

Building skills for conserving seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Scottish built heritage: Structures

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This PhD is part of a wider research on 17th and 18th centuries Scottish architecture and its conservation, carried out by the Architectural Design and Conservation Research Unit (ADCRU) at the Department of Architecture of the University of Strathclyde.

The research focuses on the structures of the period, starting from the overall arrangements and covering individual elements such as turnpike and pen-check stairs, chimneys, timber roofs and stone vaults. The complexities of these structures pose a series of issues which current conservation techniques are not always able to respond to adequately. In some cases these challenges have been successfully resolved although these experiences have not been sufficiently analysed, discussed and shared by the building industry in order to inform other projects.

Historical structures are important not only for their aesthetical and historical values: they are unique witnesses of the conceptual, scientific and technical efforts made to improve the art of building and of the migration of technical knowledge. Nevertheless, historical structures that are sound or could be easily repaired are often demolished and substituted due to a lack of understanding of their behaviour and needs.

The creation of a database and associated mapping is an important tool to locate and identify the different structures and elements. It will help to select the most relevant case studies, which will be examined from the architectural, historical and technical point of view in order to gain an accurate evaluation. This will clarify what are the specialised skills needed to conserve them.

The results of the research will be presented in a way that is accessible to craftsmen, professionals and buildings' owners, increasing awareness about the value of these buildings and interest between young people in conservation.