

2010 WORLD MONUMENTS WATCH

UK Press Release: 7 October 2009

What do Edinburgh Graveyards, Dudley Zoo, and Sheerness Dockyards have in common?

Six sites from the British Isles have been placed on the World Monuments Watch for 2010, announced today in London by World Monuments Fund Britain. The biennial Watch is an international call to action by World Monuments Fund on behalf of endangered heritage sites worldwide.

The 93 sites which make up the 2010 Watch range from the 10,000 B.C. art in Wonderwerk Cave in South Africa to a 1970's public library in Atlanta, Georgia. Successfully nominated sites include temples, churches, rice terraces, walled cities, historic centres, and cultural landscapes around the globe. All are threatened by a variety of social, economic and environmental factors united by the pressures of urbanisation.

Dr Jonathan Foyle, Chief Executive of World Monuments Fund Britain said: "We've become a world of city slickers, with urbanites now outnumbering their rural cousins. The knock-on effect of this mass migration on important heritage sites is two-fold: towns and cities are under greater pressure to make way for their new inhabitants resulting in sites of historic significance being torn down in the name of progress, whilst land and traditional historic buildings in the countryside are left untended and abandoned."

Continues Dr Foyle: "The aim of the Watch is not simply to raise awareness of the sites most at risk; we endeavour to involve people in their regeneration and development. What if the site is no longer suited to its original purpose? What else could it be used for? How could it be adapted in order to most serve the needs of the local population? We are not anti-progress, we're in favour of sustainable stewardship there is undoubtedly a need to balance heritage concerns and other priorities."

The final list is the result of much consideration involving many hours of research from individuals across the globe. It's a truly democratic process, as sites can be nominated by anyone, from a concerned citizen to conservation professionals. Through this approach, sites which may not usually gather international attention are given the recognition required to give them a chance of survival.

Since the programme's inception, more than 630 sites in 125 countries and territories have been included on the eight Watches. Nearly half the sites featured on the Watch lists in 2008, representing 79 countries, have received WMF support totalling \$50 million. These WMF funds have leveraged an additional \$150 million in assistance from other sources.

Edinburgh Historic Graveyards, Scotland

Years of exposure to nature's elements, vandalism, and neglect have led to the deterioration of this historic collection of burial grounds scattered in the heart of Edinburgh's city center. As a collective group, these five graveyards – Greyfriars Kirkyard, Canongate Kirkyard, St. Cuthberts Kirkyard, Old Calton Burial Ground, and New Calton Burial Ground – give significant insight into the history, culture, and society of Scotland from the early 17th to late 19th century. Headstones of influential figures such as the economist Adam Smith, poet Robert Fergusson, inventor Robert Stevenson, and philosopher David Hume lie alongside ones of lawyers, smiths and tailors, and are essential in helping tell the tale not only of Edinburgh's great history, but the development of the United Kingdom and Europe as a whole.

Carlisle Memorial Methodist Church, Belfast, Northern Ireland

Designed in the Gothic Revival style by noted architect W. H. Lynn and completed in 1875, Carlisle Memorial Methodist Church was home to one of the largest Methodist congregations in Belfast. Now derelict for close to 20 years, the church has suffered extensive physical degradation, and the need for action is at hand. Its inclusion on this list is also sociologically important as its location on the edge of inner-city Belfast is at a major interface between Catholic and Protestant populations. As a result, the building is now perceived as neutral territory in a deeply polarized area and holds symbolic potential for North Belfast in particular and the city as a whole. This gives great credence to renewed proposals for the adaptive reuse of this shared heritage resource, as such a project would foster significant civic engagement with stakeholder communities and deepen the successes of the Northern Irish peace process.

The Tecton Buildings, Dudley Zoo, West Midlands

A more modern example is the Tecton Buildings at Dudley Zoo. Constructed between 1935 and 1937, the Zoo's 12 animal display houses are some of the most important examples of modernist architecture. Because of changing practices of animal management, some of the 12 structures can no longer be used to house animals and are now in urgent need of action if they are to be restored sensitively as a singular heritage asset. The buildings which are made from reinforced concrete remain much loved and a distinct part of the local landscape.

Sheerness Dockyard, Isle of Sheppey, Kent

Sheerness Dockyard, as it exists today, was meticulously designed, constructed and completed in 1815. Significantly the entire complex of Georgian style docks, boathouse, and complementary structures were conceived and built in one major phase of construction. A 1,600 sq. ft. scaled model of the entire site, dating from the 19th century, survives to this day. The site is a great example of exceptional construction technologies, but its two Scheduled Ancient Monuments, one Grade 1, more than twenty Grade 2* and eleven Grade II listed structures also mean it is equally significant for its Georgian architectural heritage, not to mention for the economic history of the port as well as its military and naval history. The Dockyard has served both as a port for large vessels and an important point of defence against naval attacks since Roman times. At present it is a commercial port, but the most significant parts of the site are unused and decaying. Elsewhere the area currently most unaltered and complete - the Georgian Terraces – is

potentially being redeveloped, infuriating the local community who are greatly attached to it and who are so committed to protecting its original tone that they have launched their own campaign to save the dockyard. Its inclusion on The 2010 Watch List will potentially add support to this campaign to help stop any future inappropriate development.

St John the Evangelist Parish Church, Shobdon, Herefordshire

Listed Grade 1, Shobdon Church was originally 14th century and was rebuilt in the mid 18th century by Sir John Bateman and his uncle, Richard Bateman. Remaining virtually unchanged, the church is now widely regarded as an outstanding example of the mid 18th century Rococo Gothic style, largely influenced by Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill in Twickenham, and in accordance with Walpole's "Committee of Taste." However, a lack of attention has resulted in significant preservation challenges. Because it was built for a dramatic visual impression, the church's materials and construction have proven to be unstable in certain areas. The large concealed timbers embedded in the damp masonry have rotted, causing the walls to tip over and the beam ends to give way. The local community has been an integral advocate in soliciting support and funding from individuals and organisations. There still however remains a great deal of work in order to ensure long term safety of the church.

Russborough, Blessington, County Wicklow, Ireland

Designed for the First Earl of Milltown by Richard Castle in the 1740s, Russborough stands in stately repose at the base of the Wicklow Mountains, overlooking a large park that falls to the valley of the River Liffey. The well-preserved Palladian mansion and its surrounding demesne were donated to the Irish people in 1978, through the generosity of the estate's second owner, Sir Alfred and Lady Beit.

While the demesne contains one of the most intact and important early designed landscapes ever created in Ireland, it has not been accessible to the public in the thirty years that Russborough has been open for visitation. Most of the original outbuildings, the eighteenth-century artificial water features, and the historic structures in the wider demesne are in urgent need of repair, including the bridge to Lady's Island, the lime kiln, and the ice-house. Loss of historic natural features, including mature broad-leaved woodland and parkland trees, is a very serious problem that must be met by a vast and well researched re-planting program. Renewed attention towards the stewardship of the demesne will restore the integral relationship between the house and its designed and natural landscapes, and preserve the integrity of the whole of Russborough.

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Notes to editors

World Monuments Fund is the leading independent organization devoted to saving the world's most treasured places. For over 40 years, working in more than 90 countries, our highly skilled experts have applied proven and effective techniques to preserve important architectural and cultural heritage sites around the globe. Through partnerships with local communities, funders, and governments, we inspire an enduring commitment to stewardship for future generations. Headquartered in New York, WMF has offices and affiliates worldwide. Over 15 years, WMF Britain has secured the future of many significant UK-related sites. For more information see www.wmf.org.uk

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