ENGLISH HERITAGE
PRACTICAL BUILDING CONSERVATION

CONSERVATION BASICS

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ASHGATE

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To the memory of John Ashurst (1937–2008), an inspiration and friend to all the editors, whose encouragement and support was a great motivation for this new series of Practical Building Conservation.

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CONSERVATION BASICS

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THE PRACTICAL BUILDING CONSERVATION SERIES

This series of *Practical Building Conservation* technical handbooks supersedes the original five volumes written by John and Nicola Ashurst, and published in 1988.

The series is aimed primarily at those who look after historic buildings, or who work on them. The ten volumes should be useful to architects, surveyors, engineers, conservators, contractors and conservation officers, but also of interest to owners, curators, students and researchers.

The contents reflect the work of the Building Conservation and Research Team, their colleagues at English Heritage, and their consultants and researchers, who together have many decades of accumulated experience in dealing with deteriorating building materials and systems of all types. The aim has been to provide practical advice by advocating a common approach of firstly understanding the material or building element and why it is deteriorating, and then dealing with the causes. The books do not include detailed specifications for remedial work, neither do they include a comprehensive coverage of each subject. They concentrate on those aspects which are significant in conservation terms and reflect the requests for information received by English Heritage.

Building conservation draws on evidence and lessons from the past to help understand the building, its deterioration and potential remedies; this encourages a cautious approach. New techniques, materials and treatments often seem promising, but can prove disappointing and sometimes disastrous. It takes many years before there is sufficient experience of their use to be able to promote them confidently. Nonetheless, understanding increases with experience and building conservation is a progressive discipline, to which these books aim to contribute.

The volumes also establish continual care and maintenance as an integral part of any conservation programme. Maintenance of all buildings, even of those that have deteriorated, must be a priority: it is a means of maximising preservation and minimising costs.

Most of the examples shown in the books are from England: however, English Heritage maintains good relations with conservation bodies around the world, and even where materials and techniques differ, the approach is usually consistent. We therefore hope the series will have a wider appeal.

Dr Simon Thurley
Chief Executive, English Heritage

ABOUT THIS BOOK

"The past is never dead. In fact, it's not even past" (William Faulkner 1879–1962). The past, in other words, lives in the present. Historic buildings and places are an integral part of our collective heritage or patrimony. As Sir Bernard Feilden once observed: *"they bring us messages from the past"*; they tell stories of how and why we came to the places we are now. But they are also very much a part of the present and are, for the most part, adaptable to current expectations of commodity, firmness and delight. The choices we make about what, and how, to conserve – and our changing opinions about conservation – reflect current attitudes to the past and the values we ascribe to its material remains. These choices, in their turn, become part of the story that we pass on to future generations who will reinterpret it from their perspective, as we have done in our time, and add further chapters of their own.

In recent years there have been developments in building conservation theory and principles that have led to the adoption of a 'values-based' approach. This is based on the idea that heritage values are ascribed to places by people, rather than being inherent or intrinsic characteristics. Understanding the reasons why people value a place is therefore fundamental to the process of conservation. There have also been some changes in the language used to express these ideas, with terms such as heritage assets, significance and conservation planning entering the lexicon.

This book is about managing the maintenance and repair of historic buildings and places: what we may now refer to as 'heritage assets'. It explains the theories and principles that underpin building conservation in the 21st century, and shows how they may be applied in practical terms.

The book begins with a chapter tracing **The Evolving Concept of Building Conservation** in England from its origins up to the present day, and examines the ways in which attitudes to conservation have changed – and will continue to change – under the influence of developing ideas, beliefs, and wider political, social, economic and cultural factors. **Current Law, Policy & Guidance** reviews planning legislation, guidance, codes and standards concerning building conservation in England. **Conservation Planning for Maintenance & Repair** explains how a values-based method for safeguarding and sustaining the significance of heritage assets translates into practice. The wide range of **Survey & Investigation Methods** for understanding the history and evolution of a building, its construction and condition, are reviewed. **Ecological Considerations** examines the relationship between the natural and historic environments, and emphasises the importance of understanding the ecological interest of historic places, and how to reconcile conflicts between fauna and flora and historic buildings. **Managing Maintenance & Repair** describes the processes involved in devising, planning and managing programmes of maintenance and repairs for buildings of all types and sizes. Finally, the chapter **Planning for Emergencies** deals with risk assessment, risk management and preparing for unforeseen events such as fire and flood. Practical advice is given on management and measures to mitigate threats to significance.

USING THESE BOOKS

For accessibility and ease of use, the information given in the text has not been footnoted, and rather than references, short lists of further reading are given at the end of the appropriate chapters. References to other sections within the text are given in **bold**, and references to other publications in ***bold italics***.

Links to other books in the *Practical Building Conservation* series are indicated throughout the text by the relevant volume symbol, showing that more information on the topic will be found in that volume.

The other volumes in the series are:

- Building Environment ENVIRONMENT
- Concrete CONCRETE
- Earth, Brick & Terracotta EB&T
- Glass & Glazing GLASS
- Metals METALS
- Mortars, Renders & Plasters MORTAR
- Roofing ROOFING
- Stone STONE
- Timber TIMBER

Although every attempt has been made to explain terms as they first occur in the text, a glossary has also been included, and will be found just before the index.

THE EVOLVING CONCEPT OF BUILDING CONSERVATION

This chapter discusses the origins and evolution of conservation in England.

The recognition of conservation as a distinct philosophical approach to inherited fabric has its origins in the Italian Renaissance. The idea that physical remains – as well as written texts – could provide a unique insight into the human past stemmed from the development of scientific methods of inquiry, coupled with an increasing awareness of the process of historical change. In parts of Italy, the remains of Classical Antiquity began, by the 15th century, to be recognised as worthy of public protection. The conflict between restoring the perceived aesthetic values of buildings and sculpture as works of art, and retaining their authenticity as true remains of the past, quickly became a subject for discourse that has continued ever since.

These ideas surfaced in England in the middle of the 16th century, but only really began to flourish more than a century later, in the context of a growing awareness of the value of the medieval inheritance. From the end of the 18th century, English thought and practice in building conservation developed through sometimes bitter contention, becoming widely influential through the ideas and writings of its leading figures, particularly John Ruskin and William Morris. Evolving ideas about the cultural heritage values that people attach to some buildings and places, and the role of the state in sustaining them, are central to the history of conservation. From these ideas stem public decisions about what should be protected and how the public interest in heritage should be managed. Technical skill and innovation (including the rediscovery of lost arts) tend to evolve in parallel to provide the means of implementation.

During the 20th century, more diverse elements of the historic environment were recognised as having public value. Approaches to their conservation developed in parallel, championed by various public and professional groups, and underpinned by different legislation. These different strands, which this chapter attempts to explore, continue to influence thought and practice at a time when government is seeking to establish common principles, policies and processes for the conservation of all significant elements of our historic environment.

BUILDING CONSERVATION: THE CONCEPT

Building conservation is distinctly different from the physical processes of repair and adaptation. It is an attitude of mind, a philosophical approach, that seeks first to understand what people value about a historic building or place beyond its practical utility, and then to use that understanding to ensure that any work undertaken does as little harm as possible to the characteristics that hold or express those values. Conservation in the 21st century needs to be explained in such terms, rather than by technical directives (that is to say, to be operative rather than prescriptive), simply because of the diversity of the buildings and places that people now value and wish to hand on to future generations.



Valuing the remains of Classical Antiquity in the Italian Renaissance

Detail from *The Arrival of Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga*, by Andrea Mantegna 1465–74, from the *Camera degli Sposi* in the Palazzo Ducale, Mantua.

The background to this fresco shows an ideal city, in which the ruins of a Roman aqueduct and Classical sculpture are incorporated into what appears to be a landscape garden.

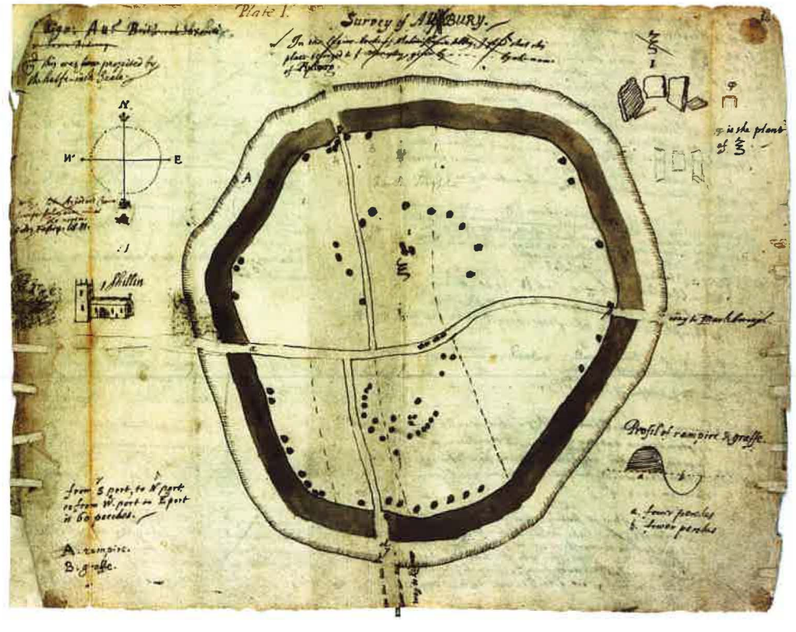
The practice of conservation involves judgement guided by professional ethics and public policy. It is based on an understanding of the relative importance of the heritage values attached to a building or structure, how they are represented in its fabric, and the effects on them of different approaches to repair. The intellectual arguments for conservation originally put forward by antiquaries and critics, often prompted by the threatened destruction of valued buildings, have gradually developed into professional statements of ethics and good practice.

The concept has evolved over a long time, but the language used to articulate it is changing. As conservation becomes a more complex and public activity, approaches to the conservation of buildings are seen as being closely linked not only to the conservation of objects, but also to sustaining cultural values in the historic environment as a whole. In that context, English Heritage, in its ***Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance*** (2008), adopted a formal definition of conservation as "*The process of managing change to a significant place in its setting in ways that will best sustain its heritage values, while recognising opportunities to reveal or reinforce those values for present and future generations*".



Destroying a fallen stone by fire and water at Avebury, 20th of May, 1724, by William Stukeley (1687–1765). Stukeley wrote: "*And this stupendous fabric, which for some thousands of years, had brav'd the continual assaults of weather, and by the nature of it, when left to itself, like the Pyramids of Egypt, would have lasted as long as the globe, hath fallen a sacrifice to the wretched ignorance and avarice of a little village unluckily plac'd within it.*"

Plan of Avebury in Wiltshire, by John Aubrey (1626–97), from his *Monumenta Britannica.* Architects and antiquaries were drawn to the awe-inspiring Neolithic monuments of Stonehenge and Avebury from the 17th century onwards. The first systematic accounts of them were published by William Stukeley in 1740 and 1743, leading, as with historic buildings, to pressure to preserve them from harm.



Throughout Europe, the cultural significance of historic buildings and places is generally recognised as a public interest in property, regardless of who owns it, justifying the use of law, public policy, and public investment to protect that interest. There are differences, however, about what buildings and areas are valued sufficiently to warrant legal protection, both quantitatively (the number of buildings and areas) and qualitatively (the values ascribed to them). Although the values of some places have long been recognised and tend to become more clearly established through time, attitudes to others (often of more recent date) may change, sometimes quite rapidly, within an evolving culture. Conservation therefore requires an awareness of the mutability of heritage values. Current policies and good practice about what should be conserved and how that should be done represent a snapshot in time, rather than unchangeable truths.

THE ORIGINS OF BUILDING CONSERVATION IN ENGLAND

AN EMERGING RESPECT FOR THE MEDIEVAL INHERITANCE

An appreciation of the value of historic buildings, particularly the medieval inheritance of Romanesque and Gothic architecture, was a necessary precursor to the development of the concept of building conservation. In the summer of 1709, Sir John Vanbrugh (1664 [baptised]–1726) – adventurer, playwright and, ultimately, architect – was overseeing the construction of Blenheim Palace and lodging in the semi-ruinous remains of the medieval royal manor of Woodstock. He advanced his ***Reasons Offer'd for Preserving some Part of the Old Manor at Blenheim*** as an ornament to the landscape park to the Duchess of Marlborough thus:

"There is perhaps no one thing, which the most Polite part of Mankind have more universally agreed in; than the Value they have ever set upon the Remains of distant Times. Nor amongst the Several kinds of those Antiquities, are there any so much regarded, as those of Buildings; Some for the Magnificence, or Curious Workmanship; And others; as they move more lively and pleasing Reflections (than History without their Aid can do) on the Persons who have Inhabited them; On the Remarkable things which have been transacted in them, Or the extraordinary Occasions of Erecting them" (**Dobrée, Webb 1927**).



This page: Sir John Vanbrugh, engraved by John Faber the Younger, 1727.

Facing page: *The Old Manor House at Woodstock*, late 18th-century watercolour and chalk by George Marquis of Blandford after an engraving of 1711.

In 1709, Vanbrugh urged the Duchess of Marlborough to retain the ruins of the Old Manor as an ornament in the landscape park of the new palace of Blenheim (but the Duchess refused).

Despite being written three centuries ago, Vanbrugh's reasoning seems remarkably modern: people value the physical legacy of the past, particularly buildings, for a wide variety of reasons. In the event, the imperious Duchess rejected Vanbrugh's plea, and the remains of Woodstock Manor were destroyed. He was not alone, however, in advocating that the *"Remains of distant Times"* should be respected. In the same year, 1709, the Society of Antiquaries was founded, with a ***Royal Charter*** following in 1751. Over time, the Society would add to Vanbrugh's case an archaeological emphasis on the value of physical objects, including buildings and places, as primary documents of the human past.



The South-View of Wigmore-Castle in the County of Hereford, 18th-century engraving by Nathaniel and Samuel Buck.

During the 18th century, there was an explosion of topographic drawings and prints, many of them illustrating ruined monuments, symptomatic of an increasing *"awe, wonder and respect for medieval ruins and buildings"* (***Jokilehto 1999***). More artless mending and preservation of functionally useless but old structures were undertaken than is often realised, decisions having been made or influenced by instinctive perceptions of heritage value. Close study of individual monuments increasingly brings examples of this to light, like Castle Arch at Guildford, repaired by John Carter as early as 1669.

1596

Robert Redhead attempts to dismantle Clifford's Tower in York, resulting in protests that it was *"an ornament to the City and a landmark along with the Minster"* (***Cooper 1911***).

1620

Inigo Jones undertakes the first survey of Stonehenge.

1700

1707

Society of Antiquaries of London founded for the *"encouragement, advancement and furtherance of the study and knowledge of the antiquities and history of this and other countries"* (***Charter of George II, 1751***).

The repair of the Castle Arch at Guildford in 1669 by its then owner, John Carter, was commemorated by a date stone (which is now in Guildford Museum).



The emergence of this growing respect for, and study of, the ruins of the medieval past in England during the 18th century is in some ways similar to the rediscovery of the remains of Classical Antiquity in the Italian Renaissance. Yet the differences are equally significant. English Gothic was not quite dead, rather than long dead, and, after a slow start, it was re-established as one, rather than the standard, idiom of contemporary building. Through a century of competition, Classical styles had become the norm in polite English circles by the middle of the 17th century. Yet Gothic lived on into the beginning of the 18th century, particularly as an occasional architectural expression of the national church.

Even as late as the 1720s, when Christopher Wren (1632–1723) and Nicholas Hawksmoor (1662–1736) added the western towers to Westminster Abbey, it was still just possible in that context to design from tradition in a Gothic idiom. In the 18th century, it was primarily the ongoing study of Antique and Renaissance buildings in distant lands that influenced contemporary (overwhelmingly classical) architecture in England, not the study and reinvigoration of its own Gothic past. 'Gothick' was occasionally used as a paper-thin domestic ornamental style, as novel as *chinoiserie*, or as a lightly-applied mantle over essentially Classical buildings, for picturesque effect. Scholarly study as a basis for the revival of Gothic architecture lay in the future.

1709

Sir John Vanbrugh proposes that the ruins of Woodstock Manor should be preserved, as *"the Remains of distant Times"* (***Dobrée, Webb 1927***).

1751

Society of Antiquaries receives Royal Charter.

1782

Start of James Wyatt's work to 'restore' Salisbury Cathedral.

1800

1804

Criticism of Wyatt's approach to stylistic 'restoration' culminates in an essay by John Carter in the ***Gentleman's Magazine***.

CONSERVATION PHILOSOPHY DEVELOPING THROUGH CONTENTION

THE ANTIQUARIAN REACTION

While, in Vanbrugh's words, *"the most Polite part of Mankind" (**Dobrée, Webb 1927**)* might value medieval buildings, until the late 19th century there was no sense that those values should be recognised as a public interest in private property, justifying public constraints on the rights of owners. They could rework or demolish medieval houses without public censure. But the most conspicuous medieval monuments, the cathedrals and churches of the Church of England, were a different matter, since they were held by the established national Church. What happened to them was seen as a valid public interest, and late in the 18th century became a matter of public controversy. In consequence, one hugely influential strand of conservation thinking was established by contention, addressing its objectives, methods and weight as a public interest. To generalise, the arguments were between antiquaries and later art critics and social reformers on one side, and architects and churchmen on the other, at least until the Arts and Crafts movement gained ground towards the end of the 19th century.

In the 1780s, James Wyatt (1746–1813), a classically-trained architect, was commissioned to 'restore' Lichfield, Salisbury, Hereford and Durham Cathedrals. He was driven by the idea that medieval churches should be presented unencumbered by later additions or insertions, in a state of *"beautiful simplicity"* (***Gough 1789***). At Salisbury, between 1782 and 1791, he demolished porches, chapels and a bell tower to emphasise the unity of the 13th-century church. Wyatt gave more weight to architectural qualities, interpreted in the light of contemporary aesthetic values that he believed were universally valid, than to the buildings themselves as authentic historic documents, illustrative of the way in which they had been built, evolved and used through time.

James Wyatt Esq RA, engraved by Joseph Singleton, *c.*1795.



This imposition of a contemporary rational aesthetic approach to the remodelling of cathedrals essentially resulted in a clash of ideology. The Society of Antiquaries was provoked to come to the defence of ancient buildings: bitter criticism by Richard Gough (1735–1809) and John Carter (1748–1817), two members of the Society, mobilised the antiquarian lobby. Through public contention, the importance of age, authenticity and integrity over transient architectural fashion was established, at least for a relatively small group of buildings clearly recognised at the time as being of national significance. In consequence, the proposed 'improvements' to Durham Cathedral were greatly reduced.

Out of this clash came a specific condemnation of 'restoration', in the sense of repair that went beyond the minimum necessary to keep a building wind and weathertight. As John Carter put it in 1804, in relation to Henry VII's Chapel at Westminster Abbey: *"when Restoration comes – why then the original will be no more. For my part, I am for no restoration of the building; I am content with it even as it is. For repair indeed, I am ready enough to agree to that; such as carefully stopping open joints, making good some of the mullions of the windows, putting the glazing of some of the windows in proper conditions; but no further would I go" (**Carter 1804**).*

1817

Thomas Rickman publishes ***An Attempt to Discriminate the Styles of Architecture in England from the Conquest to the Reformation.***

1830

1834

Institute of British Architects founded in London; later to become the Royal Institute of British Architects [RIBA].

1836

Publication of ***Contrasts***, by A. W. N. Pugin.

1839

Cambridge Camden Society (later the Ecclesiological Society) founded to promote the *"study of Gothic architecture and of Ecclesiastical Antiques"*. The first issue of its journal, ***The Ecclesiologist***, is published in 1841.

1840

1843

British Archaeological Association [BAA] founded to promote the study of archaeology, art and architecture, and the preservation of national antiquities in Britain.

1849

John Ruskin publishes ***The Lamp of Memory***.



Salisbury Cathedral, engraved by Wenceslaus Hollar, 1671, showing the detached bell tower demolished by James Wyatt.

Thus the philosophy of 'minimum intervention' emerged as the desirable approach to conservation. Buildings that were, or looked, 'ancient' were valued as the tangible expression of a different distant age and outlook, and historic fabric was absolutely privileged over design values. The cultural context was one of rapid social, economic and physical change as England industrialised, its burgeoning prosperity providing the means to fund major works to historic buildings. By contrast, there was a growing counter-cultural desire to prevent the legacy of the past from being entirely overwhelmed, to confront the increasingly prevalent excesses of speculative or stylistic restoration and crude intervention.

1860

1860

Union of Benefices Act passed, empowering the Church of England to demolish redundant churches in the City of London and sell the sites to finance church expansion into suburban areas.

1864

The RIBA establishes a sub-committee on the Conservation of Ancient Architectural Monuments and Remains, and publishes ***Conservation of Ancient Architectural Monuments and Remains: General Advice to the Promoters of the Restoration of Ancient Buildings***.



A composition showing a decorated interior, original drawing for *An Attempt to Discriminate the Styles of English Architecture...*, by Thomas Rickman, *c.*1817.

By providing an archaeological analysis of multi-period buildings, Rickman brought scientific research about the past to bear on current architectural issues.

As Gothic as a living tradition receded, Gothic scholarship began, especially amongst a group of Cambridge antiquarians who sought to understand, rather than simply observe and record, the Gothic style. They included James Essex (1722–84) and the Rev G. D. Whittington (1781–1807). Essex was arguably the first architect to take a scholarly interest in Gothic and apply it as a system of design. Whittington, although little known today, studied the origins and evolution of Gothic in England and France. His overview was published posthumously in 1809, ahead of any comparable French scholarship (***Watkin 1980***).

1870

1873

First Ancient Monuments Bill is introduced into Parliament, but is never enacted.

1874

Hampstead's Georgian Parish Church is saved after a campaign led by George Gilbert Scott, Jr and G. F. Bodley.

1875

Society for Photographing Relics of Old London is founded.

1877

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings [SPAB] founded by William Morris, who drafts its ***Manifesto***.

As time went on, seeking to understand Gothic architecture simply through observation and recording was not enough. ***An Attempt to Discriminate the Styles of Architecture in England from the Conquest to the Reformation***, published by Thomas Rickman (1776–1841) between 1815 and 1817, brought scientific research about the past to bear on current architectural issues. Rickman based his book on an archaeological analysis of multi-period buildings, in the belief that understanding the fabric of churches was a prerequisite to answering what was (to him) the most important question of church builders and restorers: 'How should we build today?' *"Independently of the value of such investigations to the history of the science of construction, the knowledge of the methods actually employed would greatly assist us in the imitation of the works of each period"* (***Willis 1842***). Slightly later, Robert Willis (1800–75) stands out for his study and publication of Gothic architecture, and his 'modern' approach of comparing documentary evidence with that of the fabric itself.

Willis' approach has been characterised as *"keep[ing] religion out of architecture"* (***Watkin 1980***), but for A. W. N. Pugin (1812–52), Roman Catholic architect, designer and polemicist, the two were inseparable. For him, Gothic was the only true Christian form of architecture. He was forthright in his criticism of those who failed to adopt its 'true principles', but instead used it in an essentially decorative fashion or, worse, adopted another style. His was an imperative not to conserve, but to restore churches to their medieval Catholic form. On the Anglican side, the Cambridge Camden Society, founded in 1839 by J. Mason Neale (1818–66) and Benjamin Webb (1819–85), proved hugely influential through their monthly journal, ***The Ecclesiologist***, which publicised both new design and the restoration and repair of historic parish churches. The Society believed that recovering the setting of medieval piety could lead to the recovery of that piety itself. It promoted both the Decorated Style (*c.*1260–1360) as the purest and 'most pious' architecture, and the adoption of the essentially medieval re-ordering of church interiors that still dominates today. One result of this injection of religious and moral fervour into architecture was the typical High Victorian drastic reconstruction and re-ordering of medieval churches, making all new, sharp and correct.

RUSKIN, MORRIS & 'SPAB'

At the end of the 18th century, Wyatt had sought to impose alien Classical ideas on medieval buildings. Growing knowledge about the evolution of the Gothic style now led to an equally misplaced confidence to restore, based on perceptions of understanding, not so much archaeological, as stylistic. The French architect Eugène Viollet-le-Duc (1814–79) was perhaps the strongest 19th-century advocate of 'stylistic restoration'. In his ***Dictionary*** of 1866, he acknowledged that *"The term Restoration and the thing itself are both modern. To restore a building is not to preserve it, to repair or to rebuild it; it is to reinstate it in a condition of completeness which may never have existed at any given time"* (***Jokilehto 1999***). Although his text goes on to promote a more subtle approach, it did lead to a movement which was to favour design, or design intent, over material or evolution.



William Morris, photographed by Frederick Hollyer in 1874.

In reaction to the 'scholarly' restoration movement, the conservation case for 'minimum intervention' was widened and elaborated beyond the antiquarian argument that the building should be preserved as a document. In ***The Lamp of Memory*** (1849), for example, the art critic John Ruskin (1819–1900) emphasised the value of the marks of the craftsmen and age on a building, concluding that *"Restoration, so-called, is worse than Destruction"*. His disquiet went beyond the romantic and picturesque values of what would later sometimes be called the 'patina of age'. He was concerned about loss of authenticity, believing that ancient buildings stood proxy for his imagined lost ideals of the medieval past, in which the role of the craftsman was emphasised above that of the designer. Criticism of repairs and restorations, especially of churches, grew steadily more strident through the 1850s, 1860s and 1870s, particularly as national and local architectural and archaeological societies took root and flourished.

1880

1882

First ***Act for the Better Protection of Ancient Monuments*** passed, giving limited protection to specific prehistoric monuments.

1884

The City of Chester obtains powers to protect its medieval walls by an Act of Parliament, followed a few years later by similar action in Colchester and Newcastle.

1890s

Archaeologist General Pitt-Rivers appointed as Inspector of Ancient Monuments.

1894

The Survey of London is established to create a systematic inventory of its buildings and monuments.

The National Trust founded by Octavia Hill, Sir Robert Hunter and Canon Hardwicke Rawnsley.

1896

The National Trust acquires its first building, Alfriston Clergy House.

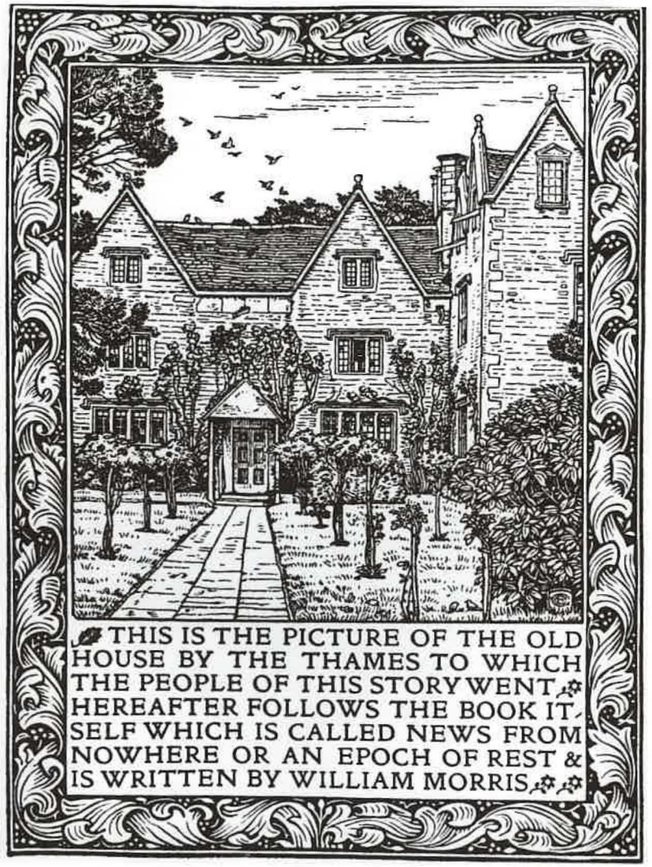
1897

Country Life first published, featuring one country house in each issue.

1898

London County Council Act gives the Council the power to acquire monuments and buildings of 'architectural and historic interest' by compulsory purchase.

The East Front of Kelmscott Manor, frontispiece of *News From Nowhere*, by William Morris, 1892.



The arguments of William Morris (1834–96) went even farther. A progressive socialist, Morris reacted against the dehumanising consequences of the Machine Age and a rigid, highly unequal society by promoting radical libertarian socialism. He contrasted what he imagined to be the life and sensibility of the medieval free craftsman with the regimented life of the 19th-century factory worker, an argument already made by Pugin in *Contrasts* (1836). Morris emphasised the inherent value of craftsmanship, contemporary as well as historic, as it came to be manifested in the Arts and Crafts movement.

In his utopian vision *News from Nowhere* (1890), Morris imagined the Thames Valley as a pseudo-medieval pastoral idyll, inspired by art and beauty rather than by Pugin's Catholic Church. The transformation was achieved after a massacre of Combined Workers by the army in Trafalgar Square, followed by a civil war in which the workers finally triumphed.

The established intellectual position of English building conservation towards the end of the 19th century thus remained 'minimum intervention', poetically, if uncompromisingly, restated in Morris' 1877 ***Manifesto for the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings***. Morris initially founded the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings [SPAB] in reaction to George Gilbert Scott's imminent restoration of Tewkesbury Abbey, but the Society was concerned with secular and vernacular buildings, as well as ecclesiastical ones and major monuments. In the *Manifesto*, Morris asserted that ancient buildings should be preserved with the minimum of intervention, staving off repair through daily care. Repairs which were unavoidable should not attempt to match the original, since any attempt to restore or copy would result in the loss of authenticity, the creation of a fake. But it was still mostly buildings, intact or ruined, which were, or appeared to be, 'ancient', usually medieval and so at least three centuries old, that were considered worthy of conservation. They were visibly of another age, and most were ecclesiastical.

1900

1900

First volume of the ***Survey of London*** published, covering Bromley-by-Bow, edited by C. R. Ashbee.

Ancient Monuments Protection Act permits inclusion of any structure of 'archaeological or historic interest' on the schedule.

1901

First volume of the ***Victoria County History*** published.

Tintern Abbey purchased on behalf of the nation.

1905

The Care of Ancient Monuments is published by Gerard Baldwin Brown, surveying the conservation of historic buildings across Europe.

1906

London Squares and Enclosures (Preservation) Act protects 64 squares.

1908

Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England [RCHME] established to prepare inventories of pre-1700 structures and sites.

THE ANCIENT MONUMENTS ACTS & THE OFFICE OF WORKS

The first *Act for the Better Protection of Ancient Monuments*, passed in 1882, was primarily concerned with specific prehistoric sites. Its passing into law nonetheless established, after a long parliamentary campaign led by Sir John Lubbock (1834–1913), the principle that their care was a public interest that should override private property rights. A second ***Ancient Monuments Act***, in 1900, widened the definition of monument to include structures of architectural or historic interest, allowing them to be taken into guardianship; that is, into the care of the Commissioners of Works on behalf of the state. Responsibility for managing and maintaining these sites came to rest with the Office of Works, later to become the Ministry of Works.

An attempt to incorporate cathedrals into the ***Ancient Monuments Consolidation and Amendment Act 1913*** failed mainly because of resistance from the Bishops. This nonetheless prompted the Church of England to improve its own faculty jurisdiction governing work to historic churches, with the first Diocesan Advisory Committee established in 1916. But the ***1913 Act*** did introduce the concept of a Preservation Order and, in 1914, the Office of Works served an order on an empty, largely Georgian house at 75 Dean Street in Soho, London, to prevent its demolition. Success would have extended the practical scope of the ***1913 Act*** (which, as its name suggests, was focused on monuments) to more recent buildings of 'special historic, architectural, traditional, artistic or archaeological interest' not in ecclesiastical use. But such orders, which required all works to the structure concerned to be approved by the Commissioners of Works, had to be confirmed by Parliament. A Select Committee of the House of Lords refused to confirm the order for 75 Dean Street, and awarded costs to the owner. The Office made no further attempt to use such compromised powers, withdrawing from involvement in historic buildings to concentrate almost exclusively on ruined monuments and government-owned buildings. In consequence, its approach to their conservation developed in isolation from that of historic buildings in use.

Facing page: 75 Dean Street, Soho, London, photographed in 1912.

The house was the subject of the first and only Preservation Order under the 1913 Ancient Monuments Act, served by the Commissioners of Works in 1914. It was traditionally identified as the home of Sir James Thornhill (1675/6–1734), painter of the dome of St Paul's Cathedral, to whom the painted stair hall was attributed; but it was actually built c.1735, as emerged during the owner's successful appeal against the Order.





1910

1911

Tattershall Castle, Lincolnshire, saved from dismantling and removal to the United States by Lord Curzon.

1913

Ancient Monuments Consolidation and Amendment Act supersedes earlier legislation, and creates the Ancient Monuments Board.

1914

75 Dean Street demolished after courts fail to uphold a Preservation Order.

1916

Establishment of first Church of England Diocesan Advisory Committee to control works to historic churches.

During the early 20th century an increasing number of 'ancient monuments' came under state guardianship, or, like Tintern Abbey in 1901, were purchased on behalf of the nation. The Office of Works adopted minimum intervention ('repair as found') as its approach to these mostly ruined structures, whose 'use' was entirely didactic. The concept came to be narrowly interpreted. Nothing was visibly added to the inherited structure or (normally) restored. Vegetation, accumulated destruction deposits and post-medieval fabric tended to be cleared away so that sites could be displayed simply, surrounded by immaculate green lawns, as the fabric that was considered to be 'historic' had survived.

Such was the fate of Tintern Abbey, once a favourite destination for artists (including J. M. W. Turner) and early tourists in search of the 'picturesque': the first guidebook to the Wye Valley, by William Gilpin (1724–1804), appeared in 1782. Stripped of the vegetation that had made it appear so 'romantic', but which was concealing and contributing to its decay, Tintern was presented, once repaired, like an object in an invisible museum case.

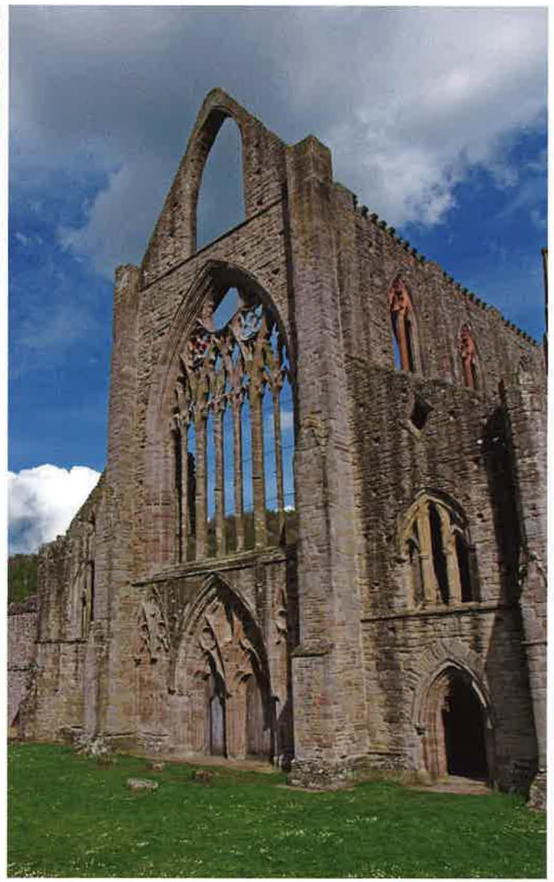
Certain values – those that provided evidence and illustration of aspects of the past – came to be prized absolutely over others, especially artistic and aesthetic values. Over the course of the 20th century, the philosophy of 'conserve as found' established by Sir Charles Peers (1868–1952), Chief Inspector of Ancient Monuments in the Office of Works, and its chief architect Sir Frank Baines (1877–1933), often proved woefully inadequate as a basis for managing the increasingly complex places taken into state care and the wide range of heritage values they represented. Some buildings in guardianship were deliberately unroofed; others were archaeologically 'unpicked' to remove even 16th-century work. 'Conserve as found' had become a formulaic response to exposing and consolidating medieval work. The normal use of strong mortars, including those gauged with cement, was creating problems for the future, the scale of which would only become apparent a few decades later (for example, at the White Tower in the Tower of London).

Tintern Abbey

The Wye Valley, Monmouthshire, was a favourite destination for late 18th-century travellers in search of the 'picturesque'.

Facing page: An 18th-century watercolour of Tintern Abbey, by Thomas Girtin (*left*). The ruins were controversially stripped of vegetation and consolidated by the then Office of Works when the monument was purchased on behalf of the nation in 1901. The site remains in this state today (*right*).





1920

1924

Ancient Monuments Society founded.

Royal Fine Art Commission [RFAC] established.

1925

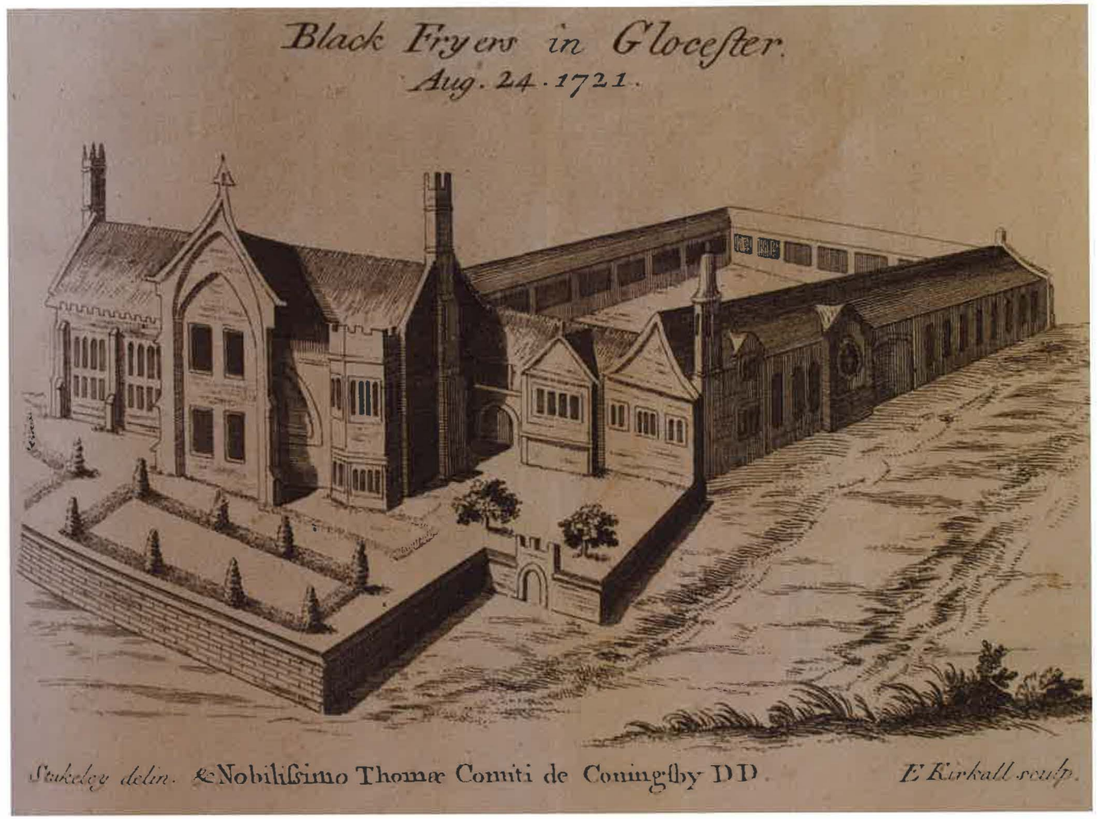
Council for the Protection of Rural England founded.

1926

Bishop of London attempts to demolish 19 city churches, but is prevented from doing so by the joint efforts of the City Corporation, the London County Council [LCC] and SPAB.

1927

On the advice of the Norwich Society, the Norwich Corporation purchases and renovates houses in Elm Hill; this becomes the first example of a townscape (rather than individual buildings) being protected.



Blackfriars, Gloucester

Founded in the mid-13th century, Gloucester Blackfriars is one of the most complete surviving Dominican Friaries in England. After the dissolution of the monasteries, it was acquired in 1539 by Sir Thomas Bell, then mayor of Gloucester, and used as his residence. The monastic buildings became workshops for his cloth and cap manufactory. Now an English Heritage property, the Friary remained in private ownership with a miscellany of uses until the 20th century.

Facing page: Gloucester Blackfriars before removal of later fabric.
This page: Gloucester Blackfriars came under the guardianship of the Ministry of Works in 1960. Most of the historically important fabric of Thomas Bell's house was subsequently removed to present the medieval fabric in isolation. A similar approach to other parts of the complex was later halted by English Heritage and the embedded Georgian houses were returned to use.



1928

Publication of Clough Williams-Ellis' ***England and the Octopus***, the first popular book wholly about the preservation of historic buildings and areas.

1929

A. R. Powys' ***Repair of Ancient Buildings*** first published by SPAB.

Montacute House, Somerset, becomes the first country house to be given to the National Trust.

The Landscape Institute founded as the Institute of Landscape Architects (ILA).

1930

1931

Ancient Monuments Act empowers local authorities to preserve monuments and their settings.

Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments adopted.

1931

The ***London Squares Preservation Act*** protects 461 squares and other green spaces.

International conservators agree the ***Athens Charter***.

4

The sad fact is that by the 1960s the Ministry of Works (as the Office of Works had then become) was no longer always in the forefront of good conservation practice; private sector specialists, both professionals and contractors, had increasingly taken the lead. Things began to change, however, when the professional Research and Technical Advisory Service [RTAS] was established. Headed from 1968 by Principal Architect John Ashurst (1937–2008), its main role was researching the reasons for the deterioration of building materials, and devising conservation treatments to address them. Repair techniques were increasingly based on scientific understanding of the composition and performance of existing fabric.

John Ashurst (1937–2008)



The field experience and casework notes compiled by John Ashurst over 25 years formed the basis for the first series of ***Practical Building Conservation***, published in 1988.

The clarity and succinctness of the series made them standard references on building conservation, both in the UK and abroad. John Ashurst taught the value of methodical and analytical problem solving: an approach involving rigorous observation, asking the right questions, making an accurate diagnosis, selecting appropriate remedies and reviewing the results.

John Ashurst played a key role in planning the new series, and was a lead contributor to the ***Mortars, Renders & Plasters*** volume.

1932

Shell Guides first published, edited by John Betjeman.

The ***Town and Country Planning Act*** gives local authorities power to make Building Preservation Orders.

1936

The ***City of Bath Act*** is passed to help preserve the character of the 18th-century city.

THE ORIGINS OF CONSERVATION AS A DISTINCT TECHNICAL SKILL

Contemporary and traditional building practices began to diverge at around the end of the 18th century, and the rate of change has increased ever since. Problems of intent in repair were increasingly compounded by problems in execution, as innovations in building technology began to be used in the repair of historic buildings and workmanship evolved in parallel. By the middle of the 19th century, heated debate emphasised the need to establish how good conservation practice differed from contemporary building. In 1865, the Royal Institute of British Architects [RIBA] published the first conservation guidance promulgated by a professional body in England, ***Conservation of Ancient Monuments and Remains***. It was drafted by a committee and sought to establish a generally acceptable line.

The most problematic introduction would turn out to be Portland cement, increasingly used in mortars for building and repointing masonry walls, and in renders to cover them. Hard and impervious in nature, it would accelerate the decay of much 'soft' historic brick and stonework, as well as proving to be an inherent problem for a good deal of new building in stone.

The increasing use of machinery to cut stone, and better steel tools to work it by hand, producing sharp arrises and fine joints, resulted in a growing contrast between historic fabric and repair work: this was reinforced by the introduction of harder and sharper machine-made bricks and tiles. Even if the aim was minimal repair, the results were often visually and technically problematic. Conservation increasingly needed to embrace both intent and the means of execution.

1937

The Georgian Group founded to advocate the preservation of buildings dating from 1700 up to the 1830s.

National Trust launches the 'National Trust Country House Scheme' to acquire large country houses, often allowing their original owners to remain as tenants.

Country Life publishes a list of 639 large country houses worth preserving.

1938

The first open-air museum in Britain opens at Cregneash, Isle of Man.

Diocesan Advisory Committees become statutory.

The most enduring and positive legacy of the first fundamental strand of conservation thinking, embodied in the SPAB *Manifesto*, has been the promotion of regular maintenance, gentle repair and, if necessary, incremental change to overcome problems. SPAB has increasingly encouraged the use of materials and techniques close to the original through a body of technical literature and practical training. A. R. Powys' *Repair of Ancient Buildings*, produced in 1929 for the Society (but still in print), and John and Nicola Ashurst's first edition of this *Practical Building Conservation* series, published in 1988 for English Heritage, are widely separated in time, but both are very much in the tradition of passing on understanding gained through practical experience, increasingly strengthened by science-based investigation.

General building construction continued to move ever further from the use of traditional materials and practice during the course of the 20th century. Cement-based mortars and gypsum plasters became all but universal after the Second World War. New materials displaced old, and traditional craft skills were lost. But as the often undesirable longer-term effects of using substitutes in the repair of historic buildings became clear, serious initiatives were taken to maintain, or re-establish, supplies of traditional materials and the skills to use them. The use of lime mortars, renders and plasters for historic buildings became accepted practice. Training courses were established for both professionals and craftspeople. At the same time, as more recent buildings have come to be valued, the problems of conserving modern materials have had to be addressed, often, as with reinforced concrete, on a very considerable scale.

1940

1940

The National Buildings Record founded (later becoming the National Monuments Record).

The first national lists of historic buildings developed by the Ministry of Works in cooperation with the National Buildings Record, in response to the threat of wartime damage and destruction.

A NATIONAL COLLECTION OF BUILDINGS

ORIGINS & EVOLUTION

A second distinct strand in English conservation emerged around the beginning of the 20th century, focused on the large number of post-medieval secular buildings mostly in everyday use. It ultimately led first to the identification and then the protection of what is now a 'national collection' of buildings, valued principally for their contribution to the present and future, as well as their recollection of the past. The Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England [RCHME] was established by government in 1908 to document this heritage, as well as more ancient structures, with a terminal date of 1700, subsequently extended to 1714.



During the first half of the 20th century the National Trust set the example of charitable acquisition in the public interest.

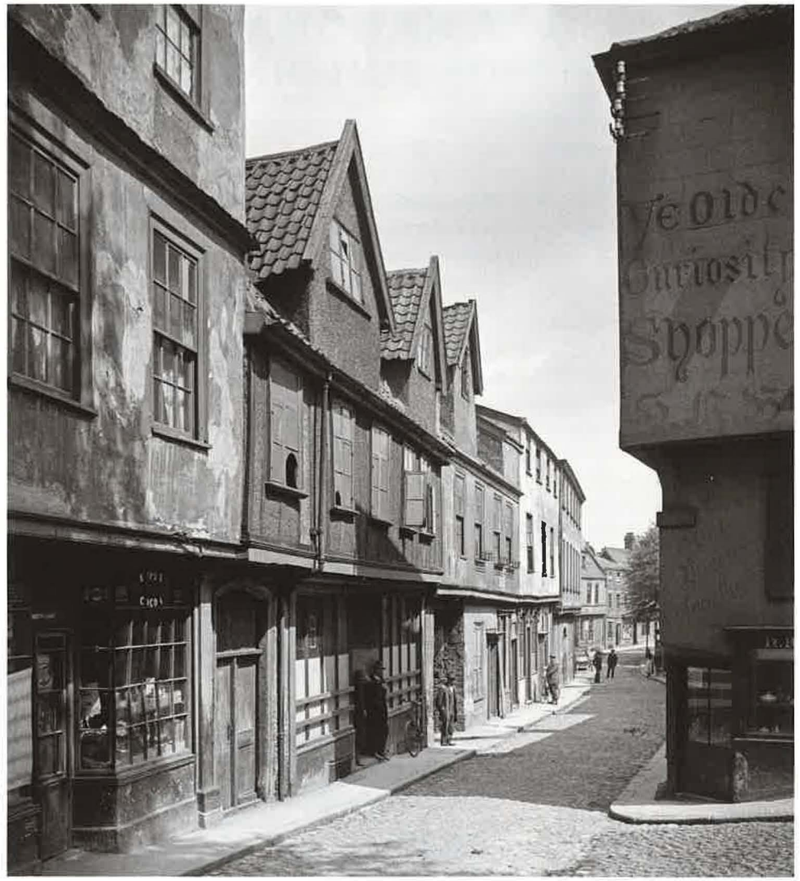
The Trust's first purchase was the Clergy House at Alfriston (*right*), a 14th-century Wealden hall house, which was bought in 1896 for £10.

1944

The ***Town and Country Planning Act*** introduces the (then theoretical) concept of listed buildings.

The Council for British Archaeology [CBA] founded, partly to oversee the repair of war-damaged towns.

These 16th-century timber-framed houses at Elm Hill, Norwich, were acquired by Norwich Corporation in 1927. Their subsequent restoration was perhaps the first example of conservation of a townscape, rather than of an individual building.



1946

'Instructions to investigators for the listing of buildings of special architectural interest' published under section 42 of the ***Town and Country Planning Act 1944***, drafted by John Summerson.

National Land Fund (later the National Heritage Memorial Fund) is established to purchase objects and sites in memory of the war dead.

On 1st August, Gosfield Hall in Essex becomes the first building to be spot-listed.

Public interest in buildings of the 16th and 17th centuries was now acknowledged, embracing the early history of English classicism, and narrowing the time lag between their construction and recognition of them as part of the national heritage. In a sense, this was a 'new renaissance': the rediscovery of the value of historic (specifically English) classical design, as well as historic fabric. The large number of these buildings meant that only a few could ever be taken into public or charitable care: their future survival clearly depended on them remaining in beneficial use.

Prompted particularly by urban redevelopment and expansion, calls soon began for legislative protection of buildings identified by the Commission as 'worthy of preservation'. Nationally, these expressions of public interest in private property were frustrated by landed interests, as the Dean Street case illustrates. Locally, however, a few buildings in areas of 'special architectural, historic or artistic' interest were protected in local town-planning schemes made under early legislation, including the ***Town and Country Planning Act 1932***. The most notable example was probably New Romney, Kent, which accounted for about one third of the small number of the 20 or so Preservation Orders made in the inter-war years. The ***1932 Act*** nonetheless set a precedent for the direction of post-war legislation, which would include national protection for historic areas as well as for buildings. Otherwise, through the first half of the 20th century, survival of historic buildings depended upon sympathetic ownership, with the National Trust, founded in 1895, setting the example of charitable acquisition in the public interest.

Slum clearance and commercial development (especially in and around London) drove the redevelopment of historic buildings and areas between the wars. Despite protests, and the emergence of the Georgian Group as the first of the 'period societies' in 1937, it took dramatic destruction through bombing in the Second World War to focus attention on the value of built heritage. The new world of the post-war Labour Government also led to a fundamental, if temporary, shift in the balance of power between public and private interests in land.

1947

The ***Town and Country Planning Act*** obliges the relevant Minister to compile lists of historic buildings, but protection still requires a local authority to serve a Building Preservation Order.

First general list is published for five parishes in the Rural District of Blofield and Flegg, Norfolk.

The *Town and Country Planning Act 1947* (developing its 1944 precursor) introduced a comprehensive national system for regulating the use of land in the public interest. It also allowed for Preservation Orders to be made on historic buildings in use, and required the relevant minister to produce a national list of buildings of 'special architectural or historic interest', the start of statutory listing. The emerging list owed much to pre-war unofficial local surveys, which had helped to inform lists of buildings compiled in 1940–44 as priorities for first aid repair in the event of bomb damage.

Protection inevitably demanded selection. The initiative was now with architectural historians in the Ministry of Housing, rather than archaeologists in the Ministry of Works. Age was, and remains, key to selection for protection, with inclusion in the statutory lists becoming progressively more selective through time. The lists soon included a small number of Victorian buildings as the principal works of the leading architects of the time, so that, albeit very selectively, the potential interval between construction and recognition of cultural significance narrowed to half a century.

As the listing criteria gradually embraced first 'Edwardian', then inter-war, and finally post-war, buildings, all initially with very restrictive selection criteria, so the gap closed further. A '30-year rule' was set, and soon was reduced to 10 years for buildings deemed to be of 'outstanding' importance and under threat. Architects have had to come to terms not only with their buildings being listed during their lifetime – an honour – but also to working on them for a second time, like Norman Foster at the Willis (originally Willis Faber & Dumas) Building in Ipswich, under the constraints of listing .

Facing page: When this glass-clad building designed by Foster Associates for the Willis Faber & Dumas Company in 1973–75 was given Grade I status in 1991, it became the first structure less than 30 years old to be listed.

In 1992, it was also the subject of the first Listed Building Management Agreement, a formal agreement between the owner and the local planning authority providing "*clarification as to what proposals for the building may not require Listed Building Consent and/or planning permission.*"



1950

1950

The Gowers Report recommends that owners of outstanding country houses should be eligible for tax and death duty relief (although this does not happen until 1980).

1951

Founding of the International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works [IIC].

Creation of the first National Park (in the Peak District).

1951

Publication of the first volume of Nikolaus Pevsner's ***Buildings of England*** series, covering Cornwall.

1953

Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act introduces national grant schemes for the repair of historic buildings and ancient monuments, and creates the Historic Buildings Council to advise government.

1954

Howard Colvin's ***Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600–1840*** first published.

The closing of the gap between (present) cultural value and (past) cultural heritage was perhaps an inevitable consequence of the emphasis from the outset (in the selection criteria for listing) on architectural, rather than historic, interest, and thus on design value as well as fabric. The incremental shift could not have been achieved without public support. When, in the 1980s, systematic listing of post-war buildings was mooted, English Heritage asked whether these buildings really were 'Something worth keeping?': the public's answer was 'yes'. Professional support is evident from campaigns by the architectural press to list threatened modern buildings.

The statutory 'list' now represents the nation's selection of architecture collectively deemed of sufficient cultural value to be secured for the benefit of future generations as part of their heritage. The scope of the list demonstrates that, while age is important, national significance is judged on how built fabric reflects a wide range of cultural heritage values. For more recent buildings, these tend to emphasise the value of their design expressed through the essentially complete survival of their key elements. While the legislation allows for selection on the basis of architectural or historic interest, buildings and structures associated with historically significant people or events have not normally been listed unless they also have discernible architectural quality. However, some recent decisions including the listing of a zebra crossing in Abbey Road in London, famous for its association with The Beatles; Brixton Market, also in London; and the childhood homes of John Lennon and Paul McCartney in Liverpool, mark the beginning of a departure from this convention, and illustrate the celebration of places for primarily historical associations.

The parallel with other visual arts, where public collections are built up and actively curated, is nonetheless becoming more valid. There is, of course, an important difference; most listed buildings are privately owned. Rather than buying them in the market, the state pays nothing to 'designate' new additions to the collection. In that sense, listing can be seen as the last vestige of the post-war Labour Government's short-lived nationalisation, in the *1947 Act*, of the development value of land. Listed buildings are sustained (or occasionally not) by their owners primarily for their usefulness and market value, rather than their cultural value.

Facing page: In April 2010, the Secretary of State listed the arcade buildings of Brixton Market, London, at Grade II. The listing recognised the market's cultural importance to an Afro-Caribbean community, and its contribution to the social and economic history of Brixton, particularly since the 1950s, as well as its architectural importance: such arcades, once common, are now rare.



1954

Forty-eight country houses demolished; more than in any other single year.

1957

Civic Trust founded; the Civic Trust Awards scheme is launched two years later.

Friends of Friendless Churches founded to campaign for and rescue redundant churches.

1958

Victorian Society founded to promote the awareness and preservation of 19th- and early 20th-century buildings.

1960

1962

Euston Arch demolished.

Local Authorities (Historic Buildings) Act enables local authorities to offer grants towards the repairs of listed or unlisted buildings, including churches.

1964

Venice Charter drafted as the successor to the 1931 ***Athens Charter.***

Foundation of ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites).

CURATING THE COLLECTION

Creating a list is one thing; retaining, let alone conserving, the buildings included on it is a different matter. While the statutory list is compiled and maintained nationally (since 1984, with the advice of English Heritage), responsibility for acting upon it is essentially local. This is an inevitable consequence of its origins in planning legislation, which is administered by local planning authorities. It is also a practical necessity, given the large number of listed buildings compared with ancient monuments, which are still administered centrally. Initially, listing was not particularly effective in securing preservation. A local authority had to serve a building preservation notice if it wished to control the alteration or demolition of a listed building, and some authorities were inevitably more enthusiastic than others in doing so, guided by local priorities.

Grants from central government for the repair of buildings of 'outstanding' importance were introduced by the ***Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953*** (which also created the Historic Buildings Council to advise the Minister on grant applications), but the post-war *zeitgeist* tended to favour comprehensive urban redevelopment over conservation. The Macmillan Government arguably saw the destruction of the Euston Arch, London, in 1961–62 as a symbolic act of national modernisation. It actually marked, insofar as any one event can, a turning point in post-war attitudes to heritage conservation. Protest was not confined to 'heritage' interests, but came from radical modern architects like Peter and Alison Smithson (1928–93 and 1923–2003) as well, providing a reflection of the emerging nature of the statutory list as a national architectural collection.

Demolition of Euston Arch

The 1837 Euston Arch in London, designed by Philip Hardwick (1792–1870), was the first monument of the railway age, and the largest Greek Revival propylaeum ever built. Its vigorously contested and controversial demolition in 1961–62, to allow the redevelopment of Euston Station and electrification of the West Coast mainline, proved to be the catalyst for the subsequent preservation of many Victorian buildings.



1966

The Garden History Society founded.

1967

Civic Amenities Act introduces conservation areas.

1968

Town and Country Planning Act introduces the need for Listed Building Consent, the notification of demolitions to the amenity societies (SPAB, Georgian Group, Ancient Monuments Society, Victorian Society, Council for British Archaeology and the RCHME), and repair notices for neglected buildings.

First official conservation advice in ***Ministry of Housing and Local Government Circular 61/68***.

1968

Conservation reports on York, Chester, Lincoln and Bath are commissioned by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, published as ***A Study in Conservation***.

Redundant Churches Fund (later the Churches Conservation Trust) is founded.

Nationwide resurvey of listed buildings begun.

1969

The first 37 inter-war Modern Movement buildings listed.

In 1968, a general requirement to obtain Listed Building Consent for works affecting the character of listed buildings was introduced. Decisions were still made locally but, over time, steadily became more conservative. This was due to more effective national overview through both policy and the requirement to refer important cases to central government. From 1980, the resurvey of the original highly-selective lists was accelerated, championed by Michael Heseltine as then Secretary of State for the Environment. This resulted in a more-or-less comprehensive review by 1993.

Conservation philosophy had to develop to meet new challenges. The ***Athens Charter***, the result of an international conference held in 1931, reflected many of the principles already well-established in England through SPAB. It also recommended that *"the occupation of buildings, which ensures the continuity of their life, should be maintained, but that they should be used for a purpose which respects their historic or artistic character"* (***Article 1***). The use of modern technology in repair, especially reinforced concrete, preferably concealed, was endorsed more enthusiastically than would later prove wise. The Charter's avowed successor, the ***Venice Charter*** (1964) was more tightly worded: *"The conservation of monuments is always facilitated by making use of them for some socially useful purpose. Such use is therefore desirable, but it must not change the lay-out or decoration of the building. It is within these limits only that modifications demanded by a change of function should be envisaged and may be permitted"* (***Article 5***).

These charters were not inter-governmental conventions, but statements of best professional practice, drafted by leading practitioners. The ***Venice Charter*** still forms the guiding principles of the International Council on Monuments and Sites [ICOMOS], founded at the time of its drafting. Primarily, the authors of the charters had in mind monuments whose exceptional significance was evident in national, and often international, contexts. Their ideal of limited adaptation to changing needs, however, proved difficult to apply to the growing range and number of protected buildings and structures of more modest significance, like the majority of those included in the statutory list of England. For these, sustaining ongoing use was not just a desirable option, but essential for their survival.

While these international charters were influential in professional thinking in England, national guidance was a government initiative. When the requirement to obtain Listed Building Consent was introduced, ministers thought that *"it may be helpful to local planning authorities to have some broad guidance on criteria in dealing with such applications"*. This was set out in the ***Ministry of Housing and Local Government Circular 61/1968***, whose content would remain recognisable in its successor circulars up to 2010. It also introduced a *"presumption ... in favour of preservation"*, since, unless the rate of demolition of listed buildings *"is, if not completely arrested, at least slowed down, the virtually complete disappearance of all listed buildings can be predicted within a calculable time"*. Appendix IV of this circular's successor, ***Department of the Environment Circular 23/77***, was presented as a *"Technical Digest on Alterations to Listed Buildings... compiled by Historic Buildings Investigators of the Department to assist local authorities in deciding on the suitability of alterations to listed buildings"*. Beyond the preamble, which stated that *"alterations... should be kept to a minimum wherever possible"*, much of the advice under *"alterations in detail"* emphasised the need for appropriate repair rather than replacement. Traditional or matching design was generally seen as the most suitable for extensions, *"in keeping with other parts of the building... great care should be taken to follow the fenestration and detailing of the original"*.

This circular advocated an essentially pragmatic approach. It was based on practical advice (much of which seems obvious now, but was not so at the time), rooted in an arts and crafts preference for blending new work seamlessly with the inherited structure, matched with a realistic concern to ensure that historic buildings could remain in use. The guidance was repeated almost identically in ***DoE Circular 8/87*** (save that the Investigators had now become the Historic Buildings Inspectors of English Heritage). Its long-lived successor, ***Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG) 15: Planning and the Historic Environment*** (1994–2010), set out more general principles for alterations. These were based on the need to understand and justify the potential impact of the changes on the 'special architectural or historic interest' of the building which had given rise to its listing, rather than the predominantly visual concerns of earlier guidance. The technical guidance was rewritten, embracing advice on elements of 20th-century buildings, and the preference that extensions should be 'in keeping' was dropped.

1970

1971

RESCUE, the British Archaeological Trust, founded.

Covent Garden market buildings saved from demolition after a public campaign.

1972

Field Monuments Act introduces a system of payments to landowners with scheduled monuments on their land.

1973

Adam Fergusson's ***The Sack of Bath: A Record and an Indictment*** published.

The UK joins the European Economic Community, and so becomes obliged to conform to ***EC Regulations and Directives***.

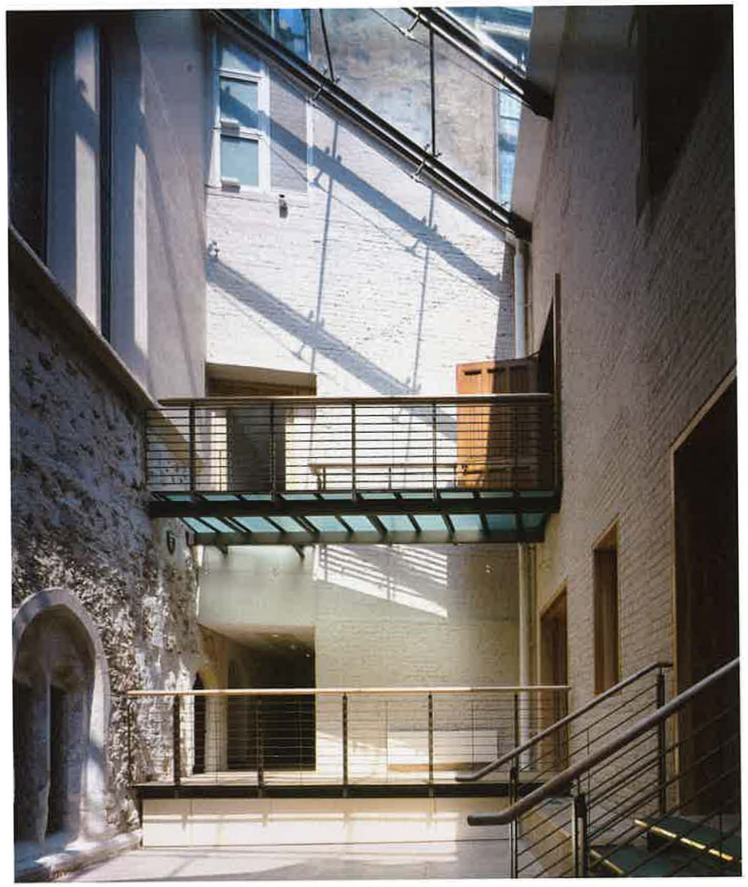
UK ratifies ***European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage.***

1974

'Destruction of the Country House' exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Town and Country Amenities Act requires planning permission for full or partial demolition of buildings within conservation areas.

Early policy guidance that extensions or alterations to historic buildings should be in traditional or matching design, *"in keeping with other parts of the building"* (*DoE Circular 8/87*), gave way to more general principles based on the need to understand the impact of the changes on the 'special character' of the building (*PPG15*), allowing contemporary interventions such as this addition to the courtyard and crypt of Lambeth Palace, London, designed by Richard Griffiths Architects.



Although the legal controls applied only to works of alteration perceived to affect a building's character, official guidance was always strongly oriented towards encouraging like-for-like repair, which did not normally need consent. Later, *PPG15* was explicitly supported by Christopher Brereton's ***The Repair of Historic Buildings; Advice on Principles and Methods*** (1995), which grew out of the experience of English Heritage architects responsible for monitoring grant-aided works to listed buildings. A succinct book of great good sense, Brereton's definition of the primary purpose of repair, *"...to restrain the process of decay without damaging the character of buildings and monuments, altering the features which give them their historic or architectural importance, or unnecessarily disturbing or destroying historic fabric"*, remains entirely valid.

As well as stemming the rate of demolition, the circulars and their successors were influential in helping to define building conservation practice in England in the late 20th century. Ultimately, however, the role of these planning policy documents was to balance the public interest in the conservation of historic buildings with other public (and private) interests that might champion the benefits of greater levels of intervention, including demolition. In contrast to ethical documents such as the SPAB *Manifesto* or the *Venice Charter*, the role and status of the circulars as government guidance precluded anything more absolute than a *"presumption in favour of preservation"* (*PPG15 1994*) (subsequently 'conservation' in *PPS5: Planning for the Historic Environment, 2010*). In parallel, a wide range of textbooks began to appear, including the magisterial *Conservation of Historic Buildings* (1982) by Sir Bernard Feilden (1919–2008).

The trend through the later 20th century was steadily more conservationist. The focus of concern moved from preventing demolition to achieving conservative repair and alteration, and, increasingly, to protecting the setting of listed buildings. A normative statement of best conservation practice specific to the UK context, written by a group of professionals who were not constrained by official policy, was produced (after an arduous 15-year gestation) in 1998. This was the ***British Standard BS 7913:1998 Guide to the principles of the conservation of historic buildings***. It carries weight as a BS Guide, and remains current. Unfortunately, the high price and restrictive copyright conditions attached to BS publications have limited its adoption within the sector. Otherwise, modern practice in built heritage conservation in England has been codified primarily through public policy and guidance, rather than standards produced by professional bodies.

1975

European Architectural Heritage Year held under the auspices of the Council of Europe.

SAVE Britain's Heritage founded.

1976

Architectural Heritage Fund established.

1977

Updated conservation policy guidance issued as **Department of the Environment [DoE] Circular 23/77.**

1979

Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act introduces the 'Scheduled Monument Consent' regime.

United Kingdom Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works [UKIC] becomes autonomous from the International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works [IIC].

The Thirties Society (later the Twentieth Century Society) founded.

ICOMOS Australia agrees the Burra Charter, which introduces the concept of conservation management.

BUILDING ARCHAEOLOGY

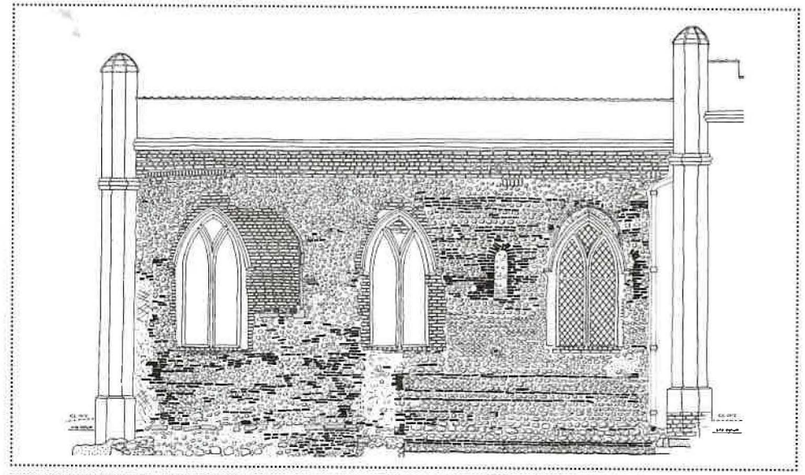
In the 19th century, the application of archaeological techniques of analysis to historic buildings was fundamental to establishing the chronology of Gothic architecture. ***Windsor Castle: An Architectural History*** (1913), by W. H. St John Hope (1854–1919), stands out as a commanding study of a single site. The RCHME always maintained an analytical approach to understanding building fabric as well as earthworks. From the late 1960s, archaeologists whose background lay primarily in excavation below ground began applying their techniques of highly detailed recording and analysis to standing buildings. At first, efforts were focused on churches, particularly to address the issue of defining Anglo-Saxon architecture embedded within later structure. Stone by stone recording and analysis began to yield some quite surprising results about the complex evolution of key buildings, such as Deerhurst Church in Gloucestershire.

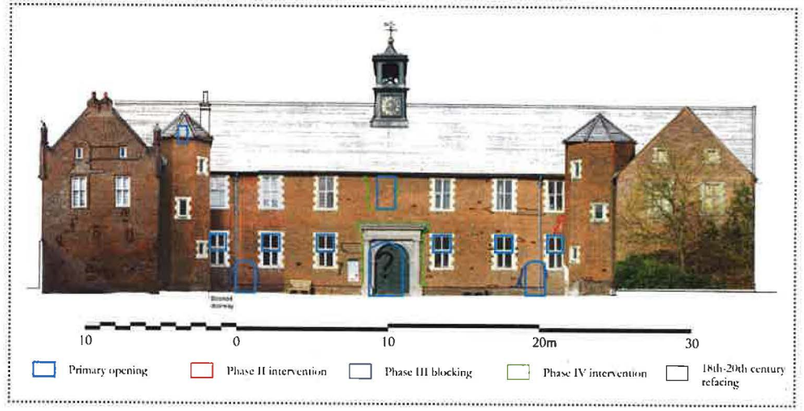
Soon this approach spread to other complex standing structures, such as the medieval and Tudor house at Acton Court, South Gloucestershire, and was often combined with below-ground excavation. Radiocarbon dating began to confirm the antiquity of some medieval carpentry, which thus became a subject worthy of study, initiated by Cecil Hewett (1926–1998). Precision came through dendrochronology, which, given the right conditions, can date the year, indeed the season, of felling of timber. The value of vernacular architecture as a source of information about the past – and the revelation that some of it is of considerable antiquity – is all part of the extension of 'archaeological' interest to a wider range of standing material remains of the past. The development of historic paint analysis – science-based archaeology on a very small scale – meant that, if the paint layers survived, a virtually complete sequence of decorative schemes could be recovered, transforming understanding of the historic use of colour and our ability to restore historic decorative schemes.

Building archaeology

Top: Rivenhall Church, Essex. Removal of cement render from the north side of the chancel of a church then thought to have been completely rebuilt *c.*1838–39 revealed a long sequence of medieval work, from the 11th-century chancel, to which an apse was later added, in turn replaced by a chancel extension, and the remodelling of the earlier structure early in the 14th century.

Bottom: Osterley Park Stable block. The use of rectified photographs of the elevations of the stables enabled the complex phases of construction and history of alterations to be rapidly and extensively recorded and interpreted.





1980

The demolition of Wallis Gilbert's Firestone Factory without consent, resulting in pressure to extend protection of inter-war buildings.

National Heritage Act establishes the National Heritage Memorial Fund in place of the Land Fund, and provides for the donation of property in lieu of death duties.

1981

The Historic Buildings Council recommends a further 150 inter-war buildings for listing.

Accelerated Resurvey of listed buildings begun.

1982

Association of Conservation Officers founded.

Institute of Field Archaeologists [IFA] founded.

ICOMOS' ***Florence Charter*** on the protection of historic gardens.

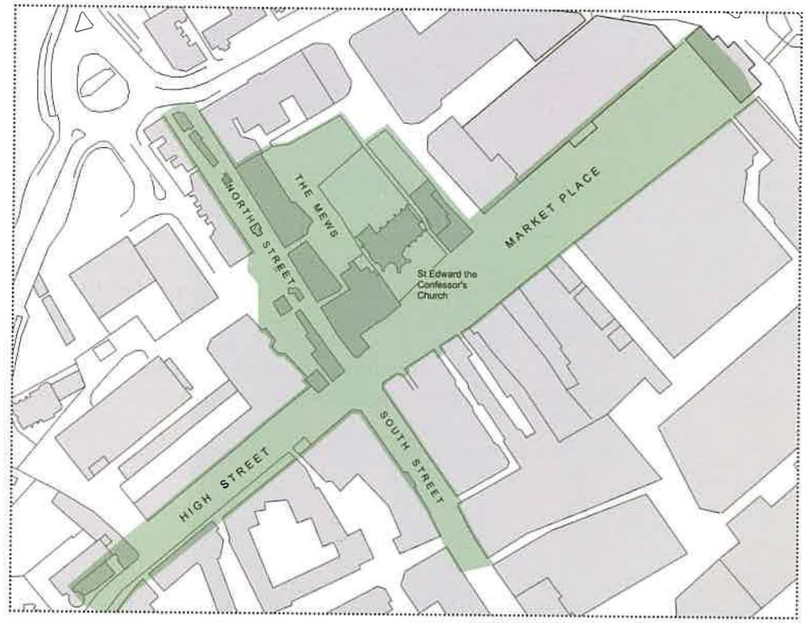
First edition of Bernard Feilden's ***Conservation of Historic Buildings*** is published.

The consequences of these developments (and many more) for building conservation have been profound. On one level, it has become the norm to include building archaeologists in a team working on major repair projects to significant buildings. The results can add to (and sometimes transform) academic understanding. They can also provide a more detailed understanding of the evolution and significance of parts of a building, and so inform conservation decisions, ranging from structural repair to reinstatement of paintwork. The values of hidden, as well as visible, structure are now much better appreciated and respected. The wholesale replacement of a medieval roof above vaulting, rather than its repair, for example, would now be unthinkable.

Archaeologists also proved vital in the conservation response to a series of disastrous fires in major buildings, notably Hampton Court Palace, Uppark House and Windsor Castle. The systematic salvage of material from post-fire debris contributed to working out in detail the form of what had been lost, and recovering elements for incorporation in the reconstruction. This provided not only a greater degree of authenticity, but also a quality control on the new work. There was a considerable debate over whether enough of Uppark had survived the 1988 fire to make its rebuilding justifiable as a conservation repair, or unjustifiable as a somewhat speculative reconstruction. The archaeological approach to salvage ensured that it was the former, and a large interdisciplinary team discovered the importance of looking very closely at a wide range of artefacts, re-learning how they were made, as well as what they originally looked like. One of the positive side-effects was that freehand modelling in lime stucco was revived as an artistic craft skill. But perhaps the most important was greater investment in effective fire detection and prevention systems in historic buildings, especially during building work.

HISTORIC AREA CONSERVATION

The identification and protection of historic areas form a third strand of English conservation. While it has many different threads, ideas of local character and distinctiveness are key. Groups of historic buildings in their topographical setting often have a greater value in aggregate than the individual buildings of which the groups are comprised. These can be of significance in the local context, and sometimes in the national context, even if few or none of their buildings individually meet the criteria for inclusion in the (national) statutory list.



Early designation

The Romford Conservation Area was designated in 1968, shortly after the passing of the Civic Amenities Act, and it illustrates the narrow, early approach to designations. The main purpose of the conservation area was to protect the group of listed buildings at the west end of the Market Place, around and including St Edward's Church, and their setting, rather than the wider townscape.

1983

National Heritage Act passed.

1984

English Heritage (officially the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England [HBMCE]) set up as the Government's advisor on England's historic environment.

The UK ratifies the UNESCO World Heritage Convention.

1984

Establishment of *The Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England*.

Updated conservation policy guidance issued as *DoE Circular 8/84*.

1986

The Greater London Council abolished, and responsibility for historic buildings in London transferred to English Heritage.

First seven UK sites added to UNESCO World Heritage list.

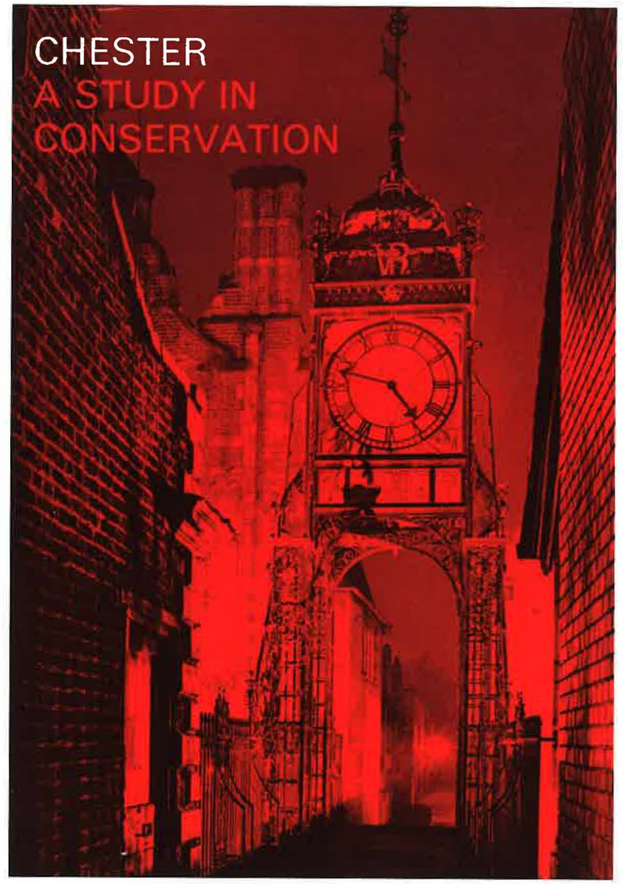
The Civic Trust, an umbrella body of local amenity societies formed under the leadership of Duncan Sandys, was fundamental in promoting the idea that the values of historic areas should be taken into account in land-use planning decisions. Formal recognition began when local planning authorities were empowered by the ***Civic Amenities Act 1967*** to designate conservation areas: 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'. Control over the demolition of unlisted buildings in conservation areas and the power to give repair grants was introduced in 1972.

Early official policy, set out in ***Ministry of Housing and Local Government Circulars 53/67*** and ***61/68***, saw the role of conservation areas as safeguarding the context of listed buildings. The process of designation was expected to be finite, and completed very rapidly: 'the preservation of individual [listed] buildings is not enough...preservation must be related to their environment'. In fact, conservation area designation remains an established means of responding to local perceptions of 'heritage' that is worth preserving and enhancing, listed or not, in line with its origins in the Civic Trust.

Comprehensive 'Historic Town Reports' were commissioned for four nationally important places (Chester, York, Bath and Chichester) *"to discover how to reconcile our old towns with the twentieth century without actually knocking them down"*. Chester boldly appointed the UK's first 'conservation officer', whose post was funded by a 'penny rate'. This special conservation rate also provided the city's share of repair grants for historic buildings, which were supported through national funds. From the outset, government policy guidance stressed the need for local authorities to have access to specialist conservation advice for both historic buildings and areas, although it has never been a statutory requirement.

Historic Towns Reports

In 1966, the Ministry of Housing and Local Government commissioned comprehensive reports on four nationally important places (Chester, York, Bath and Chichester), with the aim of discovering how the fabric of historic towns might be reconciled with 20th-century living. *Chester: A Study in Conservation*, was prepared by Donald Insall and Associates, and published in 1968.



1987

Policy changes make buildings more than 30 years old (and, exceptionally, 10 years old) eligible for listing.

Bracken House, London (1959), is the first post-war building in England to be listed.

UK ratifies the (Granada) ***Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe***.

1988

First series of English Heritage's ***Practical Building Conservation,*** by John and Nicola Ashurst, published.

1989

Accelerated resurvey of listed buildings completed.

Association of [Building] Preservation Trusts founded.

Historic Royal Palaces established as a government agency to manage the five palaces no longer in regular use.

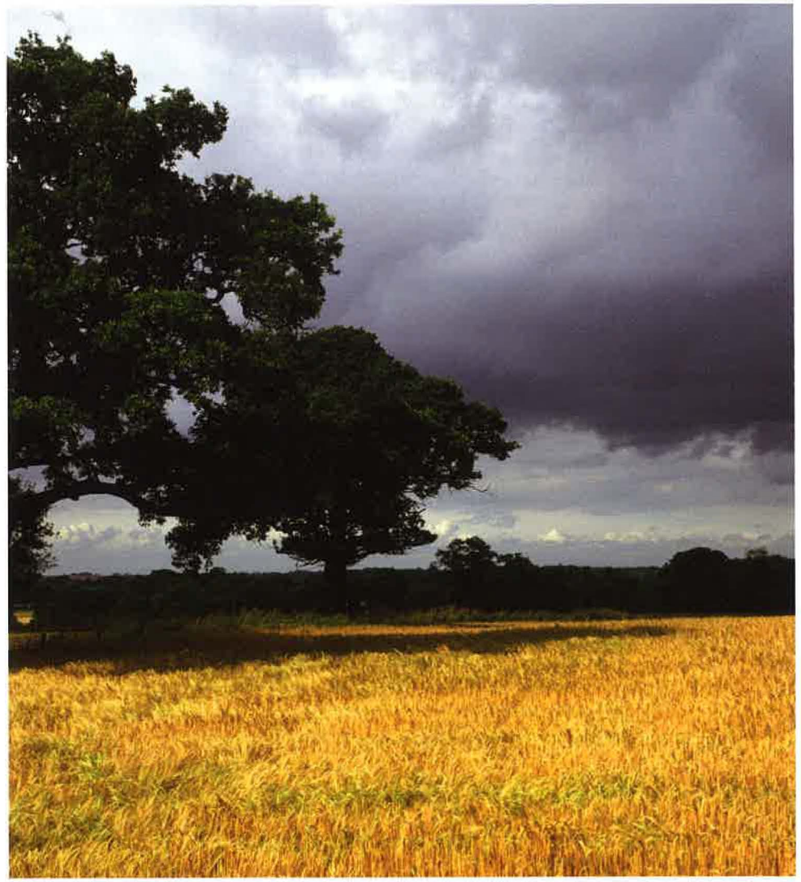
As specialist officers became more numerous in local government, the Association of Conservation Officers was founded in 1981. In 1997, it was transformed into the Institute of Historic Building Conservation [IHBC], with formal requirements for the competence and experience of its members.

Conservation areas gave local authorities the ability to designate at local level. This has contributed to what can be seen as a democratisation of heritage beyond the value judgement of the elite and expert. This trend includes things as well as places, and has been particularly championed by the Heritage Lottery Fund [HLF], which was established in 1994. For HLF, heritage is, in effect, anything that people value beyond mere usefulness. Professional opinion has increasingly embraced this approach, with the establishment of non-statutory registers of historic parks, gardens and battlefields, and, of course, the understanding of the landscape as an archaeological, as well as a visual and productive, resource.

These views are not universally shared; for some, they are symbolic of a lack of discrimination and represent cultural relativism, the consequence of a society now fearful of change and the future at every level from its own backyard to the planet. The association of change with 'harm' first began in the 1960s, with the public reacting against the wholesale redevelopment of historic towns and cities. Since then, it has tended to grow. Some of this local community rhetoric is certainly selfish 'nimbyism' hiding under the cloak of heritage protection. Nonetheless, the recognition of cultural heritage values in the wider historic environment, which gives context to designated heritage assets, and with which people identify, is likely to endure. It follows that those values should be taken into account in managing the historic environment, particularly through planning decisions.

Registering battlefields

Site of the Battle of Blore Heath, 23rd September 1459 (Wars of the Roses). For many people, these sites are places of memory and evocation, which fire the imagination; for others, they are simply empty landscapes, no different from any other. English Heritage's non-statutory ***Register of Historic Battlefields*** identifies 43 important English battlefields which have not been transformed by later development, to offer them some protection and promote their better understanding.



1990

1990

The ***Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act*** consolidates the law relating to historic buildings and conservation areas.

The ***Care of Cathedrals Measure*** brings works to cathedrals under the control of the Cathedrals Fabric Commission for England and individual fabric advisory committees.

1991

The 1975 Willis Faber Dumas building, Ipswich, becomes the first building under 30 years old to be listed.

1992

The Thirties Society becomes the Twentieth Century Society.

Begining of thematic listing of post-war buildings.

1993

The ***National Lottery Act*** enables grants for heritage projects from the lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund.

1994

Government policy set out in ***Planning Policy Guidance 15: Planning and the Historic Environment*** (***PPG15***) and ***Planning Policy Guidance 16: Archaeology and Planning*** (***PPG16***).

The ***Ecclesiastical Exemption Act*** limits exemption from Listed Building Consent to denominations operating their own, comparable, controls.

THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION

This values-based approach accords with the ideas embodied in the *European Landscape Convention* (Florence 2000), which has been ratified by the UK Government. It defines a landscape as 'a place, as perceived by people', and seeks to sustain and enhance the cultural values of all European landscapes. More recently, the *Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society* (Faro 2005, not yet ratified by the UK) deals with heritage as a human right, promoting a wider understanding of its relationships to community, society and nation. By relating the question of heritage values to the wider concerns of society about economic, social and cultural values, the Faro convention helps to inform the climate in which building conservation does (or does not) take place, rather than its technical practice. Like the *Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe* (Granada 1985, also ratified by the UK), the Florence and Faro conventions were developed under the auspices of the Council of Europe.

The European Union does not have 'competence' (powers) in cultural policy, which remains with its member states, but Title XII, Article 151 of the *European Community Treaty* (2002) gives it powers to promote action in the field of cultural heritage. These relate mainly to encouraging or enhancing awareness in the European Community of its common cultural heritage, supporting and encouraging cooperation between member states regarding dissemination of cultural knowledge, the protection of significant European heritage, and artistic and literary creation. However, the *European Union Directives* on *Strategic Environmental Assessment* (*SEA Directive 2001/42/EC*) and *Environmental Impact Assessment* (*EIA Directive 85/337/EEC*, amended by *Directives 97/11/EC, 2003/35/EC* and *2009/31/EC*) are intended to ensure that cultural heritage impacts are taken into account in large or sensitive developments. This is supported by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe *Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters* (1998).

1994

Heritage Lottery Fund established.

ICOMOS conference in Nara, Japan establishes the ***Nara Document on Authenticity.***

1995

Non-statutory ***Register of Historic Battlefields*** is established.

Christopher Brereton's ***The Repair of Historic Buildings: Advice on Principles and Methods*** published by English Heritage.

1997

The Association of Conservation Officers re-founded as the Institute of Historic Buildings Conservation [IHBC].

TOWARDS INTEGRATION

In the UK, the creation of the Department of the Environment in 1970 brought responsibility for the three strands of historic environment conservation – monuments, buildings and areas – within a single ministry. Two years later these functions were administratively merged into the Directorate of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings, but this was not to last. The incoming Conservative Government of 1979 began consultation on the remit of the Department of the Environment. From this arose the idea of devolving national responsibility for the historic environment to a semi-autonomous agency or 'quango' that would be able to operate with greater efficiency and enterprise, but under ministerial guidelines and to government policy.

English Heritage (officially the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England), was set up under the terms of the ***National Heritage Act 1983***. In Scotland, 'Historic Scotland' and in Wales, 'Cadw' (Welsh Historic Monuments) were given similar responsibilities, but remained part of the Government. The 1983 Act also dissolved the bodies that had hitherto provided independent advice – the Ancient Monuments Board for England and the Historic Buildings Council for England – and incorporated these functions in the new body. Another advisory body, the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England [RCHME], which was responsible for documenting the records of English historic monuments, was not merged with English Heritage until 1st April 1999.

English Heritage is the Government's statutory advisor on all aspects of the historic environment in England. It was created not only to secure the preservation and enhancement of the man-made heritage of England for the benefit of future generations, but to directly manage the many sites and monuments taken into state care since the 1880s. It has become the lead advisory body for the historic environment in England, advising the Secretary of State on policy and providing advice across government.

1998

Publication of the ***British Standard BS 7913:1998 Guide to the principles of the conservation of historic buildings.***

Historic Royal Palaces becomes an independent charity.

1999

RCHME administratively merged with English Heritage.

Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment [CABE] founded, replacing the Royal Fine Art Commission [RFAC].

HERITAGE-LED REGENERATION

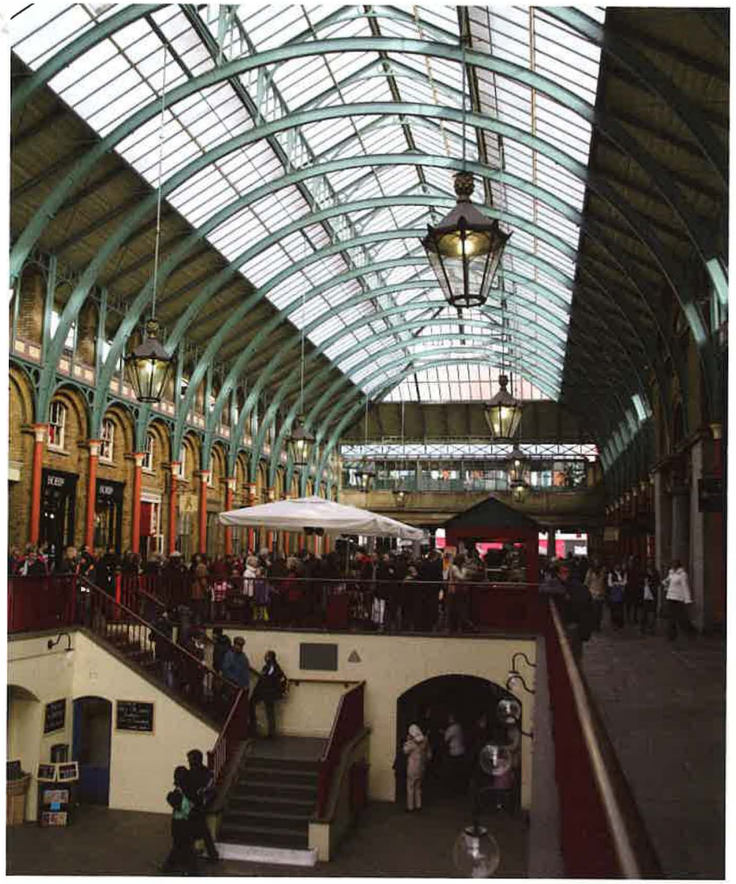
Investment in the conservation of historic areas, particularly in urban centres, emerged as a social and economic, as well as cultural, benefit. Conservation, rather than comprehensive redevelopment, came to be seen as a source of quality and distinctiveness which could make areas more attractive places in which to live or work. As public appreciation of historic areas grew, so did demand for property within them, often reversing a long-term post-war decline. The approach soon extended beyond traditional 'historic centres' like those in the historic towns studies to former industrial areas, embracing a wide range of historic building groups. A realisation emerged that heritage could lead regeneration, and tended to add value in every sense.

Heritage-led regeneration can be defined as *"the improvement of disadvantaged people or places through the delivery of a heritage focused project"* (***Ela Palmer Heritage 2008***). It was soon seen as environmentally friendly, since the re-use of buildings makes the most of energy embodied in their fabric and reduces the amount of waste that becomes landfill. Heritage was promoted by English Heritage *"as a catalyst for better social and economic regeneration"* (***English Heritage 2005***), ensuring that some of the considerable public resources and private investment in this 'growth industry' were applied to the repair and re-use of historic buildings. The economic climate has changed dramatically since that time, however, and limited public investment is now focused directly on economic objectives, rather than indirectly on property-led regeneration. The potential of the built heritage to contribute to the reinvention of places and a positive identity for communities nevertheless seems firmly established.

The Market Building, Covent Garden, London

Designed by Charles Fowler (1792–1867), the Market Building opened in 1830 to house London's principal wholesale fruit, vegetable and flower market. The market quickly outgrew its new premises and spilled into the surrounding streets, where further buildings were erected or adapted for market use. By the 1960s, traffic congestion in the area had reached a point where the market could no longer function effectively. It relocated to a new site in 1974, and the Greater London Council [GLC] purchased the Market Building, along with other market properties.

Public opinion strongly favoured preserving the historic character of the area by retaining and reusing the redundant buildings, and proposals for comprehensive redevelopment were rejected. The GLC's Historic Buildings Division prepared plans for the repair and conversion of the Market Building into shops, restaurants, bars, studios, and a venue for street entertainers. When it re-opened in 1980 it became the focal point of the regeneration of Covent Garden, proving that historic areas could make a positive contribution to the economic vitality of towns and cities.



2000

2000

English Heritage publishes ***Power of Place: The Future of the Historic Environment***, a review of historic environment policy.

The UK ratifies the ***European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Revised)***.

The ***European Landscape Convention*** adopted by the Council of Europe in Florence.

2001

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport [DCMS] and the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions [DTLR] together publish ***The Historic Environment: A Force for Our Future***.

2002

First annual ***State of the Historic Environment Report*** (subsequently ***Heritage Counts***) is published by English Heritage.

2003

DCMS publishes the consultation document ***Protecting our Historic Environment: Making the System Work Better***.

THE IDEA OF CONSERVATION PLANNING

The idea of 'conservation planning' was pioneered by James Semple Kerr in Australia, and underpinned (with the *Venice Charter*) the *Burra Charter,* first promulgated by ICOMOS Australia in 1979. While the *Venice Charter* and its precursors prescribed what was necessary to protect a narrow range of heritage values, the *Burra Charter* set out a process for managing change in ways that seek to retain *"all aspects of [its] cultural significance"*. The heritage values of places are seen as often both multiple and mutable. Heritage practitioners therefore need to be advocates and enablers as well as conservators, particularly in relation to values attached to places by communities that identify with them.

Both Kerr's work and the *Burra Charter* soon began to be referenced by practitioners in England, and the 'conservation planning' approach was taken up by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The idea is a simple one: understand the range of values that people attach to a place, and seek to manage the place so as to sustain as many of those values as reasonably possible. In the English statutory context, it was the idea of 'place' as a meaningful unit for heritage management decisions that was perhaps the most radical. The reason was the accumulated 'hierarchy' of existing legislation, which differentiates between scheduled monuments (national designation and control), listed buildings (national designation and local control), conservation areas (local designation and control) and registered landscapes (national designation and limited control). Within English Heritage, the amalgamation of its different statutory advisory teams into multi-disciplinary regional teams in 1990 created the organisational basis for an integrated approach to managing the historic environment, while conservation planning increasingly provided the intellectual underpinning for it.

As the scope of designation and recognition has widened to include historic buildings and areas significant for their design or associations, rather than simply their age, and which are sustained by remaining in use, there has been a *de facto* (but not universal) acceptance that 'minimum intervention' does not, of itself, provide an adequate response to the range of conservation issues faced by practitioners or regulatory authorities. This wider concept of heritage demands discrimination and a sense of proportion to inform attempts to identify and balance conflicting public interests (the essential concern of public policy) in a methodical and transparent way.

The *Nara Document on Authenticity* (ICOMOS Japan, 1994) examines concepts such as the tangible and intangible nature of culture, cultural diversity, and the legitimacy of all cultural values. It concludes that statements about cultural heritage should, in the first instance, be the responsibility of the community that has generated the culture, stating that *"all judgements about values attributed to cultural properties differ from culture to culture and therefore it is not possible to base judgements of values and authenticity within fixed criteria"*. In other words, authenticity can be seen as those characteristics that most truthfully reflect and embody the cultural heritage values of a place, rather than residing solely in its inherited fabric. The Document also addresses the question of how to balance the different – and potentially conflicting – cultural requirements *"provided achieving this balance does not undermine [any one community's] fundamental cultural values"*. This is to be achieved by judging the value of heritage properties *"within the cultural contexts to which they belong"*. Furthermore, management *"belongs, in the first place, to the cultural community that has generated it, and subsequently to that which cares for it"*.

These ideas, as well as established English conservation practice and public policy, provided the background to the publication of English Heritage's 2008 ***Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment***. This attempted to domesticate the concepts of conservation planning and a values-based system of assessment, and respond to discussion papers about the scope and purpose of public conservation. The immediate context for the document was the need for an agreed framework for making decisions about managing the historic environment and any 'heritage asset' within it, taking into account the full range of cultural (and natural) heritage values attached to the asset by different interest groups. To do so, it was necessary to draw together and reconcile the objectives of the three established strands of English conservation embedded in legislation and practice.

2004

DCMS publishes its ***Review of Heritage Protection: The Way Forward***.

2005

Institute of Conservation [ICON] established by merger of UKIC and others as the primary UK organisation of conservators.

At a meeting in Faro, Portugal, the Council of Europe introduces the ***Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society.***

2007

UK ratifies the ***European Landscape Convention*** [ELC].

The White Paper ***Heritage Protection for the 21st Century*** is published, proposing fundamental changes to the designation system.

To find common ground between the monuments, the buildings and the areas or landscapes, English Heritage attempted through internal and external workshops to define principles and a framework for their application to any and all elements of the historic environment, whether or not statutorily designated. The process proved to be a salutary reminder, not only of the different threads of thought rooted in established 'schools' of conservation, but also how the education, profession, thought and personal experience of practitioners shape their conservation philosophy. The potential of these differences to create adversarial positions between practitioners and organisations is obvious.

In a field of increasing diversity of subject and approach, the aim is to encourage intellectually coherent thinking acceptable to a majority of practitioners, particularly those with statutory roles. ***Conservation Principles*** could not, of course, possibly succeed in meeting such an ambitious goal. The immediate practical objectives were more limited: to achieve some consistency in English Heritage's response to casework, and provide a shared framework for arbitrating conflicts between sustaining particular cultural values.

As in all statements of conservation philosophy, ***Conservation Principles*** was the product of a specific place, time, and cultural and political context. It embraced the concept that a wide range of abstract cultural values beyond mere usefulness are attached by people to places. Heritage values are a subset of wider cultural values, attributed to things inherited from the past, or selected from current cultural artefacts valued sufficiently to warrant passing them on to future generations. ***Conservation Principles*** was based on the view that, rather than being intrinsic, cultural values are attached or attributed to places, even when the attribution stems solely from a fact that can be established more or less objectively, such as age.

HERITAGE PROTECTION REFORM & BEYOND

English Heritage's ***Conservation Principles*** anticipated, and was intended to inform, a more integrated approach to managing cultural heritage assets in the historic environment. The Government announced its intention to replace existing legislation with a single reforming ***Heritage Act***, but, in the event, the draft bill (April 2008) was not taken forward. In March 2010, the Government published a new policy document, ***Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 5, Planning for the Historic Environment***. This replaced the long-standing ***Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: Planning and the Historic Environment*** (1994) and ***Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning*** (1990). ***PPS5*** stated, as the Government's overarching aim, *"that the historic environment and its heritage assets should be conserved and enjoyed for the quality of life they bring to this and future generations"* (***DCLG 2010***). Rather than providing prescriptive solutions, ***PPS5*** sought to establish principles, applicable to all recognised 'heritage assets', regardless of the legislation under which they are designated, recognised or managed.

PPS5 was supported by English Heritage's government-endorsed ***Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide*** (the ***Practice Guide***) (2010), whose purpose was to *"assist local authorities, owners, applicants and other interested parties in implementing [PPS5] and to help in the interpretation of policies within the PPS...."* The ***Practice Guide*** *"supports the implementation of national policy, but does not constitute a statement of Government policy itself"*.

However, ***PPS5*** was short-lived. In March 2012 the successor government published a ***National Planning Policy Framework*** [NPPF] that replaced all existing planning policy statements, including ***PPS5***. Nevertheless, this carried forward, at a more strategic level, the integrated, values-based approach established in ***PPS5***.

2008

English Heritage publishes ***Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment.***

2009

English Heritage designated by government as a provider of official statistics, including the ***Heritage at Risk Register*** [HAR].

2010

2010

PPS5: Planning for the Historic Environment issued as official conservation policy guidance within the planning system, replacing ***PPG15*** and ***PPG16***.

CABE merged with the Design Council.

2012

National Planning Policy Framework replaces all former topic-based policy guidance, including ***PPS5***.

Arguably, a wider concept of cultural heritage values in the historic environment leads to an operative, instead of a prescriptive, philosophy of conservation. Rather than applying a predetermined solution, it should be understood why a building or place has public values beyond utilitarian functionality, and manage it so as best to sustain those values. Only such an approach can accommodate the range of heritage assets now subject to conservation, and the diverse values, public as well as expert, which must be taken into consideration in doing so. This does not mean, however, that answers will necessarily be different from those that Carter or Morris, or the Historic Buildings Investigators of four decades ago, would have reached. If a place is valued for its significance and potential as a historic document, its illustration of a distant age and the skill of its craftsmen, and the weathering acquired in the centuries since, minimum intervention is still likely to be the appropriate response to sustaining those values. But a values-based approach to conservation also means looking for the potential to reinforce and reveal the significance of places. That in turn means making value judgements about design value and interventions: removing things, and even restoring documented elements, if the benefits decisively outweigh the losses.





Differing cultural responses

The *Nara Document on Authenticity* states: *"...all judgements about values attributed to cultural properties differ from culture to culture and therefore it is not possible to base judgements of values and authenticity within fixed criteria".*

These examples – the new Coventry Cathedral (*facing page*), of 1956–62, by Sir Basil Spence (1907–1976), and the Frauenkirche, Dresden, of 1726–43 (*this page*), as reconstructed in 1994–2005 – show two very different cultural responses to war-time destruction.

The further one moves from the kind of place that prompted the responses of earlier generations, the more the practice of conservation may differ, and the more negotiation it is likely to involve. The point, as James Semple Kerr expressed so clearly and simply, is that the outcome needs to be reached by a logical and transparent process, not the application of a predetermined simplistic solution. It is too early to say whether this 'conservation planning' approach will find general acceptance, or if (particularly in the absence of unified legislation) existing approaches developed in relation to particular types of physical heritage or its statutory protection will continue to dominate day-to-day practice. The idea that doing the minimum is always the ideal response remains potent, even in the face of pervasive designation which necessitates discrimination.

The importance people attach to the cultural heritage values of places has grown exponentially over the past half-century, but that does not mean it will continue to do so. There is a new ethical imperative, environmental sustainability, that began (like heritage conservation) as a minority position, but which has become widely accepted and so adopted as public policy. That it may be in conflict with sustaining inherited cultural values in the historic environment is already becoming clear, and the drivers may not be so much technical as polemical.



Abbey Road zebra crossing, St John's Wood, London

The crossing at Abbey Road in north London is famous for its association with the English rock band The Beatles. It featured on the cover of their last recorded album *Abbey Road*, released in 1969 and made at the studios of the same name.

The crossing has become a popular destination for Beatles fans, and in 2010 was listed at Grade II for its cultural and historical importance.

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