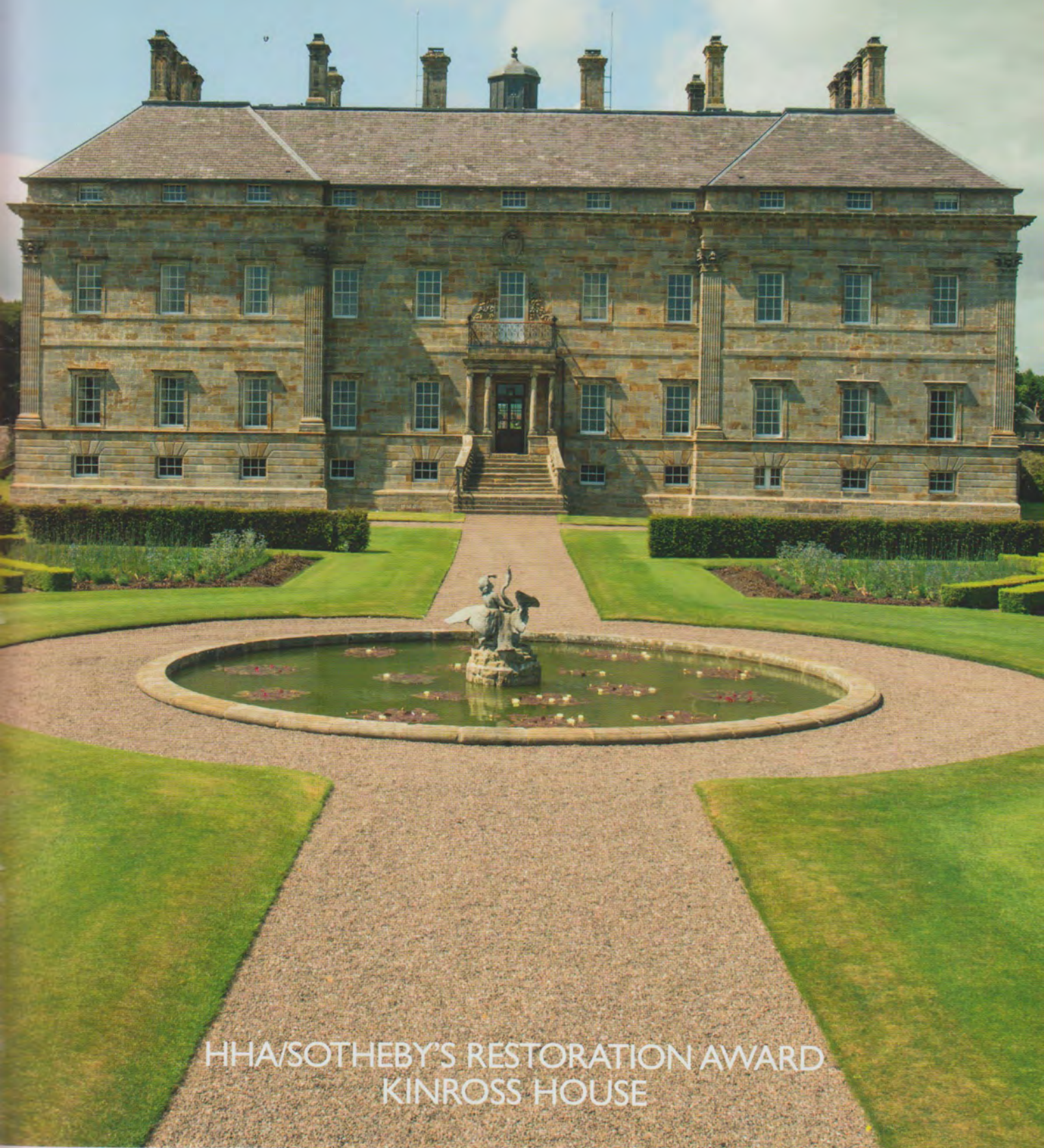


HISTORIC HOUSE

THE HISTORIC HOUSES ASSOCIATION MAGAZINE | AUTUMN 2013



HHA/SOTHEBY'S RESTORATION AWARD
KINROSS HOUSE

40 years of preserving and promoting Britain's private heritage 1973-2013

HISTORIC HOUSE

THE MAGAZINE FOR MEMBERS
AND FRIENDS OF THE HHA

*40 years of preserving and
promoting Britain's private
heritage 1973-2013*

The Historic Houses Association represents the owners of over 1,500 privately owned historic houses, parks and gardens throughout Great Britain whether open to the public or not. It exists to represent its Members' interests in political circles and provide practical advice and professional services. Friends of the HHA have free access to 280 houses and gardens open to the public.

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COVER

Kinross House, winner of the 2013
HHA/Sotheby's Restoration Award
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HISTORIC TRADITIONAL LEADWORK: TRAINING INITIATIVE LAUNCHED

DR. PETER T J RUMLEY FSA



A skills shortage

The traditional leadworking plumbing skills training initiative is something I have been working towards for years and it was with great pleasure that this launch was held at the House of Lords on 15 May, courtesy of Baroness Sharp of Guildford, who speaks for the Liberal Democrats on education, science and technology.

Through the Chartered Institute of Plumbing and Heating Engineering, the Worshipful Company of Plumbers and The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings we were able to bring together the key figures of the heritage world including the Historic Houses Association, to hear my presentation regarding the issues surrounding the skills shortage and the launch.

It is a national scandal that there are currently no formal, courses in the UK that train plumbers in the conservation of historic traditional leadwork. Successive governments and the Sector Skills Council continue to ignore the pleas for funding. An added confusion is that leadwork (sheet leadwork) has been moved into the 'ConstructionSkills' sector skills council (SSC) as it is seen as roofing rather than plumbing, which remains in the building services or 'SummitSkills' SSC.

The senior plumbers who were trained in the traditional leadworking skills of solder wiped joints, soldering, pattern making and casting techniques are steadily retiring from the workforce. The technical colleges have thrown out traditional leadworking in favour of copper and plastic installation techniques, creating a growing craft skills shortage. Given this dwindling of expertise in the field of historic leadwork, it is all the more important that the heritage sector should be fully aware of the nature of the leadwork they own and have some notion of how it can be correctly preserved, repaired and protected.

The craft skills set required for the plumber is inherently wider ranging than for lead sheet roofing. Such traditional skills include wiped soldered joints (using plumbers' black and mole skins), lead pipe bending using bobbings, dummies, mandrels, followers and dressers. Within another ten years the senior practitioners who may have had training in these skills would have passed away and important heritage skills will be lost. Furthermore, the colleges have thrown out their traditional skills as plumbing leadwork is no longer part of NVQ training.

It is often forgotten that the plumber was a sculptor too. Mary Tudor in 1555 engaged the Royal Serjaunt Plumbers, John Punchedon and Henry Deacon, both Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Plumbers, to cast fantastic gilded heraldic royal beasts around a massive 15ft lead dragon spouting water for the magnificent fountain at Windsor Castle.

The embellishment of country houses, such as the work carried out by Thomas Sackville at Knole, William Cecil at Hatfield and the Manners family at Hadden Hall, demonstrates the art of plumber as a decorative craftsman to perfection. Here, we can see richly delicate pieced work of the rainwater heads, interlaced with cast crests, dates and heraldic arms, initials and complex tinned patterns of chevrons, strapwork and stars. There are countless historic buildings up and down Britain which have some historic decorative leadwork, however plain, which requires protection, assessment and careful conservation using traditional leadworking plumbing skills.

CPD courses

There are to be two CPD courses, accredited by the CIPHE and WCP, to be held at HHA Corporate Members, Norman & Underwood Ltd, Leicester, on 27 September and 29 November 2013. The aim of this course is to provide an introduction to the principles and practices used in the conservation and repair of historic leadwork to be found on listed buildings throughout the country. Practical demonstrations will be given by Jonathan Castleman, Director of Norman & Underwood, including sand-bed lead sheet casting.

The course includes health & safety, traditional plumber's leadworking tools and how they are used, historic fabrication detailing, decoration, tinning, types of casting, soldering and lead wiping techniques; with a focus on defects, repair, fixing and design.

Jon Castleman of Norman and Underwood stressed the importance of keeping the traditional skills alive in the same style of those great craftspeople of years gone by. "These are the skills that I have been taught which now need to be passed on to our future generation. It is these skills which have kept our heritage in good order".

MORE INFORMATION

Further information may be obtained from Catherine Swain Comp CIPHE on 01708 463112 or catherines@ciphe.org.uk or by visiting www.ciphe.org.uk