



## Newsletter – November 2004

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### Royal Aircraft Establishment, Farnborough: Mission Accomplished?

It has been a long time coming but shows that our dogged determination and persistence pays dividends. The long running saga of the future of the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough is, at least from our point of view, drawing to a close. Its owner, Slough Estates, has received permission from the local authority for the refurbishment of the historic wind tunnels and a number of associated historic buildings in the 20 acre “development brief area” (the only remaining part of the original 180 acre site, the rest having been bulldozed), and is planning to spend £20million on the historic buildings.



This is a far cry for the situation we faced when our report “Enough Has Been Bulldozed: Save Farnborough, the

Cradle of British Aviation” was launched in December 2001. Then, possibly two, perhaps three, of the remaining buildings were scheduled for retention and the bulldozers were active on the rest of the site. SAVE was responsible for initiating (and doing a good deal of research for) the upgrading of the listings on the site, with the remarkable, cathedral like 24ft wind tunnel upgraded to Grade I from Grade II\*, the massive transonic wind tunnel from Grade II to Grade I and the original wind tunnel building on the site, R52 to Grade II. We commented extensively on the original development brief drawn up by Slough Estates which was seriously flawed, we drew up alternative plans for the site with Huw Thomas showing how buildings could be converted to alternative uses to raise the cash to repair the wind tunnels, we even offered to buy the site off Slough Estates (much of this is evident in the final product). We badgered, with Farnborough Air Sciences Trust (FAST), every one at every level of Government who had even the vaguest interest in the site, and encouraged them to talk to Slough Estates. And it worked.

There are lessons to be learned all round from this case, from the way in which the Ministry of Defence rids itself of its sites (it initially argued against the listing of the buildings on the site), to the attitude of local authorities towards major development, to the need for developers themselves to listen to the whole range of stakeholders in the site before acting: Slough Estates could have saved itself a huge amount of effort (and money) if it had just listened to all those campaigning from the outside from the beginning. The change in Slough Estate’s attitude to the site can probably be summed up in the fact that its Chairman, Sir Nigel Mobbs, in his speech presenting the new plans for the site to the press, was so gracious as to actually thank SAVE for its input.

This is a great triumph for SAVE. We were severely hampered, not least because the local authority refused to declare a conservation area. We will however keep at least one beady eye on the future of the site....

### Save Severalls

For the last couple of years we have been fighting hard for the preservation and reuse of another large Government owned-complex, the handsome arts and crafts asylum complex known as Severalls, on the outskirts of Colchester in Essex. Having fought back the NHS from a position of almost total demolition we have just launched our report “Save Severalls: an arts and crafts village for living and learning” (£3.20 to Friends and £4 to every one else) as part of a concerted effort to push the NHS to sell the site to developer Country and Metropolitan Homes with whom we have drawn up plans for the conversion of most of the hospital into housing. We are currently working with a range of interests in and around Colchester to find a way of reusing the magnificent hall at the heart of the complex.

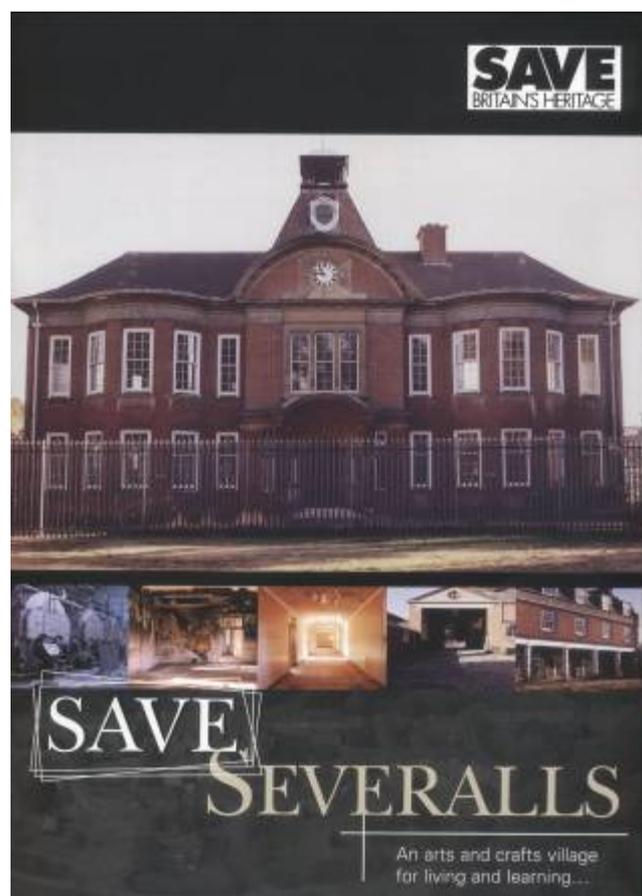
The sale of the site has been held up by a number of factors, not least of which is the fact that it was to be sold to a consortium as one of 117 sites in a package worth millions. This deal has collapsed giving us the chance to try and achieve a separate sale. However, the auditors and

lawyers will no doubt ensure that the sale is further postponed: Government has decided to re-assess the sale of these sites. The fees they generate will ensure this is a lengthy process and will bump the price up even higher: a virtuous spiral from their point of view and a vicious circle from ours.

We strongly encourage Friends to write to:

John Reid, Secretary of State for Health, Richmond House, 79 Whitehall, London SW1A 1NL stating the importance of the buildings and parkland, highlighting the number of these hospital buildings that have been successfully converted to residential use, and asking that the Severalls site is marketed as soon as possible on the basis of retaining the maximum number of buildings.

Cllr John Jowers, Leader, Colchester Borough Council, Town Hall, Colchester CM1 1FR saying that you support the masterplan for the site drawn up by Country and Metropolitan homes with SAVE for retaining the hospital buildings and reusing them for residential and educational purposes, and that the hospital and park must be designated a conservation area to protect the complex.



## St. Mildred's Tannery

This fascinating tannery site at the heart of historic Canterbury has wandered across the pages of this newsletter a few times over the last couple of years and hopefully this will be the last such occasion pro tem.

Following our success in getting the last plans thrown out we drew up alternative plans for the site through the good services of one of SAVE's many supporters who wishes to remain anonymous but at least deserves a huge thank you through these pages.

The result of these plans was a set of revised plans from the developer, Bellway Homes, making use of a local architectural firm with an understanding of the tight urban form of historic Canterbury and an ability to meet an exacting brief. This was the developer's third stab at a development on the site and we were delighted to see that the ground plan bears a remarkable similarity to our plans, imitation being the best form of flattery. While a few aspects of the scheme are not entirely satisfactory (at least three convertible buildings including a charming set of Georgian workshops are up for demolition), the preservation element has gone from one façade up to a dozen or so industrial buildings of all dates. The drying sheds, all of which we were firmly told by the developers' archaeological consultants would be impossible to reuse, are to be converted for residential and hotel use, and various other warehouse buildings are to be converted to residential use. Naturally we objected to the losses, but the councillors felt that the developer had gone a long way (which indeed it had) and allowed the plans through. Naturally, time will tell....

## Smithfield plans

We have been very busy fighting the ongoing threat of the demolition of the General Market buildings at Smithfield and have received a good deal of press coverage on the matter. Since the last newsletter, the developer, Thornfield Properties, put in for planning permission and conservation area consent for the demolition of the buildings and their replacement with a pair of nine storey buildings giving a total floor area of over 750,000 square feet. Their justification for this took your Secretary quite some time to go through (they have in effect readied themselves for a public inquiry) and the result was 16 pages of objections without repetition, hesitation or deviation, to borrow a phrase. The basis of the developer's argument is, as you might expect, that the existing buildings on the site are rubbish, and that their new building will be brilliant, meeting the demands of the City (which has no shortage of empty office space).

In the meantime we await the Minister's verdict on the listing of the buildings, and we have been working on the growing number of local residents, most particularly those within the Barbican, which forms the nearest major residential cluster, practically on the doorstep of the market. We have also garnered the support of Darren Johnson, the Green member of the London Assembly and chair of the GLA's environment committee. The developer's public relations people have been putting out plenty of negative press about the existing buildings and in a classic example of the press feeding off itself, an absurd rumour that we were to hear in a matter of days that the buildings would not be listed resulted in a flurry of articles in respected national papers reporting this as fact. We were quite splendidly barred from entering a press launch of

their plans on the grounds that we weren't invited – what did they expect us to do? Ask awkward questions? Heaven forbid! We remain eternally optimistic and look forward to seeing plenty of egg on various faces as and when the buildings are listed. However, even if the buildings are not listed, the battle is far from lost as we will be in the same position we are in at the moment. A public inquiry remains the best way forward, with the Corporation of London currently wearing rather too many hats: owners of the freehold, planning authority and market organisers.

In the meantime we took matters in to our own hands with the small lavatory block and carried out a stealth maintenance raid, clearing out the gutters, chopping off the buddleia and generally carrying out the sort of everyday maintenance work which we all (ahem) do to our own houses a couple of times per year.



We have also raised a petition which over the course of a couple of hours of the London Architecture Biennale raised 400 signatures. If any Friends would like a copy of the petition in order to garner a few more signatures please do let us know.

Likewise we have produced two handsome A3 posters calling for the preservation and reuse of the buildings which we would love to see displayed in butchers shops up and down the country. The posters are available from SAVE for £1 each or £1.50 for the pair (to help cover costs and postage etc).

### Staple Hall and Stone House, London

Another handsome building in a City of London conservation area, this time one by Richardson and Gill, dating from 1931. This handsome freestanding office block has been granted consent for demolition by the Corporation of London to be replaced with a 20 storey tower to match the as yet unbuilt 40 storey Heron Tower. The conservation benefit is to rip out the guts and retain the façade of Richardson and Gill's earlier neighbouring office on Bishopsgate, Stone House. Oh and they will also complete the composition as it looks a little incomplete to Kohn Pederson Fox's tidy eye (KPF are also the architects for the new Smithfield development). We were given the opportunity to have our say at the Corporation of London's



planning committee, which we leapt at as this is a new-fangled idea for the Corporation. In the three minutes granted we put across the points as best we could, focussing on the fact that this would be the first demolition of a historic building in a conservation area in the City for about 30 years. One of the (sort of) elected members commented that he was glad to see the clock being turned back 30 years, and the City Planner, in response to our arguments about conservation areas stated that conservation areas were as much about bringing life to an area as they were about preservation, and that the demolition of this building and its replacement with a tower would bring life to the area. This is of course in terms of policy strictly rubbish, but it at least gave a clear idea of how the City's planning committee works. On the bright side, your Secretary was later congratulated by the City Planner for being the first person to stick to their allotted three minutes.

### East London

Over the past couple of months we have seen a spate of planning applications for the demolition of a number of interesting industrial buildings in East London, as a result of the ongoing pressure for development in the area and the Olympic bid, which is being driven through by the Mayor (to the extent that he invited all of the relevant borough planning committees down to the City Hall and locked them in a room until they had agreed to pass the plans). As ever, East London remains neglected by the rest of the capital, and a number of important and interesting structures, buildings and sites, all of which could be reused with a little imagination are facing the chop.

First up is a former **timber works** on the edge of the River Lea, along which is a whole series of fascinating (and rotting) small industrial sites. The timber works contains what is in effect a First World War aircraft hangar in the form of a triple Belfast truss roof. This is something of a rarity, but not rare enough, it would appear, to merit listing, on the grounds that there are earlier examples of hangars using the Belfast Truss (this one dates from 1937). However, all of these are for aircraft hangars, not for industrial uses in urban areas. The hangars could easily be

reused as an indoor sports centre or some other such community based use but instead the proposals are for a series of residential blocks. This is the first major site on the Lea Valley to be redeveloped as a part of John Prescott's vision for East London, and while there is a need for investment in the area, it is questionable whether it should be in the form of oversized blocks – up to 6 ½ storeys against the ambient townscape's three and the empty Hackney Marshes. Over the marsh in Walthamstow the Borough has been demolishing its tower blocks and improving the view for the good residents of Hackney: the favour is clearly not being returned.



Next up are the **Riverside Works**, the only remaining historic ink works in London, which supplied much of the ink for Fleet Street for over a hundred years and is a virtual history of the process of ink making. Like many industrial sites in the area the river and canal network were essential to its success, providing the easy and fairly rapid transport of raw materials from London's docks. The works contains a series of industrial buildings of local architectural interest, while their interest in industrial and historic terms is arguably greater (although not in English Heritage's book, again listing was refused). Current proposals, approved with the casting vote of the chair of the Borough's planning committee will see the site cleared to make way for live / work studios. The buildings ought to be in a conservation area, and two are proposed for nearby but have not yet been put into place. It is very unfortunate that isolated sites such as this with fine, reusable buildings should be subject to the planners mantra of "its not listed, its not a in conservation area" and be lost to "preservation by recording". At stake here is not just the small matter of some fascinating historic buildings but also the question of identity – so much of the new building in East London, replacing good historic buildings, has created a giant nowhere, a series of places without any identity or anything to anchor them in time and space.

The proposals for the **Olympics** are potentially lethal in terms of historic buildings – one industrial site which again would convert nicely is designated as a coach park. It would appear that there has been too much masterplanning on the basis that the Lea Valley is a blank sheet, which it certainly isn't. This will make the detailed stages of the planning process painful for all involved as each piece of threatened heritage (and open, green space)

is fought for. As with Farnborough all this could have been pre-empted through a more considered approach.

Out in Bow we were contacted by locals concerned about proposals to demolish a charming Victorian **Rope Works**, which made rope for the British Steel Corporation, which made the Royal Navy's steel hulled ships. We supported their call for listing, and once a date had been agreed with the developer for the listing inspector to visit the site, they set to with the knocking ball to ensure the building was suitably vandalised to make listing impossible. This again highlights the absurdity of the current way in which buildings are spot listed, with English Heritage being frightfully sporting and arranging site visits with owners with malicious intentions, leaving the buildings vulnerable.



In rather less wild Wapping, an old warehouse which is very much a part of the character of the area is on a developer's hit list. It currently contains **St Patrick's Social Club** and carries out quite a service to the community. Even if the owners boot out the club (which would be a great pity as they have pretty much kept the building in good order) the building could easily be converted to residential accommodation. The owners are the Roman Catholic Diocese, who frankly should know better than to go proposing the demolition of characterful buildings in conservation areas



Finally for east London (well it is probably more north than east), a terrace of dilapidated but essentially handsome 1820s houses with Victorian shop fronts

extending out in front, and a neighbouring series of semi-detached buildings along the **Dalston Lane** were sold by the local authority to a developer with the proviso that they were not to be knocked down. Naturally the developer put in to demolish and replace with some drab nonsense, which the authority rightly rejected. It then found itself having to declare a conservation area around the buildings to protect them, while the owners went to appeal against the refusal of permission to demolish. Your Secretary cycled up to Hackney early one morning to have a close look at the buildings only to find that the fire engines had beaten him (and to add insult to injury his camera promptly self destructed). The damage (to the buildings), almost certainly caused by arson, is two gutted houses out of the 20 or so. Again, the buildings were under consideration for listing. Much like the Georgian buildings on Sun Street, Vauxhall Bridge Road and St. George's Circus in London, all of which we have fought for over the past five years, these really are the sort of buildings that can easily be restored to wonderful houses in spite of being borderline cases for listing. As ever, it would be helpful for the criteria against which these late Georgian buildings are judged when under consideration for listing to be published so we know what we are aiming for when applying for spot listing. At least with **Vauxhall Bridge Road** (down south in Pimlico) we are now faced with a planning application for the restoration of the buildings, which is a huge relief after the massive effort to get them listed and stop Westminster City Council demolishing them.

## Regent Palace Hotel



While still in London, a quick update on the Regent Palace Hotel at Picadilly Circus, which was proposed for demolition by the Crown Estate and replacement with a bland office. SAVE attended Westminster's planning committee and put forward the arguments against the demolition of this Edwardian Baroque hotel in a conservation area, mentioning not only the splendid art deco interiors by Oliver Bernard, but also the smaller details of the hotel that survive, such as the door latches to the room designed to prevent maids becoming caught in the rooms with the guests.... Westminster duly chucked out the plans and then – hooray – the building was listed at Grade II following efforts by ourselves and the Twentieth Century Society. We await the Crown Estate's revised

plans: the best solution for the building would be to grant the current owners a long lease to allow them to make the necessary improvements to the building, but we fear that they will put in for a massive façade retention scheme.

## Country Houses

### Endsleigh House, Devon

We had been keeping a close eye on Wyatville's Picturesque masterpiece since its sale was announced in September 2003. This wonderful cottage orné sits high above the River Tamar in 108 acres of gardens, recently restored with the aid of the Heritage Lottery Fund. The house was built for the 6<sup>th</sup> Duke of Bedford in 1810 by Jeffry Wyatville as a holiday retreat. Wyatville is probably better known for altering Windsor Castle to the state we see in it today. We forewarned the Heritage Lottery Fund of the impending danger and received a letter in October 2003 from its chair telling us that they were ready for action.



The house was finally sold last month to Olga Polizzi, of the Forte family, with the intention of using it as a hotel. In contrast to Toddington, this is very good news the house has been used as a hotel by its owners of the last 40-odd years, the Endsleigh Fishing Club, and will make a marvellous place to stay. Ms Polizzi has undertaken to keep the gardens open to the public, but the Fishing Club and its offshoot, the Endsleigh Charitable Trust, were obliged to pay back their grants to the HLF with an uplift reflecting the increase in the value of the house bought about by restoration of the gardens.

The HLF's own expert advisors had made clear the vital importance of keeping the furniture collection, much of it designed specifically for the house by Wyatville, in the house, in effect keeping this complete Picturesque collection of park, garden, house, furniture and interior intact. Imagine our surprise therefore when we learned (with 10 days to go) that the contents were to be sold at auction to raise funds to pay back the HLF. The trustees of the charitable trust and fishing club were doing as they were legally bound to, so we put together a last minute application to the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the HLF's parent body (reconstituted from the Land Fund after the Mentmore debacle) to purchase the most

important items of furniture for the Nation. This was put in an envelope clearly marked “urgent” and delivered by hand on the Wednesday, six days before the sale (which was at Woburn Abbey on the Tuesday). Having pulled out all the stops we were told on the Friday afternoon that it was not possible a; for the NHMF to accept the furniture in lieu of the repayment of grant as this might set a dangerous precedent, b; that they had not the time to contact all their trustees, c; the legal side of it all was too complicated, d; we had not secured a definite end owner, and e; that there was not therefore a set series of conditions for the display of the furniture at the house. On the last two points we had secured the goodwill of a number of organisations, from the Plymouth Museum through to the Landmark Trust (and of course Ms Polizzi), all of whom expressed a strong desire to help out and firm up any arrangements at a later stage. Only then did we find out that the NHMF has the power to hold such items in trust until a suitable place for them is found.

The white knight of the story, as ever, is the voluntary sector, in this case the Georgian Group, which heroically shelled out for the chairs and dumb waiters from the dining room. One sincerely hopes that the NHMF will now buy these items back off them and return them to their rightful place, where arrangements for public access can be settled, and allow the Georgian Group to build back up its bank account.



The case raises a number of serious questions.

1. Why did the sale come as a surprise to the top brass of the NHMF?
2. Why did the NHMF ignore its own professional advice from the foremost experts in the field?
3. Why has the pioneering spirit of the NHMF, of purchasing places of beauty for the benefit of the nation, fallen by the wayside?
4. Why was it left to the voluntary sector to pick up the pieces?

This points to a serious lack of internal communication within the NHMF and the continued obsession with forms and bureaucracy rather than action: while this leads to a feeding frenzy for consultants, small voluntary

preservation trusts and community groups cannot bear this sort of burden. Something has to change.

## Toddington Manor

After a great deal of pressure, Warner Holidays issued a press statement to the effect that they were pulling their proposals for the Gothic Revival Toddington Manor on the grounds that they do not like to go against local and national opposition. This is a remarkable turn around given their previous determination in the case of Cricket St. Thomas (of TV’s “To the Manor Born” fame), where we ended up in a public inquiry against their plans (and lost, and yes, the place has been comprehensively ruined by additions with a giant dusty car park). We rather suspect that the reason for their exit from the scene has more to do with increasing project costs than a sudden concern for the historic and natural environment, but credit where credit is due.

English Heritage, who oddly enough had not opposed the plans to build a giant hotel next to the house and 200 car parking spaces in the park, were rather upset at this retreat, to quote their Chief Executive no less:

*‘English Heritage officers, our advisory committee, EHAC and the Commission are desperately disappointed that Warner leisure pulled out of their development...The loss of their interest means that once again Toddington is at serious risk. This has largely come about because Warners were frightened off by the prospect of a continued aggressive campaign...I do not rejoice at Warners’ retraction and fear that if we are not careful Toddington will become another victim of heritage sabotage and join Brighton Pier as a lesson of how not to save an important building’.*

We reject this scare-mongering in the strongest terms. Toddington needs to be subject to a proper marketing campaign and priced realistically (its £3.5million tag is a little hopeful as it will need plenty of work over the coming decade) to find a suitable buyer. There are numerous examples of fine large country houses going back into private use recently, such as Duncombe Parl in Yorkshire (which was a school). Toddington should follow.

## Guy’s Cliff, Warwickshire

Guy’s Cliff was already a ruin at the time of the Destruction of the Country House exhibition in 1974 at the V&A Museum (from which SAVE was born), but it was not entirely beyond rescue. Then in 1992 along came Granada TV, filming an episode of Sherlock Holmes and requiring one flaming country house. Even this however did not entirely destroy the house and what remains, is listed at Grade II and could still be brought back to life by a brave, enterprising (and very wealthy) individual.

The house is in a dream-like location above the River Avon. It has a complex building history, but was most probably started in the 1720s, with a major building

campaign in the 1740s to extend it under the auspices of its then owner, Samuel Greathead. The next stage of alterations took place at the behest of his son over the 15 years following the turn of the nineteenth century, with the final alterations taking place in 1898. The result of these various interventions is a hugely picturesque mixture of styles. In the Second World War the house was used as a school for evacuees. After the war it was sold for conversion into a hotel, but this never came about and the fixtures, fittings and lead from the roof were sold in 1955.



Unfortunately its current owners are not especially enterprising in terms of historic buildings and put in something masquerading as an application to demolish the Grade II listed remains. The irony of the Freemasons wanting to demolish all that handsome stonework was clearly lost on them. To their credit though they have at least kept the Grade II\* chapel to the house in good condition, using it as a meeting place. The application submitted contained little more than a map showing the location of the building and no justification for the demolition as one would normally expect. SAVE, as with the Georgian Group, was surprised that the application was even accepted by the local authority at Stratford-on-Avon as it was so skimpy. It has for the moment at least gone quiet, so we await another application.

## Apethorpe

At last some positive news about Apethorpe, which has been widely reported. For the second time ever the Secretary of State has used her powers to order the compulsory purchase of a listed building, in this case this very long standing and hugely important building at risk. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport intends to hand the building over to English Heritage to do the repairs and then to market the house with a preference for it to be taken on by a single private owner. This may be a challenge as while the house is spectacular, the remains of the parks and gardens are less so – the house is approached from the service wing, the front façade faces out on to a row of conifers and there are only about 20 acres of park and garden remaining. We wish them every success in the venture and applaud the Secretary of State for having taken decisive action, but question whether this really is the best use of scarce grant aid when the house might have successfully be taken on by the private sector and divided up into two or three units without damaging its integrity.

## Brympton D'Evercy, Somerset

The great Christopher Hussey made the point that Brympton is the quintessential English Country house in gorgeous gardens and fine park land, undisturbed by the less delightful aspects of the modern world. Why then should South Somerset District Council wish to put and end to this romance? Their current plan for the expansion of Yeovile would see industrial parks creeping out towards the house over land currently owned by the house's previous owner – it did not occur (and indeed why should it have) to the new owner that this might happen. Yeovile is well contained at the moment by the Bunford lane in this location, and it is a great shame that the local plan sees this as the direction to expand in – the next country house in line after Brympton would be Montacute. The expansion



of the industrial park towards the house will, whatever the local authority claims, impinge on the historic setting of the house. There are less harmful locations around Yeovile for new industrial estates if indeed they are really needed, although our objections to the local authority have thus far fallen on deaf ears. The same situation is faced, albeit on a rather more drastic scale, by **The Vaynol Estate** in Gwynedd. Here, however, the council's unitary development plan is not yet settled and so hopefully our comments will be listened to. The park right up to the house has been marked in the UDP as an extension to an existing business park. To allow this would stymie the future of the house and we have lodged a strong objection to this proposal in the hope it will be removed from the UDP once it is finalised.

## Haverfordwest Shire Hall

A natural result of the launch of "Silence in Court" has been a gradual influx of cases involving historic court houses. Haverfordwest Shire Hall is no exception to the fast emerging rule that there are no easy solutions for these buildings. The building is an imposing pedimented classical building with a huge barrel vaulted courtroom capable of seating 900. The building was completed the year Victoria became Queen and was the work of William Owen, who was responsible for many of the more elegant

buildings in the town, including its covered markets. The building is now listed at Grade II\*. It is magnificent.

The town council have agreed a deal with Wetherspoons to convert the building into a pub. While this will preserve the essential internal space, it will result in many of the fixtures and fittings being removed, which can be a particular problem when, as in this case, they are high quality and specifically designed for the building. The building was looked at by the buildings at risk trust which concluded that the building preservation trust route was not viable for the building, but the council's decision to pass the building on to Wetherspoons seems to have been taken in camera, much to the anger of the local civic society which rightly feels that the inhabitants of the town ought to have a say over the future of one of the great civic landmarks of the town.

## Buildings at Risk Notes

The pace is building for what promises to be a very busy winter for the Buildings at Risk register. Over the summer there has been a steady increase in the number of buildings new to the register, and there seems to be a very encouraging trend of recruitment for conservation officers in the local authorities. This is fantastic news for Buildings at Risk, as it should mean a more active approach from the councils to their buildings, and hopefully bring more to light.

There are currently no nation-wide statistics regarding the number of Grade II listed buildings at risk. To remedy this, we are attempting to compile these figures, which should be published in the next Buildings at Risk catalogue, due in March 2005. It will be a mammoth task, and it is unlikely that we will get a full picture straight away. However, we hope that the publication of these statistics will make everyone more aware of the problem, and give impetus to local authorities and owners to monitor historic buildings and find solutions.

Finally, we look forward to receiving feedback from Friends of SAVE new to the Buildings at Risk register. We hope that you will enjoy browsing the website; maybe some of you will even be inspired to take on a building and restore it!

## The Great Buildings at Risk Photo Contest

With the changes to the way the Friends will operate (you will all soon be sent access to the online register of buildings at risk), we thought that it would be a good idea to hold a contest to see which of our Friends can scoop the best picture of a Building at Risk on the Register. We will put the best picture in our 30 Years exhibition which we are planning for the V&A's new architecture galleries for November next year, and others will be used to illustrate the Buildings at Risk register and catalogue.

## Darwen, Lancashire

Having outlined the enormous threat posed by the Government's misguided Pathfinder policy in the last

newsletter, the case of the "Red Earth Triangle" in Darwen landed on the (virtual) doormat. Darwen is a typical small northern mill town, with views out from its terraced streets to the hills and in to the mill with its spectacular chimney, listed at Grade II\*. ICI still rules the roost although its factory is slightly less elegant than the Victorian mill.

Under Pathfinder the local authority proposes to demolish 151 houses next to the town centre on the grounds that they are structurally unsound. The vast majority of these terrace houses, dating from 1850, are occupied, and a trip around the area shows very few signs of the disrepair claimed by the local authority's condition surveys. Indeed an independent survey of ten of the buildings rated as structurally unsound, carried out by a structural engineer with an excellent knowledge of historic buildings, confirmed our belief that there was nothing at all wrong with the houses.

In order for the local authority to claim its grants it is obliged to spend over 50% of the grant on demolition and rebuilding. We are still trying to work out which hat this apparently arbitrary figure was pulled out of.

What we have in essence is a case of old fashioned slum clearance, with the occupants (many of them owner occupiers) horrified at the thought their beloved homes are to be demolished, the community broken up (and it is a community), while nothing is planned for the cleared site. Or at least the local authority claims there is nothing planned for the cleared site, in spite of the sneaking feeling amongst locals that the council thinks it would make a good site for a new city academy.



The figures used to justify the demolition have a whiff of the back of fag packet about them, and do not tally with the work carried out by the Heritage Trust for the North West, which has been doing precisely this sort of repair in Nelson in the wake of the planning inspector's rejection of the CPO order for over 150 houses there last year. It is taken for granted that every house will require over £20,000 spending on it. This is simply not the case as around half the buildings are occupied by their owners who take great pride in their houses, and while maybe ten are empty (some of which are council owned) and five or six require work, it is hard to believe that this much needs to be spent. Furthermore, the environmental and social costs of tearing down this area have not been taken into account.

The basis for the whole Pathfinder exercise is to prevent the housing market from bottoming out, as it had done a few years ago in some areas, with rumours of terraced houses changing hands for a tenner down the local boozier. This in itself is a laudable aim, but in an area that has seen the prices of these terraced houses rise dramatically over the last five years (from around £10,000 to £40,000), such as Darwen, it is idiotic. The leader of the council assures us that the clearances are still necessary because we cannot be sure that the market will not fail in the future. By that reckoning we should clear most of the housing stock in the UK (and likewise by the judgement of their surveyors, most of our houses are unfit for human habitation).

We have been opposing this as strenuously as possible, and have had excellent coverage of the issue in the press – after a year of trying to make clear to the wider world the scale of the impending Pathfinder disaster they have finally cottoned on. Consequently we had a full page in the Daily Telegraph covering the plight of Darwen and a fully illustrated 5000 word piece in the Sunday Times Magazine by Richard Girling. Hopefully the wider community will wake up to the situation.

The bigger picture is however for a minimum of 75,000 houses to be cleared in the Pathfinder areas in the coming years. We have our work cut out.

### **Lanyon House Camborne Cornwall**

A handsome town centre building with a shop on the first floor, Lanyon House recently changed hands, lost its original windows to UPVC and was threatened with demolition and replacement with a block of flats. The building sits on a prominent site in the town centre which is chock-a-block with listed buildings. It is on the verge of being declared a conservation area. We wrote to the council objecting to its demolition, as did a great many locals, suggesting that the decision be deferred until the conservation area was declared or considered the application as if it was already within a conservation area, in order not to prejudice the future of the conservation area. Hey presto, the owner withdrew the application. The building deserves better than demolition.



It is often in the small cases such as this where SAVE can make a real difference with only the minimal outlay in terms of time, but which we sadly can only really deal with on an ad-hoc basis in between dealing with the big cases and issues. Perhaps when we're rich we'll be able to employ a caseworker to deal with these sorts of cases alone.....

### **King's Meadow Baths, Reading**

Local authority owner baths are something of an ongoing issue, as exemplified by the winners of last year's BBC2 Restoration, the Victoria Baths in Manchester. In Birmingham the council has at least a plan to repair its wonderful 1904 Moseley baths, but in Reading the council was looking to demolish the open air King's Meadow baths and replace them with a hotel. The baths are interesting as a very early and probably unique example of a municipally owned outdoor pool from the Edwardian era, pre-empting the golden age of outdoor bathing in the 1920s and 30s with the lido movement. They were originally built to allow women to bath in privacy and were fed from the Thames. The pool is surrounded by a covered loggia with a timber roof supported on ornate cast iron brackets and columns.

A strong local resistance, backed up by the Victorian Society and ourselves resulted in DCMS reconsidering the building for listing (it had already been turned down once), and the building consequently found itself added to the statutory list at Grade II. This exacted squeals of horror from the local authority on the grounds that the building had already been turned down for listing. However, the local authority had refused to tell local campaigners how it had come to the decision to redevelop, and refused to listen to their ideas of how it could be reused (as a pool in the summer and as an ice rink in winter), in spite of them having found a company willing to operate it as a commercial enterprise. Perhaps now the local authority will think again.

### **Signposts in Cumbria**

We frequently make the point that it is the minor details of the historic environment as much as the buildings which are important, adding to the richness and sense of place. Hooray then for Cumbria County Council, which firstly appeared to disobey the World War II edict to remove all signposts to confuse invaders and secondly has recently started to restore its historic signposts, recognising that they serve their purpose rather more elegantly so than the ever expanding sprawl of modern signage.

### **The Cutlers' Arms, Rotherham**

The Cutlers' Arms sits in an area of Rotherham that needs a spot of tidying up, but recent proposals were more along the lines of demolish the lot and start again. Unfortunately this would have involved the loss of this pub, recently listed at Grade II for its handsome arts and crafts exterior and almost complete interior. We maintain that historic pubs have long formed an important part of the fabric of

our villages, towns, cities and everyday lives, providing a unique reference point to which communities can relate, and in the case of the proposed development in Rotherham, the retention of the pub would be a positive step for the development, adding value rather than getting in the way. We have made these points to the local authority, while reminding it of the presumption in favour of preservation of listed buildings. We look forward to seeing revised plans incorporating the historic pub.

## **“The review of heritage protection: the way forward”**

Yet another longwinded title for a publication from Government. This is its response to the consultation on the Review of Heritage Protection, and represents the largest single shake up of the system for the protection of the historic environment in this country since its inception. While there are elements of the system that need alteration, adjustment and clarification, SAVE does not see the case for major reform.

One the reasons for change is highlighted as being the perception of the system, not its actual operation. These are weak grounds for this most radical shake up of the heritage protection system since its inception. If this really is the case then this is a sledgehammer to crack the nut.

The ultimate beneficiaries of the system should be the historic buildings and areas, and changes to the system should aim to ensure that they are properly protected and any gaps in the protections covered. However, under these proposals, the ultimate beneficiaries will be those seeking to make changes to historic buildings and areas and those seeking to meet targets set by central government for dealing with applications within a certain time frame.

In much of the commentary on the responses received it is unclear as to what is government opinion and what is the opinion of respondees – quite a lot of colour appears to have crept in and confused the line between what is fact and what is interpretation. This is sadly symptomatic of these proposals.

Our main areas of concern are:

- 1. Conservation areas*
- 2. The changes to the listing system*
- 3. Government’s attitude to heritage as embodied in the proposals*

### *1. Conservation areas*

The proposals recognise that heritage led regeneration is breathing life into townscapes, but fails to recognise the role of conservation areas in this – without these the historic townscapes would be long gone. The one of the aims of the new system is to put the historic environment at the heart of the community. Through conservation areas it already is at the heart of many communities and they provide the means to keep it there. This great untapped potential is ignored by the proposals. Along with the fact that Government still has not reversed the damage done to conservation area legislation and guidance through the

Shimizu decision, the feeling remains that Government is little concerned with conservation areas.

We are concerned that the importance of conservation areas is greatly understated in the proposals and that they will result in the further downgrading of both the perception and protection provided by them. There is a need to make it clear that although conservation areas are declared and administered locally there interest is more than purely local.

The request for bolder policies for enhancement in conservation areas will inevitably be used as an excuse to demolish more historic buildings. The key to conservation areas – the conservation of the historic environment, must not be lost in the rush for high quality new design (which certainly should not be particular to conservation areas alone).

### *Listing*

The reduction in the number of grades to Grade 1 and Grade 2 is a classic case of the tail wagging the dog – in order to fit in with other classifications within the system (of which there are far fewer in number). This would result in the weakening of protection for Grade 1 and would mean that with future designations buildings that might have previously made it to Grade II\* would probably become Grade 2: the threshold between II\* and II is naturally going to be wider than that between Grade 1 and 2. Grade I must remain non-negotiable. This change is all the more absurd given that 91% of respondents felt that the existing gradings should be retained

It is noted that spot listing on buildings where there is an application to demolish can slow things up and add burden. This only happens in a minority of cases and the problem is not in the spot listing itself, but in the fact that the statutory lists are out of date and need thorough revision. In order for the listing regime not to appear obstructive, the proper survey of areas should be restarted under the duty to list buildings of listable quality.

The review of the criteria for listing is an opportunity, but could equally be seen as a threat, as a new way to limit the numbers of listed buildings. Much of the tenor of the proposals is that the number of listed buildings is a problem to contend with, which seems to lead to the attitude that new ways of managing the numbers are needed. The list should be open ended in numerical terms as there will always be aspects of the architectural heritage which become appreciated as our values change.

The proposal for maps showing the extent of listing is potentially useful but the question has to be asked as to whether they will be definitive as well as the effect of this on the legal basis for curtilage. A further concern is the effect of this on the all-important concept of setting, which is much wider and more fluid than a tightly drawn line on a map. This question of setting, when linked with attitude taken towards conservation areas indicates that the whole question of what is “beyond the line” seems to have passed Government by in this review.

### *Government*

There remains a singular failure to properly relate these proposals for a new system with other government reviews and legislation underway shout the need for proper co-ordination – how will this affect emerging LDFs, RSSs, PPS15 and so on, for example?

There is a little discussion of the ODPM research on the proposals to unify the consents. However, the research that this study is based on are deeply flawed, with statistical evidence being drawn from exceptionally small samples and few outside the property world being properly consulted. A more thorough piece of research is needed before any conclusions on this can be drawn.

In handing the responsibility for listing to English Heritage, DCMS could be seen to be shirking from responsibility, and will be able to pass the buck to English Heritage whenever anything controversial is listed rather than accept responsibility (although it is its own policies that will result in the listings). There is also the possibility that political pressure will be bought to bear on English Heritage if any designations appear to go against other Government initiatives or policies. In order to protect this the statutory duty to list buildings of listable quality must remain.

### *Conclusions*

SAVE remains sceptical about these proposals, fearing that they will confuse the system, create uncertainty and give less protection to historic buildings and areas than the current system. For all the talk of making the system more open and user friendly, the Government is passing more responsibility to local authorities while their resources remain the same, and is diverting resources into changing the goalposts again: has it taken its eye off the ball, is in danger of putting more buildings at risk through inappropriate alterations?

When taken with the ongoing **changes at English Heritage** (more on this another time), it is clear that the historic environment is in for a long, rough ride. These changes at EH represent a step back from case work and a move into pre-application discussions, as well as a series of standard letters in response to consultations, and just to top it all of a serious change in the organisation's structure and personnel. The move to pre-application discussions is dangerous as firstly it takes two to tango: if developers ignore EH's pre-application comments, much time will have been wasted, and secondly, what they decide at a pre-application stage will presumably be confidential, and so their partners in the sector, conservation officers and case workers at amenity societies, will find themselves in weakened positions. The organisational changes see much messing around with the management, creating supra-regional directors called "territory directors", the lessening of the regional director's powers and officers working to set letters, so wave cheerio architectural history and independent judgements. At this rate they will have flogged off all their properties and been sucked back in to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, whence they came when it was called the Department of the Environment.

## **PPS 7: Planning Policy Statement 7: sustainable development in Rural Areas**

In spite of all the guff over what style people might be allowed to building country houses in, this new planning policy statement contains some useful points, recognising that many country towns and villages are of considerable historic and architectural value and that planning authorities should ensure that development respects this. It also recognises the value of local culture to tourism and supports the reuse of existing buildings, recognising the need to preserve buildings of historic or architectural importance, "or which otherwise contribute to local character". This is very welcome, finally showing some sensitivity to the buildings "beyond the line" of listing and conservation area status which never the less help us understand the past while making valid contribution to the present. Finally then a tick for Government, but one has to ask why the heritage message isn't getting through where it counts most – that is in the DCMS?

### **Airports Expansion (again)**

We continue to take a strong stance against the predict and provide approach to runways on the grounds of the enormous damage the government's current proposals will wreak on our historic environment, and would encourage anyone who feels similarly to join in the Stansted tree buying programme being organised by Stop Stansted Expansion. The aim of this is to plant a forest of saplings of native broad leaved trees in the area proposed for development. The campaign group are working on the basis of £10 per tree, of which £5 will go towards its purchase, planting and long term care and £5 towards their campaign. *Stop Stansted Expansion, PO Box 311, Takeley, Bishop's Stortford CM22 6PY*

### **Castle House, Bridgwater, and "Restoration"**

Our concrete castle in Bridgwater had its moment in the sun with BBC2's "Restoration". Although perhaps predictably we were firmly beaten into second place in the South-west vote by the Georgian Sherbourn House, the show resulted in a fine end use coming to us in the form of "Strummerville". Strummerville is a new charity set up in the memory of Joe Strummer, leader of the Clash which some of the more rock music inclined of you will have heard of. For whatever reason, Bridgwater held a place in his heart, and Strummerville would like to make Castle House the first of their projects, turning it into their headquarters and a place where young musicians can practice, meet like minded individuals and generally use as a refuge. This will mean that the historic building will be open and accessible to the public, and will also include restoring a neighbouring building.

Strummerville really got the "Restoration" bit between their teeth and organised a wonderful street party with a range of funky popsters from Badly Drawn Boy to Billy Bragg, with Keith Allen as master of ceremonies and Mick Jones of the Clash having a tinkle on the guitar, amongst

others. A giant Damien Hirst banner covering one side of the scaffold was revealed, as was the front of the house. Over the next couple of weekends we opened up the house to the public and various events were held in the town in support of the house in an attempt to raise as many votes as possible, and we owe trustee Oliver Leigh Wood a huge thank you for his very great efforts. These included covering a part of the house with a giant series of angels falling from the sky, as envisaged by artist Jack Milroy, which amused rather than offended the populace. We are now working with Strummerville to clarify their scheme and get on with the repair of Castle House  
[www.strummerville.com](http://www.strummerville.com)

## The Friends of SAVE

### Email Addresses

We are shortly going to send out to all Friends of SAVE user names and pass words so that you can access the online register of Buildings at Risk. We can do this far more rapidly and efficiently by email so if you would like to supply us with your email address we would be most grateful. And we promise not to give them to anyone else

### The First SAVE Trip

Back in August we had our first SAVE trip, and around twenty of us went off to Tyntesfield, the National Trust's new house near Bristol. SAVE had played a major role in ensuring the house and its collections were bought for the Nation. We were welcomed by the Tyntesfield project manager, John McVerry, expertly guided around the ground floor of the house before lunch on the loggia, for which the weather held fine. Over lunch Marcus Binney explained SAVE's role in the campaign to prevent the break up of the house and collection. The afternoon was spent exploring the gardens before tea and cake. All in all it was a lovely day and we are glad that Friends were able to take advantage of the opportunity. We hope to organise further trips in the coming year and will keep you all posted.

### The First SAVE Lecture

On 30<sup>th</sup> September Sir Simon Jenkins, writer, broadcaster, journalist and trustee of SAVE gave a talk at the Royal Geographical Society in London entitled "A Future From Their Past: the lessons to be learned from our built heritage". Simon guided us through some of his favourite houses and churches visited during the writing of his books on the thousand best of each type, focussing on the charm and delight of the churches and the life of the houses. We were glad that so many Friends and supporters were able to attend and we look forward to the next talk, which will be given in the Spring

### The Next SAVE Lecture

Mark 24<sup>th</sup> March 2005 in your diaries as the date for our next lecture. Architectural historian, author, broadcaster and long time trustees of SAVE, Dan Cruickshank, will be

giving a talk on "buildings at risk international", which promises to be an entertaining and informative evening.

The lecture will be held at the Royal Geographical Society at 7pm. Tickets are £12 for the public and £8 for Friends – contact the SAVE office to book your tickets.

### Giftaid through the tax return

There is yet another way of giving, this time through your tax return. If you have overpaid or are owed tax back by Inland Revenue you can opt for it to be given instead to a charity of your choice. Naturally we hope that this would be SAVE, and if so the tax return form asks you whether you would like to do this and also asks you for the charity's tax code. Ours is currently in the post from the Inland Revenue, and we will hopefully have it by the time you call us up to ask for the number.

### The Lodges and Gatehouses of Carmarthenshire

SAVE Friend Dominic Conway, will be giving a lecture at the Civic Hall, Llandeilo on Nov 12<sup>th</sup> at 7pm on the lodges and gatehouses of Carmarthenshire. This promises to be a fascinating evening looking at a type of building which frequently pops up on SAVE's radar.

### Other Publications

**Cheltenham's Lost Heritage** is a handsome new publication written by Oliver Bradbury, which compiles an excellent range of pictures some 100 of the 400 or so of the town's lost historic buildings. A sobering reminder that even our finest historic towns have been pillaged over time. ISBN 0-7509-2990-1

SAVE Friend Nigel Gilbert has recently completed his **History of Kidderminster** which contains quite a lot of detailed information about the destruction of the historic town centre in recent decades. Published by Phillimore at £17.99

### Computer Appeal

The most modern addition to the SAVE family of computers is a splendid machine from 1998 which performs its duties admirably. The other two machines that are used on a daily basis are rather elderly donations, which in spite of various additions to them over the years, have reached the outer edges of their abilities and have difficulties keeping up with this broadband, high resolution, data intensive world. Consequently we appeal to you to help us buy two new computers. We have done our research worked out that for £600 each we can get hold of something that will carry out all tasks demanded of it for now and some time into the future, while also being looked after by the manufacturer for the next three years. If you are interested in helping out with this, please do contact the office on 020 7253 3500, or drop us a line (or even just a cheque). As ever, all contributions are gratefully received and carefully spent.

**SMITHFIELD: From this....**



**to this.....**



**Below is a Standing Order form**

We would be grateful if Friends who have not already set up standing orders could complete the form and send it to their banks (and notify us). This saves us the cost of having to mail out about 75 reminders every month and note to return it to us: we'll keep a record of it and send it on to their banks

# SAVE Britain's Heritage

**STANDING ORDER MANDATE**

PLEASE COMPLETE IN BLOCK CAPITALS

To the Manager ..... Bank

Account in the name(s) of .....

Account No ..... Sort Code .....

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Please pay to:

**Lloyds-TSB Bank plc  
33/33a Kings Road  
London SW3 4LX**

**Sort Code 30-91-86**

for the credit of SAVE Britain's Heritage, Account No. 0630114,

the sum of £..... [.....pounds (*in words*)]

now (date given below), and thereafter on this day of each following year until cancelled by me/us in writing, and debit my/our account accordingly.

Full names of Friends .....  
(BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE)

.....

Signed: (1) .....

(2) .....

Date: ..... 2004

## Restoration 2004: The Castle House Street Party

Castle House, covered in a giant Damien Hirst artwork, looks over the Strummerville Street Party, with Keith Allen on stage, to be later followed by Billy Brag, Badly Drawn Boy, Mick Jones and whole host of talent. We didn't win but at least we had more fun trying than everyone else.

If you would like to consider buying the giant Damien Hirst for cost of restoring Castle House as the headquarters of Strummerville please contact SAVE!



# Publications Order Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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|---|--------|-----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Silence in Court – The Future of the UK's Historic Law Courts        | £20    | (£16)*    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SAVE Farnborough, the Cradle of British Aviation                     | £5     | (£4)*     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blink and You'll Miss It: Northern Ireland's Heritage in Danger      | £3     | (£2.40)*  |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> SAVE Severalls: An Arts and Crafts Village for Living and Learning   | £4     | (£3.20)*  |

\*Prices in brackets only apply to the Friends of SAVE.

Prices include postage & packing within the UK. For a full list of SAVE's publications, please contact the SAVE office or visit our website [www.savebritainsheritage.org](http://www.savebritainsheritage.org)

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VISA / MASTERCARD only

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