Book review

Specifications for Building Conservation: Volume 1: External Structure: Practical Examples v. 2

Rory Cullen and Rick Meier (eds), Routledge, Oxford, UK, 2015, ISBN 978-1-873394-80-9, £35.00 (hardback), 220 pp.

As might reasonably be expected from a book produced by National Trust staff with a wealth of practical work behind them and with input from their highly experienced consultants, this is a very useful and, perhaps surprisingly, readable book.

Part 1 of the book takes the form of a useful dissertation of conservation philosophy, which even those with a long background in conservation will find an interesting read. It serves to set the context for the rest of the book, as it also briefly discusses historical building legislation, procurement of building services and notes on specification writing.

The major part of this book (part 2) is a series of case studies of a wide range of National Trust buildings, each of which begins by setting down a brief outline of the building in question and its problems and how the conservation philosophy impacted on the decisions made about the repair methods adopted, and then follows this with the specification for the work. While readers will probably not read through the specifications in great detail unless they have similar problems to deal with, the case

study outlines all make interesting and instructive reading. Each case study ends with a short paragraph commenting on how successful the work was.

Topics covered in part 2 are building recording, masonry (brickwork and stonework), timber repairs, stone roof coverings and thatch. Each case study is complemented by photographs and, in some cases, drawings.

The specifications seem, to this reviewer, to be both comprehensive and well written such that the experienced contractor will find them helpful without having their intelligence insulted, while less experienced contractors will find quite detailed information and guidance contained within the book.

Towards the end of the book are appendices, again very helpfully written. Appendix 1 covers conservation management plans and conservation statements, and appendix 2 is a generic brief on historical building survey.

This is certainly a book which will prove a very useful addition to many a conservation practitioner's bookshelf; its main drawback to this reviewer is that it was not written 30 years ago!

Ian Hume