

Ironbridge reinforces links with the Historic American Buildings Survey

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During the rather chilly last weekend in April, Ironbridge played host to a distinguished American visitor and her family. Catherine Lavoie, of the National Park Service, is Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), and successor to an old friend of the IGMT, Eric DeLony.

The Historic American Building Survey is one of three Federally-funded programmes that records the many historic buildings in the United States, often intervening before they are demolished and so preserving the buildings by record. The other two elements of the survey are the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) and the Historic American Landscape Survey (HALS). The focus of their work tends to be on historic industrial structures, landscapes and buildings. In past years, the Ironbridge Institute has sent students on placements with the HABS and HAER work programmes, a link that lapsed before the retirement of Eric DeLony, but under Catherine the link

has been revived. Last year, the winner of the Edwin Burns prize for 2012, Simon Hobson, undertook a placement at the Woodrow Wilson House in Washington D.C. and in May this year a distance learning student, Steven Roden, will be travelling to America to work on a canalside-landscape in need of rapid recording.

The visit to Ironbridge was arranged by Simon Hobson and included a tour of the Iron Bridge, led by former Institute Director David de Haan (with the added interest of dodging the flying sticks of the myriads of Morris Dancers who were also using the bridge for their demonstrations). There was also a visit to Jackfield and Maws factory (so they could experience the wooden road) followed by a swift trip to Blists Hill and a discussion of the merits of reconstruction of historic buildings intermixed with the historic structures on the site. As ever, the squatter cottage made its magical impression on our visitors, and its occupants obliged us by recording the visit. A final trip to view Coalport and the Hay Incline Plane was capped off by a trip to the Black Swan to recover. All in all, a lovely opportunity to thank our transatlantic friends for their help in training our students, and reinforcing our links for the future.