

Franco-British Council

**LIVING OUR HERITAGE
IN FRANCE AND THE UK**

Report of a seminar held in Paris 21 November, 2008

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(with assistance from Christopher Johnson and Marie Ranquet)

SUMMARY

Protection and projection of a national cultural heritage in the face of numerous social and economic challenges brought French and British specialists together in Paris for the Franco-British Council's seminar "Living Our Heritage in France and the UK".

Chaired by Professor John Rogister and Geneviève Gallot, director of the *Institut National du Patrimoine*, French and British participants confronted and compared their experiences in conserving the ensemble of elements that fall under the category of cultural heritage, a task complicated by the fluid definition of heritage itself.

The difference between the French notion of *Patrimoine* (seen by some French participants as an artificial concept wherein aesthetic considerations do not fall within the remit of public interest) and the British concept of Heritage (perceived as more reflective of British society and more responsive to its changes) were discussed.

Economic challenges facing both nations' efforts were examined: funding from public purse and private capitals were compared and the difficulties of applying market solutions to the preservation of cultural heritage were highlighted.

Case studies were examined: the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, the Landmark Trust's efforts to preserve historic buildings and the restoration of the Hall of Mirrors in Versailles.

Education as a means to increase public awareness of cultural heritage was a recurring theme throughout the seminar.

In his conclusions, John Rogister noted how globalisation raised the challenge of preserving cultural heritage world-wide, as civilisations are fragile and their tangible achievements must be protected.

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Introduction

The seminar was attended by about 20 people from each country. The organisations from which they came serve as an indication of where responsibility for heritage lies. On the UK side were the English Heritage, Heritage Lottery Fund, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, the National Trust, the Landmark Trust and the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings. On the French side were the Ministry of Culture, the National Heritage Institute (*Institut National du Patrimoine*), the French Museums Agency (*Agence France-Muséums*), the Historical Monuments organisation (*Les Monuments Historiques*), the National Archives (*Archives Nationales*) and the French National Library (*Bibliothèque Nationale de France*).

Heritage can be defined as whatever society wants to preserve. It is generally taken to refer to what has been handed down from the past but many features of present-day civilisation are being added to heritage. It is what we want our descendants to inherit, as well as what we have inherited from our ancestors.

The core of heritage is cultural: the physical legacy of buildings, extant, ruined or waiting to be dug up; churches, monuments, castles, houses, old towns. To this must be added the physical records of manuscripts, books, documents, works of art and the more intangible played, spoken and broadcast manifestations of speech and music. The wider natural heritage concept includes landscapes and natural features: for example the Jurassic Coast of Dorset is a World Heritage site. The preservation of endangered species is yet another addition to the concept of heritage. The computerisation of records has caused an explosion in the potential size of heritage.

UNESCO has drawn up a useful definition of heritage for the purpose of identifying world heritage sites. The cultural heritage includes monuments: architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an architectural nature, inscriptions and cave dwellings. It also includes groups of buildings because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape and archeological sites. The natural heritage includes physical and biological formations and areas which constitute the habit of threatened species of animals and plants.

There is little agreement on where to draw the perimeter of heritage and whether some parts of it can be de-accessioned, for example by delisting modern buildings whose original listing reflected a trend of the moment. A popular vote on what heritage should include may exclude items appreciated by minority tastes. The test of the market has only limited application to heritage. It may be necessary in principle but impossible in practice to compile complete inventories of what comprises heritage. Different regions and communities take varying views on what should be included thus altering the scope of purely national policies

Patrimoine and Heritage: A Comparison

Although *Patrimoine* and Heritage are not exactly synonymous terms, they are now used as equivalent terms. Attitudes towards them are influenced by fashion and politics. An historical approach helps to explain this situation. The nineteenth century is the period when, in Britain, the need to protect the natural environment was felt. Christian Socialists founded the National Trust in 1895 for that purpose. After the Second World War, there was a change of emphasis. A Labour government introduced legislation that made possible gifts of historic or artistic property *in lieu* of taxation. A Conservative government created the Department for National Heritage in the 1990s. The old Ministry of Works had owned historic properties and landmarks. These were subsequently brought together under the label of English Heritage and were more actively drawn to the attention of tourists in the process. The creation of the National Lottery provided a novel form of funding Heritage causes, which were placed on a similar footing as sport and social projects.

With the advent of the Blair government in 1997, Heritage causes were viewed as increasingly old-fashioned, as the emphasis was placed more on the funding of the creative arts and on modernity. At the same time, pressure was applied on museums and galleries to provide free access. The result was a doubling of admission figures, (over 70% of adults were found by a survey to have visited at least one heritage sight in a year. Heritage was financed once again. Although the National Trust counts 3.6 million members (and the figure is increasing all the time), its emphasis is now on its benefits to the individual, rather than its benefits to the community at large. Its task is to gain acceptance for the notion of beauty and its social and cultural value.

In Britain, France is perceived as having two advantages: a concept of citizenship that is derived from the French Revolution and which means that the State belongs to each individual. *Patrimoine* is something that already exists, whereas Heritage means something that is passed on with a suggestion of the world of privilege, wealth, and social inequality. The second advantage France enjoys is its unquestioning sense of patriotism. As De Gaulle observed: "*Il y a un pacte entre la grandeur de la France et la liberté dans le monde*". The country's history is still taught in a chronological sequence, whereas in Britain this has largely ceased and it falls to Heritage to act as the means whereby people acquire a general idea of the history of these islands which they could not otherwise obtain, except perhaps through certain television programmes.

Faced by this British presentation of the role of Heritage in their country, the French participants accepted that the Revolution had played a fundamental part in French attitudes towards *Patrimoine*. Revolutionary confiscations of cathedrals, churches and secular buildings left the State with massive responsibilities in respect of a vast and historic "*parc immobilier*". The concept of a public service was one of the consequences of this takeover of lay and ecclesiastical property and/artistic works and artefacts. Criteria for conservation were rapidly elaborated. It was decided to keep what could serve the education of the people or for political uses. What was deemed

"counter-revolutionary" was destroyed, or else torn out of context and placed in museums. Initially there were two guiding principles: that of artistic value and that of national identity. The creation of the Ministry of Culture in 1959 could be seen in some ways as a final stage in this approach.

The rise of multiculturalism meant that several identities became acceptable within a Nation-State, and an almost untranslatable distinction has been drawn between "*le culturel, l'identitaire, [et] le vernaculaire*". In practical terms, this means that an anthropological approach to *Patrimoine* has been adopted, and no longer is art seen as being separate from other aspects of a material and immaterial culture. Administrative decentralisation has enlarged and enriched the scope of *Patrimoine* (the Defferre Law of 1983 defined the territory of France as the common *patrimoine* of the Nation, and the *Toubon* Law of 1994 deemed the French language itself to be an essential aspect of that *patrimoine*. Local or regional agencies now have the right to protect and list buildings and sites.

Nevertheless, Jean-Michel Leniaud discerned weaknesses in the system. Firstly, there is a structural weakness. Religious bodies, families, and associations are fragile elements with a risk of impermanence. Secondly, there is a disturbing modern concept: if nature abhors a vacuum, modern public opinion abhors immobility. Everything must move around. This is the concept of universality (which lies in part behind the Louvre/Abu Dhabi project). Thirdly, decentralisation of decision-taking to towns has led to the unfortunate bull-dozing of old city quarters. Fourthly, although public opinion is favourable to heritage sites, it often feels that responsibility for preserving them lies elsewhere. Last but not least, there are the consequences of immigration. *Patrimoine* implies the existence of a testator and of an heir. There is a refusal to inherit on the part of those who come from different cultures. This last problem, the most intractable, can only be resolved by enhanced educative and assimilative processes. The citizen of tomorrow needs to be made aware of the need to protect and to enhance the legacy of the past.

The ensuing discussion ranged widely over these problems. Roy Clare pointed out that in Britain 60% of the population never visited a museum. This proportion remained the same irrespective of policies adopted to encourage greater attendance. Only 11% of the population had the feeling that they were consulted on heritage issues. 10% of the population came from minority groups. The "Cultural Olympia" project was aimed at encouraging people to discover museums and art within the context of the 2012 London Olympic Games.

Jean-Michel Leniaud's conclusion was that Heritage and *Patrimoine* reflected the different cultural situation in each country. In France, *Patrimoine* was an artificial concept, and aesthetic considerations did not fall within the remit of the public interest. In Britain, Heritage was the history of society, or of social change.

Heritage/Patrimoine and the Economy

The link between Heritage/*Patrimoine* and the Economy is a crucial one. As it was the case with the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, for instance, one can measure the impact of Heritage in terms of wealth generated and jobs created. Why not, therefore, "invest" more in Heritage? Paradoxically, few studies have been produced on this question. The problem is, firstly, that heritage is difficult to define. Systems of evaluation, particularly the "contingent evaluation method", which uses opinion polls, are felt by the French to yield disappointing results. Besides, is it necessary for culture to produce a financial, or economic, return? Culture necessarily comes at a price.

In discussion, the question of museum charges was raised. Access to the British Museum is free, but it leads visitors to make donations that are equivalent to entry charges. This system would not work in France because of the public's ambivalent attitude towards the State, which owns most of the museums. Moreover, mass tourism, which does generate income and jobs, also threatens and endangers sites and buildings.

The wider the definition one gives to Heritage/*Patrimoine*, the greater the problems that have to be faced. Christine Nougaret raised the question of the relatively unregulated market in historical and literary manuscripts, a form of heritage. On another level, Baroness Quin showed how, in the North-East of England, the cultural sector had become a means of economic regeneration in formerly industrial areas.

Unlike France, Britain has a National Lottery that is aimed at supporting heritage and the arts. Assistance from the National Lottery for a particular project depends upon that project enjoying wide popular support. "Elitist" criteria were, on the whole, less favourably treated. On the French side, the growing role of the private sector, of the *mécénat*, was discussed. Of particular significance in this respect was the activity of the Aga Khan in the running and development of Chantilly, the most important private property in France with an art collection second only to that of the Louvre. P-A Gatier described the partnership established between the Aga Khan and the *Institut de France*, which owns Chantilly since the bequest of the Duc d'Aumale.

The unreliability, in the long term, of *le mécénat* remains a problem, especially as the economic crisis is in the process of weakening many charitable foundations that supported heritage and the arts in both countries.

Case Study: The National Maritime Museum, Greenwich

Roy Clare

The UK finds it difficult to define its heritage, and has problems with the notion of “national”. It is difficult not to sound imperialist, particularly with the name “maritime”. The word “museum” has also been debated, but it has been retained. Public attendance has increased over Roy Clare’s 7 year tenure. The museum has become more attractive, thanks to the measures taken. But it is very dependent on State funding; this is a threat, because the State can pull out. So an attempt was made to increase income from independent sources; at the end of the seven years, about 25 per cent of income and capital were independent. What was the advantage? The issue of competition can be sidestepped as there are only so many leisure hours, and the public has to be persuaded to make the trip. The Government agreed to pay a cost of £5 per user for the National Maritime Museum; at the end of the seven years, this cost fell to £1.54; the Government was giving less money, but at the same time the public attendance had doubled.

Priorities must be established: a good reputation wins the endorsement of the academics who bring a corresponding investment from the world of education and other museums. A reputation does not come for free; partnerships with the world of higher education are needed. One’s reputation must be first-class, yet it is difficult to meet the challenge of access to the wider public, while maintaining high standards. But that is what people want.

There are four keywords to guarantee success:

1. *Reputation.*
2. *Inspiration.* One must be able to carry out policies that do not need money, while being sure that they are relevant. The Museum launched programmes which had something to say to people. One must be able to build bridges between cultures.
3. *Sustainability.* It must be environmental as well as economic. Sustainability also applies to the tourist industry. The creative industries represent 8 per cent of the national economy, so this is an interesting investment.
4. *Knowledge.* One must analyse the data, and launch research programmes to establish the impact of the policies pursued. Unfortunately governments do not think in the long term.

Case Study: The Landmark Trust

Peter Pearce

The Landmark Trust is a charity specialising in the preservation of historic buildings in danger, which gives them a new life and a new aim; these buildings are made available as holiday homes. This policy has two aims. First it allows the Trust to finance the building; its restoration, conversion and upkeep. The second aim is to create a special link with holidaymakers, who discover a new approach to buildings. Some 190 buildings have been restored in this way. Funds have to be found for each restoration. The charity is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, among others, and by private partners. The public has to benefit from these projects. The buildings are made over for ownership or long term lease, without rentals; they no longer have an economic value to the Trust.

The Trust is established in Italy, the United States and France, and is setting up a partnership with the *Conservatoire du Littoral Français*. Requests come from all over the world. The concept allows them to work internationally with partners for restoration and preservation. The buildings are called Landmarks. There are questions about preservation. The Trust always tries to repair before restoring. It keeps the original materials as far as possible. It uses traditional methods to carry out the work as much as possible. Later additions are sometimes removed. The purpose of the buildings is that they should be used.

Taking the case of Dolbedyr, a medieval manor in Wales, built in 1593 by Henry Sorsby, it took the Landmark Trust 20 years to take the building over, because the owner did not want to part with it. The Trust was able to open the building for holidays in 2004. It restored the roof and the oak floors, of which most parts were preserved, and some older paving. There were lessons and challenges. It takes a long time to take a building over because of negotiations and safety measures. There is the question of access to the property, where the owner may be difficult. The Trust needs to know what it is going to do with the building. Each project gives rise to a historical study, so as to understand the building as well as possible. The work is not begun until the Trust has as much information as possible, for fear of destroying something important. The project must also pay its way. Attention must be paid to modern regulations, which are often opposed to a respect for history; the building must above all be safe. Work is carried out in different countries; each time the Trust has to adapt to different contexts. It needs enough energy and determination to take the risks necessary for restoration.

Case Study: The Hall of Mirrors at Versailles

Cinzia Pasquali-Vidler

The Hall of Mirrors (*Galerie des Glaces*) has a surface area of 770 square metres, and is 74 metres long and 10.5 metres wide. The roof has a surface of 1500 square metres. The restoration benefited from the exceptional sponsorship of Vinci (an international construction conglomerate), which contributed €12m, the whole sum required to fund the work, not only on the roof, but also the installation of electrical standards. It was a sponsorship of skills, which meant control over the workmanship. The restoration took place in two phases, of 17 and 15 months, during which a third of the hall could always be seen by visitors. The double need to separate the working area from the public and to clad the scaffolding led Vinci to set up a competition. At any given moment a third of the gallery remained visible for visitors. The scaffolding was encased in a box covered with mirrors, with explanations. Visitors thus had an advance view of the final results. The team was multifunctional; a steering committee, a follow-up committee (which meets once a month), and an international scientific committee (which meets every three months).

All the operations were carried out simultaneously. The state of preservation was very diverse, particularly in the case of the *fresco* paintings, which had been redone in the 19th century. The decision was taken to go back to the 17th Century state; where this was not possible, the 19th century state was preserved. The painting on primed canvas, which was in a bad state, was subject to reincorporation tests. The sculptures were in good condition, and were reconstituted. There was a discussion about the inscriptions; they were restored to their 17th century state. The conduct of the restorers had to take many things into account. The objective was a result in which the harmony of the whole was not obscured to the detriment of authenticity. The “readability” of the restoration was preserved. Choices were made on the basis of three things; the state of the materials, the state of knowledge, and the views of the experts.

The Future of Heritage: Education, Professionalisation, and the Way Forward

Bruno Racine and Clive Aslet endeavoured to draw the various strands of the discussion together and to point the way forward.

Bruno Racine highlighted how the digitisation of aspects of our cultural heritage offers opportunities to a wider audience for access and appreciation but also introduces new challenges. As more and more material becomes accessible primarily or even exclusively via the web, issues arise over archiving and storage. Preservation of these documents also becomes important, opening up numerous technical questions relating to storage and maintenance and the costs involved. Accessibility of this information is also a concern, via software and search engines - *Europeana*, the portal for European libraries is an example.

Digitisation of information also presents other challenges: as more and more documents are stored, historians have started to just glance through summaries prepared by the relevant institutions, losing the instinct and ability to conduct proper research. If only summaries are ever viewed, then what is the point of storing the entire document? If only parts of documents are retained, then the rest, no longer electronically stored, is effectively lost. Digitisation will affect all aspects of preservation and access to heritage but that which cannot be digitised is not bereft of value. Clive Aslet stressed the fact that digitisation was the future's new frontier and carried risks as well as advantages. On the one hand the reduction of trips to physically view heritage sites could enable better preservation of the sites. With the evolution of new technologies such as holographic representations of museums and works of art, the actual visit might not be so important. At the same time Carole Souter highlighted how visiting heritage sites is a habit that should be engrained into children at a young age and that therefore most sites should be rendered family-accessible. Saturday schools have been successful in engaging the younger generations with their heritage.

Clive Aslet raised the question as to how to define what heritage should preserve. There was a growing interest in the environment and the countryside as areas susceptible to changes, due to climate change and man's activity. There is also a potential conflict arising from the extension of the definition of heritage: could, for example, social housing be listed as part of a country's cultural heritage, as a representation of a specific age and thus be required to be preserved?

In the discussion an emphasis was put on education as the main tool to address the concerns of comprehension and access to information. Conservation requires that the people fully understand their heritage which means more than just awareness of it. Theoretical and practical knowledge must be combined for a proper understanding and preservation of a country's heritage, which is also a good check against globalisation. Another aspect of heritage was the oral history of people who

have lived across the decades - for example, the State of Israel has done a lot to preserve these traditions.

The Europe-wide definition of 'basic skills' was very useful in improving the overall level of education and culture, with the inclusion of humanist culture. Bruno Racine pointed out that "the problem is not the existence of an elite, but the presence of an increasing mass of young people who are being left behind. We have a responsibility to help them: this would be an advantage for them and for the country. A basic knowledge of chronological history is essential. One should be able to read a text, to think, etc".

Bruno Racine concluded this session by underlining the importance of education and the emergence of countries like the UAE that are focused on affirming and protecting their own specific heritage. We should not however forget that cultural heritage is a living process that thrives on exchange. But what were presumed to be universal values might undergo significant changes by these new "actors". Clive Aslet commented that heritage must be both universal and local.

Conclusions

John Rogister summarised the seminar's conclusions as follows:

1. It is important to combine public and private financial resources: partnerships must be pursued. The dualism between these two spheres was appropriately underscored.
2. Heritage's "Elitism": is there a contradiction between popular interest and elitism? The British National Lottery won't support a project if it feels there isn't public support for it.
3. There are political choices to be made, regardless of whether funding is public or private, concerning payment for access that won't have repercussions on the numbers of non-visitors of cultural establishments.
4. Economic impacts will have to be better studied, especially in these recessionary times.
5. The Venice Charter was only briefly mentioned in the Versailles case study, which doesn't want to set a precedent.
6. Little attention was paid to aesthetic considerations.
7. Education about heritage is very important especially as levels of formation can be low. Modern technology can help in this.
8. Globalisation raises the challenge to preserve cultural heritage world-wide. Civilisations are fragile and their tangible achievements must be preserved. Heritage is shared.
9. Within the context of globalisation, the restitution of works of art was briefly mentioned.
10. What wasn't mentioned was the de-accessioning of works of art (their sale by museums to allow them to be replaced by other works)

Baroness Quin thanked Geneviève Gallot and John Rogister for the organisation of an interesting and informative seminar, as well as all the participants and the interpreters.

Appendix I - British Participants

Co-chair:

John Rogister

Corresponding Member of the Institut de France

Max Arthur

Oral Historian

Clive Aslet

Editor, Country Life

Roger Bowdler

Head of Designation, English Heritage

Roy Clare

Chief Executive, Museums, Libraries and Archive Council

Rory Coonan

Director, Architecture and Design, Circle Healthcare; fellow, Royal Institute of British Architects

Ivo Dawney

Communications Director, National Trust

Maurice Fraser

Vice Chair, FBC, Senior Fellow in European Politics, LSE

Robert Hewison

Professor of Cultural Policy and Leadership Studies, City University, London

Ann Kenrick

Secretary-General, FBC

Paul Lewis

Pastoral and Closed Churches Secretary

Roshi Naidoo

Research and education consultant, editor of *The Politics of Heritage*

Peter Pearce

Director, The Landmark Trust

Lord Prosser

Former Senator, College of Justice in Scotland, former Trustee, FBC

Rt Hon Baroness Quin

Chair FBC, Former Minister of Europe

Dr Robin Simon

Editor, *The British Art Journal*
Visiting Professor, Dept of English, University College London

Carole Souter

Chief Executive, Heritage Lottery Fund

Giovanni Spinella

Assistant to Secretary-General

Belinda Thomson

Independent Art Historian

Philip Venning

Secretary, The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings

Appendix II - French Participants

Coprésidente :

Geneviève GALLOT

Directrice de l'Institut national du Patrimoine

Françoise BENHAMOU

Economiste

Professeur à l'Université de Paris 13

Chercheur au Centre d'Economie de Paris Nord

Sylvie BLUMENKRANTZ

Sous-directrice de la Section française du

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Guy BOYER

Directeur de la rédaction Connaissance des Arts

Cédric CRÉMIERE

Directeur du Museum d'Histoire naturelle du

Havre

Laurence des CARS

Conservatrice en chef du patrimoine

Directrice scientifique à l'Agence France-

Muséums

Philippe DUREY

Directeur de l'Ecole du Louvre

Bruno FAVEL

Chef de la mission des affaires européennes et

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Patrimoine Ministère de la Culture et de la

Communication

Pierre-Antoine GATIER

Architecte en Chef des Monuments historiques,

Inspecteur général des Monuments historiques,

Président, ICOMOS France

Jean GUÉGUINOU

Ambassadeur de France

Président de la Section française du Conseil

franco-britannique

Jérôme GUERRAND-HERMES

Président du Conseil de surveillance d'Hermès

International

Olga GIACOMONI

Directrice de la communication mécénat, VINCI

Jean-Michel LENIAUD

Directeur d'études à l'Ecole Pratique des Hautes

Etudes

Stéphane MARTIN

Président de l'Etablissement public du Musée du

Quai Branly

Christine NOUGARET

Conservateur général du patrimoine

Professeur à l'Ecole des chartes

Cinzia PASQUALI-VIDLER

Restauratrice

Bruno RACINE

Président de la bibliothèque nationale de France

Gérard ROUBICHOU

Secrétaire général de la Section française du

Conseil franco-britannique

Marie-Anne SIRE

Inspecteur général des monuments historiques

Daniel TERUGGI

Directeur de la recherche

INA

Etienne TORNIER

Etudiant en licence « Histoire de l'Art », Ecole du

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François UGINET

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François VIGNAUD

Etudiant en master "Culture, Politique,

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Appendix III - Seminar Agenda

LIVING OUR HERITAGE IN FRANCE AND THE UK

Friday 21st November, 2008
Institut national du patrimoine
2, rue Vivienne, Paris 1^{ère}

Heritage and Patrimoine: a comparison of current attitudes and policies

introduced by Ivo Dawney and Jean-Michel Léniard

- how has the concept of 'heritage' changed over recent times?
- heritage and identity, heritage and multiculturalism
- how do we determine principles and criteria of heritage preservation ?
Do these reflect changes in cultural values? Are they affected by political considerations?
- how can we evaluate and 'share' heritage today ?

Heritage and the economy

introduced by Françoise Benhamou and Roy Clare

- the role of private partners, financial incentives and disincentives (the national lottery, inheritance tax etc)
- local regeneration, national prestige, tourism
- expansion of museums abroad
- to what extent has Heritage contributed to the revival, preservation and development of arts and crafts/artisanat?

Case study: restoration of an historic building

introduced by Peter Pearce and Cinzia Pasquali-Vidler

The future of heritage introduced by Bruno Racine and Clive Aslet

- education, training, professionalisation
- how should archives be preserved in the computer age ? How should oral testimony be preserved ?
- protection of areas of natural beauty, will heritage need to take on an increasingly environmental dimension ?
- towards a universal heritage?

General conclusions