

Scottish Stone Liaison Group

NEWSLETTER

Stone Industry Project Team

Issue No. 1 Spring 2001

What is the current situation within the industry?

The function of the Scottish Stone Industry Project Team is well defined within the SSLG Business Plan but before a number of these issues can be progressed it is necessary to establish the current position of the industry.

To that end, with the assistance of the CITB, a questionnaire is being sent to EVERY employer likely to employ masons or work with stone.

This is a crucial exercise as there appears to be a general assumption (not made by employers of masons) that anyone who can lay bricks can also work with stone. It is an assumption that some clients and architects have learned to their cost is simply not the case.

The questionnaire is seeking to secure vital information and the returns, once analysed, will be built back into the Business plan to determine the manner in which this particular Project Team proceeds.

"Stone in the City" Seminar

This is advanced notice of an important SEMINAR entitled "STONE IN THE CITY" which is being run by the Stone Federation GB. It will be held on the 19th September in the Stirling Management Centre, Stirling University Campus, Stirling with a BUFFET LUNCH being available from 1.00pm. The seminar will commence at 2.00pm and it is anticipated that it will conclude around 4.45pm.

The cost is £35.00 for the first booking and £30.00 per additional name from the same company.

Bibliography of speakers:-

Mr A Bruce - Manager of Kemnay Quarry from which the granite cladding for the new Scottish Parliament will be secured against a very tight timetable.

Mr P Buchanan - has overseen the research and restoration of Stirling Castle's Great Hall and this involved careful research, archaeology and material sourcing.

Mr N McLeish - From Hugh Martin Partnership, project architects in a number of city centre developments in Glasgow and Edinburgh.

The Content is subject to editorial review and may be edited for clarity and accuracy.

The Seminar is aimed at highlighting the issues that have to be addressed when using stone in both new build and conservation projects with the first question arising with the "winning" or quarrying of the material in the first place. The following matters will be addressed:-

- Quarrying Dimensional Stone: *Mr A Bruce*
- Repair / renovation / restoration: *Mr P Buchanan*
- Use of stone in new build projects: *Mr N McLeish*
- Technical difficulties that can arise: *Mr P Harrison*
- Summing up: *Mr I Maxwell*

The Seminar will be Chaired by *Mr A Stark* and *Mr J McLeish*.

With spaces being limited those interested should book IMMEDIATELY by sending the necessary cheque (made out to the **Stone Federation GB, and returned to PO Box 28011, Edinburgh EH16 6WN**).

developments in Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Mr P Harrison - President of the Stone Federation GB. Mr Harrison is knowledgeable of the technical difficulties that can arise in the modern fixing of stone in new build projects.

Mr I Maxwell - As Director of TCRE at Historic Scotland Mr Maxwell has long championed the need for those architects involved in grant aided work to have the necessary conservation qualifications and he has worked with COTAC to establish these standards.

As the SSLG wishes to encourage young architects develop their knowledge of the use of stone in both new build and conservation projects a limited number of places are being made available to Schools of Architecture.

SCOTBUILD - November 2000

In its first 'public outing' the SSLG had a stand at the above three-day event and throughout the exhibition had two trainees cutting and dressing a variety of sandstone.

This demonstration attracted considerable attention with many stopping to admire the skills of these trainees making comments such as "it is good to see the old skills being displayed" and "it is a credit to their firms that these young folk get a chance to learn a craft". Clearly this demonstrated the interest of the public that such skills were still being taught but such training cannot be undertaken in a vacuum.

Training costs MONEY and TIME and clients and architects who concentrate solely on the 'bottom line' place such training opportunities at serious risk.

Should the commitment of those dedicated to provide such training opportunities waiver then the consequences for Scotland's built heritage will be serious indeed.

Training - "good" and "bad" news

Until February this year there were only two Colleges providing masonry training courses (Glasgow College of Building & Printing and Telford College, Edinburgh) but now Inverness College, utilising the facilities at Elgin Cathedral (previously used by Historic Scotland) is now in a position to provide a limited training programme

The analysis of the figures show that 63% of all construction courses fail to meet these numbers and could, should Colleges so decide, be terminated immediately.

The SSLG is aware that the NSCC has raised these concerns and its analysis with the Scottish

position to provide a limited training programme.

It is anticipated that these opportunities will grow with the passage of time but as with all developments there are also risks.

The Scottish Committee of the National Specialist Contractors Council (NSCC), having undertaken an analysis of the masonry trainee intake, has highlighted the fact that there are currently insufficient trainees being recruited to ensure the continuation of masonry training at the Edinburgh and Glasgow Colleges. So whilst the development in Elgin is a step in the "right direction" it will be necessary to ensure that this expansion is built on new recruits to the trade from the area covered by the Inverness College. If on the other hand it simply pulls trainees away from the other courses then this could further threaten the training provision.

This charge is based upon the NSCC analysis, as it is necessary for Colleges, now responsible for their own economic accountability, to recruit 12 trainees per course to ensure the viability of such courses. If a 'drop out' factor of 10% (in fact it is 20%) is then built into the equation then to ensure the viability of a course it would be necessary to have 14 trainees enrolled at its outset.

these concerns, and its analysis, with the Scottish Further Education Funding Council but it is an issue that will concern everyone who recognises the need to secure well trained operatives for the future to address the growing "skills crisis".

Unfortunately it is not a problem that any one sector of the industry can resolve - it will require the concerted and combined efforts of all - from client to employer, from architect to parent.

The latest information from the SFEFC indicates that the concern, namely of the needs of trades that attract fewer numbers, is to be reviewed and this is welcomed.

Only by such efforts will the positive and constructive comments made at the SCOTBUILD Exhibition be realised.

WEB PAGE

Keep up to date with matters addressed by the SSLG - see <http://www.sslg.co.uk>.

Scottish Stone Liaison Group
Room 133, Pentlandfield Business Park, The Bush, Roslin EH25 9RE
Tel: 0131 448 0313 Fax: 0131 440 4032