The Getty Conservation Institute

Field Trip Report
By F. LeBlanc, Head, Field Projects

London, UK – RecorDIM Publications Editorial Board Meeting
September 13-14, 2004

Within the framework of the RecorDIM (Recording, Documentation and Information Management) Initiative, the GCI prepares two publications: a Manual on Principles and Guidelines and Handbooks.

The purpose of the meeting in London was to meet with the recently created Editorial Board to discuss questions pertaining to these publications. The meeting was held in the offices of English Heritage at 23 Savile Row.

Werner Schmid, a conservator based in Rome, has been hired as the Technical Editor for the first publication and Rand Eppich is the Technical Editor for the Handbooks.

The Editorial Board is made up of:
- Giora Solar, Treasurer General of ICOMOS
- John Fidler, Conservation Director, English Heritage
- Alejandro Alva Balderrama, Unit Director, Architecture and Archaeological Sites, ICCROM
- Kate Clark, Deputy Director of Policy and Research, Heritage Lottery Fund, UK
The Editorial Board was welcome by John Fidler, Director of Conservation at English heritage and me on behalf of the GCI.

I made a brief summary of the conclusions of the meetings organized by the GCI in Los Angeles during 2002 during which the need for such publications was clearly expressed by a group of international experts. The target audience and contents for these publications was outlined by another group of experts who met at the GCI during spring 2003.

The publication on Principles & Guidelines is aimed at Policy Makers and Heritage Managers while the Handbooks are targeting professionals in the field of conservation (architects, archaeologists, engineers, conservators, surveyors, landscape architects, etc.). The Principles & Guidelines publication is based on a manuscript written several years ago by Robin Letellier.

The Editorial Board first discussed the focus of the P&G publication. There was a long discussion concerning what this publication will cover and what will be left out. For instance, it will not cover recording and documentation for academic purposes. The focus will be on ensuring that heritage managers understand the necessity and benefits of good documentation.

Though in reality many if not the majority of heritage managers have little or no training or formal education in how heritage should be managed, this publication will not attempt to initiate them to heritage conservation. It is not its purpose. It will clearly state where, how and why recording, documentation and information management fit into the conservation process and it will address the managers in a way that they should be addressed if they had the qualifications that are necessary to deal with this type of property.

ICOMOS published principles for recording and documentation in 1996. But since then, the conservation field has expanded in several areas. Werner Schmid will be looking into what should be developed in terms of principles and guidelines for some of these areas and it will be clearly stated at the beginning of the publication that we realize that the field has expanded in several new areas, but for various reasons, we will cover all of them in our publication. Some of the areas of expansion mentioned were: cultural landscapes, intangible heritage, public participation, underwater heritage, preventive conservation, management planning and digitalization.

There will be many examples (sidebars) to illustrate the various concepts and make the publication interesting to managers. To ensure continuity
between the P&G publication and the Handbooks, it was suggested to explore the possibility of using the P&G examples as the basis of the case studies to be used in the Handbooks.

Werner presented a revised table of contents and the participants suggested modifications that will offer the reader a clearer understanding of the conservation process and where recording, documentation and information fits into it. Also, because managers tend not to read manuals or publications from cover to cover but go directly to sections of interest to them, each section in the publication should be more or less self sufficient, even though that may require some repetitions of concepts or methodologies.

Werner then presented a sample of the proposed writing style prepared under his direction by a consultant. The Editorial Board felt that the “rewrite” was not adding a plus value to the original text written by R. Letellier but actually was removing some of the “fire” or enthusiasm from the original publication. It recommended that instead of continuing with this approach, that we ask Robin to simply rewrite the manuscript as best he can with the target audience in mind and through the services of a copy editor, ensure that the message is passed on in plain English to heritage managers and policy makers. Robin and Werner will get back to us with a proposal to this effect.

Rand Eppich presented the proposed approach for the Handbooks and explained how the two publications should be linked together. The target audience for the Handbooks is professionals (architects, archaeologists, conservators, engineers, landscape architects etc.) He said that after reviewing the existing literature on this subject, he considers that the material for most of the techniques that we would like to explain already exists in various publications but that none of them really covers the whole field that we understand needs to be covered at this time.

He suggested an approach that consists in describing certain conservation issues and showing through various examples how recording and documentation have helped to resolve the issues. He suggested doing this through a “profession” structure i.e. architecture, archaeology, engineering etc. For example, if a building requires conservation (conservation issue), an architect will need, among other things, floor plans to make conservation proposals. This issue would be clearly stated, and one or several examples of best practices used to obtain floor plans would be succinctly described, with information on advantages and disadvantages, resources, relative costs and time for production. Each technique would be described in a two to four pages layout.

The Editorial Board commented favorably on this approach but instead of using the “profession” structure, it suggested to adopt the CISFB European structure that goes from the general to the particular i.e. land -> structures -> elements -> components -> finishes. The previous architectural floor plans example would still be valid but would become part of the “structures” section. Global Positioning System (GPS) land survey examples would be in “land”.

Giora Solar, ICOMOS Treasurer General

Werner Schmid, Technical Editor for the Principles and Guidelines

Robin Letellier, RecorDIM International Coordinator and author of the first manuscript on Principles and Guidelines

Frank Matero, Professor, U. of Pennsylvania Historic Preservation Program
The Board suggested that for this type of publication, it is best to begin with very good illustrations, create a layout and then fill the empty spaces with text as opposed to writing a text and then trying to illustrate it.

The Editorial Board also strongly recommended that the Handbooks have a well-illustrated matrix that offers to the professionals the breadth of techniques available to them for the same problem.

This publication is about process, decision-making, using the right tool for a specific problem, not teaching “how-to” use every specific tool.

The Editorial Board felt that it would be very important for these two publications to get the broadest possible distribution especially for managers and professionals in developing countries. All efforts by the GCI in that direction would be greatly appreciated by the field.

The publications should be in color, well illustrated and available on the Internet if at all possible. We should not wait for both of them to be ready to publish them. They should be made available as soon as they are ready.

The Editorial Board will review drafts of the publications as they become available. As per the local tradition, the meeting ended in an English Pub a few blocks away from our hotel.

**English Heritage**

English Heritage is the official government agency charged with looking after, well, English heritage!

What this means in practice is that English Heritage performs archaeological excavations, preserves ancient monuments and buildings, and administers heritage sites. Many of the most famous historic buildings and monuments in Britain (Stonehenge, for example) are under the care of English Heritage.

One of the terrific things that EH gets up to is hosting special events at many of the properties they administer. A glance at their latest “Events” brochure reveals over 600 events ranging from historical re-enactments of jousting to "Life in the Age of Chivalry" and exhibitions of medieval calligraphy.

English Heritage’s activities are presented under three headings:

1. Understanding
2. Discovering and
3. Protecting
Understanding
Improving understanding of the past by research and study.
This comprises the following departments:
- Historic Buildings
- Archaeology Technical Conservation Advice
- Presentation
- National Monuments Record

Discovering
Opening up the national buildings to be enjoyed today.
This comprises the following departments:
- Visitor services
- Education
- Outreach
- Fundraising
- Publishing

Protecting
Helping to protect the value of important buildings for their current owners and for future generations.
This comprises the following departments:
- Designation
- Statutory Advised
- Grants
- English Heritage Nationwide

Photo Gallery
English Heritage also offers on the web an impressive photo gallery of the monuments and sites under its care.

Lets take a closer look at a few departments.
HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Our research and training programmes increase understanding of the historic environment, helping us to guide its management in an informed and sustainable manner. We work with others in the environmental development and university sectors and concentrate our fieldwork and analysis on poorly understood building types, as well as on specific sites and areas.

Methodology
As practitioners we are continually developing new methodologies and approaches to the study of the historic environment. Formal courses and on-site survey experience ensure that we share this expertise with local authorities and the private sector. Working with our partners, we develop standards for the study and recording of historic buildings and areas and provide good practice guidance.

Publications
Our publications include small booklets that show how full historic understanding feeds directly into informed conservation. Larger scale studies explore neglected building types such as hospitals and prisons. We also produce the Survey of London, now at volume 45, which offers an authoritative and comprehensive account of the capital’s buildings.

ARCHAEOLOGY

As the national archaeology service for England, we set standards, promote innovation and provide detailed archaeological knowledge on the historic environment. This work includes the discovery and analysis of new sites from the air and on the ground, recording and researching the history of landscapes and developing techniques for geophysical survey, technological analysis and dating. We also implement the statutory protection of England’s 18,300 Scheduled Monuments.

Our survey results inform our conservation and outreach initiatives and those of partners. They are made available via the National Monuments Record, in a Reports Series and in our reports and publications. Our training programmes, often run in partnership with local authorities, universities or other organisations, ensure that this expertise is maintained for future
generations. Our Archaeology Commissions Programme is a grant budget that enables us to fund important archaeological projects. We also fund a number of scientific specialists who are based in universities and our offices in Bristol, Cambridge and York.

**Maritime Archaeology**
In 2002 we took on responsibility for the historic wrecks and submerged landscapes in, on or under the seabed within 12 miles of the English coast.

**TECHNICAL CONSERVATION ADVICE**

Our regional casework teams offer technical conservation advice to all those who care for historic properties, including the public, local planning authorities and the government. We help set and deliver standards based on common casework problems and research.

Our research in conservation includes material science, engineering, health and fire safety, security, building economics and gardens and landscape management. Our free technical advice notes, listed on our website, are available from our Customer Services.

**NATIONAL MONUMENTS RECORD**

The National Monuments Record (NMR) – English Heritage’s public archive of 10 million items – is the first port of call for anyone seeking information on the historic environment.

The resource
Its collections – including breathtaking photographs, architectural plans and surveys of sites and landscapes – cover the architecture, archaeology and air photography of England. They are housed in our state-of-the-art archive building in Swindon.

Standard setting
The NMR sits at the centre of a network of bodies who manage records of the historic environment. Our thesauri are the national standard for heritage information. We are the key national liaison point for local authority Sites and Monuments Records and represent England in a range of projects that aim to develop European heritage networks.
We are the national leader in education about the historic environment. Our expert advice, inspiring resources, courses and events, support teachers at all levels and link to citizenship, geography and other curriculum subjects.

Free visits and resources
Educational groups are welcomed to our properties free of charge. Our teachers’ membership scheme, Windows on the Past, gives four staff in a school unlimited entry to our properties. Many of our supporting materials for teachers are free and we have a wide range of mail order books, videos and poster packs. Our magazine Heritage Learning is published three times a year and is available on request to anyone involved in teaching.

Partnerships
Our partnership projects involve both formal and informal educational groups. Our Heritage, My History is just one example. With The History Channel this nationwide project involved groups of two or more people undertaking research into famous people, places or events within their community, locality or family. We also work with the Guides, Scouts and Cubs to help them enjoy and learn from the historic environment.

Special events
From royal progresses, to battle re-enactments and have-a-go-archery, historical events dramatically bring our properties to life. If you’ve ever wanted to converse with a Roman soldier, experience the tension at a Suffragettes meeting or browse at a traditional trades fair then we have just the event for you. Alternatively, you might like to bring a picnic to one of our open-air concerts held at Kenwood or Marble Hill in London and Audley End House in Essex.

Stonehenge