



Newsletter – April 2004

70 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EJ
Tel: 020 7253 3500 Fax: 020 7253 3400
save@btinternet.com
www.savebritainsheritage.org

Don't Butcher Smithfield

"In any place less philistine than the City, Smithfield would be protected. Nothing has damaged the City's case to stay a local planning authority than its guardianship of Smithfield" Simon Jenkins in the Evening Standard, 26th February 2004

"As unlisted buildings in a designated conservation area, [the General Market buildings] make an outstanding contribution to the character and appearance of Smithfield and possess enormous townscape value" Sir Neil Cossons, Chairman, English Heritage, letter to The Times 29th March 2004

In February we launched our report *'Don't Butcher Smithfield: The Threat to Britain's Finest Group of Market Buildings'* which highlighted the threat to Sir Horace Jones' General Market buildings at Smithfield. The reaction was immediate and vociferous: these buildings must not be demolished. The Corporation of London has leased the buildings to Thornfield Properties for them to redevelop as a 10 storey office block, completely at odds with the scale and character with the historic Smithfield area, the built heritage of which dates back to at least the 11th century. The group of market buildings proposed for demolition has been empty for four years, in spite of attempts by ourselves to convince the Corporation that reuse is a viable option, and indeed in spite of a report by Urban Space Management, compiled at the invitation of the Corporation, showing that the buildings could be economically reused as, surprise surprise, market buildings.

The General Market is a handsome red brick building with white stone dressings, two storeys high (with an attractive French style attic storey) around the edge of the central market space with shops facing out on to the street, and a glorious central dome. The annex is a playful variation on the theme struck by Jones in his earlier market buildings in the complex, and the Red House cold store is a powerful part of the townscape. The diminutive lavatory block keeps the faith, using a similar vocabulary with tall white stone chimneys.

In spite of four attempts, the three blocks of buildings remain unlisted, although they are in a conservation area, specifically designated to protect them from precisely the sort of development proposed. They were included in the conservation area as the last act of Ken Livingston's GLC Planning Committee in 1986. In spite of the growing support for the preservation and re-use of the buildings, including importantly HRH The Prince of Wales, Mr. Livingston has not declared his hand. We remain convinced that if they were in any other town in the UK they would be listed: the General Market and its annex are high quality Victorian buildings by a fine architect, and were innovative in their construction through the use of the "Phoenix Column", the technology that made the construction of skyscrapers possible in the USA. Only one other building in the UK uses these.

Press coverage of the issue to date has been good, with the first shots fired by the Evening Standard and the Guardian, followed up with strong pieces in the Evening Standard and the Times. London Tonight has also picked up on the story, as have various London radio stations. Our report, *Don't Butcher Smithfield: The Threat to the UK's Finest Group of Market Buildings'* is available from the SAVE office for £4 to Friends of SAVE and £5 to everyone else.

In this campaign, every bit of help we can muster will make a difference and so we would ask those of you that feel suitably riled to put pen to paper expressing your concerns.

Tony Marcus
Chairman
Thornfield Properties
6 Cork Street
London W1S 3NX

Richard S Fuld Jr
Chairman and CEO
Lehman Brothers
One Broadgate
London EC2M 7HA

Lord Stevenson CBE
Chairman
HBOS
PO Box No. 5
The Mound
Edinburgh EH1 1YZ

Peter Wynne Rees
The City Planning Officer
Corporation of London
Guildhall
London EC2P 2EJ

Lord McIntosh
DCMS
2-4 Cockspur Street
London SW1Y 5DH

Ken Livingston
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London SE1 2AA



Severalls Asylum, Colchester

At Severalls we have been busy with developer Country and Metropolitan Homes pulling together an alternative scheme to that proposed by the NHS. After much hard work, with ample help from the local press, the NHS changed its position from almost total demolition of this massive hospital complex to retaining around a third of the complex, including 2/3rds of the handsome ward blocks, with a view to converting them to residential units. This was granted permission by the local authority, but has yet to be ratified by John Prescott's office. This has given us the chance to work up the alternative scheme which retains the vast majority of the buildings on the site and places new build in the less sensitive parts of the parkland that surrounds the complex and makes it such a special place. The onus is now on the NHS and the Department of Health to agree to sell the site whole to Country and Metropolitan, rather than selling it off piecemeal, a route that has been the curse of many other important historic hospital complexes.

The importance of the case is that the complex is neither listed nor a conservation area – although the parks are included on the Register of Parks and Gardens at Grade II, and after much pressure, the administration block is now listed. If a commercial developer is able to put together a scheme for the retention and conversion of the majority of the site, while raising enough money from the sale of the site to keep the Treasury happy (which we firmly believe can be done), there will be no excuse to demolish any more of the historic hospital buildings out there. If we succeed, Severalls will be an exemplar.



Friends of SAVE

Tyntesfield Trip

A treat for our Friends. Following all our hard work in preventing Tyntesfield's collections being broken up and the house sold to a private owner, its eventual purchaser, the National Trust (with no little help from the National Heritage Memorial Fund), is rewarding us with a day at Tyntesfield, near Bristol on Friday 20th August. The day will include tours of the house and gardens, and a spot of lunch in the gardens, weather permitting, or on the loggia. The number of places is strictly limited and the cost is £40

per place on a first come first served basis. Our guides will be the people most involved with the project and we will have the opportunity to learn first hand from them about the treasures of the house and the process of opening it up to the public. Please contact the SAVE office to reserve your place.

Lecture: Simon Jenkins on Country Houses and Churches

On the evening of 30th September, Simon Jenkins (writer, broadcaster, journalist and Trustee of SAVE) will be giving a lecture on behalf of SAVE at the Royal Geographic Society on Kensington Gore, London. With his books on England's Thousand Best Churches and England's Thousand Best Houses under his belt, this promises to be an excellent and informative evening. For Friends of SAVE, tickets are priced at £14, for all other comers £16. Please phone the SAVE office to book your tickets on 020 7253 3500

Changes to the Friends

As of September we will be putting into place a fairly radical change to the way we run the Friends. The aim of this is to offer more to the Friends in return for a little more from them. While the bad news is that the minimum annual subscription will rise to £25 (equivalent to less than an extra 84p per month), the good news is that this will also include access to the online Register of Buildings at risk. The aim of this is to entice more current Friends with the idea of taking on a building and to involve more of the current subscribers to the online Buildings at Risk register with our core activities. This will also mean a spot less database management for the office. The other good news is that we are planning events for Friends from lectures to trips to the occasional party to mark any notable comings and goings. We will let you know of these through the newsletter.

Book Fair

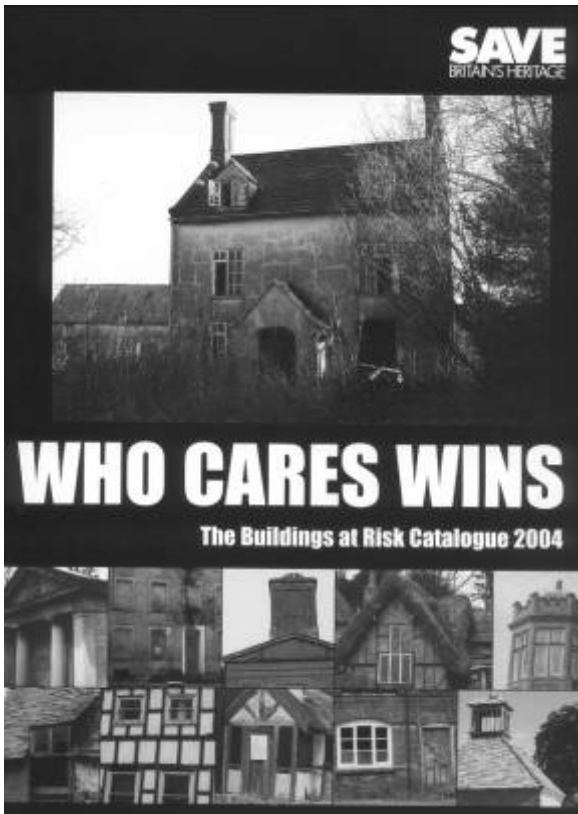
Its coming to that time of year again where we try to shift some of the book stock that currently prevents natural daylight from reaching the interior of the office. SAVE's third annual book fair kicks off at noon on Thursday 20th May and finishes at 7pm. From around 5.30pm a glass of wine or two will be available (courtesy of our landlord, Alan Baxter and Coombes) to help you in your deliberations over which publications to purchase. We would dearly like as many Friends as possible to come and join us and have a look though the publications we have for sale, buy a few and grill the staff, as well as having a look at the offerings of a whole range of other organisations and societies in the sector, including the Twentieth Century Society, The Georgian Group, The London Society, The Victorian Society, the National Piers Society and many others

Thank You

We have been delighted with the response of our Friends to our Christmas list – for the first time in over two years, we have been able to receive faxes without fear of the fax machine eating them, we can now project slides clearly, look up all the rich and mighty in “Who’s Who” for our fundraising efforts (and ask them to join the Friends!) and so on and so forth. Your help has ensured the smooth running of the office, providing a secure base for our campaign work.

Publications

Buildings at Risk 2004 - 'Who Cares Wins'



SAVE's 15th Buildings at Risk Catalogue has landed in the office and it is bigger than ever before. 'Who Cares Wins' contains 130 buildings, 115 from England and 15 from Wales, all of which are totally new to our register. There is an amazing selection, some of which are directly for sale, and many of which would benefit greatly from a little interest shown in their direction. All of the buildings, however, need a new owner or a new lease of life if they are to survive.

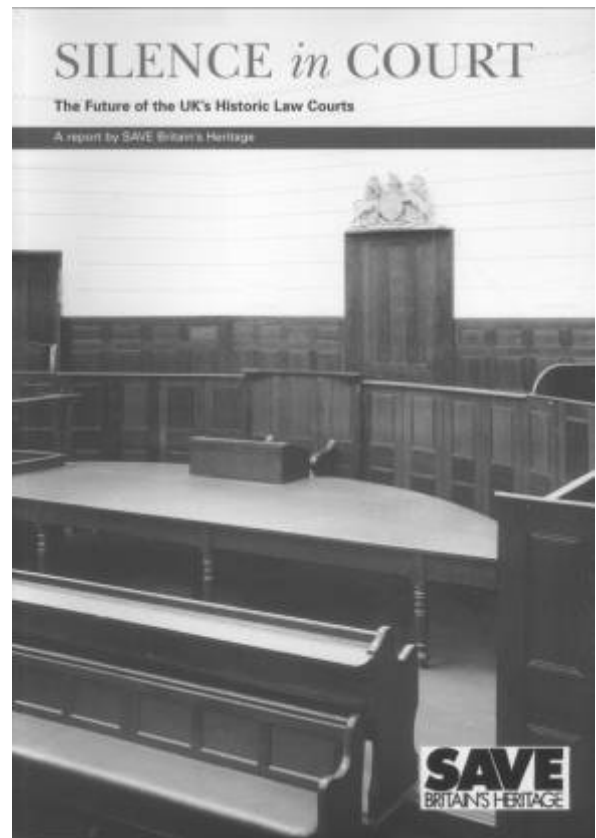
This year's catalogue contains over 60 examples of buildings which would be perfect for residential conversion, but they all need to find a sympathetic and patient new owner to get them back on their feet. There are also buildings suitable for a plethora of other uses, from cinemas to community buildings. All that is needed is a little imagination... the opportunities are out there.

'Who Cares Wins' will cost all Friends of SAVE £ 9.60 (£12 to everyone else). If you feel tempted to take on the

challenge of restoring a historic building this is the best place to start!

Historic Law Courts

“Silence in Court” is finally with us, following a protracted creation. It is SAVE's most handsome book to date, with over 170 pictures of this little studied building type, and Richard Pollard's quite superb critique of the situation faced by this wonderful group of buildings. We think that it is a bargain at £20 for the rest of the world and £16 for Friends of SAVE. Many of you placed pre-orders which have all now been delivered – and any one else keen on owning a copy should place their orders now.



A note from the Building at Risk Officer

Another change in personnel to report for the Buildings at Risk Project, as Ela Palmer replaces Alice Hickman, who left us at the beginning of March to pursue other interests. During her time with SAVE, Alice carried out an impressively rapid update of the register. We are hugely grateful for all her hard work. The register has continued to expand and now features around 700 buildings in need of a little (and a lot!) of love and attention. They vary massively in type, size and character, examples being Apley Park, a great Gothic pile in Shropshire, or the fantastic Muslim Burial Ground in Surrey. We are also seeing more examples of buildings at risk in Wales come on the register, as contact has grown with conservation professionals in that country.

Unfortunately this number is only the tip of the iceberg, and new buildings under threat are appearing all the time.

Supporting the Buildings at Risk Register is one way to help keep track of what is happening to our decaying heritage nationally. Subscription to the register costs £15 at the moment but will become available to all the Friends under the new membership scheme in September. However, this is not the only way to support the register; we are always grateful for up-to-date information about the properties and we rely on those 'in the field' for that information. Please do contact Ela on save@btinternet.com if you know of a building at risk – we concentrate on those that are vacant and therefore most immediately vulnerable.

We are currently searching for 'success stories': buildings that were once on our register but have now been saved and given a new lease of life. If anybody out there owns a former 'building at risk', we would love to hear about the trails and tribulations, as well as the joys, of restoring a historic building. Again, contact Ela if you can help.

Out of Government

The flow of consultation papers does not cease, with the ongoing changes to the planning system creating further confusion. First up (numerically rather than in order of consultation) is **Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 1**, the document that will underpin the future planning system, which is in need of some work before it can in anyway reflect the hopes and aspirations of the heritage community. **PPS 8 and 9**, which govern the way the planning system works, will see the move to regional plans and local strategies, representing a radical change to the way the planning system works. Both succeed in neglecting the historic built environment, or for that matter cultural heritage in general. The **revisions to PPG 15** – the guidance on the historic environment – to produce PPS 15 have not been published for consultation in spite of having been written before the current review of the listing system was put into place. A complete lack of joined up thinking here on the part of Government.

In the meantime, we have been granted an update on progress in implementing the Government's aspirations for the historic environment as outline in 'A Force for our Future' (affectionately known as Effoff) through a written Ministerial Question. Out of the 21 actions listed in the response, 9 (being generous) were government led, 4 by voluntary bodies and the rest by English Heritage.

At least two of the Government actions related to the Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Bill, a shockingly overdue piece of legislation which required the alleged plundering of the Baghdad Museum to force it through Parliament. Heavens only knows how many illegally obtained antiquities have been bought and sold in the UK in the last decade. The Bill was of course a private members bill. Other Government actions include drawing up a Protocol for the Care of the Government Estate, launching the review of the heritage protection system, guidance on making SMRs available to more people, launching CABA Education (lest we forget, CABA, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, does not have role in the historic environment), co-

ordinating itself over funding English Heritage, co-operating with UNESCO, and launching the National Heritage Training Group's business plan. Much like Effoff, a mixed bag without much clear direction or leadership for the sector.

It would seem that the government continues to expect everyone else to put its policy on the historic environment in place: much of the actual 'doing' reported by the Minister was done by the voluntary sector. The Historic Houses Association has been busy increasing public access to houses and gardens and helping them develop commercial activities, the Architectural Heritage Fund has made its directory of funding sources available online, and the Civic Trust continues to organise its hugely successful Heritage Open Days, with 800,000 people visiting over 2500 properties. English Heritage swept up with a range of other policy and theory based work as well as 'Heritage Counts', the second annual compendium of facts and figures about the historic environment. This is potentially a super tool with which to beat government into thinking properly about heritage policy. However, at a pre launch meeting of the press officers of all those involved, the gentleman from the Ministry raised concerns that Heritage Counts might be used in this way and that it would not look good for English Heritage to be seen to be having a go at its sponsor department. Groans all around.

Then there is **Kate Barker's report on housing supply**, commissioned for the Treasury, not the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, which is usually responsible for such things. It is the love child of the tussle between Messers Brown and Prescott, and unsurprisingly, it is the historic environment which comes off much the worse for wear (and high quality agricultural land is bizarrely identified as the ideal place to build new houses).

As if all this was not enough, the **European Commission** is getting in on the game, with its recent paper 'Towards a Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment' which has the overall aim of improving '*the environmental performance and quality of urban areas and to secure a healthy living environment for Europe's Citizens, reinforcing the environmental contribution to sustainable urban development while taking into account the related economic and social issues*'. Your Secretary is steadily becoming more paranoid - is this part of some grand strategy to sink the voluntary sector under heaps of paperwork and grand visions?

2004 Budget

Having announced earlier in the year that the Listed Places of Worship Scheme, which allows the reclaim of large amounts of VAT on repair to listed places of worship, would continue for a few more years, Mr. Brown has extended the amount that can be reclaimed to a full 17.5%, well worth negotiating the paper maze that results. Otherwise the budget had very little to offer heritage, other than a possible tax on land sales which might have the by-effect of preventing further erosion of the character of our Victorian suburbs, currently vulnerable to developers

looking to build blocks of flats on top of both buildings and gardens.

Cases

Country Houses Association

Albury Park near Guildford, Gosford Hall near Halstead, Ayhoe Park near Banbury, Great Maytham Hall near Cranbrook, Danny near Hassocks, Pythouse near Tisbury, Swallowfield Park near Reading and Flete near Ermington: this quite remarkable collection of country houses formed the portfolio of the Country House Association, a charity that rescued them from certain doom following World War II and converted them into retirement flats. However the future of these wonderful buildings and their surroundings has been called into question following the collapse of the Country Houses Association's finances. Not only at risk are the houses, but also, and more importantly, the occupants, whose expectation of peaceful, secure, stress free retirements in splendid surroundings have probably been dreadfully shattered by the news that their homes were up for sale.

So far, all but two have been sold, and only one to an organisation that is clearly interested in the occupants. Albury has been sold to Historic Houses Retirement Homes Ltd; while Swallowfield and Ayhoe have gone to the Sunley Group who are concerned with commercial and residential development. Fosfield has gone to Messers Perkins, Andersen and Wentworth, whose intentions remain unknown, as do those of Richard Burrows, the proud new owner of Danny. We will keep a close eye on the progress of these buildings.

The Shawford / Hockley Viaduct, Hampshire

It seems that there is no end to the threats to our Victorian railway heritage. This splendid viaduct, 2014ft long with 32 arches, was built in 1891 as part of an attempt by the London and South Western Railway to stop the Great Western Railway from gaining direct access to Southampton Docks. The Viaduct was abandoned in 1966. Now a familiar part of the landscape, the viaduct shields the Itchen Valley from the noise of the M3, but years of neglect are starting to take their toll and it needs urgent work to stabilise the parapets. The viaduct has already escaped demolition once – the Army was called in to dynamite it but for some reason this never went ahead. Although unlisted, the structure is important as an early example of concrete in the core of a supporting structure – the columns are in effect concrete with a brick cladding. Listing is one possible way of opening up sources of funding for its repair and reuse as a part of a footpath proposed by Winchester City Council.

Buckley's Brewery in Llanelli

The site of the Buckley's brewery in Llanelli contains an interesting collection of historic buildings, from malthouses to barley kilns, and is predictably in the line of

fire of developers wishing to build lots of houses. While houses and historic buildings are far from incompatible, it is usually the case that in keeping the historic buildings on a site and reusing them, one aims to retain a sense of place. The developers of the Brewery got this half right, in that their current plans aim to keep the main sturdy 1850s malthouse, but the barley kilns, which are of a similar date, face the chop. Furthermore the proposed conversion of the malthouse would be so intrusive as to ensure there would be little way of recognising it as a malthouse, replacing the windows with 'pods'. While these pods might be a novel solution to the problems of small window openings, they would destroy the rhythm of the façade as well as much historic fabric, and within 20 years would look as dated as the gaudy half balconies that adorn so many of the early warehouse conversions.

Fortunately for Llanelli, there now exists Llanelli Community Heritage (Treftadaeth Cymuned Llanelli), a lively body ably manned by the Jones family. They have successfully fought for the preservation and reuse of a number of buildings in Llanelli since their formation and they asked for, and of course received, our help with this site. Unbelievably, Cadw have not listed any of the buildings on it, and nor is the Brewery in a conservation area. Still, it would appear that the local authority has time for this small body, and with our assistance there might be a future for the barley kiln and a less intrusive conversion of the Malthouses.



Regent's Palace Hotel, Piccadilly, London

Grandiose plans have been hatched by the Crown Estates to redevelop parts of the Regent Street area, the aim of which is to exploit the huge commercial potential of the area, to the detriment of the historic environment. The Regent's Palace Hotel is a massive building dating from 1915 which was built with the aim of providing the luxuries of life to a wider audience. It is an ebullient celebration of the baroque, with classical elements liberally sprinkled over the building, its main entrance forming a familiar backdrop to Piccadilly Circus. The hotel has undergone several refurbishments in its time, most notably in the 1930s when a series of remarkable art deco interiors were designed by Oliver Bernard. The key

survivals from this scheme are the Dicks bar and the Atlantic Grill, in the basement of the hotel.



Current proposals would see the demolition of the building with the exception of the basement areas and a thuddingly dull office block erected above. Given that this is a conservation area in the heart of historic London, this application should be rejected out of hand. Reasons given for demolition include the fact that the streets nearby smell of urine. It is unbelievable that a hotel in a location such as this cannot be successful and that the existing building cannot, with a little imagination, be adapted – although this might not of course be as profitable as a large office block. Conservation areas remain inherently weak (while Government procrastinates and fails to put right the damage caused by the Shimizu decision) and buildings which do not immediately meet modern expectations seem increasingly vulnerable – just around the corner on **Savile Row, English Heritage's headquarters**, an imposing 1930s Portland stone clad building with some fine detailing, has been granted conservation area consent for demolition.

It is not only behind Regent's Street where the Crown Estates conservation credentials are also called into question – the Georgian Grade II listed York and Albany pub on Parkway in London, which is in its possession, has been vacant and at risk for years. Recent plans to bring it back into use have involved massive interventions into its historic fabric. Surely this Government body, with such an astounding historic building stock should be putting government policy on the historic environment into practice rather than brazenly flouting it, and leading by example with repair schemes based around minimising the damage to its historic buildings.

Tynemouth Railway Station

While half of William Bell's 1882 Tynemouth Station is in good condition and in use for the Newcastle Metro, the other half is in private ownership and not in use. The joy of the station is its splendid canopies, chockablock with exuberant iron work and for this it is rightly listed at Grade II*. The half of the station which is in use was lovingly restored by Friends of Tynemouth Station and so it comes as little surprise that proposals by the owner of the other half to build 80 flats as enabling development for the repair of the canopies on his part of the station went down

rather badly with locals and national amenity societies alike. The proposals would involve the demolition of some of the canopies and platforms and would have a frankly disastrous effect on the setting of the station, as well as being completely out of character with the conservation area in which the station sits.



A further part of the application was for the dismantling and re-erection at a later date of some of the canopies. This sort of arrangement frequently spells doom for the dismantled structures, which then appear in the strangest of places. Naturally we joined the local objectors to the scheme and after a couple of attempts on the part of the owner to drive the application through the local authority, it was rejected. In the meantime, the local campaigners are pushing for the local authority to serve an urgent works notice on the owner.

Liverpool Lyceum

An old SAVE case where one new use is coming to an end and another is needed. Our original persuaded Secretary of State Peter Shore to revoke planning permission to redevelop Thomas Harrison of Chester's 1802 Lyceum. The handsome Grade I listed building included a library, newsroom and coffee room. A forceful local campaign was led by Florence Gersten, and SAVE joined the fight, taking the issue to a national level. As a result, Peter Shore purchased the club, repaired it and sold it to the Post Office. The Post Office has now, however, decided that after 20 years service as a post office, the building is surplus to requirements, in spite of howls of local protest, and so is thinking of closing it down. Once again we are supporting a growing local campaign.

Leadenhall Tower, London

More tall buildings are heading towards central London. The Minerva Tower was duly granted consent by the Corporation of London, and now a Richard Rogers designed tower is proposed for nearby his widely acclaimed 1986 Lloyds Building (which was itself built on Edwin Cooper's 1920s Lloyds). The Leadenhall Tower

will be 224.5 metres high, the tallest building in the City by a long way, and has (perhaps a tad unfairly) been likened to a cheese grater in appearance. Architectural merits aside, the key concern over the building is the effect it might have on the setting of St. Paul's cathedral, the dominance of which is increasingly threatened by the emerging cluster of tall buildings in the City, and on the setting of Sir William Tite's magnificent Royal Exchange. Following the Heron Tower enquiry a couple of years ago, it was strongly stated that the floodgates for tall buildings had not opened. This was a little disingenuous – rather they have burst open. English Heritage's defeat at the public inquiry into Renzo Piano's tower on the South Bank seems to mean that it is less and less likely to take an active role in opposing future proposals, as well as avoiding controversy where possible (oh let me role over and you can tickle my tummy). Also proposed is a massive 30 storey slab block beside Waterloo Station (the developers claim that it looks like a sail), while in Manchester, the success of the Beetham tower in gaining consent is leading to more proposals for tall buildings there. Towers in Birmingham, Cardiff (by the ironically named developer Heritage Gateway), Leeds and Glasgow are all set to follow. The need to say where tall building can and cannot go remains as strong as ever.



Liverpool Parks

Liverpool's historic parks are rightly famous, the inspiration for many a park across the world, including, remarkably, Central Park in New York. We were therefore rather surprised therefore to learn of plans to build the new City Academy on a part of Sefton Park, which formerly contained its hothouses and more recently a municipal

works site. While it is no longer an active part of the park, a more inspired action would have been to have reinstated the site as a part of the park, and put the multi-storey Academy on one of the many sites recently cleared through demolition (of which there are very many). The Academy will also be completely out of character with the surrounding area of modest yet handsome two to three storey late Victorian villas, but such is the way business is conducted in Liverpool that little was going to stop this flagship project going ahead.

A pause for thought also for Stanley Park in Liverpool which faces the prospect of Liverpool Football Club's new stadium being built on a part of it and the Palm House being converted into a shop selling football gear. Oh, and the demolition of about 1200 houses, mostly Victorian terraces, if it goes ahead. The planning committee meets in May.

Heritage Information

Over the last couple of years an expensive, yet eminently worthwhile effort has been made by Heritage Information to compile as many details about resources for the repair of historic buildings, from craftsmen and women to providers of raw materials, and make this available to the public for free. While the idea is simple, the execution has been complex, and now that the organisation is up and running, it has had the rug pulled from under its feet by its funders, including the Heritage Lottery Fund. The failure of this organisation would be a major waste of money, time and effort. While there may have been teething problems with the organisation – some of them time consuming and difficult to resolve, there seems to have been a failure on the part of the funding bodies to take into account the bigger picture: there is a clear need for a single source of information for the owners of historic buildings for information on the repair of their buildings. Heritage Information is in a position to provide this now that the hard work of setting it up has been completed, and in a position to encourage the next generation of craftsmen through skills fairs it proposes to hold throughout the country, while also creating demand for the services it advertises amongst the owners of historic buildings.

Sun Street, London

History repeats itself. - an old case which typifies so many of the problems faced by historic buildings in areas of high land values. We previously helped fight off proposals at a public inquiry for the demolition of 10 Georgian buildings along Sun Street on the northern fringe of the City of London and had hoped that the strong message sent out by our victory would convince the developers that demolition was not an option. Clearly the message did not get through, and so seven years on we are now faced with a similar proposal for the demolition of these buildings and half of the conservation area they sit in and their replacement with a 10 storey office block.



The terrace is the last vestige of Dance's masterplan for the redevelopment of Finsbury Square / Circus following the destruction and damage of the Great Fire of London, and the small conservation area it sits in preserves the low horizons and charm that has been lost in so much of the City fringe. The block which is proposed for demolition to make way for the new office building makes up about half the conservation area. The argument employed by the developer is that the conservation area was created as a defensive measure to stop any such development rather than on the merits of the character of the area. Although this is not entirely true, one has to ask so what if it was – there is nothing wrong with wanting to protect historic buildings from destruction.

Updates

RAE Farnborough

In the last year, our hard work and patience at Farnborough has started to pay dividends. The owners of the Royal Aircraft Establishment site, Slough Estates, seem to have realised that they cannot proceed with their enormous business park development without sorting out the historic buildings at the heart of the site. Their tactic is now to make these buildings the heart of their business park, and so some serious thinking about the future of the historic buildings has been done by the new team drafted in to sort out the development. Interestingly, many aspects of our proposals for the site, worked up with Huw Thomas Associates have been incorporated into their scheme, which is welcome. However, there are still aspects of their emerging proposals that might benefit from a more conservation minded approach, in particular controversial proposals to re-erect the airship shed which stood on the site from 1910 to 1916 and was then reused in two other buildings, both of which are now listed and one of which makes a significant contribution to the remarkable character of the remains of the RAE. Likewise, the future of R178, a handsome 1940s office building, remains in the balance. Our position remains firm – enough has been bulldozed.

On a slightly lighter note, as a part of our attempts to get new uses into the buildings to show that they do have a life beyond research and science, we have attracted the Henry Moore Foundation to the idea of staging some form of exhibition in and around the buildings, to help people of

the buildings as rather more than giant machines. To this end, they have brought in Arts Catalyst, a splendid organisation that explores the boundary between arts and science, and there is a proposal for a slightly alternative airshow in September. Expect levitating chairs, floating runways and ghost aircraft galore over Farnborough this autumn.

Bishopsgate Goodsyrd, London, again

It turns out that unlike most other rail related projects, the destruction of the Bishopsgate Goodsyrd in London (a striking set of Victorian railway arches covering several acres) was far too early. In fact it was seven years premature, as Transport for London have admitted that they have no intention of building the East London line (for which the site was cleared) until 2010. This act of deliberate vandalism seems all the more pointless and shocking.

Gwrych Castle, Conwy



The picturesque Gwrych Castle, dating from the 1820s has long been a concern of SAVE's, with the campaign run locally by the splendid Mark Baker. Now aged 19, he has been running the campaign for the last 8 years and has recently set up a preservation trust, the ambitious aim of which is the restoration of the Castle. Previously, the key bone of contention with the building had been its ownership, which has now been resolved – the man with the key to the door, as such (which along with the roof, most of the floors, and the staircase, is now long gone) lives in America and has lots of grand ideas. He is also aged over 80. Our efforts have been to convince the local authority, Conwy, to accept that at some stage serving a repairs notice and moving to a compulsory purchase should be an option - if, of course, there is a viable scheme on the table, and that they should help bring forward such schemes. In adapting such a position, the Architectural Heritage Fund would be in a position to offer a grant for a feasibility study to the trust, the first step on the road to a financially viable solution. The local authority, however, continues to err on the side of extreme caution in holding out its hopes for a solution from the octogenarian absentee owner. The absurdity of the situation would be amusing if the building were not suffering so terribly: had it taken action ten years ago, the cost of repair would have been a tenth what it is now. The local authority could and should do far more to actively

encourage the rescue of the building, starting with start putting some faith in the ability of the voluntary sector to start the process of finding a viable future for the building, and provide a little seed corn funding. Such inaction is disgraceful and leads one to question the local authority's true agenda for the building.

Toddington Manor, Gloucestershire

English Heritage are to be congratulated on nearly always taking the right line with controversial cases, and their one or two minor indiscretions can usually be forgiven (with the possible exception of the Baltic Exchange). At Toddington, however, they really have thrown in the towel far too early on by giving the green light for a massive enabling development scheme, which is more to enable the reuse of the building as a hotel than it is to enable the reuse of the building. In other words, supporting the high cost of converting the building to a hotel with 213 bed ancillary accommodation and parking for 260 cars within the setting of the Grade I listed is preferable to a scheme which might involve a handful of houses at the end of the drive. A complete change of position is needed, whether English Heritage want to become involved in another country house case or not, or they risk leaving the door open for the destruction of the setting of every country house at risk, as well as the destruction of their own set of rules on enabling development, which the current application rides roughshod over. Sheer folly.

The Baltic Exchange, London

The Ghost of the Baltic continues to haunt us, long since the building has been demolished and Lord Foster's Gerkin erected on top. The interior of the building was salvaged and bunged into store in a warehouse near Reading. Some rather weak attempts were made to give it away to any interested public body, and so eventually, the collection was sold off to various salvage dealers. The interior of the building, damaged by the IRA bomb blast in 1992, was, just to remind you, one of the finest Edwardian commercial interiors in the country, chocked to the gunwales with Italian marble of the highest quality and wonderful ironwork and glass. About six months ago, some of the tiles from the lavatories were spotted decorating someone's bathroom wall in a home / style magazine, which was faintly amusing. However, some of the light fittings are now turning up at auction, restored, for £10,000 - £15,000. This goes beyond the slightly amusing into the seriously irksome and rather worrying.

“Raise not Raze”: Pathfinder bulldozes on

Is the banner adopted by residents in Colne in Lancashire in opposition to proposals under the Pathfinder initiative to wipe out yet more terraced houses. This well meant but fundamentally misguided policy (to bolster the housing market in certain areas through reduction of the housing stock) potentially has huge consequences for the built heritage. SAVE has previously reported on it in Pendle, also in Lancashire. It is worth, however, dwelling on the

scale of the losses of Victorian buildings we are faced with: it seems that no one has yet quite grasped this. In the Newcastle-Gateshead market renewal area, 2000 houses face demolition, while thankfully another 2000 are up for improvement grants. A total of 900,000 houses are in this and the eight other renewal areas. In Merseyside, 2700 houses are to be demolished, 325 modernised, and 1600 built. In the Manchester – Salford area, 13,000 are to be modernised, the same again built and 1700 demolished. In Stoke on Trent, 17,000 houses apparently have a negative value, while it is claimed that over 20,000 houses in Blackburn and Burnley are unfit for habitation. How many face the chop is unclear. What is however clear is that mass demolition of sound buildings causes dislocation in the communities affected by it, which are nearly always the poorest in society.

With rising market values, there is an increasingly strong case for carefully aimed renovation grants, which act as an incentive to people to take on and repair these buildings. Often they already form the framework for viable communities and the funds that would be spent on demolishing and rebuilding would surely be better spend on such grants. The problem is at a governmental level, where it would appear that an assumption has been made that pre-Great War buildings are generally beyond redemption. One only needs to look to Pendle where local initiative has shown that this is not, or to Manchester where Urban Splash, the ever resourceful developer, is showing how these terraced houses can be adapted to meet modern expectations

Northern Ireland



A couple of quick bites on action in Northern Ireland. The Ulster Architectural Heritage Society has strapped on its tin hat and joined battle over proposals to demolish three perfectly decent late Georgian buildings in the **Dromore Conservation Area** (above). A judicial review of the decision to allow their demolition is currently underway. All strength to their arm! Meanwhile at **Glenalm** proposals are afoot to ruin a perfectly decent conservation area, a the root of which is a duff development brief for the harbour area. Local resistance is strong, and we will shortly be adding our voice to the fracas. This summer we are hoping to review progress three years on from the

launch of our publication *'Blink and You'll Miss It: Northern Ireland's Heritage in Danger'* which we have no doubt will prove to be an interesting exercise

Lost architectural landscapes of Warwickshire by Peter Bolton

Although we usually make a point of only attempting to interest you in purchasing our own publications, the Secretary feels compelled to mention the work of one of the Friends in the recently published *'Lost Architectural Landscapes of Warwickshire'* by Peter Bolton, a sharp reminder of the cumulative losses over the years in just one county. ISBN 1 901522 98 9

Save Europe's Heritage

A year after the launch of our report on the potential of the proposed Valdastico Sud motorway to ruin the landscape of the Veneto, not only is a legal challenge to the proposals being brought by a coalition of local organisations, but also we have learned that the Soprintendenze (the regional equivalent of English Heritage) is considering introducing some form of protection for the wider landscape, by extending the Vincolo Monumentale, or protected area around certain villas, and by possibly introducing a Vincolo Paesaggistico for key areas of landscape. This is especially welcome as the area, and indeed Italy as a whole, completely lacks anything comparable to the Town and Country Planning Act, which contains development in certain areas rather than allowing the ad hoc development of the countryside.

Maintain Our Heritage

The pilot maintenance service scheme in Bath has come to an end, having inspected over 60 buildings and in effect been the test bed for the service. In the time the service ran, valuable experience was gained in dealing with insurance, health and safety and other potential obstacles, as well as on the actual inspection of the buildings. Also valuable was the feedback from those who allowed their houses to be crawled over, which indicated that although nearly all participants were pleased with the result of the inspection, some work is probably needed to create a viable market for maintenance.

The DTi funded 'Partnership in Innovation' research (also supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage) into maintenance has now also been completed and the full results are available on the website www.maintainourheritage.org.uk

Next up is a possible maintenance service for places of worship in the south west, for which the preliminary work is currently being done.



English Heritage update

Several years after having set up the organisation on a regional basis, presumably to reflect moves in government towards a more regional structure, it is all change again in EH's regional structure. The new changes will see an end to assistant regional directors, the downgrading of regional directors and the introduction of four directors above them. We are concerned that the result will be a retrenchment in EH's activities, precisely what is not needed. We'd rather it went down with all guns blazing.

In the meantime, the level of grant aid available from English Heritage for the repair of historic buildings is shrinking to an all new low: in the south west for example there is a paltry £1million available to support those attempting to repair their historic buildings. The headlines may shout that more grant aid is going to the regions in total, but this ignores the fact that certain grants that were centrally administered are being farmed out to the regions, and overall this year the decrease in grant aid reaches double figures in percentage terms.

Views of the threatened buildings at Smithfield Market, London

