



Book Review: *Architectural Tiles – Conservation and Restoration*



Author: Lesley Durbin.
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Hardback, 246pp, size 20 x 25 cm.
ISBN 978-0-415-84058-3, £85.00.
Also available as an ebook.

This is not a new title, but a second edition of Lesley Durbin's well-known book of 2005. Having said

that, it is, nevertheless, radically different in many ways, all of which are improvements. The new edition is worth celebrating for several reasons. Firstly it demonstrates a publisher's confidence in a specialist area which is close to the heart of many TACS members. In a sense it recognises that tile conservation has come of age and can now easily take its place amongst other areas of specialist skills and knowledge relating to historic building materials. The author has well over 30 years of direct experience in the field and the new book is an excellent way of distilling and disseminating that experience. There have been advances in techniques over the past decade which can now be assessed and brought to a wider public.

Not only is the text richer in content, but it is presented in an attractive way with a much higher standard of editing, removing the minor errors which marred the first edition. Author, editor and publisher have worked as a team and the effort has been rewarded.

The need to understand the primary causes of tile degradation has been well catered for as part of a much expanded chapter on troubleshooting. Readers of the book, who will include, **amongst others**, conservation officers, building owners and managers and general contractors, will not necessarily be undertaking conservation work directly themselves, but it is vitally important that they understand the practical and philosophical issues surrounding the work. Lesley Durbin has always encouraged community groups and volunteers to play their part in tile cleaning and conservation work which may be repetitive and time consuming (and therefore costly) but well within their capacity.

The case studies, which form an important section at the end of the book, have been expanded and presented with additional visual material. The Minton tile ceiling of Bethesda Arcade in Central Park, New York, is a welcome addition. The valuable historical work by Danny Callaghan is married up with information about the fixing replacements for the nearly 16,000 encaustic tiles which have to defy gravity and remain safely in place on this extraordinary ceiling!

One area of expansion in tile conservation work since the original edition has been the recognition of the significance of 20th century tiling, especially post-war murals. A number of examples crop up in several sections of the book and a colour image of the 1960 Dorothy Annan murals, now relocated to the Barbican Centre, London, is included in the montage on the cover of the book.

The bibliography, expanded by the growth of tile literature in recent years, is now allocated to appropriate chapters. Although this means some repetition it is more

convenient, especially when consulting the book for specific purposes.

The author rightly acknowledges the pioneering role which TACS has played in tile conservation, and which must continue. For their part TACS members may find the cost of the book quite daunting. The reality is that it is on a par with many conservation titles from academic publishers which have relatively small sales across a wide international market. It is a great cultural export and in this new and revised form will serve as the key text for years to come.

Tony Herbert