

SCOTTISH STONE LIAISON GROUP

Charlestown, Scotland

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US/ICOMOS Intern

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About SSLG

Stone has traditionally been a key building material in Scotland and still plays central role in shaping that country's architectural landscape. The demand for its use in both new-build construction as well in repairs to historic buildings is a testament to its durability and beauty. The future of the stone-built heritage of Scotland is, however, confronted with a dilemma as many of the country's quarries have closed and the number of trained stone masons has declined. The Scottish Stone Liaison Group (SSLG) is a non-governmental organization which advocates the use of native stone from Scottish quarries in its mission to secure a future for that industry which has historically played such a prominent role in the shaping of Scotland as it is known today. The organization, as the name implies, also serves as a link between the many diverse entities concerned with the use of Scottish stone:

- Petrographers of the British Geological Survey (BGS) who analyze and select the most suitable stone when replacement is warranted;
- Historic Scotland which seeks to conserve the cultural heritage embodied in the stone-built architectural fabric; the quarry owners who wish to secure markets for their products;
- Construction Industry Training Board which seeks to ensure that the high quality stone-working skills for which Scotland is known will continue to be practiced in numbers which satisfy present and future demand; the municipal planning authorities who are charged with conserving the existing housing stock and protecting the public from the risk posed by falling masonry;
- Architects and their clients who must be made aware of the economic, social, and cultural value of building and repairing with stone.

Life in Charlestown



I enjoyed living and working in Charlestown, a wee Scottish village planned by the 5th Earl of Elgin (of Elgin marble fame) in the 1750s. I resided in the old schoolmaster's house with other young conservation professionals and worked in what used to be the village granary.

Research & Recreation in the Burgh



My research into the use of Scottish stone and work of immigrated Scotch stone masons to North America often led me across the Firth of Forth to the National Library, National Archives and British Geological Survey Library in Edinburgh. When my work was done for the day, I took the opportunity to explore the city, its people, pubs, museums, architecture, and the famous Edinburgh Festival.

Professional Visits



I was fortunate to be given the chance to experience the conservation industry in Scotland first-hand through several professional site visits:

- Historic Scotland Monument Scheduling Team, Alnes
- Conservation Studio, Hypostyle Architecture, Edinburgh
- Building Conservation, Stirling Castle (a Historic Scotland site)
- Building Inspection Team, City Council of Edinburgh
- Scottish Lime Centre Trust, Charlestown
- Laboratory Services (conducting petrographic analysis), British Geological Survey, Edinburgh

Learning About Lime



Historic Scotland, a financial sponsor of my internship arranged for me to participate in courses offered by the Scottish Lime Centre Trust. I was introduced to world of building lime from burning limestone to slaking lump lime then repointing, plastering, and harling (an exterior render) with traditional lime-based products. Through a seminar on random rubble masonry construction, I discovered that the placement of stones is not so random after all!

Side Projects

I investigated the impact that climate change would have on stone buildings.



I assembled a dossier on the socio-environmental issues of sourcing stone from India and China.

The Glasgow Project

Assessing the threat to the stone-built heritage of Glasgow.

I helped publicize the findings of an assessment survey of the front facades of over 200 stone buildings which concluded:

- Inappropriate and neglected repairs jeopardize the public's health and safety, exposing them to the risk of falling masonry.
- 295,000 tons of replacement stone are required.
- 1,395,373 mason hours are required to complete the needed repairs.
- There is a serious shortage of skilled labor and the outlook is bleak as there are few new apprentices joining the trade.



Haggis, Rain, Ale, & Friends

