

Heritage at Risk



Historic England

East of England Summary 2017



Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register provides an annual snapshot of the condition of England's historic sites. The Register helps us to target resources to those sites which are most threatened. Following on from successes in earlier years, 2017 has seen the number of entries on the East of England Register fall below 400 for the first time. With expert advice and grant aid, our regional team of architects, archaeologists and advisors has been able to assist owners, local authorities and other stakeholders to find sustainable solutions for threatened listed buildings, scheduled monuments, registered parks and gardens and conservation areas. The threats are as diverse as deep ploughing, neglect and development pressure. Success almost always arises from developing effective partnerships – with owners, local authorities, preservation trusts and other funders. Although new challenges arise continuously, we look forward to building on these partnerships and successes in the years to come.

John Neale Planning Director, East of England



This year saw an overall reduction of the number of assets on the East of England Register, from **412** in 2016 to **393** in 2017, taking account of both removals and additions. £1.5 million in Historic England grant was spent on **31** entries.

The biggest success was for listed places of worship, with **32** entries coming off the Register (**17** additions). Almost all these removals were made possible with the help of grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund. More than half of the churches are in Norfolk, noted for its many fine medieval churches reflecting a former wealth based on agriculture. Today, economic circumstances have changed and congregations have dwindled, and the challenge to maintain these much-valued places in good repair is urgent.

There was success too in reducing the number of scheduled monuments on the Register, with nine archaeology entries being removed (one addition). Damage from arable cultivation is the cause of risk to 72% of the archaeological entries on the East of England Register, almost double the national figure. Countryside Stewardship agreements, administered by Natural England, are the most effective way to eliminate the risk. These agreements compensate

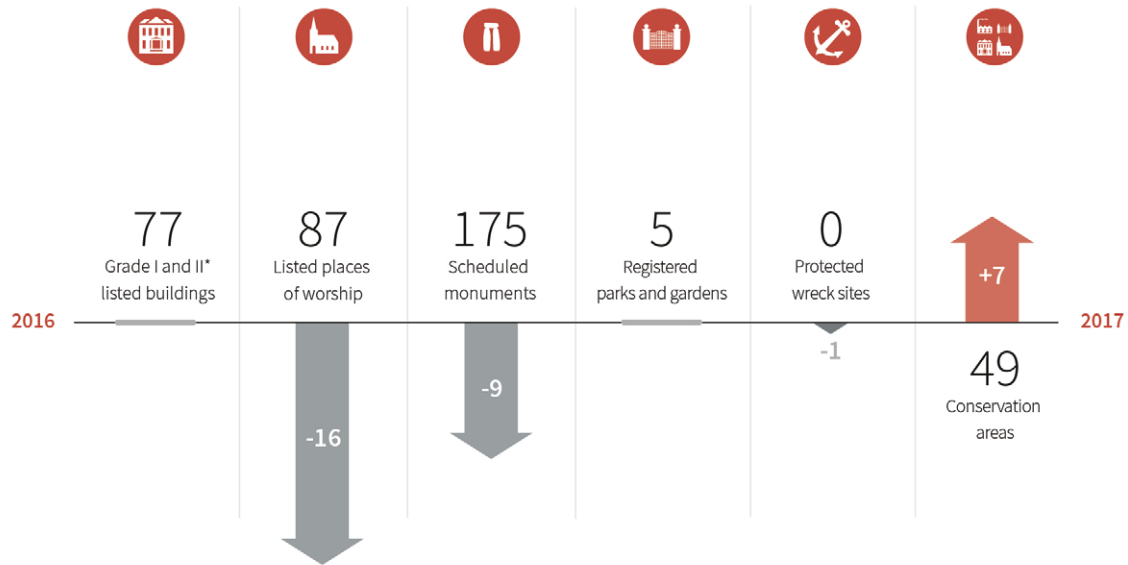
farmers who adopt environmentally-friendly regimes. Our archaeologists advise Natural England on applications that involve scheduled monuments, ensuring that appropriate steps are taken to protect them. Among the monuments no longer at risk in 2017 are the Stone Age **Great Wilbraham Causewayed Enclosure**, the Bronze Age **Round Barrow Cemetery at Suet Hills**, and the Iron Age **Pitchbury Ramparts hillfort**.

Defensive sites of all types form one of the most tangible aspects of England's heritage. The medieval **Walden Castle** came off the Register this year (see overleaf), as well as **Bawdsey Transmitter Block** on the Suffolk coast, which played a crucial role in the development of radar surveillance during the Second World War. Another success, the culmination of a decade-long programme of advice and grant assistance, has been the removal from the Register of the former **Atomic Bomb Store at RAF Barnham**. This once top-secret Cold War complex housed 'Blue Danube', Britain's first atomic bomb. In 2017 we continued to support and grant assist two other major projects dedicated to rescuing, interpreting and making publicly accessible our military heritage: **Coalhouse Fort** on the Thames Estuary, which formed part of Britain's defences from 1861 to 1945, and the internationally important **Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome** (see opposite).

Simon Buteux Principal Adviser, Heritage at Risk

Cover image: Great Gransden Windmill, Cambridgeshire. With parts of the structure dating back to the early 17th century and its machinery intact, this windmill is one of the oldest and most important in the country. Urgently needed repairs have been completed, with advice and grant support from Historic England, with just the sails to go back on. The mill can then be taken off the Heritage at Risk Register. An enthusiastic local trust is poised to take on responsibility for the monument from Cambridgeshire County Council and open the mill to the public.

Designated assets on the 2017 **East of England Register**



There are **333** assets on the **East of England Register**, **19** fewer than in 2016

Stow Maries **Maldon, Essex**



Stow Maries, in Maldon, Essex, is of international significance as probably the most complete surviving First World War aerodrome in Western Europe.

The aerodrome became operational in 1917. It was strategically located for air defence against German bombing raids on London, initially by Zeppelin airships and later by Gotha bombers.

That defence was carried out by 37 Squadron of the Royal Flying Corps.

Of the original 47 buildings on the aerodrome, 24 survive. Through outstanding volunteer effort and fundraising, repair of some of the buildings began in 2007, work which included the creation of a museum in the Squadron Offices. In 2012, all 24 of the surviving buildings were

listed at grade II* and more than half of the buildings, some in a very perilous condition, were put on the Heritage at Risk Register. A wide range of building types is represented, including the now repaired Pilots' Ready Room and Water Tower (see image).

In 2013 this historic site was purchased by Stow Maries Great War Aerodrome Ltd, a charity set up for the purpose of preserving it for public benefit and education. Since then, Historic England has supported the charity with expertise and grants for a programme of repairs. This is on-going and it will be several years yet before all the buildings are in a safe condition and the site as a whole can be removed from the Register.

Stow Maries, which is largely volunteer-run, is open to the public six days a week and a popular venue for school visits. There are two museums to explore as well as a collection of (replica) WWI aircraft, which take to the air at special events. A major Heritage Lottery Fund grant has been awarded, which will enable the development of visitor facilities and the repair of more of the buildings.

Walden Castle **Saffron Walden, Essex**

The castle once dominated the Essex market town of Saffron Walden. A Norman motte-and-bailey castle, it was probably rebuilt in stone by Geoffrey de Mandeville, Earl of Essex, around 1125-1141, during the civil war between King Stephen and Matilda in which Geoffrey died. By the 16th century it was already a ruin, and today all that survives above ground are the remains of the square keep – the walls reduced to their rubble cores – and surrounding earthworks. Nevertheless, it is a substantial monument woven into the historic fabric of the town; the shape of the inner bailey – which today contains Saffron Walden museum – is clearly reflected in the layout of the surrounding streets.

Walden Castle went onto the Heritage at Risk Register because uncontrolled vegetation growth and exposure to the elements were causing decay and collapse of the rubble walls. With advice and grant support from Historic England, in 2013 Uttlesford District Council embarked on a programme of stabilisation and repairs, now complete, which included protecting the walls with a ‘soft capping’ of carefully selected grass and other plants. As a result,



Walden Castle came off the Register in 2017. Landscaping work and improved interpretation will complete the scheme, making the castle once again fully accessible to the public.

Caring for Conservation Areas

This year we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of conservation areas. These come in all forms, from the quintessential English village to the urban heartland. They are united by a common theme – they are special places full of character and history, much loved by those who live and work in them. Because of their unique character they are also engines for economic regeneration and this is the key to tackling risk in many conservation areas.

This year we have added more conservation areas to the Register than have been removed. But it’s also the year we launched Heritage Action Zones, many of which include conservation areas at risk where we will unlock economic potential with our partners over the coming years.

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[HistoricEngland.org.uk/har](https://www.HistoricEngland.org.uk/har)