

RECORD OF MEETING

Subject	Heritage Ironwork Forum	Date	21 st March 2010
Venue	Rural Crafts Centre, Holme Lacy Campus, Holme Lacy, Hereford, Herefordshire, HR2 6LL		
Chair	David James	DJ	George James & Sons, Blacksmiths
Speakers	Bethan Griffiths	BG	The Ironwork Studio
	James Mott	JM	Project Book
	Brian Hall	BH	Hall Conservation
	Paul Allen	PA	Motcombe Forge
	George Swann	GS	Construction Skills
	Adrian Legge	AL	Senior Tutor, Hereford College of Technology

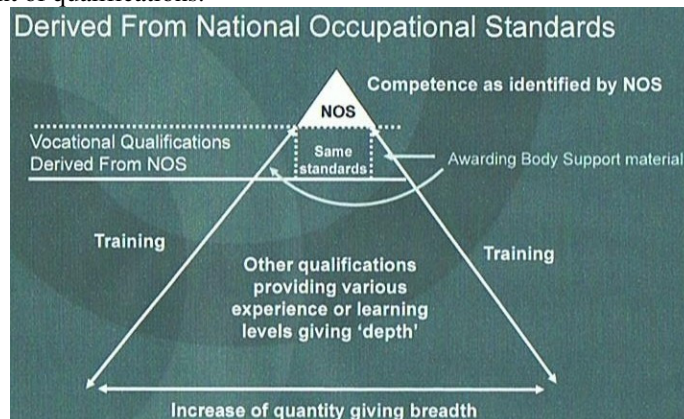
1.0	Introduction by David James (summarised)	ACTION
1.1	<p>Why are we here today? The National Heritage Ironwork Group (NHIG) has been formed due to shared concern that there are no 'uniform' standards /specifications for heritage ironwork, resulting in no understanding of the skills required. As blacksmiths we are on an unlevel playing field when it comes to tenders, as we are competing with 'general metalworkers' who don't aspire to our level of skill and as a result our craft is being devalued. NHIG would like to see a consistent & objective approach to: GUIDELINES on the specification of restoration work; ACCREDITATION for blacksmith conservator/restorers; a RESOURCE CENTRE for ironwork information; COURSES studying historic ironwork. However, NHIG is not about dictation , but rather the means by which formal consultation can take place with all those concerned regarding our objectives.</p>	
1.2	<p>The main thrust is skills. NHIG is aware there are contentious issues with no consensus, however we should not let this overshadow the fact there is also a lot of common ground for us to focus on.</p>	
1.3	<p>What NHIG would like to address today is;</p>	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. General acceptance/support of; <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. High standards, b. National Occupational Standards, c. Consensus for raising the profile of heritage work, d. Principle of accreditation e. Heritage Lottery Fund Blacksmithing Bursary bid. 2. General concerns; a list of your comments and concerns from which we can further debate & research. 3. Involvement; volunteers to actively get involved, making use of the Face Book Group, links to NHIG web page. 	
2.0	<p>Why now? by Bethan Griffiths (summarised)</p>	
2.1	<p>NHIG wishes to bring to your attention that there is a current push, led by government & heritage bodies, towards mandatory registration to prove individual skill driven by demand for assurance that craftspeople are suitably qualified.</p>	
2.2	<p>A ten-point 'Memorandum of Understanding on maintaining standards & best practice in the built heritage sector' has been created. It is being used as the basis for working towards and encouraging all heritage funding agencies to insist on the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) Heritage Skills card.</p>	
2.3	<p>The National Heritage Training Group has been set up to facilitate this with the objective of ensuring a workforce of sufficiently skilled craftspeople to work on our UK historic buildings.</p>	
2.4	<p>It is important to note that the CSCS is not just about Health & Safety (which is mandatory) but also about competence. There are eight types of card to certify competence of different trades and managerial roles. They are intended to provide clients with a simple way to check that everyone on their site possesses the appropriate skills to carry out their work competently.</p>	
2.5	<p>NHIG's concern is that although the CSCS Heritage Skills Card is not yet compulsory for Blacksmiths (due to a lack of any approved accreditation system) but as a national scheme it</p>	

	has potential of becoming so, as such it would be remiss of our industry not to do anything about it. The challenge is to get involved and find a 'fit' that actually suits us before someone else enforces one!	
3.0	Demand - by James Mott (summarised)	
3.1	Current surveys and reports acknowledge large numbers of clients (400 per day) looking to appoint qualified & experienced crafts people. Some published lists of craftsmen use a 'vetting' procedure whereby portfolios and references are assessed; however, with no formal standards or accredited lists many enquiries go unanswered due to legal obligations. The Wedgewood Survey estimated that 70% of work is undertaken by unskilled craftsmen. Not only would an official accreditation system be beneficial to both practitioners and clients, but it would also fill a gap for which there is a demand. This is becoming an urgent priority to ensure work is only taken on by competent people.	
4.0	Current Profile of Ironwork - by Brian Hall (summarised)	
4.1	Perception of Ironwork; Ironwork tends to fall under the 'building maintenance' rather than the 'art collection' remit, but we regard decorative wrought iron as part of decorative art generally, an integral part of architectural or landscape design. At its best, decorative ironwork is up there with the stonework on Great Britain's Cathedrals, but it's still thought of by many owners as a bit of rusty old fencing that some bloke down the road can weld up or make just as good new at a fraction of the price (and not just the individual owner of a relatively small historic property- there's plenty of stately country palaces and important historic buildings with bodged and ruined ironwork). It's happened so often and it's so widespread that there's not much left, and the situation is desperate. We have to close off access to work on historic, quality ironwork from the bloke with an arc welder before it's all lost; and open it up to the people with real skills and ability - or the trade will suffer. We also need to make custodians and owners value classic decorative ironwork.	
4.2	Perception of Blacksmiths: We need to raise the profile to a level of 'professional' recognition, not just a craft. Blacksmiths perceive themselves and are perceived by their clients as craftspeople, makers, artisans. The way those skills and qualities have been used to preserve historic ironwork has been to replicate and replace. The Tijou Screens at Hampton Court Palace is a graphic demonstration of how this approach has failed. We want to ensure that not only are the skills up to standard when replication is the only option, but that the conservator blacksmith has the objective analytical ability to step back and not dogmatically favour the traditional techniques, but to dispassionately evaluate all the alternatives.	
4.3	What's Needed: We are all agreed that there is a need for well trained blacksmith/conservators to work on traditional decorative wrought iron, but the role of the blacksmith working on historic decorative ironwork must be redefined to suit the needs of the custodians and the ethics of conservation as the perception of historic decorative ironwork develops. The blacksmith/conservator must be capable of carrying out traditional techniques to a high standard, must understand the art and history of decorative ironwork and metalworking, but must also appreciate the need to be flexible, to be objective and use alternative, non-traditional treatment where it is less invasive and will save more historic material. To many in the trade, this will be an unacceptable departure from the traditions of blacksmithing, and it is a radical change, but it is one that is essential to meet current needs and to enable blacksmithing to change, evolve and develop in the future. The training the conservator/blacksmith should be given will prepare them for Professional accreditation as Conservator Restorers with (PACR) accreditation and then they will be on a par with accredited conservators in other disciplines, which is what is needed for the future conservation of external and large historic metalwork.	
5.0	The Opportunity by Paul Allen (summarised)	
5.1	I got involved because we have all worked hard to acquire the craft skills of our trade and this is an opportunity to get them recognised.	
5.2	As I see it the main problem is that work is currently approached differently by everyone, there are simply too many different views. With no common standard or processes our personal differences confuse the client, how are they to distinguish the difference between good and bad practice?	
5.3	Our techniques make us unique as our primary trade is about forging and we should be proud to get our craft acknowledged. We have all worked hard to acquire these skills and this should be	

recognised, rather than allowing our trade to be undermined by those who haven't. To do this, then yes, we will all have to be assessed, but I don't have a problem with that. It is not a threat and common standards have the potential of creating a level playing field within the tendering process. I am aware that I don't know everything, we all have gaps in our knowledge or areas we are unsure about; this is also an opportunity to learn and improve. Personally I'm particularly interested in learning what conservators & finishers know so that I can approach these areas correctly. I hope that you too can also view this as an opportunity.

6.0 National Occupational Standards (NOS) by George Swann

6.1 What are NOS? They are statements of skill, knowledge and understanding needed in employment that clearly define the outcome of competent performance in a given trade, occupation or profession. They are the starting point for all craft qualifications, sitting at the top they 'override' everything in the qualification structure framework. NOS are statements of competence and all about 'skills', in themselves they are not 'qualifications' but are used for the development of qualifications.



6.2 How are they developed? The process of developing their technical content is undertaken by forming National Working Groups (NWG's). The NWG is the 'occupational representative consultation' of current practitioners of the trade that provide and debate the information for the new standards. It must be a National representative group covering the whole of England, Scotland, N. Ireland & Wales. This is not necessarily where practitioners are based but where they carry out their work. Construction Skills (CS) Training Developers manage and facilitate the process by using a standard approach to format & recognised terminology that is clear to understand and unambiguous. This process is regulated to ensure the appropriate consultation is undertaken. The suites of standards are then submitted to the regulators for approval. Once approved they are imported to the UK Standards database. The Recommended Qualification Structures are on the web at www.cskills.org.

6.3 NOS enable awarding bodies, education and training providers to:

- develop training and qualifications
- map current provision against the relevant NOS
- to develop entirely new qualifications and courses basing the demand and outcomes on the competences identified in the NOS.

6.4 NOS assist employers and managers:

- describe the skills they need
- assess the skills they already have
- develop training and recruitment plans to fill skills gaps and shortages
- form the basis of job descriptions
- describe good practice and assist in setting objectives in performance plans and reviews
- inform the content of training plans and training as they specify in detail what constitutes competence
- evaluate training by defining the expected outcomes
- develop benchmarking exercises either to use internally or to compare with other similar organisations.

6.5 Individuals and employees can use NOS to:

- undertake self-assessment of competences against their own or other jobs
- provide a foundation for Continued Professional Development and associated career development
- reveal a base point for qualifications that relate to work needs
- motivate to learn and develop new and existing skills
- help develop personal knowledge and skills, improve performance and to gain credit for achievements
- achieve greater job satisfaction through improved personal achievement.

<p>7.0 7.1 7.2 7.3 7.4</p>	<p>Heritage Blacksmithing NOS by George Swann & Adrian Legge Although NOS are driven by demand, the more people that get up and say ‘I want’ the more chance of getting the; you need a funding route in with one of the development agencies. Construction Skills (CS) working with the National Heritage Training Group has created a route via ‘Heritage’ which is why we are starting with this specialism. The important point is that a heritage NOS for blacksmithing will give English Heritage (and similar bodies) something to base guidelines and standards on. In addition elements can also be used for blacksmithing outside of heritage as the forging skills are universal to new and heritage work. The draft Heritage Blacksmithing NOS were presented and thoroughly explained to the forum delegates. With very minor adjustments they were agreed and accepted by all delegates as representing the foundation of what we do as blacksmiths. It was agreed to put a link from the NHIG website to CS for people to find the agreed NOS and also the contact details for anyone wishing to comment on the drafts. The agreed draft NOS will now go to CS regulators for approval in two weeks. If we are successful in their acceptance our trade can then lobby the awarding bodies to turn them into a qualification. There is no set time frame for this BUT the more enthusiastic we are as a trade the more likely it is to happen.</p>	<p>BG</p>
<p>8.0 8.1 8.2</p>	<p>New Entrants Training Scheme (NETS) by Adrian Legge & Paul Allen It was announced that the training for the NETS course at Hereford College is coming to an end. As there are currently no established blacksmithing NOS there is no sustainable route to draw down funding for the NETS. A heritage blacksmithing NOS could however support the NETS. There was a request all delegates to write a letter outlining your views on it to the Learning Skills Council. Contact details to be posted on the NHIG web site.</p>	<p>BG</p>
<p>9.0 9.1 9.2 9.3</p>	<p>Heritage Lottery Fund Heritage Blacksmith Bursary Bid by David James On the 19th March 2010 NHIG submitted an application for funding to create the first British training course in heritage blacksmithing. It is a vocational (work placement) based proposal with underpinning knowledge provided by block release to Hereford College of Technology. This project is aimed at taking the heritage NOS to the next stage by developing guidelines & training based on them. Students and training provision will also be evaluated throughout which will provide the basis of a report assessing training & delivery requirements within this specialism. It is hoped that this project can be used to ‘pump prime’ a more sustainable training course. Hereford College has so far concentrated on traditional forge skills within the modern world by including new technologies e.g. welding, plasma-cutting. The gap left is how to apply these skills within existing conservation guidelines. This training scheme will be the first attempt to learn from conservation and by doing so fill this gap. The outcome of the application will be announced in May. If successful NHIG are looking for supporters of this project especially in the form of short term placements for students.</p>	
<p>10.0 10.1 10.2 10.3 10.4 10.5 10.6</p>	<p>Open Forum led by Adrian Legge Q; Won’t heritage blacksmithing courses end up with too many people trained for too small a market? A; This is vocational based training so these people already have a job in the industry and (with due respect to the grey haired) we need sustainability for these skills. Q; How many employers in the UK are capable of providing skilled training in this specialism? A; Hard to assess as individuals aren’t always members of an association & not good at publishing themselves. Q; Will I have to go back to school? A; No – this is ‘vocational’ training and assessment. Q; Why have we been kept in the dark so far regarding NOS? A; NOS is compiled using one representative from each of the four countries (England, Scotland, N.Ireland & Wales) with each representative selected and assessed by regulatory guidelines. It is not possible to include everyone in compiling the draft as a small group can work in a manner that a group of fifty can’t. NHIG became aware of an opportunity for our industry and acted on it, breaking the back of the work ready for wider consultation today. Q; Are there any other international standards that are relevant? A; Yes, the European Qualification Framework. Q; How will assessment work? A; Existing vocational assessment frameworks are based on; 1, an assessor coming to watch you at work and take personal statements relating to your understanding & knowledge. 2, the assessors have to justify their opinions and talk to each other to regulate the assessing process</p>	

10.7	<p>to make sure everyone is working to the same standards. The proposed CSCS Heritage Skills Card is not going to be a high enough standard for the best of the best and the Institute of Conservation (ICON) registration system is something to aspire to; however currently blacksmiths don't register on this list. We need to establish our own 'credible' accreditation system through debate and feedback. Q; Why can people call themselves blacksmiths who aren't? A; That's what this is about!</p>	
10.8	<p>Question's and concerns compiled for addressing at next forum;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a 'standard' is agreed, what happens if people pass the assessment but don't practise? • Need to form an authoritative association. • Who writes the standards? • Can a 'model' specification be compiled to take to the client? • If there are gaps of certain types of work in our portfolios can 'test/simulation pieces' be substituted & used for assessment? • How are we going to publicise our guidelines to get them picked up by clients & other professionals? • Need to involve all related parties (architects & conservation officers, heritage & funding bodies, etc) in the development of our guidelines so that all points of view are considered. • Are NHIG going to set up a member association? • What capacity does NHIG have to vet/assess & how does this need to be developed? • There is an urgency for accreditation – as most of what we're talking about could take a long time, could a 'stepped' entry level system be used, which is developed and added to, over time, for the higher levels & specialisms? • 22apr10 – still not received Q's written onto Hereford computer screen from Adrian 	
11.0	Summing up & close of meeting by David James	
11.1	<p>There appears to be a consensus that the objectives of NHIG are required, and that together we are heading in the right direction. We need to make sure all views are aired and that we consult with everyone involved in heritage ironwork from the custodian and architect to the trainee blacksmith. Working together we can do this. A questionnaire will soon be available on the NHIG website: please spare some time to fill it in and return it to us. Please get involved and have your say, and remember that communication works two ways – if you have a question or comment let us know!</p>	BG
11.2	<p>To keep up to date & informed please sign up to our Face Book group and visit our website.</p>	
11.3	<p>Richard Quinnell volunteered to host the next meeting at Rowhurst Forge, Leatherhead, KT22 0EN; the date has now been confirmed as Saturday the 10th July. Details will be circulated.</p>	BG