

Minerva Stone Conservation Company profile, 2011.



Above, The famous Gorgon Pediment situated in the Roman Baths in Bath, which was reconstructed and conserved by us in 2010.

Minerva was established 20 years ago and currently has 18 permanently employed staff. We are familiar with the requirements of a project of this nature as we only work within the heritage sector and are well used to managing an efficient flow of staff from one site to another. As is usual with all of our projects, the works will be directly supervised by the 2 directors in close association with 2 of our key managers, (masonry and conservation) for the duration of the contract.

2). About Minerva

Minerva is a small business engaged in the specialist repair and conservation of historic stone and plasterwork, it could be called a family business. Our directors, Andrew Ziminski and Andrew Sharland, met in the early 1990's whilst attending the Postgraduate Stone Conservation course at Weymouth College in Dorset and went on to gain further experience by working for Salisbury Cathedral Works Department, our company development continued in 1998 when Andrew Ziminski was awarded a William Morris Craft Fellowship by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, this advanced training scheme, designed originally to train future Clerks of Works gave Andrew a unique insight into the most sympathetic repair techniques to historic buildings. We now mainly work in the area known as Wessex in the UK, but undertake church monument conservation work throughout the UK and abroad. This autumn, for example Minerva will be part of a team of UK based advisors visiting Russia on an exchange visit to the Society of the village church. Here we hope that we will be able to contribute to a Russian lime renaissance.

Our lifelong interest in the landscape and its manipulation by man has given us a rare understanding of the building techniques, vernacular style and building materials of South West & Southern Britain. We have developed slowly, taking on about 1 person per year and this has given us a sound economic footing, directorial and managerial stability and staff loyalty.



Since establishing Minerva Stone Conservation we have worked as the principal contractor on a large number of projects, including:



Work to restore the cascade and serpentine lake at Prior Park Landscape Garden in Bath for the National Trust.

Repairs to the Grade 1 fabric of Newton Park House, Bath Spa University. Works to exclude rainwater and to prevent future failures due to rusting ferrous cramps. In addition there was a need for a considerable amount of pollutant removal, repointing, and conservation mortar repairs



Conservation works to Sherborne Abbey in Dorset. We undertook quinquennial works at the Abbey church of St Mary. We replaced decaying stone weathering and pinnacles, pointed in a specially created mix to suit the original mortar, and replastered.

Recording and rebuilding of many sections of the medieval Malmesbury town defences, packhorse bridges and Market cross. Having spent many years working in and around Malmesbury it was nice to focus our attention on the Market Cross. After the structure was cleaned we repaired and sheltercoated the lantern and pinnacles, we then had the opportunity to base the recarving of vandalised faces and grotesques on local characters.



Tyntesfield House (National Trust).

We have been working here (as the Principle stone conservation and masonry contractor to the main House and chapel) since March 2009.



Left, new grotesque carved for Tyntesfield house chapel.



Lottery-funded masonry works to the Kennet and Avon Canal at Bath.

Here we rebuilt many sections of locks, bridges and boundary stonework, a technically challenging project.

Work for English Heritage-funded projects such as at Muchelney Abbey, a Preaching Cross at Wick St Lawrence in Somerset and St Stephens Church, Lansdown, Bath where the major decay factor was the presence of hundreds of iron cramps in the ashlar face of the tower, the buttresses and pinnacles. These cramps were corroding and the consequent pressure on the Bath stone had been causing pieces of stone to pop off from a great height. The cramps were removed and replaced with stainless steel versions. We discovered that the tower octagon had been encircled with several layers of wrought ironwork, which had jacked up the top parapet section. These had to be tunneled out, surgically removed and also replaced with stainless steel.



Here we can see one of our apprentices removing a corrodng ferrous cramp (one of over 400).

We regularly work on many redundant churches for the Churches Conservation Trust.



Repairs to the medieval bridge in Bradford on Avon for Wiltshire County Council.

Much original stonework survived in the arches and the fixing of the replacement stone in the barrel vaults could only commence once the resident Daubentons Bats had been temporarily moved on to new roosts for the winter. Using an surprisingly stable pontoon system we Peeled back the layers one by one, removing areas badly damaged (such as the cutwaters) and jacked up by tree root growth & inappropriate modern materials previously fixed by contractors in the 1970s. We also removed the cracked Tarmac carriageway, replacing with a limecrete mix.

Profiles and Curriculum Vitae of the Minerva team.

Andrew Sharland and Andrew Ziminski (the 2 directors of Minerva) share a common C.V that is profiled above and below;

Education

Andrew Ziminski initially trained in the late 1980s at the Weald & Downland Museum at Singleton, Sussex. Andrew Sharland had gained early experience as a volunteer at Bath Abbey during the repair scheme to the west front. After attending the Postgraduate Architectural Conservation course based at Weymouth College and Bournemouth University (later converted to MA, both Andrews Now sit on the advisory panel).

Andrew Z then went on to gain further experience by training and working for Salisbury Cathedral Works Department. Andrew Ziminski's personal development continued in 1998 when awarded a William Morris Craft Fellowship by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. This advanced training scheme (designed to train Clerks of works) gives a unique insight into the best current thinking relating to the management & repair of historic buildings.

Having Established Minerva Stone Conservation in 1991, Minerva has repaired countless historic monuments from Abbeys, Churches and grand houses to local cob cottages and monuments of archaeological importance.

Other interests.

2001-2004 Trustee, The Society for the Protection Of Ancient Buildings

Andrew Ziminski was a Trustee & Main Committee member of the SPAB. I am, unusually for the main committee, a craftsman, with a unique knowledge base to contribute. I have had on many occasions been the representative of the Society at, for example, sensitive casework meetings with other heritage.

1999-2004 Trustee & Secretary, The William Morris Craft Fellowship Trust.

In 1999 a group of the SPAB's Craft Fellows had all been so inspired by our training that we resolved (as funding from a sponsor for the unique scheme was coming to its end) to raise enough to endow funds ensuring that future young professionals and craftsmen may have the same opportunities as we did. With Prince Charles as our patron we exceeded our target of a quarter of a million pounds in the first three years.

Profiles of Minerva's most experienced senior staff who would manage the project:

Christina Kaye (who begun her career in 1981 at Wells Cathedral under Professor Baker) and Nell Pickering

CHRISTINA KAYE. WORK HISTORY- 30 years experience in buildings, monument and sculpture conservation. Three year apprenticeship on Wells Cathedral, West Front under Professor Baker, starting 1981. Over the subsequent years I have worked on a wide variety of buildings and artifacts. To name a few:

Wells Cathedral Cloister Monuments
Limestone, high-relief carving by Eric Gill
Winchester College medieval figures and niches
Salisbury Cathedral West Front figures
Temple of Harmony lime plaster conservation
Tower of London monuments report

I am experienced in lime conservation techniques including casein based repairs; marble, sandstone and polychrome cleaning, repair and consolidation; decorative lime plaster cleaning, repair and consolidation. I see clear, detailed reports of works completed as an essential part of the process. On a more personal note, I care for our architectural heritage and particularly enjoyed managing the project at Pugin Hall Dorset and at the Roman Baths in Bath. I strongly believe in quality, integrity and honesty in all that I do as conservator both for my generation and the generations to follow.

NELL PICKERING, Resident in Frome, Somerset

WORK HISTORY - I have had 19 years experience working on a varied number of lime conservation jobs. To name but a few:

Apprenticeship with St Cuthbert Conservation starting 1992 for 4 years

Repair and re-modeling window tracery at Chedzoy Church

Extensive lime conservation works at Axminster Church

Polychrome conservation and re-lettering to Maximillian Noreys monuments from the church of St Hellier on Jersey.

Re-modeling volutes and acanthus leaves at Newton Park, Bath Spa University

Since my apprenticeship with St Cuthberts' I continued to work for them as part of their experienced team, expanding my understanding and knowledge of the lime conservation techniques. By this stage I was working both as part of a team and managing jobs on my own. In 2004 I joined Minerva Conservation and have subsequently been promoted to conservation manager in the company and have over-seen the conservation works at St Stephens' church tower and the lime conservation project at Newton Park (Bath Spa University.) Having worked extensively in the community arts prior to my conservation apprenticeship I see that I have expanded my natural understanding of materials, line, colour and form through the work that I have done in the conservation field.

3). Training and Education

Minerva is committed to the concept of training. This more often than not comes out of our own pocket. It is a part of every supervisor and manager's job to identify the training needs of their staff and plan for training tasks. The majority of Minerva staff have or are currently undertaking formal training of one sort or another, One of our team (who is now project Manager at our Tyntesfield House Project) has attended a one week intensive Traditional Masonry Course in the Saxon area of Transylvania, Romania. The site chosen is a live project, in the Saxon village of Laslea. This is one of the biggest houses of the village, which was about to be demolished three years ago due to its structural problems. Over the last few years local craftsmen with the help of The Mihai Eminescu Trust have restored the house.



Left, In house stone carving course for all crafts and non-crafts based staff, (administrators, delivery, stores etc). This not only bonds but also brings out any hidden skills.

Apprenticeship Scheme.

Minerva recruits an apprentice every year working towards NVQ level 3 Banker Masonry. (We currently have 3 apprentices and a further 2 masons undertaking day release training). Training programmes are managed by the Construction industry training board and balanced between workshop (at a stonemasonry college) and site based training, so that experience is given in all aspects of stonemasonry not necessarily covered at college, in addition we further train them in conservation, mortar repairs and lime work with the aim of producing Mason - Conservators, traditionally these 2 crafts do not work together, however as a small business we need to produce all rounders with the highest level of skills.

At St Andrew's Methodist church in Devizes we have been rebuilding a rose window, which blew out during a ferocious storm two years ago.



Left,
Adam (Apprentice) and
Peter Advanced trainee
(NVQ3) work sections of
Tracery.



It was a challenging project for Adam, one of our newly qualified apprentices who was guided by Dieter our chargehand. Here they pose with with newly carved and saved sections. On the next page you can see before and after shots.



Before.



After.

Education.

We annually host SPAB Fellows and Scholars (craftsmen and architects respectively). Our directors sit on the panel of the FDSC Applied Architectural Stonework Advisory Panel at Weymouth College.

We also teach at the annual Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors Conservation Summer School. We also regularly teach at the City and Guilds art school's conservation and stonecarving course.

We are always open to giving the opportunity for Surveyors, Architect and other building professionals of any level of competency direct hands on experience, this we have been receptive to from our inception, many have passed our way over the years and we still have our regulars who come for a working holiday.

We also are regularly called to assist with the Faith in Maintenance Scheme. This is a new initiative (Winner of a Europa Nostra award), which aims to help volunteers who look after historic places of worship. We help provide training to help understand how a historic building works and how to solve problems caused by leaky gutters and blocked drains. The training courses are free and are available to any volunteer who helps to look after an historic place of worship.



At Prior park Landscape garden we happily worked with the public in the most challenging of conditions, they were particularly interested in how the flow of water was controlled by a series of conduits and sluice gates at the head of the cascade enabling the visitor to be treated to a variety of effects, from gushing mountain stream, to a more tranquil, sylvan flow. These had to be thoroughly recorded prior to a scheme of repair and replacement where stone had been robbed out or damaged by tree

root growth. An original elm bore pipe was preserved within one of the narrow control channels and new sluice gates installed.

At Architectural Heritage Days run with the National Trust at Kingston Lacy, Corfe Castle in Dorset and Tynesfield House we have had the opportunity to talk to public about the conservation of historic buildings and specifically the techniques we employ and materials we use which are crucial for maintaining the happy equilibrium of an old building. We enjoyed demonstrating plastering on to lath and masonry skills such as letter cutting and architectural stone carving and look forward to returning again in future years.

Other organizations that we regularly contribute to include, The Building Limes Forum, the Spring and Autumn SPAB repair courses, conservation organizations in Romania and Russia, from where we will be hosting craftsmen and women over the next year



Other ways of educating the general public that we have been involved with include, left, Clare Venables who can be seen demonstrating Lime modeling techniques to the public at the Victoria and Albert Museum as part of the international Arts and Crafts Exhibition. Clare, an important founding member of our team, (now on maternity leave) was also involved in a successful project at Buckland Abbey, Devon (creating a new hand modeled decorative ceiling) that

involved a large component part of public engagement.

As you can see are well versed in and actively enjoy sharing what we do with the public, the personal development of both directors would have been very different if others had not been receptive to our early interests and not bothered to engage with us both.