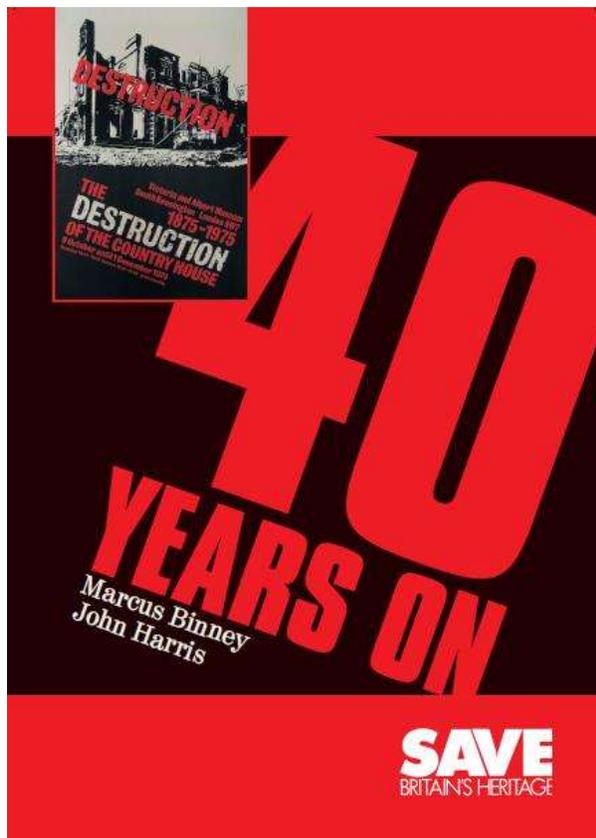


A forty year fight to save great historic country houses from decay and demolition is celebrated in SAVE's latest publication *The Destruction of the Country House: Forty Years On*.

This new book records the enormous impact of the V&A's landmark exhibition in 1974 and includes illustrations of over 120 major houses lost between 1875 and 1974.

The main purpose of the book is to tell the story of SAVE's many campaigns to restore, revive and reuse endangered country houses. The plight of these houses has been illustrated in successive SAVE reports since 1978, starting with *Tomorrow's Ruins?*, a catalogue of some 60 endangered houses.



The front cover, and inside front cover of *The Destruction of the Country House: Forty Years On*, showing the staircase at Eaton Hall, Cheshire, demolished in 1961.

Very soon after its foundation in 1975 SAVE began to come forward with practical solutions for individual historic houses, working with entrepreneurs and architects to create solutions, including Kit Martin, who has rescued a series of major country houses, including Gunton Hall, Hazells Hall, Cullen House and Burley-on-the-Hill.

Memorably in 1981 SAVE bought the derelict Barlaston Hall for £1. It was no bargain as rain was pouring through the roof, bringing down the ceilings and floors and the house was suffering from severe mining subsidence. It took a major fight with the National Coal Board to secure compensation, but SAVE carried out the structural repairs and found a purchaser willing to complete the restoration, including all the wonderful Rococo plasterwork.

The book tells the story of SAVE's campaigns to save major houses with their contents, starting with the great campaign over Mentmore Towers ('A Battle Lost, a War Won') Calke Abbey, Tyntesfield and Dumfries House.



...in 1981 SAVE had purchased a study of eleven of endangered country houses. Its early work in 1981 was to improve the condition of Calke Abbey, the romantic residence of Fitzwilliam, had just returned to 18th century, when he arrived in 1800 and built in his office at County Agh in high judges that Liverpool.

...a historic among the many houses he had designed, was in danger of being demolished in his own lifetime. The house had been ingeniously established around an early site in 1812 for Archbishop Charles and was built of brownish local stone with a higher one from Flintshire for the roof.

The owner General Chichester wanted to replace Calke's house, retaining only the three stone entrance porch. There was a public inquiry in 1975 and permission to demolish was refused. Mr Chichester built himself a new house nearby but showed no interest in selling Calke's house. Various other applicants and finally the National Trust. Instead of the former house, one of its potential buyers bought the property in 1975 and restored it in a style which would have stood against three years later.

This was a remarkable success story. SAVE also played a key role in lengthening awareness of the challenge

in Wales by publishing Thomas Lloyd's remarkable documentary *The Last Houses of Wales* a survey of country houses in Wales demolished since 1880, one of SAVE's best-selling publications. This appeared in 1986 supported by the Lords Trust, the Henry Cecil Trust and The House of Wales Committee.

Tom Lloyd wrote: "The most telling criticism: 'The Destruction of the Country House' - showed us with the dreadful loss of hundreds of two buildings that Wales was not to reach the great status... In fact the cause in Wales has been an iron grip, and not just among the richer houses. The big houses have suffered greatly. In proportion to resources."

Wales has lost a far higher number of fine rural sites in other England or Scotland. Many of these were not mentioned in the 1975 exhibition, which is a criticism of the country's lack of available resources for these 'nothing to go on.'

He argued that, in contrast to the Welsh situation, which has been severely restricted, country houses have been little studied. "Less than 30 remaining buildings have a regularly open door, without appointment, to the public." Extreme budget and poor care often, now land markets. He continued, "The demolition and destruction of historically and architecturally interesting buildings"



...the great houses owned by local authorities from a fourth century, a manuscript to study houses still in the hands of the National Trust and to maintain such as Jodrey Hall and Broomfield in the care of English Heritage.

These 'rescue' houses include prime examples of English architecture, notably Woburn Hall for the great Elizabethan architect Robert Smythson as well as Vardough's King's Weston near Bristol, James Wyatt's Thomas Hall, north of Manchester and William Duguid's masterpiece Calke Abbey. Lydbury Tengen is unique example of Palladianism. Hill (The Wood in Black and white) is an early example.

For years many of these local authority houses, with one or two exceptions, such as Mowbray and Stone House - in central Tyneside - were in the hands of the National Trust. But with recent budgets which have put in year after year a continuing crisis the survival of these houses is in danger.

Lydbury Hall is currently closed for five years while an act of a further regulatory and Historic Environment Agency that in 2008 there were 1000 in 2012 and 2014 it has been open at weekends.

Budgets for maintenance and repairs have been

The Future of Great Country Houses in Local Authority Care

...in the past where Tyneside National had not a single professional expert on its staff. Now in 2014 there is hope that with Arts Council support it will have one master again, charged with the responsibility, previously held by three owners.

Despite the good news over open house months there are positive news. First the National Trust under Baroness Justice, has stepped forward to some new partnership agreements with local authorities. The first is an 11th century Tyneside House near Newcastle where the Trust took over both opening and maintenance from Tyneside (2012) funded last year in return for a capital sum from the Council. The aim was to boost visitor numbers from 25,000 to 100,000 a year.

Previously the Trust would not take on large houses without a capital endowment which was nearly 20% of the building's value. Inclusion in the National Trust handbook, with the entry for Tyneside House, greatly increases visitor numbers. Spending on shops and restaurants, signs and public information which the council is to see, could never have afforded. In London there are new partnerships with local authorities such as Longleaze House.

Many of these houses have been rescued by individuals and entrepreneurs who first saw them in SAVE's reports, and these successes are celebrated with a large series of before and after pictures.

The book has a contribution on lost houses by John Harris, who with Marcus Binney was joint organiser of the 1974 exhibition, commissioned by Sir Roy Strong, and the book documents the original 1974 exhibition and its impact. It is lavishly illustrated with numerous colour photographs throughout.



The Hall of Destruction in the 1974 exhibition

Marcus Binney, author of the new publication and Executive President of SAVE said: “this is the vivid story of years of campaigning, the romance of visiting hundreds of beautiful decaying country houses and the often furious battle to save them, with a surprise round every corner.”

For more information and pictures contact Mike Fox, SAVE caseworker, on 0207 253 3500/ mike.fox@savebritainsheritage.org, or Marcus Binney on 07973 802 648.

The book can be purchased direct from SAVE and is priced at £20 (£18 for SAVE friends) plus £2.50 postage.

Purchases can be made over the phone (0207 253 3500), through SAVE’s website, (<http://www.savebritainsheritage.org/publications/>), or by sending a cheque to SAVE Britain’s Heritage, 70 Cowcross Street, London, EC1M 6EJ

Notes to Editors:

SAVE Britain’s Heritage has been campaigning for historic buildings since its formation in 1975 by a group of architects, journalists and planners. It is a strong, independent voice in conservation, free to respond rapidly to emergencies and to speak out loud for the historic built environment.

Press release issued by SAVE Britain’s Heritage, 70 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EJ

Registered Charity 269129

Tel. 020 7253 3500 Email office@savebritainsheritage.org

www.savebritainsheritage.org

Follow SAVE on Twitter: [@SAVEBrit](https://twitter.com/SAVEBrit)