



Newsletter – April 2003

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'Risky Buildings' – The SAVE 2003 Buildings at Risk Catalogue

Good news for all budding restorers and seasoned campaigners – the new buildings at risk catalogue (SAVE's 14th) is hot off the press and clogging up the office. In order to make room for us to move around the office without injury, we are once again offering the catalogue for sale to Friends of SAVE for £8 (£10 to anyone else).

This year's selection of 95 buildings in England and 16 in Wales contains 69 buildings entirely new to SAVE and 25 which are directly for sale. There are also a number of entries where local authorities are keen to take action but need bona fide individuals to take the buildings on and bring them back to life, as well, of course, as a number where some gentle persuasion might be needed.....

The buildings range from cottages to halls, theatres to forts, covering the whole spectrum of condition, from roofless and overgrown to just a little ragged around the edges. All are crying out for enthusiastic, energetic and imaginative new owners. Are you up to the challenge?

SAVE Book Fair, Thursday 22nd May

Building on the success of last year's book fair, we will be holding second book fair in the Gallery, 77 Cowcross Street, London, with a wide range of conservation organisations and societies attending. Please do come to stock up on summer reading. Those of you who make it along after work in the evening will be rewarded with a glass of wine or some other form of refreshment to help ease away the day's strains and forget how much you have spent on the splendid publications on offer.

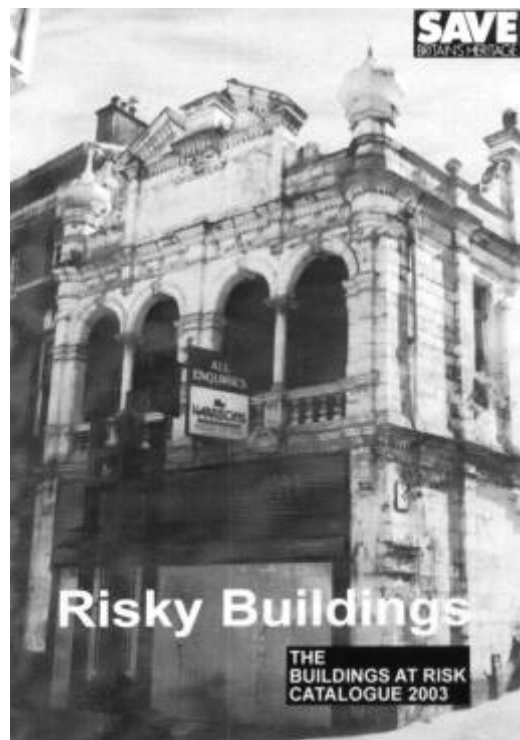
The nearest tube station, about a minute's walk is Farringdon, on the Circle, Metropolitan and Hammersmith and City Lines. In the event that the Central Line is running properly, Chancery lane is a five minute stroll.

Severalls Asylum, Colchester

Our efforts in Colchester are bearing fruit. Firstly, pressure from ourselves and local campaigners has resulted in a renewed application by the NHS's divestment agents, Capitec, which retains more than was originally proposed, but still not very much of this remarkably complete asylum complex.

Secondly, we have requested the listing of the asylum on the grounds that it is architecturally rather handsome and is one of a decreasing number – we did a quick survey of echelon plan hospitals and found that only 10 or so out of the 25 built survive in any recognisable form. DCMS initially resolutely refused to reopen the file on the complex, stating that it had been deemed not listable in 1995. The world has moved on in the last 8 years, and it is high time the oft-hinted at agreement between English Heritage and Government over the listing of asylums and hospitals was reversed and proper protection granted to this heritage.

Finally, following a public meeting in Colchester on the subject of the asylum, we have pulled together various disparate parties and believe that we may be able to put together alternative plans for the site. This was spurred on by the discovery that Essex County Council had commissioned a report on how the less easy to reuse parts of the site might be reused, and that Colchester Borough Council had shamefully sat on it for almost a year. The study sees the hall and auxiliary buildings converted to a centre for musical excellence run by the Colchester Institute. We will investigate this possibility further.



'Risky buildings' is now available from SAVE for £10 (£8 for Friends of SAVE)

English Heritage

There have been some odd decisions made recently by English Heritage which one would not normally expect, judged against its usual standards for applying policy and common sense. This gives serious cause for concern: EH would seem to be under undue pressure from a higher authority.

First is the EH Commission's apparent acceptance of the 217 metre, 53 storey Minerva Tower in London against the strong advice of EH officers and its London Advisory Committee. The result was a letter in which only the mildest objection was made to the proposals and which will almost certainly be ignored by the Corporation of London ('we consider aspects of the proposal would damage the setting of the Tower of London' was about the strongest sentence in their letter to the Corporation). To briefly recap, the problem with this colossal building is that it will allow the gradual infilling of space in the sky behind the Tower of London, a World Heritage Site when viewed from the south. If there is no protection for the setting of the WHS, then what hope for a humble Grade II listed building, as enshrined in legislation.

There is a serious need for proper consistency in EH's approach to tall buildings. Its stance at the Heron inquiry and forthcoming London Bridge Inquiry looked strong and unassailable. In the case of Minerva, however, they appear to have chosen a fancy design over location, ignoring their own '[Guidance on Tall Buildings](#)' launched in March this year and discussed below. The fear of losing another public inquiry might have been in their minds, but the result of this prevaricating approach could be to undermine any position they take against all tall building proposals. A further worry on this front is that they have shown a willingness in the discussion of Mayor Livingston's London Plan to give away up to 2/3^{rds} of the view corridors of St. Paul's Cathedral in strategic views.

A similarly counterproductive, if not downright bizarre approach is being taken by EH in the case of the Governor's Garden at Berwick-Upon-Tweed. Here, as reported in the last newsletter, the local authority in trying to do the right thing, has produced a sensible development brief for a site in the centre of this wonderful historic town. In response to an application which would exceed all the limitations of the development brief, EH has given thumbs up, couching its language so as to disguise the way in which the development would break the rules. (They stated that the height and bulk of the application was fine as '45% of the bulk of the scheme respects the maximum height restriction in the brief [for the site] and a further 30% is only one storey above it'. In other words, they are giving the nod to an application which is way over the limits set by the local authority.)

SAVE hopes that these and the other few strange decisions are not to become the norm, although the recent musings of the Head of Urban Strategies and

Listings at EH, quoted extensively in Building Design, do very little to assuage our fears. These were along the lines of dropping current listed building protection in cases involving large developments in favour of individual agreements with developers as to how specific historic buildings can be developed – the net result of such a move is likely to be a series of increasingly complex precedents which will weaken the level of protection, making any system impossible to enforce and giving lawyers a field day.

As we have pointed out so vigorously in Northern Ireland over the last two years, there is no point in having a system if you cannot or simply don't enforce it. There is therefore a latent danger that local authorities that try to do the right thing for historic buildings on their patch could end up without any support from EH.

It is therefore essential that during the forthcoming review of the designations system EH's own agenda is not allowed to dominate the valid concerns of the rest of the heritage world. One of the questions we expect to see asked by DCMS in this review is whether more powers over listed buildings should be delegated to local authorities. This comes at a time when EH has just launched a report highlighting the dreadful shortages in staff and funding faced by local authorities.

Our fear is that EH might turn into a benign spectator once again - commenting on applications that affect historic buildings rather than acting on them – as a result of pressure from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, which is forcing EH to 'modernise'. In return, EH may be coaxed with a little more funding from Government, as opposed to the ongoing scandalous decrease in its funding. A high price to pay: EH was established with increased powers and more money than the HBC. There is a real danger of turning back the clock and not tackling the problems facing the historic environment with firmness, conviction and funding.

RAE site, Farnborough

At long last serious progress is being made in what is currently our most stubborn case. Following a dark moment when the local authority passed Slough Estates' development brief for the site (which was inadequate in terms of the number of buildings it sought to retain), we were delighted to learn at the end of February that the Minister had decided to upgrade the listing of the major wind tunnels on the site. As a result the Transonic and the 24 foot wind tunnels are now Grade I listed, and the 1916 wind tunnel building known as R52 is newly listed at Grade II. This finally gives the site the degree of protection it deserves, albeit rather too late for some of the now lost buildings. R133, the transonic wind tunnel, is thought to be the only building in England dating from World War II listed at Grade I (it was completed in 1942).

This excellent news came only a couple of days after we had launched our own alternative vision for the site,

supported by English Heritage and Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust, which would involve converting some of the buildings on the site to housing, and others to work units. This would create enough value to allow us to purchase the site from Slough Estates, while endowing the wind tunnels. These would be repaired and low level uses started up in them, which could be built up over time to a level where they could support the buildings. Copies of the report are available gratis from SAVE by email (save@btinternet.com).

We await the reaction of Slough Estates on both these points with quite some interest.

The onus, of course, remains on the local authority to declare the remaining core a conservation area to ensure that any new development in the area will preserve the unique sense of place that remains thus far intact, although the Grade I listed status of the two main buildings should ensure that their setting is to some extent protected. However, the upgrading does not yet seem to have stirred any pride in the collective chest of the local authority, which seems just as determined as before to roll over and have its belly tickled by Slough Estates.

The effects of the new listings need to be considered in quite some detail, but the key points are this:

1. Farnborough is now acknowledged by Government as one of the most important historic aviation sites in the country – a significant improvement on its previous position
2. It cannot now be argued that the value of the site is in the individual buildings. Rather, the value is in the group and so any solution for the site should take a holistic view. Slough Estates will not be able to pick off individual buildings.
3. The development brief drawn up by Slough Estates for the site now needs to be thoroughly reconsidered.

In spite of our delight at the upgrades it is worth bearing in mind that it took year for the DCMS to come to a decision.

The other factor pertinent to the development of the site is the fact that the office market in the south east is currently as flat as a pancake, as is witnessed by the two buildings thus far constructed on Slough Estate's emerging campus at Farnborough: only one of the buildings is fully let, and the other, a key building by Norman Foster, has been let to a number of small, local businesses. Gordon Brown may not be such an enemy of conservation after all.

Meanwhile over the runway at **Pyestock** the massive former jet engine test facility is being decommissioned. This site was one of three key sites in the development of jet engines, and was used to test Concorde's massively powerful engines. With any luck, QinetiQ will not take the approach they are taking at RAE Bedford (below) and nor will English Heritage....

RAE Bedford

Farnborough's sister site near Bedford enjoys none of the protection that Farnborough has – indeed it is scheduled for clearance, and parts of it are already being sold off for scrap by its owners, QinetiQ. The site is entirely post war (with the exception of some of the machinery which was imported from various German research sites at the end of World War II) and consequently is carefully planned and laid out. The scale of the machinery is simply awesome, but for our site visit no cameras were allowed. We have asked for the listing of three of the dozen or so buildings on the site, but fear that the powers that be will settle for 'preservation by recording' – an oxymoron of a concept if ever there was. The reason for this? Because they have no obvious new use. This would appear to be approaching the argument from the wrong angle – although we have long championed the creative reuse of historic buildings, there are cases where this is simply not possible, and preservation as a monument of some sort is rather more appropriate.



Above: the 8ft x 8ft wind tunnel at Bedford. The lamp post and cars in the foreground give an idea of the scale

Cinemas

The Odeon has a proud heritage, yet in the age of the out of town multiplex, the physical vestiges of this heritage are frequently regarded by Odeon as either redundant, or a threat to its new multiplex cinemas. Thus it has recently seen fit to ensure that two of these fine edifices to popular entertainment are left without protection from the less sympathetic members of the developer community. Odeon has employed in both these cases the Halpern Partnership, which has been keen to boast of its expertise in arguing the case against the listing of historic buildings.

The first of these is the 1930s art deco **Paramount Newcastle**, taken on by Odeon in the 1960s. Despite being the most complete of the UK's six provincial Paramount theatres, Halpern successfully argued against its listing on the basis that a 1970s subdivision seriously detracted from its architectural interest, even though this was largely reversible. The size of the Paramount is staggering – in its heyday it was capable of seating around 2600. Its future is now uncertain – it is closed and up for sale, and apparently occupied by a 16 stone rottweiler and a couple of security guards.

The second is the **St. Helier Odeon**, a handsome landmark which was the first post war cinema in the British Isles. Halpern rather went for the jugular with a 50 page document arguing against the designation of the cinema as a SSI, Jersey's equivalent of a listed building, and in the process taking a rather high minded attitude toward Jersey's heritage committee and several well respected architectural historians. SAVE put in a lengthy and thorough rebuttal of this document, and SAVE Jersey's Heritage invited the cinema's original architects, TP Bennetts, to look at the possibilities of reuse. They drew up an interesting scheme for adapting the cinema as new national gallery for Jersey housing existing collections and loan exhibitions of Old Masters as well as contemporary arts shows. The scheme preserved the proscenium arch and main screen for use for film shows and exhibitions of work by the new generation of artists working with sound light and film.

Subsequently Jersey's Planning Committee have upgraded the listing of the cinema. Meanwhile, the cinema continues in use despite the opening of a new multiplex cinema nearby

Clearly it is possible to find new uses for old cinemas. With cinema-going in the UK somewhere near an all time high, there is a demand for single big screen cinemas showing either mainstream or arts house films, yet Odeon does not seem keen on this or other options for cinemas it believes redundant.

The Piano Building, Kidderminster

Permission was recently granted for the demolition of the Piano building (see SAVE Newsletter, October 2002) to make way for the construction of a multiplex cinema. SAVE objected to these proposals and requested the extension of the linear conservation area that follows the Staffordshire and Worcester canal beside which the Piano building and Slingfield Mill sit, while also writing with Kidderminster Civic Society to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport requesting the spot listing of the building, previous attempts by the Civic Society alone having failed.

At first glance the cinema proposals appeared rather pointless as there were alternative proposals (passed by the local authority) for cinema on another site in town that would not result in the loss of a handsome mill building. However, these proposals were referred to the Government Office for the region following complaints from the developer of the Piano building site that the alternative cinema proposals represented a departure from the local plan – a move that might be seen by some as rather cynical.

At the last minute, pretty much as the Secretary was writing this piece, the DCMS stepped in and listed the building at Grade II. This listing might be the spur needed to force some sensible thinking about the future of the canalside enclave of mill buildings that currently lie vacant and derelict in Kidderminster, although

judging from the initial vituperative backlash in the local press, some gentle persuasion might be needed.



The 'Piano building in Kidderminster, with Sligfield Mill peeping over its left shoulder.

Inserts

Along with this copy of the newsletter are two inserts. We do not wish to make a habit of this – however one is a truly worthy cause, in the form of the Public Sculptures and Monuments Association, and the other gives us a little extra cash to help with the printing of the newsletter and will hopefully be of interest to you. Any comments welcome!

181–201 Vauxhall Bridge Road, Pimlico

Mixed news from Pimlico. Following the excessively long struggle to get these buildings spot listed, all of the surrounding buildings on the Tatchbrook triangle were demolished by the site's owner, Westminster City Council, including a row of rather sweet single storey shops, which probably dated from the early nineteenth century.

Predictably, perhaps, an application to delist the remaining buildings was received by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. SAVE and the Georgian Group wrote objecting in the strongest possible terms to this, and it would appear that the attempt to delist failed. Sadly though, it would appear that Westminster City Council is almost as stubborn as we are, and they are apparently considering slapping a dangerous structures notice on the terrace.

We had previously written to the City Council suggesting the Spitalfields Trust as potential restorers of these buildings. The Trust has looked around the buildings and confirm that although not in the best condition, they certainly do not merit a DSN, and they would be willing to take them on and restore them. Westminster's determination to demolish these buildings is simply ridiculous and its double standards shocking.

Further down the Vauxhall Bridge Road, where it meets **Moreton Street**, we bid goodbye to a pair of buildings from roughly the same dates as nos. 181-201. These were the oldest buildings in the Lillington Gardens conservation area. There are times such as this when

one wishes that the national amenity societies could look a little wider than the bounds of their eras at the effect of proposals on other buildings than their own.

St. James the Less is one of the masterpieces of the Victorian Gothic Revival, and given that much of the land around it was bombed in World War II its survival is remarkable, as indeed was the survival of a pair of modest unlisted Georgian terraced houses next to it. The conservation area these buildings sit in is dominated by, and exists because of, Lillington Gardens, a huge postwar housing development (which is widely recognised as one of the best examples of its type).

The owner of the unlisted Georgian terrace sought permission to demolish, using the argument that the older buildings were detrimental to the setting of the listed church and were out of character with the conservation area. The Victorian Society did not object to this, agreeing with the developer's argument that the replacement block would improve the setting of the church. SAVE wrote objecting to the proposal on the grounds that the older buildings surely had a better claim to remain in place. While the pair of terraced buildings were not in their original condition, they are far from boring, and had until recently supported a thriving pottery, which having received marching orders after over 20 years on the site is now moving right out of the capital. A serious case of friendly fire.

Bishopsgate Goodsyard, London

The saga of this important central London site continues, with permission having been granted (again) for the demolition of the majority of the goodsyard, thereby opening the decision up to a legal challenge on the question of the validity of the planning permission. We joined the chorus objecting to the demolition, making representations to local authority illustrating the lessons learnt at the Norfolk and Norwich hospital about the extent of listing. However, the loaded gun of £1.5 billion pounds worth of potential regeneration benefits brought in by the East London Line Extension was brought into the equation, a factor which might have swayed the council's planning (forgetting that the line could be built on the goodsyard's viaducts). The gauntlet has been picked up by another individual willing to make a stand. Lets hope that English Heritage will show their colours on this one, having been rather quiet of recent on the case.

EH and CABE guidance on tall buildings

While the left hand of EH puts forward the weakest opposition imaginable to the Minerva Tower, the right hand has with CABE produced this handy document which should be clutched tight to the chest of every member of local authority planning committees which have to scrutinise tall building applications. (EH's commissioners might also benefit from reading their own literature). The importance of this document lies in the premise that no matter how handsome a piece of architecture a tall building may be, if from its proposed

location it will damage the historic built environment it should not be allowed. The document also calls for master plans of where tall buildings can and cannot be built, a noble thought.

South London Institute for the Blind, Bermondsey

A handsome cross between Scottish Baronial and Arts and Crafts, this building on the Borough Road in London is threatened with demolition in order to give a massive office development on the land behind it a street frontage. The Institute is in good condition and certainly merits listing, appearing to be relatively unaltered. As such SAVE has written in support of a request by the St. George's Circus Group for the listing of the building, and has written to the local authority objecting to its demolition in the usual robust terms. The Scottish Baronial influence perhaps comes from the then patron of the institute, the Duke of Argyll, while the fenestration has a distinctly Mackintosh feel to it. The architect was G Ashby Lean, should any budding architectural history scholars fancy a challenge.



The Borough Road façade of the South London Institute for the Blind - Scottish Baronial meets Mackintosh

Pevsner

Our much loved and well used collection of Pevsner's building of England (and Scotland, Wales and Ireland) is starting to get a little out of date as the new editions are published. If anyone would like to buy us one of the new editions (about £30 each), please contact the SAVE office for details

Some good news

Just to counter any claims that the SAVE Newsletter is the bringer of heritage doom and gloom, there have been a number of small yet important victories amongst the more minor cases which we are involved with.

In **Windsor** the local college's expansion plans included the demolition of a row of late Victorian and Edwardian buildings located within a conservation area. The buildings could probably be converted to meet the college administrative needs, but this option was not considered, with the College's sights firmly set on a large shiny new building. Pressure from SAVE, local campaigners and the Victorian Society resulted in the Town's councillors going against their officers' advice and turning the application down.

In **Rochford, Essex**, a Georgian fronted post mediaeval house in a conservation area faced the bulldozers, but a successful rearguard action was fought by the local building preservation trust, ourselves and the Georgian Group, which forced the developer and local authority to reconsider.

South Wraxhall Manor is one of the finest mediaeval manors in the country in terms of the degree of original fabric surviving, and was recently purchased by a group hoping to convert it to a hotel. While the proposal would have created an impressive hotel, an unacceptable degree of historic fabric would have been lost. We objected strongly to the proposals, which were finally killed off by the Highways department on the grounds that the village lanes could not cope with the degree of extra traffic the hotel would generate – an unlikely saviour.

Although not a SAVE case, the 20th Century Society must be congratulated on a major success with **Greenside**, a Connell, Ward and Lucas house by Wentworth Golf Course which faced demolition. Their gallant efforts, including the threat of Judicial Review, forced a rethink on the part of those concerned, and our hopes are now that the building will be restored. Win or lose, it was vital that a stand was made over this Grade II listed 1930s house, given the prevalent attitude towards listed twentieth century buildings.

Victory for Mrs Smith, who with our support put a firm halt to Nottinghamshire County Council's plans to pull down **The Ridge**, the key building in the Park conservation area in Mansfield, currently used as a home for troubled youths and children, to replace it with a purpose built unit.

Having stood at last year's local elections on the single issue of preventing the demolition of this fine Edwardian hotch-potch (and been the runner up), Mrs. Smith forced a public inquiry. This revealed a remarkable number of inconsistencies in the various statements made by public servants. For example, the County Council's conservation officer indicated that the main reason for the conservation area's existence was

the trees and vegetation rather than the series of fine Victorian and Edwardian villas (the Park being one of these). The county fire service's HQ chose to deny the number of hoax calls outs to The Ridge responded to by its residents (whereas the local fire station brought up the real, rather high figures).

Since the planning inspector delivered the verdict, most of those originally in favour of demolition have decided that Mrs. Smith was right all along. A remarkable story of self interest on the part of the authorities concerned and of sheer selflessness on the part of someone who might in other circumstances be labelled a 'nimby'. As the redoubtable Mrs. Smith remarked 'it was quite an eye opener'.

The longstanding case of **Denbigh Asylum** looks to be heading in the right direction – following attempts to turn it into a plastics factory, the site was finally sold at auction. The fear was that it might be sold into a shell company which could avoid some of the restrictive covenants placed on the complex. Fortunately, it seems to have been sold to a successful business family who are intent on restoring and converting the building.

And finally, excellent news from **Knutsford**, where the Grade II* listed sessions house has been granted a reprieve by the Lord Chancellor's Department. This powerful Georgian court was due to be made redundant under the Private Finance Initiative, which would have moved its functions to Chester. Pressure from SAVE, the local MP and concerned locals resulted in the LCD backing down, opening its plans to consultation and reacting positively to this consultation, by promising to pump the necessary investment into the courthouse to bring it up to modern standards. If only other branches of government were so responsive, Mr. Milburn.

The Governor's Garden, Berwick-upon-Tweed

As reported in the last newsletter, McCarthy and Stone had appealed against the non determination of its very inappropriate plans for the garden of the Governor's house at Berwick upon Tweed. No sooner had it been granted leave to appeal than it put in another application for a somewhat revised scheme, involving a long barrack like structure down the edge of the garden, culminating in a large four storey tower at the North Sea end of the garden. Again, the developer is trying to gain far too much from the site – there is perhaps scope for a low level of development, but not for 36 flats.

Despite the utterly confusing support of English Heritage for the scheme, the local authority's planning committee rejected the application, following much local opposition, and opposition from ourselves, the SPAB and the Georgian Group. This led (confusingly) to the initial application being withdrawn, and McCarthy and Stone then appealed against the decision of the planning committee. The application will be decided at a public inquiry in June, at which we expect to present evidence.

Seaside Towns iv: Margate

The campaign to save Britain's oldest roller coaster is underway. The Dreamland Amusement Park, at Margate in Kent is threatened with that old chestnut, comprehensive redevelopment.

The roller coaster was listed at Grade II last year following the efforts of Nick Laister, the leader of the local campaign. The Scenic Railway roller coaster was building in 1920, and is one of only two surviving scenic railways in the UK. The survival rate of early roller coasters has not been high, with only 9 out of 120 wooden rollercoasters built between 1885 and 1960 still standing. It is unlikely that the rollercoaster cannot be run to make a profit – it is a popular attraction for locals, visitors and enthusiasts alike. However, since its closure last year, the amusement park is becoming a target for vandals.

While other seaside towns are busy trying to create new identities for themselves, the councillors of Thanet are in danger of watering down Margate's by allowing the popular Dreamland amusement park to be bulldozed. A case of shooting oneself in the foot.



The UK's oldest rollercoaster from the air

Littlewoods Headquarters, Liverpool

Liverpool is a demolition hot spot at the moment, in that it seems that barely a week goes by without a fine terrace or gentleman's residence being demolished or collapsing into itself. However, it is not just the Georgian and Victorian Heritage that is at risk. The Littlewoods headquarters is a massive and handsome art deco office building dating from 1938, with clean, simple lines which are best viewed from Botanic Park. It was probably designed by Gerald de Coursy Fraser for the Moores brothers' pools empire and is threatened with demolition. It is an essay in symmetry, cleverly employing the language of classical architecture in its central tower and entrance, as well as in its flanking pavilions.

SAVE has joined with local campaigners and the Twentieth Century Society in asking for the building's spot listing – even if this fails, there is no good reason why the building cannot be economically reused.

It is perhaps ironic that the City fathers are obsessed with Mr. Alsop's proposals for a nebulous fourth grace

costing millions when too much of the proud history of the Empire's second city is still being allowed to rot.

There is some good news, however, in that major repairs have been completed on the roof of **St. Francis Xavier**, where SAVE took legal action to stop the demolition of the main body of the church. The next door presbytery has become a part of the appropriately named Liverpool Hope University.



The monumental entrance to the Littlewoods HQ in Liverpool

Bristol North District Baths

Olympic size pools are no doubt a good way of capitalising on our recent success in the pool at the Commonwealth Games, but there is a balance to be struck between new pools and the existing infrastructure, especially where this is in a grade II building and is popular with local residents and schools.

Work on Bristol North District Baths commenced in 1913, but with the outbreak of hostilities in 1914 the bathhouse was rapidly converted into a munitions factory. After the war, it reverted to its intended use, and has remained as such since then. Under the Bristol Pools Strategy, this pool is scheduled for closure, and so probably doomed to years of rot, along with so many other fine bath houses across the country. The issue is probably familiar to long term supporters of SAVE – in 1982 we brought it to a wider audience with our exhibition and report 'Taking the Plunge'.

As with so many campaigns SAVE becomes involved with, one local was not going to take this lying down -

soon enough he was joined by most of the district in objecting to the proposals, and they have been successful in forcing a rethink of the strategy. The council has asked the community group to come up with some alternatives for the pool. Although the onus for finding new uses for historic buildings should be on the owners, the case here is much the same as for the cinemas discussed above – the survival of the old facility might be seen to prejudice the future of the new (not that it should have to be that way). It does look as if the community will be able to put together a convincing case for the continued use of the pool.

The case makes it clear that heritage cuts across a whole range of different issues - it probably did not occur to the local authority or Sport England that the strategy would have serious repercussions for the local heritage, nor that this heritage is held in high regard by the community for both the amenity it provides the local community and for its history.

One of the other issues of long standing concern to SAVE this case raises is that of buildings of local importance. We recently floated the idea before the Heritage Lottery Fund of a community caseworker, advising local communities such as this one on how to campaign for their much loved and threatened (but not necessarily listed) local heritage – an area in which we have considerable experience and could make a real difference. We had previously put the idea to the Community Fund, one of the lottery distributors, which decided the project was more appropriate to the HLF. The application sadly did not get past the first hurdle with the HLF, rejected on the grounds that it would have ‘no tangible benefit for the heritage’ and is too similar to our core activities. Hmm.

The recent demolition of the Grade II listed Wembley Stadium highlights the vulnerability of even the most impressive historic sports buildings – please let us know of any rotting examples in your area, from bathing huts to cricket pavilions.

Pathfinder

John Prescott’s widely reported initiative to deal with the shortage of housing in the South and low property values in the North raises a whole host of questions for the heritage world. To turn to the south first – most of the new building proposed is to be placed on brownfield sites at high densities. While this is of course welcome, many industrial sites contain interesting historic buildings which could easily become victim to the quest for higher densities. In the North, it is proposed that areas of poor quality run down housing are cleared away. The danger here is similar to the south, in that the baby could well be thrown out with the bath water. Thorough surveys of any areas designated under this programme must be executed to assess whether there are any buildings of historic or architectural merit in them, and communities must be consulted about what buildings they would like to see retained.

In the case of **Nelson, Lancashire**, the answer of the local community was along of the line of ‘all of them – because we live in them’. The local authority, Pendle Borough Council, would have none of this and decided to put through a compulsory purchase notice for the mass clearance of an area of terraced homes that were actually rather good quality. The local community, English Heritage and the Council for British Archaeology went to battle at public inquiry, which was adjourned as the Secretary of State wanted information on the economic benefits of both retention and clearance. We submitted a paper to the Inspector pointing to the many examples of successful locally led regeneration of run down housing. In the mean time, the (largely asian) residents of the area have been subject to intimidation, fly tipping, vandalism of local monuments and so forth.

Perhaps the most positive aspect of Prescott’s proposals is to force landlords to maintain their building stock properly to prevent slum housing. How this will affect the historic building stock is not yet accurately known as there are no easily available figures to point to the number of historic buildings owned by landlords, private or public.

‘Lost Houses’ exhibition

For those that were not able to make it along to our reception at the Soane Museum, you can catch the exhibition of Country Life’s photographs of lost country houses at the Holburne Museum of Arts in Bath until 8th June.

Northern Ireland: Tillie and Henderson Shirt Factory, Londonderry

As reported in the last newsletter, this fine building was seriously at risk. During the firemen’s strike, several fires broke out in the building, at the beginning of the year it was shamefully (and illegally) knocked down by its owner, Dr. Diljit Rana. The Environment and Heritage Service is not going to take action against the owner, citing health and safety, traffic management and cost as reasons for not having taken action before the demolition.

Such inaction does neither the EHS, nor the Planning Service, nor their Minister, Angela Smith, any favours.

In the meantime, we have met with the Chief Executive of the Environment and Heritage Service, and the Head of the Built Environment Section to discuss our ongoing concerns. The discussions were full, frank, honest and possibly productive, and as a result we have written to the Minister with further suggestions on how the agenda for the built environment in Northern Ireland can be carried forward. The key points are:

1. The recent Planning Amendment Order is of course welcome but must be seen as a first step

towards a proper system of protection for the built environment, not a complete solution.

2. Conservation Areas and Areas of Townscape Character remain toothless.
3. Commencement of works without permission must be criminalised or, as one peer put it during the Order's debate, developers will drive a coach and horses through the system.
4. There is still a need for other departments of Government to take conservation seriously and to consider the effects of their policies on the historic environment.
5. The historic environment is still chronically underfunded.

We await her response.

As we go to press, we have received notification that permission has been granted by the Planning Service in Northern Ireland for a disastrous comprehensive redevelopment scheme which will see the destruction of one of Belfast's last untouched Victorian pubs – in a conservation area to boot – called the Kitchen Bar.



Last orders at the Kitchen Bar, an untouched Victorian pub in central Belfast

Great James Street Presbyterian Church, Londonderry

While it would not be unusual for conservation bodies to seek to take advantage of the publicity following the demolition of the Tillie and Henderson factory, the owner of the Great James Street Presbyterian Church used it as a means of highlighting the plight of this B Listed building – by putting up a large notice signalling his intent to demolish. The owner insists that he has been left with no alternative following several attempts to gain funding for its reuse from various sources and the fear of vandalism. Neither of these are reasons in themselves, and Planning Policy Statement 6 makes this clear. Be that as it may, the owner did get a result of sorts – he is currently in discussions with various heritage organisations about what can be done with the building.



Great James Street Presbyterian Church, Derry

St. Luke's Church. Birmingham

This solid late Victorian church by Edward Mansell has the misfortune to be located on a site that has been snaffled up by Tescos with the intention of erecting a food store on the site. These are early days, and indeed it is rather rare for SAVE to have the chance to become involved in cases so early on. The building is not only a well loved local land mark, but it also the only know church to contain the Royal Arms of Edward VII. We expect a masterplan to be produced and put out to public consultation, but we have no idea as to whether this will seek to retain the Church or not. We have therefore written to the DCMS requesting spot listing as a precaution.



St. Luke's, Birminham. The tower was never fully executed.

St. Catherine by the Sea, Holworth, Dorset

There cannot be a great many chapels that masquerade as garden sheds. However this sweet little chapel does just that, perched high above the English Channel, on the coastal footpath east of Ringstead Bay. The chapel is of local interest, built by the Rev. Linklater in the 1920's, as he found that there was a need for a chapel for the parish's fishermen to worship in before heading off to sea. Previously services had been held in his kitchen. The Rev. Linklater left a small trust fund for the upkeep of the building, which remained untouched until it was recently realised that it was worth a rather handsome £175,000. Immediately various options were put forward to demolish and rebuild the chapel, which resulted in an uproar for locals and visitors alike. The issue is that this humble chapel fits perfectly into the

landscape, and its simplicity has inspired a most wonderful range of compliments in its visitor book. Following pressure from ourselves, the trustees of the chapel wrote informing us that 'there are at present no plans for its redevelopment...there is no plan to change the character of the site.' Carefully chosen words. We will keep a watching brief.

Birch – a new challenge

Following a recent visit to St. Peter's, Birch (the plight of which was discussed in the last newsletter) by staff, committee members and trustees, we have made the decision work with the Birch Spire Arts Trust, the building preservation trust established for the benefit of the building, and to drive forward a restoration project. There are currently a number of proposals as to what to do with the building, ranging from total demolition to conversion to residential accommodation. We would prefer it that the interior space was retained for the benefit of the community.

We pointed out previously that this would be the challenge of a life time. If all else fails, we propose a phased repair of the building, starting in the next few weeks with emergency works to keep water out and help limit the rather rampant dry rot in the roof. Next would be the restoration of the roof, followed by the walls, the 110 foot spire and finally the windows and anything left.

Castle House

Meanwhile, in Bridgwater, steps are being made towards the restoration of our 1850's concrete castle. We have finally agreed an end user in the form of a local housing association, dependent of course on us gaining the necessary consents and putting together a suitable funding package. A wide range of other options was pursued, with this one offering us a combination of security and value. We will have to apply to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a grant towards its restoration, as repair costs alone are in the region of £500,000. We will also be applying to English Heritage for grant aid towards the repair of the Grade II* wreck.

Crickhowell castle

An application to extend hotel accommodation to within 30 yards of the scheduled ancient monument of Crickhowell Castle was recently given provisional approval by the Brecon Beacons National Parks Authority, pending archaeological investigations. Despite our opposition to the scheme, as well as that of the town council – Crickhowell has plenty of more appropriate sites for such accommodation – the National Park Authority looks set to give proposals the go-ahead. The application raises a number of issues.

Firstly, the proposals will be subsidised by DEFRA, the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs under one of the post Foot and Mouth Disease

initiatives. The initiative certainly has its merits, but clearly there is a need for the officials of DEFRA to co-ordinate with their colleagues in Cadw, or in the case of England, DCMS and English Heritage, to ensure the scheme works to the benefit of all.

Secondly, the question of the role of National Parks Authorities comes into question - one size might fit all in terms of environmental policies, but in terms of the historic environment, it is certainly the case that sites, building and areas vary greatly across national parks. If national parks are not able to take into account the reaction of more locally accountable (but less powerful) parts of government, what hope is there when the regions start to have a greater say in the coming years.

Third and finally, once again the question of Scheduled Ancient Monuments, a splendidly anachronistic and unaccountable form of protection rears its head – wonderful as the SAM system is for the blanket protection it offers, it is recognised that designation and control raise certain human rights issues over accountability and it is only a matter of time before some one puts this to the test in the courts. In this respect one can only but welcome the forthcoming review of designation.

Painted wall adverts

Hand painted wall adverts, once a familiar form of advertising, are now increasingly rare, and there is no practical form of statutory protection available for them. They are vulnerable to everything from pollution to repointing. The question is how to protect them? Perhaps the forthcoming review of designation will come up with some thoughts on the matter – or not as the case may be. An exhibition of pictures of these paintings will be held at the Orleans House Gallery, Riverside, Twickenham at the end of September.



London lampposts

Transport for London, one of the more mysterious quangos, has taken the decision to replace all of the historic cantenary lighting along the Victoria Embankment from Westminster to the City of London, with modern lampposts, at a cost of £850,000.

This decision has been taken without consulting the local authority concerned, Westminster City Council, or the Westminster World Heritage Site management

committee, or indeed anyone, yet it will result in the further erosion of historic detail from our environment. The piecemeal erosion of functional historic details such as this is not only unnecessary but also cumulatively disastrous, destroying the sense of place that helps make so many communities and locations special.

The lighting is rare, interesting and certainly adds character to Bazalgette's splendid embankments, reflecting the designs of Timothy Butler for the pedestrian lights along the edge of the embankment, which include dolphins, sphinxes and camels, as well as art deco influences on the reliefs on the bases. Telephone boxes, post boxes and other items of street furniture are listed so why not these? We have written to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport requesting their spot listing, but our hopes are not high.



SAVE Europe's Heritage

SAVE Europe's Heritage has been active, off in the Veneto in Italy – a beautiful fenland with a great number of fine villas and historic farmsteads (many of which have inexplicably been left to rot), now threatened by a pointless road scheme which we understand does little other than line the pockets of all involved and destroy vast tracts of countryside, as well, of course, as a number of historic buildings and the setting of a number of important villas.

The area is suffering from an increasing number of industrial sheds being built next to roads, most of which are never filled. They are encouraged by Government tax breaks, and apparently also provide certain elements of society with a convenient way of cleaning their money. Palladio's wonderful Villa Saraceno will be only a couple of hundred yards from the road, while it is already suffering from the encroachment of ugly semi vacant factory buildings, the neon blue lights of which peer over its walls at night.....



This handsome late C15th villa will sit right next to one of the proposed motorway interchanges - pure folly.

Maintain our Heritage update

English Heritage, who are part funding the pilot scheme in Bath as well as the research programme, recently confirmed that they would be happy for Maintain to expand the pilot scheme to cover a wider area than just Bath and North East Somerset. This excellent news, as it will allow us to test the service on a wider variety of buildings, broadening our practical experience, as well as increasing the sample of buildings. Meanwhile the encouraging first results of the research programme are filtering through – more later.

Conservation areas (again)

Still no word yet from government on when they will correct the legislation to get a grip on demolition in conservation areas. There is another loophole on the law which probably needs to be pointed out. Where a local authority is minded to approve the demolition of an unlisted building in a conservation area which it owns, the application would normally be referred to the Secretary of State in the form of the government office for the appropriate region. However, there is no box as such for the Secretary of State to tick which says 'no', only one which says 'call in' or 'not call in', the latter of which, of course, implies support. There is room to improve here – who knows how many less than scrupulous local authorities have already made use of this loophole.

Victorian and Edwardian villas.....

Winchester, Stockport, St. Helens, Bembridge, London, Manchester – you name it, where ever there are good Edwardian and Victorian Villas there are those wishing to knock them down and build at high densities on their generous plots. We receive a constant stream of letters about this problem from all over the UK. It is propelled in England by PPG 3, which some authorities choose to interpret so strictly that they end up destroying the character of the areas these sorts of buildings are in. Some of these villas are fortunate enough to be in conservation areas, others are not. Rarely are they listed. Keep the letters coming so we can compile a dossier on the subject.