

**INTERNATIONAL EARTH STRUCTURES  
COMMITTEE**

**COMITÉ INTERNATIONAL  
SUR L'ARCHITECTURE DE TERRE**

Report of an informal meeting held in London on Friday 8th September 1989.

Attendances by invitation:

John Warren, Joint Chairman of Earth Structures Committee.

Sir Bernard Feilden, Architect.

Prof. P. Fowler, Dept. of Archaeology, University of Newcastle upon Tyne.

Richard Hughes, Ove Arup and Partners.

Anthony Hyland, C.A.R.D.O., University of Newcastle upon Tyne.

Barry Stowe, The Conservation Practice, Midhurst.

Robin Thorne, Royal Commission on Historic Monuments.

Sherban Cantacuzino, Royal Fine Art Commission.

John McCann, Architect.

Adela Wright, S.P.A.B.

Bousmaka Baiche, Postgraduate Dept. of Architecture, Oxford Polytechnic.

Apologies:

Dr A Walls

John M Deal

John Ashurst

Mary Kerr

F W B Charles

Stuart P Smith

Robin Cousins

The following is a summary of views expressed:

1. Introduction: John Warren

The meeting had been called at the invitation of John Warren to explain a programme of research by ICOMOS Earth Structures Committee, funded by H.M. Government through the O.D.A. The purpose of the meeting was to expose the proposed research to the comment and criticism of those interested in the subject.

2. Background: Sir Bernard Feilden

Earth Structures are a neglected part of the world heritage with few protagonists. The monuments in earth are a special type and are important statements in the history of architecture. Some are very impressive indeed, such as the high buildings of the Yemen. The research proposed was a step towards a better evaluation of their importance and a deeper understanding of the causes of decay.

3. Mechanisms of Decay: Richard Hughes (Illustrated)

Illustrated and described were examples of construction, soil decay and damage and the chemistry which gave strength and cohesion to earth structures. He referred to particle size and shape, to bacterial activity, to the distribution of metallic ions and to physical stresses, and considered the addition of calcareous conditions and pozzuolaric materials to earths.

He argued the case for a programme of basic research into the mechanisms of decay in earth structures.

4. Documentation: John Warren

He emphasised the importance of the entire range of the architectural heritage in the life of a nation and in a world context and described the Earth Structures Committee's proposals for establishing an INTERNATIONAL INVENTORY of such Monuments. He underscored the difficulties of compiling such a register and the value of its achievements in providing a corpus of knowledge and an indication of status, particularly in places where such structures are held in low regard. He pointed out that ICOMOS has its own organ for publication.

5. ICOMOS: Sherban Cantacuzino

He identified the structure of ICOMOS as a body composed largely of specialists, supported minimally by UNESCO, based in Paris and having national committees in about sixty countries, each of which supports the headquarters by a subvention.

ICOMOS has international specialist committees on relevant conservation matters. Such a one is the Earth Structures Committee which meets triennially, the next meeting being in the U.S.A. in 1990.

The Earth Structures Committee is jointly chaired by Prof. Cevat Erder (Turkey) and John Warren (U.K.).

The President of ICOMOS, Prof. Roberto di Stefano (Italy) is promoting greater activity in these Committees.

6. Sherban Cantacuzino set for discussion the question «How far will our work cause the world stock of earth monuments to be valued and conserved?»

7. Discussion focussed on

- definition of earth monument.
- value judgements of their merits.

- the objects and purposes of conservation.
- categorisation of types of monument.
- the need for objective research in parallel with empirical experiment in the field.
- the agglomerative method of compilation of records

8. Invitation:

Participants and recipients of these notes are invited to contribute further as they see fit.

John Warren

## Summary

The Committee reports on a meeting held in London in September 1989 about the presentation of a research programme initiated by the British Government.

Earth architectures form a neglected part of the World Heritage. It is important to recognize the processes of their destruction and it is most urgent to record these structures on international level. The discussions concerned the following: the definition of earth architecture, the question of evaluating quality, the problems of preservation, the typology of monuments, the need to engage in research parallel to practical experiences and the methods of drawing up reports.

## Résumé

Le comité rapporte une réunion à Londres en septembre 1989. Il s'agissait de présenter un programme de recherches inauguré par ce comité et porté par le gouvernement de Sa Majesté. L'architecture de terre est une partie négligée de l'héritage mondial. Il est important de reconnaître le mécanisme de sa destruction et il est urgent de dresser un inventaire international. Les discussions visaient les sujets suivants: la définition de l'architecture de terre, les questions de notions qualitatives, les problèmes de la conservation, la typologie des monuments, la nécessité des recherches parallèles aux expériences et les méthodes de recueil de rapports.