

THIRTY YEARS OF CAMPAIGNING  
**SAVE**  
BRITAIN'S HERITAGE  
**1975 – 2005**

**Newsletter – November 2004**

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**Pathfinder: Life on the Edge?**

Our fight against John Prescott's bulldozers continues. After a couple of years of agitating on SAVE's part, the issue finally has a life of its own, with journalists picking up on both the human tragedy and heritage disaster that goes under the name of Housing Market Renewal.

SAVE has spent the last few weeks preparing and submitting evidence to the Public Inquiry into the **Edge Lane** compulsory purchase order in Liverpool. Edge Lane is the principal route of entry into Liverpool from the west, and both the city council and the Pathfinder body – New Heartlands – have it in mind to drive an unnecessary dual carriage way through this area of Victorian housing and shops, destroying the community in the process. Whether this is to make it easier for visitors to access the 2008 European Capital of Culture, or for locals to flee the bulldozers, is unclear.

Indeed the public inquiry proved that much is unclear. English Partnerships, the Government agency carrying through the compulsory purchase for the New Heartbreakers and Liverpool City Council, was unable to show what the hundreds of houses up for demolition would be replaced with. They were unable to justify the need for the new road, and they were unable to justify the need to demolish an active community and their homes (in order to create a new sustainable community – welcome to the future, comrade, its very bright – if you are a housebuilder).

The scheme represents a monstrous waste of public funds – the price of compulsorily purchasing and demolishing the houses in the area is far more than the cost of repair. The registered social landlord that dominates the clearance area (and thus the market within it) has allowed its building stock to become run down, and is unwilling to sell to private individuals, who are queuing up to take on houses like these across Liverpool.

The farce that is Pathfinder has been ruthlessly exposed at this Public Inquiry – with six besuited men hired by English Partnerships standing across the room from the redoubtable, pink-cardiganed, Elizabeth Pascoe.

Not only has SAVE been able to help with the public inquiry through submitting evidence on the historic and architectural interest of the area, as well as the wider context of the effect of Pathfinder on historic buildings and areas, but we have also been able to make a more practical contribution. **One generous Friend has donated £10,000 into SAVE's new Pathfinder fighting fund** – to help as many local groups as possible fight the compulsory purchase of their homes. We were able to help Mrs. Pascoe's group – BEVEL (Better Environmental Vision for Edge Lane) by purchasing her a new computer printer and part paying a surveyor to dismiss the false condition surveys put forward by the heartless New Heartlands. **Friends are encouraged to contribute towards this fighting fund to help others like BEVEL.**



*Houses along the Edge lane, Liverpool, slated for demolition if we lose the public inquiry (courtesy of Chris Loufte)*

**Government** remains committed to Pathfinder and committed to not admitting to the full scale of the disaster in public. SAVE wrote to the relevant Ministers at the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister – David Milliband and Yvette Cooper, asking for the figures, only to receive a letter from one of their functionaries in the ironically named communication team stating that only 10,000 houses would be demolished by 2006. Given that this is a 15-year programme, giving the figure to 2006 is utterly disingenuous. We await a straight answer, and until one is given, Government will have to stop whinging about the total clearance figures that are being put about. At the current rate of demolition, their own documents make it clear that 168,000 homes will be destroyed:

*“At present, we do not know how many homes are ‘at risk’. The Centre for Urban and Regional Studies (CURS) estimates that around 1,500,000 homes are at risk and perhaps up to 400,000 should be replaced. Others suggest that fewer are at risk and fewer still need to be cleared. Based on current rates, over the next ten years some 167,000 homes will be cleared. This is well below the rate required.”* (paragraph 9.19 of “Moving it Forward: The Northern Way”)

Government's response to the **ODPM Committee's report on Pathfinder** included plenty of encouraging

words about community consultation but was a little detached from reality, and was confusing on the issue of VAT (which is charged on the repair of buildings in the Pathfinder areas, but not on demolition and rebuild): “*To harmonise the VAT rate for new build and repair work (and hence remove inequities) would require removing the zero-rate from the sale of new residential buildings. The Government has no plans to do this.*” The question has to be “why not?” What has Government to fear? The housebuilders sticking up house prices?

In an attempt to calm the stormy waters of Pathfinder, the ODPM’s top wallahs called a meeting in Ackrington, attended by representatives of the Pathfinder bodies, a representative of the Council of Mortgage Lenders, and other notables such as Simon Thurley from English Heritage, Jon Rouse of the Housing Corporation (formerly of CABE), Joanna Averly of CABE, Adam Sampson of Shelter, Prof Anne Power, your Secretary and just one representative of the hundreds of thousands of people affected by the Pathfinder proposals. The meeting was held under Chatham House Rules, which means that we cannot tell you what individuals said, but it is safe to report that all those involved with Pathfinder genuinely feel that they are working to improve people’s lives. Quite how this is to be achieved through destroying their homes is not clear.

At the end of the two days, there was much back-patting going on amongst the various delegates, and in the final session the chair of the meeting was determined that we should all agree on something. In a rather comic, almost Wal-Mart style “go get ‘em” group hug moment, your Secretary was the party pooper, holding the line and stating quite clearly that SAVE couldn’t condone a course of action that would see over 100,000 Victorian houses destroyed – to a chorus of groans of “oh Aaaaaam” from the assembled dignitaries.

What followed is also worth reporting. A note of the meeting was written up for the press, highlighting the various issues, including that of the question of communication. Naturally it was written in a form of bureaucratese that is utterly incomprehensible. An e-mail from SAVE to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, politely pointing this out, naturally went unanswered.

SAVE’s new report on the Housing Market Renewal Initiative / Pathfinder will be published in the New Year and will hit hard.

### **Exhibition “Thirty Years of Campaigning: SAVE Britain’s Heritage 1975-2005”**

After months of hard work and preparation by Marcus Binney, designer Robin Ollington and photographer James Mortimer, SAVE’s 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary exhibition opened at the V&A on November 3<sup>rd</sup>. The exhibition charts 30 years of campaigning, making use of many of the stunning images taken on the way. The exhibition is testimony to the ongoing relevance of SAVE, as well as the remarkable contribution of Marcus Binney to the world of conservation over the last 30 years.

This was recognised at our combined **launch party** and birthday party at the V&A, where Sir Roy Strong, as guest of honour, delivered a splendid speech. It touched on the failure of museums to run polemical exhibitions in these days of Government control of the arts, Griff Rhys Jones’ haircut, and perhaps more relevantly, on the way in which SAVE has remained young and defiant. John Harris proposed a toast to Marcus, with the 300 or so guests raising their glasses in agreement.



*SAVE Trustee John Harris and President Marcus Binney celebrating 30 years of SAVE at the V&A exhibition launch*

Guests included Friends of SAVE, local campaigners, those who put the exhibition together, many of those who have helped us over the years, the great and good of the world of conservation, journalists, helpful politicians and of course our sponsors, the **Dare Group**, who have contributed handsomely to the exhibition, the party and the **30<sup>th</sup> anniversary book**, which is due out on December 1<sup>st</sup>. Copies will be available from the SAVE office priced £20 and £17 for Friends (not quite the usual 20% but then again this isn’t strictly a SAVE publication). The first 50 orders will be signed by Marcus Binney, the book’s author.

Dare Group is currently involved in the rescue of long term building at risk, Axwell Park, near Gateshead. This is a formidable challenge and we wish them every success in putting into action a sensitive and appropriate scheme for this important building.

### **Buildings at Risk 2006**

Yet again we are conducting our search for Grade II listed buildings at risk throughout England and Wales. The number of buildings on our register is still rising, and we feel as though we are still only scratching the surface. Therefore, we really appreciate any information about historic buildings in your area which look empty and abandoned. If you have a photograph, all the better!

### **CASEWORK**

#### **Smithfield General Market buildings**

If ever a case has become unnecessarily complex, it is this one. What follows is as simple an explanation of the

situation as is possible. Following the listing of the **Red House cold store** as a result of our campaign, Thornfield Properties have applied for its delisting on a range of, in our view, rather spurious points. Their case is argued by Dr. Chris Miele, who also happens to be on the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment's Design Review committee, which will comment on the plans for the neighbouring General Market. We have argued vigorously against the delisting, submitting further research to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

There is a new application in for the demolition of the **General Market** and its replacement with a seven-storey office block. Naturally SAVE has put in the strongest objection to this. The case against the existing building is argued for Thornfield by a certain Dr. Chris Miele, who is also arguing the case for a certificate of immunity from listing for the General Market building. Dr. Miele used to work for English Heritage. SAVE has submitted around 40 pages of evidence against the certificate of immunity, painstakingly researched by SAVE Friend Ev Cook, who surely deserves a medal for her Herculean efforts in this campaign.

Thornfield is convinced that it has a cast iron case in terms of Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 for the demolition of these buildings, in spite of them being in a conservation area. This is simply not the case – there are alternatives out there, but they are single-minded in their pursuit of a major office development.

## Hospital News

The ongoing divestment of old hospital buildings by the NHS remains a cause for concern – while other Government Departments, most notably the Ministry of Defence, recognise the heritage of their sites when selling them on, the NHS just doesn't seem to care. Aftercare clearly isn't on the agenda

**Severalls Hospital** near Colchester continues to be a major cause for concern. Having lost the Medical Superintendent's house to fire earlier in the year, the dreadful news came through that its spectacular hall had also been set fire to. Security on the site has long been beyond feeble, in spite of the efforts of ourselves, Ian Richards' local campaign, Bob Russell MP, and Essex County Councillor Jeremy Lucas. Construction of a new facility for live performances on the scale of the hall would cost many millions of pounds.

The loss of the hall ironically makes the site easier to redevelop as halls are often the hardest part of historic hospital complexes to reuse, but at Severalls, the hall would have played a key role in any re-use scheme, providing Colchester with a much needed large-scale arts facility. The fight goes on.

**STOP PRESS** we have just heard of another fire at Severalls which has burned out one of the beautiful south facing ward blocks (above). This failure to secure such a major site and great asset to the community is nothing short of scandalous – the site was in almost perfect condition when SAVE first encountered it.



*The November fire at Severalls being put out.*

## Union Workhouse, Hexham

This is a much smaller scale redundant hospital complex near the centre of this pretty little Northumberland town. The NHS has constructed a modern facility over the road, leaving the hospital vacant. It consists of two long late Georgian wings, with Victorian extensions linking them to a Victorian administration building. There are a number of smaller arts and crafts additions, all in all creating a very pleasant, small-scale courtyard complex within easy walking distance of the shops and the railway station, and in the Hexham Conservation Area.

It would be relatively straightforward to convert it to residential units, had the NHS not flogged it to a Newcastle based developer, whose intentions were announced in the Hexham Courant (which is actually a cracking read). They want to pull it down and create a vacant site. This is a slight variation on the same old story, which is becoming a little boring, of pulling down perfectly decent hospital buildings to build houses. Why the NHS can't be bothered to rapidly assess the architectural and historic interest of what it is selling and then ensure potential purchasers understand this interest is beyond us.

## Railways

SAVE submitted a petition to Parliament expressing our strongest concern at the impact of the east-west London rail link. **Crossrail**, if built, will hit hardest around Farringdon and Tottenham Court Road, where a series of historic buildings will be wiped out to make way for worksites and storage. Much of this is, in our view, unnecessary, as there are third-rate modern buildings nearby, the loss of which would not be regretted. Naturally the proposed demolitions form sites attractive to developers and, from preliminary images, the replacement buildings would be significantly larger than those they replace. There is a danger of Crossrail turning into a land grab, as the sites could be compulsorily purchased without actually building the scheme. While reams of information has been produced on the effects of the scheme, none of this has really been communicated to the public, which is something of a failing on the part of the scheme's promoters. The upside is that **Span 4 at Paddington station** would get a reprieve if the scheme were to go ahead – it's a hard tightrope to walk. **SAVE's report on Span 4** will be produced shortly.

**Thameslink 2000** is an old scheme that has reared its head once again. The most recent Public Inquiry has been into areas that remained unresolved after the first Public Inquiry. Of interest to SAVE are two main areas, as well as Farringdon Station again, where the proposals have not been co-ordinated with Crossrail. Firstly, London Bridge Station, the oldest railway terminus in London (now hidden behind a mass of modern additions, but still essentially intact), a potentially beautiful place from which to depart. This would be demolished under current proposals. Secondly, Borough Market and the area around it, where a range of Georgian and Victorian buildings, including some by Sir William Tite, would be destroyed or mutilated. SAVE put in submissions to the Public Inquiry on these points in defence of the threatened buildings.

### **Gosford Castle, Northern Ireland**

The Grade A listed Gosford Castle is in the ownership of Forestry Service of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) in Northern Ireland. One might naturally expect, therefore, for government to take great care in looking after a building such as this.



Gosford Castle was designed by Thomas Hopper, one of those late Georgian architects seemingly capable of working in any style. In this particular instance, he chose Norman revival, as at Penrhyn, to create a powerful, sublime concoction. The building was for Archibald Acheson, second Earl of Gosford, and work started in 1819. Little of Hopper's eclectic work remains.

SAVE is seriously concerned about the future of this building at risk. We learnt that DARD granted a license to two companies to find a future for the building. One of these then pulled out of the agreement. DARD has been working for the last two and a half years with the other

developer to come up with a solution – but is stonewalling any group that might wish to help – or find out what is happening with the building. Consequently the expertise of the likes of the Ulster Architectural Heritage Society and SAVE is being ignored.

So the question remains – does DARD have any firm plans on how to deal with this situation? While it procrastinates, the building suffers, with lead having been stolen from its already leaky roof. To this end DARD sent a press release to the local paper but, rather oddly, did not publish it on its own website. Fear not, however, the press release somehow found its way to the Belfast Telegraph...

It is simply not acceptable for a Government department to be in a situation where it is presiding over the destruction of such an important building, failing to carry out even basic maintenance tasks. Government must be seen to be taking a lead on the historic environment, not adding to the already catastrophic level of loss in Northern Ireland.

### **Toddington Manor, Gloucestershire**

Good news at Toddington – having seen off Warner Holidays' application for a 200 room extension to Charles Hanbury Tracey's Gothic Revival masterpiece and SAVE gained permission for change of use back to residential, SAVE was content to bide its time and to wait for the right solution to emerge. We wrote to the local authority, urging the use of an urgent works notice to force the owners to at least carry out some basic maintenance, but to no avail, largely because only a matter of days after this we learned of its sale to Damien Hirst. Mr. Hirst intends to use it as a museum and school, once restored.

This is excellent news and it also vindicates SAVE's stance, which was very heavily criticised by English Heritage's Chief Executive, Simon Thurley. At a meeting on an altogether different topic before Toddington's sale, your Secretary thought it would be helpful to update the good Dr. Thurley on progress, only to be rebuked with the words "I hold you and Marcus Binney personally responsible for the future of Toddington". However, SAVE feels that it is unlikely that it will receive much credit from Dr. Thurley for having held the line.

It is worth comparing the plight of Toddington over the last few years with Apethorpe in Northamptonshire, where English Heritage's attitude has been very different indeed. Apethorpe is a large country house with very little land remaining around it (indeed one now approaches it from the side rather than the front), making it far from the most enticing prospect for a private owner. Toddington, by contrast, sits in a couple of hundred acres of parkland. English Heritage is determined that Apethorpe must go to a single owner and occupier, yet it was determined that Warner's hotel scheme was the only possible way forward for Toddington. Why? Is this a reflection on a general policy towards ruinous country houses, or does it smack of desperation to sort out a case and avoid having to pay grant aid towards repair (the ultimate cost of which would be a ruined masterpiece), or even worse, is it a matter of English Heritage taking the attitude that "we know best"?

## Piercefield

When added to our Buildings at Risk Register in 2003, it was rather depressing to write the entry for Grade II\* listed Piercefield, Monmouthshire. Built by Sir John Soane and extended by Joseph Bonomi, the house had been standing empty for over 70 years. It had survived partial dismantling, the gun-shots of American soldiers, and many other abuses. However it still stands, gutted and crumbling, on the edge of Chepstow racecourse, commanding a stunning view over the Wye Valley. A visit by your Buildings at Risk Officer to the site early this year compounded our view that something had to be done, and quickly. With cracking lintels and an increasingly precarious structure, it was obvious that unless some urgent repairs were made Piercefield would not last much longer.



The owners of the building, Northern Racing, were of the same opinion. They had commissioned plans for a full restoration of the building, at an estimated cost of £7 million, and change of use into a hotel. However, they were unable to provide such a vast amount of funding themselves. Discussions followed, and the idea of leasing the building to a Building Preservation Trust was mooted.

A few months on, and plans have changed yet again. The building is now for sale through Jackson Stops and Staff, priced at £2 million. Northern Racing has included a large chunk of land running down to the Wye as part of the sale, and this should be a tempting proposition for someone with very deep pockets. We very much hope that whoever does buy Piercefield realises the importance of the setting – masses of enabling development will be completely inappropriate here. The new owner must also be prepared to act quickly and provide some support for the structure. The task is a huge one, but we are confident that somebody will come forward and take Piercefield into the future, so we can all forget about the indignities it has suffered in the past. This is really an object lesson in how sometime just a little pressure applied in the right place can make a difference and get a case, seemingly bogged down in a range of complexities (such as the cross country course that canters through the grounds), moving in the right direction.

## Gwrych Castle

The intensely picturesque Gwrych Castle has been on SAVE's books for far too long. Its owner (once the

ownership was finally sorted out) is an American gentleman, on whose watch the castle has lost its roof and most of its interior, leaving a rotting, but still spectacular, shell above Abergele in North Wales. After years of inaction, Mr. Taviglione has decided to put the castle up for sale.

Gwrych was built by Lloyd Hesketh Banford-Hesketh from 1819, with the advice of Thomas Rickman. It is a massive gothic revival building in a wonderful setting. There are a number of problems with the possible sale of the building. Firstly, it is sale by auction, which will give the owner the maximum amount of money but could leave the castle in the hands of a buyer without a realistic clue of what to do with it. Secondly, in spite of our ongoing encouragement, the local authority has only come out with the weakest statement to any potential purchaser about the planning situation surrounding the building. What should really have happened long ago was the serving of an urgent works notice, swiftly followed by a repairs notice on the part of the local authority. The authority has come some way in recent years, to a position where it might consider using its powers if there was a firm alternative scheme.

This is a delicate time for Gwrych. The wrong owner will result in the loss of the building. The right owner would be in a position to do much for not just the building but also the surrounding area. The local authority is in a position to make a real difference for the better, and SAVE will continue to encourage it.

What makes the situation so frustrating is that there is an alternative solution for the building – the Gwrych Castle Preservation Trust is working on a feasibility study, and has the will and where-with-all to make it happen. In the meantime, Mr. Taviglione will exit stage left with a rather larger bank balance than previously (the auctioneer's estimate is £1.5m), the only punishment doled out being on the building, not the owner.

## Easington Colliery School

Easington Colliery School was built between 1911 and 1913 to provide education for the children of the Easington Colliery workforce, but the school closed in 1997. It is an impressive brick building with concrete dressings and is in reasonably good condition. It comprises two identical blocks, one for the boys and one for the girls. It is listed at Grade II



The local authority passed an application to demolish the building on what SAVE considered to be spurious grounds, and so we requested that the application be called in for consideration at a Public Inquiry. This has been granted. The grounds of our request were not unusual – the condition of the building is far from parlous, there are many examples of the conversion and reuse of school buildings up and down the country, and there is a viable alternative use for the building, in the form of the Acumen Community Enterprise Development Trust. Similar schemes such as this, providing an incubator for small business in deprived areas, have proved hugely successful in Newcastle (in Ouseburn School) and in Stoke on Trent, where the Hothouse project has expanded from one formerly disused school building into another nearby. This would be a real long-term investment in the area, and far preferable to the short term illusory gains of demolition and replacement with housing.

### **Mount Pleasant School, Cosely**

John Wilks has been fighting a battle to prevent the closure, sale and then demolition of the pleasing Victorian Board school at Cosely. Cosely is an inoffensive place in the Black Country that has rather suffered in terms of historic buildings, with the District Council offices of 1895 being demolished in the 1960s, leaving the school as the area's oldest building. The next oldest building is another school dating from the 1930s and then a pool of the 1960s – so although in a national context it might not be a great rarity, it is a vital part of the community's heritage and as such a local landmark.

The building currently stores part of the council's archives, but a lack of maintenance means that the council feels it is not a safe enough environment for even this simple use. A Friends' group has been formed but faces the perennial problem of the local authority demanding that it produce a business plan for the building before it engages with the group, and potential funders of the business plan unable to give any funding until there is an assurance from the council that the plan will be taken seriously.

A similar situation is faced by groups at **Gwrych Castle** (see above) and **Kings Meadow Baths, Reading**, (see the November 2004 Newsletter) where demolition of the pool has been averted for the time being following listing, yet the local authority is not making life terribly easy for the local campaign group, which has come up with an interesting alternative plan, involving summer use as a pool and winter use as an ice skating rink, and has found company interested in the idea.

The **Lady Capel Charity School** building, dating back two centuries and the oldest school building in Haltwhistle, Northumberland, featured as a Building of the Month. Previously used by the town Silver Band, it was put up for sale, with demolition mooted. Local SAVE Friends campaigned for the building, Radio Newcastle took up the cause, and SAVE's Buildings at Risk Officer, Ela Palmer, and local SAVE activists were given a great deal of air time to put the case for the preservation of the building and also talk about the wider work of SAVE. The case for NOT bulldozing Owen Luder's brutalist **Gateshead Car Park**, featured in **Damned Beautiful**,

was also forcibly argued, and a number of members of the public took part in a phone in which seemed to suggest it isn't the detested structure Gateshead Council say it is.

The Lady Capel School building has sold and there is now an awareness of its importance to the history of the town, and hopefully eventually a new and suitable use will be found for it. The car park is one of the buildings to be featured in the forthcoming TV series 'Demolition', so its future is far from assured.

**The Red Chapel**, a former Methodist Chapel in Kimberley, Nottinghamshire, is another building which has benefited from the Building of the Month page on our website. Dwindling congregations meant this building became redundant and was put on the market. Unfortunately, agents involved with the sale applied for - and received - permission to demolish, and build several bland modern houses on the site. It certainly is a handsome building that adds greatly to the local townscape, and did not deserve this fate.

Thankfully local activists including Susan McEntee of the Greasley Civic Society, horrified at the thought of bulldozing, took up the cause, one of them posting impassioned pleas for the building's rescue on 'Period Property' website ([www.periodproperty.com](http://www.periodproperty.com)), which has a direct link to the SAVE Building of the Month. He posted direct links to the estate agent's details, gave a great deal of information about the area and other local conversions which had been financially successful, and several people expressed an interest in the building.

We understand that the building has now been purchased NOT for the site value and bland housing, but for conversion to a characterful and spacious family home. Hopefully we will soon be able to report yet another Buildings at Risk success story!



### **Pithead Baths, Northumberland**

The news is not so good from the Grade II\* Pithead Baths, which still moulder on the edge of a coal strewn wasteland. A feature on the register since 1990, this 1938 modern movement relic of the mining community needs a solution. It is in a very vulnerable situation; plant vehicles work on the surrounding land, and owner British Coal has already been discussing demolition. There are two options to save the baths from this fate: either a mining enthusiast makes some use of the building on the present site, having

negotiated access and curtilage with the present owner, or the building must be carefully moved to the near-by Colliery Museum, which actually lacks an example of a pithead bath. The scheme for the latter is extant, and could be implemented with enough funding. The former depends on a strong-minded individual or group taking on the challenge. The Conservation Officer is extremely worried that unless action is taken soon the baths could come to an untimely end, and any suggestions would be very welcome.

### Allonby Reading Room, Cumbria

Also moving forward apace is the case of the Allonby Reading Room, featured in the April 2005 Newsletter and Building of the Month on the SAVE website in August. Last seen roofless and abandoned, the Reading Room has now been sold on to a private owner who wishes to convert it into a family home. This follows months of negotiations on the part of Allerdale Borough Council, culminating in the threat of a Section 79 (Housing Act) Notice. Section 79 is not usually used on historic buildings, as the owner of the building in question has the choice to demolish or repair. In this case the threat of action was enough to persuade the owner to sell. This Notice may be a great discovery for dealing with buildings in Conservation Areas especially, where the more usual Urgent Works and Repair notices are more difficult to apply. For more about Section 79, see the note on our first conference. We wish the new owner of this building every success.

### Enforcement: Jackson's Ironmongers, Haltwhistle

The issue of enforcement action over illegal alterations to listed buildings is one that has long concerned SAVE, and we are slowly but surely building up a dossier of cases, showing the needless and illegal mutilation of listed buildings. A failure on the part of local authorities to take enforcement action on illegal alterations is in effect a tacit approval of the works. It also sends out the signal that the local authority does not have a great deal of interest in carrying out its statutory duties, even if this is not the case.



*Jackson's Ironmongers before alteration*

Jackson's Ironmongers in Haltwhistle illustrates this all too well. Listed Grade II and in a conservation area, it was a genuine surviving early 19<sup>th</sup> Century ironmongers with an 18<sup>th</sup> Century smithy at the rear. A change in the layout

of the market place on to which it fronts (in effect giving it a "heritage" makeover) made it almost impossible for the local farmers to get their often heavy and bulky equipment near the shop, and so its viability as an ironmongers was all but destroyed. This need not, however, have spelt doom for the building and its architectural and historic interest. New owners thought that the front could be improved on, and ripped it off, replacing it with a poor imitation of a vernacular building in the area. Listed building consent was neither sought nor granted, and in spite of numerous complaints and letters, a decision was taken by the local authority, Tynedale, not to take appropriate action. One imagines that if the building is ever looked at again by a listing inspector, it would lose its listed status. Not a happy state of affairs.



*Jackson's after alteration, with an entirely new front, a new interior and no listed building consent – the white paint being the only element enforced by the local authority*

### Town Houses

There are a number of cases from the Buildings at Risk Register that have seen some dramatic changes over the past year. Unfortunately, in some cases it has been change for the worse: we have recently been informed of Listed Building Consent having been given for the demolition of four very handsome townhouses on **Burton Street in Wakefield**. We were doubly disappointed to learn that in this case the Wakefield Civic Society backed the demolition, and in fact nominated the houses for the new 'Demolition' series to be screened on Channel 4. The Civic Society considers them an eyesore, beyond use. Naturally we dispute this.



There is still some chance that the scheme will not be implemented, but this case is just one of many where listed

buildings are sacrificed on the altar of regeneration. At SAVE, we believe strongly that historic buildings in regeneration areas should become part of the scheme as a whole. With a bit of creative thinking this can be achieved, but unfortunately when a building is already in decay, the prospect of making use of it is rarely taken seriously at the outset. It is therefore with great approval that we note the efforts of Middlesborough Metropolitan Borough Council, who have a policy of mothballing redundant historic buildings in regeneration areas, in the knowledge that these buildings will be an important part of the future of the city. We hope to feature the advice of Conservation Officer Malcolm Thomas in our as yet unnamed Buildings at Risk Catalogue 2006.

### The Varden Street Triangle, Whitechapel, London

The Department for Not Listing at English Heritage is up to its usual trick of not listing buildings of seemingly listable quality. In London's East End, around the Royal London Hospital, there was once a splendid range of Georgian buildings, but what remains now is a number of isolated, but very attractive enclaves. The buildings in question are two storeys high with serviceable basements and are in a conservation area (and therefore protected by a presumption in favour of preservation), but have the misfortune to be in the sights of both the University of London's Queen Mary School of Dentistry and the London Development Agency. The LDA's agenda seems to be to buy up strategic sites and prepare them for development (ie knock down anything on it, regardless of what it is.)

The university wants to build a biosciences innovation centre on the site of these little 1807-13 buildings, in spite of them being in a conservation area, being in good condition and, most importantly, being more original than the neighbouring listed Georgian terraces. This is what has been perplexing both SAVE and the Spitalfields Trust – why won't English Heritage recommend the listing of buildings that are of listable quality (given the listing of the neighbouring buildings)? The only possible argument SAVE can think of is that there are already examples listed in the conservation area, and the conservation area provides the presumption in favour of retention. Yet English Heritage is surely aware that conservation areas seem to mean increasingly little to the more avaricious members of the developer community.

The question of **conservation areas** continues to be a cause for serious concern, in particular the question of what constitutes "enhancement". While the advent of CABE has been good in putting good design on the agenda, good design is now a regularly held as a reason to demolish buildings in conservation areas on the grounds that it automatically enhances the character and appearance of the conservation area. This of course entirely depends on whether good design translates into a building that is respectful of its neighbours or refers solely to the building concerned – if it is the latter then there can be negative consequences for the character and appearance of the conservation area. Planning officials and committees at local authority level need to take this not-too-subtle point into account when looking at applications

for such demolitions in conservation areas, as do our colleagues at CABE when considering applications in conservation areas. It might also help for them to look at the quality and potential of what is proposed for replacement: often it is the seemingly innocuous, that when seen as a part of a larger group, form an important part of the character and appearance of an area.

### The London Development Agency at Dalston Lane, London

The case of the buildings on the Dalston Lane has been reported in previous newsletters. Below is an exchange between OPEN Dalston, the local amenity group which we are supporting in its campaign to retain the unlisted Georgian buildings, and the LDA

*"It is planned that the regeneration opportunity will be completed by a development partner to be selected by way of a fully transparent process. It is expected the development partner will have preferred status before the year end."* London Development Agency 19.07.05

*"Please provide full details of the shortlisted development partners and advise whether they together with you would be willing to attend a meeting of to discuss the (heritage) buildings and their potential for reuse as part of the new developments planned for Dalston".* OPEN request to London Development Agency 04.11.05

*"To preserve the integrity of the procurement and tendering process, it is not possible for us to make any announcements at this stage identifying the shortlisted bidders....we are hopeful to have identified a preferred developer very shortly and an announcement will be made on this as soon as we are able to do so"* London Development Agency 09.11.05



*Dalston Lane theatre and Regency buildings as they might look if the LDA backs down and allows them to be restored*

### Tardis and TFL

Good old Transport for London continues its unaccountable ways. Having whipped out a load of rather lovely cantenary lights along the embankment (as reported in the April 2003 Newsletter), it has booted out an artists' colony from an otherwise unusable set of buildings. The buildings are based around a hidden series of railway arches beside Farringdon Tube Station in London, and were known as the Tardis Studios on account of the

surprising amount of space lurking behind an inconspicuous door (naturally painted blue). The importance of this community is that it was one of the regenerating forces for the area: it took on the studios when they were simply a disused space beside the underground railway at a peppercorn rate.

The Studios brought the space back into use and had the wider effect of drawing talent into the area, playing an important role in the revitalisation of this part of London. Transport for London increased the rent by 40,000% and killed all of this – shortly before a court hearing over the proposed increase, the manager of the studios suffered a heart attack, meaning that he could not amply prepare his case for a rather more reasonable increase in rent. The site now lies empty, awaiting dereliction. So three cheers for Transport for London for a stupidly retrogressive manoeuvre.

### **Conservation Officers and Buildings at Risk:**

The continued rescue of buildings at risk depends largely on proactive and well-informed Conservation Officers at local authority level. In some areas this is already the case; specially trained staff dealing with historic buildings, and registers of buildings at risk already in place and steadily updated. However, in many places there is a severe lack of funds or enthusiasm for historic buildings. Some local authorities do not have a Conservation Officer at all; in Northumberland one officer from the County Council covers three districts (this must involve a large amount of listed buildings, and all the case-work that entails). The overworked and over stretched are unlikely to devote their energies to buildings at risk, which are rarely high-priority.

It is obvious that to properly assess the number of Grade II buildings at risk in England and Wales all districts should have some form of register from which to work. At the moment English Heritage estimate that only 30% of local authorities in England have complete registers (including Grade I, II\* and II buildings). This is a horrifying statistic, and makes it clear that there is much work to do before we have a full picture of the state of the historic environment in Britain.

A recently formed group, the Buildings at Risk Officers Group, of which SAVE is a member, intends to help encourage districts to compile registers of their own. The first step will be to publish a model register entry, and a strategy for getting a register off the ground. This will hopefully help those authorities that mean to have a register, but are not sure how to go about it. However, part of the problem is finding funding for this kind of initiative, so the Group also wishes to identify other local groups (for instance Civic Societies or Parish groups) to help with the work of compilation on a voluntary basis. It is felt that this may be the only way to ensure that all districts have some form of register sooner rather than later. There is evidence that this route can work: the Derbyshire Historic Buildings Trust compiles the list for that county and includes buildings of all grades.

Hopefully the work of the Buildings at Risk Officers Group will begin to make a difference in the way the problem of buildings at risk is viewed at local authority

level. With the help of English Heritage and their HELM (Historic Environment Local Management) website, advice and encouragement regarding threatened historic buildings should be more accessible, and more action will be taken.

### **SAVE Europe's Heritage**

#### **Moscow**

Save Europe's Heritage has been busy helping out in Moscow, where a young (in every sense) civic movement is building up momentum, fighting for historic buildings and areas across the country. Our in depth study of the situation will be published in the next couple of months, following an investigative trip by a team of experts from across the globe marshalled by Save Europe's Heritage, and we will continue to assist the local campaigners in every way possible.



*The 1920s Constructivist Narkomfin building in Moscow, facing the chop along with many others*

**The fight against the “Valdastico Sud” A31 Motorway through the Veneto in Italy** rumbles on. In May the splendid news came through that the regional courts had ruled the proposed motorway illegal. An appeal was heard in October at the State Council Court in Rome, which came out with the opposite ruling. The Italian judiciary works in interesting ways – the reasoning behind the decision has to be made public within 45 days of the announcement. The next step is Europe.

One might normally expect fair and independent reports to come from UNESCO on heritage matters – indeed UNESCO missions have in the past taken strong lines on any number of threatened World Heritage Sites. However, its mission to the Veneto was decidedly one-sided and seemed to lack any understanding of the importance of the landscape of the area and the relationship between the villas of the Veneto and the landscape. The mission had been briefed by the motorway company and local, national and international campaigners did not have a look-in. UNESCO's report on the situation shows an international institution that has unfortunately been duped. It needs to rethink its position, and rapidly, before it becomes implicated in the destruction of a World Heritage Site (which it declared).

## **Out of Government**

### **Listing Criteria**

While SAVE has long campaigned for the publication of the listing criteria, we were surprised at the level of detail these recently proposed criteria go into. The publication of criteria is in general to be welcomed as it gives those seeking the listing of buildings a target at which to aim, but the level of detail is a cause for concern, in that it removes the possibility of the use of discretion and does not reflect the fact that the way we value buildings changes over time, as our understanding of their significance increases. Thus there is a need for a balance to be struck.

The dangers of having extremely detailed criteria are many and SAVE's reaction to the consultation is as follows:

1. While Grade I and II\* represent the very best examples of buildings of architectural and historic interest, and thus would benefit from detailed criteria, the Grade II listing is meant to represent the broad sweep and wide variety of historic buildings of special interest across England. The weakness of the thematic approach to listing taken over the last few years (in place of a more thorough area based approach) has been a failure to look at buildings in the broader context of the entire grade. Instead buildings have been judged in terms of their type and so only a representative group makes it on to the list.
2. The proposal is that this thematic approach is applied to all listing applications. This does not necessarily allow for consistency across the grade. SAVE is strongly concerned that a result of this could be the absurd situation where if one were to take two buildings of similar architectural quality and historic interest but of different function, one might be listed and the other not as they are being judged against the type rather than the grade.
3. This in effect represents a separation of the form, meaning and function of buildings when analysing them for listing. This does not represent the rounded and scholarly approach to architectural history that should be the norm.
4. SAVE is deeply concerned that the great level of detail that the criteria go in to gives either the Minister or English Heritage (dependent on the result of the Heritage Protection Review) reasons not to list. In other words, the listing process could easily become lost in technicalities and trivial details, and the big picture of the building as a whole (rather than as the sum of component parts, some of interest, some possibly not) being lost. In effect the duty to list buildings of listable quality would be drowned in detail.
5. As SAVE has already witnessed with the General Market buildings at Smithfield this can already happen in extreme cases. It would be a dreadful for this to be replicated throughout the listing system, yet a new the potential for this is currently being created through these proposals. They will lead to an increase in the number of challenges to the listing of buildings and will give those who do not have the best interests

of the heritage at the forefront of their minds (and their lawyers) a field day.

6. Detailed criteria also remove from the Minister, or whoever ultimately ends up with the duty to list, room for the use of discretion, which in certain cases might be extremely important

SAVE has other serious reservations regarding the proposals contained in the consultation

7. The question of the condition of a building must not enter the equation. In Northern Ireland this has been included as an (unwritten) criteria in the Second Survey of buildings of architectural and historic interest. In the re-survey process many buildings have been found to have been damaged through neglect since listing. The net result is that these are removed from the list, and many have since been lost. It is imperative that it is the owner, not the building, that is punished. Most vulnerable in this situation are the rural vernacular buildings which seem to deteriorate more rapidly than their urban counterparts.
8. SAVE's experience shows that forewarning owners of the potential listing of their building can be utterly self defeating. A particular case in point would be the Ropery on Coburn Street in Bow, London, where an application for spot-listing was rendered null and void when the building was purposely wrecked overnight, following notification of intent to visit for listing purposes. SAVE is seriously concerned that this could happen to a great many more historically and architecturally interesting buildings if the practice of notification becomes standard. There is no disincentive to prevent owners taking this course of action at present.

SAVE strongly supports the detailed comments of the Joint Committee of National Amenity Societies and its conclusions that the publication of these criteria will create greater confusion as to why buildings are listed, rather than serving to provide clarity and certainty.

The listing of buildings of historic and architectural interest is not a matter of keeping the numbers on the list to a manageable level, rather it is a matter of recognising the valuable contribution that these buildings make to the culture, life and history of our towns, villages and landscapes. SAVE's concern is that the new criteria, with all their detail, will make the listing of buildings of architectural and historic interest, particularly those not in ideal condition and threatened with demolition, harder to list and so all the more vulnerable.

### **English Heritage Strategy 2005-10**

English Heritage's strategy for the next five years was launched earlier this year with a keynote speech from the new Culture Minister, David Lammy, in which he did the almost impossible and admitted to being something of a fan of the country's built heritage. Trusting the sector's luck, as an ambitious young man, he'll be climbing the Ministerial ladder rather more quickly than we'd hope. The other speeches of the evening involved namechecking practically everyone in the room, but rather failed to namecheck some of the key issues in heritage. This is

perhaps because the strategy is clearly aimed at Government, but one would have hoped that key threats to the historic environment – such as problems caused by leaves and rain – might have had a mention, but no, maintenance was only mentioned in the context of English Heritage's own properties.

So where's the meat? English Heritage talk a lot about creating a cycle of understanding, valuing, caring and enjoying. This is of course fine unless one happens not to care for heritage in the first place, or does not want to care: you can lead a horse to water....

Why doesn't English Heritage focus on what English Heritage does best – utilising the expert architectural historians it has at its disposal (before they all disappear into private practice) to produce high quality, well considered reactions to planning applications, based on solid scholarship and understanding. In attempting to be overly proactive and “upstream” – commenting on developments early on in the process, English Heritage risks finding itself held hostage to fortune over developments which it may have in part agreed to, but which as a whole is unacceptable in terms of the built historic environment.

### **Traditional signposts – an update**

In our November 2004 Newsletter, we flagged up the splendid work being done in Cumbria to restore and repair traditional signposts – the distinctive black and white fingerposts – which survive sporadically across the country. Quite remarkably, the Department for Transport produced some advice on the issue, in June this year: finally some joined-up thinking. It is splendid that they want to get the details right, and they even suggest talking to local amenity groups, parish councils and others, as well as removing clutter from the streets. We almost collectively fell from our chairs on seeing that the document recognises that repair and maintenance can help provide useful employment – so hooray for the Department for Transport.

### **An appeal for help from Gambia**

This is perhaps not the usual sort of appeal one expects from Gambia, but for those with architectural inclinations, we thought this would be of interest.



Mr & Mrs Dennett live in Gambia and have located way up the Gambia River, at Georgetown, a rather splendid old colonial building that was the Commissioner's residence. It stands in its own large grounds, with river frontage and the remains of a jetty. Georgetown was a major strategic location for the British, serving as both an administrative centre and a military post from which to eliminate the slave trade. Few colonial buildings of any significance survive there and although Georgetown attracts many tourists, few are aware of the existence of this building.

The Dennett's hope is to restore the house, its grounds and the jetty but they do not really know where to start. When complete, they would like it to be used as a museum and cultural conference centre for students and tourists. Anyone with links to Gambia and thoughts on where they might find a few pennies towards their cause should contact the SAVE office

### **Maintain our Heritage**

Following the completion of a massive research project into the state of maintenance in the country, Maintain has been working on a church maintenance scheme with Gloucester Diocese and Ecclesiastical Insurance. The involvement of Ecclesiastical Insurance is important, recognising that churches in better repair should result in fewer insurance claims. Applied across the board to all buildings, it could just be that there is yet another commercial driver for maintenance.

Maintain canvassed the views of 144 Gloucestershire church wardens. The results were not terribly surprising, showing that at least 24% of churches don't have any arrangement for regular maintenance. Of those that do maintain their buildings, 35% do it themselves, 18% use a contractor and 22% use a combination of both.

Maintain's planned service would complement the architect or surveyor's inspection which takes place every five years, and pick up maintenance issues before they become a problem. If it is a success, the scheme will be rolled out to the entire country. Each maintenance inspection will cost around £150 and will involve cleaning gutters, rodding drains, cutting back overhanging vegetation, replacing missing slates and tiles and making temporary repairs to leadwork on roofs. Following the visit, recommendations will also be made for any further or major work that is required but could not be done during the visit. This is a much less ambitious scheme than the Bath pilot project, which was a rather more gold-plated service – lessons have been learned. However, the inspection cost is an estimated subsidised amount, the scheme still needs further funding to make it possible. English Heritage is among the potential sources of funding: we await its firm commitment.

### **Heritage Link**

Heritage Link continues its excellent work pulling together the disparate strands of England's heritage into one voice, with its working groups looking at a range of issues. SAVE plays an active role in the Land Use and Planning working group. The heritage link website has recently been upgraded and is worth a look, especially for local

campaign groups wondering how to respond to some of Government's many consultations.

[www.heritagelink.org.uk](http://www.heritagelink.org.uk)

This year's "Heritage Day" is Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> December, and all are welcome to the second half of the day, from 1.30pm onwards, which will include a networking lunch, a heritage debate on the value of the voluntary sector, and an address by Culture Minister, David Lammy. The cost of the event is £15 per head – more information on the Heritage Link website or you can call them on 020 7820 7796.

### **The SAVE Leaflet**

At long last SAVE has a splendid, full colour leaflet explaining what we do, why we do it and how we do it, and it includes a Friend's joining form. If you would like to put some of these in your local library, your workplace or indeed in a historic building open to the public with which you have an association, please contact the SAVE office and we'll dispatch a bundle to you.

### **Books received**

Castles in Context: Power, Symbolism and Landscape 1066-1500, Robert Liddiard, Windgatherer Press, ISBN 0-9545575-2-2

A Frontier Landscape: The North West in the Middle Ages, N.J. Higham, Windgatherer Press, ISBN 0-9545575-6-5

Sandlands: The Suffolk Coast and Heaths; Tom Williamson, Windgatherer Press, ISBN 1-905119-02-X

The Industrial Windmill in Britain; Rob Gregory, Phillimore, ISBN 1 86077 334 6

Windmills: a Pictorial History of their Technology; rev Dr Richard L Hills, Landmark Publishing ISBN1-84306-189-9

The Dictionary of Urbanism; Robert Cowan, illustrated by Lucinda Rogers, Streetwise Press ISBN 0 95443330 0 9

Restored to Glory: A Guide to Renovating Your Period Home; Charlie Luxton and Sally Bevan; BBC Books ISBN 0-63-2287-9

### **SAVE EVENTS**

SAVE has held a flurry of events to mark its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and we are immensely grateful to Mrs Dale Ingram for her hard work in making these happen. Below is a digest of those about to happen and a report on those past.

### **Coming up...**

#### **Marcus Binney Lectures on SAVE at the V&A, 14<sup>th</sup> December 2005**

Marcus will be giving a lecture on the battle against the bulldozers at the V&A, charting the story of how SAVE has battled for churches and chapels, railway stations, markets, town houses and neighbourhoods, as well, of course as country houses. Tickets are available from the V&A on 020 7942 2211. The lecture starts at 19.15. Tickets £8.50, concessions available.

### **An Evening with Bill Bryson**

SAVE's second Spring lecture will be given by author and wit Bill Bryson, at the Royal Geographical Society on the 5th April 2006. The lecture will start at 7.15pm, but the doors open at 6.30pm, and we would encourage Friends to join the SAVE team and Trustees for a drink and a chat at the bar both before and after the event (hopefully Bill will also join us all afterwards)

The nearest tube is South Kensington, and the RGS is at 1 Kensington Gore, London SW7. Tickets are £10 for Friends of SAVE and £15 to the rest of the world. If you would like to give the tickets to some one as a Christmas present, please let us know. To book, either call the office with your credit card details or write to us with a cheque and mark the envelope "Events".

### **And recently past...**

The 24<sup>th</sup> March saw SAVE Trustee, architectural historian and broadcaster, Dan Cruickshank give a fascinating lecture on "Buildings at Risk - International", exploring some of the world's most endangered historic sites. Dan stayed behind after the lecture to sign books and chat to the audience. We still have one signed copy of the book of the TV series "Around the World in 80 Treasures" available from the office for £20.

Our annual Conservation Book Fair took place in early May in the basement of our office here in Cowcross Street and attracting conservationists of all shapes, sizes and enthusiasms. Dan Cruickshank and several other authors were kind enough to come along to sign yet more copies of their books, including a terrific new volume on the social and architectural history of Islington by Mary Cosh.

Early July saw about 20 Friends converge on Barlaston Hall in Derbyshire, home to SAVE Trustee James Hall and his wife Carol who were brave enough to take on this beautiful country house after SAVE had prevented its demolition, bought it for £1 and repaired it to a shell in the 1980s. The weather was kind, which allowed us to enjoy the stunning gardens. After a quick tour of the church, it was off to the Wedgwood Museum, where we were given a brief presentation on their plans for a new building and were then at liberty to enjoy a wander through the Visitor Centre.

Later on in July, one of SAVE's American Friends, eccentric and all-round anglophile Curt Dicamillo delivered a beautifully illustrated and entertaining talk, drawing on his knowledge of country houses in the UK. Curt's lifetime ('spare time') work is to compile a fully comprehensive database of UK country houses, whether standing or demolished. It is a superb resource and he welcomes corrections and additions!

[www.dicamillocompanion.com](http://www.dicamillocompanion.com)

### **The First SAVE Conference: Action on Buildings at Risk**

On 24<sup>th</sup> May 2005 SAVE held its first conference, aimed at furthering the knowledge of all those working with buildings at risk. Our chosen location was Derby

University, who must be thanked for making the day run very smoothly and providing us with all we could ask for in terms of facilities, food and tea!

The idea behind the conference was to explain the action that local authorities can take regarding buildings at risk, concentrating on Urgent Works Notices, Repairs Notices, Compulsory Purchase orders and a new weapon in the armoury of those saving buildings, the Section 79 (Housing Act) Notice. We managed to secure some of the best speakers in the field: Bob Kindred opened with his overview of how Ipswich Borough Council tackled their buildings at risk, followed by Delcia Keate who explained central government policy. The last speaker of the morning session was Lynne Franklin, a solicitor and former planner from Martinau Johnson Associates. She gave an extremely clear and concise insight into the legalities of statutory action; we have often found that it is local authority legal teams who are the most reluctant to be proactive in planning matters, so this was both informative and extremely encouraging.

The afternoon session consisted of case-studies from across England. We began with Eddie Dawson, from Allerdale District Council, Cumbria, whose fantastic talk on the use of Section 79 (Housing Act) was greeted with avid interest by Conservation Officers desperate for a new way to approach the issue of abandoned buildings. This was new ground for most of the delegates, and we have heard that this action is now being used more often. We then moved on to a study of Creswell Model Village, by Allan Morrison of Derbyshire County Council, which showed the difficulties in the use of, and the results that can be gained from, Urgent Works and Repairs Notices. Allan was followed by our last speaker of the day, Kingsley Fulbrook of Bristol City Council, who discussed the saga surrounding the Compulsory Purchase of Arnos Vale Cemetery. These last two speakers gave a very good account of the realities of action on the part of Local Authorities, but were ultimately inspiring – they showed that perseverance pays off in the long run.

We are pleased to say that our first conference attracted over 90 delegates from all over England and Wales, and we thank them for coming and making it a success. We must also give a massive thank you to English Heritage and Camelot Property Solutions, without whom the conference would simply not have been possible. Camelot provides a common-sense solution for protecting vacant property by placing live-in guardians in the buildings under its management. Feedback from delegates was very good – the conference was described variously as ‘informative’, ‘inspiring’, and ‘empowering’!

We are planning our second conference, which will take place in Bristol in 2006, and we hope that some of our Friends may be tempted to join us. Details will be available in the new year.

For further information about the issues discussed at the conference, please refer to:

- Eddie Dawson: [eddie.dawson@allerdale.gov.uk](mailto:eddie.dawson@allerdale.gov.uk) – Section 79 (Housing Act) Notices

- Stopping the Rot – an English Heritage publication available free online at [www.english-heritage.org.uk](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk)
- [www.helm.org.uk](http://www.helm.org.uk) – Historic Environment Local Management; a website including advice and case studies.
- [www.camelotproperty.com](http://www.camelotproperty.com)

### “You Beauty”: notes from Down Under

Alice Yates, a former SAVE Buildings at Risk Officer, works for the National Trust of Australia (NSW) which operates throughout the state of New South Wales.

“Australia?! Does it have any *old* buildings?” Although comforted by the thought that amongst SAVE’s Friends, and the mighty shoulders on which the organisation stands, there are those with a wealth of knowledge and a deep appreciation for old things Down Under, I am still confronted on both sides of the globe – by both Brits and Aussies – with the perception that two hundred years is not old, and, therefore, not important. The building stock of Australia may not contain the warmth and texture of the ancient and worn materials of European buildings, but it is not devoid of beauty, charm or architectural merit, making this attitude towards Australia, its buildings and history remarkably frustrating. Corrugated iron roofs; single storey buildings in both suburbia and the country; elegant terraces with elaborate cast iron lace work; the warmth of honey coloured sandstone in both neatly cut building blocks and as natural rocky outcrops; the simplicity of streetscapes with their regimented awnings; dust roads; rural shacks; and verandahs galore, all set against a strong, bright Australian light are just some of the features I’ve grown to love deeply.



*Georgian sash windows, weatherboarding and a lovely verandah – all that is needed is a bit of love and imagination*

Amongst these pockets of beauty, however, are admittedly, brutal, dull, modern intrusions insensitively designed against their context and often occupying the site

of a once fine building. Sadly, Sydney and the rest of NSW has not been as lucky as Melbourne and Victoria, where the rigorous efforts of campaigners is evident in the number of historic buildings still gracing its landscape. In NSW many buildings constructed since European settlers first arrived in 1788 have been lost to the bulldozer, either in an attempt to strive for modernity, and to achieve “progress”, or to conceal any hint of Colonialism. And an eagerness to eradicate the past and obscure the identity of a place by demolishing a perfectly good building, and replacing it with the unimaginative, still exists. Even in the last twelve months, legislation announced by the State Government is making development easier, promoting large scale renewal, and quashing existing protection afforded to buildings and places under the Heritage Act. The built environment of NSW would be in a far worse state however, were it not for the NSW office of the National Trust of Australia which celebrates its Diamond Jubilee this year.

For the last sixty years the NSW office of the National Trust has been campaigning to prevent inappropriate demolition, lobbying State and local governments to reform their attitudes towards the built environment and supporting community campaigns, along side running a range of historic properties within the State. The Sydney office of the National Trust was the first to be established in Australia, and was founded by Annie Wyatt, the ‘house wife from Ku-ring-gai’, in 1945. Moved by an increasing threat to both the natural and the built environment, Wyatt wrote to the National Trust of England for advice on setting up an Australian Trust, roused community consciousness, and started lobbying with the support of members. (In 1946 buildings that today form the core of Sydney’s fine intact collection of nineteenth century sandstone public buildings, The Mint, Hyde Park Barracks, and Parliament House, were all to be removed under the State Government’s plan for the remodelling of Macquarie Street.) 1945 also marked the beginning of the Australian National Trust movement as a whole. Today each Australian State and Territory has a fully autonomous National Trust; a total of eight National Trusts throughout the country with the Australian Council of National Trusts based in Canberra acting as a national secretariat and representing all eight at a Federal level.

There is no statutory requirement for Councils to notify the NSW National Trust of development applications affecting listed buildings (development applications being the equivalent to planning applications). We rely on community members to inform us of inappropriate demolition and works, although Councils are not obliged to take our comments into consideration. Nor is there an equivalent to the strong and united voice of the British Amenity Societies. Often the Trust is a lone voice advocating for the retention and sympathetic re-use of historic buildings, especially as there are times when it proves impossible do anything but disagree with decisions made by the State government’s conservation agency, the NSW Heritage Office. Interestingly however, it’s the twentieth century buildings that sometimes receive more support with the RAI, Docomomo Australia and the NSW Art Deco Society occasionally speaking out on issues relating to 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings.

The Trust’s most useful lobbying tool is its own listing process and Register, which reflects the diversity of the

NSW landscape with buildings, ferries, industrial items, ocean pools, cemeteries, and landscapes included amongst the 12,000 items. The items remain on the register even if demolished, as a record, and a reminder of changes in attitudes, lifestyles and architecture. Although there are no statutory powers behind the listing, it reminds Councils, Government, and the local community that the Trust has an interest in the item or site. The Trust has always been of the view that powers to protect historic buildings and places should belong to the Government and successfully lobbied in the late 1970s for State Heritage legislation.

Sometimes to the detriment of the NSW building stock, buildings are subject to a three tiered listing system and are listed according to levels of significance by either, the Federal, the State or a local government. When it comes to protection, it is survival of the fittest (or of the most significant.) Those listed at a National or State level survive more often, but not always without damage, than those that are ‘merely’ of local significance. Tempe House for example, a suburban villa designed within an Arcadian setting by John Verge in 1836, in what is now the Sydney suburb of Arncliffe has been severely compromised and trivialised by adjacent development permitted by the NSW Heritage Council, despite its inclusion on the State Heritage Register. Levels of significance form the crux of all arguments in favour of demolition or proposed works to a building. So those listed at a local level, by a local government authority, are frequently the ones that suffer the most. The importance of Trust listings lies in the fact that buildings or items are included very simply because they are of a good quality or interesting design, with important historic or social associations. They frequently have great local significance too, reflecting the value a local community places on them. There is no grading system, and no significance contest.



*A house in Hawkesbury in a gentle state of collapse*

After sixty years, the energetic efforts of the NSW National Trust are still extremely relevant, with great efforts needed to continue the conservation of this State’s pockets of architectural beauty. And with a State government that promotes development for the sake of increased living space at the price of our existing surroundings, their beauty and history, that energy is required more than ever. Like SAVE, the National Trust of Australia (NSW) battles on! For more information on the work of the National Trust of Australia (NSW), its campaigns, properties and public education programmes, please go to [www.nsw.nationaltrust.org.au](http://www.nsw.nationaltrust.org.au)

**Some pictures from the new publication on 30 years of SAVE**



*The view from All Souls, Haley Hill, Halifax, to Dean Clough*



*Tyntesfield, bought along with its collections by the National Trust as a result of SAVE's campaign*



*The Three Graces at Woburn, saved for the nation by SAVE*



*6 Palace Street, Caernafon, rescued from demolition at the last minute by SAVE and then repaired by SAVE*



*Billingsgate, saved from demolition by SAVE, with the City of London looming behind*



*The Liverpool Lyceum, saved from demolition by SAVE*