

Scottish Stone Liaison Group

NEWSLETTER

Natural Stone Institute

Issue No. 4 Winter 2002/3

Innovative use of Caithness flagstone The Devonian House - a case study John Sutherland

One of the presentations made at the first Annual General Meeting of the Natural Stone Institute (NSI) on 19 September 2002 at the Royal Overseas League in Edinburgh was a description of a house of Caithness flagstone. Now this might not sound that unusual, but as the story unfolded, it became clear that this house had been re-thought from first principles: everything that could possibly be constructed in flagstone, was constructed in flagstone.



Background

There are three flagstone quarries in the region and Mr Sutherland has been examining other potential markets for material that could otherwise be classed as waste.

Walling

The main walls of the house were constructed of stone cropped using a guillotine with blades offset by 25mm. This acts to find any natural weakness in the stone, which is split to give a slightly rough texture to the face. Walling to the garden included stones with a sawn edge given a flamed finish and cropped stone piers.

Landscaping

Cropped stone setts are laid in quarry dust to prevent them lifting and these, now weathered, form an attractive alternative to the modern mono-block drive area. Paths are finished with conventional paving slabs and there is an attractive garden water feature in the front with water cascading down a stone in which the name of the house "Devonian House" is carved. Polished stones have been used for the barbecue area.

Roofing

Caithness slabs have been used for roofing - a single size of 575mm wide by 325mm long was sourced. These were laid with two nail holes at the top of each and a 75mm top lap.

Internal fittings

Many internal fittings were constructed of flagstone.

Even with the most efficient production techniques, only about 5% of the material won is sold as Caithness flag in large sizes for paving. Finding a use for quarry waste, especially now the Aggregate Tax has been introduced, is therefore important in ensuring the viability of the quarrying operation. Every effort was made to produce all the required stone and "slate" elements for the house from the products of the quarry. Nothing, neither inside nor out, escaped this philosophy.

many internal fittings were constructed of stone, including floors and worktops, sink surrounds, shower trays and cills. The innovative use of white oak inlay surrounds in the hall and other rooms complements the darker stone material.

Devonian House - Site visit

The NSI is planning a site visit in the Spring to both the house and the quarry. Contact is being established with other quarries in the North of Scotland to determine if other quarry visits are possible.

Whilst everyone who is interested is welcome on this trip, if space is limited, then preference will be given to Members of the NSI.

INTERESTED? Whilst the date has yet to be set, anyone who is interested in this proposed trip should make contact with the office as soon as possible. Once details are finalised, information will automatically be forwarded to those who have expressed an interest.

NSI Membership

If you have not yet joined the NSI, you are reminded that the Membership is open to everyone who has an interest in Scotland's built heritage and its appropriate maintenance.

Memberships - for individuals (£25) or Companies (£100) is available and the NSI is looking to build a range of benefits for the latter. Unfortunately, for tax purposes, such benefits can only apply to the latter.

Please contact the SSLG at the address at the bottom of this page for more details and a membership application form.

Extracts from the Convener's Report to the NSI AGM

19 September 2002, Royal Overseas League, Edinburgh

Andrew McMillan reported on the NSI's achievements over the past year since the Inaugural Meeting of the Natural Stone Institute was held at Stirling Castle on 19th September 2001.

"Prior to the Inaugural meeting a Minute of Agreement between Scottish Stone Liaison Group and Natural Stone Institute, setting out Objectives and Tasks, was finalised. A Memorandum and Articles of Association have been drawn up and ratified by the Board of Directors. Charitable Status has been confirmed for the NSI.

With the Research Working Group, Dr Maureen Young has undertaken a survey of research organisations and current areas of research. Much of the networking has been conducted by email and I would urge you to contact her (at m.young@rgu.ac.uk) if you are not already on the Research mailing list.

On the Education and Training front, we are conscious that any courses that are developed for professionals should be well integrated with existing established training courses. Together with the SSLG, the NSI has arranged what we hope will be the first of a series of self-financing CPD Seminar Roadshows starting this autumn

The NSI Steering Committee and five Working Groups (Publications, Education, Fundraising, Research and Events and Publicity) were set up following the Inaugural meeting in Stirling in September 2001. We are very heavily dependent on the voluntary effort of individuals and I should like to thank all who have contributed to our achievements during the first year.

We have formally circulated membership literature in the past months but we recognise that membership fees alone will not provide enough financial support for the organisation. In its new structure following the AGM, the Fundraising Working Group will concentrate on the crucial matter of securing funding.

Dr E. Corrinne Henderson starting the committee aimed at local authority staff, architects and builders amongst others. The task of the new Education Working Group is to develop an Educational Policy and to advise on the appointment of the Education Officer."

Mr McMillan also reported that the NSI web site had been further developed by Dr Maureen Young and that talks on the SSLG and NSI had been presented at *Stone in Wales Conference* in Cardiff, *A Conservation Forum: Setting the Agenda in the 21st Century* meeting in Newport, Rhode Island, USA and the *Cultural and Natural Landscapes Conference* in Dublin.

Note: this is a summary of the report - a fuller version is available on the NSI web site at <http://www.nsiuk.org/index.html>.

SSLG web site

The SSLG website has been completely re-vamped. You can go direct to the NSI homepage on:
<http://www.sslg.co.uk/NSIhome.html>.



**Contributions for future editions of this Newsletter should be sent to:
Audrey Dakin, NSI Newsletter Editor, Longmore House, Salisbury Place, Edinburgh EH9 1JA
or audrey.dakin@scotland.gov.uk**

**Natural Stone Institute
Room 133, Pentlandfield Business Park, The Bush, Roslin EH25 9RE
Tel: 0131 440 9473 Fax: 0131 440 4032**