

New design

The glass and metal facade of the National Theatre's new production workshop
PHOTO: PHILIP VILE



When William Morris fathered the SPAB and published the Society's seminal Manifesto with its emphasis on honesty to fabric and respect for the layers of history, he could little have imagined the trends in architecture and the pressures on the built environment in the UK over the following 140 years. At the time, the SPAB's founders were

BUILDING



Authors **Roger Hunt** (right) and **Iain Boyd** explain the background to their new book, which includes a foreword from **Kevin McCloud**



ON THE PAST

PIERRA

Winner of the prestigious 2017 SPAB John Betjeman Award for sensitive repairs
to the iconic portico at St Pancras Church

Providing a comprehensive service in conserving and restoring historic buildings and monuments



enquiries@pierra.co.uk – Tel: 01322 556691 – www.pierra.co.uk

 Follow us on Twitter @PierraRLtd

HOCKLEY & DAWSON

CONSULTING ENGINEERS



Structural Engineers and Historic Building Consultants

The Great Barn | Smithbrook Barns | Cranleigh | Surrey | GU6 8LH
Tel: 01483 548784 | email: admin@hockleyanddawson.co.uk | www.hockleyanddawson.co.uk

New design



expressing a revolutionary philosophy. But, inevitably, as the Society has been in existence for so long, it is often assumed to be a “conservative” body as well as a “conservation” one and, consequently, many believe it is fundamentally opposed to new design, or that it prefers to see it “in keeping with the original building”.

In fact, the welcome extended to new design is there to be seen in the Manifesto and is echoed in the new SPAB Approach published with this issue of the *SPAB Magazine*. Our book *New Design for Old Buildings* aims to do justice and give depth to this wide-ranging topic, helping all who wrestle with how to adapt or extend old buildings in a way that creates something interesting and new while respecting their original fabric.

We were keen to address any misconception that the SPAB is ossified, only interested in the past and unwilling to embrace or allow change. Anyone who really knows the Society will be aware that this is untrue. When the SPAB, in its statutory role, does object to a proposed change to an old building, it does so with good reason and often suggests alternative solutions where new architecture is clearly of its time and readable as such.

Often the SPAB’s objections are simply to poor design that fails to take proper account of the existing building. In the case of an old building, new work must be seen as just one phase in a long timeline spanning decades, even centuries. Proposals that do not account for how the new will coexist with the old over time, respect historic fabric, or which do not allow for further change in decades to come, are likely to stumble at some point.

The SPAB position continues to be that good new architecture can complement an old building where justified and that it is usually preferable to designing in imitation of an earlier style. This

long-held precept is widely supported in the design and conservation community, although not by all. As authors of the book, we were only too aware that some may disagree with our arguments and ideas, insisting on seeing new design as a threat or an unwelcome intrusion. Many others, we were sure, would be pleasantly surprised.

Good new design has long been encouraged by the SPAB through its annual Philip Webb Award, which celebrates the sympathetic re-use of existing buildings and sensitive new design in a historic context. It is an opportunity for students and architects in the early stages of their career to demonstrate their grasp of repair techniques and their engagement with the SPAB’s principle of fitting the new to the old, as well as their design flair.

In writing *New Design for Old Buildings* we needed to illustrate this thinking and wanted to encourage people to be braver, whether architect, designer, contractor, building owner, conservation officer, planner or student – anyone who has an involvement with old buildings and who is faced with the challenges of adapting and using them in future decades.

Many examples of new design in a historic context have been described and celebrated in books and magazines, often featuring projects from North America and elsewhere in Europe. With *New Design for Old Buildings* we made the early decision to focus solely on buildings from the UK. At first we thought we might struggle to find sufficient good examples but quickly discovered a rich supply of exemplary schemes, both large and small, as well as countless designers and craftspeople who demonstrate a thoughtful and creative approach.

The diversity of approaches taken has been equally impressive with buildings spanning a period from medieval times to the second half of the 20th century. They range from large schemes such as the British Museum’s World Conservation and Exhibitions Centre in London by Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners to the simple but practical wooden extension to the beautiful Holy Trinity Church at Goodramgate in York, by *simmonsheriff*.

The research was absorbing and we enjoyed personal tours of buildings as diverse as Astley Castle and the National Theatre. We were often guided by architects but also by the users of buildings who were frequently quickest to point out a scheme’s successes or peculiarities. On other occasions, capturing imagery was our mission’s aim and we came to appreciate previously unnoticed architectural details as we waited, camera on tripod, for the clouds to clear the sun, or



Top: The relationship of different materials at Astley Castle

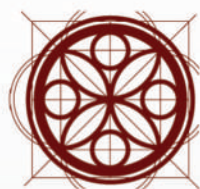
PHOTO: IAIN BOYD

Above: One of the links between the British Museum and the World Conservation and Exhibition Centre

PHOTO: ROGER HUNT



By Appointment to
Her Majesty The Queen
Building Facade Restoration
and Conservation



PAYE
conservation



® Collective Trade Mark of PACR
Accredited Conservator-Restorers

Providing everything from specialist consultancy to the complete delivery of complex conservation and restoration projects.
PAYE Conservation offer a bespoke service to Private Clients, Architects, Trusts and Bodies.



CONSERVE - RESTORE - PROTECT

To discuss a potential project, please contact: Spencer Hall ACR
spencerhall@payeconservation.net - Tel: 020 8857 9111 - www.payeconservation.net
A specialist division of PAYE



NEWTON
FORGE

Specialists in high quality
historic ironwork restoration
& bespoke ironwork

Café Royal, London

NEWTON FORGE LTD. STURMINSTER NEWTON • DORSET • DT10 1EY

Tel: (01258) 472407

www.newtonforge.co.uk



New design

Far left: Holy Trinity Goodramgate, York, thoughtful design and use of materials in a difficult space

PHOTO: KYNAN SIMMONS

Left: Georgian styles reimagined for a house extension in Wapping

PHOTO: PETER LANDERS

the engrossed tourist to step out of frame in the peace of an ancient structure like Ely Cathedral.

We spent a great many hours with architects and others, including distinguished practitioners in the field as well as more recent talent, who have immersed themselves in the art of bringing the old and new together. From them we have gained fascinating and often personal insights into the thinking behind their schemes and the wider issues of conservation and new design.

As we gathered examples and spoke to more people, the message that well-executed and thoughtful new architecture can and does sit happily alongside old and is preferable to poor pastiche was reinforced. Schemes succeed when the relationship between new and old is well understood and skilfully managed. This is the core of the SPAB ethos: successful new design requires a deep understanding of what has gone before, as well as a vision of how the new and old parts will perform together long into the future.

Within the book we aim to provide an insight into the factors and considerations that go towards making a successful scheme. We do not presume to set out in depth the processes of design or the specifics of what design is – this understanding comes with long years of training and experience. Overall, we attempt to present the best philosophical and practical thinking on the subject. Rather than analysing a select few case studies, we draw on a larger sample, referencing over 100 buildings; some appearing once within the book, others numerous times.

We attempt to analyse the processes involved in creating new design in the historic context and begin by charting the SPAB's long experience in considering the relationship between conservation methods and the visual effect of new design when applied to buildings and sites in the historic

environment. Our first chapter "Embracing Good Design" looks at how its introduction into this context relies on understanding, respect, good manners and skill.

In the further chapters, we examine the starting points and the aspects of a project that need proper consideration to give the best chance of success. Later chapters explore the material palette that is available to designers, ranging from the use of those most traditional of building materials, lime and wood, right through to modern composites and weathered steel.

Examples are given throughout the book, and in particular within the two chapters focusing on forms of adaptation and interiors. While no single solution can be deployed wholesale to fix a

problem elsewhere, we hope that enough are given in the course of the book to illustrate both the philosophy of approach and the wide range of design options that are available in terms of form and finish. No book on adaptation would be complete without looking at issues around sustainability and our final chapter examines how old buildings and new work can be "fit for the future".

Buildings result from collaborative effort and a creative vision shared between a number of people. Much of our focus is on the architects and designers who provide the vital narrative of imaginative thinking and execution. Architects understand that design is an overarching process that provides both a solution to an entire building brief and deals with more specific small scale detailing. But they cannot work without the efforts of others, the engineers, surveyors and contractors who make a scheme possible and of course a client who has had the vision to appoint a team that could bring sympathy, practicality and creativity to the scheme in the first place.

Inevitably a manuscript has to be handed to the publisher at a certain point, which is unfortunate as new and exciting schemes are emerging even as the book is going to print. This year's Stirling Prize contenders include at least two schemes that could easily have been in the book, had they been completed earlier. It is important for the SPAB to continue to get its message across that good new design is welcome. We hope that those who read *New Design for Old Buildings* will be emboldened and gain a greater understanding that good new design is essential to ensuring the life and sustainability of old buildings.

● Roger Hunt blogs at www.huntwriter.com and Tweets @huntwriter

● Iain Boyd is Chairman of the SPAB

Special offer

We are delighted to offer SPAB members and *SPAB Magazine* readers the opportunity to purchase *New Design for Old Buildings* at a specially discounted price. Use this code: SPABMAG5 to gain a £5 discount when you purchase *New Design for Old Buildings* by Roger Hunt and Iain Boyd on ribabookshop.com or instore at RIBA Bookshops, 66 Portland Place.

Online – enter the code when you checkout.

Instore – show this article at point of purchase and the discount will be applied. This discount code is valid until June 30, 2018.

