

# Conservation Bulletin, Issue 9, October 1989

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## ARCHAEOLOGY TOWNS

Many English towns and cities are historic centres of great age: a good proportion date back to the Roman period, while others were foundations of the medieval or post-medieval period. Patterns of foundation, growth, and development have led to an amalgam of areas or buildings which are unique to each and which give to each an individual character. Much of the visible legacy of surviving buildings comes from the less distant past, but is nonetheless valuable or distinctive. It is our aim to retain as much as possible of the historic character of such towns and cities: to this end, we are encouraging local authorities to get ahead with the production of their local development plans and to evaluate as fully as possible the conservation aspects of their areas as part of this process.



*Excavations at the Stakis Hotel site, Wellington Row, York, which revealed the remains of a Roman warehouse of second century AD date*

However, we are concerned too with the hidden aspects of our urban past – the remains of buildings, periods, and human occupation which have now left little trace apart from the buried build-up of layer upon layer of archaeological deposits. Urban centres are today as much as ever under considerable and growing pressure for development. However well this is planned to take account of the surviving historic architecture and townscape, it is bound to affect the buried levels and layers which preserve the remains of past settlement on the site. Often several metres thick, the remains of past centuries may constitute the only record – the unwritten history – of the past development of urban life: this evidence can be used to illuminate the whole history of these important centres. It is an irreplaceable resource, whose potential for information about the history of our towns and

cities is as important a cultural resource to the modern city as are the visible legacy of historic buildings and urban conservation areas.

English Heritage's prime duty is towards the preservation and protection of the historic environment. So far as archaeological considerations are concerned, our role is to set out the general framework for the protection and preservation of sites and monuments of archaeological importance – a representative sample of which will ultimately receive statutory protection through scheduling. Such a selection of important sites recognises the significance and the irreplaceability of individual sites or elements of the man-made heritage and provides a framework for their protection or at least for careful consideration of any changes to them that may jeopardise their survival for future generations. Yet, although some of today's urban centres are by and large some of the most important and most historic areas of human settlement in the country, there are obvious problems in seeking to preserve all potentially important buried remains within them by a stubborn resistance to any form of redevelopment or revitalisation of the urban core. This dilemma is, in one sense, irresolvable. A pragmatic approach requires that we should seek in a number of ways to make the best possible provision for the protection of this archaeological resource. First, we should build into the process of planning new developments in historic centres as much accurate 'information about buildings, or other evidence which has now disappeared, as possible and to have that taken fully into consideration. Second, where relevant, we must ensure that where development schemes are expected to encounter major archaeological remains which should be preserved for their own sake, adequate cognisance of this is taken within the long-term planning of the schemes themselves. Third, we need to persuade planners and developers, who are increasingly and encouragingly accepting this message, that adequate time and resources should be made available within the plans for their schemes to enable archaeological excavation to take place prior to the development work. In this way, although preservation *in situ* may not be achieved, at least a full record can be made of the historic deposits, before they are destroyed or dislocated by building operations.

The role of local authorities in relation to the archaeological heritage is thus a crucial first stage of this process. Most county and some district authorities now employ archaeologists and are able to influence the future of the archaeological heritage through their development control responsibilities and powers. The preservation of the archaeological remains on a development site, whether *in situ* or by record, should therefore be dealt with as an integral part of the planning application and the proposed development programme. It is clearly in the interests of all concerned that consultation between developers, planners, and archaeologists takes place at an early stage. Where the implications of development proposals cannot be determined satisfactorily, because of the inadequacy of current information, and there is good reason to believe that important archaeological remains exist, the planning authority may request the developer to arrange for an archaeological field evaluation to be carried out before any planning decision is taken.



*A substantial Roman wall, found to stand 3.25m high, and probably part of a major public building within the colonia, discovered in excavations at the Queen's Hotel site, York*

Such evaluations are quite distinct from archaeological excavations and are usually rapid and inexpensive operations involving ground survey and small-scale trial trenching. They help to define the character and extent of the archaeological deposits that exist in the development area and enable informed and reasonable planning decisions to be taken.

Archaeological remains may be protected in a development, for example, by sympathetic design of the layout, by adopting specialised minimally-damaging foundations, by building up the ground under the new structure, or by careful siting of landscaped and open areas. Early consultation and evaluation procedures therefore reduce the damage to the archaeological site and reduce the costs to the developer of recording what is unavoidably to be destroyed. There is no statutory obligation for a developer to meet the costs of recording, because it is considered desirable to retain flexibility in the arrangements for dealing with the different sites. Many developers do make time and money available for archaeological work within the framework of the voluntary Code of Practice between archaeologists and the British Property Federation (second edition, 1988), and a number of planning authorities now seek agreements to ensure that 'an appropriate provision is made.

Recent events in York and London are instructive in this context. York has well-preserved archaeological deposits and a pressing need for economic development. English Heritage has persuaded York City Council to compile a strategy document that will provide information on the archaeological implications of building sites to potential developers. Forearmed with this information, the developer will know whether special building foundations will be required and budget for any costs of archaeological recording. In addition, there is now to be an archaeologist on the staff of York City Council to advise on planning applications. These joint measures should go a long way to reconciling tensions that have existed in the past between archaeologists and planners in the city. So far as London is concerned, had more opportunity been taken to carry out an evaluation of the site beforehand, the discovery of the remains of the Rose Theatre would not have come as such a surprise and could have been planned for from the start. In this way, the remains of the theatre's structure could have been accommodated in the foundation design of the building without the disruption and costs that were subsequently incurred.

No one who is involved in a high-cost, inner-city development welcomes a sudden forced change of plan or design consequent upon a surprise, but important, discovery such as the remains of the Elizabethan 'Rose' Theatre. Such discoveries, though rare, are part of the hazard of inner city building work: it would be foolish to claim that archaeologists can always be absolutely certain what remains will be found on any particular site. With better and more consistent input to the planning process, however, and with limited and low-cost evaluation exercises where relevant, the risk of this kind of surprise to the developers, the planners, or the interested public can be minimised. A proper professional approach to urban archaeology demands no less.

G J WAINWRIGHT

## **EDITORIAL**

### **PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT? CONSERVATION UNDER THREAT**

One of the many recent press articles on the Great Architectural Debate between the Prince of Wales and the architects said, as a self-evident truth, 'the case for preservation is made'. It is a case, however, which cannot be made with any such degree of finality, for it rests on a fine judgement of what is worth preserving: a criterion always applied to individual buildings or individual places. Thus, the case for preservation has to be made time and again, in the face of varying economic and social circumstances. At present, development in many major towns and cities, housing demand throughout the South East, and transport needs everywhere are increasing, rather than declining. Pressures to make space for the new by destroying or overwhelming the old are correspondingly more demanding. Conservationists are watching the present system of protecting our heritage to judge how well it withstands these strains, and to see whether government continues to

uphold the principles embodied in current legislation and circulars. There have been some good examples in recent months, but some other cases show a more worrying picture. These should be confronted squarely.

The first event was the attempt by British Rail, backed by the Department of Transport, to set aside all listed and historic building, ancient monument, and conservation area legislation in the redevelopment area covered by the King's Cross Bill. If Clause 19, which contains this provision, is allowed to survive into the Act, the attempt may well be repeated not only in the imminent Channel Tunnel Rail Link Bill, which will affect substantial numbers of historic buildings, archaeological sites, and conservation areas in Kent and London, but also in other development-related private bills promoted by, for example, port, water, and electricity-generating authorities. This possibility is a threat to all conservation interests, whether natural or manmade, since the principle could easily be extended to exclude other statutory protections. English Heritage is protesting vigorously, but it will probably need government assistance, if the King's Cross Bill is to be changed before enactment. So far, the outcome is uncertain.

The second disturbing case was the decision on No 1 Poultry (described in this issue, pp12–13). Here, we have buildings of accepted architectural, historic, and civic merit in a conservation area, as fully protected as the law allows, and demonstrably capable of economic reuse, which the Secretary of State has agreed can be demolished to make way for the work of a modern architect on the grounds that, in the words of the Planning Inspector, '[the new building] might just be a masterpiece'. It is perhaps odd that we have a system which prevents the Secretary of State listing most buildings that are less than 30 years old, because that is too soon to judge their lasting architectural merit, but does nonetheless allow him to take account of potential genius on the drawing board. Ministers are, however, given wide discretion within the planning laws. This example of that discretion has made the task of local planning authorities, conservation groups, and, indeed, developers potentially much harder, by apparently introducing difficult subjective judgements into the planning process.

Despite the No 1 Poultry decision, the former Secretary of State said that the principles of Circular 8/87 were still in force. I wrote in July to all Chief Planning Officers to the effect that English Heritage proposed to treat that decision as the exception which proved the rule of 8/87. At the same time, Lord Montagu, our Chairman, asked the Government for further clarification, for the sake of all those who have to operate within the planning world. Since then, SAVE Britain's Heritage have taken steps to challenge the Secretary of State's decision on No 1 Poultry in the courts. The new Secretary of State has recently replied to Lord Montagu that he stands by the principles of Circular 8/87, but he has declined to consider any change or reinforcement of the circular, while the No 1 Poultry decision is *sub judice*. Unhappily, therefore, uncertainty about the government's position continues. In addition 'to these two key cases, there has been public criticism of the government's attitude to several other conservation issues. For example, the Department of the Environment issued minimal guidance on the protection of important views in London – effectively turning its back on most of the advice offered by English Heritage and the London Planning Advisory Committee – and, in a recent spotlisting case, the Victorian Society questioned whether the Department was paying due regard to the recommendations of its statutory advisor, English Heritage.

Some of this may well illustrate a general point about the relationship between any quango (*quasi*-autonomous non-governmental organisation) and central government. Government creates such bodies to perform executive functions or to provide advice, and, in the latter case, retains the right not to follow that advice. It is inevitable, if regrettable, that when advice is rejected, it may be interpreted by the outside world as indicating a shift in commitment, either to the subject in question, or to the quango itself. In a similar fashion,

the recent surprise announcement by the DoE that it was curtailing the Nature Conservancy Council's responsibilities has caused concern.

The above examples of conservation cases lost or still in the balance must, therefore, be treated seriously, not only in their own right, but also as possible indicators of shifting focus by government, under the undoubted development pressures of which we are all aware. The first major policy statement on conservation of the built heritage by the new Secretary of State will, we hope, provide some comfort.

JENNIFER A PAGE

*Chief Executive*

## **VICTORIAN CHURCHES IN LONDON: PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS**

In the last 100 years of building conservation, each generation has had to tackle particular areas of crisis. For Morris and the early days of SPAB the main problem was neglect and abuse of medieval fabric; by the post-war years, the country house was the most threatened historic building type. By the 60s and 70s, the new threat was to historic town centres. The legislation under which we work is, to some extent, the accumulated responses to all these problems. Today, however, one of our most pressing, most widespread, and most intractable problems is that of historic churches.

London is a good place to observe the church problems in an acute form and to see different ways in which they have been tackled. The capital is particularly rich in important Victorian churches. It has a disproportionate number of the major works of the best known architects of Anglican churches (Butterfield, Scott, Street, Pearson, Brooks, etc) together with very fine – and undeservedly obscure – major churches of the other denominations, such as the enormous Roman Catholic Priory Church of St Dominic in Camden, the great preaching auditorium of the Union Chapel, Islington, and the former Catholic Apostolic Church of Christ the King, Gordon Square.



*St Michael and All Angels, Poplar Road, Croydon*



*Christ Church, North Brixton*

One problem that these Victorian churches all have in common is that of fabric, as they are all coming up for their first really major overhaul. All those slates were nailed down at about the same time: all those nails are now failing. Similarly, the weathering parts of stonework now also need repair – a problem made worse by the tendency of nineteenth-century architects to succumb to the temptation to use easily-worked stone, much of which has not stood up well to London's atmosphere.

In cases where important churches cannot reasonably meet or raise the full costs, English Heritage is making grants towards these necessary repairs. In London we have the advantage of being able to grant-aid any historic building, thus grants may be made under our 'Section 3A' scheme in the case of outstanding churches, 'London grants' for other historic churches, or 'Section 10' grants for churches in certain priority conservation areas.

Last year, churches in London (including former churches) were offered a total of £1,186,000 under all schemes; £1,068,000 of this was for nineteenth-century churches. A large part of the cost of church repairs can be the cost of the scaffolding, which usually amounts to between £30,000 and £50,000 for a typical large town church. It therefore makes good economic sense to do as much as possible from that scaffold, although against this must be weighed the conservation ideal of disrupting as little fabric as is absolutely necessary and the churches' own ideal of not working faster than they can raise the money. The balance of these factors, together with the urgency of the works, tends to lead to large phases of work. To take churches by J L Pearson alone as an example, we have offered £154,000 towards St Peter's, Vauxhall, over £120,000 for St Michael's, Croydon, and £37,000 for St Augustine's, Kilburn. All of these are grants for major structural repairs, such as roofing, brickwork, and stonework.



*St Stephen, Rosslyn Hill, Camden*

Whilst the problems of fabric can be challenging, they are far less intractable than the other great problem, which can be summarised as 'use'. Most of our historic churches are far too large for their present congregations, and many are now in the wrong place for their pastoral needs. This national pattern is intensified in London by cultural, ethnic, and economic changes in the inner suburbs – where most great Victorian churches stand – which have greatly reduced the church-going populations of those areas. The problem is serious for Anglicans, but even more devastating for the nonconformist churches which do not have access to the central resources available to the established church. (One can, however, take these generalisations too far – the quite remarkable URC Westminster Chapel, Buckingham Gate, frequently attracts over 500 to its services). By comparison with other denominations, the Roman Catholic Church in London appears not to have as serious a problem in the size and distribution of its buildings. They do sometimes, however, require grant assistance for major works, as at the ragstone landmark church of Our Ladye Star of the Sea, Greenwich, which has received a total of over £95,000 of Section 3A grant to repair its crumbling stonework.

Overlaid on the above problem are the changing patterns of worship and changing priorities of the clergy, some of whom regard their buildings as an encumbrance to their pastoral duties. Whilst it is almost always better for an historic church to remain use as a church, this itself brings other pressures on the interior of the building. Sometimes this can be satisfactorily resolved, as at Beresford Pite's extraordinary neo-Byzantine Christ Church, North Brixton, which was snatched from the jaws of redundancy and sensitively subdivided to leave the interior space still clearly visible. The same is true of St Chad's, Haggerston, where Brooks' mastery of space has survived the insertion of a parish room at the west end, although that cannot so readily be said of the internal division of his Church of the Holy Innocents, Hammersmith. Destructive re-ordering is a continuing problem, although this is eased in London by the fact that each Diocesan Advisory Committee includes an official from our London Division, giving us the opportunity to discuss and negotiate on proposals at an early stage. A current example is the partial reordering of Mitcham Parish Church, a delightful early Gothic-revival building, where we have offered over £133,000 towards eliminating dry rot behind the plaster vaults. Redundancy is the final solution to the problem described by our least antiquarian clergy as 'plant overcapacity'. London has its share of celebrated cases, of which St Alban's, Teddington, and St Saviour's, Aberdeen Park, give cause for cautious optimism. We hope that St Alban's will become the subject of a repair scheme supervised by us, financed partly by the adjacent development and partly by our grant; St Saviour's is in the final

stages of repairs supervised by us, with intended use as an artist's studio. Schemes of these kinds, which preserve the interior space, are the ones which are the most difficult to find and to fund. There are also encouraging signs that two of London's sleeping beauties – St Stephen's, Rosslyn Hill, and St Mark's, North Audley Street – are about to wake: there are new proposals for the reuse of both of these splendid buildings which have been closed and deteriorating for far too long. Reuse by another sect or religion can seem an attractive option for a threatened church and may sometimes be appropriate, but in practice we have seen several examples of problems caused by the limited resources of the new occupiers and by their wishes to make extensive alterations – a problem exacerbated by ecclesiastical exemption from listed building controls.



*Interior of the Westminster Chapel, Buckingham Gate*

With London residential property values it is relatively easy in most areas to make financial sense of conversion into flats. However, this is almost always a poor solution in historic building terms, as it must involve the substantial loss of the interior space of the building and much of the interior detail, together with requiring inappropriate external alterations such as rooflights, new windows, or flues. There are cases (such as St Clement's, Barnsbury – a minor work of G G Scott) where the interior is relatively unimportant and the external alterations are acceptable, or where the only importance of the church is in townscape terms, but these are rare with listed churches.

The extra funding for church grants from next year onwards will certainly help to solve more of the problems raised by the gradual deterioration of church fabric, but the fact remains that there really is no universal solution to the problems of historic churches.

JOHN YATES

## **THE DAMASK BEDCHAMBER, MARBLE HILL**



*The Damask Chamber, Marble Hill*

English Heritage has been awarded two Diplomas of Merit in the latest Europa Nostra Awards, one of which was for 'the superb restoration and refurbishment of a Palladian Villa': that at Marble Hill. Over 200 architectural and natural heritage conservation projects were submitted in 1988 from seventeen countries and only ten awards were made to entries from the United Kingdom. The Medieval Merchant's House, Southampton, earned English Heritage its other Diploma of Merit.

Marble Hill was built beside the Thames at Twickenham between 1724 and 1729 for Henrietta Howard (1688–1767), mistress of George II and later Countess of Suffolk. The design was first published in Colen Campbell's *Vitruvius Britannicus* (volume III, 1725), and the exceptional survival of the villa and its landscaped estate, with only minimal

alterations, has made Marble Hill a textbook example of its kind. However, the original decoration and furnishing of the interior had disappeared by 1902, when the villa was purchased for the nation.

Initially, it was used as a tea room and park keeper's residence. Restoration commenced in 1965, but when Marble Hill reopened as an historic house museum in 1966, only the restored ground floor and *piano nobile* (the first floor with the main reception rooms) were open to the public, but without any of their original paintings and furniture. The second storey, comprising three guest bedrooms and a long gallery, remained closed, since they had been gutted on the discovery of dry rot. In 1988, following painstaking restoration, this suite of rooms was formally opened to the public. The emphasis has now returned to the *piano nobile*, where the restoration carried out by a previous generation is under fresh scrutiny, as standards of historical decoration continue to rise, and as the villa's original paintings and furniture return from as far afield as Philadelphia, USA, and Bondi, Australia. The Damask Bedchamber on the first floor reopened shortly before Christmas, 1988. It takes its name from the earliest inventory of Marble Hill, drawn up on Henrietta Howard's death in 1767, and was probably first decorated as a dressing room for her second husband, George Berkeley, whom she married in 1735. Since 1966, this square room at the northwest corner of the house had been lightly furnished and was hung with a striped wallpaper, recreated from fragments found on site. This wallpaper was thought to date from 1796, when another royal favourite, Mrs Fitzherbert, lived at Marble Hill. However, the earliest inventory, drawn up in 1767, describes the room as the 'Damask Bedchamber' and refers to 'Red Damask curtains'. Furthermore, traces of a crimson flock paper had been recorded in 1965 during restoration.

After over twenty years, the striped wallpaper was sadly stained and peppered with screw holes from the changing display of engravings. Careful stripping revealed the original striped paper. When first replaced, it had clearly been reused as a lining paper, pasted direct onto the panelling to exclude draughts and dirt. Tiny fragments of the crimson flock paper were also discovered, where it had run over the original stretched hessian backing and been pasted direct onto the panelling.

Stripping also revealed the high quality finish to the brickwork by Roger Morris (1695–1749), who had been commissioned to build the 'naked carcass of a house' at Marble Hill. The mortar had been struck up between each layer (rather than left rough or finished at a downward angle as for exterior brickwork) and the brickwork had weathered *in situ*, as if the roof had remained unroofed for some time. This corresponds with the delays in finishing Marble Hill indicated by bills and with a passage in Jonathan Swift's *Pastoral dialogue between Richmond-Lodge and Marble Hill*, written on the accession of George II in 1727. In the poem, the Marble Hill estate laments:

My house was built but for a show,  
My Lady's empty pockets know;  
And now she will not have a shilling  
To raise the stairs, or build the ceiling

Unfortunately, the rediscovered fragments of crimson flock wallpaper were too small to provide a pattern for reconstruction, and a period equivalent had to be found. Larger fragments of a crimson 'pomegranite' flock probably used by Roger Morris around 1743 at Lydiard Park, Wiltshire, survive in the archives of Temple Newsam House, Leeds. Through the generosity of the Principal Keeper, Anthony Wells-Cole, a piece was borrowed for reconstruction. Samples of flock paper with brushed grounds were obtained from specialist manufacturers in London and Paris before the commission was given to Cole & Son, whose archive at Perry's contained the appropriate pattern block.



The traditional method was used, comprising hand-block printing with an adhesive, before powdered wood and nylon (originally just wool) were sprinkled over the paper. A concession to technology was to print on continuous sheets, unrolled through a trough along a mechanically pounded belt. The printed paper emerged from crimson clouds to be hung in giant loops from the factory racks to dry.

Meanwhile, the carved decoration of the room was repainted in its original stone colour, and the walls prepared with stretched hessian and backing paper. An overhead light and its conspicuous wall switch were removed, and 'Two Brass Sconces' (as listed in the 1767 inventory) were fitted on either side of the chimneypiece to provide more sympathetic illumination.

The most significant piece of furniture mentioned in the inventory was 'A four posted Mahogany Bedstead with Red Damask Curtains'. As with most of Marble Hill's original furniture, this bed would have been presented to Henrietta Howard by George II as a 'perquisite' and removed from her apartments at St James's Palace. Sadly, as with the rest of Marble Hill's furniture, it was removed before the villa was acquired for the nation, and its present whereabouts is unknown.



*Restoration in progress, Marble Hill*



*The Damask Chamber before restoration*

Happily, a magnificent carved mahogany bed, made in England around 1740, had recently been 'deaccessioned' by The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, USA. It had been displayed in The Governor's Palace at Colonial Williamsburg (a building wholly recreated in the 1950s), but was now considered too elaborate for the earliest eighteenth-century inventory of the palace. America's loss was Marble Hill's gain, as the bed was purchased by English Heritage to complete the restored room. Not only is the wealth of carving of exceptional quality, but the bed had not been modified for modern use and remains relatively small, in keeping with the scale of Marble Hill. Working from the 1767 inventory, other pieces of appropriate period furniture have been introduced. Red damask curtains and matching bed hangings will follow.

As the first of the suite of rooms on the *piano nobile* to be restored after twenty years, The Damask Bedchamber now evokes the more domestic atmosphere enjoyed at Marble Hill in Henrietta Howard's time. The restoration project was undertaken by Robin Wyatt, architect, and Leslie Robinson, clerk of works.

JULIUS BRYANT

## **THE POTATO STORE AT BOLLITREE CASTLE**

On 18 May 1989 the High Court quashed a planning permission which South Herefordshire District Council had given to a local farmer for the erection of a potato storage building at Bollitree Farm.

The application for judicial review of the planning decision was brought by the owner of nearby Bollitree Castle. The Castle is an extraordinary example of a mid-eighteenth

century Gothic sham castle developed around an earlier house of about 1700 and later embellished in the nineteenth century. The principal parts of the Castle are Grade I and Grade II\* listed buildings.

Under Section 28(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, planning authorities are obliged to advertise (in the local press and by a site notice) planning applications which would in their opinion 'affect the setting of a listed building' and (apart from cases where only the setting of Grade II listed buildings outside London are affected) to notify English Heritage. In this case, the Council had done neither of these things, because it argued that the potato store would not, in its opinion, affect the setting of Bollitree Castle.

The judge, Mr Justice McCowan, looked at photographs of the potato store which was a bulky structure erected within 77m of the Castle. He also considered the opinion of Mr Paul Drury, Inspector of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings in the Historic Buildings Division of English Heritage. Giving his judgement, Mr Justice McCowan said that he was amazed that anybody could have thought that a building of the nature and bulk of the potato store would not affect the setting of Bollitree Castle. Moreover, the Council had appeared to concentrate on whether or not the potato store was visible from Bollitree Castle and not to have taken into account the equally important question of whether the potato store intruded on views of the Castle from other viewpoints. He held that the decision of the Council was so unreasonable that it was bad in law and should be quashed.

This case is a timely reminder that the provisions of planning legislation, designed to protect the setting of listed buildings, must be properly observed by planning authorities. If councils do not advertise applications or fail to notify English Heritage, then their grant of planning permission will be open to successful challenge in the High Court by those adversely affected.

It is understood that the South Herefordshire District Council are appealing against the decision to the Court of Appeal. However, those representing the owners of Bollitree Castle are understood to be quietly confident that the Court of Appeal will uphold the judgement and that the potato store will have to be moved.

The decision is reported in the *Estates Gazette* (1989, EGCS 80).

CHARLES BIRD

## **CORPORATE PLAN 1989–93**

With this issue of the Bulletin you will find a summary of the English Heritage Corporate Plan for the years 1989–93. The Corporate Plan is our main planning tool and helps us to ensure that we direct our resources in the right amounts to the right activities. English Heritage has an annual budget of around £80 million, 90% of which comes from public sources. The plan sets out how we intend to use those resources over a three-year planning period (on some major issues it looks further ahead). As well as enabling us to plan our activities, the Corporate Plan is increasingly our most important channel of communication with the Department of the Environment. Their decisions on the level of grant-aid that we will continue to receive are based very much on the content and credibility of our plan.

The full plan is a long and complex document, necessarily so as we are a large organisation with many functions. The attached summary of the plan should give the broad outlines of how we visualise the development and continuance of our work.

Most significant is the prediction, at present, of a £4 million deficit by 1993, if funding, activities, and income all remain at their present and projected levels.

DUNCAN SIMPSON

## **WATERLOGGED WOOD**

The Wetlands Archaeological Research Project in conjunction with English Heritage is running a conference on Monday 15 January 1990 at the Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London. The main business of the conference will be to discuss and publicise the findings of a committee convened to prepare guidelines on the recording, sampling, conservation, and curation of waterlogged wood. Details are available from: Professor John and Bryony Coles, WARP, Fursdon Mill Cottage, Thorverton, Devon, EX5 5JS. Copies of the *Archaeological wood survey* are available for £2.50 from the Ancient Monuments Laboratory, English Heritage, Fortress House, 23 Savile Row, London, W1X 2HE.

## **HISTORIC PARKS, LANDSCAPES, AND GARDENS**

The Institute of Advanced Architectural Studies is running a number of open short courses within this academic year, designed to inform those whose professional work brings them into direct contact with the care and conservation of historic landscapes. Normally of 2–3 days' duration, these courses deal with subjects such as conserving and managing historic parks and gardens (Nov 20–22, 1989), protecting the rural heritage: landscapes (May 14–16, 1990), through to conservation and the industrial heritage (23–25 May, 1990). Full details about times and course fees can be obtained from the Secretary, IoAAS, King's Manor, York, YO1 2EP; telephone 0904-433966 or 433963.

## **ICOMOS UK HERITAGE AND TOURISM**

An international congress is due to take place in the University of Kent at Canterbury between 27–30 March 1990 on the theme of Heritage and Tourism in Europe. The programme includes sessions on the 'European dimensions of tourism', 'Pressures on the heritage', 'Cathedrals – can they survive?', and 'Cultural tourism, management, marketing and presentation'.

The congress will attempt to address the problems of the impact of tourism on heritage sites from the standpoint of those working in both fields, and, working from the case study of Canterbury itself, widen the debate into the European field. For further details, please contact ICOMOS UK, at 10 Barley Mow Passage, Chiswick, London, W4 4PH, telephone 01-994-6477.

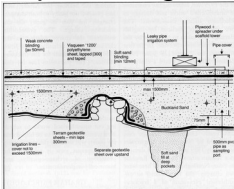
## **THE ROSE THEATRE**

### **OVERCOMING THE TECHNICAL PRESERVATION PROBLEMS**

Excavations at 2–10 Southwark Bridge Road by the Museum of London's Department of Greater London Archaeology showed in the Spring of 1989 that this was the site of the 'Rose', one of the four famous Tudor/Jacobean playhouses on London's south bank, and that visible – though fragile – remains of the theatre had survived. Planning permission had already been granted by the London Borough of Southwark for the erection of an office block on this site; both the initial developers, the Heron Corporation, as well as the firm who later took over the interest in the site, Imry Merchant Developers plc, contributed towards the costs of archaeological excavation, and the latter twice extended the time allowed for this work, despite the financial penalties to which this exposed them.

Before the full importance of the discoveries was realised, the developers had already agreed to rebury the remains in a way which would secure their preservation, leaving it possible that the remains would be uncovered and displayed to the public at some later date. When the archaeological work began to demonstrate that the planned piling design for the new building would affect the remains of the theatre, it became necessary to reopen discussions with the developers over the best way to ensure their safety.

There was extensive press coverage of the different views taken on the extent of the remains, which might yet be discovered, as well as the need to schedule the site, which will not be repeated here. Briefly, however, English Heritage, which assumed responsibility for negotiations with the developers, had three objectives. First, to persuade Imry to redesign their foundations in a non-damaging fashion. Second, to ensure full protection of these remains while the office building was going up; and third, to persuade Imry to do the redesign in a way that would eventually allow the remains to be uncovered again and displayed to the public. The process of negotiation over all these matters was conducted as speedily as possible, not least because it was apparent that the second objective, that of protecting the remains, was one which required rapid attention.



*Rose Theatre: sketch section of the measures taken to preserve the remains*

The condition of the excavated structure was rapidly deteriorating through its exposure. Many of the surfaces and sections had dried out despite the 'leaky-pipe' watering system that had been installed for their protection. Extensive fissures were present at the surface and edges of exposed sections, and it was imperative to cover the site as soon as possible both to prevent further drying and to try to return the surface to anaerobic conditions. It was the preservation of the organic artefacts and ecofacts that seemed particularly urgent, as the drying and aeration of the surface had already reinitiated the processes of decay. The objectives of the exercise were therefore to protect the site itself and any organic remains from biological, chemical, and physical damage whilst it was under cover. The method that was devised by English Heritage's Research and Technical Advisory Service and the Ancient Monuments Laboratory after consultation therefore needed to fulfil some stringent requirements.

It must first be able to protect standing structures and surfaces from accidental damage during other on-site works. It was also necessary to insulate the site against extremes of temperature and to reduce oxygen at the excavated surface to prevent decay of the delicate exposed remains. Finally, the provisions must aim to re-hydrate dry areas and allow the maintenance of a constant moisture content, whilst allowing the soil water chemistry to remain unchanged as far as was possible.

After taking account of various suggestions, including the advocacy of the use of peat, silts, or clays to blanket the site, the method described below was adopted. It was devised to be controllable and as neutral as possible and to alter the soil environment biologically and chemically to the minimum. The use of other materials for covering the remains was rejected: peat would raise the acidity of the soil water in the archaeological levels and could therefore contribute to the deterioration of the organic materials, as well as providing little structural support to upstanding features. Clays or silts, unless deposited as a slurry, would be likely to leave air-pockets which could allow further oxidation to occur; if they were used in slurry form, there was a danger that they would permeate the protective sheets laid between the remains and the covering.

The method adopted was therefore as follows. Exposed timber features were securely wrapped in 'cling-film' and heavier grade polythene, after their condition had been described and recorded photographically. All surfaces and features were then covered with a layer of the permeable geo-textile 'Terram'. The Terram sheets were held in place by lime/sand mortar (1:6), and all upstanding features were protected by mortar supports. Next, Buckland sand was mechanically sprayed onto the Terram to a minimum depth of 300mm above any archaeological remains. The dry sand was compacted by saturating it with water, thus also reducing the amount of air at the surface of the site.

Seven water monitoring points (using 68mm diameter pipes) were built into the covering, and ten moisture sensitive electric cells were built in to record moisture content in the sand covering and within the archaeological levels. A 'leaky-pipe' irrigation system was laid in the upper levels of the sand, which was then covered with an impervious polyethylene sheet (Visqueen 1200). This in its turn was covered with a weak mix concrete binding with a minimum thickness of 50mm. This layer is not load-bearing and no plant or machines will be placed on it.

An essential element of any method of site conservation is an ability to monitor the amount of moisture and dissolved oxygen present. Advice was taken from the Soil Survey of England and Wales, Hunting Technical Services, and engineers of MRM Partnership. The system that has been installed will enable the monitoring of both the water level and water chemistry of the site. The collection of such data is very important, not only for the preservation of the Rose, but also for the future understanding of other fragile, excavated, waterlogged sites.

It is worthy of record that this sophisticated method and specification were devised and implemented in the twelve days between 12 and 23 June – the weak mix concrete capping was laid on the afternoon of that day. Any further delay would have ensured that only fragments of the structure would have remained for future exploration and display. Imry, who financed the operation, Costains, who provided the materials and equipment, and the staff of the Central Excavation Unit, the Ancient Monuments Laboratory, and the Research and Technical Advisory Service of English Heritage, who devised and supervised the work, all had a part in this achievement.

Although the remains of the Rose theatre are now safe in the short term, and mechanisms are in place to ensure that the site's condition can be checked and controlled, there are still difficulties to face in the longer term. Re-excavation and eventual display of the remains, whenever this may take place, will bring with it a host of new but related problems which require a great deal of discussion and study before adequate solutions can be found. We propose that there should be wide consultation on the way forward.

JOHN ASHURST, NICK BALAAM, and KATE FOLEY

## **ANCIENT MONUMENTS PROSECUTIONS 1989**

In March 1989, a prosecution case for alleged damage to a scheduled ancient monument, Condicote Henge, in Gloucestershire, was dismissed by the Crown Court on the grounds that evidence of the existence of the Schedule of Ancient Monuments was not made available. The dismissal attracted considerable attention in the press, with speculation that the decision threatened the validity of all schedulings. Both English Heritage and the Department of the Environment, however, publicly expressed their confidence in the legal validity of the Schedule and promised to continue to instigate prosecutions where unlawful damage was caused to scheduled monuments. Since March, three cases have come to court and each has resulted in a conviction.

The first was a prosecution under Section 42 of the 1979 Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act for the illegal use of a metal detector on a scheduled ancient monument in Norfolk. The case was brought to court by the police and resulted in a verdict of guilty for both defendants, who were each fined £110 with £30 costs.

The other two cases involved offences under Section 2 and Section 28 of the 1979 Act, following the execution of unauthorised works and damage to scheduled ancient monuments. The two cases were initiated by English Heritage and taken to the court by the Crown Prosecution Service. In the first of these, on 27 and 28 June 1989, Ludlow Magistrates heard a charge of damage by ploughing to a scheduled hillfort, Ratlinghope Castle Ring, Stitt Hill, Shropshire. Evidence on scheduling was given by the Department of the Environment and was accepted by the defence. The farmer, who pleaded not guilty,

was convicted by the magistrates and was fined £300 with £200 costs. The second damage case was heard by Nottingham Magistrates on 18 July 1989 and concerned damage to a Roman site at Red Hill, Ratcliffe on Soar, Nottinghamshire. There were two charges: the first related to unauthorised excavation of a trackway through the site of a Romano-British temple on top of the cliff. Evidence relating to the scheduling by the DoE was served in advance of the hearing and was accepted by the defence. During the hearing, the farmer, who had pleaded not guilty to both charges, changed his plea to guilty on the trackway charge. The prosecution withdrew the charge relating to the cliffworks. The defendant was fined £1500 plus £500 costs for the trackway offence. (The maximum fine for this offence in the magistrates court is £2000.)

The outcome of these prosecutions may be seen as confirming the legal validity of the Schedule. English Heritage will continue to press for prosecutions of those responsible for carrying out unauthorised works to scheduled monuments. It is to be hoped that the courts will show by their sentencing that a serious view is taken of the protection of archaeologically- and historically-important sites.

GRAHAM FAIRCLOUGH

## ECCLESIASTICAL EXEMPTION

The first issue of the *Conservation Bulletin* (1, February 1987) outlined the basis of the agreement reached by the government and all the main English churches on changes to be made to the exemption from listed building controls at present enjoyed by buildings (of whatever faith) 'in ecclesiastical use'. These changes still need to be implemented by Order in Parliament, and in March this year the government issued a consultation paper. For the Church of England (with its own faculty jurisdiction system that controls more than alteration and demolition of buildings), there will be hardly any change to the *status quo* concerning church buildings themselves. However, if the government's intention to restrict the exemption solely to 'principal places of worship' can be sustained, PCCs will have to apply for both faculty and listed building consent to alter or demolish churchyard walls, grave markers, lych-gates, and any other building within the curtilage of the place of worship. English Heritage supports this restriction, as many of these items are now separately listed (and so of special architectural and historic interest), and the setting of a parish church is frequently of great environmental value too. It is hoped that some of the extra £3 million, which English Heritage has available for church grants from April 1990 (see *Conserv Bull* 6, 6), can be used for conserving these important structures.

It is also proposed to bring into secular control the curtilage buildings of all listed non-Anglican places of worship. More importantly, all works of partial demolition that affect the external character of such listed places of worship will also require listed building consent. This is a welcome improvement on the earlier agreement, but English Heritage is still pressing for the demolition or radical alteration of the interiors of non-Anglican places of worship to be included. The greatest interest and architectural value of such listed buildings frequently reside in the disposition of the internal volumes and the use of galleries. It would be tragic for these essential major elements to be beyond the listed building legislation.

It is hoped to lay the Order in the next Parliamentary session. Meanwhile, the Church of England has progressed its own legislation through its General Synod. The Care of Cathedrals Measure (*Conser Bull* 6, October 1988) has completed its ecclesiastical course and, once through Parliament, should come into force late in 1990. For the first time, cathedral authorities have to seek approval from an external body (either the Fabric Advisory Committee appointed to each cathedral or the national Cathedrals Fabric Commission) to carry out works that affect the fabric or character of the cathedral and adjoining buildings or to add or remove works of art or historical value.

A further measure reforming the faculty system has also received outline approval from the Synod and, as with the Cathedral Measure, English Heritage is actively pressing for inclusion of suitable safeguards to ensure that these measures are at least as effective as the secular controls in protecting the built heritage.

Amenity societies, English Heritage, and the general public will be given the opportunity to comment on such proposals, as they would with proposed alterations to any other Grade I or II\* building.

RICHARD HALSEY

## LIST REVIEW

The review of older statutory lists of historic buildings to bring them up to the standard of more recent resurvey volumes is now well under way, with fieldwork programmed in nearly 40 areas, and using individual consultants commissioned either by English Heritage or by the local authority.

Most local authorities are participating in the essential work of identifying buildings for consideration in their area. A substantial number are making funds available, which will enable more time to be spent in the field to improve the authorities' own knowledge of their listed building stock, including condition and photographic surveys.

The list entries themselves are now being indexed and computerised using specially developed software. Statutory lists will still be produced as 'hard copy' from the database, which will also include details of all the buildings considered for listing during the review programme.

PETER WHITE

## MORE APOLOGIES

In our last issue, the names of three of our contributors were marked off in error by our printers. The article on 'Urban conservation studies' (pp8–9) was by Paul Drury, that on 'Geophysical prospecting' (pp10–12) was by Andrew David, and the review of *Rural wetlands* (p12) was by Professor Richard Bradley. Please note that the telephone number for Warwick District Council, Leamington Spa, should have been 0926-450000.

## GEORGIAN GROUP GUIDES

The Georgian Group, 37 Spital Square, London, E1 6DY, has recently published a series of new guides dealing with the history, treatment, and repair of aspects of Georgian buildings. No 1 deals with 'windows', no 2 with 'bricks', no 3 with 'doors', and no 4 with 'paint colours'. Nos 1–3 cost £1 each, and no 4 is £2, and all are available from the above address; please send a large (A4) SAE with your order.

## DIRECTORY OF SOURCES OF GRANT AID

An updated version of the above directory is currently in preparation and will be available early in 1990. Designed to fit in the existing covers, the new version will be compatible with the previous version of the directory (published in 1988 and still available, price £4, including postage and packing).

## THE EMERGING PAST

The Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England has just published a study of the Trent Valley area and of the Welsh Marches, based on the results of three years' intensive work on the evidence revealed by aerial photographs within their collections. Dr Rowan Whimster, its author, makes the case for a greater degree of statutory protection

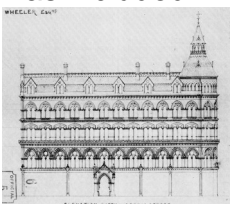
for cropmark sites such as these, where complex and crucial evidence about the development and history of early landscapes is to be found.

The book was generated by a survey jointly funded by English Heritage, RCHME, and Cambridge University and is available, price £16 plus postage (£2 UK, £3.50 Europe, £5 USA), from the Publication Section, RCHME, Fortress House, 23 Savile Row, London, W1X 2JQ; telephone enquiries to 01-631-5021.

## NUMBER ONE POULTRY

A recurrent issue at last year's Number One Poultry public inquiry was whether the matters being debated constituted a test case. Those who sat through the eighteen days of argument are likely to have agreed that it indeed was so, and, if any still remained sceptical, their doubts will have been banished by the Secretary of State's decision letter issued in June this year. In granting planning permission and listed building consent for the redevelopment of the Poultry site, the decision appears to overturn the normal presumption in favour of the preservation of listed buildings by attaching greater importance to the quality of what is to replace them.

The decision letter alters the priorities enshrined in existing conservation policies, but without giving a clear indication of the circumstances which justify doing so and without making a broad restatement of those policies. In response, English Heritage has taken the unusual step of writing to every planning authority in the country to reaffirm its intention to abide by the existing legislation and policy guidelines. At the same time, SAVE Britain's Heritage has elected to challenge the decision in the High Court, on the grounds that the Secretary of State failed to apply the appropriate statutory tests and that the inspector at the public inquiry misinterpreted existing conservation legislation. SAVE's full-page advertisement in the national press has left no doubt that there are major issues at stake. The Number One Poultry affair has been called a test case for other, less legally exact reasons. For a start, it has been distinguished by the length of time that it has been in the news in one guise or another. Its earlier episode, the debate over the Mies van der Rohe design for what was then called Mansion House Square, first began in 1968. It was then that the developer Peter Palumbo made his first planning application for the Mies scheme which, though favourably received, could not be granted because he did not own the whole of the required site. There was then a delay of fourteen years before he was able to make his next application, during which time eight of the buildings were listed and the site was included in a conservation area.



*Drawing of 2–10 Queen Victoria Street*

The public inquiry on the Mies scheme, held in 1984, offered a prolonged spectacle of architectural combat on an unprecedented scale: Mr Palumbo's twenty or so witnesses (including Richard Rogers and Colin St John Wilson) ranged against the City Corporation, the Greater London Council, the Victorian Society, SAVE, the Georgian Group, and a clutch of individual protesters. SAVE's alternative scheme, showing how the buildings could be retained and imaginatively reused, was presented by Terry Farrell. Patrick Jenkin, then Secretary of State, accepted his inspector's conclusion that the scheme should be refused permission. However, his decision letter hinted that an alternative scheme might fare better. With that inducement, Peter Palumbo asked James Stirling to produce a design for a slightly smaller version of the same site. The resultant application



triggered a second inquiry, shorter and less good-tempered than the first, which has produced the decision now the subject of such widespread dismay.

This has also been seen as a test case because of the symbolic importance attached to the site. The properties that Mr Palumbo has gradually acquired form a triangle immediately to the west of the Bank junction in the City, at the historic epicentre of the financial world. Across the junction, they face the famous triumvirate of the Bank of England, the Royal Exchange, and the Mansion House, while tucked to one side is Wren's St Stephen Walbrook. When the City Corporation first designated a conservation area embracing this group, it was referred to as 'a national set piece', and the subsequent extension of the area to include the buildings on the Palumbo site was an acknowledgement that they too form part of the historic core of the City. Yet on the same count, it is because of the historic significance of the area that Mr Palumbo selected it as a place to present his choice of twentieth-century architecture.

A case which has run for twenty years or more is bound to have changed complexion many times. The two common denominators throughout have been the developer and the group of buildings threatened by his architectural ambitions. In contrast to the ranks of hardnosed and unimaginative commercial clients, Peter Palumbo has often been cited as an ideal architectural patron, but a man frustrated at every turn by the dismal rules of planning bureaucracy. The buildings which he owns, a substantial and varied group of mostly mid-Victorian offices with ground floor shops, have not changed much externally since he first started to acquire them; but most of the interiors have been gutted and replaced by a complicated framework of steel supports. Not surprisingly, after so many years of uncertainty, they now look in a pretty unhappy state.

Amongst the changes which have affected the case during its lengthy progress, the most obvious has been the growing importance attached to these existing buildings on the Poultry site. When Mr Palumbo first approached Mies van der Rohe in 1962, the Coal Exchange was just being demolished and the Victorian Society had not yet got into its stride. The revolutionary change of attitude towards Victorian architecture in the late 1960s and 1970s included an upsurge of appreciation for the commercial buildings produced by Victorian architects working in the City. Many of the best examples had already gone, and some such as Cockerell's Sun Insurance Building were soon to be demolished. Taking account of this tally of losses, it became evident that the buildings in the Poultry triangle are the best surviving group of their kind. Almost all erected in the years 1868–77, they show how ingeniously the architects of the time injected character and variety into office design, and how brilliantly they could handle corner sites. The inspectors at both public inquiries endorsed the historic and architectural importance of the group, and neither of them doubted that the listed buildings had been correctly selected.



*West end of Queen Victoria Street from Royal Exchange forecourt*

The defence of the existing buildings presented at the second inquiry inevitably was a reiteration of what had been said first time round, though with an emphasis on the changes elsewhere in the City which helped reinforce the case for conserving the area at the Bank junction. On the opposite side, however, the introduction of the Stirling scheme signalled the most dramatic turnabout in the entire history of the case. Mies van der Rohe's 290ft tower proposal had been justified as a work in 'the great classical western tradition', which in its dignified purity, set to one side of a square, would complement other buildings in the

area. By contrast, Stirling chose to fill the whole of the main triangle with a building less than half as high and utterly different in character: aggressively monumental and full of boisterous movement and changes of material along its street facades. Yet it too, like the Mies tower, was presented as an appropriate design for the conservation area.

The conservation arguments marshalled by English Heritage at the second public inquiry rested first and foremost on the fact that the existing buildings are worthy of preservation and that, if appropriately treated, they could have a good life ahead of them. A scheme was drawn up (based on SAVE's earlier proposal) and costed to show how nine office units could be slotted into the existing fabric, along with other public facilities and refurbished shops. The Stirling design was of course addressed, principally to assess the impact that it would have, if built, on the surrounding buildings in the conservation area. The fact that it was considered in detail in no sense meant that English Heritage would willingly acquiesce in the demolition of the existing buildings.

Mark Girouard has called the decision in favour of the Stirling scheme 'a pyrrhic victory of tragic dimensions'. With a High Court case pending, the matter is still not finally resolved. The English Heritage view is that whatever the outcome of the High Court action, this decision cannot be taken as a precedent. We welcome the statement of ministers themselves that it does not alter the criteria set out in Circular 8/87.

ROBERT THORNE

## BUILDINGS AT RISK

### ENGLISH HERITAGE OFFERS THE FIRST GRANTS

English Heritage has made the first two grants under its new 'Buildings at Risk' programme, which makes funds available for the repair of thousands of previously ineligible buildings. Before, only 'outstanding' buildings and listed buildings in one of 500 selected conservation areas could be considered for English Heritage grant-aid. The new category expands this to include all vacant listed buildings in very poor condition in any of the 6000 conservation areas in England (*Conserv Bull 7*, February 1989).

The first grant-aided building is *The Old Grammar School, Walton-on-the-Hill, Merseyside*, one of the few seventeenth century buildings in Liverpool and listed Grade II. This is a twin-gabled sandstone rubble building, vacant for over eighteen months and deteriorating due to holes in the roof, vandalism, and fire damage. English Heritage has offered Walton Parochial Church Council a 25% grant towards the reslating of the roof and other repairs. The Parochial Church Council intends to bring it back into use as a parish hall once these have been completed.

The other grant recipient is *The Shelter Shed, Clifton-upon-Dunsmore, Warwickshire*, about which the district council have been concerned for some time. The roof covering is no longer protecting the cob walls, which would decay very rapidly in the coming winter. Following the council's determination to serve a notice for emergency repairs under Section 101, English Heritage was able to assist the owner with a small 25% grant to renew the roof covering as the first stage in repairing the building.



*Interior view of the Old Grammar School, Walton-on-the-Hill, Merseyside*

In addition to the grants, it is now English Heritage policy to give financial support to those local authorities carrying out urgent repair work. Normally, the cost of such work, done in cases where the owner is unwilling or unable to undertake mandatory repairs, is

recoverable from the owner. If it is impossible to reclaim the money, however, English Heritage will reimburse up to 50% of the costs.

Prospective applicants for grants should contact their local authority or Gaynor Roberts at English Heritage on 01-973-3817 for applications and guidance.

SUSAN BROWNE

## REVIEWS

### CONSERVATION TODAY

*Conservation today*, by David Pearce. Published by Routledge, price £11.95.

Pausing occasionally to take a retrospective view is no bad thing: it helps us to see ahead more clearly. *Conservation today* was published to accompany a travelling exhibition sponsored by the Royal Fine Art Commission and launched at the Royal Academy. Those who have only recently become involved in conservation, as well as those already engaged, will find Pearce's book essential reading. Conservation is no longer just for the expert.

David Pearce is a successful journalist, a former secretary of SPAB, and a founder member of SAVE. His review takes 1975 as its starting point: European Architectural Heritage Year. At that time, interest broadened from the dedicated few to embrace, amongst others, the local authorities. They responded with renewed interest by designating conservation areas, and launching Building Preservation Trusts in response to the Civic Trust's initiative in forming the Architectural Heritage Fund. In the wake of the exhibition 'The destruction of the country house' at the V&A, SAVE itself was formed giving the conservation movement a new impetus. Today, another exhibition at the V&A, 'A vision of Britain', carries the debate yet further to a wider public. The case for conservation is seen to rest not just on architectural interest, as it did after the last war, or even on general historic interest, which was appreciated later, but now, Pearce suggests, as a matter of social history too. A wider public interest has been demonstrated, as evidenced by the increasing membership of national bodies, including English Heritage, as well as of local societies.

From a general, legal, and financial introduction, Pearce draws on case studies to show examples of inner-city renewal, conservation in towns, industrial monuments, modern classics, country houses, rural buildings, new buildings in conservation areas, the repair of buildings of national importance, and a chapter on churches. From this wide-ranging evidence, Pearce draws his conclusions:

Most dangers lie in the very success of the processes described in this book. Buildings of value will remain at risk, especially in country towns for example, and attractive environments will continue to be eroded despite conservation area status, but the chief task is to see that what is done and approved as being in the common good really is of an appropriate quality.

Although the postwar redevelopments were carried out with a degree of consent, at least initially, that was partly because of a genuine belief that experts and authorities knew best. Among many crucial changes since then is a widespread belief that individuals, 'laymen' as architects call them, are as capable of helping to mould their environments as they are of 'doing up' their own homes. Many initiators of schemes described in this book were just such 'laymen'.

They may have needed expert help, of course, but Pearce's message is that, as compared with 1975, conservation today is for everyone.

MIKE PEARCE

## A VISION OF BRITAIN

*A vision of Britain*, by HRH The Prince of Wales.

Scores of reviewers have made the attempt, but, with this author, it is evidently extremely difficult to avoid the urge either to fawn, to patronise, or to be cheeky. Being on the receiving end of such behaviour all the time, must be one of the worst burdens of Royalty. Perhaps it also explains that failure to define a flexible, cogently argued position which strikes one on reading the book, which is marked in part by a clearly genuine humility and in part by breathtaking unselfconscious arrogance.

HRH's argument is based on a series of propositions of varying plausibility. At the bottom is a good layer of unexceptionable truism. My own favourite is the caption: 'I admire the perfection of Islamic architecture in the Taj Mahal, India'. Here, the urge to be cheeky persuades me to point out that the picture thus captioned shows HRH sitting with his back to the monument in question and is cropped of the crescent on top of the dome and the side of one of the minarets. Taken together, however, these statements of conventional wisdom do demonstrate a sensitive feeling for, and response to, buildings, landscape, townscape, and history.

At a slightly higher level in the argument, is the view that the post-war period has produced a large number of buildings which we now believe to be bad. This is something that we can all agree on. Many of the Prince's critics have berated him for doing no more than stating the obvious, but he and they have both rather missed one important point, which is crucial for those of us concerned with conservation. This is simply that tastes change, and what seems good today will not seem good tomorrow. Think of your own attitude to the buildings of the 1930s or, if you are over 50, to St Pancras Station. Now consider the ease with which the Prince spatters the word 'ugly' about, and you will see the case for respecting the intentions of the past and not making sweeping changes on the basis of the conventional wisdom of the moment.

That is all very well and adds strength to the conservation case, you may say, but new buildings have to be built, towns have to grow and be redeveloped, if they are to live. The centre of the Prince's book deals with the architecture which he likes and wants to see more of in these circumstances.

Here, his propositions become much more debatable. He thinks that the Modern movement has been a fairly unmitigated disaster, forced onto an innocent world by a conspiratorial clique of architects who have deluded soft headed developers, local authorities, and other clients into accepting their crazy theories. The only acceptable buildings are small in scale, modest in their ambitions. In style, they are either neo-vernacular or 'classical'. If there is any steel or concrete about, it probably denotes a bad building, at least if it is not camouflaged with some tasteful detailing. The man in the street knows best with his love of decoration. The Prince shows off his own version of instant stone and carriage lamps in the pilasters and out-of-scale urns which he has applied to his own house, Highgrove.

Now, this is all very wrong-headed and over the top. Most professional commentators have said so and I certainly agree with them. In saying so while agreeing with so many of HRH's opinions of recent buildings, one is pointing to the scale of the problem for everyone with an influence on the appearance of towns, cities, and villages, and in particular for the architectural profession itself.

This amounts to no less than collapse of a commonly understood and accepted language of building styles. You do not have to be a dedicated modernist to find something repellent in the cynical application of stray details that passes for post-Modernism in so many buildings or the effete facadism of Richmond Riverside. You do not have to be the Prince of Wales for the heart to sink at the sight of another black-glass monster. If we have a new battle of the styles, there are certainly a few generals, but most of the soldiers do not want

to join either side. Couple that with the plastic freedom offered by new materials and you have a crisis of confidence.

Or is this apocalyptic nonsense? Is it simply a bit more difficult to spot good new buildings than it used to be? Either way, the solution cannot be to wish away a hundred years of social and technological change, which I very much fear is what the Prince of Wales' prescription amounts to. We must, however, be grateful to him for provoking such a widespread debate about these difficult and fascinating questions.

FRANCIS GOLDING

## A MORALITY TALE

*Overheard in Stamford High Street (Tuesday, 22 August 1989) – a couple of tourists, apparently husband and wife and American (probably a grain-grower from Iowa and, judging by his accent, with ancestors from East Anglia):*



*Ornamental fingerposts usually of cast iron and of timeless design, together with granite setts and cobbles and bollards and cast iron dustbins, are currently being installed throughout most of our historic towns*

'Well, bless ma soul Mary Lou, jus' look at that there fingerpost. Jus' like we've seen in the films. How ol' do you think that be – three hunered, four hunered years maybe. Now ain't that something sure honey. And look at that there trash can. All emblems and things and made sound enough to last a thousand years. All solid iron. That's jus' how they made 'em in the ol' days – three, four hunered years ago. Ain't it jus' good to visit the ol' country where your folks an' my folks grew up and to see all these of things'.

*Ten minutes later, across the way, the two tourists were again overheard – first outside No 19 High Street and, a moment later, outside No 9 Ironmongers Street, where workmen were at work (builders it might be supposed, although they seemed at this moment on Tuesday morning not to be building so much as pulling things down):*

*(In the High Street)* 'By heck, Mary Lou, they seem to be pulling the place apart – and that's the very place where ol' Jessica Moore, your mama's grandmammy was born two hunered years ago and more in the year of our Lord seventeen hunered and thirty-six before she left for the Americas. There ain't much left of it now – jus' the front. There ain' anything left but the front. It's all gorn Mary Lou. But don't be sad, honey one, 'cos right around the corner here is the very place where ma own mama's ol' granpappy, Henry Butcher of the fourth generation, was born roundabout in the same year of our Lord. Ain't that sure honey. So wipe away them tears Mary Lou and come along with me.'

*(In Ironmongers Street)* 'By heck and by heck again, Mary Lou, what the devil's own nation is going on. The whole of my mama's ol' granpappy's house seems to be right out here in the street, in that great trash cart all blathered to smithereens. That sure knocks me up. That's ol' Henry Butcher's staircase, and that's ol' Henry Butcher's doors, and that's ol' Henry Butcher's everything. All smithereens and smathereens Mary Lou. It sure knocks me over to see all these ol' things blathered out here in the street. Ol' Henry Butcher was right famous in his day, honey one, for chairs an' things and those sofa things, right through the whole kingdom. But they've left only the front. What have they done to him. Ol' Henry Butcher. Let's go home, Mary Lou.'



*9 Ironmongers Street: the fine interiors, panelling, doorcases, staircase, and window shutters have been stripped out and placed in a truck*

BRIAN ANTHONY

## **NEW TELEPHONE NUMBERS FOR ENGLISH HERITAGE: 01-973 3000**

English Heritage has now been equipped with a new telephone system in its London headquarters. All the separate Central London buildings – Fortress House, 25 Savile Row, Clifford Street, Chesham House, and Keysign House – can now be reached on the same exchange line with individual staff each allocated a direct number: calls can be made to the switchboard on 01-973 3000 from 8am to 6pm. General enquiries can be directed to staff through the English Heritage enquiry point on 01-973 3498.

We will present a breakdown of the organisation and points of contact for individual branches within divisions in the next issue. Please note that enquiries concerning the *Conservation Bulletin* should be made to 01-973 3121 or 3130, and enquiries concerning English Heritage academic and specialist publications to 01-973 3105.