

**STUDY TOUR  
TO NORTHUMBERLAND  
AND CUMBRIA  
30 September – 4 October 2001:**

**To what extent has the conservation and use of historic places visited during the study tour reflected or respected the philosophical ideas of John Ruskin, William Morris and their successors?**

**Reference may be made to such key documents as the SPAB *Manifesto*, the *Venice Charter* and the *Burra Charter*.'**

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## 1. Scope and Time:

The Angel of the North by Antony Gormley, and the Millennium Bridge linking Newcastle and Gateshead over the Tyne, were impressive and poignant introductions to the Northumberland-Cumbria study tour undertaken by the MA in Conservation Studies group. The Angel of the North, as a very recent sculpture, in combination with the Tyne Millennium Bridge opened in 2001, demonstrate that age is not a precursor for the achievement of cultural heritage value. Indeed, the spectrum of time encountered in the places studied during the tour commenced with the second century fort and wall remains of the Roman period (Chesters, Vindolanda, Segedunum and the linking Hadrian's Wall). Encounters then ranged from the seventh century crypt at St Wilfrid's Hexham, through medieval structures including Prudhoe, Naworth and Belsay Castles, Lanercost Priory, Lindisfarne Priory (with earlier links), St Nicholas' Cathedral Newcastle, and Trinity House of Newcastle upon Tyne. Finally we encountered more recent places of significance from the eighteenth and nineteenth century at Gibside, Four Gables and St Martin's Church Brampton, Craggside, Wallington Hall, Belsay Hall, Grainger Town, and Alderman Fenwick's House.



**Figure 1:** The Angel of the North

<http://www.vision.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/angel.html> October 2001

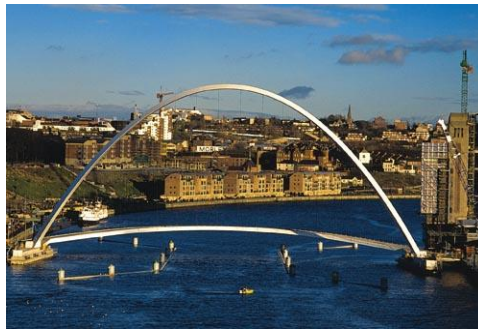
## 2. Discussion of Selected Places:

### 2.1 The Angel of the North:

The 208-tonne 'Angel' takes the form of a human figure based on artist Antony Gormley's body. At 20 metres high the Angel is higher than a five-storey building, with the wings 54 metres wide - almost the same as a jumbo jet. Overlooking the A1 at Gateshead, as many as 90 000 motorists a day pass by the sculpture. Rail passengers travelling on the East Coast mainline from London to Edinburgh see the Angel as they approach Newcastle. With such 'exposure', the Angel has readily become an object of intense scrutiny. It is made of weather resistant steel, containing copper, which forms a patina on the surface intended to mellow with age. Reportedly built to 'last for more than 100 years and to withstand winds of more than 100 miles per hour', the structure may in the future pose complex philosophical and technical questions for conservators of cultural heritage. It is of interest that in today's society, such questions are often pondered before the event, whereas in the past, issues were generally far more immediate.

## 2.2 Millennium Bridge upon Tyne:

The Millennium Bridge is the latest addition to the Tyne's famous collection of bridges - which have given the area one of the most instantly recognisable skylines in Europe. Designed by Wilkinson Eyre Architects and engineers Gifford and Partners, the £22 million bridge provides a footpath and cycle-way linking ambitious new arts and cultural developments at Gateshead Quays on the south bank with Newcastle Quayside. This is the first part of a new cultural area on the south bank of the Tyne called Gateshead Quays. The Quays is to include the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, similar to the London Tate Modern in adaptive re-use of a former industrial building, and the biggest gallery of its kind outside of the capital. The developments - along with other major new schemes north of the river such as the renovation of the historic Grainger Town area - are a major part of Newcastle Gateshead's bid to be chosen as the 'European Capital of Culture'. Thus an 'event' is having a major influence on cultural revitalisation of the area, and will raise many conservation issues on a precinct basis – how does one successfully combine the old with the new?



**Figure 2:** Millennium Bridge upon Tyne

<http://www.gateshead.gov.uk/bridge/bridged.htm> October 2001

The mid-nineteenth century writing of John Ruskin (1819-1900) drew attention to the methods and ideology of Victorian artists and architects, and many of his concerns are entirely relevant in the discussion of both design and conservation philosophy today. Ruskin's book *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* of 1849 attacked contemporary standards, and his theories contributed to a new stream in architectural thought reflected in the work of many important architects of the time. Notwithstanding the difficulty of having Ruskin's florid prose appeal to the tastes of hasty twenty-first century designers, the philosophy of his writing remains relevant reading for new age architects. A quote from *The Seven Lamps* (Chapter VI, 'The Lamp of Memory') may be considered with respect to the new work illustrated above:

*When we build, let us think that we build forever. Let it not be for present delight, nor for present use alone. Let it be such work as our descendants will thank us for.*

The visual and practical amenity for the community, and the quality of design and construction of both the Angel of the North and the Millennium Bridge upon Tyne would appear to stand favourable consideration with respect to Ruskin's concerns.

### 2.3 Prudhoe Castle:

In 1877 William Morris drafted (with the assistance of George Wardle and Philip Webb) the *Manifesto*, the principles of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB). One of the foundation documents for the considered philosophical discussion of cultural heritage and conservation, the SPAB *Manifesto* includes:

*It is for all these buildings, therefore, of all times and styles, that we plead, and call upon those who have to deal with them, to put Protection in the place of Restoration, to stave off decay by daily care, to prop a perilous wall or mend a leaky roof by such means as are obviously meant for support or covering, and show no pretence of other art, and otherwise to resist all tampering with either the fabric or ornament of the building as it stands; if it has become inconvenient for its present use, to raise another building rather than alter or enlarge the old one; ...*

Even with the later raising of the accommodation range across the central portion of the castle, the conservation of Prudhoe Castle remains faithful to Morris' wish to stave off decay, albeit the effort at Prudhoe is tarnished by the use of twentieth century cement and concrete in some wall stabilisation. Morris' suggestion that if a place has 'become inconvenient for its present use, to raise another building' does not entirely fit with modern conservation philosophy which recognises that in most circumstances compatible adaptive use is an excellent method of ensuring the conservation of a building.



**Figure 3:** Entry tower with chapel over at Prudhoe Castle

<http://www.theheritagetrail.co.uk/castles/prudhoe%20castle.htm> October 2001

### 2.4 Belsay Hall

Belsay Hall provides an excellent example of the folly of intrusive and misdirected conservation work, with the removal of timber from the north east corner of the building in an attempt to deal with dry rot. This was work that was surely well intended, but has been proven to be unnecessary in the light of careful study. We now know that a simple rectification of the environmental conditions in the affected area, by removing the source of moisture ingress (with maintenance!), and a gradual drying of the affected material, would result in the majority of the timber remaining in good condition. We may consider in this case the conservation work adage 'do as much as necessary but as little as possible'! Panic and over-reaction to deterioration can be costly.



**Figure 4:** Belsay Hall and Castle  
[www.northumberland.gov.uk/vg/images/belsay.jpg](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/vg/images/belsay.jpg) October 2001

### 2.5 Naworth Castle:

The treatment of dry rot at the rear wing of Naworth Castle by ruthless demolition of the timber work is a powerful and painful reminder of the misguided work at Belsay Hall. Another philosophical issue is raised at Naworth with regard to the four great heraldic beasts that with perfect circumstances would always grace the great hall of the building.

The Australia ICOMOS *Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance (The Burra Charter)*, 1979, amended 1981 and 1988, has been the key heritage conservation doctrine in Australia. Regularly reviewed, members' workshops in 1994 and 1996 identified topics that needed to be addressed to bring the Charter up-to-date with current practice. After three further years of intensive consultation with members and other users of the Charter, a final revision was endorsed by the Australia ICOMOS membership in late November 1999. Renamed *The Burra Charter (The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance)*, the Charter now includes intangible values throughout its conservation principles and conservation guidelines.

In the preamble the fundamental connection between place and intangible values is expressed:

*Places of cultural significance enrich people's lives, often providing a deep and inspirational sense of connection to community and landscape, to the past and to lived experiences.*

and the revised Charter's definitions recognise that intangible values are an integral aspect of heritage significance:

**1.2 Cultural significance** means aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or spiritual value for past, present or future generations.

Cultural significance is embodied in the place itself, its fabric, setting, use, *associations, meanings*, records, related places and related objects.

In addition, Article 10 of the Burra Charter, 'Contents', records that:

*Contents, fixtures and objects which contribute to the cultural significance of a place should be retained at that place. Their removal is unacceptable unless it is: the sole means of ensuring their security and preservation; on a temporary basis for treatment or exhibition; for cultural reasons; for health and safety; or to protect the place. Such contents, fixtures and objects should be returned where circumstances permit and it is culturally appropriate.*

The Naworth heraldic beasts form an important and integral portion of the castle's cultural heritage value, and the considerations of the Burra Charter are clearly valuable in this instance.



**Figure 5:** Naworth Castle  
<http://www.naworth.co.uk/> October 2001

## 2.6 Lindisfarne Castle

Originally a Tudor fort, the castle was built for the defence of the harbour in 1543 using stone from the ruined Lindisfarne Priory. Once England and Scotland were united the castle lost importance, but it continued in use as a military station. After the Civil War the castle was neglected and eventually only used by coastguards until the beginning of the twentieth century when Sir Edwin Lutyens reworked the interior. The small rooms are now full of intimate decoration and design, the windows looking down upon the charming walled garden, planned by Gertrude Jekyll.

The detailed investigation at Lindisfarne Castle of the 'harled' external render issue, and provision of guttering, all as described by Andy Davey, illustrated both the difficulty of conservation administration by large committees and of discovering evidence of previous works and finishes. It is possible that in some respects the recent conservation work at Lindisfarne Castle was not entirely to the wishes of the 'experts'!

## 2.7 Lindisfarne Priory

Lindisfarne is one of the most important early centres of Christianity in Anglo-Saxon England. A bronze cast of Fenwick Lawson's sculpture Cuthbert of Farne was unveiled in the grounds of Lindisfarne Priory on 14 June 2001. The landscape and setting of Lindisfarne are reflected in the work. The sculpture is of interest as a modern object that adds value to the site and its interpretation, and as a compliment to the experience of the ruined Priory.



Cuthbert became Prior at Lindisfarne around the year 664. The Celtic side of his nature gradually asserted itself and he withdrew from participation in the affairs of the monastery to live on an island just to the south-west of Lindisfarne, now known as St Cuthbert's Island. However, the greater isolation of the island Inner Farne, some seven miles away was more attractive.



**Figure 6:** Sculptor Fenwick Lawson pictured with his work Cuthbert of Farne and various clergy.  
[http://www.durham.anglican.org/newslink/stories/200109/spectacular\\_sculpture\\_holy\\_island\\_images.htm](http://www.durham.anglican.org/newslink/stories/200109/spectacular_sculpture_holy_island_images.htm)  
 October 2001

After a long period of inactivity, in 1082 Holy Island came to life again when a community of Benedictine monks was granted permission to settle there. The priory church, which they built on the site of the old monastery, was constructed along the lines of Durham Cathedral. The dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII in the sixteenth century brought an end to the islands prosperity. The priory itself was demolished in 1541, and the total Lindisfarne story is now relatively well delivered in the signage and other English Heritage interpretative material available at the site.

### 2.8 Segendunum Roman Fort, Bath House and Museum:

Segendunum has been the subject of a major archaeological excavation, and a project funded by North Tyneside Council to reconstruct a Bath House in the style of the day as part of a new park. The Bath House is illustrative in being equipped with a hypocaust - the spaces beneath the floor being filled with hot air heated by a Roman style furnace.



**Figure 7:** Segendunum Roman Bath House  
[http://www.wirsbo.co.uk/html\\_projects/project6.html](http://www.wirsbo.co.uk/html_projects/project6.html) October 2001

As a portion of Hadrian's Wall, the interpretation of Segedunum contrasted with the other Roman fort sites studied in the rural areas at Chesters and Vindolanda. The fact that Segedunum was controlled by a local authority rather than by a body concerned with heritage or conservation matters seemed obvious in the management and presentation of the site. Additionally the fact that an industrial building had been adapted to provide the interpretative and viewing centre seemed less than successful. The car park area visually and physically separated the ruins from the site, and the somewhat conjectural construction of the Bath House seemed mainly to provide greater 'theme park' value to the place.

It is apparent that the management of tourism in such places includes consideration of the accelerated physical degradation of heritage places (erosion of grounds, floor surfaces, walls); the consideration of the impacts of related facilities (on-site facilities, parking and souvenir shops, roads); and the intrusive or excessive presentation and related works, including inappropriate reconstruction.

The Venice Charter records with respect to Historic Sites:

*ARTICLE 14.* The sites of monuments must be the object of special care in order to safeguard their integrity and ensure that they are cleared and presented in a seemly manner. The work of conservation and restoration carried out in such places should be inspired by the principles set forth in the foregoing articles.

Unchallenged or uncontrolled development practices can lead to irreversible damage or losses to all our heritage. New and powerful trends are evolving in the context of a more global and interrelated economy whose influence on the world's cultural diversity is potentially devastating. Trends such as World Heritage listing must strike an adequate balance between conserving and maintaining traditional or appropriate use of existing heritage places, monuments or sites, and responding to economic needs.

### **3. Conclusions:**

The Northumberland and Cumbria study tour met objectives established at the commencement of the tour. It facilitated the examination of a wide range of heritage buildings and sites, within their contexts. The tour allowed the MA group to meet various heritage professionals from a variety of backgrounds, and to learn something of their roles. Students have been able to note how effectively and with what various means historic places are being presented to the public, and the effect of repair and conservation techniques currently being deployed. The devastating effect of the foot and mouth epidemic on the local community has been illuminated, especially in Hexhamshire and close to Hadrian's Wall. Many other less obvious factors have been absorbed, and the study tour can be considered to be a very effective learning tool.



#### 4. Bibliography:

*Burra Charter*. 1999. *The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance*.

Ruskin, John 1849, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*. 5<sup>th</sup> edition 1894. George Allen, London.

Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) *Manifesto* 1877.

*Venice Charter*. 1964. International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites.

#### 5. Appendix –Dates, Places and People:

Sunday 30 September 2001	The Angel of the North Prudhoe Castle Gibside (Hugh Dixon) Millennium Bridge over the Tyne Shepherd Dene
Monday 1 October 2001	Chesters (David Sherlock) Vindolanda Belsay Hall and Castle (Tony Kay)
Tuesday 2 October 2001	Naworth Castle (Elizabeth Howard) Lanercost Priory (John Simons) Four Gables St Martin's Brampton Hexham – St Wilfrid's Priory Church Northumberland Vernacular (Grace McCombie)
Wednesday 3 October 2001	Lindisfarne Castle (Andy Davey) Lindisfarne Priory Lion Bridge, Alnwick Castle Cragside (Hugh Dixon) Wallington Hall (Nev Kirby)
Thursday 4 October 2001	Grainger Town (David Lovie) St Nicholas' Cathedral (Grace McCombie) Alderman Fenwick's House (Brian Jobling) Trinity House of Newcastle upon Tyne Segedunum