

Changing London

AN HISTORIC CITY FOR A MODERN WORLD

'Steadily, we are shifting the focus of Buildings At Risk to preventing – rather than rescuing – ruins.'

Delcia Keate
Regional Adviser for Buildings at Risk.

Map-making, lists and descriptions have helped Londoners through the ages keep a sense of the whole of the sprawling city in which they live.

The work continues: July 2003 saw the publication by English Heritage of the thirteenth *Register of Buildings at Risk* in Greater London.

There is one difference from the records of earlier centuries, however. The London BAR *Register*, like its twelve predecessors, records those listed buildings and scheduled ancient monuments known to be at risk from neglect, decay, under-use or redundancy with the specific intention of bringing their plight to public notice. Its success is undeniable: 90% of the buildings on the 1991 *Register* have since been repaired. Its track record in bringing historic buildings back from the brink is established – but the dereliction and under-use continue.

This third edition of *Changing London* explores some of the success stories and the outstanding challenges in this important aspect of London life. It also looks beyond conservation and restoration to active regeneration initiatives.

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ENGLISH HERITAGE

REGISTERING SUCCESS



Delcia Keate
Regional Adviser for Buildings at Risk



St Luke's, Old Street, Islington

St Luke's, built between 1727 and 1733 by Nicholas Hawksmoor and John James, was an empty shell for 40 years. Now, thanks to grant aid from English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund, it is back in use by the London Symphony Orchestra, as a rehearsal and performance space and an education centre.

'WE CAN NOW USE THE REGISTER PROACTIVELY TO IDENTIFY EMERGING ISSUES, SO THAT SCARCE RESOURCES CAN BE DEPLOYED MORE EFFECTIVELY.'

In July English Heritage published the thirteenth edition of the *London Register of Buildings at Risk*. 723 listed buildings were highlighted – at risk from neglect, disuse or redundancy.

One quarter of BARs in London are owned by local authorities. Some – such as Finsbury Town Hall, Islington and Hornsey Town Hall, Haringey – are outstanding examples of Victorian and 20th century public architecture, which now face redundancy. In February, we jointly hosted *Civic Heritage: Millstone or Opportunity?* at Shoreditch Town Hall, itself a building at risk being restored by a community trust. Civic buildings are often unsuitable for residential or commercial conversions, and we are urging local authorities to seek mixed uses that can ensure a sustainable future for their magnificent public spaces.

Eleven mansions are at risk in public parks, including Gunnersbury Park, Hounslow, and Broomfield House, Enfield (which featured in the recent BBC2 *Restoration* programme). These buildings are treasured by local communities, but often face huge repair backlogs. The key is to find sympathetic uses that will keep them as community assets while raising vital revenue funding. We and the

Heritage Lottery Fund are commissioning a study to explore some solutions to this London-wide issue.

In the past year we have seen successful outcomes for some of London's longest-standing BARs including Eltham Orangery, Greenwich, St Luke's Church, Old Street, Islington and St Stephen's Church, Rosslyn Hill, Camden, all with the help of EH grant aid. Works are underway at Chandos House, Westminster; Isokon Flats, Camden and 52 Newington Green, Hackney, one of London's oldest terraced houses. Last year we offered £225,293 for the repair of BARs, including the medieval church of St Andrew, Kingsbury and Hawksmoor's St George, Bloomsbury.

More unusual structures such as the conduit house at Blackheath, a scheduled ancient monument, and the unique Victorian stage machinery at Alexandra Palace Theatre are also benefiting. To help local authorities establish local BAR strategies, we are part-funding 39 conservation officer posts in 22 London boroughs.

Over the past twelve years, the *Buildings At Risk Register* has had a huge public profile. In 1991 when the first *Register* was compiled, the problem seemed overwhelming –

Alexandra Palace Theatre

Disused for nearly 70 years, the Grade II theatre, is the last surviving large music hall and one of the earliest cinemas. It contains the only unaltered mechanised timber stage of its date in the country. The conservation strategy proposes to repair the stage machinery for public display and the demonstration of Victorian stage techniques, whilst seeking a wide variety of uses for the auditorium.

1,000 buildings at risk were identified at the height of a recession, many in a parlous state. 90% of these have been repaired and this year we have seen a decline in the number of additions to the Register.

Although there is still a hard core of intractable BARs, we can now use the Register proactively, to identify emerging issues so that scarce resources can be deployed more effectively. Steadily, we are shifting the focus of BAR to preventing – rather than rescuing – ruins.

INFORMATION POINT

Copies of the London Buildings At Risk Register (Product Code 50794) can be obtained from English Heritage Customer Services – call 0870 333 1181 or e-mail customer@english-heritage.org.uk.

Managing Local Authority Heritage Assets (Product Code 50795) sets out guiding principles for the good management and disposal of property, and encourages high-quality design in new work. The document is endorsed by ODPM and DCMS. Copies are available from English Heritage Customer Services.

Regular tours of Alexandra Palace including the theatre are provided by the Alexandra Palace Trust. The Friends of the Theatre can be contacted on www.aptfriends@blueyonder.co.uk



'London is a vibrant and arresting place precisely because it blends the new with the established scene'

PARTNERS IN REGENERATION

FURNISHING A FUTURE FOR SOUTH SHOREDITCH



South Shoreditch in Hackney, just north of the City of London, is at the centre of the 'City Fringe'. The area has a fine concentration of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century commercial buildings. It is a richly varied and visually compelling architectural legacy. But South Shoreditch is under threat.

RAY ROGERS TAKES UP THE STORY...

This was the centre of the London furniture trade from the 1850's to the 1950's; no longer – and now, there is intense development pressure on the City Fringe. Piecemeal alterations to individual buildings and new, large scale office development threaten to change the character of areas like South Shoreditch.

To help defend the unique qualities of the area, English Heritage is carrying out a detailed architectural and historic study of the buildings of the Shoreditch furniture trade. The results will be published in a form similar to the popular booklets on the Birmingham Jewellery Quarter and Manchester Warehouses.

At the same time, English Heritage has combined with the GLA and Hackney Council to jointly fund a study that will result in an

Urban Planning Policy Framework for South Shoreditch. This will be a policy document that, following consultation, can be adopted by Hackney to provide much needed detailed planning guidance designed to protect the best features of the area, while allowing businesses to flourish.





Martin O'Rourke, Regeneration Adviser:

London is a huge World City, constantly renewing itself. This does not just mean the creation of new buildings. Landmark historic buildings, a street of character or well-worn places where lives have been led are equally important to people. Such places provide continuity and a sense of place. They encapsulate memory and humanise the city. London is a vibrant and arresting place precisely because it blends the new with the established scene.

Regenerating London and its character demands a partnership between local authorities, public agencies, developers and most importantly, local people.

Take Hatton Garden, London's 300 year old jewellery quarter. There is a need to inject new life into the jewellery trade and to save workshops from office and winebar conversion. The key to the future is the Hatton Garden Jewellery Partnership. This coalition brings together Camden Council, jewellery designers, manufacturers and retailers with English Heritage and the London Development Agency.

Partnership is possible too with commercial developers. The P&O site occupies four 19th century blocks east of Kings Cross Station. Blighted for many years by planning uncertainty, these conservation area

buildings are now being refurbished for mixed uses with some new buildings threaded into the picture. The developers have responded to the opportunity to create a new neighbourhood. The reused old buildings and the paved industrial yards will be linked by pedestrian paths, opening up a hidden part of London for rediscovery.

When commercial development embraces public opinion, the local authority and English Heritage, architectural diversity and financial reality can work together – as the following three case studies demonstrate.

REDISCOVERING A SOUTH LONDON GEM

St. George's Circus (left) is an unusual remnant of a grand Regency townscape, writes Sarah Buckingham. Houses, shops and a public house are set around a large circus with an obelisk at the centre. While some of the early nineteenth century buildings have been lost, many remain, although vacant and dilapidated. A number of major roads converge on the circus, and heavy through-traffic does not make it a pleasant place to linger.

Nonetheless, it is a place of great character; with many listed buildings, and a conservation area at its core. It has the potential to be "rediscovered" through carefully considered responses to growing pressures for change and renewal. English Heritage, working with all major stakeholders in the area, has commissioned an Urban Design Framework to help ensure its renaissance.

FROM FRESH MILK TO THE FUTURE

College Farm, Finchley is a remarkable survival. It was developed by Sir George Barham who founded the Express Dairy Company to bring milk to London from outlying farms. He erected a picturesque group of buildings and welcomed the public in to see how a dairy farm worked. By 1890 the elaborately tiled dairy building had been converted into a tearoom and College Farm had become a popular visitor attraction.

The Farm ceased to be used for dairying in 1974 and two years later was acquired by the Department of Transport as part of its proposals to widen the North Circular Road. Pending the roadworks, it then reopened as an open farm and community facility. For 25 years some 20,000 visitors a year, many of them children, came to see the animals, farm museum and paintings by

local artists. Although immensely popular, uncertainty and the Foot and Mouth epidemic finally closed the farm in 2002. Today this interesting group of buildings stands very much at risk.

English Heritage is working with a local trust to secure a long term future for the farm as an educational, community and recreational resource. Plans to widen the North Circular Road have been abandoned and we have been instrumental in persuading the Minister to sell the farm to the College Farm Trust for a heavily discounted price. We are also helping the Trust to put together a bid for grant aid from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The total cost of the project is about £3m but this will achieve much more than the repair of four listed buildings. It will ensure that

website at www.english-heritage.org.uk for further details.

English Heritage Customer Services (T: 0870 333 1181) can supply copies of *The State of the Historic Environment Report 2002*, *The Heritage Dividend 2002* and *English Heritage: A User's Guide* – the website will alert you to updates.



future generations, especially children, can enjoy, appreciate and understand how a model dairy farm served Victorian London with fresh milk.

Paddy Pugh

PROBING THE PAST: ARCHAEOLOGY AND BARS

London is a multi-layered city. Beneath the bleaching fields of the adjacent 18th/19th century printworks in Merton lie the remains of a medieval priory's Chapter House. A proposed youth performing arts venue at the Roundhouse in Chalk Farm is yielding rich clues about its former role in the history of the railways. Church crypts, such as St George's Bloomsbury, are providing a

detailed picture of the Victorian way of death – and intimate details of Victorian dentistry!

Archaeological investigation and recording at sites like these are an increasingly important aspect of English Heritage's work in London. From the medieval to the modern periods, understanding a building or an area's past is essential to plan a viable future.



Industrial buildings are often among those most at risk of disappearing from the landscape but they often provide valuable archaeological evidence about industries that were once an integral part of the local community. Some, like Battersea Power Station, are of such national significance that their future is given proper consideration. Many others across London are not so fortunate.

Herbert Morrison Terrace, Lambeth was originally built in 1828 and partly destroyed in the Second World War. It has suffered from squatting, fire and water damage and pigeon infestation. However, surviving early features are helping us understand its past life and are being retained as the terrace is being given new life as keyworker accommodation.



'ENGLISH HERITAGE IS COMMITTED TO MORE THAN JUST BRICKS AND MORTAR'

Catherine Cavanagh
Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS).



Buildings represent only the most recent and visible phase of development on a site. Understanding their significance informs decisions about retention and mitigation strategies – and early assessment is vital if sustainable development is to be reconciled with the preservation of the built and natural heritage, as Planning Policy Guidance 15 advocates.

Building recording and analysis may not be an optional extra: but a required condition of planning consent. This can even apply to the redevelopment of very recent buildings, since often nodocumentary evidence survives detailing how they functioned. It is preferable to study them prior to Building recording and analysis may

not be an optional extra: but a required condition of planning consent. This can even apply to the redevelopment of very recent buildings, since often no documentary evidence survives detailing how they functioned. It is preferable to study them prior to demolition rather than dig up their foundations in a century's time.

A survey may range from a basic photographic record to a full drawn one with historic research and analysis. Oral testimonies and video recording may also play a part, helping us understand how structures reflect the needs of the people who designed, built and used them. It is yet another indication that English Heritage is committed to more than just bricks and mortar.



The crypt of Hawksmoor's St George's, Bloomsbury (1731) revealed 781 coffins interred between 1800 and 1856. Not only do the coffins themselves provide a vivid illustration of the expense and elaboration of early Victorian funeral traditions, their contents also give us touching insights into the lives of individuals.

Above is the skull of an elderly man with elaborate dentures, with porcelain and ivory teeth set in gold. His second (spring-loaded!) set were also found in his coffin.



This plaster cast is one of two faces and a hand of two elderly individuals which were found in the coffin of a seven year-old girl. There was also a large silk shawl and a length of velvet ribbon. Death masks were quite common in Victorian mourning but to find them in a coffin is unusual. Perhaps they were the little girl's grandparents?

ON THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

HISTORIC ROAD CORRIDORS OF LONDON



Charles Wagner, Historic Areas Adviser.

Buildings at Risk tend to be located in rundown historic areas — the same locations we seek for our area grant scheme partnerships with London Boroughs: HERS (Heritage Economic Regeneration Schemes). Since their launch in 1999, over 20 have started in London with a major impact on BARS. Historic road corridors have been high priorities for action.

The history of London is one of the gradual expansion of the built up area. Ahead of the conurbation, there was extensive "ribbon development" along the routes into London: the historic corridors. Along these routes many chose to settle to escape the dirt and disease of London, whilst still being within easy distance of the City.

As ribbon developments were engulfed by the conurbation, the original owners left. During the 20th century as motor traffic increased, the environments along these roads declined. Properties slid down the social scale, but many survived, and they still form the nucleus of many London neighbourhoods. But listing in itself does not solve the problem of decay, or take away the "risk".

Since 1994 we have attempted to tackle the most rundown historic corridors in London. Tottenham High Road is a prime example. It is part of the A10 Ermine Street. The first grant scheme started here in 1995 in North Tottenham. In 1998 the scheme was extended to cover the whole High Road through the borough, 2 ¼ miles (3.75km).

English Heritage has invested over £3m in buildings on the High Road matched by at least that sum from



The Old Well, Tottenham High Road
now awaiting conservation

Haringey, and the Upper Lea Valley Partnership with funds from central government and ERDF funds from the European Union.

Over the last five years, five Buildings at Risk have been repaired and brought back into use: the Old Fire Station and Mountford House both on Tottenham Green, High Cross School, No 792 and No 820. The Old Fire Station is now Tottenham Enterprise Centre (for business start-ups), and Mountford House is now flats owned by a housing association. High Cross School has become private flats and No 792 residential accommodation for a housing association. No 820 has continued as a shop on the ground floor with a much improved maisonette above.

Over the same period another 10 listed buildings have received grant aid. For example, No 811 was repaired by a pizza company who have let the upper floors to a

housing association. The Palace Theatre is now a church. Among the prominent locally listed buildings that have been helped are the old barn (No 579b) which was repaired and converted for office use, and Forest Gardens Mews, a late C19 mews complex that has been converted by a housing association to live/work units — an instant success.

Our eight years' involvement in Tottenham High Road with Haringey Council has helped drive forward the regeneration of this part of London in a sensitive way that has preserved and enhanced its historic interest, whilst encouraging modern development on less sensitive sites. But there is still a long way go. At present 10 Buildings at Risk remain unresolved along, or just off, the High Road.

INFORMATION POINT

GLAAS advises 31 London Boroughs on the impact of development on built and buried archaeology. It publishes regular quarterly reports and an annual review of its work. Contact Lidia Szaflarska on 020 7973 3735 for copies.

The Sites & Monuments Record database lists over 70,000 sites, artefacts and listed buildings in Greater London. A first stop for anyone involved with site assessment — call 020 7973 3779.

A Research Framework for London Archaeology 2002 and London's Archaeological Secrets: A World City Revealed (Chris Thomas, Andy Chopping & Tracy Wellman, Yale University Press, 2003) are available from the Museum of London — call 020 7410 2224.

PARTNERS IN REGENERATION

Our cover image shows a pair of terraced houses built around 1835 in Union Street, Southwark. They are in an extremely poor state and in immediate danger of further deterioration. Even though English Heritage and its local and national partners have a proven track record in attracting potential uses and funds for such buildings, new cases of 'buildings at risk' right across London demand attention each year. Why should we all continue to fight on their behalf? Because such buildings are not only integral to the rich and diverse fabric of the capital – they also embody the lives, the hopes and aspirations of those who built them, lived and



worked in them. They are more than just bricks and mortar. They proclaim London's human past.

Consider the photograph here of Nelson Mandela unveiling a plaque to the South African freedom fighters Ruth First and Joe Slovo. For twelve crucial years, they lived at 13 Lyme Street in Camden and the house became a meeting place for an international group of exiles and their supporters. For centuries London has

offered a refuge to the oppressed, who, in turn, have enriched its life and culture. All over London, buildings such as this declare the city's history. Some, like those in Union Street, are in grave danger of being swept



away for ever but English Heritage continues to believe that the fight to preserve and regenerate them is a worthy cause.

This issue of *Changing London* focuses attention on just some of the work we are undertaking with our partners across the capital to safeguard its historic environment. But English Heritage is also committed to helping London adapt and grow. We will continue to forge positive relationships with partners in national and local government and the private sector to achieve this. We welcome your ongoing support.

Philip Davies
Director for London, English Heritage.



Lifschutz Davidson Architects

NEXT ISSUE

Old and new London The new pedestrian walkways at Hungerford Bridge, linking Charing Cross and the South Bank complex, are a model of how new architecture can blend with the historic environment – and enhance it.

The next issue of *Changing London* will explore other examples of the meshing of old and new across London.

CONTACT DETAILS

We would welcome comments and suggestions on this edition. These should be sent to

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