

Obituaries of Sir Bernard Feilden by:

- John Fidler, The Guardian, London, 21 November 2008
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Sir Bernard Feilden was a distinguished and prolific conservation architect whose work had global significance

By John Fidler, The Guardian, Friday 21 November 2008

Bernard Feilden, who has died aged 89, was one of the world's best-known, most highly respected and influential conservation architects. Towering over his profession for nearly half a century, this mid-career latecomer to conservation designed some of the most inventive building repairs of the 20th century, influenced the direction of architectural training, consulted and taught internationally to great effect, and authored key texts in the field.

Bernard Melchior Feilden was a twin son with four brothers, born to Robert and Olive Feilden in Hampstead, London. His early years were spent in Canada, where his father (who had been gassed in the first world war) took the family for the sake of his health. His father drowned in a lake there, witnessed by the boy, and the family returned to Britain when Bernard was nine.

He inherited his interest in architecture from his grandfather, Brightwen Binyon (1846-1905), an Ipswich architect and former pupil of Alfred Waterhouse. Bernard won an exhibition from Bedford school to the Bartlett School of Architecture at University College London and completed his training at the Architectural Association after the second world war. During hostilities, he served in Iraq, Iran, India and Italy with the Bengal Sappers of the Indian Army.

After qualifying in 1949, Feilden worked for the Norwich architectural practice of Edward Boardman and Son. There he designed the Trinity United Reformed church, which last year became only the second postwar building in the city to be given listed status. In 1954, he set up his own practice in Norwich with David

Mawson, after a shooting accident cost him his left eye. Feilden and Mawson Architects grew over the next 50 years to become a large practice involved in domestic, industrial, commercial and educational projects.

But it was 14 years after qualifying as an architect, in mid-career, at the age of 44, that Feilden first received his calling to conservation. Noted already by 1963 for his work in a practice of

sensitive housing architects and for contributing ideas for the new campus at the University of East Anglia, Feilden received a call out of the blue from the Bishop of Norwich, Launcelot Fleming, who was on the board of trustees for the new university: "Bernard, want a job? The dean tells me that his cathedral architect has just died and ..."

In awe, but unphased, Feilden set to work on one of the most challenging conservation problems of the period: how to deal with the wobbling, cracked stone spire of Norwich cathedral. Armed with a telescope and humility, Feilden consulted local masonry contractors and conservation specialists such as the superintending architect of the ancient monuments division of the Ministry of Works in London and the Architecte en chef des monuments historiques nationaux, in France. Thereafter, with his engineer, he devised a clever internal spring-loaded tensioning system to resist the wind. For the rest of his life, he advocated specialising in building conservation only at a mid-career: "Become a good architect first, and then become a good conservation architect," was his maxim.

During the 1960s and 70s, he was responsible for a number of church, country house and university repair projects, and for the conservation works at York Minster. He was also surveyor to the fabric of St Paul's Cathedral. In 1975, he devised a plan to save the historic centre of Chesterfield from destruction, work that won him a Europa Nostra medal.

In 1968 Feilden was made a fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects and from 1972 until 1977 sat on the institute's council, where he was instrumental in establishing the body's first conservation committee and developing its policy towards postgraduate, mid-career training in building conservation. With his contemporary and fellow conservation architect Donald Insall, he set up the Conference on Training in Architectural Conservation (Cotac) in 1972 and became its chairman the following year.

Through the 1960s and 70s, Feilden lectured frequently on the master's degree course at the Institute of Advanced Architectural Studies at York University in the King's Manor, which he had converted for this purpose in 1963. Later he was external examiner for the course. He also donated funds for a laboratory and lent his name to the Hamlyn-Feilden fellowship to bolster technical training. Feilden also lectured regularly in the architectural conservation course at the Intergovernmental International Centre for the Study of Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property in Rome (Iccrom) from 1972 to 1994, and served as its director-general from 1977 to 1981. As a result of his work in Rome, and based on previous discussions on Cotac, Feilden's ideas influenced the International Council on Monuments and Sites and the publication of its guidelines on education and training in the conservation of monuments, ensembles and sites in 1993. It remains the basis of much international practice today.

Feilden was president of the Ecclesiastical Architects and Surveyors Association in 1975 and, one year later, president of the Surveyors Guild. From 1981 to 1987, he was president of the UK committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites. He was appointed a member of the Ancient Monuments Board for England (1964-77); and served the Church of England on the Cathedrals Fabric Commission (1990-95), and on the cathedral fabric committees for Bury St Edmunds and Ely (1990-2006).

As part of Iccrom's mission, and as a Unesco consultant, he visited, consulted and lectured in many countries, giving advice to architects and restorers in Iraq, Iran, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, China, New Zealand and Canada. He also lectured extensively in the US. He was consulted on the Taj Mahal and the Sun temple at Konarak in India, and on the Forbidden City and the Great Wall in China.

In 1986, he received the Aga Khan award for architecture for his contribution to the conservation of the dome of Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem.

Feilden was appointed OBE in 1969, CBE in 1976, and knighted in 1985. He also found time to publish *An Introduction to Conservation* (1979); *Between Two Earthquakes* (1987); *Guidelines for Conservation (India)* (1989); and *Guidelines for Management of World Cultural Heritage Sites* (1993). But he will chiefly be remembered for *Conservation of Historic Buildings* (1982), still the most comprehensive overview of building conservation practice. So profoundly did he believe in education and training that he gifted oversight of the publication in perpetuity to the Royal Institute of British Architects.

He married first, in 1949, Ruth Bainbridge, with whom he had two sons and two daughters. After her death in 1994, he married Tina Murdoch. She and his children survive him.

• Bernard Melchior Feilden, architect, born September 11 1919; died November 14 2008

The Independent, London

Sir Bernard Feilden: Dynamic architect who led the post-war conservation of British cathedrals

Thursday, 20 November 2008

Bernard Feilden was an outstanding leader in the post-war conservation movement. St Paul's Cathedral, St Giles' High Kirk in Edinburgh, York Minster and Norwich Cathedral, all complex buildings, owe their continuing power to inspire in part to the courage and skill of Feilden and his partners in the firm he created, Feilden and Mawson of Norwich, London and Cambridge.

Always alert to take expert advice, he drew in M. Bertrand Monnet, of Chartres and Strasbourg, to save the endangered spire of Norwich, and Ove Arup to secure foundations ingeniously inserted under the 16,000-ton central tower at York. In 1977 he became Director of the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), in Rome, and even after his retirement he continued his world tours giving advice on outstanding buildings in Europe, Asia and America.

There was a dynamism about Feilden's leadership rare in the world of ecclesiastical conservation. He excused his late arrival at a meeting of York Minster Chapter by explaining that the tides were adverse as he sailed his inflatable dinghy from the north Norfolk coast. His engineering skill in driving a vital fire-lift through the Wren staircase to reach the Whispering Gallery at St Paul's might lead to raised eyebrows in today's heritage world, but has certainly saved lives. When he lost his left eye in a shooting accident, he used the compensation to capitalise his firm. To surmount objections to his new Wessex Hotel at Winchester, a group of his supporters secured a special Act of Parliament.

Feilden felt that cathedrals require a response today as courageous as that which the architects, workmen, citizens and church people had shown when their dreams rose to the skies in stone. He did not hesitate to say (to meet the criticism of purist conservationists): "The cathedral gives the orders". By that he meant using the most modern methods, as the first builders had used the latest techniques of their day.

Bernard Melchior Feilden was born in Hampstead, London in 1919 to a family proud of its public service. His mother was descended from engineers and architects, including the chief architect of the Stockton and Darlington Railway. His father, who won an MC in France during the First World War, later ran a ranch in British Columbia where Feilden received the scar on his face from his twin brother, who was careless with a pickaxe.

Feilden was sent to Bedford School, where in those days he found the same ethos as in the units he joined before being commissioned with the Bengal Sappers. His Second World War service took him to India, Mesopotamia and Italy and gave him campaigning enthusiasm which enabled him to win confidence among others with leadership roles. When he set up his first office in the Close in Norwich, he rapidly made friends in the community, as a leading member of the Norwich Society, the Norfolk Club, a Mason, a fisherman, sailor and painter.

Feilden described his style as "moderate modernism". He shone as team leader of Feilden and Mawson, which became in the Sixties the largest architectural firm in East Anglia; he left much of the designing to his colleagues. The firm built hotels in Cambridge, Winchester, worked for schools at St Paul's in London, Bedford, Gresham's and Norwich and for the universities of York and East Anglia (taking over at the latter from Denys Lasdun in 1969). Feilden personally designed the elegant United Reformed Church in Norwich, and the firm worked on enlargements at the May and Baker chemical factory in Norfolk, as well as caring for 250 medieval churches and producing a conservation plan for Chesterfield in Derbyshire.

But it was for his work at British cathedrals that he will be remembered. At Norwich after the Baedeker raids of April 1942, all the roofs needed restoration and the spire was in such danger of collapse that one recommendation was that it should be demolished and rebuilt. At York and St Paul's there was serious subsidence and in Edinburgh, the High Kirk of St Giles needed an entirely new floor. In every case Feilden's work, though controversial, has left these buildings a delight – as well as safe and secure.

He always insisted on archaeological digs despite occasional protests from clients anxious about the cost. He never closed the buildings while the work was in progress and, especially at

Norwich and York, maintained happy relationships with contractors and workmen. His skill in lighting and treating the surface of stone and mosaics was imaginative but restrained. Norwich's spire strengthened by concealed steel wire, York's exposed foundations carrying the tremendous tower and the west-end trumpets at St Paul's were among his most imaginative solutions to complex problems. For his cathedral work and his world conservation advice from Rome he was knighted in 1985.

The depression in architectural work in the mid-Seventies led Feilden to retire from active control of his firm. He and his brothers restored the Elizabethan Stiffkey Old Hall, on the north Norfolk coast, with its five flint and stone towers and terraced gardens, creating four homes for the family. He continued to travel and sail and in 1982 published the major guide *Conservation of Historic Buildings*. He also served on the Cathedrals Advisory Commission for England. In 1986 he was awarded the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, for his restoration work on Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.

Feilden had been a great leader of his firm (with office outings and even its own croquet rules); he trained 15 architects, now principals of their own practices. And he created confidence among those responsible for cathedrals that they can be preserved at the highest standards for the good of the community around them.

Alan Webster

Bernard Melchoir Feilden, conservation architect: born London 11 September 1919; Partner, Feilden and Mawson 1956-77, consultant 1977-2008; Architect, Norwich Cathedral 1963-77; Surveyor to the Fabric, York Minister 1965-77; Surveyor to the Fabric, St Paul's Cathedral 1969-77; Consultant Architect, University of East Anglia 1969-77; OBE 1969, CBE 1976; Hoffman Wood Professor of Architecture, Leeds University 1973-74; president, Ecclesiastical Architects' and Surveyors' Association 1975-77; president, Guild of Surveyors 1976-77; Director, International Centre for the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property, Rome 1977-81; Member, Cathedrals Advisory Commission for England 1981-90; Kt 1985; married 1949 Ruth Bainbridge (died 1994; two sons, two daughters), 1995 Tina Murdoch; died Bawburgh, Norfolk 14 November 2008.

Alan Webster died 3 September 2007

EDP 24

Sir Bernard Feilden

MARK NICHOLLS

17 November 2008 09:28

It is one of the finest sights in Norfolk, but without the expertise of Sir Bernard Feilden, the spire of Norwich Cathedral as we know it today may not exist.

In 1962 it was in a poor state of repair, prompting one authority to suggest it should be pulled down and rebuilt. Sir Bernard's reaction? "Not on your life!"

He set about strengthening the spire by inserting stainless steel wires into the horizontal joists, a solution he predicted would be good for 100 years.

The first time he climbed the outside of spire it was swaying in the wind and he felt sick. Later he climbed it with no safety equipment in just four minutes.

This restoration of the tower and spire was just one of many projects worked on by Sir Bernard during a long and distinguished career.

Born in Hampstead in 1919, he was one of five brothers, the twin son of Humphrey and Olivia Feilden. The family emigrated to Canada for nine years before returning following the death of his father.

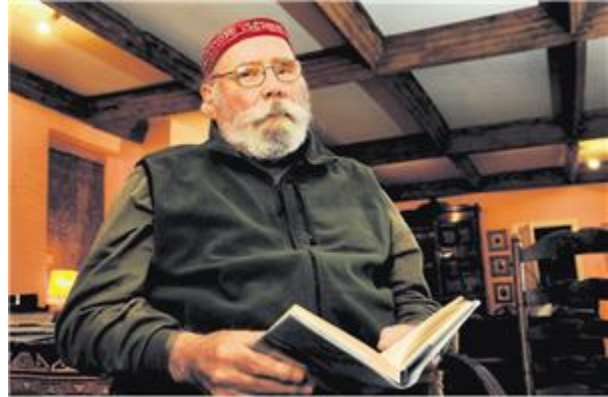
Sir Bernard was raised by his mother and aunts in Bedford and educated at Bedford School and the University of London, completing his architectural training after the war at the Architectural Association.

Volunteering for service, he joined the Bengal Sappers and Miners in India, Iraq, Iran, and finally Italy.

After the war he got his first job at Norwich practice Edward Boardman and Son. There he designed the Trinity United Reformed Church on Unthank Road, which last year became only the second post-war building in the city to be given listed status.

He met Ruth Bainbridge, a bridesmaid at his brother's wedding, and it was love at first sight. They married at Great Plumstead church, but Sir Bernard returned to London to live and work in Pimlico. On returning to Norfolk and after a shooting accident which cost him his left eye, he set up in practice in Norwich with David Mawson.

As a partner, and later a consultant with Feilden and Mawson, he was involved with the conservation of other historic buildings including St Paul's Cathedral and York Minster. As



Sir Bernard Feilden will be remembered for his role in conservation around the world – and as a great friend and family man.

Photo: Bill Smith.

consultant architect to the University of East Anglia, he was responsible for the design of many campus buildings and collaborated with local firms on others.

In 1977 he became director of the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property, moving to Rome where he was able to advise on many conservation projects throughout the world, including politically sensitive repairs to the El Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, for which he won the Aga Khan Award, and pursue his love of teaching.

He advised the Indian government on the structural state of the Taj Mahal; the Chinese government on the conservation of the Terracotta Army, the Forbidden City and the Great Wall; and New Zealand on the Wellington parliament buildings. He was knighted for his services to architecture in 1985.

Sir Bernard loved the arts and music and was fiercely self-competitive, be it sailing at Morston, fishing at Castle Acre and on the Spey, chess, croquet or Scrabble, or building up a comprehensive wine cellar. He enjoyed painting, both in watercolours and oils, throughout his life.

His exploits included travelling by 14ft inflatable boat from Morston Quay to York Minster. He took a keen interest in the development of Norwich via the Norwich Society. He also published several books including the Conservation of Historic Buildings, the third edition of which was recently published.

He served on, and chaired, many architecture and conservation committees and died as patron to several organisations.

Sir Bernard retired to Stiffkey Old Hall but continued with many consultancies worldwide. Following Ruth's death in 1994, he married Tina. He was re-energised at the age of 75 - even playing on a bouncy castle.

They moved to Bawburgh, near Norwich, in 2000 and his consultancy work continued, as well as his great enjoyment of concerts at the John Innes Centre at Colney.

In 2007, a fellowship at York University was endowed in his honour to promote the teaching of craft skills for conservation architecture. He read books, largely histories and biographies, at an ever-increasing rate, until just a week ago when ill health struck. He died on Friday.

Sir Bernard was father to Henry, Harriet, Mary and Francis and had seven grandchildren. Francis said yesterday: "He was a true gentleman, a competitive character, a deep thinker, a globe-trotter, and above all a very much loved husband, father and grandfather."

David Mawson said: "Bernard was a brilliant man. He was a great friend of mine and a colleague for over 50 years." "He had a very pleasant personality and was a very charming man who was able, through his extraordinary knowledge of architecture, to instil confidence in clients. I feel extreme sadness at having lost a very good friend and colleague who I will miss very much."



Obituary, Sir Bernard M. Feilden 1919 – 2008

By Mounir Bouchenaki, Director-General, ICCROM

18 November. Sad news struck ICCROM on Friday with the loss of Sir Bernard M. Feilden, renowned international expert the field of heritage conservation and restoration. Born in September 1919, Sir Bernard M. Feilden, started his career as architect to Norwich Cathedral, and pursued his work on historical buildings in the United Kingdom. He was nominated by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) as the representative on the Ancient Monuments Board in 1965. He also was elected in 1973 as Chairman of RIBA/COTAC (Conference on Training in Architectural Conservation) group, reporting on training architects in conservation. He became President of the Ecclesiastical Architects and Surveyors Association in 1975 and, one year later, President of the Surveyors Guild.

He served as Director General of ICCROM from 1977 to 1981. He brought to the latter role his 40 years' experience in architectural conservation. From 1973 to 1994, he lectured at the Architectural Conservation Course (ARC) and also in many countries in the world, from the United Kingdom to China, giving advice to architects and restorers in India, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Sri Lanka. He lectured extensively in the United States at various universities such as University of California Berkeley; University of Columbia; Columbus State University; Cornell University; University of Pennsylvania; and University of Virginia. Sir Bernard M. Feilden received several awards and honorary recognitions for his publications and for his works.

In 1986 he was awarded the Aga Khan Prize for his contribution to the conservation of the Dome of Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. I had the honour to participate, as UNESCO Director of Cultural Heritage Division, with Sir Bernard in two missions to Bahrein for the restoration projects of Arad Fort and Qala'at Al Bahrein.

Everywhere his scientific contribution was enormous.

In the name of all my colleagues at ICCROM I would like to present my sincere condolences to his family and in particular to his wife who sent a message saying 'he died peacefully at home on Friday 14 November aged 89... he achieved all he wanted to do, and probably more, as you know better than I do.'