

SAVE BRITAIN'S HERITAGE

Newsletter - September 2009

THE LANCASTER CANAL CORRIDOR FIASCO - STRANGER THAN FICTION



View from the east over the 'canal corridor' site with Mitchell's Brewery in the foreground. Photo: Paul Barker

The Lancaster Canal Corridor North (CCN) case has taken some remarkable and unexpected twists and turns over the last year. In February the applicant and developer of the 8-hectare site, Centros, announced it was pulling out of the forthcoming Public Inquiry. However, the developer refused to withdraw the application, leaving the council to defend the scheme, alone - a bizarre situation without precedent in the history of call-in inquiries.

The Centros scheme, which received council backing last year, involves the demolition of 30 historic buildings (18 of which stand in conservation areas) to make way for a new shopping centre. It is undoubtedly one of the most damaging town centre schemes SAVE has seen in recent years. Thankfully, the application was called-in for a Public Inquiry by the Secretary of State in January, at the behest of English Heritage (EH), SAVE and other groups. After the call-in, Centros, which up to this point had been bullish about the case, suddenly became coy. Steve Bryson, the ebullient Centros PR guru, even refused to talk to SAVE on the telephone. This sudden crisis of confidence is most likely explained by a combination of economics - the post-recession sums for the development no longer adding up - and, perhaps, a creeping realisation that the scheme was undefendable in heritage terms. Emails obtained from Lancaster City Council by FOI request revealed that SAVE's involvement appeared to have unnerved the developer. Centros's Associate Director described SAVE as 'a well educated organization ...[containing] a number of very high-profile and influential heritage planning and

architectural figures'. It's good to know we are taken seriously!

With the applicant having declined to defend its own scheme, Lancaster City Council (LCC) gallantly (and foolishly as it turned out) decided to go it alone. SAVE's calls for the Inquiry to be abandoned went unheeded and we were forced to muster our resources. Conservation architect Richard Griffiths, whom SAVE had commissioned to produce an alternative 'blueprint' for the site, was lined up as an expert witness, together with architect and artist Ptolemy Dean whose high-profile opposition to the Centros scheme had proved so helpful earlier in the campaign. SAVE's Secretary also prepared evidence, and Andrew Deakin, a Junior Barrister from 39 Essex Street was appointed as SAVE's legal representative.

It was clear from the outset of the Inquiry that the case would hinge on the heritage impact of the scheme, in particular the demolition of a cluster of buildings at the Stonewell 'nose' to the west of the site to make way for an anachronistic pedestrian bridge (demanded by Debenhams apparently) and a new 'gateway' development. The council's witnesses gave evidence first and EH, represented by Eian Caws QC, took the lead in cross-examination.

During a single session in the second week, the Inquiry was turned on its head when LCC's conservation officer, Stephen Gardner, took the witness stand and through sheer candour, under cross-examination, torpedoed his own council. His evidence proved so damning that the council was left with little choice but to follow Centros and withdraw from the Inquiry.

With no one left to defend the scheme, the Inspector decided the Inquiry need not continue. He agreed to listen to concerns from local objectors but, despite pleas from SAVE and EH, further oral evidence was deemed unnecessary. And so ended possibly the most bizarre call-in Inquiry of all time. The Inspector's report is due to be submitted to the Secretary of State in January.



Richard Griffiths's blueprint for a conservation-led regeneration scheme on the CCN site

It was not until a subsequent site visit with the Inspector that SAVE finally gained access to some of the interesting buildings on the site. The most impressive by far being the Mitchell's Brewery complex - which features an intact late 18th-century 'wing'. In Richard Griffiths's alternative vision for the site produced for

SAVE, the main range of brewery buildings is shown forming a magnificent backdrop to a new public square (pictured). Their potential for conversion for a range of new uses is obvious and exciting.



Richard Griffiths's vision for a new square in front of the threatened brewery

In a case reminiscent of Smithfield General Market, the Brewery was turned down for listing, inexplicably, in 2007. However, unlike Smithfield, the Brewery falls outside a conservation area, purely as a result of a proposed road scheme which was only abandoned in the 1980s. This leaves the complex horribly vulnerable and our worst fears were confirmed shortly before this newsletter went to press with news that the owner had submitted a demolition notice to the council. Local campaign group *It's Our City* has swung into action, and with SAVE's support, it is hoped that the building can be protected for long enough to allow it to be either spot-listed (new information has since emerged on the history of the building) or given conservation area protection (a boundary review is currently underway). It would be a terribly irony if these magnificent buildings at the heart of the canal corridor site were to be lost before the Inquiry had run its course.

SAVE EXHIBITION 'TRIUMPH, DISASTER AND DECAY' TOURS LIVERPOOL AND LONDON



Shaw Street, a once fine late Georgian terrace in Everton. No.103 (to the left) was demolished in 2008. Photo: Robert Hradsky

Liverpool is a city distinguished by the astonishing variety and grandeur of its architecture. Since World War II it has also acquired the less enviable reputation as a graveyard for historic buildings. 'Liverpool greets

visitors with a gap-toothed smile', laments one guidebook from the 1980s.

Steep economic decline and depopulation during the '60s and '70s left whole areas of the city empty and derelict. This situation, accelerated by misguided planning policies, led to widespread destruction in districts such as Everton (pictured below). Meanwhile, in the centre of the city, grand civic and public buildings such as Thomas Harrison's Greek Revival masterpiece, the Lyceum Club were decaying along with whole streets of fine 18th- and early 19th-century houses. SAVE's long involvement in the city began with the famous and successful campaign to preserve the Lyceum in 1977. A number of hard-hitting reports followed, including *The Agony of Georgian Liverpool* (1984) which catalogued the shameful neglect of the city's superb stock of Georgian domestic architecture.

Recently (Pathfinder apart) things have improved dramatically. Liverpool's time in the limelight as European Capital of Culture 2008 has helped bring in new investment and the centre of the city is buzzing again, with people flocking there to shop, eat, drink and live. Great strides have also been taken in restoring the dignity of Liverpool's magnificent heritage. In the heart of the city, St George's Hall has been repaired with a major grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, while on Rodney Street, the City Council has boldly taken charge of St Andrew's Church, now under repair after years of neglect.



St Chrysostom, Everton (1852-53) by W. Raffles Brown, photographed in 1971. The church was demolished the following year. © Crown copyright .NMR

As well as acknowledging recent successes, SAVE's exhibition (featuring over 60 photographs of the city, past and present) aimed to shine the spotlight on some of the most problematic conservation cases. At the heart of the city, for example, in the Ropewalks area, Georgian houses continue to decay. And, astonishingly, elements of the post-war clearance programme have now been

revived, this time in the form of the Government's Housing Market Renewal (Pathfinder) Initiative. The New Heartlands 'regeneration' body is promising 'transformational change' across the inner suburbs, and has declared tens of thousands of terraced houses 'obsolete'. Plans have been drawn up to depopulate and compulsorily purchase whole districts of Anfield, Edge Hill, Everton and Toxteth. Much demolition has already occurred, leaving empty wastelands in place of once thriving communities.



Visitors ponder Liverpool's lost architectural glories at SAVE's exhibition. Photo: Robert Hradsky

Triumph, Disaster and Decay opened in Liverpool in February to high praise. Anthony Quinn, writing in *The Independent*, declared it 'a superb exhibition of photographs [for which] Save Britain's Heritage deserves immense credit'. During a short run (just 3 weeks) over 70 catalogues were sold, making it the most successful exhibition to date at the RIBA's north-west gallery. The exhibition enjoyed a short run at 6 Playhouse Court in Southwark (the free use of which was very kindly offered by the owner Philip Thwaites), before a final showing at the Gallery at 70 Cowcross Street in Farringdon.



Seamen's Orphanage, Newsham Park. This magnificent Gothic Revival building by Alfred Waterhouse has been empty since 1988. Photo: Paul Barker

A colour, 48-page catalogue of the exhibition edited by Robert Hradsky and featuring essays by Marcus Binney, Gavin Stamp and others is available from SAVE, although stocks are running low (see Publications).

Sheerness Dockyard makes WMF Watch List

With SAVE as the official nominator, Sheerness Dockyard on the Isle of Sheppey, Kent, has been included on the World Monument Fund's list of Watch sites for 2010 (one of 96 key 'at risk' historic sites around the world).



Grade II* Dockyard Church, Sheerness. Burned in 2001. Photo: Kate Peters

The spectacular 60-acre site, laid out by engineer-architect John Rennie and developed, largely, between 1813 and 1830, included monumental stores and warehouses, basins, dry docks, an infirmary, barracks and accommodation for officers in the form of mansions and terraces. The multi-storey iron-framed Boat Store added in 1858 was the first of its kind in the world and a precursor to the skyscraper.

The dockyard continued in naval use until 1962 when it closed and was sold to a commercial dock company. The site was very little known and in the course of the next two decades over 50 listed structures were destroyed with the minimum of public outcry. Despite the terrible losses, the site still contains a wealth of historic buildings. The problem now is that a majority of these structures stand empty and decaying.

One of these buildings, Dockyard Church, has been on the SAVE Buildings at Risk Register for several years. A fire in 2001 reduced it to a shell and, recently, an application was approved for a residential conversion which now looks unlikely to happen. In the meantime this magnificent Grade II* building continues to decay.

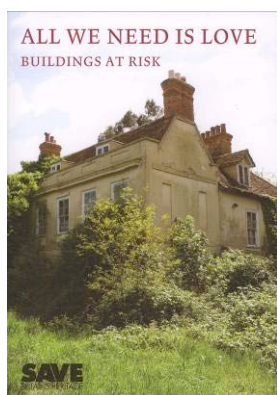
There is now, at last, a real sense that the historic dockyard has turned a corner. The historic buildings are split between three owners. One, the commercial port, has recently leased a dry dock building to the Medway Maritime Trust which will restore it for the repair of historic vessels. It is hoped that the inclusion on the WMF Watch List will also embolden the Local Authority to put the other owners under renewed pressure either to carry out repair and maintenance work, or sell at a realistic price to a building preservation trust.

So, for Sheerness Dockyard inclusion on the Watch List comes at a key moment. The site has huge potential as a tourist attraction, a heritage hub and a residential quarter. The various parties involved in its guardianship can now sit down with the local community, heritage bodies,

preservation trusts and the planning authority and move forward to achieve these aims.

To find out more about the WMF 2010 Watch List visit www.wmf.org.uk

BUILDINGS AT RISK 2009-10



This year's Building at Risk Catalogue, *All We Need is Love*, sold out in just 4 weeks. Orders were boosted by a number of press features including an article in *The Sunday Times*. Months of painstaking research by Catherine Townsend, SAVE's Buildings at Risk Officer, produced the most agonising parade of delightful and decaying historic buildings that SAVE has yet produced. Included in the list of over 100 featured buildings are classic Queen Anne and Regency houses, weather-boarded Essex farmhouses, old rectories, town houses built for wealthy merchants, pretty but forlorn village pubs, and a perfect William and Mary Dolls' House belonging to the Ministry of Defence. Larger buildings include prominent local landmarks such as the art College at Derby, the Prison at Plymouth, several town halls, post offices, schools, chapels and hotels.

This year's publication followed the new format of the 2008 catalogue - handbook-sized and packed full of colour photographs. It also featured additional articles - including a section looking at properties from previous SAVE reports which have been successfully repaired, and other chapters focusing on particular building types and problem areas (including a section on 'scandals'). There is also information on buildings at risk in Northern Ireland.

Although the catalogue is sold out, an online version will soon be available free to all friends of SAVE (this is in addition to access to our online register (featuring over 1,000 properties). See our website for updates. If you can't wait, an electronic version can be ordered for £5.

PATHFINDER

Toxteth Street CPO Confirmed

In February, SAVE and local residents learned they had failed in a bid to quash a Compulsory Purchase Order for 500 Victorian terraced houses in east Manchester. In a shocking breach of protocol (for which it was rightly reprimanded by government), the council's

'regeneration' agency, New East Manchester, leaked the result to the press before informing objectors. SAVE, which had participated in the Inquiry and presented an alternative scheme to the council's plans for demolition and redevelopment, was appraised of the result by a local newspaper.



Toxteth Street from the air with visualised improvements by Mark Hines including new blocks at the ends of terraces and prefabricated rear extensions. Original photo: Jonathan Webb

The news was not wholly unexpected but was still a bitter blow to residents who had fought so long to save their homes. Manchester City Council had identified the Toxteth Street CPO Inquiry as a 'must win' case and had brought in its top legal team (at considerable expense) in order to secure victory. During the Inquiry the council refused to give figures for the cost of its redevelopment scheme and admitted it had failed to take into account the environmental impact of demolition.

SAVE had built its case around a series of proposals for refurbishing and remodelling the houses, devised by the architect Mark Hines. The proposals demonstrated how retaining and modifying the houses could deliver the variety of accommodation the council said was needed, and at a cost considerably lower than demolition and redevelopment. Meanwhile, structural engineer Brian Morton was called in by SAVE to attest to the fine construction quality and detailing of the existing houses.

Now, with the economic downturn playing havoc with the HMRI funding model, there seems little chance that the 'regeneration' of Toxteth Street will be achieved in the near future, if at all. Although the council and its partner developer, Lovell, insist the project is still on track, it is hard to see how the scheme could be remotely viable in the current financial climate. There is now a real danger that the existing terraces will simply be cleared and the site left empty until such time as the market recovers.

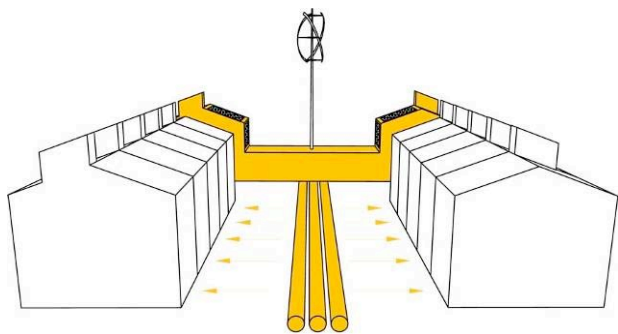
The plans to redevelop Toxteth Street were first tabled in 2001 and since then the shadow of demolition has taken a terrible toll. As properties were acquired by the council, stripped-out and boarded up, the area declined dramatically. After plans for demolition were approved in 2005 the new threat of the compulsory purchase only worsened the blight. Now, this battered and broken community is faced with the prospect of years of further delays. Refurbishment could have been achieved at a fraction of the cost and in the space of a year or two. In

this way, Toxteth Street epitomises the madness of Pathfinder.

Partly thanks to Pathfinder clearances, Greater Manchester now has 50,000 empty properties. Currently 100,000 people are on housing waiting lists. Common sense would dictate that now is the time to abandon grandiose and destructive redevelopment plans and focus on rehabilitating existing housing.

Streets of the Future - Pathfinder Report II

SAVE's fruitful collaboration with architect Mark Hines continues. Mark has now developed his groundbreaking work for the Toxteth Street CPO Inquiry into a more detailed study. As reported in the last newsletter, the Toxteth research has spawned a sister project looking at how existing terraced housing can be adapted, upgraded and remodelled to a high standard of energy efficiency. Terraces lend themselves well to such eco-refits and can be linked together on communal heat and power networks supplied by green energy.



Communal heat and power. The future for terraced housing? Drawing by Spencer Owen for the new SAVE report

The Toxteth Street case study and the 'Eco Communities' proposals have been brought together in a new publication, *Streets of the Future: Unlocking the Benefits of Terraced Housing* which will be available from SAVE in December.

Gateshead - 3rd time unlucky for hapless council

Since its first successful challenge last year (reported in the December 2008 *Newsletter*), SAVE has fought off two further attempts by the council to demolish a swathe of Victorian terraced houses in Bensham, Gateshead.



Housing in Bensham, Gateshead

Bensham is a residential district in Gateshead, characterised by streets of late 19th-century terraced streets, some laid out on dramatic inclines diving down into the Tyne valley. The area was created as a new working-class suburb, with many of the houses built as 'Tyneside flats', an innovative arrangement with two separate front doors leading to an upper and a lower apartment, both with access to a rear yard. These new flats were designed to prevent overcrowding by discouraging multi-occupancy and much care was taken in their design, red brick with sandstone dressings being the prevailing building materials. Bensham, and its neighbouring district Saltwell, are served by a vibrant high street and an award-winning restored Victorian park.

Unfortunately, the curse of Pathfinder (the government's Housing Market Renewal Initiative) has left a large part of this attractive area blighted. Although some streets have been refurbished, hundreds of houses are earmarked for demolition to make way, one day (the council hasn't yet decided), for a new residential development. Bensham is one area where demolitions are proposed, some 400 houses are earmarked for clearance.



Good housing stock left to decay. Denton, Newcastle

Although one and a half streets in Bensham were flattened (and the sites grassed over) in 2006, SAVE's subsequent intervention has prevented the loss of another 154 houses earmarked for destruction in phase 1 of the project. The houses at risk are on Armstrong Street, Brunel Street, Macadam Street, Trevethick Street and Saltwell Road. Although arranged as Tyneside flats, each house is easily capable of conversion to a generously sized single dwelling. In fact in a move that encapsulates the lunacy of this scheme, the council is currently undertaking just such a conversion on a building on the side of Armstrong Street, which falls outside the clearance zone. Meanwhile, across the valley in Scotswood, a suburb of Newcastle, a vast wasteland, interrupted by a few half-demolished streets, gives a vivid and disturbing picture of the terrible destruction wreaked on the area in the past few years in the name of Pathfinder.

In Bensham, meanwhile, the council has embarked on a laudable eco-refurb project in Macadam Street, repairing

and upgrading two flats and converting the building to a single dwelling. Bizarrely, the building is identical to those on the other side of the street which are boarded up and earmarked for demolition.

SAVE's legal challenges (brought by our lawyer Susan Ring at Richard Buxton Solicitors) have been based on the failure of the council to carry out the required Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) on the demolition zone. The council has managed to tie itself up in knots. On one hand it is arguing that demolition is not connected to redevelopment and is therefore not subject to EIA, and on the other it is promising new homes on the site.

The last application for demolition was withdrawn quickly following a letter from SAVE's lawyers pointing out that, amongst other things, basic mistakes had been made on the application paperwork. The situation would be funny if it wasn't causing so much heartbreak and suffering on the ground.

With HMRI seemingly on its last legs the question is, can SAVE delay the Gateshead demolitions long enough, to allow for a change of regime and attitude within the council?

UPDATES

Clarence Street, Bolton

Sadly, our successful last-ditch legal challenge was not enough to prevent the eventual demolition of a former Board School in Bolton. A moral victory was secured when the council admitted it had acted unlawfully in approving and proceeding with the demolition of the former community college on Clarence Street, but a second application was pushed through weeks later.



Clarence Street Community College falls victim to the bulldozers

Huw Thomas's alluring vision for the rehabilitation of the threatened Tottenham terrace



744-766 High Road, Tottenham

The 1880s unlisted Board School in Little Bolton was one of the few buildings of note in an area to have escaped a swathe of demolitions over the past few decades. After identifying the school in one of its own reports as 'a significant landmark building ...worthy of retention' the council suddenly had a change of mind and, three months later, decided to demolish it for a car park. In a dramatic move, with demolition underway, SAVE obtained an injunction against the council, before successfully quashing demolition consent.

For a few weeks it seemed that the council would see the light and look seriously at the repair and reuse of the school. The Prince's Regeneration Trust expressed interest in the case, and the Churches Conservation Trust (who secured lottery funding last year for the rehabilitation of the nearby Grade II* listed church All Souls) offered expert advice on identifying regeneration options. But it was all to no avail. With demolition having begun, the council deemed repair too costly and at a council meeting in February its fate was sealed. The scandal of this case was that in basing its decision on the fact that the building had been too badly damaged by the aborted demolition works, the council had actually taken advantage of its own unlawful behaviour.

This whole affair has proved expensive and embarrassing for the Local Authority, and we now hope that, at the very least, Bolton Council will think twice in future before callously and unlawfully condemning one of its historic buildings.

Spurs Football Ground Redevelopment



Huw Thomas's drawing showing how the retained buildings could create a new public square beside the stadium

As part of a campaign to save a stretch of historic buildings on Tottenham High Road from demolition as part of proposals to redevelop Spurs's football ground, SAVE commissioned architect Huw Thomas to produce drawings showing how this delightful group of 18th- and 19th-century buildings could look if repaired and integrated within the new stadium scheme.

Huw's drawings have proved a hit with locals and have won the full support of Tottenham Civic Society.

At a lively meeting in February SAVE, together with Huw Thomas, presented its ideas to the football club. The club quickly dismissed the scheme as unworkable, but couldn't seem to make up its mind whether this was because of naming rights (i.e. the little buildings would get in the way of the branded entrance to the stadium); for physical reasons (specifically, that the terrace stood in the way of a new public piazza), or because the houses represented a 'security threat' and health and safety hazard.

In fact, the only clear message that came across at this meeting was that Spurs had not given any real thought to how the High Road terrace - which includes two listed buildings (all within a Conservation Area) - could be retained and the positive contribution the buildings could make to the new development. A full application was expected in April but has yet to materialise, perhaps indicating that other bodies such as EH and the Mayor's office have concerns over the heritage impact of the scheme.

Huw Thomas's scheme has been reproduced as a handsome greetings card, suitable for Christmas and all occasions. To order visit the SAVE website.

The Supreme Court and the Middlesex Guildhall - the real story

Last week the judges were sworn in at the UK's new Supreme Court. The Court is housed at the Middlesex Guildhall, a Grade II* listed building adapted to its new function at a cost of £59 million. The conversion of the building saw the loss of key historic interiors and the wrecking of unique fixtures and fittings, including some of the finest examples of decorative woodcarving of the period. Thanks to the Supreme Court publicity steamroller, little of this has been reported in the press.



Photo: James Mortimer

The Middlesex Guildhall was built in 1906-13. The architect, James Gibson, collaborated on the project with sculptor H C Fehr to produce a late Gothic Revival masterpiece. The principal room and three courts were elaborately decorated and fitted out with delicately carved woodwork. Many of these interiors, once applauded for their quality and completeness, have now

been drastically altered, and the fittings stripped out, as part of the Supreme Court scheme.

In 2006 SAVE launched a campaign opposing the damaging proposals for the conversion of the building, publishing the report 'The Guildhall Testimonial'. When Westminster Council granted consent for the new court, SAVE took the case to judicial review on the basis that the decision was contrary to national and local policy on the treatment of listed buildings. Despite advice and assistance from the brilliant David Cooper and QC Joe Harper, the challenge was unsuccessful. The story was reported in our November 2006 and July 2007 *Newsletters*.

The 2006 SAVE report can also be viewed on our website. Several paper copies are also available to purchase priced at £5 plus £2.50 p&p.

CASEWORK

Gurdwara, Gravesend

A Sikh temple and former church in Gravesend, Kent, has escaped demolition following a successful legal challenge by SAVE's lawyers.

Although unlisted, the Gurdwara is in a conservation area and in good condition. Early in August, the council approved an application for its demolition to make way for a new residential development - a decision taken in the face of strong opposition from SAVE, the Victorian Society, Urban Gravesham (the Civic Society), and local residents. SAVE then instructed its lawyers, Susan Ring of Richard Buxton Solicitors and Barrister Harriet Townsend of 2-3 Gray's Inn Square, to issue a legal challenge based on a number of grounds, including a failure by the council to follow proper procedure in ignoring both national planning guidance and the advice of its own conservation officer.



The Gurdwara (former Milton Congregational Church), Clarence Hill, Gravesend

In September the council conceded defeat. The planning committee will now reconsider the application.

The Gurdwara was originally built as a congregational church. The architect was Sir John Sulman (1849-1934) who built over 70 other churches in this country. However, he is best known for his work in Australia, where he became a leading architect and an important figure in the field of town planning. He designed a number of civic and institutional buildings including the Civic Centre buildings in Canberra and is credited with playing an important role in the development of Australia's cultural identity.

The church falls within the Windmill Hill Conservation Area and has also been included in a list of buildings of local interest. In opposing the application to demolish, SAVE, together with other objectors, argued that this was a landmark building which made a positive contribution to the conservation area and that its loss would not be outweighed by the public benefits of the new development. Since its construction, the building has been more or less in constant use and has been well maintained. Despite WWII bomb damage and some unsympathetic alterations it has retained its overall integrity and much of its original fabric.

Included in the grounds for SAVE's legal challenge was the claim that consent for demolition ran contrary to Gravesham Council's conservation policy, as laid out in the recent conservation area appraisal. Also, crucially, SAVE felt the council failed to pay proper attention to national heritage guidelines for the demolition of buildings within conservation areas as set out in PPG15. SAVE argued from the outset that the motive for demolition appeared to be purely financial and there was little evidence that the feasibility of other uses had been seriously investigated.

The Aveling and Porter Building, Strood, Kent

Medway Council has plans to destroy a landmark Edwardian commercial building which occupies a commanding position on the riverside at Strood in north Kent. SAVE has backed a campaign begun by the City of Rochester Society and has submitted an application for spot-listing.



The headquarters of the world renowned steamroller manufacturers, Aveling & Porter, on the Esplanade, Strood.

The unlisted Aveling and Porter building is one of only a handful of buildings of architectural and historic significance in Strood. It was built in 1903 and was designed by prolific local architect George E Bond as the headquarters of Aveling and Porter, world-renowned manufacturers of agricultural engines and road rollers. The firm built its first steam engine on the site in 1861 and went on to become the world's leading producer of steam rollers. Following its success the company expanded and there was the need for a handsome new office building. It has stood as a prominent landmark on the Esplanade in Strood riverside ever since.

Medway Council has recently completed new, rather expensive, offices, leaving this fine, solid and well-maintained Edwardian building surplus to requirements. The council now proposes to flatten the building to facilitate the sale of the wider site to developers.



Huw Thomas creates a riverside development with the Aveling & Porter building at its heart

Although currently empty, the building is extremely well built, in good condition and remarkably intact (all the original windows survive for example). Clearly, it is eminently capable of conversion to a number of new uses and the headquarters could be the jewel in any future scheme for the Esplanade. Its waterside location, with views across the Medway to Rochester, is a major attraction.

SAVE has backed a campaign begun by the City of Rochester Society and has submitted an application for spot-listing. In the meantime, it has commissioned architect Huw Thomas to produce a visionary scheme showing how the building can be incorporated into a new riverside development.

Elvian School, Reading

The 19th-century suburban villa is one of Britain's most enjoyable and varied building types. Sadly, it is also one of the most overlooked and endangered, with many demolitions in recent years. Two fine examples under threat are Rotherfield Grange and Oakland Hall which are earmarked for destruction as part of a redevelopment (with private sports centre) by Elvian School in Reading. SAVE was alerted to this case by the Reading Civic Society earlier this year.

Oakland Hall is a handsome villa dating from the 1870s, sitting in well-planted grounds. As well as beautifully

detailed brickwork, it has an exceptionally pretty cast-iron veranda with serpentine roof. Inside, the house retains many original features including chimney-pieces, doorcases stained glass and a particularly elegant screen. The building is not listed nor in a conservation area but it is of a quality that merits retention.



Oakland Hall with its delightful veranda

SAVE has written to the school's owners, the Licensed Trade Charity to appeal for the redevelopment proposals to be amended so this graceful, dignified building can be retained.

63 Clerkenwell Road, London

A long-dreaded application to demolish the former Turnmills nightclub building in Clerkenwell has been controversially approved by Islington Council.



63 Clerkenwell Road, another central London landmark building about to bite the dust

63 Clerkenwell Road is an unlisted late Victorian building located within the Clerkenwell Green Conservation Area. It was built by the Great Northern Railway Company as stables and warehousing - constructed in 1886-87 to the designs of GNR engineer Richard Johnson. Since 1985 the building has been in a number of uses, most recently as office space, a night club (Turnmills) and restaurant. In 2004 SAVE was involved in a campaign to have the building spot-listed but the application was eventually rejected on the basis that the building was too altered.

The building occupies an important position at the entrance of the Clerkenwell Green Conservation Area,

and forms a handsome partnership to the splendid Grade II* listed Middlesex Sessions House opposite. The proposed replacement office block is, in SAVE's view, over-scaled and depressingly banal and would do nothing to sustain or enhance the special qualities of the conservation area.

In objecting to the application SAVE stated a desire to see the building retained and restored. SAVE argued that the former courtyard could be reinstated, lifting the presently light-starved offices in the heart of the building - and if extra space was sought that there was the possibility of extending upwards in a considered manner.

Sale Hotel, Greater Manchester

Sale Hotel, with its eccentric fairytale staircase turret, is all that remains of the town's botanical pleasure gardens that were once such an attraction of national renown. When SAVE learned of its impending demolition it wrote to the council expressing the opinion that its destruction prior to an application for redevelopment (i.e. without any consideration or vision of what might replace it) was irresponsible and needlessly destructive.



The eccentric and delightful Sale Hotel. Photograph courtesy of the Victorian Society

Happily, we can now report that the council has since served the owners with a Building Preservation Notice, giving this delightful and lonely memorial to Sale's once great tourist industry a six-month reprieve pending a listing review.

12-32 Lampton Road, Hounslow, London

The plight of Lampton Road came to SAVE's notice in September. The houses in this jolly Victorian terrace have been boarded up for a number of years, and are now under threat of demolition as part of a forthcoming planning application.

Although much degraded by alterations, the characterful terrace provides a much-needed historic 'anchor' in this part of the borough. SAVE wrote to Hounslow expressing its deep concern over the loss of this group, calling for a scheme in which the facades, and other key surviving features, would be retained, and lost architectural detail reinstated (such as railings and other ironwork). In its letter SAVE made the obvious point that this kind of conservation-led solution, invariably results in superior and more profitable development. As well as raising the status of the new development, such a

solution would be to the great advantage of the street scene and to the borough as a whole.

Horncastle Town Hall, Lincolnshire

SAVE was dismayed to learn that East Lindsey District Council had approved plans to demolish Horncastle Town Hall.



The Town Hall was built in 1901 as a drill hall for the 1st Battalion Lincolnshire Regiment, from funds raised by public subscription. It is a good, solid, Edwardian building - simple but well detailed - and is typical of the period. It has been well maintained and is in sound condition. The building has a fascinating history, including spells as a hospital for wounded troops during both World Wars. Although unlisted its importance has been recognised by the award of a heritage blue plaque from the Horncastle Civic Society.

In 2006 a the Horncastle Town Hall Working Group was set up at the suggestion of council to show how a small amount of investment could revitalise the building - and that there was a good deal of interest from community groups in using the space, and installing new facilities. The group produced a report which included an excellent conversion scheme (pictured), subsequently dismissed by the council.

However, the excellent news is that freehold of the building has since been offered to the town council to lease which intends to lease it to the Working Group. It now looks like the future of the Town Hall is secure.

Wesley Street Mill, Bamber Bridge, Preston

Wesley Street mill, formerly the premises of the Bamber Bridge Spinning and Weaving Company, is a substantial 19th-century building and powerful reminder of Preston's rich industrial past. Although much neglected and badly vandalised it retains attractive details, such as classical swags and volutes on the tower, and delightful ornate lettering.

Press reports have focused on the run down state of the mill, indicating that the only options are demolition or continued decay. With so many examples of successful conversions of large textile manufactories, there seems little excuse for the failure to save Wesley Street Mill. In the 1980s SAVE's groundbreaking exhibition *Satanic Mills* did much to change perceptions - showing how

these often daunting buildings could make excellent residential and mixed-use conversions.

We wrote a strong letter to South Ribble Borough Council urging the retention of the mill and including a copy of our 1990 publication *Bright Future: The Re-use of Industrial Buildings* (of which we still have copies available).

Westcliffe Hospital, Chell, Stoke-on-Trent



The imposing red brick blocks of Westcliffe Hospital (pictured), distinguished by their neat stone dressings and projecting bays, formed part of a late 19th-century extension to Wolstanton and Burslem workhouse. The demolition of the hospital has been proposed by the council as part of a new care home development. A strong local campaign began last year to save the buildings.

SAVE wrote to urge the council to delay demolition in order to give time to review the project and investigate how the buildings might be retained and converted to residential use. We were not convinced that any serious consideration has been given to this possibility, or, of the savings this could make in terms of both energy and materials.

The British Museum, London

Camden Council's rejection of the initial application for the proposed north-west extension to the British Museum (by architects Rogers Stirk Harbour & Partners) was as unexpected as it was welcome. SAVE was one of the critics of the scheme, writing to Camden expressing various concerns and recommending refusal.

Whilst acknowledging the need for a new exhibition space and improved conservation and storage facilities at the Museum SAVE felt that the scheme was damaging for a number of reasons.

First, we were concerned about the impact on the proposed main pavilion on the Arched Room (one of those great forgotten museum spaces) as well as on the King Edward VII building. The new block was to be squeezed in so tightly between the 19th- and 20th-

century buildings, that it would block not only important façades but also natural light.

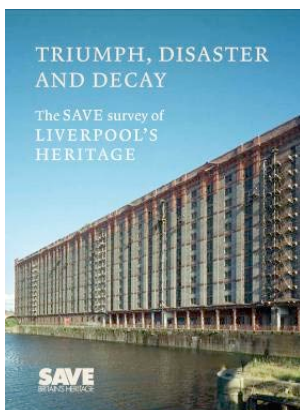
We were also unhappy about the creation of four new openings on the north side of the Great Court which would spoil the symmetry and purity of this monumental elevation.

Lastly, SAVE also had strong misgivings about the demolition of the two facsimile Georgian houses on Montague Place (Nos 1 & 2). These houses were reconstructed in the 1960s under the direction of the Local Authority after the existing buildings collapsed following unauthorised works. We felt that to dismiss them as worthless replicas was missing the point of the original enforcement action. Also, the existing buildings undoubtedly make a positive contribution to the streetscape and help enforce the distinctive character of the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. We felt they could and should have been retained and integrated within the new scheme. What's more, the proposed replacement block on Montague Place was, in our view, undistinguished and would have a negative impact on the character of this part of the conservation area. It failed to relate to the vista from Malet Street (a very important view) in any meaningful way and, with its stone-clad corner tower, displayed an asymmetry that would run contrary to the balanced classicism of the existing buildings or their neighbours.

Despite support from English Heritage, the application was refused. A new application has now been submitted and, although there are improvements to the height and placement of the new pavilion, the openings in the Great Court and the destruction of the facsimile buildings remain contentious. SAVE is minded to object once again.

NEW PUBLICATIONS

Triumph, Disaster and Decay - The SAVE Survey of Liverpool's Heritage

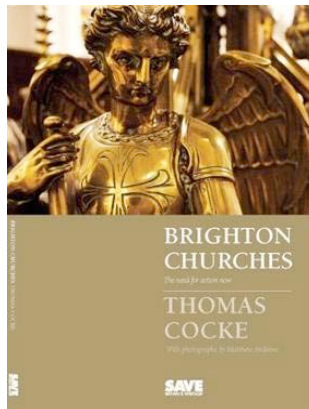


Published to accompany our 2009 Liverpool exhibition, this report shines the spotlight on fine buildings suffering from long-term neglect and tackles issues such as new development in the World Heritage Site and mass clearance in the suburbs under Pathfinder.

The report, edited by Robert Hradskysy and superbly illustrated with new photography by Paul Barker, features essays by Marcus Binney, Gavin Stamp, Richard Pollard and Jonathan Brown.

48 pages, full colour. £12.50 (£10.00 Friends Price)

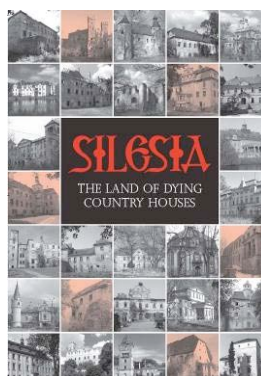
Brighton Churches: The Need for Action Now



Central Brighton is home to a number of 19th-century churches of great size and beauty. This report by the late Thomas Cocke - with stunning new photography by Matthew Andrews - examines the superb but all too little-known interiors of these churches and warns that, with rising costs of repair and maintenance combined with declining congregations, the threat of closure looms for many.

95 pages, full colour, 100 illustrations. £20.00 (£18.00 for Friends).

Silesia - The Land of Dying Country Houses



Silesia, in western Poland, was one of the richest and most fertile provinces in Europe. Almost every village had its own great house and grand set of farm buildings. Many of these remarkable houses now stand empty and decaying - a product of Silesia's turbulent history. This report by Marcus Binney, Kit Martin and Wojciech Wagner identifies the scale of the problem, describing over 100 houses, most in desperate need of repair, and suggesting strategies for rescue and reuse.

Among them are fine examples, large and small, of Renaissance, Baroque, Neo-classical and Romantic architecture. Yet the overwhelming majority stand empty and disused and many of these are crumbling rapidly

into ruin. Nearby there are often large courtyards of farm buildings with distinctive eyebrow roofs sweeping over the upper windows. These houses often stand in the heart of villages many of which are only two or three kilometres apart, for this is fertile farming country.

This book not only captures the desperate plight of these remarkable houses, but also looks at the ways in which they might be brought back to life by new owners, whether as single houses or sensitively divided for several families to occupy. A few have been successfully restored as hotels. When Poland gained independence from the Soviet bloc, many of these properties were handed to an agricultural agency with a view to selling them. But most of the sales have been to speculators and the houses remain empty.

The plight of these houses is a product of Silesia's turbulent history. First Polish, then Czech and thereafter Austrian, it was seized by the Prussians in the mid-18th century. As the Soviet armies thrust into Germany early in 1945, the German population fled and was evicted, to be replaced by Poles who had been evicted by the Soviets from the east of Poland.

This book is intended for all those fascinated by great country houses and the families which lived in them, whether as armchair reading, property guide or companion on a tour of Silesia.

122 pages. Full colour. £15 (£13 for Friends)

Moscow Heritage at Crisis Report - 2nd Edition

Following up from the 2007 report this new edition brings our attention back to the continued threat to Moscow's architectural heritage. This latest bilingual report from SAVE Europe's Heritage and MAPS (Moscow Architectural Preservation Society), with support from DoCoMoMo International, lists the latest losses, the current threats and proposals to help protect Moscow's historic buildings. The new edition, which includes 200 illustrations in its 128 pages, also features information on threats to St Petersburg.

£18.00 (no Friends discount)

EVENTS

Silesia Report Launch Party

SAVE is offering limited places to Friends for the Silesia Report launch on Tuesday 1 December. The party will be held at the Gallery, 75 Cowcross Street, EC1M 6EL from 6 to 8pm. RSVP to the office (details below).

OFFICE NEWS

Website - Appeal for Funds

SAVE's new and improved website has now been up and running for over a year. It is simpler to use and

much easier for us to update. It also offers improved access to the on-line Buildings at Risk Register.

We now want to implement an improved on-line ordering, donation and membership system to reduce the need for posted reminders and streamline payments. These developments have been costed at £8,000 - which is considerably beyond our means. So, any help you can give would be hugely welcome.

New BAR Researcher

SAVE is delighted to announce the appointment of Rhiannon Tracy as SAVE's new Buildings at Risk researcher. Rhiannon is now working on next year's printed register and would be interested to hear about Grade II listed and/ or unlisted vacant buildings of historical or architectural note, which are at risk from dereliction, decay or vandalism and in need of a new use. She would also like to hear about Grade I and II* listed buildings at risk, which are vacant and for sale. Please do get in touch.

Chosen buildings will be featured online and around 100 new entries will be chosen for inclusion in our annual catalogue with the aim of inspiring and empowering people to take a more active role in protecting and cherishing their historic environment.

A good photograph is worth a thousand words and we cannot feature a building in the catalogue without one. So please send us your pictures (300 dpi minimum) if you can, along with your suggestions, to Rhiannon at the office email or postal address.

The deadline for suggestions is early January.

SAVE is now on Facebook and Twitter!

SAVE has joined Facebook and Twitter! These free networking and messaging services are powerful communications tools and have been proven to be invaluable ways of communicating a message. They can be especially useful to small organisations to help generate awareness and support.

Facebook is a social networking site where members have individual accounts and can join groups created by other members. On a group, information can be posted, members can exchange messages and discuss topics and photographs can be uploaded. SAVE will use both services to update group members and followers on our recent work and activity. For example, we have used Twitter and Facebook to help find buildings at risk for next year's register.

Just follow the instructions at www.facebook.com & www.twitter.com

Friends - help us with your renewals

Has your Friends subscription expired? If you are unsure or would like to renew then please contact Denise Neilson, Administrator, at the SAVE office.