

Scottish Stone Liaison Group

NEWSLETTER

Stone Industry Project Team

Issue No. 6 Autumn 2003

National Heritage Training Group

The Scottish Stone Liaison Group is represented, through its Chief Executive, on the Management Board of the National Heritage Training Group which is seeking to address the needs of the built heritage throughout the UK.

The case made at its first meeting (4th June), namely ensuring that it recognised the fact that the other countries in the UK had ministers addressing "cultural" issues, has been taken onboard and a protocol established which should ensure that when reference is made to, and communications are sent to, the "Minister" then the Scottish Minister will indeed be included.

Data

The main outcome of this meeting was the need to establish the exact position regarding the skills, and the skills mismatch, throughout the UK and it was proposed that this could best be achieved with the use of a questionnaire. The draft timescale for this particular exercise meant that Scotland was to be last to be surveyed in late 2004.

Following a meeting held in the offices of Historic Scotland on 1st August, attended by the newly appointed Heritage Construction Manager, Ms Beverley Peters, the CITB's National Specialist Manager, Mr A Collin, the CITB's Scottish Manager, Mr D Fergus, Mr I Maxwell, Director TCRE Historic Scotland and the Chief Executive SSLG, Mr A McKinney, additional funding was agreed enabling Scotland to be moved to the forefront of this exercise.

Within a few weeks, the structure of the questionnaire was resolved and subsequently circulated by the CITB. The return rate to date is running in the area of 10% which is very promising. Some 700 firms are on the mailing list for this survey.

The results of this exercise are anticipated in or before December.

A centre of excellence

Currently there is a drive to explore the possibility

Training

College based training invariably uses new

of the creation of a Centre of Excellence for the heritage market in Scotland. The purpose would be to meet the specific training needs of a range of practical skills from carpentry, to slating and painting & decorating with masonry skills also being included. Landscaping and metal work are others that it is envisaged that this Centre would accommodate. The Scottish Lime Centre Trust would be an integral part of any such proposal.

The needs of the professional and management structures are also recognised and it is proposed that these too would be addressed by the proposed Centre.

However, whilst recognising that this is a small market, it is extremely important that work on these old buildings is carried out in the most appropriate manner and in this way safeguard that heritage for the pleasure of future generations.

materials, be it wood, slate, stone or paint, and focuses primarily on the needs of the new build market. Yet current statistics indicate that this sector accounts 50% of the market and there is growing concern that the requirements of the other 50% (repair/ maintenance) requires to be addressed.

The data contained in [Newsletter No 5](#), namely the lack of opportunities offered by employers for young people wishing to enter the industry, indicates that, although Scottish employers generally outperform other employers in the UK, we cannot be complacent. It is a fact that only 50% of those who sought employment in the construction industry were successful. The Industry Team is concerned that, at best, the drop outs may have continued to work for their employer but, at worst, they have been lost to the industry. Not having completed their college training they will have NO recognised qualification.

The SSLG is currently exploring the possibility of mobile training rigs that could tour areas where college training is less accessible. Whilst this may sound fanciful and likely to be more expensive, the case being made is that it is better that the investment in training, both financial and physical, actually achieves a positive outcome.

Currently 50% of the investment is simply wasted and this cannot be in anybody's interest – least of all the trainee!

However, on a brighter note, the Northern College will create a slating & tiling course in Alness in 2004 which is very encouraging – it is but a first step.

Training outcomes

The Numbers Game

The Industry Project Team has identified a mismatch between the number of those entering the training cycle and those subsequently securing a SVQ3 qualification.

A SSLG survey, undertaken some three years ago, indicated an ageing masonry workforce and the Team is concerned that the current intake, coupled with the drop out rate (averaging 20%), the mismatch on the intake/output on achieving qualification and the general attrition of the

Stone Federation GB – AGM

The SSLG Chief Executive addressed an internal session of the SFGB Annual General Meeting on the 25th Sept. in Stratford-upon-Avon and acknowledged the support the SFGB has given to the SSLG, both financial and in the form of Directors to its Board, since its formation. Other issues covered at the meeting included the Hallmarking of natural stone and the issuing of draft "Clients Guide" and the "Contractors & Producers Guide". In addition, the Construction Products Directive & CE markings for natural stone and the "Testing" guidelines for the new

industry, may not be meeting the future needs of the industry.

European Standards were all issues that will have an impact on the industry in the coming years.

'Naming' Scotland's building stones



Watson Stonecraft apprentice Dean Hamilton with 'Dolerite', the first 'named' stone at the Scottish Parliament. A copyrighted image courtesy of British Geological Survey.

During 'Rock On', Scottish Geology Festival 2003 (Sept.), a length of Dolerite kerbing quarried from Tarmac's Cairneyhill Quarry near Caldercruix, for the landscaped area at the Scottish Parliament, became Scotland's second 'named' stone.

Supported and financed by Watson Stonecraft, with the engraving undertaken by the Edinburgh-based Graciela Ainsworth and team, this highly unusual and innovative piece of geological interpretation was coordinated by the 'Rock On' Organising Committee led by Scottish Natural Heritage.

The engraving, on the 4 m length of kerbing reads: "*Dolerite - An igneous rock from Caldercruix that cooled from molten magma around 300 million years ago*". During the "Rock On" 2001 a slab of Caithness Flagstone at Hunter Square just off the Royal Mile, Edinburgh was 'named' with the inscription: "*Caithness Flagstone - A Scottish rock formed during the Devonian geological period around 380 million years ago*".

Kemnay Granite will be the next 'named' stone and Colin MacFadyen (SNH) would like to hear from those in the stone industry who would like to support the 'naming' of a Caithness Flagstone at the Parliament to take place in situ in late 2004, when the 'named' dolerite and Kemnay Granite stones will be unveiled. (Contact the SSLG Offices)

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