

Press release: SAVE presents new historic research about the remarkable Phoenix Columns at Smithfield General Market and calls on the Secretary of State to reconsider listing it.

In a new report for SAVE Britain's Heritage, 'The Curious Case of the Phoenix Columns in Smithfield General Market,' architectural historian and specialist developer Dr Jenny Freeman details the columns' origins in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, and explains how City Surveyor Sir Horace Jones, uniquely in the UK, came to utilise the same technique in the General Market.

**The Curious Case of the Phoenix Columns
in Smithfield General Market**

Dr. Jenny Freeman



**SAVE
BRITAIN'S HERITAGE**

THE GENERAL MARKET UNDER THREAT

Smithfield's General Market in the City of London was the subject of a public inquiry early in 2014 over a proposal by Henderson Global Investments for extensive demolition. This would have allowed tall office buildings to be slotted within the partially retained facades of the Market. Similarly, its neighbour known as the Annexe was to be reconfigured with a tall new tower inserted behind its altered facade and partly demolished interior. Both buildings stand within Smithfield Conservation Area and, together with the famous listed Meat Market, are the work of Victorian architect, Sir Horace Jones (1805-1887). Jones was Architect/Surveyor to the Corporation of London from 1864 until his death in 1887.



An early view of the General Market, looking north east. *National Monuments Record*

The scheme was refused permission by the Secretary of State, Rt Hon Eric Pickles M.P., following a public inquiry and new proposals for re-using the two long derelict Jones' Markets are now being drawn up.

This report sets out to reinforce the significance of the General Market and to suggest how Phoenix Columns, uniquely, came to be used there to support the market superstructure.

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Dr Freeman states that: "In the history of nineteenth century civil engineering the wrought-iron Phoenix column played an intermediary role in the transition from the use of cast-iron to the employment of steel. Jones, for example, turned to steel for the structure of Tower Bridge at the end of his career."

SAVE has sent the new report to the Secretary of State and Ministers for the Department of Culture Media and Sport, John Whittingdale MP, Ed Vaizey MP and Tracy Couch MP, as well as to Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Greg Clark MP. Peers and MPs who have been connected with the campaign for Smithfield General Market over the years have also received copies. Historic England has been sent copies, including to Chairman Sir Laurie Magnus, Chief Executive Duncan Wilson and

Designation Director Roger Bowdler. The report has also been circulated to the Museum of London, the City of London Corporation, the Greater London Authority, and several dozen other key people involved with the building and its future.

Dr Freeman wrote her Post Graduate Thesis on the works of Sir Horace Jones and in this report undertook extensive fresh researches to establish why, at the General Market, Jones adopted the idea (unprecedented in the UK) of using the enormously strong Phoenix Columns. Dr Freeman writes: "Their deployment here was a carefully considered, bold and imaginative response to the requirements of his brief, and an astonishing a technological triumph."

SAVE considers that it is imperative to revisit the decision not to list the General Market or the Annexe.

The history of the listing of the market is fraught: the Red House cold store beside the General Market was listed by former Secretary of State Dame Tessa Jowell in 2005, until English Heritage controversially delisted it a year later.

SAVE considers that the entire complex of buildings at Smithfield should be listed. At present the Meat Market is listed Grade II*, the Poultry Market Grade II, while the Western Market Buildings, subject of a public inquiry last year, are unlisted.

SAVE considers that there is also a strong case to make the entire area, including St Bart's Hospital and St Bartholomew the Great church, a World Heritage Site.

Professor David Walker, former Chief Inspector of Historic Buildings in Scotland and expert adviser to the National Heritage Memorial Fund and the Heritage Lottery Fund, said: "I hope those now in charge won't persist in denying the blindingly obvious just because someone either made a poor assessment, or more probably just got scared of the City's, and in turn, Minister's displeasure long ago. Clearly they can now be seen to be of European importance."

Background

SAVE successfully fought a public inquiry to save the General Market, Annexe and Red House cold store from insensitive development last year. The proposals put forward by Henderson Global Investors were to demolish the market halls and replace them with three office blocks. The Inspector concluded in favour of preservation, a recommendation endorsed by the then Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Eric Pickles MP.

At present the Museum of London has [announced plans](#) to move to the Western Market Buildings by 2020 and recently [launched an architectural competition](#).

The new SAVE report is available online [here](#).

A limited number of hard copies are available, priced at £5.00 plus postage (£2.50). Please contact the office to order on 0207 253 3500 or office@savebritainsheritage.org

For more information and images, please contact the SAVE Office on 0207 253 3500 or office@savebritainsheritage.org

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.

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