



## Newsletter - October 2001

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### Editorial

Blink and you'll miss it: Northern Ireland's built heritage is disappearing at a frightening pace, aided by official policy and a failure to provide sufficient funds to allow the Environment and Heritage Service to properly fulfil its role. SAVE launched its latest publication, investigating the state of conservation in the province to a packed audience in Belfast in June, hosted by the Belfast Building Preservation Trust. The immediate reaction from those on the receiving end of the report was one of stunned silence, while those who work in conservation in Northern Ireland expressed their gratitude at the problems being brought to a wider audience. The situation can be summarised as follows:

- Buildings are being downgraded and de-listed as a result of an abject failure to enforce listed building control and prevent illegal alterations and demolitions. Owners - not buildings - should be punished.
- The current resurvey of listed buildings is proceeding far too slowly. The material gathered so far will take two years to process. In addition, it is resulting in too many de-listings: by the end of 2000 there had been 134 new listings, but 304 delistings. This situation is unique in the UK - England, Scotland and Wales have added significantly to their listed building stocks. The survey must be accelerated and policy changed to increase the number of protected buildings.
- Uniquely in the UK there is no spot listing policy or system of building preservation notices to save buildings under immediate threat in Northern Ireland. This must be introduced, as under the present system, it can take up to six months for a building to be listed.
- Following the collapse of the government grant aid programmes for conservation no new grants were available from November 1999 until April 2001, and then limited to works over £25,000.
- Conservation areas in Northern Ireland are essential for the preservation of local urban character. SAVE is concerned about the lack of adequate management and enforcement structures. As a result the character of these areas is being eroded swiftly. Article 4 Directions should be put in place without delay.

- Rural vernacular dwellings are being lost at an escalating rate. Current housing policies favour the replacement of supposedly "unfit" buildings (requiring mandatory demolition of the old house) rather than renovation. Grant levels should be reviewed and sustainable development encouraged in line with a commendable Housing Executive project which had been considered.

The cause of this situation? A complete lack of will on the part of bureaucrats and the majority of politicians to find solutions to these problems, which must be solved. Money is not the answer - although a little more might help ease the situation. A modicum of will to do something about the situation would, however, produce positive results, although this will require a complete change in the way historic buildings are regarded by those in power in Ulster. Let us hope that we can help bring this about, sooner rather than later, as the opportunity now exists with the end of the Troubles and the introduction of devolved government.

Media reaction to the report - nationally and locally - has been very positive. We await reaction from those responsible for the built heritage in Northern Ireland with great interest. Available from SAVE for £3 (Friends £2.40).



Ardmara, Ulster, goes the way of many others in the Province

### The former Royal Aircraft Establishment site, Farnborough

The owners of the site of the Royal Aircraft Establishment, Slough Estates, are lacking inspiration. In the face of strong opposition from SAVE, Farnborough Air Sciences Trust (FAST) and English Heritage, Slough have proposed for the development brief area (encompassing the historic core of the site) nothing other than a genuine 1950's style clean sweep, to make way for modern 'flexible' office space, and rather a large amount of car parking. This wholly uninspired approach has already resulted in the entire factory site outside the development brief area being flattened in preparation for more modern 'flexible' office space, including Q27, the original aircraft factory of 1910. A part of the irony of this is that two of the buildings within the development brief area that they wish to see bite the dust are fine inter-war office buildings, perfectly capable of being refitted to a very high standard, and reused as high quality,

flexible, modern office space. Not only would their destruction be a complete waste of resources, but it would for ever break up what remains of the urban grain of the development brief area. Indeed, within the analysis of the site upon which the clean sweep is supposedly based, it is observed that the lines that these buildings create should be retained by any new buildings.

The importance of this site cannot be underestimated - there are only a handful of comparable sites in the world - at Chalais Meudon in France, Langley in the USA, and Pennemunde in Germany, which between them reflect the entire history of aviation in the 20th Century. This site alone, with its collection of wind tunnels and associated buildings serves to illustrate the science behind the way we now skip from continent to continent with such ease, and this needs to be recognised by its present owners. The two buildings which would be hardest to find a new use for - the two main wind tunnel buildings - have a keen potential operator in the form of FAST, who have until recently been given short shrift by Slough (who would appear to have little idea what to do with them). Slough's plans for the clean sweep will shortly be officially met with the most staunch opposition from SAVE and the other groups interested in securing this site's future.



Mind the gap - the view from Waterloo Bridge if Mr. Ronson gets his way

Can SAVE, the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's, English Heritage and Mr. Tony Tugnutt really defeat such high level support of tall buildings in London? Yes, and for good reasons. At the centre of the debate lies the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral, and around this there are issues of townscape, urban design and sustainability. On all of these fronts there are strong arguments against tall buildings, and as the attacks on the twin towers of the World Trade Centre highlighted, safety issues must not be allowed to take a back seat.

At the root of it all lies the utter confusion in government guidance on tall buildings. There is no one overall policy which governs where, how large or how high these mega-tall buildings should be. Instead there is a raft of other policies that relate to tall buildings but fail to deal directly with the issues. SAVE is determined to see a clear policy on the table to help developers realise that not every site available for redevelopment is capable of accommodating the erection of a 40 storey tower block.

Our stance on tall buildings is outlined on the back page of this edition of SAVE news.

**Vauxhall Bridge Road, London - or - how not to protect our heritage**

5 months. That is how long it has taken the Department for Culture, Media and Sport so far not to decide whether this set of Georgian buildings at the top end of the Vauxhall Bridge Road are worth listing. Most other London Boroughs nowadays cherish their Georgian heritage, but it appears that Westminster has decided that it has an excess and can do without a few of those pesky Georgian buildings - so much so that it has decided to compulsorily purchase a block of them with the express desire of knocking them down (we must be grateful for small mercies: the run down Victorian pub on the corner gets a reprieve). The buildings, which are mostly examples of late Georgian speculative building, will be replaced by something else. Precisely what something else will be is unclear, as only the vaguest outline permission has been granted, with up to 6 storeys at one end, and up to four at the other.



Q134, Farnborough - ripe for reuse.

**Heron Bishopsgate - or - not tall buildings in London again**

In spite of the horrific results of the recent attacks in the USA, Gerald Ronson's Heron Corporation remain determined to see their 41 storey tower built in the City of London - so much so that we recently received a crate of evidence from them for the public inquiry at which we will be opposing their plans. The Corporation of London is just as keen - they have recently put aside £170,000 to help them win the public appeal. The Mayor, too, has jumped on the bandwagon, and declared 2001 the year of the skyscraper, although in reaction to recent events, he seems to have toned down his rhetoric to stating that only 10 or 15 towers will be built in London in the next decade. 10 or 15 towers, dear Mayor, of the sizes presently on the drawing board, will leave an indelible and unwanted scar in the historic fabric of London.

The situation is most worrying - these buildings are similar in quality to those which we persuaded the DCMS to list at St. George's Square, Southwark. If it takes more than 5 months to get an answer on these buildings, heaven only knows how long it will take to get a decision on a more complex set of buildings. There is, however, one minor complexity, in that one of the buildings is far more special than the others due to its 20th century ornamentation, which involves what is thought to be a unique example of a shop (other than a butchers or fishmongers) containing painted tiles illustrating the trade of the shop - namely decorators at work. To remove these tiles from their context would destroy their meaning, as well as probably physically damage them. Even so, this cannot be considered a good excuse for taking 5 months to come to a decision.

One has to worry for the other bits of Pimlico that are looking a bit shoddy - on the Wilton Road, near Victoria there are what would appear to be a group of late Victorian town houses that are boarded up and have clearly not been properly maintained. One reassuring fact, however, is that the Victoria Station development brief, produced by Westminster Council, seems to minimise the chances of Railtrack, (or son of Railtrack) inflicting any further damage to the area.

**Bradford on Avon - or - the peril of the bullying developer**

Alec Clifton Taylor included Bradford on Avon in his book of the five finest historic market towns in the country. If Taywood Homes have their way, future editions would have to be renamed and drastically shortened. Taywood's original scheme for the Kingston Mills site, was quite rightly booted out by the Council. The former factory site, located beside the river in the centre of the town, is extremely sensitive, and if a developer were to get it right (by no means an easy task), the town centre could have a new addition of which to be proud. However, the latest offering from Taywood and their architects (none other than Broadway Malayan) is rather more appropriate to London's Docklands than to a small south west market town. The locals think so too and have objected vehemently. SAVE objected, asking for another rethink of the proposals for a series of monolithic riverside blocks, the destruction of several buildings recommended for retention in the site brief, and the total domination of the historic buildings on the site by new build - views echoed by the Georgian Group. English Heritage, however, produced an utterly flimsy reply, while CABE positively enthused about the new design.

There are places where the historic fabric of the town can handle massive modern insertions, but not Bradford on Avon, where the townscape is created by a delicate balance of local materials, differing building heights and the natural focus provided by the valley around which it is built. It is essential that these points are taken into consideration when preparing a scheme of this type, but the developers have adopted a radical approach, using bronze and timber as the principle materials cladding their structures. The proposed layout of the site will also serve to seal the far end of the site from the centre of the town, which is a great shame as this

pretty area, beside a weir in the river, has the potential to provide a most pleasant public amenity.

The local authority's officers have expressed their strong opposition to the scheme, as have a very considerable number of the residents, yet the developer is pressing ahead with its application, without heed to these objections. The fear is that the local authority and the local residents will start to suffer from battle fatigue, and will give in to a second rate scheme forced upon their gorgeous town by a developer who will then laugh all the way to the bank.

**Cavalry Riding School and Veterinary Stables, Aldershot.**



The interior of the Riding School - best for desk jockeys or horse riders?

There are in this country a great many historic hospitals, and a number of historic equine buildings, but few which combine the two, along with a military riding school of the very highest quality. It is this very great rarity which makes the Grade II\* listed Cavalry Riding School and Grade II listed Veterinary Stables in Aldershot so valuable. However, a fit of collective shoulder-shrugging by the local authority planning committee has resulted in planning permission and listed building consent being granted to convert the stables into an old people's home and the riding school into office space. All this, despite the fact that the stables and riding school are considered by a group of horse experts to still be a viable proposal for equine use. The local authority's conservation officer left her post in the run up to this, the third application for the site, in horror at the Council's actions. Good for her for taking a stand.

Although the plans to convert the stables into an old peoples home are probably as good an attempt as might be made at reconciling a structure designed to hold sick horses with the need of the elderly and the infirm, SAVE objects to the principle of a unique part of our heritage being put beyond its original use when it would appear to still be capable of being viable used largely as was originally intended. The conversion of the riding school to office space is a different matter, as no matter how reversible any changes made may be (in this case involving the insertion of a mezzanine floor), there will never be any economic incentive to reverse these changes - office space is obviously much more profitable than a riding school.

SAVE has asked the Secretary of State to call in this application on the grounds that it is breach of national policy relating to historic buildings. It is stated quite clearly in government guidance on the historic environment that judging the best use of a building requires the balancing of economic viability of possible uses against the effect of any changes that these uses may bring to the special architectural and historic interest of the building. The special architectural and historic interest of the veterinary stables will be destroyed by the proposals, and the interior space that characterises the riding school will be partly destroyed by the insertion of the mezzanine floor. Government advice states that the principle aim should be to identify the optimum viable use that is compatible with the fabric, interior and setting of the historic building. It would seem to us that the optimum viable use in this case one involving horses, not old people.

## **Other Cases:**

### **Schools**

A whole crop of cases involving threatened school buildings have been sent in our direction in the last six months. These include Grange Rd infants school, Tuffley, Gloucester - an extraordinary construction, which would appear to utilise parts of the Brabazon Bomber; the Boyd Hall, Havering, which is owned by a church intent on developing the land; St. Mary's, Lytham St. Annes - a neo-Georgian scholastic style building which is facing partial redevelopment and Up Hatherley village school, Cheltenham, which again faces the peril of redevelopment. All of them raise different significant issues, but perhaps none more so than Up Hatherley village school.

This building is not in a conservation area, nor is it listed. It therefore has no statutory protection against demolition, unlike residential buildings. It is, however, the best building in that area of Cheltenham, and is much loved by the local people who were either taught there, or for whom the building has formed an attractive part of their everyday lives. The level of local feeling about the building was huge, and a request to DCMS to spot list the building fell on deaf ears. The building, dated 1874, is by John Middleton, who was very active in Cheltenham, building no fewer than five of its finest Victorian Churches.

The owner bought the building several years ago with an outline planning permission, and paid a price for the building that probably reflected its development value rather than its value as a building. For a while a nursery school was run in the building, but this, it is believed, was not a profitable venture. When the outline permission lapsed earlier this year, the owner decided to reapply with specific plans to place 4 residential units on the land, which would require the demolition of the building. Following vigorous opposition from the local campaign to save the building and SAVE, this application was turned down. SAVE offered to help the owner find a new use for the building, and made tentative approaches to several potential occupiers. However, before these could come to fruition, another application was placed before the Council, and simultaneously, the strategic vandalism of the building

commenced, with all the roof materials removed, followed by other valuable materials. The Council was in a position whereby once an application for a license to demolish the building had been made, there was little they could do but allow it as there are no legal instruments controlling the demolition of unlisted non residential buildings outside conservation areas.

There is a clear need for some form of control over the demolition of buildings when there is such a strong local outcry. Following the publication of the report 'Power of Place' for the DCMS and then DETR, in which the importance of local opinion in heritage matters is stressed, surely now is an ideal time for the control over the demolition of residential buildings to be extended to other buildings, such as schools, law courts, industrial mills, markets and the such like.

### **Markets**

London's scattered planning authorities, it seems, refuse to learn the lessons taught to them by Covent Garden and other successful projects involving the conservation of historic markets. Half of Spitalfields Market and the disused old General Market, Smithfield, and the amenity that they potentially provide, are in danger of being lost to the public for ever. Markets play a vital role in fostering economic enterprise, the spaces that they provide are flexible, and can be used for more than just markets. Historically they are the hub of smaller towns - their very reason for existing. In modern London they can play an even more pronounced role in helping regenerate areas, as proved by Covent Garden and Borough Market.

The Square Mile's desperate search for more office space is leading it to take increasingly drastic measures - so much so that the obsolete Liffe office planned for the site has been resurrected, despite the tremendous efforts of the splendidly named SMUT - Spitalfields Market Under Threat. As the outline consent for the former Liffe building is still in place, we advised SMUT that the best way in which they might yet hold up the development was to get as many people as possible to object to the detailed application once it arrived on the planners desk. To say that they were effective in this would be an understatement - the ensuing fuss kicked up by the developers covered the pages of the Architects Journal for a fortnight or so, and is still dragging on now - hundreds objected to the Borough about the application.

One of the more interesting upshots of SMUT's campaign is the concept of a brightfield site, which SAVE has moved to endorse: a brightfield site is a successful public place, which provides colour, character and relief from other forms of city life - where people come together economically, socially, recreationally, and strengthen the bonds of civil society that are necessary for a sustainable market economy and social well-being. Spitalfields market is just one such place, and deserves recognition as such.

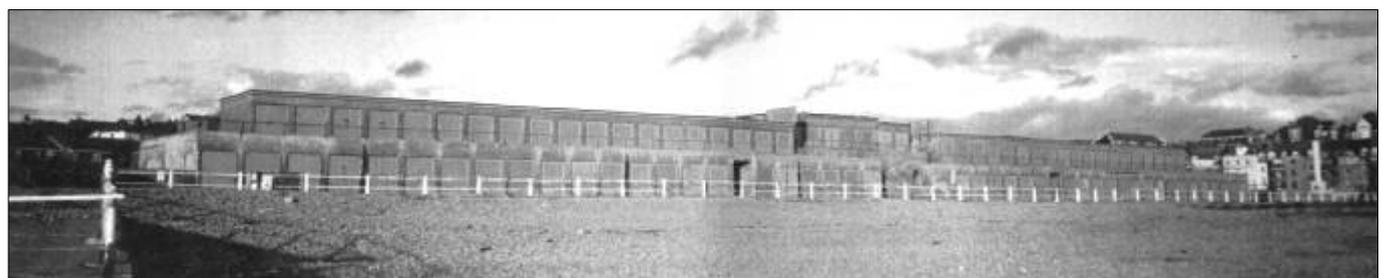
Meanwhile, on the other side of the City, the future of the old general market buildings at Smithfield is looking grim. Our repeated offers to help the Corporation of London find new users for the buildings seem to have fallen on deaf ears.



This might be because the site (above) offers one of the few remaining chances for a development with a large floorplate of the type that the City is so desperate for at the moment, disregarding the importance of the group of market buildings, the history of the site, the lack of public amenities in the area, and so on. Indeed the Corporation have already started to come up with possible reasons for the demolition at some point in the future, such as work on the Cross-Rail scheme (as yet no more than a rough line on a map), and work on Thameslink 2000. These works could be carried out without demolishing the historic market and associated buildings. In the meantime, it appears that they will be left by the Corporation to rot - although they assure us that the buildings are being properly maintained, a brief external inspection reveals that this is patently not the case, with vegetation growing out of the gutters, and water soaked brickwork contributing to their dilapidated appearance, while at night the buildings provide a useful set of open air conveniences for resting cab drivers and truckers delivering to the meat market.

The tragedy is that these buildings could so easily be used for something else - a farmers market, a sports centre - any number of suggestions involving a minimum level of works could provide a commercially viable public amenity in this location. The Corporation, however, would prefer more office space to help it compete with Docklands.

Below: Sydney bathing station, St Leonards on Sea



## Updates:

**St George's Circus:** The battle may have been won, but the war is far from over. Various plans are afoot for parts of the circus, although only one has so far been put before the planners. This was for the human equivalent of a multi-storey car park in the conservation area - a hotel designed to get the maximum income from the site with scant regards for the surrounding buildings and overall urban grain. Strong objections from SAVE, the Georgian Group and the local campaign have ensured that if not dead and buried, the designers have been forced to go and have a long hard think about what they were trying to achieve.

**Wokingham: The Lucas Hospital.** The threat of development has resided, and the hospital sold - not to a developer, or even the Landmark Trust, or the National Trust, but to an individual with the need for a private chapel and a number of individual dwelling units. Solutions do often come from the most unexpected quarters.....

**Hastings / St. Leonard's on Sea: The Warrior Hotel,** which is the centrepiece of Warrior Square has been doomed by a housing association keen on demolishing it. A last minute legal challenge by the local preservation societies was scuppered when the member carrying the action on legal aid dropped it for fear of future costs.

In the meantime, the plight of the **Sydney Bathing Station, St. Leonards on Sea,** was brought to the attention of SAVE by a campaigning body called the West Marina Chalet and Beach Users Group, part of West Marina Partnerships, a community-led organisation set up to represent the views of local people and groups with an interest in the surrounding coastal site. A planning application is imminent, and includes (as part of a wider development scheme for the coastal area) the outright demolition of these 1930's chalets. Built for the Empire Games in 1934 by Sydney Little, along with the since demolished Lido, they form an impressive backdrop along the coast line and, most importantly, 30 are still used and enjoyed by their tenants. About 60 chalets are unused and in need of repair work but there is a waiting list of potential tenants eager to take them on. Hastings Borough Council own the chalets which are currently unlisted (an application has been submitted to DCMS for spot listing), but the Council's proposals to build a slip way adjacent to the chalets allows for their total demolition. As part of the nation's dwindling stock of seaside structures and as a local landmark and amenity, SAVE has written twice to various officials in the Planning

Department of Hastings Borough Council opposing their demolition and recommending that any permission granted includes a condition that they be retained and restored. The fight continues.

### **The Ridge, The Park, Mansfield**

It is not often nowadays that an individual who has served the community over many years, gives a large, functional memorial as a sign of his pride in that community. The architect R.F. Wallace, however, felt that he could continue to help the people of Mansfield after his death by giving one of his buildings - in fact his own house - to the town in order to house the town's orphans. A pity, then, that Nottinghamshire County Council should choose to abuse such munificence so ruthlessly.

The Ridge is the key building in the Park conservation area of Mansfield - as its name implies, it occupies a prominent location in the conservation area, and the somewhat eclectic range of architectural vocabulary employed in its design reflects the various different styles employed on the Victorian villas that make up the Park conservation area. While the locals who live there have attempted - successfully - to smarten up the area, the social services department of Nottinghamshire County Council see the area as ideal for nursing homes, and most recently they have seen the Ridge itself as an ideal dumping ground for disturbed youths. Not that ideal, however, as they want to knock it down, and build something a little more suited to the job. The quality of life of the local residents had worked so hard to achieve appeared to be on the brink of falling.

SAVE objected very strongly to the proposed demolition, and the locals even more so, with the leader of the local campaign standing at this year's local elections on a one issue ticket - to save the building. Although she failed to win the ward, she certainly gained enough votes for the winning candidate to take on the issue. Mansfield District Council did not give conservation area consent for the demolition. Despite this, for a while it looked like Nottinghamshire County Council were going to carry on regardless and give themselves planning consent to build a greater capacity unit, which resembled something between a supermarket and scout hut. Letters to the government office ensued, and the decision which Nottinghamshire wanted to make themselves will now be decided at a higher level.

### **Derby Bus Station.**

To paraphrase a greater prose writer than myself, to lose one station is misfortunate, to lose both is careless. Derby looks to be veering towards the careless. Having disposed of its Victorian railway station in the early 1980s, the transport supremos at Derby City Council are preparing to rid themselves of their rather fine, if somewhat dilapidated, 1930s Bauhaus bus station, which is reputed to have been the inspiration for Buenos Aires own bus station. The bus station was designed by Charles Aslin as a part of the City's central improvement scheme, but its central location is causing something of an inconvenience for a new all singing all dancing development (which will incidentally take out a riverside park as well). The bus station was designed to handle up to 45 buses per hour, with parking for 25 more, and age has not diminished this capability. It is a highly individual piece of early modernist geometric planning, with a boomerang shaped island block, and is included on the local list, which the Council interprets as meaning that it requires special consideration. Neglect by its owner (er, the Council), however, has reduced the facilities available to the public. This does not however mean that the station is incapable of being sensitively refitted to provide adequate shelter for passengers and access for the disabled, all with a dash more egoiste than might be possible with a new bus station - it has been done in Birkenhead, so surely Derby could manage it. 14,000 plus locals are in favour of keeping the bus station, and have signed a petition to prove it. SAVE has written to the Council expressing its extreme concern at the proposals. We will keep a careful eye on events.

### **Railtrack: a memo for the future - or - hope for the few**

Railtrack's mixed record for the care of the nation's stations will die with it, but unfortunately that is no guarantee that whatever takes its place will be any better, or will be any more answerable to planning committees across the country. If anything, its government backed replacement may be expected take an even more bullish line, to which it can expect an even more bullish response to plans to do away with the Victorian splendours that distract one from the misery of travel by rail. Although Railtrack's board have said that they will honour all existing contracts, this does not mean that London Paddington, Clapham Junction, Edinburgh Waverley et al are no longer under threat. Plans

### **Buildings at Risk: A progress report.**

Sleeping Beauties, the 2001 catalogue of Buildings at Risk was produced in February of this year and is still in great demand. Alice Yates, SAVE's Buildings at Risk officer has now started work on the 2002 edition. Any suggestions about buildings Friends know to be at risk, or features they would like to see included would be welcomed - please feel free to contact Alice at the office. If there are any Friends who have already rescued one of the buildings featured on SAVE's register then do get in touch. Inspiration and encouragement provide the best publicity! Despite the continued demand for 'Sleeping Beauties', there has been no shortage of new subscribers to the online version of the Buildings at Risk register. Each of these represents a potential saviour. Friends can subscribe to the online register for £10 instead of the usual rate of £15, and because it is updated as frequently as possible, it really is a useful resource for anyone looking for a historic building to rescue, as well as for those just interested in ruins. The number of buildings on the register remains steady as solutions for problem buildings are found and so removed from the register, and replaced with 'new' buildings at risk. In an interesting development, we are also being asked to market one or two historic properties for private owners who are keen to place their buildings in the hands of someone who respects historic structures. Buildings at Risk need to be monitored, their situations do change but over time, so be patient and keep an eye on the register.

for Paddington were recently examined by CABE, while Network Southeast have expressed their desire to 'move' Clapham Junction station, and Edinburgh Waverley appears as close as before to having a shopping centre dropped on top of it. Other railway buildings still face the axe, most notably, London Bridge (close to which is the location for Renzo Piano's planned 1000ft 'spike').

### Maintain - a progress report

Maintain our Heritage is about to undertake research to make the case for systematic maintenance as the most sustainable and cost-effective regime for historic buildings. It will compare the costs of systematic maintenance with spasmodic repair in a range of case studies.

Maintain also plans a wider programme of research on maintenance attitudes and practice and has applied - in partnership with English Heritage - for funding from the Government's Partners in Innovation scheme.

Meanwhile, the group (which was formed with SAVE support and continues to work closely with SAVE) now has firm plans for a six-month pilot of its maintenance inspection service in Bath & North East Somerset in spring 2002. Funding has been secured from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

#### Have a browse.....

**[www.buildingconversation.com](http://www.buildingconversation.com)** This is the most comprehensive web site on building conservation in the UK, featuring contact details for building conservation companies, organisations and professional societies.

**[www.salvo.co.uk](http://www.salvo.co.uk)** Salvo provides information on reclaimed architectural features.  
Tel: 01890 820333

**[www.wealddown.co.uk](http://www.wealddown.co.uk)** The Weald and Downland Museum features 40 historic buildings dating from the 15th century all of which have been rescued from demolition, reconstructed and restored on site at the museum. A fascinating place that also holds events and courses on methods of repair. Tel: 01243 811363

**[www.regency-town-house.org.uk](http://www.regency-town-house.org.uk)** This site focuses on the restoration work carried out at 13 Brunswick Square, Hove, East Sussex. No 13 opens itself to the public as a museum and also provides a useful study centre for anyone wishing to embark on the restoration of a similar Regency style property. Contact: Nick Tyson, 13 Brunswick Square, Hove, E. Sussex BN3 1EH

**[www.dicamillocompanion.com](http://www.dicamillocompanion.com)** This website is run and researched by Curt di Camillo, a Friend of SAVE and aims to list all the country houses of England and Ireland whether standing or demolished.

### Exhibition in aid of SAVE

The artist Graham Byfield will be holding an exhibition of watercolour paintings from his most recent publication "The London Sketchbook", which illustrates a number of the most interesting buildings in London. The descriptions that accompany the works are by none other than SAVE President, Marcus Binney. All Friends will be welcome to the exhibition, which will be held in the Gallery of 70 Cowcross St. on the evening of Wednesday 12th December. Copies of the book are available from SAVE priced £19.95

### Obituary: David Pearce - cofounder and trustee of SAVE

David Pearce liked to say his only claim to fame was to have designed the bathroom of Shirley Bassey. But though he never really practised as architect he was an notable figure on the architectural scene, as journalist, editor, author and office holder in two leading conservation groups.

Amusing, ebullient, cheeky, feisty, but also on occasion prickly, he had a notoriously thin skin and a tendency to fall out with colleagues, a factor in his many sideways but always interesting career moves.

Educated at the Haberdashers' School in Middlesex, at the age of 14 he enterprisingly cycled round the coast of England on his own, camping as he went. At the Architectural Association he was a vociferous participant in the famous anti-ugly march to Sir Albert Richardson's Bracken House of 1959 (home of the Financial Times) which modernist students then felt was an unforgiveable step back to a prewar era.

For a while he worked with the architect John Voelcker, a modernist seeking to work within a vernacular tradition, converting barns and farmhouses. Taking a job at the National Building Agency, he began to write, notably for the lively weekly Building Design, and became editor of the quarterly Built Environment respected for its thoughtful treatment of planning as well as architecture. In 1976-77 he was briefly editor of the RIBA Journal.

In 1975, he was a key figure in the foundation of SAVE Britain's Heritage, for which he proposed the name and designed the distinctive logo with the SAVE always in capitals. As an energetic vice-chairman he raised the first vital funds, and designed and organised early publications at lightning speed, notably the SAVE Mentmore for the Nation booklet in 1977 which launched a furious and sustained campaign to save the great Rosebery-Rothschild house in Buckinghamshire from break-up. Though ultimately unsuccessful, the campaign led to the creation of a major new source of funds for conservation, the National Heritage Memorial Fund (the basis for the present Heritage Lottery Fund).

For the publisher Peter Murray he wrote Spot the Style which eventually sold some half million copies at National Trust bookshops - followed by Spot the Furniture and Spot the Fireplace - all mini volumes of the type today found by every bookseller's cash till.

An unexpected appointment was as secretary of William Morris's Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings where he served 1978-82. His predecessor had been in office for 37 years and Pearce came in (with relish) as a new broom, moving the society out of its early Georgian building in Great Ormond Street where he felt too much staff time was being taken up with the management of several flats (including supplying bedlinen to two of them) to take a key front line role in the rescue of Georgian Spitalfields from the bulldozers. Pearce masterminded the rescue of 37 Spital Square from severe dilapidation according to best traditional anti-scrape principles. He launched the SPAB's vigorous barns campaign, started the SPAB News and appointed the society's first full time technical adviser to give advice to owners of historic buildings.

In 1982 he made legal history by taking out a successful private prosecution over the demolition of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century (Grade II\* listed) almshouses at Denton in Lincolnshire without consent – an act of vandalism which today would prompt most local authorities to take legal action themselves. With Peter Murray he mounted an important perspective exhibition at the Royal Academy "Conservation Today" which, through the British Council, travelled to 46 countries. Pearce's book of the same name remains one of best general surveys of conservation in the 70s and 80s (The venture was jointly backed by the Royal Fine Art Commission). Another venture was his Great Houses of London (just issued in paperback) – a survey of aristocratic town houses, drawing attention to terrible losses between the wars.

Ten years ago to the surprise of his friends, he suddenly decided to leave London for Shropshire having found a rambling old farmhouse on a hill outside Bishop's Castle, above the snow line in winter but with glorious views west towards the Welsh hills over sheep filled pastures. This he ingeniously reoriented, banishing a tarmac farmyard, planting a garden, orchard and coppice, offering friends new and old stylish and always argumentative candlelit dinners looking out over long summer sunsets. Adopting corduroys and woolly sweaters, he became a mainstay of the tiny church at Mainstone dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> century and serving a small hill farming community where his funeral will be held on October 30. His move was in part prompted by a desire to try his hand at creative writing and shortly before his sudden death, he had submitted several chapters of a novel to his agent. In his will he bequeathed funds to set up a scholarship at the Haberdashers's School  
(Reprinted from the Times, 17th Oct. 2001)

### Tall Buildings in London - Bullet points from SAVE

- **The Sky is not the Limit:** The height of towers in London is constrained by the flight paths into Heathrow and London City airports. The Civil Aviation Authority has set a limit of 1000 ft for buildings in central London. Any proposal approved for buildings above that height will be referred to the Secretary of State at the DETR as dangerous.
- **Hyde Park is not Central Park:** The beauty of the Royal Parks, admired around the world, is the sense of

*rus in urbe*, of apparently boundless countryside within the capital. Though punctured in certain places by the towers of the Hilton and Royal Lancaster hotels and Knightsbridge barracks, the horizon in many parts of the Royal Parks remains filled with trees, not buildings, providing beauty, air, and space that all Londoners can enjoy. This is a precious asset which must be protected, ideally through elevation to World Heritage status.

- **Safeguard the protected views:** Central London has a limited number of protected views, several of them from vantage points at the heights above the central plain - from Hampstead, Highgate and Greenwich. It has been suggested that the dome of St. Paul's is insignificant from these views - this is simply not true.
- **No license to print money:** Any planning permission to build a high rise tower in place of much lower buildings increases the value of the site and constitutes a vast planning gain. Developers who are given such permissions must be made to make a permanent and substantial contribution to the public realm in terms of amenity. In many cases tight sites make the creation of outdoor space impossible (and piazzas are rarely desirable beneath towers). The gain must be provided by public space and amenities within the building at both lower and upper levels, secured in such a way that the local authority is bound in law to ensure public access is maintained.
- **Say where the towers should go:** If London is to have more high rise buildings, it is essential to identify in advance a select number of sites - in Canary Wharf for example, where high rise building will be considered - to prevent a rash of applications all over London which will have a blighting effect on surrounding areas.
- **Uphold the protection of listed buildings:** There are a sufficient number of sites in the City and Docklands where towers can be built without involving the demolition of buildings of special historic and architectural interest.
- **Every Borough does not need a virility symbol:** There is a danger that London Boroughs, left to themselves, will compete with each other in approving tower proposals. The great attraction of London as a World City is that it has so many exceptionally pleasant and attractive residential areas, where people can live in tranquil surroundings, with their own gardens, hardly conscious that they are in a busy city. Great caution must be exercised on any tower proposal overlooking a residential area, and wide ranging consultation carried out.
- **Local Views:** Towers can intrude on views which are much valued by local people - across a local park, square, or behind a church spire, or a well frequented pub, as well as larger and more obvious landmarks.
- **Environmental Impact Studies:** Every tower proposed must be subject to an independent Environmental Impact Study, commissioned at the developer's expense, but not edited or censored by him. This must address the questions of viability, shadowing and microclimate, especially downdraughts created by around high rise buildings. Every proposal should be subject to rigorous wind tunnel tests to determine the impact on neighbouring streets and open spaces.