

# SAVE BRITAIN'S HERITAGE

Newsletter - May 2011

## SAVE WINS LANDMARK RULING ON DEMOLITION



SAVE's landmark judgment means that Pathfinder demolitions will face tighter controls and be subject to closer scrutiny

SAVE has secured a landmark court judgment which gives new protection to buildings threatened with demolition. The ruling means that most forms of demolition previously exempted from planning controls could now need planning permission.

The ruling came after a Court of Appeal hearing in London and marked the end of a long-running and complex legal case. The case, brought by SAVE against the Secretary of State for Communities, was fought by SAVE's superb legal team - Susan Ring of Richard Buxton Solicitors and barristers Richard Harwood and Andrew Deakin of 39 Essex Street.

The case involved the Government's interpretation of a European Directive - Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) - which governs the impacts of building projects on the environment. Up until now the Government had argued that EIA was not required for demolition alone as demolition was not a 'project'. This meant that no planning consent was needed to demolish a building that was not a dwelling, a listed building, or a building in a conservation area.

However, the Court of Appeal ruled to the contrary, saying that demolition could indeed be classed as a project and that it could attract EIA (and would therefore need planning permission). This automatically meant that the directive in UK law which exempts the demolition of certain building types from requiring planning permission became unlawful.

The ruling will have major implications for planning authorities, and will have a particular and immediate impact on proposed demolitions of large areas of terraced housing under the now defunct Housing Market Renewal (Pathfinder) Initiative. SAVE is currently involved in a number of Pathfinder battles, such as the campaign to save the 'Welsh Streets' area of Toxteth, Liverpool, (including Ringo Starr's birthplace) from the bulldozers (see below).

The judgment will also mean that proposals for demolition of listed buildings and buildings in conservation areas may also need Environmental Impact Assessment. Prior to this, they were exempted.

SAVE has been arguing for years that it is absurd that a developer can escape the EIA Directive by separating demolition from development when it is clear that demolition can and does have serious impacts on the environment. As SAVE's President, Marcus Binney, put it: 'For 35 years SAVE has challenged the waste involved in the demolition, year on year, of tens of thousands of soundly built houses which could often be renovated for a fraction of the cost of compulsory purchase, demolition and rebuilding. The appeal court judgment is of vast significance as it will help to put a brake on the cruel practice of evicting residents and flattening houses before any decision has been made about the future of the site.'

For developers, the days of gung-ho site clearances and preemptive demolition of sensitive (possibly listable) buildings seem to be over. In a *Property Week* article Daniel Farrand, Head of Planning at law firm Mishcon de Reya, said: 'Developers will even need to review existing unimplemented permissions to make sure that necessary demolition is expressly included or to build in the notification procedure to their project timetables. For those on site today it may be too late but those planning to clear controversial sites ahead of an application may find new barriers in their way.'

## Naval Officers' Quarter Rescued by Buildings Trust



Dockyard House, empty and neglected for a decade, but now to be restored as a single home. Photo: Rupert Wheeler

The Spitalfields Historic Buildings Trust, acting as the nominee for a group of investors, and with the help of a loan from the Architectural Heritage Fund, has successfully sealed the £1.85m purchase of a complete 1820s naval officers' residential quarter at Sheerness Dockyard. The site, on the Isle of Sheppey, Kent, contains six Grade II\* and four Grade II buildings on four acres of land. It has been empty (save for one protected tenant) and on English Heritage's national at risk register for the best part of a decade.

In 2010, nominated by SAVE, the entire dockyard was added to the World Monuments Fund's international Watch List of endangered historic sites. In recent years the site has languished under the shadow of redevelopment proposals involving the building of apartment blocks on the historic landscape. This application was finally refused at planning last year after a strong campaign involving local people, the national amenity societies and SAVE.



View down Church Road towards the derelict St Paul's Church with Dockyard Terrace on the right. Photo: Rupert Wheeler

Following this decision, the Trust entered into negotiations with the owner to acquire the site. The investors - who have taken on seven of the ten available properties - will restore them as single homes. The buildings include Regency Terrace (a row of five elegant houses) and the magnificent Dockyard House, built for the Chief Superintendent of the yard and later converted to offices. The three remaining properties will be held by the Trust, to be passed on to suitable purchasers. The Trust will be responsible for submitting the necessary planning applications, will oversee the rehabilitation of the site, and will carry out the repair work to the envelope of Regency Terrace. The Royal Naval Dockyard at Sheerness was planned and engineered by John Rennie and constructed by successive surveyors Edward Holl and George Ledwell Taylor. It was Ledwell Taylor who, during the 1820s and '30s, was responsible for a majority of the residential buildings - all of which were built to exacting standards, with restrained Grecian detailing. When built, Sheerness was one of the most advanced naval installations in the world. The dockyard closed in 1960 and since then has operated as a commercial port.



The entrance to the officers' quarter, with South Gate I (the old Police Office) on the right. Photo: Rupert Wheeler

The Sheerness buy out can rightly be considered as one of the greatest heritage rescues of recent years. It provides proof that viable conservation solutions can be found for even the most difficult historic sites. Against all the odds, the Spitalfields Trust has managed to assemble, within its expert embrace, a group of sympathetic and passionate investors who, together, will return this magnificent site to its former glory. SAVE is pleased to have had a hand in this rescue and wishes the Trust well with this exciting project.

*For more information about the Spitalfields Trust and the remaining Sheerness properties contact: Oliver Leigh-Wood or Tim Whittaker on 020 7247 0971.*

## PATHFINDER - SPECIAL REPORT

### Pathfinder Axed

Finally, the ailing but still dangerous Pathfinder programme (also known as the Housing Market Renewal Initiative, or HMR) has been put out of its misery by the Coalition government. The 'withdrawal' of its funding was announced in October, bringing to an end a decade of state subsidised demolition of Victorian housing stock across the north of England. The statistics are damning: since the bulldozers were unleashed under John Prescott in 2002, the programme has demolished at least 16,000 homes and built fewer than 4,000. Many thousands more homes lie empty - 'tinned-up' and awaiting their fate at the hands of local authorities. The cost to date is in excess of £2.2 billion.



Shameful: fine Victorian houses in Ducie Street, Granby, Liverpool, under demolition in November 2010. Despite the axing of HMR funding the council seems intent on continuing Pathfinder clearances.

The scheme was designed to tackle 'housing market failure' by reducing 'surplus housing stock' and building new homes which might appeal to more 'economically active' individuals. The result, as predicted by SAVE in our first report on Pathfinder in 2004, has been a costly disaster. Rather than lifting areas of low demand, it has caused blight and misery, leaving wastelands in place of functioning neighbourhoods, breaking up long-established communities and wasting millions on the acquisition (often by compulsory purchase) and demolition of good housing stock.

Even before the funding for the programme was axed it was clear that the regeneration miracle was a mirage. In the wake of the credit crunch, the private developers who were key to the promised regeneration of the HMR areas began to realise that the deals they had sown up with local authorities did not look particularly appetising. Some pulled out, others decided to hang on in the hope that things might improve. In the meantime, whole districts were left resembling what the former leader of Liverpool Council described as 'war zones'.

Although SAVE welcomes the news of Pathfinder's termination, we are concerned for the future. Whilst some councils seem genuinely eager to find ways to rehabilitate HMR areas which have been emptied or flattened, others seem to be continuing with clearances as if nothing had changed. In Liverpool and Gateshead good terraced housing is still coming down (see below) even though there are no concrete plans or funding in place for redevelopment. This is scandalous.

Fortunately, the Coalition is waking up to the situation. At the end of December the Housing Minister made a personal intervention in one of SAVE's cases - the 'Welsh Streets' in Liverpool - asking the council to consider alternatives to

demolition. Meanwhile, policymakers are beginning to introduce incentives for renovation and refurbishment - such as extending the New Homes Bonus scheme to include empty homes brought back into use. Also, SAVE has sought to test the government's new Localism agenda by encouraging residents in Pathfinder areas to ask the Secretary of State to issue a Public Request to Order Disposal (PROD), a little-used piece of legislation which can force local councils to release empty housing stock (see below).

SAVE hopes that the end of Pathfinder will herald a new age of renovation, where innovative ideas such as those proposed by architect Mark Hines in the SAVE report *Reviving Britain's Terraces: Life after Pathfinder* can at last be implemented. There are hundreds of individuals, charities, housing co-operatives and local builders ready and willing to take on and refurbish houses earmarked for demolition. Most of these houses are in now local authority ownership so there is an opportunity for the council to refurbish some of its own housing stock funded by profits from a controlled release of the remainder of the homes (with time constraints and conditions) to other parties.



Modest but well-constructed artisan housing in Toxteth Street, east Manchester, demolished by the council under a Pathfinder scheme. SAVE fought demolition plans at a CPO Inquiry in 2008 and these houses form a case study for SAVE's recent report *Reviving Britain's Terraces, Life after Pathfinder*. Photo: Gene Hunt

SAVE has long been a fierce critic of Pathfinder, and the most vocal of the national heritage bodies in its condemnation of the programme's scorched earth policy. We have worked to lobby those responsible for delivering the scheme, both at national and local level, and joined forces with residents and campaign groups fighting to save their homes and protect their communities. Now, with Pathfinder gone at last, we will focus our energies on bringing those houses emptied by HMR back to life and preventing further, senseless, demolitions.

### Housing Scandal! Pathfinder - a Post-Mortem

SAVE has published a devastating verdict on the discontinued Pathfinder programme. In a new report *Housing Scandal! Pathfinder: a Post-Mortem*, SAVE attacks both the legacy of the programme and the machinery and ideology which has sustained and supported it. *Housing Scandal!* includes a paragraph by paragraph critique by planning expert Bill Finlay of the recent, positive, Audit Commission Report on HMR.

As well as a riposte to the Audit Commission, SAVE's report is a response to continuing demolitions in Pathfinder areas, and to calls from some quarters to revive the programme. We are now in a bizarre situation where some councils such as Liverpool and Gateshead are in effect holding a gun to the head of government and saying 'let us finish the demolitions or we'll blame you for the mess'. In most cases there are no detailed plans for redevelopment and no funds to pay for it, so good housing stock worth tens of millions of pounds, easily capable

of renovation, is being sent to landfill, only for the vacant sites to be grassed over.



These houses in Kelvin Grove, Liverpool, were in near perfect condition before being emptied, tinned up and left to rot using HMR funding. Photo: Mark Loudon

In his introduction to the report, Planner and Liverpool resident Jonathan Brown, gives a damning summary of the disastrous effects of the scheme in the city: 'As the new government vacillate over calling time on catastrophe, whole districts lie half-demolished and derelict. Vulnerable households are left stranded in terrifying twilight streets. Communities have been abandoned by their public authorities, deserted by developers once lauded as saviours. Housing waiting lists have mushroomed with countless individuals displaced. Public spending has been brought into disrepute, and a once in a lifetime opportunity lost.'

Brown lists 10 charges against the programme from his experience as a resident in Liverpool's pathfinder area:

- 1. Pathfinder prevented market correction** – 1990s low demand and ultra low house-values proved a passing phenomenon, and soon became a relic as the economy grew - but Pathfinder 'sealed in the rot'.
- 2. Pathfinder talked places down** – inner Liverpool was characterised as an obsolete urban hell by quangocrats - no way to restore investor confidence, and a travesty of a historic metropolitan core rich with complex communities and strong architectural character.
- 3. Pathfinder diagnosed the wrong causes** – population decline, jobs and access to them are the real problem, not low house prices or terraced streets, which are often solutions to attracting new residents.
- 4. Pathfinder prescribed the wrong medicine** – demolition of the very streets that sustain urban living, and replacement by low density standard layouts just repeats '60s errors and accelerates cycles of decline.
- 5. Pathfinder ignored sensible solutions** – housing refurbishment grants and environmental upgrades are well tried and far better value packages of regeneration improvements - demolition was too often a first resort to facilitate major land deals.
- 6. Pathfinder distorted local democracy** – councils chased the grant despite the damaging terms, and suppressed opposition through sidelining and spin. CPO and eviction became a mainstream activity, with social landlord and developer interests placed before those of individual householders.
- 7. Pathfinder rewarded failure** – Social landlord executives and quango bosses grew rich while ordinary people lost hard-

won equity averaging £35,000. Housing management problems were disguised as market failure, and monopoly land banks built up with huge public subsidy.

**8. Pathfinder killed local economies** – removal of people means removal of networks of exchange. Empty streets mean no customers for the shops, no locals in the pub and no cars to be repaired. The huge negative externalities of investment forgone, residents displaced, tax revenues lost, opportunity costs and damaged confidence have never been accounted for.

**9. Pathfinder worsened social deprivation and housing need** – In Liverpool, housing waiting lists have doubled and entire districts blighted. Shelter condemned increased overcrowding. Civic pride is corroded. How do you ask children not to drop litter when the council have boarded up their neighbourhood?

**10. Pathfinder was environmentally stupid** – In enlightened hands £2.2bn could have pioneered low carbon retro-fit technology and kick-started green economies, giving deprived areas a head-start in building skills and supply chain networks to compete in rapidly expanding markets.

The full report can be downloaded from the SAVE website.

## PATHFINDER - WELSH STREETS UPDATE

### Pickles Rejects PROD but Halts Bulldozers with an Article 25 Direction



In the balance: Madryn Street in Liverpool part of the Welsh Streets clearance zone. The housing minister has intervened to request that the council examines alternatives to demolition

The battle to SAVE the Welsh Streets area of Liverpool from the bulldozers is reaching a critical stage. In the latest twist to the saga, Eric Pickles, Communities Secretary, has intervened at the eleventh hour to issue a stay of execution. Plans for demolition were approved by the council at a meeting on 19 April, in the face of widespread opposition, but Pickles has now issued the council with an Article 25 Direction which prevents the council from issuing permission until he has considered a request by SAVE to require a full environmental assessment.

Up to now the council has claimed that the demolition of nearly 300 houses in the area in this phase of the clearance scheme 'will not give rise to any significant effects on the environment'. SAVE has challenged this - stating that the council has failed to take into account the effect of the wider HMR scheme; the loss of embodied energy; the pollution and noise impacts of demolition; the loss of material assets and the loss of cultural heritage.

Pickles' intervention comes after he declined SAVE's request to issue the council with a Public Request to Order Disposal (PROD). The PROD is a mechanism designed to prevent long-term, speculative land banking on the part of the public sector, and it gives the Secretary of State the power to force public bodies to offer empty properties on the open market. SAVE's request related to over 440 terraced houses in the Welsh Streets including 9 Madryn Street, the birthplace of Beatles drummer Ringo Starr.

Remaining residents of the Welsh Streets say most of the homes were inhabited and in good order before they were emptied and acquired with Pathfinder funds. Bitter public opposition and the ending of funding have left the clearance programme half complete, with no plans in place for redevelopment or renovation.

The initial response to the request was positive. Eric Pickles stated that Ministers were '...keen to raise awareness of this little-known right to request intervention to safeguard empty buildings and get them back into productive use'. However, it seems that government lawyers could not find a way to make the PROD legally watertight and after some deliberation declined to serve it.

Eric Pickles had already recognised public concern about the Pathfinder's top down structure. In a statement issued in September he wrote: 'We recognise the public concern about the last Government's Pathfinder scheme having too great an emphasis on demolitions, encouraged by targets set by Whitehall. There is a powerful financial and environmental case for renovating rather than demolishing houses, as well as protecting our Victorian heritage ...Liverpool City Council needs to listen to the concerns of local people and conservation groups such as SAVE Britain's Heritage.'

In a powerful statement supporting the PROD request, Jonathan Brown of the Merseyside Civic Society wrote: 'In Liverpool, councils of various political stripes have abused their role by hoarding land and leaving housing empty for many years, ruining the lives of those living nearby. Thus far, officials have shown neither the political competence nor financial wherewithal to make good their promises of regeneration. It's time these homes were returned to the local families and small firms queuing up to bring them back into use.'

Eric Pickles' comments were echoed by Housing Minister, Grant Shapps. In a letter to the leader of Liverpool council Shapps called into question the Welsh Streets demolition plans. 'I would encourage your authority to urgently re-examine these plans in consultations with local communities and with other interested organisations... Demolition is often an expensive solution and should only be a last resort - we need to preserve and restore housing which can still be made habitable and decent at reasonable cost.'

In relation to the Welsh Streets, and Ringo's Starr's house, I hope that you would now reconsider remaining plans for demolition to give SAVE Britain's Heritage and other interested organisations an opportunity to come forward with alternative proposals to see if a viable retention option can be achieved. Imaginative re-use and redesign of terraced housing can be achieved and this could give a new opportunity for this to be considered.'

Liverpool Council reacted furiously to the Minister's letter, accusing him of 'interfering'. The council has been going to bizarre lengths in order to justify its scorched earth policy. Last year the Leader claimed that renovating a house in the Welsh Streets would cost £150,000. When pressed the council

admitted the figure 'was not based on an actual fully costed specification of any one individual property' i.e. 'we made it up'. In 2005 a house in the area was refurbished on Trevor McDonald's *Tonight* programme for just £23,000. It was no surprise that one of the fiercest attacks on the minister came from councillor Richard Kemp, Chairman of the Dane-Plus, the Housing Association which has been working with the council to empty the area and which is a partner in the redevelopment scheme.

### SAVE Debunks 'Beyond Repair' Myth

In order to defend the housing stock from council slurs, SAVE asked one of the UK's top structural engineers specialising in historic buildings to assess the Welsh Streets terraces.

Ed Morton of the Morton Partnership revealed his findings in a report which flatly contradicts council claims that economic repair is not possible. He says '...it is clear that it is perfectly practical to retain and re-use these buildings. Repairs will of course be required but I do not see these being difficult ...' He continues, '...This approach must be more economic than demolishing and re-building, and of course will retain an interesting and viable group of Victorian terraces including Ringo Starr's birthplace in Madryn Street.'

The report states what SAVE, and local residents, have said all along - namely that although the houses in the Welsh Streets shamefully neglected since being acquired and boarded up, their repair would be financially viable.

In a separate statement Mr Morton has said: 'It is tragic that demolition of these essentially sound buildings should even be considered. With reasonably modest sums, it is clear that these buildings can be put back into long term beneficial use for the community who previously loved living here.'

The houses in Madryn Street and the surrounding area were built by Welsh artisan builders who came to Liverpool in vast numbers during the 19th century.

### SAVE Buys Madryn Street House



Madryn Street, with SAVE's house on the left. Photo: Paul Barker

In an unprecedented move, the last private owner in Madryn Street - in the heart of the Welsh Streets clearance zone in Liverpool - has agreed to sell his home to SAVE. The house, 21 Madryn Street, is a few doors down from the birthplace of Ringo Starr and is one of nearly 300 destined for clearance under the Welsh Streets Pathfinder scheme.

SAVE will refurbish the building and make it the centre of the campaign to prevent the bulldozers flattening surrounding Victorian houses in phase one of the Welsh Streets clearance programme.

It is the first time SAVE has managed to get a foothold in a Pathfinder area. Our aim is bring national attention to the plans for wiping out this once thriving historic neighbourhood. We will refurbish the house and make it available to the community for events and activities. We also hope that the Beatles tours, which visit the street daily, will use it as a base in the area.



Only five years ago these Welsh Streets houses were inhabited and in good order. Photo: Mark Loudon

The intention is to show how, with modest outlay, these buildings - so maligned by the council - can be made attractive homes once again. Ever since these houses were earmarked for clearance seven years ago there has been no incentive for any maintenance or improvement. In 2005 only one resident of Madryn Street wanted demolition, with 35 opposing, but as the council, together with the Registered Social Landlord, began to run the area down by acquiring and boarding up properties, more and more people wanted to leave. With 21 Madryn Street, SAVE hopes it will break the cycle of neglect and show that the future lies in healing and rejuvenating these neighbourhoods. In the long term we hope that the SAVE house will be much more than a symbol of defiance against the destructive folly of Pathfinder - but will actually help persuade the council to bury the wrecking ball.

### Ringo's Birthplace Refused Listing Status



9 Madryn Street (left), Ringo Starr's birthplace and childhood home. Turned down for listing but the Housing Minister has now spoken up for the building.

Last year SAVE put forward Ringo Starr's home in Madryn Street for listing (together with a group of other Beatles-related sites in Liverpool). Just before Christmas we heard that English Heritage (EH) had turned down the house for listing. The next day they announced that the 'iconic' Abbey Road zebra crossing once traversed by the Fab Four *had* been listed. We remain slightly nonplussed by this decision, partly as we consider that the cultural significance of Ringo's birthplace was not properly considered, and partly because we didn't actually know it was possible to list a pedestrian crossing.

## Gateshead Terraces Fall after Epic Court Battle

It is extraordinary that at a time when local authorities are facing substantial budget cuts some councils are continuing to flatten valuable assets. One of the most heartbreaking and scandalous cases involves an area of terraced housing in Bensham, Gateshead. Readers may have been following this case, both in previous SAVE Newsletters and in the national press. SAVE was first made aware of the demolitions - which were part of a Pathfinder scheme - in 2006, when we were contacted by the Saltwell and Bensham Residents Association (SABRA), but became more involved in 2008 when we initiated court proceedings against the council.



Armstrong Street in Bensham, Gateshead. One of several streets of good late Victorian houses, emptied, left to rot and now destroyed by the Council, following the lifting of SAVE's injunction in December 2010. Photo: Warren Bone



SAVE fought off three applications for demolition of 154 homes in the first phase of a scheme for clearing a total 440 buildings. Last year we obtained a further injunction to prevent demolition pending the outcome of a related court case involving a historic brewery in Lancaster. However, at a hearing in the High Court in December a judge discharged the injunction, allowing the council bulldozers to move in. During the hearing it emerged that the demolition alone would cost over £300,000. This is on top of the huge cost of acquiring the properties, some of which were valued at more than £120,000. Shamefully, the council claimed at the hearing that the houses were beyond repair, despite the fact that one of them was occupied and in excellent condition before the tenant was bought out by the council a few weeks before.



Not so great: poster on a demolition site in Saltwell, Gateshead quoting Mrs Scott - an alleged resident.

Demolition has now begun and a perfect opportunity to renovate and refurbish has been lost. The cost to the taxpayer of depopulating and destroying these terraces has been huge, and the impact on the local community (both residents and businesses) devastating. And all in an area with a huge waiting list for social housing. There are no plans for new houses.

## CASEWORK

### Royal Sussex County Hospital, Brighton

The Royal Sussex County Hospital in Brighton was designed by Sir Charles Barry (1795-1860) in the early stages of his career. Construction started on Barry's hospital building in 1826 and was completed in 1828. Winged extensions by different architects were added as early as 1839, with several further additions made during the 19th century. These additions sit comfortably with Barry's design. A chapel, now listed Grade II, was attached to the rear in 1854.



Remarkably, other than the chapel, the building remains unlisted (it was turned down by English Heritage in 2009), and now the local NHS Trust has proposed flattening the site for a new hospital. The proposals have caused an outcry - with objections from local and national conservation groups, including the Victorian Society. SAVE has objected and has also published a 'lightning' report on our website.



The hospital in the late 19th century, with kitchen garden to the front. (Courtesy of Brighton History Centre)

The report, compiled by Adam Turner, has contributions from Barry's biographer Professor Michael Port and also from SAVE's president Marcus Binney, who writes:

'The purpose of this report is to show that the importance of Barry's Hospital has not been adequately recognised. Brighton, with Bath and Edinburgh, is one of the finest Georgian cities in Britain, and indeed the world. It is equally deserving of designation as a World Heritage Site. Brighton cannot afford to lose a major public building and landmark dating from the 1820s, a golden decade of Regency architecture.'

The hospital site is substantial and the Trust also owns land adjacent to the building. It is obvious, therefore, that a scheme to adapt and incorporate the historic buildings within a modern facility would be possible. In fact, the leading conservation architect Bob Chitham has produced a scheme to show how this could be achieved.

### Strand Union Workhouse Listed



Listed at last: the threatened former workhouse on Cleveland Street.

Elsewhere, the efforts of another NHS Trust to demolish a historic hospital building appear to have been thwarted by the Culture Secretary. An application had been submitted for the redevelopment of the former Strand Union workhouse on Cleveland Street in central London (close to the site where the Middlesex Hospital once stood) but in March, following a high-profile campaign and a recommendation from English Heritage, the building was listed.

SAVE had written to Camden, objecting strongly to the demolition. The building, most recently the Middlesex Hospital annex, was built between 1775 and 1778 as the Covent Garden Workhouse. It is thought to have been designed by the architect Edward Palmer and is a rare surviving example of a pre-1836 workhouse. Only one other has been identified in London and only three more nationally. It was renamed the Strand Poor Law Union in 1835. Its links with Dr Joseph Rogers (1821-1889), a Poor Law medical officer and celebrated health care reformer, reinforces its national significance.

The workhouse has undergone many physical changes in its history - as would be expected of an institutional building of this type. During the 19th century the building was adapted and enlarged, and in the 1860s it became an infirmary and its wings were extended. However the original H-plan of the workhouse, and the frontage block - a simple classically proportioned façade - survive and the building retains its 18th-century character. Its outward appearance reflects contemporary trends in metropolitan architecture towards the plain treatment of domestic elevations. Later additions should not be dismissed - the wings, for example, are of high quality and create a characterful inner courtyard.

The boundary of the Charlotte Street Conservation Area is drawn specifically to include the building - a tacit acknowledgment of the positive contribution it makes to its special character. The building makes a significant contribution to the area and demolition would cause substantial harm.

Not only is the former workhouse an invaluable tool in helping us understand the way of life for London's poorest inhabitants during the late 18th and early 19th centuries, but the workhouse is clearly capable of conversion and reuse.

In 2008 the Secretary of State refused English Heritage's recommendation to list the workhouse but Jeremy Hunt, the current Culture Secretary, saw things differently - and listed the building.

### Elvian School, Reading

Last year, SAVE Britain's Heritage was alerted to proposals to demolish two handsome Victorian villas on the Elvian School site in Reading - Oakland Hall and Rotherfield Grange. Our concern, as reported in the September 2009 newsletter, was that neither the architectural and historical interest of these two buildings, nor the possibilities for retaining and adapting them for inclusion in redevelopment plans, had been properly considered.

SAVE was concerned that the school, owned by the Society of Licensed Victuallers, was claiming that these two substantial, well-designed and well-maintained houses were 'not capable for conversion to a viable form of use.' They had also been turned down for listing which was being used as an argument for their destruction.



Oakland Hall in the grounds of Elvian School. The windows have been removed since this picture was taken.

Following an unsuccessful application for redevelopment, the school was closed at the end of the 2010 summer term, the site was vacated and the buildings abandoned. However, Reading Borough Council has recently issued a new draft development brief that recognises the positive contribution these buildings make to the site and recommends the retention of both buildings in light of any forthcoming scheme. The document also highlights the environmental advantages of their retention and recognises the historic significance of the landscape and its contribution to the site's character.

Whilst we are concerned over the apparent lack of security and news that the windows have been removed from both buildings, we hope that the drafting of this brief will result in a more hopeful future for them both.

## Swimming Pool and Mortuary, Mecklenburgh Square

These two (sadly unlisted) buildings are rare surviving elements of the Foundling Hospital in London, most of which was demolished in 1926. They date from a later phase in the development of the hospital at the end of the 19th century. Both buildings make a positive contribution to the Bloomsbury Conservation Area in which they are sited.



The swimming pool at the Foundling Hospital. A precious fragment of the working hospital.

The swimming pool was constructed in 1900 and the mortuary dates from 1880. Although converted to office use, the exterior of the single-storey pool building survives little altered - retaining its entrance, windows and chimney. There are also attractive details, including stone quoins, which make a pleasing contrast to the yellow brickwork. Inside, the pool basin, now covered, extends beneath a raised glazed clerestory visible behind the central pedimented façade. The mortuary is a simpler building of red brick, but it is clearly of interest and, again, is relatively little altered.

SAVE objected to an application for the demolition of both structures and their replacement with a much larger building related to the work of the Coram Foundation. Our comments were based on our concerns for the loss to the conservation area given the contribution they made and the obvious capacity for reuse of the pool building as part of a new development scheme. Despite our concerns approval was granted on 11 November 2010.

## Bath Press Building

The architectural and historic importance of the Bath Press building, a former book manufacturing plant, is already recognised by its inclusion on Bath Council's local list. It dates from 1889 but most of the site was developed between 1929-34. The long, low, classical stone façade is the building's most prominent and impressive feature. The building was vacated in 2003 and added to our Buildings at Risk Register in 2008.



The Bath Press building. Tesco proposal to demolish all but the façade for a new supermarket.

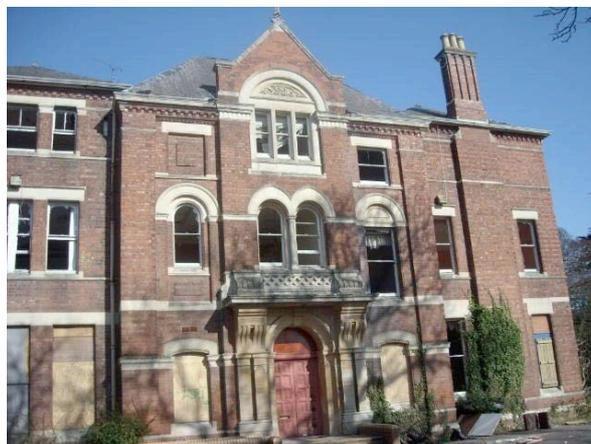
SAVE was alerted to proposals drawn up by St James's Investments and Tesco's at the consultation stage. Their scheme proposed the retention of the Art Deco façade as a screen connected to a new Tesco store by steel bars crossing a walkway. When we showed the design to our committee, the reaction was one of amused disbelief! Despite our objections the submitted application varied little this initial proposal. In our view it still presents a clumsy and unsatisfactory solution which fails to integrate the retained façade into the new supermarket in any meaningful way.

There is evidence that Tesco is capable of more sensitive design. At the South London Hospital for Women and Children in Clapham (an unlisted 1920s building), the façade was retained and successfully integrated into the new building, preserving its handsome frontage and enhancing the streetscape. We can see no reason why a similar approach could not be taken in Bath.

## Copsewood Grange, Allard Way, Coventry

SAVE is deeply concerned over the deteriorating condition of Copsewood Grange, a fine Victorian mansion on Allard Way, Coventry which is at the centre of a business park development site. Despite the fact that one of the conditions for the redevelopment of the site was the retention of both the house and its lodge, it is clear to us that when the building was vacated the owners failed to take adequate measures to secure it against vandalism and theft. Consequently, the building has suffered a series of break-ins, the most recent and serious being an arson attack.

Although Copsewood Grange and its gatehouse, Copsewood Lodge, are both unlisted they have both been included on the council's list of locally important buildings. They were built in the 1870s for the industrialist James Hart, a ribbon manufacturer, and are impressive and attractive designs in red brick with stone dressings.



Copsewood Grange, deteriorating despite a planning condition to retain the building.

SAVE has written to the council, voicing these concerns and urging the planning department to use its powers to oblige the owners to heighten security on the site and to carry out the necessary remedial works to halt the deterioration of the house. Although damaged, Copsewood Grange is still easily capable of repair and conversion, as outlined in the planning application for the site. The building has also been added to SAVE's new BAR catalogue.

The Coventry Society has now launched an online petition to gain support for the campaign to save the house. You can find the petition at [www.ipetitions.com/petition/copsewood/](http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/copsewood/)

## Skipton Town Hall, Skipton, Yorkshire

In December, we were alerted to worrying plans for a new shopping centre in the historic town of Skipton. The development was to abut and obscure the rear elevation of the fine Grade II listed Town Hall. As well as blocking out light, the development would have hindered access to the Town Hall's grand assembly room, therefore threatening the long-term sustainability of the listed building.



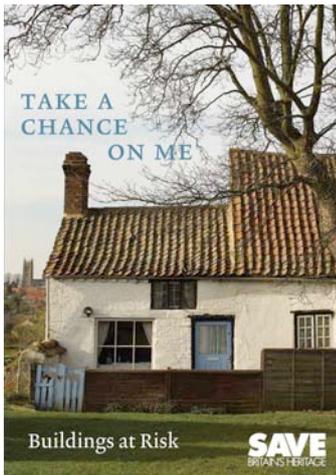
Skipton Town Hall, under threat from damaging development plans.

SAVE also felt the development would have a damaging impact on the conservation area. We were also uneasy about certain design elements, specifically the large unbroken window expanses. The tinted windows, without glazing bars, would have had a deadening effect on elevations.

Overall, SAVE felt that the applicant had not shown that sufficient effort had been made either to understand the context of the proposed development or to assess the impact of the scheme. We urged the plans to be refused and, thankfully, the council did indeed reject them.

## BUILDINGS AT RISK

### Take a Chance on Me



On 1 June SAVE publishes its 22nd annual catalogue of Buildings at Risk across the UK. In terms of quality, quantity and variety *Take a Chance on Me* marks a highpoint in SAVE's perennial search for delightful and unusual historic buildings in need of rescue and reuse.

A good proportion of the buildings illustrated are suitable for repair as family homes. Others will make excellent small development projects for entrepreneurs and builders. What they

all demonstrate is that there is a never-ending supply of historic buildings in need.

*Take a Chance on Me* include farmhouses, cottages, townhouses, chapels and churches, barns, mills, a factory shop, an observatory, a fortified house dating from 1300s, country houses, manor houses, a mortuary chapel, old inns, cinemas, theatres, libraries, school houses, an old forge, a magistrates' court and a home for seamen's widows.

This year SAVE also highlights a wide range of buildings which have been successfully rescued and given a new lease of life. The standard of work is often of remarkable quality.

The catalogue has benefitted from the biggest ever response from local authority conservation officers who, despite coming under intense pressure as a result of local government cuts, have taken time to supply detailed information and photographs.

SAVE's own researches have been boosted by a larger team of volunteers than ever before, resulting in a record crop of new entries, at least half of which are on the market or potentially available. We have also had regional volunteers at work - in Oxfordshire and Nottinghamshire - suggesting cases and taking photographs.

Marcus Binney, President of SAVE, says: 'SAVE was set up in 1975 - European Architectural Heritage Year - to highlight and challenge applications to demolish listed buildings. But we soon discovered there were a far greater number of historic buildings standing empty and decaying. Hence the title of one of our early influential reports *Left to Rot*.



Trenholme Farm, North Yorkshire. Photo: Paul Barker

This year SAVE's friends and volunteers have helped achieve a better geographical spread than ever before. On offer are properties in cities, towns and villages and in leafy country too. Many of them, far from being blighted by some ugly neighbour, are in remarkably unspoilt surroundings. And don't give up hope if you find your dream building in the catalogue but it's not for sale. An owner may believe a building is worthless and useless but once people with experience and passion for old buildings take an interest - and persist - a thaw may begin. Gentle diplomacy could be all that is needed.

The good news is that there are now more energetic and enterprising people keen to find a building to rescue than ever before even in these difficult times.'

*Take a Chance on Me Buildings at Risk 2011-2012* (192 pages in full colour) can be ordered direct from the SAVE Website using our new online payment system. Price: £15 (£13 for Friends).

## Talgarth Hospital, Powys, Wales

This fine asylum building of 1900, outside the town of Talgarth set within the glorious Brecon Beacons National Park, has been empty and largely unsecured for over a decade. The building is now in a poor state. Lead theft has resulted in extensive water damage and many of the original fixtures and fittings, such as fireplaces, have been stolen.

SAVE has been trying to raise awareness of this building and has contacted a developer with experience of converting a former hospital to flats. We believe residential conversion is the best (and most sensitive) option for the building but current permission is for mixed-use only (there is a pressure for any scheme to deliver employment opportunities). We have written to the council urging a change of policy.



Talgarth Hospital. Photo: Tom Ford

The building was sold to a developer in October and we are told a planning brief is being prepared. Watch this space!

## East Gatehouse, Hillington Hall, Norfolk

The East Gatehouse at Hillington Hall was built c. 1828 by the eminent local architect W J Donthorn, who also designed the house itself which was demolished in 1946.



The Grade II gatehouse has suffered in recent years from lack of maintenance and storm damage. There was recently an application for partial demolition which would have resulted in the loss of the tower, the dominant feature of this charming building, but this was thankfully refused. SAVE objected to these plans, pointing out that the arguments set out in the design and access statement – financial burden and limited opportunity for reuse – are not arguments that can be used to justify the loss of any listed structure.

A timetable for repairs is currently under discussion between the owner and the council.

## Coventry

In October 2010, Catherine Townsend (former Assistant Secretary) and Buildings at Risk Officer Rhiannon Tracy attended the Coventry Society's 'Big 5 Symposium' organised to find long-term viable uses for five of the city's most important 'at risk' historic buildings (all listed Grade I or II\*). At the moment, they are either underused or vacant (some have been empty for many years) and the Society argues that finding solutions is key to the successful regeneration of the city.



At Risk: Whitefriars, Coventry. Photo: Keith Draper

The 'Big Five' are the Old Grammar School (Hospital of St John the Baptist), in Hales Street; Whitefriars Monastery, Much Park Street; the Charterhouse, London Road; Drapers' Hall, Bayley Lane; County Hall, Cuckoo Lane and the Prison Governor's House, Pepper Lane.

Attendees included heritage professionals, a councillor, the City Council's conservation officer, the Chief Executive of the Prince's Regeneration Trust, a director of a local Building Preservation Trust and a representative of a Norwich Regeneration Trust.

SAVE was very impressed by the day and the proactive attitude and determination of the society. We encouraged them to share their ideas with other civic societies who could follow their example. The day was a great way to bring together various people and bodies within the heritage sector - to work towards the common goal of finding solutions for Coventry's most important historic buildings.

## SAVE in Wisbech

Some of us at SAVE recently visited the town of Wisbech on a fact finding mission for the 2011-12 Buildings at Risk catalogue. We were very grateful to have been shown around by Brian Payne, Chairman of the Wisbech Society & Preservation Trust, and Martyn Kendall, Conservation Officer for Fenland District Council. Both were generous with their time and knowledge on what turned out to be one of the coldest days of the year.

Wisbech is a market town and inland port on the river Nene. The town's out of the way position north of March, in the Fenland district of Cambridgeshire, means that it has seen relatively little modern development and boasts some excellent buildings. As well as the North and South Brink, which lie along the banks of the river at the west end of town (described by Pevsner as one of the finest Georgian brick streets of England), there is the urbane Castle Estate developed by local builder Joseph Medworth from the early 1800s, complete with

crescent (pictured) and square. There are also many good surviving shopfronts in and around the town centre.



The Crescent, Wisbech, developed c.1800 by Joseph Medworth.

The town is not without its problems, however, as the same remote position that has preserved it has also prevented the inward investment that has facilitated the conservation of historic buildings in towns such as tourist friendly Ely. There are significant numbers of buildings standing empty and in need of maintenance, and a spate of arson attacks last year claimed several historic buildings including the Grade II-listed Phoenix House on the North Brink.

### SAVE in Cromer

The last SAVE visit to Cromer was in January 2002, when the then Secretary, Adam Wilkinson, braved icy winds to explore the town with Cromer Preservation Society (CPS) Vice Chairman Andy Boyce. Since then we have been able to keep in touch with goings on in the town - including the numerous conservation battles - through the excellent CPS Newsletter. Furthermore, the lovely architectural guides produced by the CPS are amongst the best of their kind.



One of Cromer's famous sea views, with The Gangway on the left. The building pictured benefited from a THI grant in 2006.

SAVE's Secretary William Palin and BAR Assistant Anya Matthews returned to Cromer in February this year, where we were taken around by Andy Boyce. The purpose of the visit was to look, learn and offer advice on some of the challenges facing the town's historic buildings.

Cromer is essentially the result of two building booms, at either end of the 19th century. This has left a fine architectural legacy, with the Regency core of the town complemented by fine late Victorian and Edwardian development. However,

despite the great efforts of the CPS - working in partnership with the council - it still faces problems. One of the main threats to the special character of the town is the incremental loss of detail - a process which is difficult to control through the planning process, even with buildings which are listed or which stand in conservation areas. UPVC windows are a constant menace and SAVE was pleased to learn that the council is considering introducing more Article 4 directives in conservation areas. These directives control the alteration or replacement of specific features by requiring owners to seek planning permission. Although owners may initially be resistant to such directives, once they realise that the purpose of these controls is to preserve the distinct and special qualities of a place, improving both quality of life and house values, they will often come out in support of them. Controls like this are particularly important in a town like Cromer which owes its charm not to spectacular individual buildings, but to groups of good buildings, satisfying streetscapes and delightful, incidental, views.



Cromer Pier, home of the Pavilion Theatre.

The degrading effects of gradual, unsympathetic, change are most visible in the 'boarding house district' of west Cromer, where many handsome blocks, with pretty details, have not been well treated. The process is all too familiar - failure to carry out regular maintenance leading to decay and subsequent removal of ornament (stonework, joinery and ironwork) stripping a building of its finery. The beautiful restoration of A F Scott's Ashbourne House shows what can be done, but at present this example does not seem to be inspiring many others to follow suit.

The CPS has achieved a huge amount and, generally, we were encouraged and impressed by how well the town looked. However, in common with all historic towns in England, there is a big question mark over its future - particularly in terms of resources. Thankfully the council's conservation team has emerged intact from the first round of cuts, but the County Council team (with all its expertise) has gone. The Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) funding - which helped to repair a number of buildings - as well as improving the public realm - stopped in 2006 and without proper maintenance even this work is beginning to look shabby in places. SAVE's advice to the CPS was to continue to keep conservation high on the council agenda - this means pushing for Article 4 directives, and for better awareness of, and resources for, care and maintenance.

## FRIENDS NEWS

An appeal from SAVE's President, Marcus Binney:

'This is to ask a simple question – will you help us double the number of SAVE Friends over the next year? If each Friend can introduce one new Friend it will be an enormous boost to our work and give us a strong and secure base from which to work.

As this newsletter shows, SAVE has never been operating on more fronts – or more effectively – than now. With other national heritage bodies facing cuts there has never been a greater need for SAVE's independence and energy. And we are making a difference, for example our battle against the bulldozers unleashed by Prescott on northern towns and cities under the name of Pathfinder is yielding major results – the demolitions are slowing and now there is the prospect that empty houses will be sold to people who want to repair them and live in them.

When we set up SAVE in 1975 we decided not to have members as we did not wish to compete with existing societies and were determined to concentrate all our efforts into front line battles. But SAVE has always had a steadily growing band of supporters and this led to the establishment of the Friends.

The Friends have now grown into a band which hovers around the 1,500 mark, increasing as our annual buildings at risk catalogue appears. Soon we will have systems for paying Friends' subscriptions online (publications are already available in this way) and this, we hope, will help us boost numbers.

## OFFICE NEWS

### Staff Changes

Catherine Townsend started at SAVE in 2007, serving first as Buildings at Risk Officer then as Assistant Secretary. In December the unthinkable finally happened, Catherine left SAVE to take up a new post (and a new challenge) at the Church of England. Catherine has made an immense contribution to the organisation during her time here. Her 2008 and 2009 Buildings at Risk Catalogues broke new ground both in terms of content and production, and, through her casework, she put herself at the forefront of dozens successful battles. We will miss her.

We are not replacing Catherine (that would be impossible) but we have taken on Christina Emerson and Anya Matthews as part time support for Rhiannon Tracy, our Buildings at Risk Officer.

### Online Ordering

SAVE Publications can now be ordered online using our new payment system. Shortly, Friends will also be able to join and check their details using the same system.

### Appeal - SAVE's Shopping List

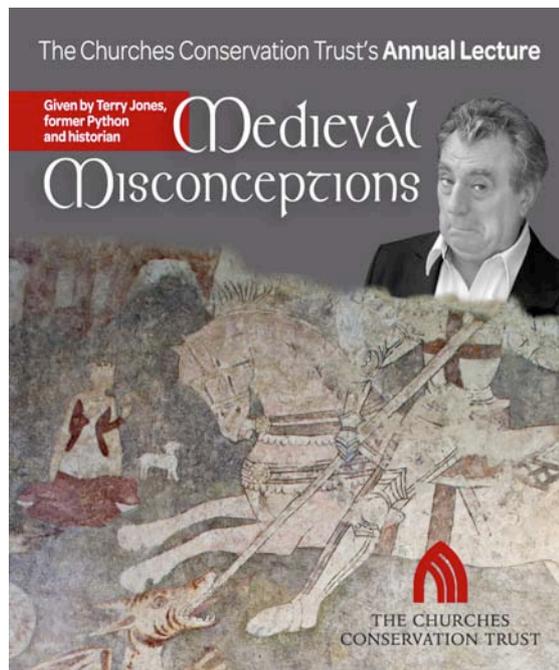
We were delighted by the response to our shopping list plea. Generous donors came forward with funds for a new office camera as well as a laptop and scanner. However, we are still looking for donations towards a new phone system - and the upgrade of our website to allow online payments and subscriptions.

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### CCT Annual Lecture

The Churches Conservation Trust's Annual Lecture is being given this year by Terry Jones, the former Python and historian. His illustrated lecture *Medieval Misconceptions* will be held at The Geological Society, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1J 0BG on Thursday 6 October 2011 at 6.45 (doors open 6.15).

Tickets are £20; £15 for CCT Supporters and SAVE members, and include a drinks reception afterwards.



To book tickets go to [www.visitchurches.org.uk](http://www.visitchurches.org.uk), or phone 020 7213 0670. Early booking is advisable. SAVE members should quote the code 'JONES610' on the booking form to receive the ticket price discount.

## PHOTO COMPETITION



We are inviting Friends to send in photographs illustrating unusual approaches to building conservation. To kick off, here is a new office development in Cork, Ireland, submitted by former SAVE volunteer Monica Filby. Can you spot the 18th-century building?