

SAVE

BRITAIN'S HERITAGE

70 Cowcross Street, London, EC1M 6EJ

Moira Costello
Heritage Protection Branch
DCMS
2-4 Cockspur Street
London SW1V 5DH

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Dear Moira Costello,

SAVE Britain's Heritage is writing to add its strong support to the recommendation, by English Heritage, to list Waterloo Station at Grade II. Currently, only the Victory Arch is listed and in our view this grossly undervalues the station as a whole. In any case, under tests for curtilage set out in PPG 15 - namely, historic dependence, physical layout and ownership there appears little justification for the Arch to be listed separately.

SAVE agrees firmly with the EH adviser's report which identifies the station as the finest British terminus of the early 20th-century and as an example of innovative and high quality design, inspired by international models. Its fine frontage, epic in scale, and elegantly and confidently composed in the Beaux-Art style, looks not only outwards but also inwards where its curve defines the grandest station concourse in Britain. Here, between 1903 and 1922 the architect James Robb Scott, together with successive engineers J W Jacomb-Hood and Alfred W Szlumper, produced a vast, illuminated public space designed to maximise clarity of orientation and ease of travel. Passenger facilities (housed in the extensive frontage) and platforms were thus arranged rationally in the interests of comfort and to facilitate the flow of a large numbers of people. Despite the insertion of modern retail kiosks and proliferation of signage clutter it has remained a highly successful arrangement. The fine surviving interior of the Windsor Bar (now the travel centre) and the vaulted ceiling and columns of the booking office (now a bar) remain to show the architectural refinement and ambition of the original station facilities.

As is pointed out in the EH report, the station marked a departure from the 'cathedrals of steam' of the 19th-century and looked instead to American models, such as Grand Central Station, where the focus was on a grand public concourse. This has led to some misunderstanding about the architectural qualities of the station and has prompted some unwarranted criticism. The report by Network Rail, which recommends against listing, recites a number of these criticisms, including Gavin Stamp's reference to the 'new and unremarkable Baroque facades (of Victoria and Waterloo) ...made to screen unexciting train sheds...' Concerned that this comment was taken out of context, SAVE contacted Gavin Stamp who made the following response (the original email can be supplied at request):

'Tiresome when one's words are used for an unintended purpose.'

What I say is true, but not intended to denigrate Waterloo. Those Edwardian train sheds with overall flat girder roofs - Waterloo, Victoria LB&SCR, Marylebone and Glasgow Central - are not as impressive as the great Victorian arched sheds, but those - St Pancras especially -

were very expensive and not wholly practical. Nevertheless, the Edwardian sheds have their qualities in enclosing expansive public spaces. Glasgow Central concourse is the real centre of the city and I have always liked and admired the Waterloo concourse with its long gentle curve and great width. It is a lively place, full of light and movement, and makes an enjoyable and appropriate beginning or end to a journey. To extend the platforms and push the public spaces downstairs would certainly NOT be an improvement. The experience of the traveller would be much diminished and London would lose what really is a great and much used public space. In that essay, I was talking about the stations as architecture, but the quality of spaces under steel 'n' glass roofs needs to be assessed by wider criteria. So I would defend Waterloo strongly - even while regretting that the L&SWR didn't build a great Baths of Caracalla booking hall as well - like the contemporary Pennsylvania Station.'

The train shed, with its 9 lateral canopies, is a hugely impressive piece of engineering - it is one of the largest train shed roofs in Europe, measuring over 28,000 square metres and was considered important enough to warrant a 2-year restoration project (completed in 2003). This involved the refitting of 24,000 panes of glass and 19km of guttering. 675 tonnes of trusses were also cleaned and repainted. This repair programme was a clear acknowledgement of the shed's architectural and engineering qualities and should add weight to the argument for listing.

SAVE considers another powerful reason for listing is to recognise the undoubted importance and architectural significance of Nicholas Grimshaw's award winning international terminus. The tapered, curved vault of the train shed is architecturally exciting, and forms an admirable and visually harmonious counterpart to the earlier station. The terminus is undoubtedly the most successful and best loved post-war railway terminus in Britain and its many accolades are rightly listed in the EH report, including the RIBA Building of the Year Award (forebear of the Stirling Prize) in 1994, and in 1995 the Mies van der Rohe Pavilion Award for European Architecture, the Royal Fine Arts Commission/Sunday Times Building of the Year Award, and the Excellence in Design Award of the London chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

Lastly, SAVE would like to draw attention to the subterranean network of brick vaults which date from the earlier station (dating from the 1840s), we would urge these to be properly investigated and assessed and included in any revised list description.

SAVE urges in the strongest terms for the advice of English Heritage to be followed and Waterloo Station to be listed in its entirety. Its progressive planning, the confidence and elegance of its Edwardian architecture together with the international terminal (an acknowledged masterpiece) defines Waterloo as one of Britain's great termini. The fact that it has so far remained unlisted is, in SAVE's view, astonishing.

Yours sincerely,

William Palin
Secretary

Cc Delcia Keate, English Heritage
Jon Wright, 20th Century Society
Heloise Brown, Victorian Society