

Damaging improvements

David Yeomans¹

Abstract A structure can sometimes be altered for the worse as a result of repairs. This is a report of a late eighteenth century stables that had been re-roofed. Recent movement within the masonry structure suggested that the new and heavier roofing tiles were the cause of the distress. However structural appraisal showed that the increased weight could not account for the observed movement. It could instead be traced to a change in building practice since the original construction.

Two lessons can be drawn from this. Analysis carried out by hand enabled the structure to be better understood. The other lesson is that one should be careful that the use of more recent and better building practices are not counter-productive.

Keywords roof, repair, movement

INTRODUCTION

Conference papers are most often about the more dramatic or complex examples of restoration, about some of the latest findings in research in which sophisticated instrumentation or finite element analysis will feature, or possibly about the historical significance of some structure or group of structures. Such papers are, of course, the very stuff of these conferences, and very interesting to us as delegates. But whatever the findings on the frontiers of research what ultimately matters is the standard of structural conservation in the field and that means asking how well buildings are being treated by those who may be entrusted with their conservation. This issue concerns simple examples of historic buildings just as much as the more complex and while we may be happy to report the excellent work that I am sure that all of us at the conference are doing, those of us who are involved with education should be concerned about the more general level of conservation and be asking what we need to be doing about that. To address this issue I want to provide two simple examples from my own experience where excessive interventions had been recommended and ask what simple methods we need to be advocating if things are to improve. To answer that I shall then examine in a very modest building in detail – a contrast to the kind of thing that many presenters will be showing but which enables some simple lessons to be considered.

1 David Yeomans, United Kingdom, mail@davidyeomans.co.uk

