

THE ORIGIN OF OFFICIAL PRESERVATION OF ANCIENT MONUMENTS

By John H. Harvey

IT is well known that Great Britain was by no means the first country to give official recognition to the listing and preservation of ancient monuments and relevant archaeological material, in spite of the very early date of serious interest in the subject. While this interest taken by individuals can be traced back at least as far as the fifteenth-century travels of William Worcestre,¹ it was not until 1882 that the first Ancient Monuments Protection Act was placed on the Statute Book, and the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments was not set up until 1909. Credit is commonly given to France as the initiator of a state service of monuments, but this was not until 1837, nearly twenty years after action had been taken by the absolute ruler of a small but important German state, Hesse.

Hesse has a very long history as an ancient German region and as a group of principalities, but it was only after the end of the Napoleonic Wars that the chief of these, commonly called Hesse-Darmstadt, was constituted into a substantial state of central Germany, with important territories on both sides of the Rhine as well as to north and south of the Main. The Congress of Vienna in 1815 awarded to Hesse the ancient imperial cities of Mainz and Worms with an extensive surrounding territory, and the grand duchy attained considerable commercial and strategic significance. The former landgrave, Louis X (1753-1830), became grand duke as Louis I and extended an enlightened rule to his enlarged dominions. Within little more than two years he was to promulgate a short decree which is a fundamental document of the cause of monumental preservation.

This decree, of outstanding interest not merely because of its early date but for its mastery of the subject and succinct expression, was republished by Georg Moller (1784-1852), the architectural historian and discoverer of the lost medieval drawings of Cologne Cathedral. Moller held office as Director of Buildings at the Hessian Court, and travelled widely in Germany measuring medieval buildings, of which he published the earliest satisfactory scale drawings and details. The first edition of his important illustrated book, *Denkmäler der deutschen*

¹ Printed, though with some omissions, in *Itineraria Symonis Simeonis et Willelmi de Worcestre*, ed. James Nasmyth, 1778.

Baukunst, appeared in Darmstadt in 1821, but the much enlarged second edition, published simultaneously in Leipzig and Darmstadt by Carl Wilhelm Leske and in London by John Weale, bears no date.

Moller regarded publication of ancient buildings not as a substitute for the originals, but as a protection against ignorance and vandalism as organs of destruction.² It was in this context that he introduced a footnote regarding the grand duke's decree, describing it as an enactment hitherto without parallel in any other country, so far as Moller was aware. He continues by reprinting the entire text of the order, which is of such remarkable interest that it seems worth while to give a full translation, as well as to place the original on record at the present time, when legislation of far greater complexity too often proves ineffective.

"Louis, by the grace of God Grand Duke of Hesse and the Rhine, etc., etc.

Whereas the surviving monuments of architecture are among the most important and interesting evidences of history, in that from them may be inferred the former customs, culture, and civil condition of the nation, and therefore their preservation is greatly to be wished, we decree as follows:

1. Our Higher College of Building is charged with bringing all the discoverable remains of ancient architecture in the Grand Duchy of Hesse, which are worthy of preservation on historical or artistic grounds, into a correct inventory wherein their present condition is to be described and the ancient works of art to be found in them, such as paintings, statues and the like, are to be noted.

2. For the compilation of the historical part of this inventory the aforesaid College is to invite such as are most learned in the history of every province to collaborate in this patriotic purpose, and these are to communicate to that end the necessary information from the archives.

3. The most distinguished of these works, or the most ruinous, are to be completely and accurately surveyed and the drawings deposited with their description in our Museum.

4. Our Higher College of Building is hereby charged: to lay before us the inventory of these buildings considered worthy of preservation or illustration for our approval, in order to put in hand the preservation and repair of the same in conjunction with the various authorities; and to give us the appropriate advice thereon.

5. If it should seem necessary to put in hand alterations of one or other of these buildings, or to demolish one entirely, this is to be done only with

² G. Moller: *Denkmäler der deutschen Baukunst*, 2nd edition, n.d., p. 9: "Indem man auf diese Weise eine Uebersicht des Vorhandenen erhielt, würden diese Werke zugleich unter den Schutz der Publizität gesetzt und dem Vandalismus, mit welchem an vielen Orten unwissende Unterbehörden diese Gebäude nur als gute Steinbrüche ansehen und benutzen, durch die Furcht vor öffentlicher Schande ein Damm entgegen gesetzt." The experience of the twentieth century hardly suggests that "fear of public ignominy" is now a restraining factor where "ignorant lower authorities" are involved.

the previous knowledge of the said College, and in appropriate cases after it has obtained our supreme approval.

6. If in the course of excavations or on other occasions antiquities are discovered, our officers are to take care that if possible they should be preserved, and notice thereof is to be given immediately to our Higher College of Building or to the Directorate of our Museum.

7. It is the duty of all public authorities to take the greatest possible care of the monuments made known in the aforesaid inventory, to which end the same shall be printed and communicated to them.

Darmstadt, the 22nd of January 1818.

Louis.”³

Given that such a decree was possible only in a state governed by the personal will of an absolute monarch, it remains astonishing that in less than four hundred words every essential feature of all ancient monuments legislation is clearly outlined. The principles of preservation, and also the practical means involved, are grasped with brilliant

³ The original text, as printed by Moller, runs:

Ludewig, von Gottes Gnaden Grossherzog von Hessen und bei Rhein, etc., etc.

In Erwägung, dass die noch vorhandenen Denkmäler der Baukunst zu den wichtigsten und interessantesten Urkunden der Geschichte gehören, indem sich aus ihnen auf die frühern Sitten, Geistesbildung und den bürgerlichen Zustand der Nation schliessen lässt, und daher die Erhaltung derselben höchst wünschenswerth ist, verordnen Wir Folgendes:

1. Unser Ober-Baukolleg wird beauftragt, alle in dem Grossherzogthum Hessen befindliche Ueberreste alter Baukunst, welche in Hinsicht auf Geschichte oder Kunst verdienen erhalten zu werden, in ein genaues Verzeichniss bringen zu lassen, wobei der gegenwärtige Zustand zu beschreiben und die in ihnen befindlichen alten Kunstwerke, als Gemälde, Bildsäulen und dergleichen mit zu bemerken sind.
2. Wegen der Ausarbeitung des geschichtlichen Theiles in diesem Verzeichniss, hat das genannte Colleg diejenigen Gelehrten, welchen die Geschichte jeder Provinz am bekanntesten ist, zur Mitwirkung für diesen patriotischen Zweck einzuladen, und sind ihnen zu dem Ende aus den Archiven die nöthigen Nachrichten mitzutheilen.
3. Die vorzüglichsten dieser Werke, oder die am meisten auffälligen, sind nach und nach genau aufzunehmen und die Zeichnungen derselben nebst der Beschreibung in unserm Museum zu deponiren.
4. Unser Ober-Baukolleg wird hierdurch beauftragt, uns das Verzeichniss dieser der Erhaltung oder Abbildung werthgeachteten Gebäude zur Genehmigung vorzulegen, sich wegen der Erhaltung und Ausbesserung derselben mit den verschiedenen Behörden in Verbindung zu setzen und Uns darüber die geeigneten Vorschläge zu machen.
5. Wenn es nöthig scheinen sollte, mit einem oder dem andern dieser Gebäude Veränderungen vorzunehmen oder dieselben ganz abzubrechen, so soll dieses nur mit Vorwissen des erwähnten Kollegs geschehen, und nachdem dasselbe, in den geeigneten Fällen, Unsere höchste Genehmigung eingeholt hat.
6. Wenn bei Nachgrabungen oder andern Veranlassungen Alterthümer aufgefunden werden, so haben Unsere Beamten dafür zu sorgen, dass dieselben möglichst erhalten werden, und ist davon sogleich die Anzeige an Unser Ober-Baukolleg oder die Direction Unsers Museums zu machen.
7. Den sämmtlichen öffentlichen Behörden wird es zur Pflicht gemacht, für die Erhaltung der in dem oben erwähnten Verzeichnisse bekannt gemachten Denkmäler möglichst zu sorgen, zu welchem Ende dasselbe gedruckt und ihnen mitgetheilt werden soll.

Darmstadt, den 22. Januar 1818.
Ludewig.

intuition, and could not be bettered even after a century and a half of bitter experience and of long-winded argument on the subject in many countries and parliaments.

First of all, the responsible authority under the Crown was to be a professional body of architects, with the essential technical knowledge of the works to be described. All historical material, which was to be derived from archival sources (as it always should be, and so seldom is!), was to be provided by the most learned historians of every part of the country, and placed at the disposal of the architects engaged in compiling the inventory. The buildings were not to be divorced from their contents, contained works of art finding a place as well as the fabrics themselves.

Full and complete graphic survey was recognized as a vital complement to the initial task of listing, and was to be applied both to buildings of outstanding importance and to those whose ruinous condition gave rise to the urgent risk of loss. The drawings, with the description of the buildings annexed, were to be deposited for permanent preservation, in the national Museum.

All necessary steps for preservation and repair were to be taken by the Crown, or co-ordinated under its aegis, the professional body compiling the inventory being responsible for its presentation and for making advisory recommendations as to treatment. No room was left for failure to implement the necessary proposals by any permissive delegation of authority: the final decision as to preservation or repair was left, without any question or right of appeal, with the Crown as fountain-head of all authority.

The problem of alteration and demolition of monuments was not overlooked, but was made subject to previous notice given to the professional body in charge, who were to refer important cases to the sovereign himself. It is one of the more notable features of this outstanding document that these provisions indicate that the preservation of architectural monuments in historically and artistically sound condition was regarded as an object worthy of the personal application of time and energy by the ruler. Here is no suggestion that architecture, or antiquities, are matters of minor moment to the state, to be neglected or treated as the objects of a mere dilettantism.

Not only monuments above ground, but the results of excavation and chance finds, in other words the raw materials of archaeology, were brought within the scope of the order, with the recognition that only immediate notice of such finds given to the central bodies in charge would avail to prevent destruction. The alternative methods

of giving notice, either to the College of Architects, or to the National Museum, doubtless implied close co-operation between the two organizations, and would tend to avoid the disappearance of material that fell on the borderline between the provinces of the architect, concerned with structural remains, and the curator, interested in movable objects of art or craftsmanship.

Finally, and in view of modern experience perhaps the most interesting provision of all, an express duty is laid upon all public authorities to take the greatest possible care of the listed buildings and works contained in the inventory, which to that end would be printed and circulated to them. Here again no room was left for loss and destruction due to hesitancy, supineness, or overlapping functions. All alike were firmly saddled with the duty of active preservation, under the monarch's watchful eye.



FIG. 1. The pre-dovetail method of assembling a transverse building frame, in the southern barn. The brace to the tiebeam is squint-lapped to the sides of both post and beam. Note the significant absence of the post-head jowl.

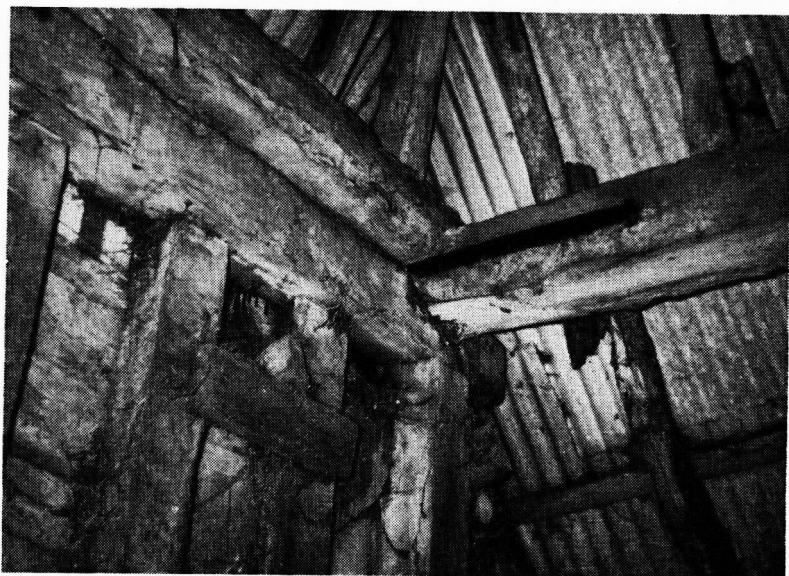


FIG. 2. One end-frame head of the northern barn. The top-plate is seen on the right, and the two "claspings" tiebeams extend towards the left. Some of the empty joint-matrixes are visible, proving re-use of the timber.
BELCHAMP HALL BARNES, ESSEX.

T. K. Kinsey.