing frigates left in the world.



Her construction is unique but what makes her of truly exceptional importance is the fact that her fabric is close to being 100% original. HMS Victory for example has only some 15% of her original fabric left. Powerfully atmospheric, Unicorn is a superb example of Georgian craftsmanship, technology and ingenuity.

Scandalously, and despite the best efforts of its owners, Unicorn is severely under-resourced and at risk and requires to be re-housed in a more friendly environment than Victoria Dock. The ship has museum status and with suitable vision could be a major asset in the City's grand designs for its waterfront. Its officers and crew made up the first congregation of the Seamen's Chapel so it would be very fitting for the restoration of the ship and the building to go ahead in tandem.





My career in the historic built environment started with Tayside Building Preservation Trust in 1996, when I was fortunate to win one of the first scholarships offered by the Trust to undertake the EUC course at Dundee University. Since leaving the Trust, I have worked as a

Conservation Officer for Alnwick District Council in Northumberland, THI Project Officer for Stirling Council and Project Manager for Stirling City Heritage Trust.

In September 2006, I was appointed Chief Executive of the Scottish Stone Liaison Group, which is charged with promoting the supply and use of Scottish Stone and Slate and encouraging the development and provision of training both at craft and professional level. This is an interesting time for the stone industry in Scotland. There is a greater realisation of the importance that natural stone has played in developing the character and appearance of our built environment and infrastructure. There is also an acknowledgement that we have lost much of the expertise and skills required to win stone from the ground and use it properly, whether that be in new build or in the conservation and maintenance of existing structures. SSLG is at the forefront of trying to fill these knowledge gaps through research into available stone resources and dissemination of technical research on issues such as stone decay.

We also lead on helping industry develop new training at vocational and professional level to ensure that the skills are available for maintaining the built heritage and using stone in contemporary construction and the development of our landmark buildings of the future. Improved training at a craft level is vital for the day-to-day maintenance of our Built heritage.

To help improve the current skills shortage SSLG has been heavily involved in developing and promoting the new National Progression Award in the Masonry



Extracting block of sandstone using traditional methods. Swinton Quarry

Conservation. This will raise the standards of training available for the construction industry and will result in better conservation practices being adopted. With regards to material supplies, we are continuing to progress with the opening of a



Traditional Stone Carving by hand. Hutton Stone Company, Swinton.

Scottish Slate Quarry and working with British Geological Survey and local authorities to identify and assess the potential of sources of local stone, to enable the built environment to be better maintained. There is still a huge amount of work to do, as the stone industry and understanding of stone as a material is at a low ebb. Due to industrialisation of construction and the growth of the concrete industry, stone has been on the back foot for Fifty years and although realization is growing of

the role stone can play as a sustainable, low-carbon material, that reflects the local character of areas, there are still large gaps in the supply of the material and the professional and craft knowledge to use it properly. It is difficult to integrate everything into what are often very complicated projects but I feel that prestigious conservation projects, like those that the Trust is involved in, have an important role in demonstrating what can be done and raising awareness of materials and skills issues. I hope that in the future I will be able to work with the Trust in ensuring locally sourced stone is used and that stonemasonry training can be delivered on its projects.

Brechin THI

TBPT has played a small part in the Brechin Townscape Heritage Initiative. The Heritage Lottery Fund's Townscape Heritage Initiative programme is designed to help communities regenerate an area of their town which is in need of social and economic regeneration, while also bringing back into good use vacant historic buildings. The Trust contributed to Brechin's THI character statement and also previously carried out a feasibility study for what is now one of the THI's Priority Projects, the category A-listed Merchants House in the High Street. The feasibility study was carried out with the help of the University's EUC students in 2001 and highlighted the importance of the building. The Merchants House has recently come under new ownership and the Trust looks forward to seeing its successful restoration. Brechin's THI Project Manager Sarah Kettles is a past graduate from the University's EUC course.

Who's Who and What's What?

Tayside Building Preservation Trust is a non-profit company limited by guarantee

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