



## From the Chairman

**Our emergence – however cautiously – from lockdown presents an opportunity to reflect on what we have learned during this strange time, and also to look forward to the new ventures before us.**

Looking back, we can be really proud that the webinar series which the pandemic inspired has really established itself as a permanent feature in our diary. The range of topics that have been covered shows how wide the interests of the Consortium are; and the webinars have drawn in several new partners in what we are collectively attempting to achieve. Altogether the whole webinar process has stimulated a lot of new ideas and initiatives within the Consortium, and brought us many new contacts – as well as informing us on a fascinating range of issues.

The pandemic also provided the opportunity to bring some of our internal affairs up to date. Looking to the future therefore, we have several new initiatives to put forward in the coming months. We were going to have brought some of these to the AGM in June, but as will be noted elsewhere we have decided to postpone the AGM until the autumn in the belief that people will by then be more willing to come and meet in person, and in particular that the younger members and bursary winners should have been vaccinated and had time to build up antibodies. We really want this next AGM to be an opportunity for us all to meet in person.

One important piece of work has been the introduction of a new membership software package which will provide the basis for a much more efficient way of handling membership issues. We anticipate that this will give us a much better platform to build our long planned new membership drive. Another element is the introduction of a new Code of Conduct. This is a necessary step in the process of establishing sounder credentials for the Consortium as a responsible charitable organisation. This is really important now that we have grown so much in stature and influence within the sector.

A further step is a plan to bring the Consortium and the Foundation together as one single body. Although those of us close to the running of YCCC have always thought of the two bodies as being different facets of a single organisation, it has become progressively clear that the existence of YCCC and YFCC together are confusing to others in the sector. At the time the Consortium and (subsequently) the Foundation were established it was considered necessary to keep the membership interests separate from the charitable status; but we now understand that this is no longer necessary. Accordingly, we are taking steps to bring forward proposals to formalise the bringing together of both under the original title of the York Consortium for Conservation and Craftsmanship, for presentation at the AGM.

Apart from these, you will see from this newsletter what a lively and wide spread of interests the membership covers. Happy reading!

Martin Stancliffe, Chairman

13th May 2021



Tuesday Talk | 19:00, 15th June  
'Grinling Gibbons in the Workshop' by master carver Alan Lamb and conservator David Luard  
(For webinar details, see page 7)

Photo © Alan Lamb

## Date Change: Annual General Meeting

28th September 2021

We have decided to delay this year's AGM, to increase the likelihood that a physical event might be possible. The AGM will now be held on Tuesday 28th September and the format of the event will be confirmed in the summer.

Documents for the AGM, including the Annual Report, and details for registering will be circulated in early September and we hope that you still be able to will join us!

## Bursary Application Deadline Extended



As the situation continues to be somewhat uncertain for many conservation and craft courses, internships and training opportunities, we have extended the deadline for applications to this year's YFCC Bursary Scheme to Monday 31st May. This will give a little more time to confirm what will be possible later in the year.

We welcome applications even in cases where a place, or dates, for a training opportunity have not yet been confirmed.

This year we particularly want to encourage applications from conservation and craft businesses to support apprenticeships (for which larger sums up to £3000 are available) and from practitioners adversely affected by the pandemic who are seeking to re-establish themselves or develop in a new area. Please do spread the word to anyone who might be able to benefit.

Further information and application forms, along with more details about the Bursary Award scheme are, as always, [available on our website.](#)

## Remembering Dick Reid

Since we announced the sad news of Dick Reid's death in the last newsletter, a number of people have been in touch to express their regrets at his loss, but also their memories of him. Here we share two recollections, which capture Dick's irrepressible character and love of life, which had such a strong effect on those who knew him and upon on the craft and conservation community more widely.

*Peter Burman recalls:*

"Soon after I moved to York in 1990 to run the Centre for Conservation Studies at the University a friend called Peter Coates – a gifted stone carver working at York Minster - asked me what I missed after London. I told him I missed the fortnightly meetings of the Art Workers' Guild, the stimulating lectures and especially the fellowship of the Guild. Before the evening was out, we had decided to found the York Art Workers' Association, testing the idea by organising a well-attended public meeting. Dick's encouragement was crucial.

He was the very epitome of what being an 'art worker' meant. It was a joy that in due time he became the Master of the Guild in London. As to York, the York Art Workers' Association continues to exist after all these years. Moreover, Dick and Buff Reid both played important roles in supporting the York Consortium for Conservation & Craftsmanship. It has enhanced the lives of countless young craftspeople and conservators by giving them timely bursaries.

I have two particularly special memories of time spent in Dick's company. In September 2009 I had the opportunity to organise a behind-the-scenes private visit to Dumfries House, Ayrshire, for Dick, and distinguished friends Donald Buttress (architect) and Ivan Hall (architectural historian). I was able to do this through the then Curator, Charlotte Rostek. To experience Dick, Donald and Ivan revelling in the consummate craftsmanship of that house and its furniture was simply extraordinary. Collectively, individually and temperamentally they all three loved the art, architecture and culture of the 18th century. To see them, especially hands-on Dick, running their fingers up and down a moulding; to see the gleam in their eyes; to feel the friendship between them, their sense of fun at being together on an outing. It was all quite wonderful, never to be forgotten.

A few years later I was staying with a university friend who lives near Ripon, Bill Connor, a retired archivist of distinction. One of our rituals is that we always go out to lunch at The Blue Lion in East Witton, an inn where the food is famously scrumptious. On entering we found Dick and Buff seated at a table. After we had said hello, Dick said - this is our wedding anniversary, but we have said almost everything to one another that we could possibly say, so why not come and sit with us? So, we did and, needless to say, we had one of the great lunches of our lives, sparkling conversation and delicious food. A perfect combination of circumstances in which Dick was in his element.

He was a great and dear man and it was such a privilege to know him."



Dick Reid admiring door mouldings at Dumfries House

Photo © Peter Burman

*Martin Standcliffe remembers:*

"The first time I met Dick was when he joined the regional committee for the National Trust in Yorkshire at a time when I was employed in the restoration of Beningbrough Hall. He came with a reputation for asking awkward questions, and he was certainly an intimidating presence at the committee table; but he was always supportive to me as a young very green architect.

I first worked with him on an actual project in the early 1980s, when I was architect for the Culloden Tower in Richmond for the Landmark Trust. The Trust had taken the tower over in very damaged condition: the lead had been stripped from the roof, causing the partial collapse of a fine moulded plaster ceiling immediately below; and vandals had got into the building and smashed the strange and delicate wood carving of the two decorative chimney pieces. Luckily, photographs had been taken of the ceiling and of the chimney pieces before they were damaged; and in addition, someone had collected all the surviving fragments of the carvings from the two fireplaces and put them into a bag.

Unfortunately all the fragments had been mixed together, so that there was no way of knowing which piece came from which fire surround, and many had been burned and lost; but Landmark was insistent that every fragment be used in the repair. I went to Dick to seek his help and I remember that he patiently explained that it would be much easier, and therefore cheaper, to start again

afresh, guided by the photographs; but when I insisted that we must do as Landmark had requested he immediately entered into the spirit of the conservation process and patiently fitted every surviving piece into a new carved framework.

I have a photograph of the final result before it was painted, which shows just how painstaking and fiddly the process was. But Landmark were right: by insisting on the use of the surviving material we were able to ensure that the spirit of the original carving was retained.

My next project with Dick followed a disastrous fire at Nostell Priory. An electrical fault had caused a fire which completely burnt out one of the rooms with all its

fine Chippendale furniture. The flames had broken through the solid mahogany decorated doors into the adjoining rooms, and only tiny fragments survived. I recall discussing their replacement with Dick – he identified the original wood as the finest quality Honduras mahogany, which of course was by now entirely unobtainable. But he told me he happened to have a single large plank of equivalent mahogany which, with some small adjustments to how the doors were originally made, could all be got out of the single plank. "It is a fine piece of timber I have had for many years, and I have kept it aside for just such an occasion" he said; and indeed, the doors cannot now be told apart from the surviving originals elsewhere in the house."

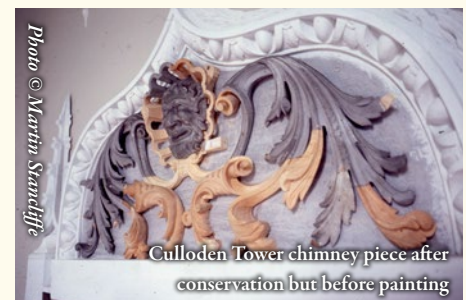


Photo © Martin Standcliffe

Culloden Tower chimney piece after conservation but before painting



## Announcing our new membership management system!

**York Consortium members will be pleased to hear that we are poised to move our current membership database to a new system, widely used by businesses, charities and associations.**

We have selected the new system as it will enable us to better support our members and to cater to your various interests. The new system will provide an online 'self-service' portal which is easy to use and, above all, secure. Through the portal, you will be able to update your details, payments and preferences.

The additional information provided by you in the new registration forms, will support the development of our plans for increased activities for our members. The improved functionality will also prepare us for any potential increase in our membership.

We would like to take this opportunity to encourage members who currently pay their subscriptions by standing order to switch to direct debit, as this will streamline our accounting processes, allowing us to devote more time to member activities.

In mid June, please look out for an email giving further information, as well as instructions on how to sign up to the new system. Our Membership Secretary and Conservation Research Officer will be on hand to provide support for those who need it.

Birte Walbers, *Membership Secretary:*

[membership@conservationyork.org.uk](mailto:membership@conservationyork.org.uk)

Katie Harrison, *Conservation Research Officer:*

[researchofficer@conservationyork.org.uk](mailto:researchofficer@conservationyork.org.uk)

## Let the organ sound...

After three years of continuous work costing over £2m, the great organ at York Minster is once again in full voice. The organ was dismantled almost completely, the 5,000 or so pipes being taken away for cleaning and repair. The opportunity was also taken to clean years of dirt and dust from the detailed carvings and delicate decoration of the 15thC pulpitum, or King's Screen, with its 15 polychrome stone statues of medieval monarchs.

The origins of the Minster organ go back to 1834, when the London firm of Elliot & Hill built an ambitious but problematic organ of 75 stops; the case, front pipes and two 32ft stops survive today. A major rebuild in 1903 was followed by further adaptations, reorganisation and revoicings on four successive occasions, the latest commencing in 2018. This was carried out by organ-builders Harrison & Harrison of Durham whose brief was to recapture the musical character and energy of the organ as left by their interventions in 1931.

Now, new slider soundboards and electro-pneumatic actions have been installed, and the layout conservatively revised, whilst maintaining the instrument's versatility across musical genres and bringing the diverse pipework together in a coherent tonal structure. The organ's wooden casework now looks different too, its original waisted shape being visible again above the pulpitum after years of being obscured.

Apart from the complex mechanical work undertaken, the thousands of decorative organ pipes visible on the organ case

and in the quire transepts also needed painstaking cleaning and partial repainting. Originally in a 'disagreeable-looking faded bronze' the current colourful scheme was provided by a Mr Blackmore of London during an overhaul of the organ in 1859, and hardly touched since. The style of decoration adopted consists of variously coloured arabesques intermixed with medieval flowering, in green, white, and gold, touched here and there with vermillion. Essex-based Robert Woodland and Son Ltd were invited to undertake the specialist cleaning and painting work,



Robert Woodland touching in pipework paint detail

parts of the design work requiring gold leaf were subsequently varnished to create a 3-dimensional effect.

There was a silver lining to the long months of the Minster's closure during the pandemic: the tonal specialists who were responsible for the all-important final 'voicing' and regulation of the thousands of pipes, were able to work conventional hours in an empty and silent locked-down cathedral, rather than having to work around services and tourists, usually during the night.

The first public performance on the almost fully restored organ was at the Candlemas Eucharist service, transmitted via YouTube on Sunday, Jan 31st, 2021 when the Asst. Director of Music, Ben Morris played Paul Patterson's beautiful Toccata Fluorescence, Op22.

But the formal reintroduction of the organ was reserved Easter Day, when the Archbishop of York carried out a formal celebratory re-dedication accompanied by a splendid programme of music culminating in the Toccata in D maj by Marcel Lanquetuit, played by the Minster's Director of Music, Robert Sharpe. This is surely one of the noisiest pieces of music ever written for the organ, which must have set the carefully conserved stained glass rattling in the windows!

Speaking to me afterwards, Robert Sharpe said "The glorious sounds of the restored organ follow over ten years of planning and work; we are thrilled to hear this sleeping beauty reawakened."

*Jim Spriggs*

## Research on glazed tile surfaces in India

The traditional craft of glazed tile-making arrived in the Indian subcontinent in the medieval period along with the Mughal rulers from Uzbekistan in Central Asia. It thrived as a popular mode of artistic expression but, today, glazed tile craftsmanship in India is depleted and there is a dearth of people with the skills and training required to sustain the tradition of glazed tile ornamentation.

As an undergraduate student of History at Delhi University, I would often visit the city's many monuments. The World Heritage site of Humayun's Tomb with its bright blue and green tiled canopies and vividly coloured domes was my absolute favourite. While choosing a dissertation topic for my Masters degree at the University of York, it was these scarcely discussed glazed tiles that came to my mind.

Scouring through different sources of literature, I discovered that while there were many art historical narratives of the evolution of glazed tiles as well as scientific studies on these ornamental elements, there was a lack of information about the conservation and traditional craft of glazed tile-work in the Indian context. So I undertook this research to understand better the conservation problems associated with the material, possible reasons for why the use of glazed tiles dwindled in India and steps that can be taken to give an impetus to renew its production.

Framed as a desk-based assessment of case studies, my research explored how local communities in three countries have been involved in projects conserving glazed tiles, which has contributed to the continuity of the craft skill there.

Keeping India as my focus, I discussed instances of international best practice from World Heritage level sites that represented exemplary specimens of glazed tile-work in Uzbekistan, India and Pakistan. Conservation efforts undertaken at Samarkand in Uzbekistan, Humayun's Tomb in India and the Lahore Fort Picture Wall, Wazir Khan Mosque and Makli Hill ensemble

in Pakistan were explored. Through these examples, I brought out not just the exquisite beauty and brilliance of traditional glazed tiles by providing a descriptive background of each site chosen, but also analysed the involvement of the community in the various conservation efforts.

The common overarching theme that emerged in all cases discussed was the very close engagement of communities in the conservation process. In India, only the Nizamuddin Urban Renewal Initiative at Humayun's Tomb has been implemented in the form of a community-centric conservation project, which helped to develop craftspeople's potential to manufacture glazed tiles.

Uzbekistan and Pakistan, however, have more than one instance where traditional crafts have been linked with local communities so as to benefit both heritage as well as peoples' lives. Through site-based workshops, training sessions and capacity building measures aimed at strengthening craftspeople's skills, initiatives in Uzbekistan and Pakistan were able to sustain, bolster and revive the craft skills of tile-making, essentially by heightening community participation.

Towards the end of the research, I came up with recommendations for how Indian conservation and heritage practice can imbibe strategies adopted by other nations to further their own efforts to prevent the age-old craft skill of glazed tile production from being lost.

In today's world where international heritage bodies and conventions are giving greater importance to people's participation in sustaining their heritage, this research suggested, among other things, the increasingly important idea of co-production in heritage, which would entail a close collaboration between conservators, craftsmen and communities, as a way in which glazed tile conservation and production in India could be brought back on track.

Although I had thought I would be interviewing craftspeople and heritage

practitioners for this study, the constraints posed by the COVID-19 crisis did not allow for that. Luckily enough, however, I was able to make a trip to Humayun's Tomb and conduct some fieldwork, photographs from which are attached here.

I particularly enjoyed researching and writing the case studies centred on Pakistan, especially because this gave me an



opportunity to learn about heritage across the Indian border. It is very unfortunate that due to the political situation between the two nations, researchers are unable to delve into the wealth of heritage and histories that either side has. It was a joy to write about the intricately tiled Lahore Fort Picture Wall, the mosaic minarets of the Wazir Khan Mosque and the sprawling funerary site at Makli Hill.

But all the while writing I kept thinking to myself, surely there must be scholars in Pakistan studying the Taj Mahal, Qutub Minar and Humayun's Tomb in the same way Indian researchers study Pakistani heritage and architecture. I particularly wanted to build my knowledge and understanding of glazed tiles as a specific building material, used essentially for embellishment purposes, in the hope that it would contribute towards my goal of being a material conservator in the future.

Writing this piece now, a few months down the line, I can say with some confidence that choosing this as a research focus has been beneficial. I have had the opportunity to work as an on-site trainee in conservation projects, and hope this is just the beginning of my learning and that I am able to widen my skill set.

I would really like to thank the YCCC for thinking my research worthy enough to be awarded the medal – it was most overwhelming and encouraging. I do hope that I am soon able to find the resources and guidance to take my study forward in a practical way so that it can contribute to the global effort for conserving our rich heritage.

Jahan Thakur MA





## Ruskin Land: John Ruskin's continuing influence today

Few people realise that Ruskin was a passionate gardener and that the wise stewardship of land was one of his key insights into the nature of satisfying work and healthy food. In this third article, I'd like to show how Ruskin sought to support rural crafts and reposition craftsmanship away from the manufactories back into his vision of an Arcadian idyll.

Ruskin's 1875 Memorandum on establishing the Guild of St George declared it to be 'constituted with the object of determining and instituting in practice the wholesome laws of agricultural life and economy and of instructing the agricultural labourer in the science art and literature of good husbandry.'

In 1877 Ruskin purchased St George's Farm, Totley, near Sheffield comprising an 18th century farmhouse, subsidiary buildings and 13 acres. He appointed Henry Swan, a 'cycling vegetarian, Quaker and artist' to help set up the farm as a collective, with nine working-men and their families. Like Edward Carpenter and his partner George Merrill they proposed to make boots and shoes to boost their income and demonstrate practical craftsmanship. It was one of Britain's earliest communes, but lasted only two years. Edward Carpenter said of the farming community that 'they were mostly great talkers.' Finding the precise balance between 'talk' and 'do' has always been a challenge to idealistic communities.

Ruskin's love of landscape was interwoven with his empathy for rural crafts and craftsmanship. Based at Brantwood, overlooking Lake Coniston, he vigorously encouraged local craft traditions – for example, textiles ('Ruskin Lace'); furniture, enriched with carving; pottery ('Ruskin Pottery'); traditional building materials and skills.

The Guild today is an education charity focused on arts, crafts and rural economy. This focus is best exemplified at Ruskin Land, the Guild's property in Wyre Forest, near Bewdley in Worcestershire.

The original property was given to the Guild by George Baker, Quaker, Mayor of Birmingham. Ruskin stayed wrote in Letter 80 of *Fors Clavigera*, 16 July 1877, that 'he has shown me St George's land, his gift, in the midst of a sweet space of English hill and dale and orchard, yet unhurt by hand of man.' The original 20 acres were later added to by purchase by the Guild and are surrounded by 6,000 acres of oak forest, orchard, meadow and wildlife habitats.

On my first visit to Ruskin Land, in the summer of 2011, I was bowled over by the beauty of the place – ancient forest land, orchards, meadows, grazing land – and by the demonstrations of rural craftsmanship and sound husbandry.

The Guild's own 40 hectares of woodlands are managed in hand after a long period of being leased to Natural England. Obvious care has been taken in the replanting of the orchards, keeping old local varieties where they still had life in them and did not need to be replaced.

My architectural historian's eye was caught by the two groups of farmhouses and their outbuildings. The Guild aspires to manage them with tenderness using traditional skills: as I write, a relationship is being forged with historic buildings architect Robert Kilgour, former SPAB Scholar and Hereford Cathedral architect, who has his office in Bewdley. The Studio at Ruskin Land, now just over a decade old, shows how a barn can be sensitively developed using traditional skills.

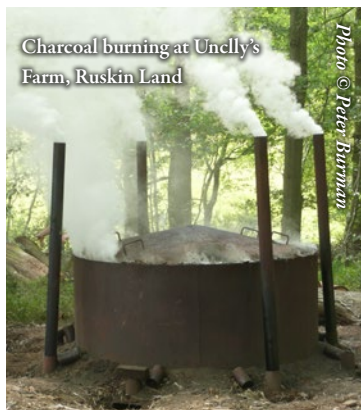
On each of my visits I have been struck by the welcoming and friendly atmosphere created by John and Linda Iles, both of them Companions of the Guild, and tenants at Uncly's Farm. They have worked to transform Ruskin Land, reinterpreting its mission, as expressed by Ruskin in Letter 5 of *Fors Clavigera*, May 1871:

'We will try to take some small piece of English ground, beautiful, peaceful and fruitful. We will have no steam-engines on it, and no railroads ... we will have plenty of flowers and vegetables in our gardens, plenty of corn and grass in our fields ... We will have some music and poetry; the children shall learn to dance to it and sing it ... We will

have some art, moreover; we will at least try if, like the Greeks, we can't make some pots.'

The other farmhouse on the Guild's estate is St George's Farm, occupied by a young couple and their family, enthusiastically working with the 'genius of the place' in its forest context.

In 2007 John Isles and Jenny Robbins, both Directors of the Guild, were instrumental in setting up the Wyre Community



Land Trust (WCLT) to carry out forestry and agricultural work – in particular orchards and meadows - to a high standard of competence.

Community, volunteer and educational work have all been greatly expanded. The WCLT, now led by an enthusiastic team under Margaret Tunstall, offers conservation and sustainable woodland management to other landowners in and around Wyre Forest, clearly meeting a local need. A woodworking shop has been established to make saleable products; a timber drying shed, a sawmill and a sawmill shelter have been provided along with volunteer, educational and office facilities.

Recent highlights have included managing a Guild initiative called *Ruskin in Wyre*; hosting *Studio in the Woods* courses for visiting craftspeople; expanding conservation grazing techniques for the Dexter cattle, supported by an annual grant from the Guild; and broadening the

horizons of local schoolchildren, some from exceptionally deprived areas in local towns. Four days a week, local volunteers learn traditional rural skills such as hedge-laying.

In May 2021 the Guild's Board held an online meeting to consider the options for Ruskin Land, which will now be explored through a feasibility study.

The meeting highlighted the need for

substantial investment in building repair and adaptation, for example to provide much needed accommodation; it affirmed the general direction of travel – working within the natural environment, training volunteers, holding and hosting courses and events of a distinctively Ruskinian creative character; being an exemplar of good rural landscape and forest management, working with other local owners, agencies and organisations. In all these activities the Board recalled Ruskin's wish that his ideal place should be *peaceful* as well as beautiful and fruitful. Finding the right balance through good management will be vital, along with open and skilful communication to the Companions of the Guild and all who support us through partnership and funding.

In the Guild's 150th year it is good to be able to report so many positives at Ruskin Land.

Peter Burman



## Wiles & Maguire: Civic Trust winning projects 2021

In the twenty years since YCCC member Wiles & Maguire Ltd. was founded, we have had our share of awards, but it is not something that we particularly pursue. We are usually more focused on achieving good outcomes for our clients, rescuing their buildings and sticking within budgets. 2020 was a different kind of year all round and lockdown offered valuable time to reflect. We have achieved some great transformations over the years to some very run down and under appreciated buildings.

In August we saw that the closing date for the 2021 Civic Trust Conservation Awards was fast approaching, and that there was a specific category for projects in partnership with the AABC (Architects Accredited in Building Conservation). With our projects catalogued and photographs freshly sorted the time was right to submit an application. We had two conservation projects in mind: Fillingham Castle Gatehouse and Robin Hood's Cottage. On 5th March 2021, the Fillingham Castle Gatehouse won the main conservation prize, and the work at Robin Hood's Cottage was highly commended. We are very proud of this achievement for both projects and have the opportunity to tell you about them here.

### Fillingham Castle Gatehouse

The Gatehouse at Fillingham Castle sits 10 feet from the edge of the A15 trunk road north out of Lincoln and is a very prominent local landmark. This was a Roman road but now there is a huge amount of traffic thundering past it everyday. The Castle itself is set back from the road by about a quarter of a mile and while it may have had medieval foundations, it was ostensibly rebuilt around 1770 in a primitive 'Gothik' style by John Carr of York. There is a long avenue of trees stretching down to the A15, at the end of which was built the arched gatehouse with its flanking stone walls.



Fillingham Castle Gatehouse, after restoration

The gatehouse is in a very public location and heritage crime has been a major issue since the last shepherd moved out in the 1950s. The lead was stolen from the roof of the bastions flanking the central arch and the accessible parts of the rear buildings were stripped of their roofing slates. Over time, the walls collapsed outward, pulling the remains of the roof structure down with them. Soon it was hidden in a jungle of saplings. While the back wall had collapsed some effort had been made in the 1980s to consolidate the main facade stonework of the gatehouse facing the road. The sections of the pinnacle tops were rebuilt in concrete blockwork and the soft local oolitic limestone was smear-pointed with sand and cement. Pocketing erosion to the stone was severely advanced.

We first got involved with the building in 2015 developing a condition assessment for the Client, the Trustees of A G Rose. The

work was majority funded by Historic England (Midlands office) and in consultation with Penny Evans, we agreed that the best way to stabilise the structure and keep the weather out of the wall tops was to reinstate the roofs and rebuild the pinnacles. Funding was only available to cover work to get the building off the Heritage at Risk Register. As we developed the tender documents, we worked hard to find an active local quarry that would be a close geological match for the original. We did find a good match but unknown to us this was a very amateur set-up, unused to deadlines and detailed cutting lists. The appointed contractor, Bridgett Conservation of Bawtry, needed to work in a hit-and-miss rebuilding process on the stone and worked hard to lay out a sequence for delivery. Instead, the quarry chose to cut blocks on the schedule of the same bed size and sent them through without markings. Despite arguments they would not improve their attitude and sorting the stone on site added around two weeks to the programme.

Analysis of the tooling to the original stone produced some very surprising results as it appeared that, other than that they had used a half-inch chisel, there was no real consistent pattern in how it had been done. The chisel marks on adjacent stones could be diagonal, radial, square-on and regular or square-on and random, close-spaced or far apart. If anything, it looked as if the building had been prepared for render, rather than with a tooling that one would be intended to see. Thankfully the contractor took this challenge in hand and worked hard to ensure that adjacent blocks would not necessarily have identical tooling. As the stone was arriving in random batches, this was certainly a very difficult thing to keep track of. They ended up setting up a tented village on the site, with two 'bankers' for the masons working on a production line.

Feedback from the client and the passing public has been very positive throughout, as this is a structure that people see every day from the A15. The most eye catching aspect of the transformation was when the scaffold was removed and people first saw the painted window designs to the blank windows. The budget just stretched far enough to include this but we felt it was essential to re-construct Carr's original design if we were to do the building justice. As the angled bastions face towards the oncoming traffic in both directions this is the thing that really stands out.

### Robin Hood's Cottage

The work to conserve and convert Robin Hood's Cottage, a half-timbered 16th-century building on the Kirklees Priory estate, represents a greater range of the classic conservation skills such as historic timber repair, stone replacement, ironwork and leaded glazing. Completed by Historic Property Restoration (Ripon) the finished result is a glorious, eye-catching restoration, but the fact that it sits within a private estate and is visited on heritage open days only meant it met the 'civic' criteria of the awards less successfully.

'Robin Hood's Cottage' is named as such for being one of the places where legend has it that Robin Hood died, after shooting his arrow through a window to mark his burial spot. The earliest parts of the building date to the late fifteenth century, and so could not have been the actual structure, it is more likely part of the Priory gatehouse. The recorded history of Kirklees Priory dates back to the twelfth century nunnery, and it could indeed have been the place where in legend he sought refuge after being wounded. The first mention of the building as being the death place of Robin Hood is from around 1620 and it may have been a publicity story concocted by the landowner who bought the estate after the dissolution. After 1620 Kirklees Priory Park had remained in the hands of a single landed family for many generations, but by the 1970s was in the



hands of an elderly widow with little in the way of resources for maintaining any of the buildings. The complex shape of the cottage gatehouse and the lack of any valley gutters had allowed water to penetrate deeply into the structure around the key posts for the decorated gables, and by the 1990s the building was at increasing risk of collapse and had a forest of temporary scaffold installed.

Wiles & Maguire first got involved in 2014 and this led to a long project to secure the building and its future. Key people getting the project started were Giles Proctor at Historic England and the new owner, Louis Pickersgill. Once appointed we set about the long process of clambering through the forest of scaffolding inside the building, trying to understand how the timber frame structure fitted together, the extent of the decay, and the prospects for conservative repair. The aim was that the frame would once again stand up in its own right without the scaffolding (or any hidden steelwork). I am very proud that we achieved that. We originally planned to repair all of these frames in situ, but with the stone slate roof removed, the connections of the frame were so loose that it became more straightforward to remove them and lay them out in the adjacent medieval aisled barn for repair than to do so in situ. However, most



of the inner frame behind the gables could be retained in situ.

One striking element of the structure that had been noted in the earlier 20th-century recordings of the structure and 1930s photographs in *Country Life* was the carved hunting scene on the north gable tie beam. This had been partially repaired around the 1970s, with sections refaced, leaving little of the original carved work intact. When the infill of the gable rendering was removed, we could see the core of the timber behind had been exposed to long term water penetration and there was little structural potential left in the beam. We looked at different scenarios of scarfing in elements of the original beam and decided that the best thing for the structure would be for it to be a full-sized, correctly sized and shaped new beam. The

budget for additions created the opportunity to have the hunting scene replicated in the beam by Joseph Hayton wood carver of Pateley Bridge. We discussed this being a new interpretation of the scene; however, the 1930s *Country Life* photographs were so clear that they had an accurate model to use for the reconstruction.

Andrew Wiles, [Wiles and Maguire Ltd, www.wamarchitects.co.uk](http://www.wamarchitects.co.uk)

## YCCC Webinars

The Winter Series of Second Tuesday Talks culminated in February with 'St Paul's Cathedral: Rescuing a Lost Architectural Scheme' by YCCC Chairman Martin Stancliffe. Drawing on his time as Surveyor to the Fabric of St Paul's, Martin described the restoration between 2003 and 2005 of a lost decorative architectural scheme, including panels of floral swags and fluting in the 'tambour' or lower register of the great dome, part of the scheme by Sir James Thornhill, of 1817-19.

After explaining the rationale for re-instating the decoration, just visible in places through 1860s overpainting, and selectively revealed by conservators, Martin then described the process by which YCCC member Charles Hesp was selected to undertake the redecoration, using traditional materials and techniques.

Of particular interest was the design of the access scaffolding, which was suspended from a central point at the apex of the dome high above the Whispering Gallery, and which could be swivelled around as required. Martin paid special tribute to the specialists who were involved in this complex project.

Following his talk, Martin was joined for the Q&A session by Charles Hesp, enabling the audience to discover more about his approach to the redecoration.

## Hamish Ogston Foundation Building Skills Programme

The YCCC was pleased to host two webinars on Historic England's new partnership with the York-based Hamish Ogston Foundation (HOF). The HOF's generous pledge of £3.5m will support skills training and employment in the construction industry, particularly focusing on the skills needed to conserve historic buildings. All training delivered as part of the programme will include work on Heritage at Risk sites in the North.

The first webinar, on 23rd March, was given by YCCC member Dr Sophie Norton, who has strong connections to York, and is currently Sector Skills Manager for Historic England. Her presentation, 'Heritage building sites as a place for learning', focused on a case study from her PhD research.

By analysing how craft skills were taught, acquired and passed on at Fountain's Abbey over the past century, Sophie was able to build up a picture of historical and current practice. Having found that there are now few formal pathways available for specific training in the heritage building crafts, she proposed models for providing well-trained and highly motivated craftspeople into the future.

Sophie's research informed her work

on the Building Skills Programme, which she and Phil Pollard, Heritage Apprenticeships Manager at Historic England, discussed on 17th April.

This timely new training programme, funded by the HOF and developed by Historic England, offers three training levels and pathways, with up to 40 people in the first three-year programme. Heritage construction businesses are invited to get involved.

### Next Talk: 19:00, 15th June

#### *Grinling Gibbons in the Workshop*

Our Spring Series has been devised in partnership with the Grinling Gibbons Society, as part of tercentenary events celebrating the life of Grinling Gibbons.

In the final talk, master carver Alan Lamb and conservator David Luard will look at Gibbons from the perspective of experts responsible for the practical conservation of his surviving work.

The intimacy of a carved repair, involving an identical vocabulary of tools, a revisiting of the choreography of the maker's chisel, the painstaking removal of later paint and varnish layers, or physical evidence of the reordering of a scheme, can throw much light on Gibbons' workshop practices, his original design intentions and later changes in fashion.

Please visit our website for more details: [www.conservationyork.org.uk/events/](http://www.conservationyork.org.uk/events/)

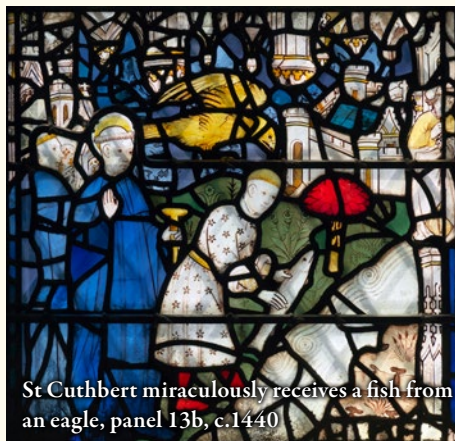
## New Exhibition at York Minster

In June, a new exhibition at York Minster will offer the opportunity to explore the fifteenth-century St Cuthbert Window, which is among the finest extant examples of the art and techniques of medieval glaziers and stonemasons.

For centuries, Cuthbert was the most important saint in northern England. During his lifetime he guided kings, abbesses and ordinary people alike, and was renowned as a preacher, healer and hermit. The St Cuthbert Window shows the story of Cuthbert's life on a monumental scale. Made around 1440, it is a rare surviving example of a narrative window, making it an important source for understanding medieval devotion, politics and storytelling, as well as past approaches to restoration.

The essential repair of the stone of the south-east transept has created a once in a lifetime opportunity to conserve the St Cuthbert window, last restored following the Second World War. A programme of cleaning, repair and stabilisation will be complemented by the introduction of a state-of-the-art environmental protective glazing system, creating a dry and stable environment that will ensure the window's preservation for many generations to come.

The exhibition, *Light, Glass & Stone: Conserving the St Cuthbert Window*, offers the chance to learn about the creation and history of the St Cuthbert Window, including new discoveries from recent research, as well as the cathedral's current project to conserve this magnificent window. Visitors will have the rare opportunity to see



Photograph York Glaziers Trust, © Chapter of York

at close range panels which have been removed from the window as part of the conservation and restoration project, alongside a soundscape and projection depicting one of St Cuthbert's miracles.

The exhibition is part of a series of activities at York Minster this summer to mark the start of the major conservation and restoration project. Two talks by experts, both YCCC members, will offer the opportunity to explore the history and conservation of the window in more depth.

In the first talk, Dr Katharine Harrison will introduce St Cuthbert and explore the history and significance of the window. By tracing Cuthbert's remarkable life and exploring the St Cuthbert Window's design, as well as the impact of nearly 600 years, she will offer insights into the importance of this captivating window and the ingenuity of its creators.

In the second talk, Professor Sarah Brown, director of the York Glaziers Trust and YFCC trustee, will explain the programme of conservation and protection now underway, ensuring the preservation of the window for

many generations to come. This talk will take you into the studio to learn about the meticulous conservation processes. It will also show how approaches to the conservation of stained glass have been transformed since the post-war era, a development in which the conservators and scholars of York have played a crucial part.

The exhibition is due to open in late June, and will run until January 2024. Entry is free with general admission to the Minster. Free tickets for the talks will be released in advance, with the option to watch via livestream. For more information, and to book tickets for general admission and the talks, please [visit York Minster's website](#).

## Woodcarving tools go to a good home!

There was a speedy response to Iain Broadbent's appeal in the last newsletter seeking a new home for an extensive set of woodcarving tools. A delighted Andrew Silk came forward for the generous gift made available by Clifford, who's late wife Janet had a passion to carve in wood as a recreational pastime.

Andrew is being taught by the woodcarvers at Houghtons of York to follow the grain of the wood and to choose the correct chisel to create the finish and shape required. He had reached the point where he could use proficiently the small selection of tools he had and this gift has now allowed him to progress to the next stage and create more detailed pieces.

Andrew has Down's syndrome, which means learning tasks takes longer and needs to be reinforced several times, but if given the opportunity he is able to achieve his goals, as he has proved many times.



## Heritage Update

The YCCC is a member the Heritage Alliance, which unites over 150 independent heritage organisations in England as a powerful, effective and independent advocate for the heritage sector.

The Alliance acts as a hub for news and information, including jobs, funding sources and events, which is distributed via [Heritage Update](#), a free, fortnightly online newsletter.

Heritage Update can be accessed online at: [www.theheritagealliance.org.uk/our-work/heritage-update/](http://www.theheritagealliance.org.uk/our-work/heritage-update/)

We also encourage our members to sign up to receive the Heritage Update via email – [please click here to do so!](#)

### York Consortium for Conservation and Craftsmanship

- The Merchant Adventurers' Hall, Fossgate, York YO1 9XD
- [www.conservatoryork.org.uk](http://www.conservatoryork.org.uk)
- YFCC charity no. 1075315

- News and Events: [news@conservationyork.org.uk](mailto:news@conservationyork.org.uk)
- Membership Enquiries: [membership@conservationyork.org.uk](mailto:membership@conservationyork.org.uk)
- General Enquiries: [info@conservationyork.org.uk](mailto:info@conservationyork.org.uk)