

RECORD OF MEETING

Subject Conservation Principles Forum **Date** 10th July 2010

Venue Rowhurst Forge, Oxshott Rd, Leatherhead, Surrey, KT22 0EN

Chair David James DJ George James & Sons, Blacksmiths

Speakers Bethan Griffiths BG The Ironwork Studio

Adrian Legge AL Senior Tutor, Hereford College of Technology

Brian Hall BH Hall Conservation

1.0	Welcome & Introduction to the day by David James (summarised)	ACTION
1.1	<i>Following a warm welcome and introduction to the aims and objectives of the NHIG David went on to talk about the day ahead.....</i>	
1.2	Today’s forum is about the blacksmith conservator/restorer and what theories and principles there are to guide & evaluate their work. The term ‘Conservation’, within the field of heritage conservation, is generally accepted as meaning the preservation, protection, care and restoration of our cultural heritage.....but the question for us here today is how does this translate into good practice for heritage ironwork?	
1.3	As a group NHIG have a good idea of what is out there, we’ve done our homework, and are aware that we are working in a wider world where general principles are already established and used by other professions (Bethan will talk about this more). It’s a while since I did my first restoration project but like many of you at the start I didn’t have any information on how to approach and carry out restoration work and neither did I know where to go and get it, I learnt and gained experience on the job. Today it’s probably not too different for most of you but in reality conservation guidelines are available. However, they are still not promoted within our trade with the still unanswered question to the majority of smiths of where to find them? What we the NHIG want is something that is widely available within our craft and while we’re at it something which is also specific to the work we do. A guide that is readily understandable to any blacksmith that picks it up.	
1.4	The need for this was first identified by the National Heritage Training Group in their ‘Skills Needs Analysis of the UK Built Heritage Sector’ report in 2008. Understanding that professionals have a fundamental role in the care of our build heritage, they discovered extensive knowledge gaps ‘particularly regarding the appreciation and application of conservation principles’. Like when I first started out they also openly admitted that ‘access’ is a contributing problem by recommending the need to ‘improve access to authoritative advice and guidance relating to traditional skills and materials’. Preceding this was another recommendation whereby they acknowledge certain information gaps by claiming a need to ‘establish and propagate standards of best practice.’ We are here today because the NHIG not only agree with them but want to do something positive about it.	
1.5	We have looked at and used established guidelines in compiling today’s discussion document. Our starting point in promoting good practice is agreement of some basic principles and the purpose of this meeting is to discuss, clarify and agree these principles in the form of a ‘Conservation Policy’. This is not about the minute detail, as by going into too much detail we won’t get anywhere, but rather an overview of ‘Best Practice’.	
1.6	The aim today is that we can agree on what the basic principles are which the National Heritage Ironwork Group will develop into a conservation policy. We have prepared a discussion document to inform and guide the forum today but before we get stuck in Bethan will explain a little more about the already established guidelines and how NHIG intend to develop a policy suitable for use by custodians, specifiers & practitioners alike.	

2.0	<p>Overview Of NHIG’s Proposed Conservation Principles by Bethan Griffiths (summarised)</p>	
2.1	<p>One of NHIG’s main aims is to ensure that there is specific advice and guidance available for blacksmiths working within the field of conservation to fill the current void, however, the first thing to understand is the context of NHIG within the world of conservation. For ease of clarification the mainstream & statutory sources of conservation principles in the UK can be viewed as a hierarchy of the following four groups;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS): Although you may not find direct references to this charter within specifications it is good to know about it as, due to its international standing, it sits right at the top with its principles generally adopted in the UK. 2. Central Government: Our government of course directly controls what happens within the UK working through the names we commonly know of English Heritage, Cadw & Historic Scotland. All these carry enormous weight when it comes to legislation and guidance. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Legislation: this provides the core framework within which the principles are applied. b. Policy, Guidance & Advice: this is generally produced and published directly by English Heritage, Cadw & Historic Scotland. 3. Local Authorities; Making sure the policies are implemented by authorising consent on work to listed buildings. It should also be noted that planning departments also publish policies and guidance. 4. Amenity Societies (Professional Bodies, Associations, etc): This is where the NHIG sits. These organisations are not listed last because they are less important but because their role is advisory. Many publish principles and as a philosophy of conservation these are still important. 	
2.2	<p>There are however other influential sources which fall outside of the above simplified view most noticeably;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • British Standard BS 7913:1998: You may see this referred to in specifications. • Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF): While they generally adopt ICOMOS principles they also have other additions for example, ‘accessibility’ (in the widest possible sense). There mention here is because of the prevalence of the HLF in many important conservation projects where they set the terms of there grant. 	
2.3	<p>Working within and in accordance with this framework of legislation & guidance NHIG’s ambition, from its position as an advisory group, is to develop and publish specific guidelines for blacksmithing. Today’s forum is about informing and developing a document which will form the basis for a consensus view, a conservation policy. It is intended to cover all the main generic points and be, at the finish, suitable for use by custodians, specifiers & practitioners alike.</p>	
2.4	<p>From this beginning NHIG hope to eventually move forward by putting more meat on the bones, through adding greater detail, with guideline documents and then finally specifications. For this a project proposal will need to be needed to not only keep those involved focused, but give others a better understanding of what the project is about and importantly how they can get involved and help. The biggest factor in achieving this is to make sure we can walk before we run, bringing us full circle to the foundation document, the conservation policy. Making sure we are all singing from the same hymn sheet.</p>	
2.5	<p>In order to get the policy widely adopted NHIG aim to engage with others concerned with heritage ironwork, from the owner and custodian to the conservator and practitioner, and in doing so form a well balanced working group to peer review their proposals. The National Trust and English Heritage have already confirmed their desire to get involved and support the outcome of the results being recognised as NHIG’s but adopted by themselves and others.</p>	
2.6	<p>Today’s forum is important as it will inform the discussion document that will be forwarded for peer review.</p>	

<p>3.0</p> <p>3.1</p> <p>3.2</p> <p>3.3</p> <p>3.4</p>	<p>The Proposed Conservation Policy By Adrian Legge & Brian Hall (summarised)</p> <p>All delegates were given a hard copy of the draft policy proposal.</p> <p>Adrian introduced the proposal which was prepared for the forum by a small working group from the NHIG council including; Adrian Legge, Andrew Naylor, Bethan Griffiths, Chris Topp, David James & Geoff Wallis.</p> <p>The policy was then read out by Adrian, but aided by Brian on specific conservation issues, one item at a time with each point being explained as necessary to the group before an open forum on each.</p> <p>There was an enthusiastic participation in the debates with many points of view heard and discussed. The result was a number of proposals for the amendment of the policy text. Adrian drew the debate on each point to a conclusion by the groups agreement to the changes, the results of which are in Appendix A.</p>	
<p>4.0</p> <p>4.1</p> <p>4.2</p>	<p>Case Studies by Adrian Legge</p> <p>Adrian presented a variety of ironwork images to end the forum by providing examples against which the group disused how to apply the policy principles.</p> <p><i>NOTE; Bob Oakes gave an impromptu presentation of a case study showing what he proposed was an appalling example of reinstatement ironwork to a listed building. He used this case to outline why he was present today and his support for the guidelines that the NHIG is trying to establish.</i></p>	
<p>5.0</p> <p>5.1</p> <p>5.2</p> <p>5.3</p> <p>5.4</p>	<p>Moving forward with achieving NHIG aims & close of the day by David James (summarised)</p> <p><i>Following the close of the forum David did a short presentation on NHIG's Bursary Programme, the upcoming launch at Hampton Court Palace and the funding needs of the group and how those present could help. A donation form was handed out and £170 in cash was received on the day and 'Orchard House (IFAs) Ltd' confirmed as a sponsor to cover the outstanding costs of the launch. David then went on to close the days meeting.....</i></p> <p>The relevance of today will become more apparent as the NHIG moves forward in achieving its aims but what is great about today is the fact that a general consensus has been reached. From here we can forward our proposal for peer review as well as advance to putting the meat on the bones and in doing so I can envisage that there will be plenty more follow on debates!</p> <p>These forums are about the need to work together and take everyone with us as NHIG develops. With your help NHIG will get there. The debate about the skills we have as blacksmiths is as important for new and old work. Going by the feedback NHIG is doing the right things and the time is right.....and together we can raise the profile of our craft!</p> <p>Thank you to all of you for making the effort to participate in the forum and particularly a warm thank you to Richard Quinnell for hosting today's event.</p>	

NOTE; Rory Cullen, Head of Buildings for the National Trust agreed to organise and chair a peer review of the NHIG conservation principles discussion document. Updates on this will be posted on the NHIG website as and when available.

Proposed Conservation Policy for Heritage Forged Ironwork

19th August 2010

DISCLAIMER:

This document is a first draft of the NHIG conservation policy and as such should not be used. It is offered only as an addendum to the forum notes in the form which was provisionally agreed at the forum. The policy is subject to peer review and will be issued in its final form in due course.

Core Principles:

The fundamental aim of the blacksmith conservator is to conserve; to slow down the process of deterioration and stabilise the object's condition with minimal loss of evidence. This recognises the intrinsic worth of the object's original design, finish and materials, and ideally this stabilisation should be the limit of conservation work.

Where conservation is insufficient on its own to ensure an object's long term survival, provision of support and/or protection should be selected to ensure minimal disturbance to the object, and reversible processes should be used whenever possible.

Where for a reason of aesthetics and/or function restoration work is carried out on an object, intervention should be kept to the minimum, reversible processes should be used wherever possible and the whole process should be recorded.

These simple, fundamental principles recognise the need to preserve the object intact as evidence for future generations.

Proposed Good Practice:

1. Consideration and understanding of historic significance.
2. Budgetted provision for planned short- and medium-term maintenance.
3. Specification of all stages of work in accordance with good conservation practice.
4. Selection and proper training of suitable practitioners.
5. Improvement of immediate environment (e.g. protection from the elements, covering, packing, etc.), dehumidification, reduction of pollutants.
6. Relocation to a less destructive environment, if this is agreed to be the only means of ensuring preservation.
7. Use of replicas for display, or to fulfil function.
8. Protection of surfaces.
9. Detailed recording of object before, during and after conservation work. Secure and stable long-term storage of records.
10. Use of additional materials or structure for strength or support.
11. Retention of as much existing material as possible, reversibly repairing and consolidating rather than renewing.
12. Use of techniques and materials as originally used on the object where possible.
13. New material should be identifiable either directly or by records.
14. Recording and retention in a recognised protected environment of all parts and materials that cannot be re-used and returned to the client
15. Provision of comprehensive written maintenance schedules and operation guidelines.
16. Thorough periodic inspection by competent practitioners.

Proposed Definitions:

Decorative wrought ironwork is: a forged decorative object, principally ferrous.

An object is: an historical item under consideration, which may be anything from a single small detail to a monumental gateway.

Material is: the physical substance of which the object is made, including its surface finish.

Historic Importance is: the aesthetic, technological or social value for past, present or future generations in terms of any of the following;

- Age.
- Uniqueness of design, scale, materials, etc. when originally made.
- Rarity as a survivor of its type.
- Example of past style, design, innovation, use of materials, constructional practice, etc.
- Association with persons, places or events.
- Spiritual, political, or cultural significance.
- Exceptional aesthetic qualities of form, colour, decoration, etc. and the contribution made to the immediate environment or landscape.
- Condition and extent of the remaining original material and additional material.

Conservation is: stabilising the object in its existing state, maintaining its constituent materials and slowing deterioration, this includes consideration of the provision of support and protection. Means of protection may mean removal to a recognised protected environment.

Restoration is: returning the object to a known and agreed earlier state with minimal introduction of new material.

NOTE;

Recording is: a precise recording of the object in any or several appropriate media: written; photographic; drawing; laser scans; X-ray Diffraction (XRD) etc., prior to treatment specification; before treatment starts; during the course of treatment and at the conclusion of the conservation project; or, it may be a stand-alone survey commissioned by the client. Recorded information must be collated, stored and full copies given to the client.

Maintenance is: the periodic inspection and care of an object, with routine attention given to defects as they occur, in order to preserve it for as long as possible with the minimum of intervention.