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BUILDING CONSERVATION SUMMER SCHOOL CIRENCESTER UNIVERSITY 2022

Stephen has recently attended a residential course at the famous Cirencester Agricultural University to advance his expertise in advising his clients on the maintenance and conservation of heritage buildings, with particular emphasis in providing Quinquennial Surveys for Church properties.

The course was an exhaustive 45 hour, five day journey taking in building conservation philosophy, building defects, timber decay and repair, energy retrofits, masonry repairs, roof coverings, lime mortars and renders, glazing and timber frame technology.

Stephen's highlight was a practical day learning about the different types of lime mortars and plasters including slaking and an opportunity to practice his re-pointing skills on a rubble filled stone wall agricultural building! Most of the churches that Stephen surveys were built using lime mortars in masonry and lime plasters on walls, and lath and plaster ceilings. It is important to understand the significance of using lime mortars to keep masonry in healthy condition, thereby avoiding deterioration by trapped moisture caused by modern cement mortar.



Stephen with trowel in hand practicing his re-pointing skills using quick lime putty mortar on an old rubble filled stone wall. (Quick lime is not to be confused with hydrated lime which builders add to cement mortar to improve workability).

We were treated to a tour of Cirencester town centre by the well-known local Artist and Conservator, Rory Young, who's indepth knowledge of the architecture and history of the famous honey-coloured stone buildings was fascinating and included descriptions of the majestic John the Baptist Parish Church and recent refurbishment of the South Porch, complete with lime wash. The streets were lined with gems of architectural history, some correctly maintained and others not so! The wool merchant's house was a fine example of the riches resulting from the medieval wool trade. We ended the day in Rory's own restored and very individual town house as he entertained us with local stories with wine glass in hand!

St John the Baptist Church, Cirencester, one of the largest parish churches in England renowned for its recently refurbished south porch.



Our final day was an amazing experience at Woodchester Mansion, a Grade I Listed architectural masterpiece of significance at a national and international level. Woodchester Mansion in Gloucestershire is a masterclass of the Victorian Gothic Revival style. The building was left unfinished in the mid 1870's which is special in itself as it reveals in layers the techniques and craftsmanship buried by normally completed projects. We were given tasks in surveying the building, diagnosing defects and specifying repairs in accordance with the conservation principles of the Society for The Protection of Ancient Buildings founded by William Morris and others. Work is still taking place on the building to conserve it and we were treated to a tour from the scaffold, one stonemason revealing that he had worked on the Vatican!

A selfie opportunity at the Woodchester Mansion.

This Gothic Revival Mansion features in TV productions including The Crown, Celebrity Haunted Mansion Live and His Dark Materials.



Our lecturers were an elite roll call of property experts having reached the top of their profession and who have worked on famous national landmarks. They include Marianne Suhr, chartered building surveyor, who is perhaps best known as co-presenter with Griff Rhys Jones on the BBC TV series Restoration. Dr Duncan Philips, professor of Architectural Conservation for the Centre for Building Conservation Studies who has surveyed thousands of Listed Buildings of every type and age and is also a lecturer having done TV and radio work. Last but not least, Stephen Boniface, former chairman of the construction arm of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.

About Stephen Barlow

Stephen is a practicing chartered surveyor and RICS registered valuer with 35 years experience who set up his own practice in 2002. Stephen specialises in surveying churches, particularly providing Quinquennial condition reports which are required every five years as part of planned preventative maintenance programmes. Stephen's clients include numerous Methodist Church circuits and the East Midlands United Reformed Church. Stephen also advises local authorities and private clients with regard to building defects pathology.

If you wish to discuss any services offered please contact Stephen for informal advice. Stephen is happy to provide examples of Quinquennial reports to prospective new church clients.

Stephen Barlow, BSc MRICS
Chartered Surveyor & RICS Registered Valuer



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