Cliveden House South Terrace

Cliveden is a Grade I listed building made infamous for its connection to the Profumo Affair which rocked the government during the 1960’s. There have been a total of three significant houses on this site at Cliveden. The first was built in 1666 and burned down in 1795. Unfortunately the second house (rebuilt in 1824) was also destroyed by a fire in 1849. The current house was designed and built by Charles Barry in 1851 for the then 2nd Duke of Sutherland. In 1985 the building was converted into a prestigious hotel (making the presence of any building works difficult) and the close interaction with approximately 420,000 annual visitors to the Estate, a continual concern.
Cliveden House South Terrace (cont’d.)

The South Terrace is possibly the most significant architectural detail on the Cliveden Estate and had fallen into poor, possibly even dangerous condition. The terrace is accessed via a symmetrical staircase with three flights of steps to either side of the central sounding chamber, thought to date from as early as the 1720’s. It underwent major reconstruction and alteration by Charles Barry during his wider restoration works in the 1850's, but this had once again fallen into poor condition.

'Save the South Terrace' is a major conservation project initiated by The National Trust with an estimated cost of £5 million set to span approximately 5 years. PAYE started works in 2012 with Contract 1 related to the Cockerill Pavilion to the East. The conclusion of Contract 2b is set for the end of 2015 and will see the West Blind arcade and the Main Staircase restored in full.

Our specialist conservation approach has seen us undertake hidden structural pinning to a number of layers behind the façade; each secured to one another. A full dismantle and rebuild of most stone elements and the discovery and restoration of the decorative ‘red rubber’ brickwork. All being well, this structural intervention and repair should see the staircase once fully restored survive for another 250 years.
Visitor engagement is also a key part of the Cliveden/National Trust experience. As part of this, The Trust commissioned a large 6 tonne stainless steel slide to encourage that interaction. This in itself presents a number of problems, not least the difficult interaction between potentially dangerous building site and the public on a family outing.

There are a number of additional issues we have had to face as a company whilst carrying out the restoration, specifically in relation to bats - Cliveden has been mooted as the most significant bat swarming site in England (with approximately 12,000 bats thought to use it as a regular playground). As such we were restricted to only completing works to areas where they may hibernate outside of the periods between April and September. Combine this with the difficulties associated with working in the lime season and it’s a wonder this project has been completed. The work continues and the next phase is to address the water ingress into the terrace itself, which is the primary cause for much of the damage.