

SAVE

BRITAIN'S HERITAGE

NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2024



Serving up fresh ideas on Oxford Street
Traditional crafts go viral
A lifetime of achievement



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SAVE
BRITAIN'S HERITAGE

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Gillian Darley OBE, Hon FRIBA is a widely published writer, biographer and broadcaster. Her books include *Villages of Vision* (1975) and *Excellent Essex* (2021).

Robert Drake has had a long involvement with C20 Society particularly on places of worship, libraries and other municipal buildings and was a member of the casework committee until 2022. He has led many national and foreign events over the years for the society.

John East is an architectural photographer and regeneration professional who has been involved in conservation initiatives and campaigns since the 1980s. His

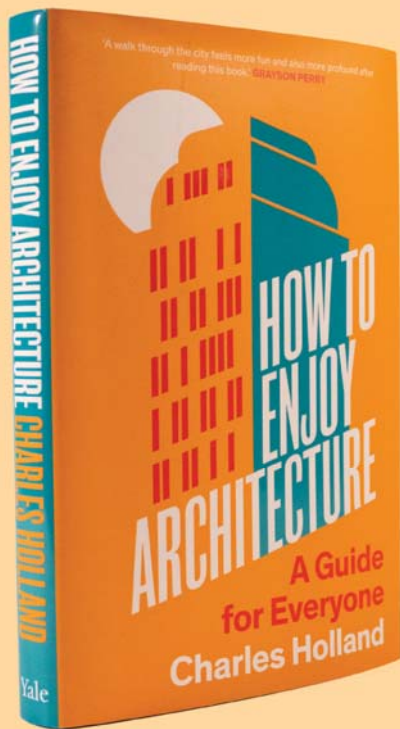
photographs can be found in many publications and books, the latest being Gavin Stamp's *Interwar*.

Designed by Libanus Press Ltd and printed by Hampton Printing (Bristol) Ltd

Produced by Henrietta Billings and Elizabeth Hopkirk

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Front Cover: Palace of Sustentation by Jestico + Whiles – concept image for SAVE/AJ Re:store competition (see p. 8)



HOW TO ENJOY ARCHITECTURE

A Guide for Everyone

'We so often encounter architecture when it goes wrong, or offends us with its looks. Holland, though, is the perfect, clear-headed tour guide to help us appreciate it with newly sharpened senses and fall in love again – even with those buildings we think we hate.'

Tom Dyckhoff

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

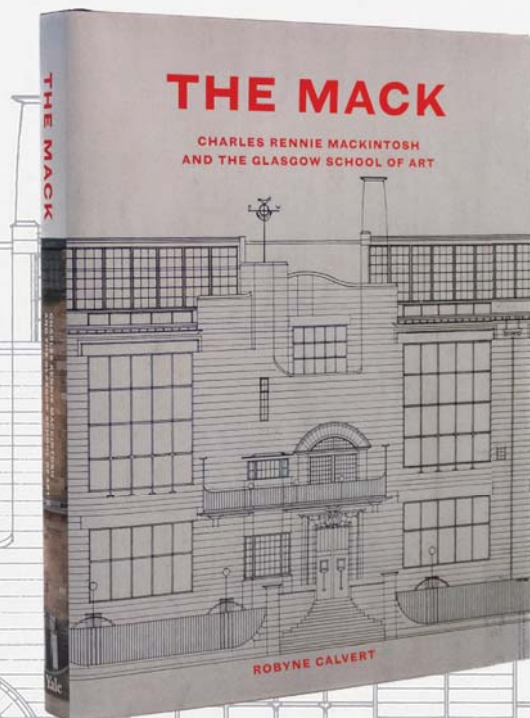
CHARLES HOLLAND is an architect, writer and teacher. He is the principal of Charles Holland Architects (CHA) and Professor of Architecture at the University for the Creative Arts, Canterbury. Prior to forming CHA, Charles was a director of FAT, a practice described as having 'changed the architectural weather'.

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ROBYNE CALVERT recounts the story of 'The Mack', incorporating for the first time the history of the building during the post-Mackintosh era up to the present day, including the 2014 fire, reconstruction efforts and the devastating fire of 2018.

'Bristling with new information, insights and interpretations, this is an important contribution both to architectural history of the late nineteenth century and to early twenty-first-century debates on the challenges of rebuilding lost, or nearly lost, monuments.'

BARRY BERGDOLL
MEYER SCHAPIRO PROFESSOR OF ART HISTORY,
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY



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BRITAIN'S HERITAGE NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2024

Director's welcome

by Henrietta Billings



One of the standout highlights of this year so far has been our 're:store' ideas competition for the M&S Oxford Street buildings – co-hosted with the *Architects' Journal* in May. We were blown away by the response from leading architectural practices, individual architects and students. The quality of the entries was superb, with teams offering conceptual approaches to the task of re-using the buildings, from an urban farm-to-fork cookery centre, to housing and a roof top restaurant. The final six proposals were developed by teams in a workshop and then presented and debated at Ravensbourne University in North Greenwich in front of our panel of judges and journalists. They demonstrated a huge appetite in the industry for re-use – and sparked ideas about applying the same approach for buildings in similar scenarios up and down high streets across Britain. As well as the coverage of the event on p.8, check out our video clips on Insta by Stephen Sheriff which capture the real buzz on the day.

In Elizabeth Hopkirk's wide ranging piece, 'Department stores: the fight back' she talks to innovative developers of these landmark buildings who are finding them new futures and uses. And staying on topic, as we go to print, we await the redetermination of the M&S proposals by the Secretary of State following the legal challenge to the public inquiry decision by the retailer. The General Election and a potential new government mean the timing of the decision could be considerably delayed.

Everyone here is completely delighted that president of SAVE, Marcus Binney, has won a highly prestigious European lifetime achievement award for heritage. On p.24 we highlight some of his major successes with snippets from the judges' magnificent citation. We have had so many kind messages to the office following the announcement that went nationwide. Congratulations Marcus!

This year also marks the 50th anniversary of the polemic Destruction of the Country House Exhibition at the V&A in London – an event Marcus was instrumental in pulling off – and led to the founding of SAVE the following year (p.26). Simon Jenkins who was there when the show opened reflects in conversation with journalist Malika Brown on its impact and enduring significance.

On the Isle of Wight we report good news from Norris Castle where drastically harmful proposals to this remarkable Regency ensemble have been averted – thanks to the unanimous

refusal by the council's planning committee, and strong objections from SAVE, the Georgian Group and Historic England. Liz Fuller gives us a glimpse of the 80 plus new additions to our Buildings at Risk catalogue nominated over the past year (p.38). They include a country house, a colliery building and a swimming pool on a quayside. Liz also makes the case for opening up Cadw's extensive reporting on the condition of Wales's 30,000 listed buildings to the public. Surely this is long overdue.

Lydia Franklin shines the light on the latest surprising social media sensation – heritage craft skills – including a stone mason based in Yorkshire who shares videos of her work on Instagram and a master thatcher in West Sussex with over 700,000 followers on TikTok (p.14). They're hopeful these modern platforms promoting traditional crafts will inspire the next generation to take up the baton. Voices from the Frontline this issue comes from Nick Roscoe in Sheffield (p.47) highlighting a successful community campaign to save a Victorian bowling green.

This newsletter is a real labour of love and involves everyone in the office – I owe a massive thanks particularly to Elizabeth for her great skill and generous sense of humour in putting this one together in record time. It's a cracking issue. Thank you to all of you for your brilliant support as Friends and Saviours of SAVE. I hope to meet you at one of our events over the summer. **S**

Bevis Marks Synagogue: Keeping its light alive

SAVE rallies supporters to protect Europe's oldest continuously used synagogue from plans that would plunge it into darkness

SAVE has written to object to plans for a 43-storey tower that would seriously harm the significance of one of the UK's – and Europe's – most important religious buildings.

Grade I-listed Bevis Marks Synagogue in the City of London dates

from 1701 and has been a centre of worship and Jewish life ever since. The building, tucked away in its own courtyard metres from the Gherkin, has survived wars and successive waves of development. In recent years the threats have intensified but so far they

have all been successfully defeated.

Earlier this year the synagogue was given official protection with the designation of a new conservation area in Creechurch. Despite this, fresh plans have been put forward for a 178m tall tower right next to it.



This is the third recent application that has threatened Bevis Marks, a building of outstanding architectural and historic interest, as reflected in its grade I listing, the highest possible level of protection. SAVE objected in 2019 and again in 2020 to a harmful proposal for a 20-storey building at 33 Creechurch Lane which would have drastically overshadowed the synagogue and its secluded courtyard. Similarly, in 2022 an application for a 48-storey tower at 31 Bury Street was rejected as harmful and overbearing.

The current proposal came just months after the Creechurch Conservation Area was designated in

January 2024, covering the application site. The new proposals would demolish Bury House, at 31 Bury Street, and erect a building nine times its size. This would be a vast and overwhelming step up in scale and would run counter to the City of London’s own planning policy which states that tall buildings are inappropriate within conservation areas.

SAVE has submitted a detailed letter of objection setting out the damage the proposals would cause to the internationally important synagogue, its setting and the wider conservation area. We also encouraged our supporters to object.

We consider that the tower, which would be visible from within the synagogue’s courtyard, would have a direct and substantially harmful impact on its setting and secluded nature. The sky view from the courtyard has religious importance and allows daylight into the synagogue’s beautiful interior. This was a reason for the refusal of a previous tower proposal.

SAVE also expressed strong concerns about the harm a building of this height would cause to the adjoining grade II*-listed Holland House, with its spectacular glazed bricks and mosaics, and unlisted 1912 Renown House, for which rooftop extensions are also proposed. A building of this scale would cast a shadow over multiple highly listed buildings within the Creechurch Conservation Area, including the, 17th-century St Katherine Cree Church and 18th-century St Botolph’s, both grade I listed and located at its heart.

Henrietta Billings, director of

Bevis Marks Synagogue (1699–1701), designed by Joseph Avis, was home to the Sephardic Jewish Community which first settled in Aldgate in the 18th century (Credit: Blake Ezra)



Model of the proposed tower (Credit: Planning submission documentation)

SAVE Britain’s Heritage, said: “This damaging planning application comes hot on the heels of a brand-new conservation area within London’s famous Square Mile and if granted would make a mockery of the purpose of conservation areas which exist to protect the special architectural and historic character of a place. Any development here should respect the extremely sensitive setting of one of Europe’s most important buildings as well as the character of this richly historic conservation area.” [S](#)



Gove ‘absolutely justified’ in holding his line, reports Telegraph

SAVE submits new evidence to Secretary of State after High Court sends M&S case back for redetermination

M&S’s demolition plans are back with the Secretary of State for redetermination. This follows a procedural challenge by the retailer in the High Court in February against Michael Gove’s original decision.

To inform his redetermination, Mr Gove invited both sides to submit new evidence in April. SAVE’s dossier included a list of new emerging policies prioritising retrofit over demolition which are being adopted by a growing number of authorities including Westminster council and the City of London. The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) published updated guidance late last year on the preparation of whole life carbon assessments (the carbon emitted in the entire lifecycle of a building, from construction to demolition). The RICS methodology aligns with the ambitious UK Net Zero Carbon Buildings Standard which is expected to be

published this year, supported by the leading built environment specialists and bodies.

Our submission also drew the Secretary of State’s attention to a number of other West End department stores that are being retrofitted (see panel).

And we explained that there is nothing in the High Court judgement that would stop the Secretary of State refusing the scheme again on sustainability grounds, alongside the strong heritage grounds that were upheld.

The *Daily Telegraph* published some of our evidence and quoted SAVE’s director Henrietta Billings urging Mr Gove to “stand his ground”.

She said: “M&S’s destructive plans were conceived more than six years ago and they’re looking increasingly outdated. So much has changed since then, from our understanding of the



SAVE outside High Court (Credit: SAVE Britain’s Heritage)

sustainability impacts of demolition and re-building from scratch – to the widespread public interest in this case and growing awareness about the need for change. As our submission demonstrates, the Secretary of State would be absolutely justified in holding his line and refusing planning permission on heritage grounds alone, or in combination with sustainability grounds. History is on his side and future generations will thank him for retaining this West End landmark.”

The High Court decision

In her ruling on February’s legal challenge, Mrs Justice Lieven allowed five of M&S’s six points but crucially upheld Mr Gove’s heritage reasons for rejecting the planning application. The ruling means his criticisms of the harmful heritage impacts of the scheme – a key element of his decision – have been found to be lawful.



M&S building (Credit: Matthew Andrews for SAVE Britain’s Heritage)

The Secretary of State now has to redetermine the case. As before, he can approve or reject M&S's plans on heritage and/or sustainability grounds. He just can't use any of *those* five grounds to justify his decision.

The court case centred on the wording of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) where Mr Gove wanted to highlight the

importance of re-using buildings in the face of the climate crisis.

Henrietta Billings, director of SAVE Britain's Heritage, said: "The judge's decision shows that the policy wording isn't tight enough. The best way to remedy that is for the Secretary of State to strengthen the NPPF in terms of sustainability. We urge him to do this without delay."

She added: "This case has focused widespread public attention on the wasteful knock it down and build again process that has dominated our construction sector for the last 100 years. People are demanding action. We need a fresh positive approach to re-using historic buildings and saving precious resources." **S**

Oxford Street's renaissance making waves in the media

Marks & Spencer has made much of Oxford Street's struggles in its bid to convince officials that demolition and replacement with a 10-storey office block is the only viable future for its flagship store. Yet a very different narrative is beginning to unfold.

"A £1bn investment boom is set to transform Oxford Street's fortunes and restore it to its former glory as Europe's premier shopping destination after the years of candy store blight. Global brands are now scrambling to secure space along the West End's 1.2-mile canyon of consumerism after a remarkable turnaround since the end of the pandemic."

So said a recent *Evening Standard* front page heralding the "Oxford Street renaissance that's left experts lost for words".

It's the latest in a series of colourful splashes in the paper highlighting major overhauls of big West End department stores – including Ikea restoring the former Topshop building at Oxford Circus and the combined £330m transformations of the old Debenhams and House of Fraser stores.

The *Standard* quoted Sam Foyle, co-head of global retail at Savills, saying: "There's been a phenomenal speed of turnaround, I would say it's unprecedented when you think of the number of candy stores and empty stores there were a few years ago.

"Some of it comes from traders' talk, the word gets around that the footfall is back and the tourists are back. The rates are down by as much as 40% and that can mean your rates and rents bill falling by £1m. That had made Oxford Street much more affordable again.

"Now it's very viable and not just for one sector, it's every sector, whether beauty, mass market experiential fashion, consumer brands, athleisure, sports brands, all of them.

"I would say there have been 40 deals on Oxford Street in the past 12 months, and there are 10 units under offer at the moment. What was a vicious cycle has turned into a virtuous spiral of positivity."

The buzz on Oxford Street is turning heads all over. Construction industry bible *Building* devoted seven pages



The Daily Telegraph

Gove told to 'stand ground' on M&S scheme

By Hannah Ireland

MICHAEL GOVE should stand his ground and again block Marks & Spencer's flagship Marble Arch redevelopment, campaigners have said, even though the High Court told the Housing Secretary to reconsider his decision.

to revisit his decision after a successful legal challenge by M&S. "[The] plans were conceived more than six years ago and they're looking increasingly outdated," she added. "So much has changed since then, from our understanding of the sustainability impacts of demolition and

Westminster council that would stop the bulldozing of properties that could be improved by renovations. Rival retailers near the Marble Arch store have been able to revive ageing sites, campaigners said. Sacha Berendji, M&S operations director, said there was "nothing new in

to the £130m redevelopment of House of Fraser – aka DH Evans – under the headline: "It's M&S's Oxford Street neighbour – and it's being refurbished not demolished."

The magazine interviewed Simon Bennett, associate director at Civic Engineers which is working with architect Studio PDP. He said all options had been discussed with the client at the start. "Fundamentally this is a big, heavy, robust, good-quality building with a usable grid," he said, adding: "Our conclusion was: why would you demolish it as this is very wasteful?"

The upfront carbon cost of the retrofit project is "a commendable 103kgCO₂/m²", reported *Building*. This incorporates the higher embodied carbon of the new-build elements (such as an extra storey) which is 279kgCO₂/m². "If the whole building had been replaced, the upfront carbon of the structure would have been the same as those new structural elements, so refurbishment has saved nearly two-thirds of the carbon for the structure of a new building," said the magazine.

Huge interest in our Marble Arch ideas competition

Joint SAVE / Architects' Journal contest triggers flood of creative and technical ideas for reusing the M&S buildings

While waiting for the Secretary of State to redetermine the M&S case, SAVE and *The Architects' Journal* announced Re:store, an ideas competition intended to spark fresh thinking about the buildings and their capacity for re-use.

We were thrilled by the response from leading architectural practices, individual architects and students. The quality of entries was superb, with teams offering creative and technical approaches to the task of reusing the buildings. Many found ways of introducing natural light, social space and “wow” moments into the heart of the building as well as improving the pedestrian experience

through and around the buildings.

Ideas for new uses included: an urban farm-to-fork cookery centre; a retrofit academy where pre-loved items can be upcycled and the public learn repair skills; pop-up arcades; experiential concept stores; housing; a rooftop restaurant; and a basement spa.

A longlist of 13 teams was chosen to face the judges who then picked six finalists. The six were invited to take part in a fascinating day-long charrette workshop hosted by the school of architecture at Ravensbourne University in North Greenwich, ending with celebratory drinks on the roof.

A little like *Bake Off*, the teams had four intense hours to work up their ideas through sketching, model-making and discussion before being grilled by the judges. There was a real buzz in the room as the deadline for presenting loomed and journalists arrived to interview the teams.

Another highlight was the debate at the end of the day which everyone was invited to join. As judge Sanaa Shaikh of Native Studio said: “The discussion that came from the ideas was really important. The whole day has shown there’s a plethora of options and potential lives for M&S’s buildings. They have this asset in such a prominent location and they could do something amazing with it.”

Basil Demeroutis, managing partner of specialist retrofit developer the FORE Partnership which co-sponsored the competition, told the teams: “This conversation is so rich. I’m so impressed with the way you have articulated the brief. A lot of these schemes are probably more viable than the smash-and-grab planning application. We’re moving away from that mentality and I would encourage you to have this conversation with your clients. Developers are ready for this. We’re entering a golden age of architecture so please don’t let it go to waste.”

The teams hard at work at the SAVE/ AJ charrette at Ravensbourne University. They spent the morning working up their ideas through discussion, sketching and model-making and the afternoon being grilled by the judges (Credit: SAVE Britain’s Heritage)



Finalist Zubaydah Jibrilu, from Marks Barfield Architects, said: “It’s been a great day, full of energy.” Her colleague Darcy Arnold-Jones added: “We’ve loved the breadth and depth of ideas – and the exchange of ideas. Each studio has approached the brief differently and to have an open discussion and learn from each other has been refreshing.”

The aim of the day was not to pick a winner but to gather the best ideas. All the finalists’ work will feature in a special issue of the *Architects’ Journal* in July. The competition has also featured on SAVE and the *AJ*’s social media channels as well as in *Time Out*.

Henrietta Billings, director of SAVE Britain’s Heritage, said: “We’ve been overwhelmed by the thought and skill that all the entrants put into their submissions. The charrette achieved exactly what we were aiming for – to capture the creativity and imagination

of architects. Doing it in a university setting with the help of Ravensbourne’s students was a massive bonus.

“We hoped to challenge old-fashioned thinking about demolishing and rebuilding historic buildings, both for sustainability reasons – releasing the potential of the resources we already hold in our hands – but also recognising the townscape importance and emotional attachment these buildings have. When you erase chunks of history you can never get them back.”

AJ managing editor Will Hurst said the day had been a hopeful one, arguing that the six “generous” proposals demonstrated a huge appetite in the industry for retaining and reusing buildings such as M&S Oxford Street.

Thanks to our judges, sponsors and hosts

Huge thanks to the judges: architects Sanaa Shaikh of Native Studio and Simon Henley of Henley Halebrown; London School of Architecture chief executive Neal Shasore; and the *AJ*’s sustainability editor Hattie Hartman.

Thanks also to our sponsors, developers Basil Demeroutis, managing partner of the FORE Partnership, and Eric Reynolds, founding director of Urban Space Management. They, along with SAVE, sponsored the finalists’ honorariums.

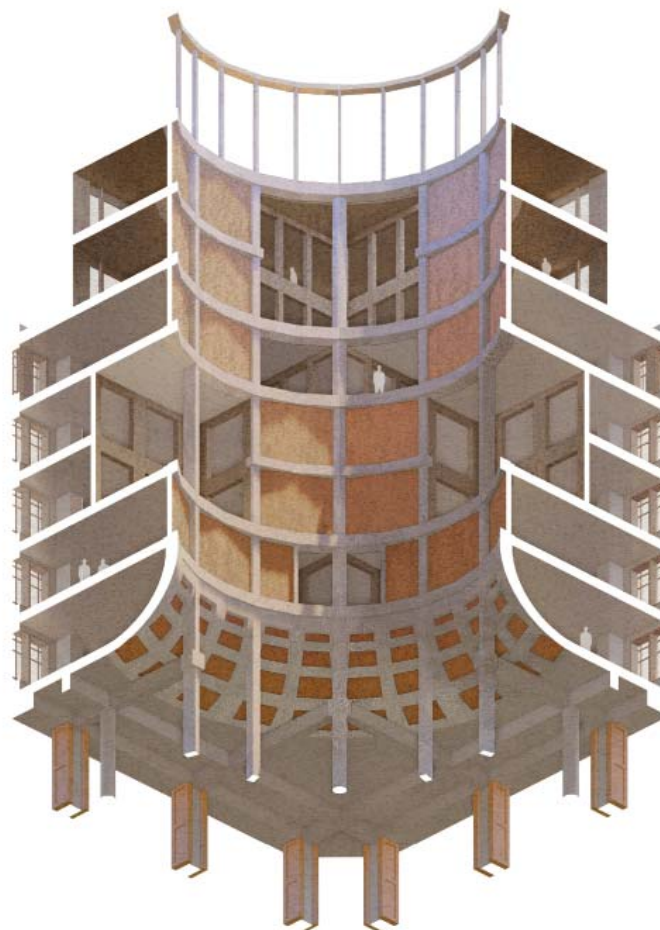
And a special thank you to the staff and students at Ravensbourne University’s school of architecture for hosting and supporting the charrette so generously.

Finalists

Team 1 Connolly Wellingham (Fergus Connolly, Charles Wellingham, Connie Beauchamp, Joe Hyett, Callum Purdue, Jacob Robinson)

Project title Re:Store, Humane Scales

This proposal – which involved input from several architectural assistants and students – sought a single bold intervention: atriums which would introduce natural light, natural ventilation and long-term flexibility to open up deep floor plates. The atriums seek to draw occupants deeper into the building while balancing the building’s heritage with a generous new spatial gesture. The scheme draws on the history of the site, going back to its humble origins and considering Nash’s grand vision and more recent developments. Timber is used extensively on the new interventions for its low-carbon and ‘human’ qualities as seen in the atrium of nearby department store Liberty’s.



Team 2 Saqqra (Marwa Elzubark, Nile Bridgeman)

Project title Flagship

Under Saqqra's plan, the building would become a concept store for M&S (or another single retailer) within the lower floors of the retained Orchard House, while catering to smaller independent retailers on the storeys above. Other uses are introduced including residential and office space. The existing building is stripped of recent additions, returning to its original Neo-Grec grandeur. An open ground

floor is an extension of the street, establishing new visual and physical connections with the public realm and allowing activity to spill out. Demolition is used sparingly to introduce natural light, aid passive ventilation, and accommodate additional flexibility and subdivision of space. New elements are lightweight and bio-based and designed for disassembly.



Team 3 Jestico + Whiles (Carlos Gonzales and Rhys Jones)

Project title Palace of Sustentation

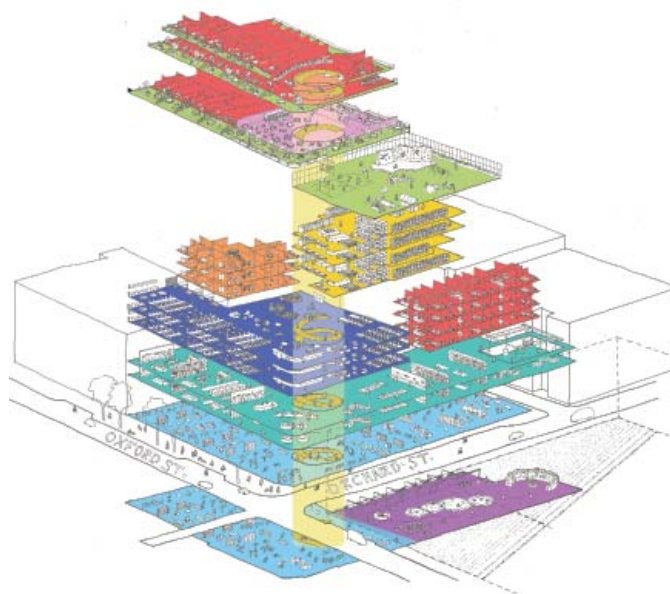
Drawing inspiration from sustainable fashion brands like Patagonia and circular-economy moves by the likes of Nike and Next, this concept proposes turning the department store into a forward-thinking Palace of Sustentation. The goal is to preserve the building's historic fabric and retail DNA while revitalising its purpose and appeal. The building would become a sanctuary for slow fashion and a community hub, hosting lectures and workshops on refurbishing and repurposing clothes. The ground floor will feature innovative slow fashion retail brands with accommodation for students and young people above, allowing staff to live above the shop. Oxford Street would be pedestrianised, allowing far greater interaction between street and store.



Team 4 Marks Barfield (Julia Barfield, Ian Rudolph, Ian Crockford, Thomas Henderson Schwartz, Darcy Arnold Jones)

Project title London's Flagship Circular Economy Hub

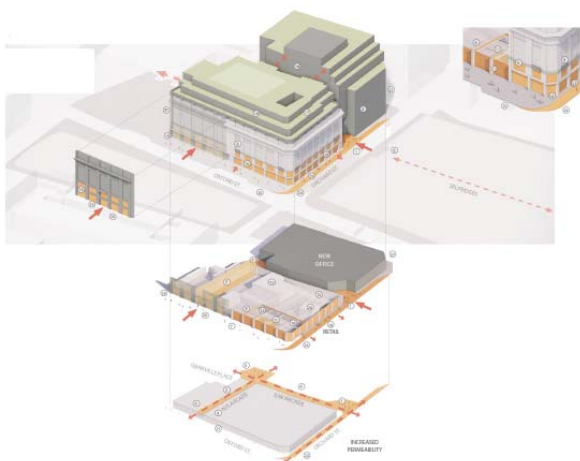
The M&S Oxford Street building would become London's flagship Circular Economy hub, an exemplar to be replicated in high streets across the country which would house makers, repairers, thinkers and doers all moving towards a circular economy. The building would be retrofitted with the existing façade of Orchard House retained and internal insulation and replacement glazing introduced to improve the building's operational carbon emissions. To ensure the commercial viability of the scheme, 6,000sq m of additional area would be added in three new storeys on top of the existing building, stepped back to preserve the original appearance of the building from the ground. Internally, a new central spiral of circulation is created, while the basement will house an affordable wellness spa.



Team 5 Avanti Architects (Andrew Phillips and Fiona Lamb)

Project title 456-472 Oxford Street

Avanti proposes a deep retrofit of Neale House and Orchard House, working with the existing structure and context to provide a sustainable, flexible, low embodied carbon and low energy scheme. Additional floors are added using CLT and glulam timber, allowing easy disassembly. Selective demolition allows the creation of a new public space at the heart of the site. The strategy repairs the negative streetscape around the site and particularly Orchard Street and Portman Mews. The building's street frontage is reactivated through new pedestrian routes, F&B space, and double-height shop fronts able to attract retailers to this international shopping destination. The approach is about limited but transformative interventions, improving the streetscape and working with and enhancing the neighbouring grade II*-listed Selfridges.



Team 6 Add Apt (Kristian Foster and Niels Gusching)

Project title Re:Store Public Realm First

This proposal seeks to 'disintegrate the block' with generous public routes added between Orchard House and the later additions of Neale House and the 1970s building. These form an 'experiential arcade' surrounded by screens for experimental marketing events, product launches and promotions, and a 'pop-up arcade' lined with smaller units for business launches, such as eateries, new product spaces, art galleries or venue spaces. These arcades, looping back to the High Street and linking to quieter and biodiverse garden-like spaces, would entice people to leave the hustle and bustle of Oxford Street. The plan would unblock windows, strip back interiors and reintroduce vertical connections. A variety of small and medium-sized retailers would occupy the building and the building would be topped by a green roof connecting with other neighbouring buildings.



Congratulations to everyone who made it to the longlist:

Team 7 Alma-nac, Constant SD, Urna Sodnomjamts and Hattie Walker-Arnott

Project title The School of Retrofit and Reuse

Team 8 E&A (Ester Calliku and Aidan Leahy, Oxford Brookes University)

Project title M&S Oxford Street: Renewed for Well-being

Team 9 Re-volve (Madeleine Kessler and Nick Elias with Hanna Baumann and Oliver Simms)

Project title Re-volve

Team 10 Retrofit Hub (10 Design, Prewett Bizley, Elioth, National Retrofit Hub and Retrofit Academy)

Project title Retrofit Hub

Team 11 Polly Thompson (University of Westminster)

Project title Rooftop Revival

Team 12 Studio Chris Simmons

Project title Re:Grow Oxford Street

Team 13 Zhi Bin Cheah (Foster + Partners)

Project title Architecture of Repair



Alma-nac, The School of Retrofit and Reuse



Studio Chris Simmons, Re:Grow Oxford Street



Zhi Bin Cheah, Architecture of Repair

Controversial Norris Castle plans thrown out by Isle of Wight planners

A harmful scheme to turn one of Britain's most outstanding ensembles of listed buildings and protected parklands into a luxury resort has been refused

SAVE Britain's Heritage has welcomed the decision by Isle of Wight Council to refuse consent for plans which would have caused drastic harm to one of Britain's most remarkable Regency ensembles of listed buildings and protected parklands.

Councillors unanimously voted against the proposals at planning committee. They found that a plan to convert Norris Castle into a luxury 5-star hotel and build extensively across its parklands would cause unjustified harm to one of the country's most historically important estates.

SAVE called on councillors to reject this alarming proposal in a letter submitted ahead of the planning committee meeting on 16th April. SAVE previously objected to the scheme in 2022, when the £107m proposal by Norris Castle Estate (Group) Ltd first emerged. Along

with Historic England, the Gardens Trust and the Georgian Group, and over 60 public comments, we submitted objections strongly reinforcing our concerns.

The scheme proposed converting Norris Castle into a 17-room hotel, with a further 57 suites housed in new extensions to the north and west of the castle. Both Norris Castle and Norris Castle Farm are grade I listed, a status reserved by Historic England only for buildings of the highest importance. Along the shoreline, four prominent new structures known as the 'sentinel' buildings were proposed to provide more resort accommodation.

Norris Castle lies in finely landscaped parklands, designed by Humphry Repton and is the only grade I listed park and garden on the Isle of Wight.

While we welcome this decisive move by the council to protect this landscape and buildings of national significance, the future of the Norris Castle Estate still hangs in the balance. It is now of the utmost importance that a more sensitive scheme and a financially viable use for the castle and its parklands is found.

Henrietta Billings, director of SAVE Britain's Heritage, says: "The council has rightly acted to reject this proposal which would unjustly damage one of Britain's most outstanding historic estates. SAVE was pleased to support the concerns of national heritage organisations as well as many local people. Any future proposal concerning Norris Castle Estate must remain sensitive to its remarkably intact and unaltered character." [S](#)

Norris Castle commands spectacular sea views and is set within a landscaped park. Both are grade I-listed (Credit: Carolyn Jenkins / Alamy)



Carving a reputation on social media

A new generation is embracing traditional crafts – and the revival is going viral.
Lydia Franklin reports

The rhythmic tapping of a chisel hitting stone fills the room at varying tones and pitches. Shards of debris are sent flying as pieces of limestone are chipped away and soon, out of a block of hard rock, fluid curves forming words and patterns have appeared.

But here's the catch. I'm at home and the sounds are coming from my phone. I scroll and watch as bundles of straw are expertly trimmed to create an artful ridge for a roof being re-thatched.

In an age of technology and

machine labour, there seems to be a growing movement to use the former to shine a light on traditional craftsmanship and the use of hand tools. Hundreds of short videos populate Instagram and TikTok and provide an insight into the art of



stonemasonry, thatching and carpentry, and thousands more viewers flock to watch them.

I spoke to three talented craftspeople sharing their skills on social media. Rosie Winterton (@yorkshire_rosie) has found success sharing her expert stone carving abilities in the form of short videos on Instagram reels, often time-lapsing long and complex projects into seemingly seconds. Her Instagram page charts her progress creating bespoke fire surrounds and deftly carved decorative plaques.

“My partner thinks it’s the tapping noise that is popular,” Rosie comments on why her videos, which regularly hit well over 10,000 views, draw people in. Undoubtedly, it’s also an admiration of her talent and expertise in hand carving. This is precisely why her friends and family urged Rosie to start an Instagram page, to help make people aware of her job as a stonemason and carver. “It’s almost like a business card,” Rosie jokes.

Rosie, who works with her father at the family business Stone Fireplace Company Ltd, grew up surrounded by the craft. She hopes that posting on social media might encourage a new generation to pick up a chisel and practise creativity and that, by showcasing the use of hand tools, these skills might be kept alive.

Zoë Wilson (@zoewilsoncarving) moved from a background in fine art and architectural stonemasonry to hone her own unique and breathtaking talent as an artist. Her hand-carved stone sculptures play with dynamic, lively geometric patterns set against the rigidity of stone using

the same process as letter carving.

After covid cancelled her upcoming exhibition, Zoë started sharing her artwork on Instagram to market her pieces. Serendipitously, it also became a way to share her work with her family during lockdown. “I still feel like I’m actually just FaceTiming my mum,” Zoë laughs about sharing videos on Instagram, even if her followers are actually in the hundreds of thousands. “It’s kind of just a day in a life,” she says.

It is this personalised way of sharing videos straight from the creator that Zoë feels draws viewers in, almost like they are catching up with a friend. It fulfils a curiosity to witness the practice of traditional arts, and is an invitation to momentarily enjoy the peace, mindfulness and satisfaction that often accompanies skilled craftsmanship.

With video captions such as “Satisfying Saturday”, master thatcher Shane Stevens (@thethatchingguy)



Left: Rosie Winterton at work using hand tools to expertly carve a fireplace (Credit: Drew Forsyth)

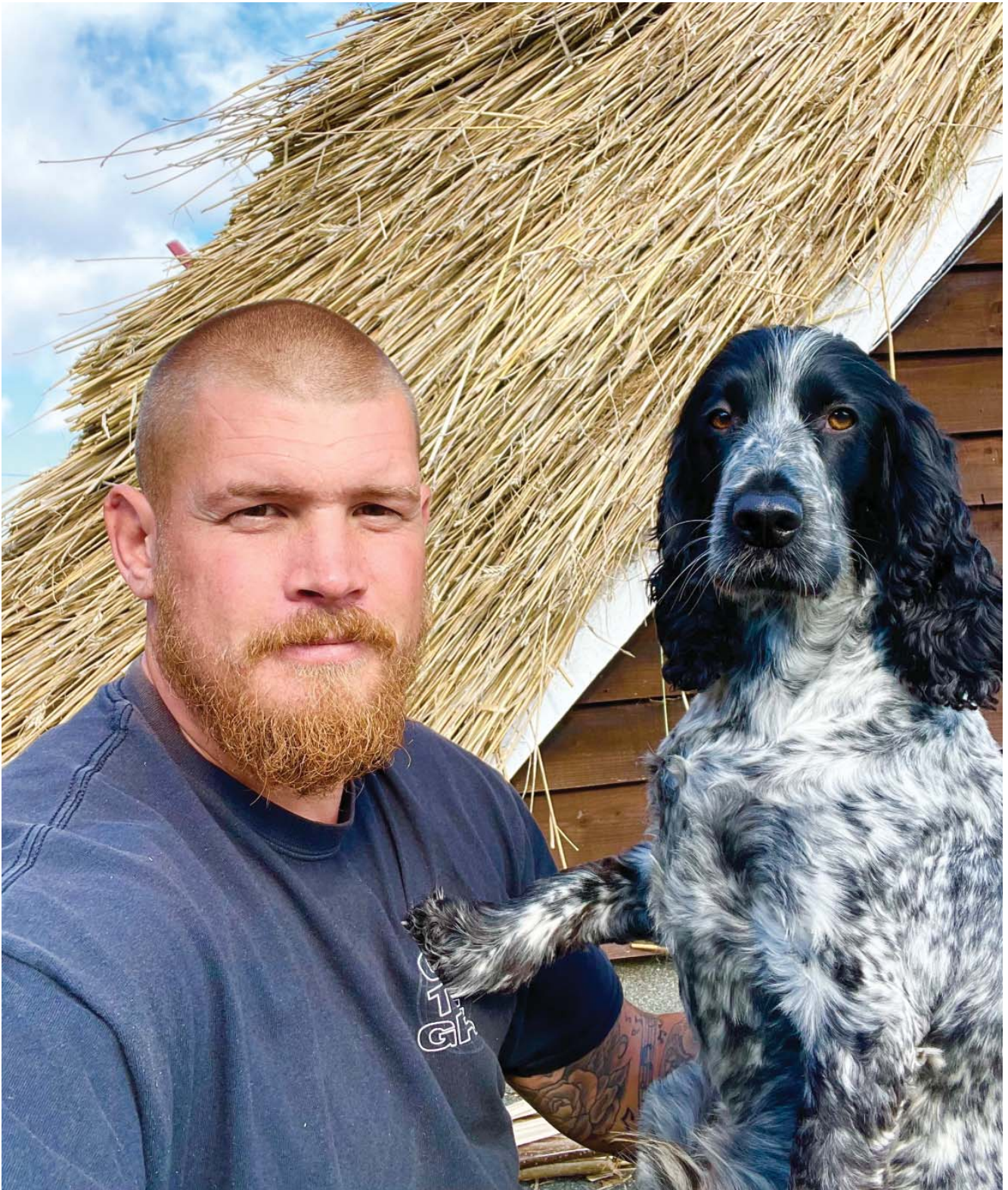
Right: Zoë Wilson with her hand-carved sculptural artwork. Zoë (@zoewilsoncarving) has over 160,000 followers on social media (Credit: © Hearst Magazines UK, photograph by Andrew Montgomery)

has harnessed this. The viewer becomes invested in watching as a dulled, moss-covered roof is freshly re-thatched in shining new golden reed or straw with the edges neatly trimmed, and the excess material brushed away.

Shane shares his thatching videos on Instagram and TikTok to over half a million followers after he spotted a niche in the social media sphere to show people his thatching knowledge and skill. His videos are internationally watched, liked and shared – an

outcome Shane didn't expect in the beginning.

"I think social media is a great way to attract younger thatchers. I have been contacted a lot by people just leaving school or college who want to start an apprenticeship," Shane notes.



Big on social media: Thatcher Shane Stevens (@thethatchingguy) has half a million followers on Instagram and TikTok (Credit: Shane Stevens)

A freshly re-thatched roof with a decorative and precise ridge by Shane Stevens (@thethatchingguy). (Credit: Shane Stevens)



Social media creates a platform to demonstrate crafts which have been practised for hundreds of years in a format that appeals to, and reaches, young people. It also doubles as a marketing tool and a form of self-promotion, allowing craftspeople to demonstrate their abilities honed over countless hours of hard work for people to digest in 10-second pops. As an advertising tool, social media advertises the maker's content, and it advertises the trade to a younger audience.

While Zoë uses Instagram to display her work, she also enjoys that

it promotes the craft and makes it accessible to a wider audience. "Clearly Instagram is used by all sorts of different ages," she remarks. "I think that's a really lovely way of hopefully just opening people's eyes... that there are some alternative careers which are creative."

Paradoxically, this untraditional new platform that social media gives to these historic skills might be the way to encourage a fresh generation to explore different crafts and careers. It could help guarantee the survival of vernacular structures which rely on the continued tradition

of historic buildings skills. I wonder what William Morris would make of this new symbiosis between TikTok, technology and the traditional crafts. **S**

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Departing Stores: The fightback

Two years after SAVE drew national attention to the plight and potential of department store buildings there are plenty of reasons to cheer, reports Elizabeth Hopkirk

It seems barely a month goes by without news of a grand old department store undergoing a 21st-century reinvention. Innovations include rooftop bars, health spas, desk space where once hats or haberdashery were sold... even retail (gasp!).

“£130m Oxford Street flagship reborn,” declared an *Evening Standard* headline over a gleaming image of the 1930s DH Evans building as it will look soon. And in North Yorkshire the *Craven Herald & Pioneer* reported: “Rackhams plan will ‘restore vitality of Skipton High Street’.” There’s a lot to celebrate, and yet closures and demolitions abound too: in April Bristol voted to tear down its curvily elegant 1950s Debenhams.



Why is love lavished on some of these landmarks while others are left to rot or worse? Let’s visit some exemplars and talk to pioneers of reuse to see what lessons might be learnt.

In 2022, SAVE published *Departing Stores: Emporia at Risk*, showcasing what was at stake. The interest from newspapers and radio stations across the country demonstrated how much affection there is for these cathedrals of commerce. It’s partly that many of our fondest memories are tied up in their picture windows and pediments (our first shoes, first Saturday job, first suit...). It’s also that the buildings were designed to dazzle and, even when a little faded, are often a town’s finest landmark. Demolish and the community loses something intangible, much more than the sum of bricks and mortar. Architect Simon Henley put it well when he said the “embodied memory” at M&S’s famous Marble Arch site was as important as its “embodied carbon”, critical though we now know this to be.

No one can deny that our national enthusiasm for online shopping is a serious challenge for high streets, but if these great buildings are no longer viable as traditional department stores, how can they be made to work? It is one of the questions explored by

Re:store, the ideas competition we ran with *The Architects’ Journal* for the M&S Oxford Street site (see pp. 8–12).

Meanwhile the catalogue of inspiration is growing, including Edinburgh’s 1930s House of Fraser, now transformed into an eight-storey visitor centre for Johnnie Walker whisky, and Havens, a family-run homeware and gift store in Essex which closed its doors after nearly a century on what was once the “Bond Street of Southend”. With a grant from the Architectural Heritage Fund it has reopened as The Haven, an Age Concern community centre offering fitness classes, beauty treatments, dementia day care and a café, plus cheap space for local groups. Sophia Mirchandani of the Cultural Consulting Network, which is helping the community fundraise to buy the building, said its reopening had contributed to the area’s wider regeneration through increased footfall and visibility. This underlines the value of getting the lights back on at boarded-up stores, something keenly felt by anyone whose local high street is being dragged down by an empty Debenhams or House of Fraser.

Even on the real Bond Street in Mayfair, where venerable old Fenwicks

Up the Junction!

Interview: Arding & Hobbs, 1910

One of the latest department stores to be transformed is Arding & Hobbs at Clapham Junction. Despite its imposing Edwardian presence, the grade II-listed store had long been in decline when main tenant Debenhams went bust

during the pandemic and owner British Land didn’t know what to do with it.

Its potential was spotted by Sascha Lewin, chief executive of W.Real Estate, a commercial property investor specialising in “repositioning” under-used buildings. Much of his portfolio is of a certain vintage, “for no other reason than we like historic buildings,

because of their character and the way people react to them. Everyone is excited to go into a building with history,” he says. Lewin cut his teeth in property-related private equity but 10 years ago he’d had “enough of moving money around: I wanted to get hands-on with the buildings”.

W.RE now owns town houses in



Opposite and above: Arding & Hobbs (Credit: Richard Chivers)

Soho, terraces in Mayfair and a warehouse in Bermondsey, but there is something about Arding & Hobbs that catches everyone’s imagination. “It’s very special,” says Lewin. “It was entirely in public use and is very strongly connected to the community. An enormous number of people have a relationship to this building because

they shopped there.” Over 1,000 responded to the public consultation – more than for Battersea Power Station, he was told. Many shared stories – “my mother got married in the building; I bought my first sofa there”.

The conversion, by architect Stiff & Trevillion working with structural engineer AKT-II and specialist

contractor Restore London, uncovered some wonderful original features hidden behind paint and plasterboard, including the glass in the copper lantern, a sprung dance floor, huge Crittall fire doors and two decorative ceilings – all now restored and celebrated.

A timber roof pavilion has been 



Bank Buildings in Belfast was a 'passion project' for Primark (Credit: Primark)

is about to be converted, the architects are under pressure to get the project completed as quickly as possible. “The longer you have a missing tooth, a place suffers,” says Patrick Campbell, senior partner at Foster & Partners.

That’s one of many reasons why retention makes sense. As Scott Lindsay, partner at Simpson & Brown, architect for the Johnnie Walker project, points out: “Retrofit of existing buildings saves cost, not only in terms of build cost, but in terms of time. Reuse can often mean faster occupancy and revenue generation for businesses.”

A further argument for reuse is that

original features add value, attracting customers who appreciate heritage. Saving tonnes of carbon by not re-building from scratch is another, the importance of which is increasingly recognised by policy makers and investors.

Campbell, the architect leading Foster’s work both at Fenwicks and another historic London department store, Whiteleys in Bayswater, said their approach at New Bond Street – to retain as much fabric as they could – was strongly guided by environmental concerns and Westminster council’s new policy requiring reuse to be considered

treadmills will be framed by the decorative first floor windows.

“It’s deliberately not a corporate space. The ambiguity is more sociable and inviting,” says architect Lance Routh, director at Stiff & Trevillion. “It’s been a real privilege to be involved,” he adds. “It was tricky but worth it.”

Lewin is frank about the complications of working with a building like this – especially the deep

from the start. Tellingly, at the very committee where Fenwicks’ retrofit was unanimously approved, a proposal to replace a 1950s building on Savile Row was thrown out because of the demolition involved. The decision was described as a “warning shot” to developers. How much has changed since 2018 when M&S conceived its plan to demolish its Marble Arch flagship.

“Repurposing historic buildings is a new art that we are all throwing ourselves into,” says Campbell with relish. “This is going to be the new normal.”

He talks enthusiastically about how much he has learnt from the decade-long Whiteleys project. “What I love about working with historic buildings is you have to be nimble and responsive to the challenges they throw up – because we never quite know what we’re going to get when we open them up.” One minute you might be pulling your hair out but the next you’re rolling up your sleeves and working out a solution and that’s immensely satisfying, he says, adding that the UK is lucky to have so many conservation specialists. “It’s about a mental approach where you have to be constantly thinking about things from a slightly different angle, but if you’re surrounded by like-minded people you will solve it.”

At Fenwicks, where they are dealing with 30 level changes across six

added, clad in brass, creating two extra floors and a cascade of natural light down the escalators (a very “department store” means of reaching what are now office floors and event spaces). The roof terrace is filled with plants, while the baroque clock tower may become a bijou bar. Downstairs, Botanica Hall, a buzzing café-bar, is bringing life back to the street. Still to come are a deli and a posh gym whose

floorplates – but says he’d love to take on other department stores. “Those challenges are the price one pays for having a building with an emotional dimension, which Arding & Hobbs has in spades. You work through them and it’s exciting and fun. But it needs occupiers willing to take on the challenges of being in a building that’s not cookie-cutter perfect, for the upside of being in a building that is super cool.”



Liverpool's Owen Owen's has been transformed by Flannels (Credit: Flannels)



A CGI of how Fenwicks on New Bond Street could look (Credit: Foster & Partners)

buildings, Fosters worked closely with structural engineer Buro Happold and contractor Erith on an audacious plan to jack up some of the facades by as much as 4.5m. This will allow them to line up windows with new floors while significantly enlarging the rather modest entrance. Some may be scandalised, but they say this is allowing them to keep 50% of the structure and three quarters of the historic facades while making the 1882 building viable again. Fenwicks' enviable location was obviously key to Lazari Investments' decision to pay £430m for it but heritage was no less important. "They fell in love with the building," says Campbell. "They see Fenwicks as a pivotal trophy asset." Even so, only the ground and first floor

are considered realistic for retail so the rest is to become offices.

Finding tenants in Mayfair is never going to be a problem, but what about empty shops with less fortunate addresses? Campbell says what most department stores helpfully have in common is strong "loading capacity" and decent ceiling heights which make them very adaptable to extra floors and new uses.

"We spend a lot of time thinking about this. Every location has its unique set of opportunities and challenges," he says. "Right now office space is difficult because of the change to hybrid working, so in some cases the solution might be residential above retail – or it could be a civic or cultural use, performance space, light

industrial or 'maker' space."

A pragmatic mix is the most common solution. In Liverpool, the 1925 Owen Owen department store has just been restored by Flannels, a high-end clothing brand from the man who brought us Sports Direct. It now boasts seven floors of retail, a fitness studio and four bars and restaurants. In Bournemouth, entrepreneur Ashley Nicholson has done the town a massive favour by reopening the most prominent of its three shuttered department stores, Debenhams on The Square, introducing a lively blend of shopping, dining and events under its original name, Bobby's. To tempt people away from their online shopping screens you must offer things that can only



Havens of Westcliff has been reborn as a community hub (Credit: Age Concern)



be experienced in real life, he says.

Primark, the Irish fashion chain with a reputation for reusing historic buildings, has also been diversifying its stores, adding cafes and homeware. As readers of *Departing Stores* will remember, it was Primark that restored Brighton's 1931 art deco BHS to its former glory and took on Bristol's 1950s streamline moderne Lewis's. In February it announced it will invest £100m in its UK estate this year, including 15 refurbishments. Most famously, it spent millions and four years restoring the Bank Buildings in Belfast, a 237-year-old listed landmark all but destroyed by fire in 2018. The project involved 40 specialist stonemasons, plus copper and lead craftspeople. There was great jubilation when it reopened. Area manager Jacqui Byers declared: "Restoring Bank Buildings has been a passion project for Primark." Her

colleague told SAVE that Primark was proud to be a "champion of the high street" and was always on the lookout for buildings that would become integral parts of their areas for years to come, adding: "We know how important heritage buildings are to our local communities and high streets."

Another retailer to watch is Ikea – best known for its out-of-town boxes – which is currently restoring and converting the 1924 beaux arts Top Shop at Oxford Circus into a flagship for a chain of smaller "city stores". Intriguingly Ikea's parent company Ingka is also acquiring much less prestigious buildings – 1960s and 70s shopping centres. While not of architectural note, they have a very large embodied carbon consideration. Rather than bulldozing, Ingka upgrades them and adds an Ikea and other amenities. In Hammersmith these include a Library of Things

where you can hire power tools, a carpet cleaner or a sewing machine. "We've proven in Hammersmith that traditional shopping centres have a strong future when they are adapted and constantly evolving to match the real needs of local communities," says managing director Cindy Andersen. In Brighton, where Ingka has bought 1960s Churchill Square, the "city Ikea" will open in a former Debenhams. Elsewhere, in shopping centres in Wandsworth and Liverpool, abandoned Debenhams branches have been converted into high-octane indoor amusement parks with go-karts, mini-golf, padel tennis – and axe-throwing.

There is certainly no lack of appetite or ideas for reusing department stores. As our whistle-stop tour of the UK makes abundantly clear, these buildings are nowhere near ready to check out. **S**

COMPLETE: The Department Store, south London

Architect Squire & Partners converted the dilapidated 1876 Bon Marche department store in Brixton into a new HQ for its expanding team.

Partner Tim Gledstone says: "Despite the uncertainties of restoring a derelict Edwardian building, as we uncovered its decayed grandeur we were rewarded with an extraordinary commitment to craft and detail by its original artisans. We sought to highlight these elements, allowing the building's existing fabric and history to inform the new design, collaborating with numerous contemporary craftspeople to bring it to life.

"The generously proportioned and flexible spaces allowed us to repurpose the building as an inspiring



(Credit: James Jones for Squire & Partners)

modern workspace, in addition to a restaurant and event spaces which offer alternative revenue streams and welcome members of the whole community to share our spaces, ensuring that the building serves the community in which it sits."

COMPLETE: Johnnie Walker, Princes Street, Edinburgh



(Credit: Giles Rocholl for Simpson & Brown)

Architect Simpson & Brown and Diageo restored and converted this 1930s Edinburgh landmark into a "brand home" for Johnnie Walker whisky in 2021. The category B-listed building, a former House of Fraser, has more than a passing resemblance to M&S's Orchard House in London. The project saw the original shop front with its bronze cladding and sconces repaired and a roof extension and terrace added. The building, which now contains a double-



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Photo: Brandon Station, Suffolk

height event space and several floors of visitor experience, offices, retail and bars, has won awards for its energy efficiency.

UNDERWAY: House of Fraser, Oxford Street, London

The former DH Evans and House of Fraser building, of similar vintage to Orchard House, is undergoing a £130m retrofit which will restore its distinctive facades and create 366,000sq ft of space. Retail sits above a gym and pool, topped by six storeys of offices and a roof-top restaurant. The project, branded The Elephant and designed by PDP London for Publica Properties, was granted planning permission in 2020 and is due to complete next year.



UNDERWAY: Debenhams, Oxford Street, London

Another of Oxford Street's grandes dames which shut in 2021 after exactly half a century. When it reopens next year it will boast three new storeys of offices and a roof terrace over retail. Victoria Shapiro, partner at Capital Real Estate Partners which is advising the client, a private European

investor, said the £200m project would "breathe new life into the site, creating a more attractive, sustainable, and exciting building which will contribute to the revitalisation of Oxford Street".

IN PLANNING: Debenhams, Harrogate

Plans to convert and extend the former Parliament Street store into 34 flats over two floors of flexible commercial space have been submitted, backed by SAVE and Harrogate Civic Society. The proposal follows a demolition attempt which was withdrawn after an outcry. The building was originally a run of separate shops that came together as Busby's in the 1960s, later Debenhams.



Proposed Parliament Street elevation showing the former Debenhams to the right of ornate Westminster Arcade. (Credit: NW Architects / planning submission)

A lifetime of achievement

SAVE's founder and president Marcus Binney CBE has been honoured with one of Europe's most prestigious prizes – a Europa Nostra heritage champion award, which will be presented at a ceremony in Bucharest this autumn

Huge congratulations to SAVE's founder and president Marcus Binney for winning Europa Nostra's Heritage Champions Award, one of Europe's most important cultural heritage prizes.

Announced in May, the award recognises the extraordinary work that Marcus has achieved over the last 50 years including his role in the conception of the Destruction of the Country House exhibition at the V&A in 1974 which led to the founding of SAVE as a national conservation charity a year later.

Henrietta Billings, director of SAVE, said: "Everyone at SAVE is completely thrilled that Marcus's vast and positive contribution to the heritage sector, both at home in Britain and across the continent has been recognised and celebrated with this prestigious award.

"He is an inspiration to work with and the string of high-profile successful campaigns, from the Custom House and Smithfield Market in London to the Welsh Streets in Liverpool and Wentworth Woodhouse in South Yorkshire, all are testament to his influence, vision, persuasion and determination. Congratulations Marcus!

"As we approach our 50th anniversary next year this is a fantastic moment to celebrate Marcus's achievements and to build on SAVE's success for the next 50 years. We look forward to continuing to fight for threatened buildings across the UK as a leading voice in the sector. We seek to boost awareness of our work and its value, and to build on pioneering campaigns like M&S Oxford Street – promoting the importance of re-using historic buildings as a vital and

complementary tool in contributing to a more sustainable planet for future generations."

In their assessment of Marcus's achievements, Europa Nostra said:

"Marcus Binney has been a guiding force for raising public awareness of European cultural heritage for over 50 years. His wide-reaching influence and inspiring leadership have revolutionised the protection and conservation of heritage in the United Kingdom and abroad."

The citation pointed to the hugely influential Destruction of the Country House exhibition, and the subsequent founding of SAVE.

"Fifty years ago, historic buildings in the UK were being demolished at the rate of one per day. In 1975, in response to this drastic loss, Binney co-founded SAVE Britain's Heritage... who are now recognised as one of the most effective and influential heritage organisations in the UK. Through SAVE, Binney helped begin a movement of direct action and media campaigning that alerted the public to the scale of the loss of built heritage in the UK, challenged governments' understanding of the feasibility of rescue and re-use and, ultimately, would help save innumerable buildings."

Europa Nostra highlighted recent landmark campaigns, as well as major successes and national achievements. Marcus's work in Europe as Chair of SAVE Europe's Heritage – a sister organisation to SAVE – was also commended.

"Marcus Binney has also had success in Poland, Spain, Germany, Russia and Italy, motivating and encouraging local heritage

conservationists across the continent.

His exceptional skill in careful persuasion, as well as his ability to bring together actors from a wide range of fields, including politicians and local authorities, is outstanding.

"Notably, his work with the Moscow Architecture Preservation Society on the joint report *Moscow Heritage at Crisis Point* had a massive impact. It was one of the major strands of campaigning in Moscow that led to a sea change in attitudes to heritage in the post-Soviet era, and subsequently a huge reduction in demolitions."

In recognition of his services to heritage, Marcus was appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1983 and Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in 2006.

"Marcus Binney is a daring, courageous and fearless leader who has set the standard for heritage campaigning over the past 50 years. His activities and interests are in a diverse range of building types, truly spanning all across Europe. With a clear objective, he utilised the media very cleverly to change views on heritage and heritage reuse," the jury said.

"Binney can be described as a pollinator, successfully convincing and bringing stakeholders together, and acting as a skilled moderator among various groups with sometimes conflicting interests. He is a legal innovator, helping to change legislation to limit damage and setting legal precedents, who serves as a powerful example for heritage campaigners across Europe," the jury added.

The award entry was compiled by



SAVE founder and president, Marcus Binney (Credit: Natalie Mayer, Country Life magazine / Future plc)

Maxine Webster and supported by SAVE, with huge thanks to Sophie Andreae, Timothy Cantell, Kit Martin, Guy Oliver and many others. Maxine Webster also directed and produced a short film to support the award.

The European Heritage Awards /

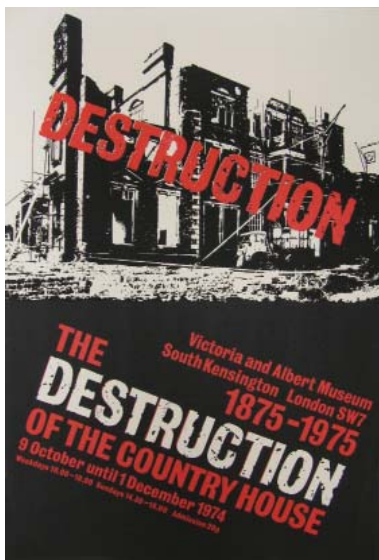
Europa Nostra Awards were launched by the European Commission in 2002 and have been run by Europa Nostra ever since. For 21 years, the awards have been a key tool to recognise and promote the multiple values of cultural and natural heritage for Europe's

society, economy and environment. Europa Nostra is a pan-European Federation for Cultural Heritage, representing citizens' organisations that work on safeguarding Europe's cultural and natural heritage. **S**

The Destruction of the Country House

The landmark V&A exhibition sent a shockwave through Britain 50 years ago and sparked the creation of SAVE. Malika Browne interviews Simon Jenkins about its lasting impact for a new podcast series





“We take them for granted. Like our parish churches, the country houses seem always to have been there, since time immemorial, part of the fabric of our heritage. We glimpse the park gates as we hurtle down a road, or we sense behind some grey, mouldering stone wall, the magic of a landscape planting.

“Majestic trees pierce the skyline, and a profusion of shrubs leads the eye through the artificial landscape in successive tantalizing vistas. Alerted, we strain our eyes for a brief fleeting glimpse of some noble pile floating in the distance, either embraced within some hollow or standing proud on a prominence.”

Opening paragraph of the exhibition catalogue, *The Destruction of the Country House*, 1974, by the curator and then V&A director Roy Strong.

Left: Original exhibition poster (Credit: V&A)

The year 2024 marks the 50th anniversary of the Destruction of the Country House exhibition. A seminal photographic show held at London’s V&A Museum of country houses that had been destroyed over the previous 40 years, it was one of the most daring displays ever staged by a UK museum. It is widely recognised as a hugely influential moment in architectural history which in turn led to the founding of SAVE the following year. The following is an edited transcript of the informal podcast interview recording.

Simon Jenkins was there in September 1974 and remembers the stir it caused. It was quite a sensation. There was a large Hall of Destruction with falling pillars which greeted you as you arrived. All around you were black and white photos of destroyed houses from the *Country Life* archives and there was a large scale model of Ham House.

It was in the first place an attempt to use a museum exhibition to make a pretty blatant political point. The point was that the rate at which historic buildings – particularly country houses in Britain – were being lost was completely unacceptable. Something had to be done about it. It was an electric charge saying, “We’ve got to save these buildings”.

That would only happen if enough attention was drawn to the quality of the buildings, which often were hidden in the countryside. They weren’t like monuments on show in public spaces in London or other big cities. So the idea was to give a shocking display of the number of buildings that had been lost, to showcase the quality of these buildings, and to discuss what should be done to save them.

What was the background to the exhibition?

You need to remember, and this is not often realised, that at the time in the early 1970s, Britain had had 20 years

“The most emotive propagandist exhibition ever to grace a public museum’s walls.” – *The Observer*

of modernist architecture and town planning. The ethos of that culture was essentially destructive. The word obsolete occurs over and over again in town plans after the war. “This city or that city is obsolete.” The Abercrombie Plan for London began: “London is obsolete.” These cities were seen as designed for horses and carts, in the same way that country houses were designed for aristocratic families with



Private View invite to the exhibition, 1974

lots of children and servants. And the message was, those days are over.

By the 1970s, a sort of disquiet had arisen. In the first place the cost of re-building these British cities was astronomical – it had already been started in Liverpool and Glasgow and parts of London. The dislocation of families and communities was astronomical. A new ethos emerged with the Town Planning Act of 1968, followed by the V&A exhibition, as well as the great campaigns in London like the future of Covent Garden and Whitehall.

Most of the West End of London was to be demolished. People didn't realise this at the time. Piccadilly Circus was coming down, Whitehall was coming down, Carlton House Terrace was coming down, Covent Garden was going, Barbican was the only bit that had been completed. The rest of London was "going Barbican".

The exhibition came at a critical moment when people were beginning to say the postwar modernist tradition is coming to an end. We need to find something new and it's going to have to combine the retention of the old with the arrival of the new. So it was a very timely exhibition in that sense.

Who was behind the exhibition?

It was staged by Roy Strong, the very fashionable and trendy director of the V&A, at a time when museum directors really weren't like that. He worked with a group of young mostly journalists and architectural historians centred on *Country Life* with John Cornforth, Marcus Binney, and John Harris at the RIBA drawings collection. Also a large number of us were beginning to write about these things – I was writing about planning and architecture at the time. They got together and said: "Let's put on a show".

What was the aim of the exhibition?

The aim was to stop it, bluntly. The statistic they kept quoting was a country house or stately home was coming down every week in the 1950s. It had begun to tail off – the 1968 Town and Country Planning Act brought in extra controls – and I think a certain amount of general sensitivity had begun to develop by then. The exhibition was crucial – from 1974 onwards it stopped.

Had the mood changed by 1974?

I think it was changing. I served on English Heritage for a while and the National Trust and there was sort of a feeling: "Are these buildings the sort

of thing public money should be spent on?" To be fair, right from the Arts Council immediately after the War right through to the foundation of English Heritage the case was made strongly and was accepted by the Treasury that some money was appropriate to go into these heritage buildings.

The National Trust was, in a sense, the standard bearer. They are the great treasure houses of Britain. There's Blenheim, Longleat and Castle Howard. And it really wasn't until the 1970s and 80s that it was plausible to start saying these houses are basically national monuments of some sort or another, and we're all involved in keeping them going.

The catalogue to the exhibition shows all the ones that were lost, and you think to yourself: "If only they'd lasted another 10 years". I know of so many cases where I just think if they'd had just 10 more years, they'd have been saved.

What was the reception by the public?

It made its point. Most people were just surprised. Some people said, is this proper – should a national museum be making a political point in this way? I think on the whole it went down very well. It was a great success – it signified a new deal for these houses.

Treasure house: Castle Howard in North Yorkshire (Credit: alh1 flickr)





Covent Garden Market was only saved after a huge battle (Credit: Ray in Manila Flickr)

And what was the consequence of the exhibition?

I think from then on, what I call the counter revolution really was underway. A very important moment was Covent Garden. Covent Garden was about to go the way of the Barbican in 1969–71. The new GLC – Labour and Conservative both equally modernist in a sense – just expected old parts of London, poor, obsolete in every sense, to be demolished and rebuilt. But people just took to the streets, and day after day there were demonstrations and blockages. In 1973, Jeffrey Ripon, who was the environment minister, basically caved in, and listed half the buildings so they couldn't be pulled down.

Central government then effectively stymied the GLC and stopped the plan. It took a general election and an incoming Labour government to effectively end it. From then on almost all comprehensive developments of that sort stopped. They abolished the planned demolition of Whitehall, they abolished the Piccadilly Circus plan. A lot of redevelopment plans across Britain, like particularly in Liverpool, Newcastle, Glasgow, they were still going ahead. But they were on their last legs.

The general view that the exhibition

did mark was the dawn of a new age in which planning was not about replacing old with the new, but a compromise between the old and the new. And someone had to bang the drum for these country houses, which must have felt very far away from the concerns of London. It made the point about old buildings being worth something, and that was the key to get across.

These houses were not just houses belonging to toffs you didn't need to worry about, but were part of the national heritage of Britain. And therefore we ought all to be concerned with them. It was the emotion that stirred the popularity of the exhibition. And I think got many people to take this seriously.

It moved with the tide at the time. It came at a time when the world was changing and changing in an essential and benign direction. Between 1974 and 2004 huge mistakes were still being made, buildings still being demolished. But I think the country house as such really was rescued. It sent a clear message: this will not continue. That was the achievement of the exhibition.

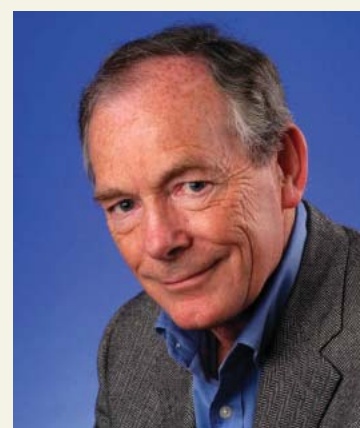
The exhibition closed in London just before Christmas 1974 and travelled to seven other cities in the UK.

The Observer called it: “The most emotive propagandist exhibition ever to grace a public museum’s walls.”

Roy Strong wrote in his diaries: “Many was the time I stood in that exhibition watching the tears stream down the visitors’ faces as they battled to come to terms with all that had gone.

“In modern times no other country has been party to such artistic destruction in a period of peace. To have destroyed so much of beauty over such a length of time is a stain on our national history. We are all to blame in some way. If you leave this hall of destruction feeling grieved and shameful, then we who have prepared this exhibition will be confident that people in government will not allow it happen again.” **S**

This is an abridged version of an interview by journalist Malika Browne, recorded in April 2024 for her Shows That Go On podcast. Find it on podcast platforms including Spotify: <https://bit.ly/ShowsThatGoOn>



Simon Jenkins is a writer and broadcaster and a trustee of SAVE Britain's Heritage. He was editor of *The Times* and the *London Evening Standard* and is a former chair of the National Trust and deputy chair of English Heritage. He is currently a columnist for the *Guardian* and is the author of several books.

On the shoulders of giants

Architecturally, socially and spiritually, St Mary's Somers Town plays a crucial role in the heart of its north London community – so how can there be talk of closure, asks A N Wilson

St Mary's Somers Town is, to my mind, rather a fine building, which is now threatened with closure or even demolition. It has stood in Eversholt Street, just north of Euston Station, for 200 years, the work of the Inwoods, who designed the more famous, and grander St Pancras Church, with its wonderful caryatids, on the other side of the Euston Road. Pugin, in his book *Contrasts*, mocked the attempt at "Gothic" by these architects whose real forte was Greek Revival. He mocked the disproportionately large doors opening out on to the street, saying they looked as if they had been designed for giants. It was meant as an aesthete's joke, but he spoke truer than he knew. There have been giants associated with this place.

In these rather sad days, the construction of HS2 has torn the guts out of the neighbourhood. Many people have had to be rehoused. Like a lot of working-class neighbourhoods in inner London there is a great stability of its demographic. Many people who live here were born here. Many of them are the grandchildren and great grandchildren of those who were born here. They attended the excellent Church of England school. They have been baptised, many of them, at St Mary's. Their funerals happen here, even if they have not kept up with churchy ways.

One of the things which is hard to imagine if you are born into relative comfort is that most people do not have any space. They live cheek by jowl in small flats. They do not have big halls or drawing-rooms. So they depend on big public spaces as focuses of unity and fellowship. St Mary's, as well as being a centre of Christian

prayer, is a space. It is where the schoolchildren come together for assemblies. Their nativity play each year is a big social event in the area with, likely as not, a Muslim Virgin Mary and St Joseph, for many of those who live in the parish are now first, second or third generation immigrants. The church is also the biggest local space where the railway and bus workers can gather for their annual Christmas beano, which they do with great gusto each year.

It is not just high days and holidays: the church is full of life year-round. There is a much-loved vicar, Father Paschal Worton, who belongs to the Catholic or High-Church wing of the Church of England. So do his faithful congregation, who meet for worship here not only on Sunday mornings but on other days of the week as well.

I first came into this building out of curiosity, passing it on my way to the British Library. A service was in progress, a small group of people on a Tuesday morning, and it felt like the concentrated spiritual gathering of monks or nuns, even though it was simply the "faithful" who keep this place going. Those so often wrongly called "ordinary people". When there was talk of pulling the church down, one of the congregation said to me: "Can't they" – those who would pull it down – "*feel* the spirit of prayer in this place?" It wasn't a soppy remark. The person who said it is utterly down-to-earth. What she said was the simple truth. There is a palpable air of something special going

"It is not just high days and holidays: the church is full of life year-round."

on here when you walk through the doors. If I am passing, I often pop in and sit at the back for a while. There are people coming in and out all day long. Some of them are burdened with suitcases, trying to find their way from one railway terminus to another. Others are burdened with drug problems – there are a lot of these. This place provides a refuge for rough sleepers in the colder months. But even those who have not necessarily reached that stage of urban life come in here and find a refuge, a large space in which to sit and find calm. It is a good space, and some of the fittings are not without aesthetic interest. I would single out, especially, the Calvary figures – the Crucified, and St Mary and St John, carved by Mary Grant, a good Victorian sculptor.

When I was a student, my landlady was an eccentric old lady born in 1895. When she lived in this part of London she had worked as a secretary for one of the curates: a famous man called Basil Jellicoe. It was from her that I heard of this robust but rather battered neck of the woods.

Somers Town has always been poor. Since the beginning of the railway age, its inhabitants have been squidged between railway termini – Euston and St Pancras – and most of the people on the streets round here are hurrying to get somewhere else. It was always thus, even before the railways came. In a house, since demolished, just round the corner from the site of St Mary's Somers Town, the infant Charles Dickens left for his long and melancholy walk to the Blacking Factory in the Strand, where he earned his living while his parents were imprisoned for debt in the Marshalsea.

He was Somers Town's most famous pauper, but there have been thousands of poor children born here since, and there are thousands still here.

The house where Dickens lived as a lonely, frightened lodger was pulled down because it was insanitary. I have spoken to those whose grandparents and great-grandparents can remember what those houses were like, infested with rats and cockroaches, with no bathrooms or proper kitchens. In any account of how things improved, one name is repeated over and over. Basil Jellicoe. As a privileged young man (cousin of the famous First World War Admiral Jellicoe) he came to work in the parish of St Mary's in the 1920s. He would die, worn out, in his mid-thirties, in 1935. His Oxford College, Magdalen, had a Mission in the parish, and he originally came as the Magdalen Missioner. He was never the vicar, but when he had become a priest, he worked here as a curate. "That man saved my Nan's life," one woman told me. She was a Roman Catholic. There were 12 children, sick and hungry. Thanks to Father Basil, they were rehoused in the tenement buildings he had built. There was proper sanitation. There was a sitting room in each flat. He started, and ran, several pubs in the area. Yes, it was patronising – he told the customers when they'd had too much to drink, and when they were wasting the limited wages which should be helping to feed their children.

The Saint Pancras Housing Association which he set up became a model for countless other housing schemes in the slum-ridden inner cities of Britain in the inter-war years. And it all began here. Television viewers were able to see some of Jellicoe's legacy a few years ago in one of the Queen's last Christmas broadcasts, when she visited St Mary's School and the

"Pugin spoke truer than he knew when he said the doors of St Mary's were built for giants."

children sang *Away in a Manger*. The Queen knew that her grandfather George V, her great uncles, her father and others had all known the Jellicoes from their Royal Navy connections. Basil Jellicoe used his "connections" to raise money for his housing association, but he always used to say that housing isn't enough. A community depends on more than just bricks and mortar, and St Mary's is at the heart of the community here.

When there was talk of closure, horror spread through the entire neighbourhood: horror at what would be lost, which is not just a place where high church people like to enjoy "bells and smells". What is under threat is the very heart of Somers Town: a beating heart, a sad heart, a brave heart. There are some very good architectural plans which friends of the church have in place which would enable them – if only they could find the backing – to build office space or

flats in the place of the parish room, and possibly of the vicarage. The rents from such properties could easily finance the threatened building.

The sums involved are beyond the means of the parishioners, but they are, by the expensive standards of today, relatively modest. *We must* find the funds and save this place which has meant so much, not only to the people of Somers Town for 200 years, but to so many Londoners who now live in clean, heated flats rather than in slums. The story of rehousing the London poor began here. I remember a doctor in Bethnal Green telling me when she was an old lady: "If you had lived in Bethnal Green in 1920, you would have joined the Communist Party as I did." I asked if she had known Jellicoe and, atheist that she was, she praised him without reserve. Pugin spoke truer than he knew when he said the doors of St Mary's were built for giants. Basil Jellicoe was one such giant, but there are still some giants there today who do not deserve to have their church torn away from them. St Mary's is a sacred place, in many senses of the word, and to lose it would be a desecration. **S**



Holy ground: St Mary's Somers Town is a current SAVE case (Credit: Anthony Coleman)

Casework Review

Green Bank, Trafford

SAVE has received alarming reports and images of demolition which commenced in May 2024 on the Victorian villa known as Green Bank in Greater Manchester. This follows a change of ownership in 2023, and a listing application made by SAVE to seek greater protection for this remarkable house and its ancillary buildings, which includes a characterful carriage house and original boundary walls. SAVE is in contact with the local authority to resist further demolition.



Green Bank (Credit: Paul G Beardmore/Butters John Bee)



Rudgate Bridge (Credit: Robert Matley)

Rudgate Bridge, North Yorkshire

In 2021, the handsome 19th century Rudgate Bridge on the disused Church Fenton-Harrogate railway line was infilled despite not structurally warranting these works. In April, both SAVE and campaigners The Historic Railways Estate Group objected to a retrospective planning application by the government road authority National Highways to retain this infill. This is one of many ongoing cases to reverse illegal infilling and re-establish the legibility of these historic structures.

42 Kelvin Grove, Liverpool

In 2015, SAVE was instrumental in a major legal campaign and prolonged battle to save 400 houses earmarked for demolition in Liverpool's Welsh Streets, including Ringo Starr's birthplace. Following this success, SAVE has continued to champion the Welsh Streets by objecting to a planning application to demolish a building within them, at No. 42 Kelvin Grove. SAVE urged instead that a heritage-led regeneration approach is taken to match the award-winning and imaginative restoration of the surrounding Welsh Streets.



Kelvin Grove (Credit: Nina Edge)

Corah Factory, Leicester

Echoing similar calls from the Twentieth Century Society and Leicester Civic Society, SAVE objected to a scheme to demolish the historic former hosiery and knitwear factory in Leicester. We believe that the factory presents a unique opportunity for a sustainable regeneration scheme within the city centre which celebrates rather than razes the city's industrial past and historic development.



Corah Factory (Credit: Leicester Civic Society)

Brandon Station, Suffolk

SAVE continues to work with the Breckland District Council, Railway Heritage Trust and Suffolk Building Preservation Trust to campaign to save this 1840s station building in Suffolk. At a meeting initiated by the Independent MP for West Suffolk, Matt Hancock, which

brought together representatives from heritage groups, the council and Greater Anglia, we expressed our view that it is of paramount importance that a viable and sustainable future for the building is found, and this remains our priority.



Brandon Station (Credit: Breckland Society)

Vallance Road, Whitechapel

Plans submitted by Transport for London's development company Places for London to clear the entire west side of Vallance Road in London's historic East End have been withdrawn. In SAVE's objection to the scheme, we highlighted that the terrace is an increasingly rare example of the traditional streetscape with small shops that once characterised much of east London. While we welcome this decision to withdraw this damaging application, the terrace remains in need of repair and restoration.



Vallance Road (Credit: Alex Pink)

80 Broad Street, Birmingham

A highly controversial application to cantilever a 42-storey tower over a grade II-listed late Georgian building at 80 Broad Street has been refused permission by Birmingham City Council. This radical scheme would have drastically overshadowed the listed building below, which once served as the Midlands' first lying-in hospital in the mid-19th century. SAVE strongly objected to the scheme, which was unanimously rejected by Birmingham's planning committee on 25th April.



80 Broad Street (Credit: planning documents)



Princess Royal (Credit: Stacey Harris)

Princess Royal, Folkestone

We have written in support of new plans to redevelop and restore the Princess Royal Public House in Folkestone. This revised proposal abandons the previous proposals for complete demolition following numerous objections, including those made by SAVE. We welcome in particular the reinstatement of the historic use of the building as a pub.

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27 Savile Row, London

Westminster City Council has approved the demolition of the former police station building at 27 Savile Row. Located in this northern part of Savile Row, the former police station provided an important pre-war context for the famously 18th-century street which is synonymous with high-end, bespoke tailoring shops. The new development, which SAVE strongly objected to, proposes an eight-storey office block and restaurant (pictured).



27 Savile Row (Credit: planning documents)



Market Tavern (Credit: Nick Roscoe)

Market Tavern, Sheffield

SAVE hit the headlines when Sheffield's much-loved Market Tavern pub apparently collapsed on 10th January. The downfall of the building's upper storey occurred just hours after SAVE formally offered to bring in a conservation-accredited engineer for a second opinion on the building's structural condition. Events unfolded quickly as the day wore on, and further demolition work was deemed necessary to make the site safe. Investigative journalism from Now Then Magazine later revealed that demolition, rather than collapse, was the cause of the destruction of the pub's upper storey.

St Anthony's Gardens, Penzance

Committee members for Cornwall Council approved a scheme for the redevelopment of part of Cornwall's iconic seafront on 28th May. Located opposite the grade II-listed Jubilee Pool on Penzance's coast, the committee approved the drastic relandscaping of St Anthony's Gardens and the replacement of the former PZ Gallery with a housing development. SAVE objected to the scheme, alongside local community groups, on the grounds that this would disrupt the area's strong inter-war character. [S](#)



St Anthony's Gardens (Credit: vintage postcard, courtesy of Philip Knight)

Postcard from... Essex

Gillian Darley revisits Hylands House in Chelmsford, one of SAVE's earliest cases

Fifty years ago, Hylands House was a wreck, surrounded by security fencing and slowly but surely being consumed by the multiple hazards of dry rot, vandalism and incremental dereliction.

Yet a sunny weekend in 2023 saw Hylands House at full stretch: events in the public rooms and a lively food fair outdoors, cheerful bevies of tents around the magisterial portico.

Year-round, the house now accommodates all kinds of activities, firmly embedded in the lives and affections of Chelmsford people, which has been a city since 2012. There is still a walled garden and an ice house to take on, and the renovation of the Flint Cottage. But a quick survey of what has been achieved suggests there are no limits to the possible here.

In the 1960s, a park – better still a park known to be by Repton – was considered a public asset and Chelmsford Borough (now City) Council bought the Hylands estate in 1966 after the death of its elderly owner. Mrs Hanbury's only son, a pilot, died in the war. After her death, aged 89 and without heirs, none of the local authorities (county, borough or rural district) was prepared to rescue a rotting house, especially after fire damage and water ingress

had exacerbated the situation.

By early 1975, European Architectural Heritage Year, Hylands House gained the dubious accolade of being number two of SAVE's urgent press releases. By then the council had applied for listed building consent for its demolition, having rejected several private initiatives which were both damaging for the listed house and proved essentially incompatible with surroundings in public ownership. It had reached stalemate. Though the DoE recognised the importance of the house, it had no financial inducements to offer. The Christmas issue of the *Architects' Journal* that year was devoted to SAVE's report, a chilling cavalcade of buildings lost or almost lost. Desolate Hylands House merited a full-page picture.

Essex County Council prided itself on its care for historic buildings, with an exceptionally committed and expert staff in a well-resourced department. Among its triumphs, viewed equally as exemplary conservation work and as innovative, self-sustaining uses for important but redundant historic buildings, are the Knights Templars' grain barns at Cressing Temple and the storeyed timber-framed Guildhall in Thaxted. The latter was featured as a

shining example of "what can happen" in that otherwise doom-laden issue of the *Architects' Journal*. Although it was to be Chelmsford Borough Council which took eventual responsibility for Hylands House, it was the in-house expertise and experience of the county council that lay behind it.

In the early 1980s local elections saw the defeat of the sitting Conservative council and so, refreshed, CBC committed themselves to finding an eventual future for the house. First it had to be repaired and restored, with care and ambition. Between 1987 and 2007 the building underwent a transformation, passing through six phases. Incrementally the public were granted access, at certain times and to certain areas, and the fabric was slowly reinstated to a state approaching the 1820s version.

Over the years new streams of funding, above all those becoming available through the different iterations of the Heritage Lottery Fund from the mid-1990s onwards, would prove to be key to the future for Hylands House. Equally key to the future, a Friends of Hylands House group was formed in 1991. Now the transformed stable block, with café, bookshop and a series of artists' studios signals the importance of volunteers throughout in this community endeavour.

The story could be repeated across the country, city by city, and is particularly worth recounting to those who are embarking, in current tough times, on ambitious, even idealistic, ventures. It is just one of many hundreds of buildings SAVED. **S**



Hylands House (Credit: Gillian Darley)

SAVE PUBLICATIONS



BOOM NOT BUST

Central Manchester is experiencing an economic boom which is reshaping its skyline, with around 70 towers currently planned or under construction. It's an exciting time for the city, but such rapid growth comes with a risk of its remarkable built heritage being swept away, with many historic buildings facing decay or demolition.

This report focuses on three areas – central Manchester, Rochdale and Oldham – examining how Greater Manchester can build the future without destroying its past.

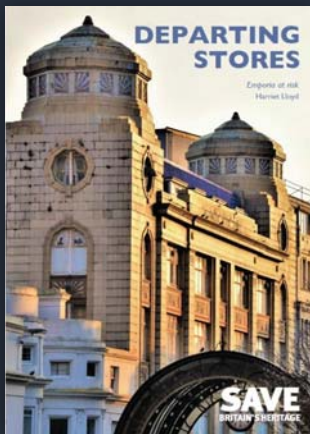
Copies available for purchase direct from SAVE
£12.99 Friends and Saviours | £14.99 general sale

THE BATTLE FOR M&S OXFORD STREET

Marks & Spencer's plan to demolish and rebuild their flagship store in London's West End ignited public indignation and quickly became one of SAVE's biggest cases.

It was the first time heritage and sustainability have taken joint centre stage at a public inquiry and the outcome has had far-reaching consequences for development in the UK. This report tells the story of the campaign and why this landmark case matters.

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DEPARTING STORES

Britain's department stores are facing an existential crisis thanks to the pandemic and rapidly changing shopping patterns.

This up-to-the-minute report documents some of the country's finest examples, the threats they face – and what can be done to rescue and reinvent them for the 21st century.

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SAVE
BRITAIN'S HERITAGE

Buildings at Risk

From Risk to Resource: Buildings at Risk 2024 new entries launch

SAVE's Buildings at Risk officer Liz Fuller introduces some highlights from this year's list

This year's launch of new entries to our Buildings at Risk register includes more than 80 buildings from all over the United Kingdom. They have been nominated during the past year by people keen to see these fascinating historic buildings transformed from redundancy and ruin into places

servicing renewed uses, full of activity and enriching their surroundings.

SAVE's Buildings at Risk register exists to highlight these buildings and to provide a platform to advocate for them. Among this year's selection, we have a country house in Bedfordshire tottering on the brink of serious

neglect, a vast and impressive colliery building in Wales, a Manchester hotel which served an early industrial estate and later a host of football fans, a picturesque mill in the shadow of Durham Cathedral and a swimming pool in a surprising location in Kings Lynn.

Moggerhanger House, Park Road, Moggerhanger, Bedford, Bedfordshire



Moggerhanger House (Credit: SAVE Britain's Heritage)

Moggerhanger House is an exceptional grade I country house substantially remodelled by Sir John Soane between 1809–12 and is regarded as an important example of his work. The house stands in a grade II registered landscape designed by Humphry Repton. After serving as an isolation hospital it was acquired in 1987 by a Christian charity. A building preservation trust was established to facilitate conservation and the resultant award-winning project was supported by grants from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic England and others. More recently, the house has struggled to recover from closure during lockdown, there has been a serious lack of maintenance and there are now significant structural and other issues. We understand that the house is currently not in full use. Historic England added it to their Heritage at Risk Register in autumn 2023. SAVE has written to the Trust to ask what its plans are to ensure the safeguarding of the house and its setting but has not yet received a reply.

Penallta Colliery Engine House, Caerphilly, Wales

In its day, Penallta Colliery, built between 1905 and 1909, was one of the largest collieries in Wales and in 1935 achieved the awesome feat of producing the most coal in a week in Europe. All of the buildings were constructed in a unified architectural style in light brick with red brick detailing. In the last few years, there has been some redevelopment of the site for housing and other purposes, but the giant grade II* listed Engine House together with the nearby baths (which we have added as a separate entry) remain abandoned. It is an imposing building with an impressive interior: there is a 100m-long open hall with continuous arcading on all sides and unexpectedly detailed architectural decoration. It is on Caerphilly's own 2023 Buildings at Risk list.



Credit: Richard Hayman

Trafford Park Hotel, Third Avenue, Trafford Park, Manchester

The ornate and wonderfully detailed, grade II listed Trafford Park Hotel was built in 1902. It was built to serve the workers of the newly created Trafford Park, an industrial area with over 500 houses laid out in a grid pattern. The hotel contained 42 bedrooms and a large pub and was in operation until 2009. It stands about one mile east of Manchester United's Old Trafford football stadium and was a popular stopping off point for fans for both refreshment and relief. Sadly, we understand that although many of the hotel's original fittings are still in place, including a grand staircase, the extra-long urinals that were built in the basement to accommodate supporters on matchdays have been removed. This wonderful building with so much history really needs a new use. It is in poor condition after having been squatted and passed through different ownerships.



Credit: Andrew Marland



Credit: Phil Payne

The Old Fulling Mill, the Banks, Durham, County Durham

Durham's Old Fulling Mill has an exceptional location on the banks of the river with the cathedral towering above it. It is a conservation area and World Heritage Site with Durham Castle and the Palace Green Library complex nearby. The original mill on this site dates from 1416 but the current building is thought to have been built in the 17th and 18th centuries, incorporating earlier material. It is grade II listed. In 1833, the University of Durham took it over as its museum, which made it the second oldest university museum to be opened to the public after Oxford's Ashmolean. It has been in and out of university use, latterly serving as the Museum of Archaeology, but this was moved elsewhere in 2013. The building has not been maintained for many years and is now boarded up and subject to degradation and vandalism.

Former Swimming Baths (part of the Conservancy Board and Pilots' Office), Common Staithe Quay, King's Lynn, Norfolk

The Conservancy Board and Pilots' Office form a waterside building complex on the east bank of the Great Ouse. The two buildings stand in a prominent position by the water and make a charming and eye-catching combination. They are grade II listed. The Conservancy Board, built in 1856, once housed the city's first public baths which were in use until the 1980s. It is this part of this quayside building that is currently redundant. Next to it, the Pilots' Office is still very much in use. Now that the part of the building containing the swimming pool is without a use, the harbourmaster is looking for someone to take it on and find it a new purpose. Its wonderful location and fascinating history make it an attractive and unique space for which to consider possible uses. **S**



Credit: SAVE Britain's Heritage

See all the new entries and read a short summary of their current position on our website at www.savebritainsheritage.org/buildings-at-risk/bar-news. The full, searchable Buildings at Risk register is available to our Friends and Saviours. Find out more about joining and supporting SAVE's work by visiting our website, scanning the QR code or calling us on 020 7253 3500.



Thank you to all of our volunteers for writing up entries and to everyone who has been in touch to nominate new buildings for inclusion. We are indebted to all of the photographers who have offered their services and provided images.

A survey of nearly everything?

A remarkably comprehensive record of the condition of Wales's listed buildings is maintained by Cadw, yet it remains locked away. SAVE's Buildings at Risk officer Liz Fuller makes the case for letting in some light

It is a remarkable fact that since 2012, the condition of every one of Wales' 30,000 listed buildings and structures has been surveyed. The survey is carried out on a five-year rolling basis on behalf of Cadw, the Welsh body responsible for listing and heritage policy. By any estimation, this indicates a serious and thorough approach to the maintenance of the historic environment in Wales, but it is far from clear what happens to the information once gathered and how it is used to take action or to inform policy or thinking on heritage.

There is a strong case for the survey and its findings in relation to buildings at risk to be made publicly available in an appropriate form, as is done in Scotland and England. This would support the case for proactively managing vulnerable historic buildings and promote legitimate public interest in buildings at risk.

The SAVE Britain's Heritage Buildings at Risk register currently has about 160 buildings in Wales on it, both listed and unlisted, all disused. As with other areas of the United Kingdom, the buildings in Wales have been nominated over time by conservation professionals and

members of the public wanting to do something to bring the plight of buildings they value to wider attention. Every year when we seek to update entries and find new buildings to add, we ask for information from local authority conservation officers about buildings in their area. While in one or two places conservation officers appear to be using survey data to prioritise and devise strategies to address the issues – Caerphilly being a recent standout example – in others there can be reluctance to share any information with third parties. While there may be various reasons for this, it gives the impression of there being no overarching approach to using and applying the survey's results and this is surely a huge missed opportunity.

Cadw is the body in Wales responsible for listing, heritage regulation and policy as well as the maintenance of 130 historic sites. It sits within the Directorate of Culture, Sport and Tourism of the Welsh Government. The surveys are carried out by a private consultancy, The Handley Partnership (HP), and Cadw says that this is to ensure a consistent approach. Prior to 2012 each local authority carried out their own survey

with funding from Cadw. The only substantive information on Cadw's website about the surveys are two reports by HP, one from 2012 and one from 2015, that give some insight into the methodology of assessment, analysis and prioritisation together with some headline statistics. It makes for interesting reading but the last report is now nearly 10 years out of date. No overall list of buildings at risk is formally published and no explanation is given on the Cadw site as to how information is disseminated to local authorities and how the local authorities are to use it.

General sensitivity to the safety of sites and their owners as well as the requirements of privacy regulation have been given as reasons for not sharing the contents of the reports. However earlier this year, following a Freedom of Information request from a determined member of the public, a heavily edited version, principally including address and risk category, was made available in spreadsheet form. It reveals over 2,000 entries relating to listed structures of all kinds. However interesting this list may be as a general reflection of the survey's work, it is of course just a list and

Left to right: Engedi Chapel, Caernarfon; Marine Buildings, Penarth; Tyrpeg Mynedd, Conwy; Hafod Morfa Works near Swansea





Photos by Eveleigh Photography

would require extensive analysis to extract overall trends or conclusions. Given the restricted nature of the data that has been released, any such analysis might be limited in scope in any case. In fact, the publication of the list in this form serves, more generally, to highlight the apparent absence of a coherent effort to employ the detailed data meaningfully and use it to promote the understanding and future care of buildings.

For SAVE's work, the list is potentially a useful additional source of information especially in cases where we have struggled to obtain information from elsewhere. We plan to use it as a resource for our Buildings at Risk work, both for new leads and to update existing entries on our register. For example, we have already enhanced entries for Marine Buildings in Penarth and Tyrpeg Mynedd in Conwy (both pictured) to reflect that they have been assessed as being at the highest level of risk. We also hope to be able to identify new additions, perhaps focusing on the most at risk in each area.

In relation to this summer's launch of new entries (see separate article), we have been able to make use of the buildings at risk list published in 2023 by Caerphilly County Borough Council which is based on the survey. Ideally we would not need to make repeated FOI requests to obtain future updates, but that is an option to progress our work.

As part of its role, Cadw receives

government funding for capital grants among other revenue, and grant making is one of its core activities. In its 2022-23 annual report, it records making just over £10m in grants for buildings and projects, including working in partnership with the Architectural Heritage Fund (AHF) on community projects. It specifically states that "the data from [the] survey work will be utilised to ensure that the grants are focused on those buildings most at risk across Wales." One building benefitting last year was grade II-listed Engedi Chapel in Caernarfon, Gwynedd which has been on SAVE's Buildings at Risk register since 2017. A community group wanting to restore the building and use it as a community art and wellbeing centre received funding via the AHF as part of the Cadw scheme for a feasibility study which will hopefully lead to a focused project plan. Interestingly however, Engedi Chapel does not appear on the building at risk survey that we have seen so this grant, albeit made through the AHF's scheme, is not as a result of the survey work as such. However, there are certainly other examples of beneficiaries of Cadw grants which do appear in the survey such as the Hafod Morfa Works near Swansea and Ruperra Castle in Caerphilly.

The absence of a publicly available list in Wales raises a number of important issues. A published list of buildings at risk demonstrates the

relevance of, and raises awareness about, historic buildings that have been neglected. It shows that the relevant official heritage body regards it as important. In Scotland, a list including buildings of *all* listing categories (A, B and C) is published by Historic Environment Scotland and updated periodically. Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register covering grade I and II* buildings as well as grade II places of worship in England together with grade II buildings in London is available on its website and is updated annually.

SAVE's register seeks to raise awareness of listed and unlisted buildings at risk. We also use it as a platform to advocate action and to spread wider recognition of the issues. In addition, it provides a focus for supporting community groups already taking steps to safeguard their local buildings.

That Cadw have commissioned these comprehensive surveys stands out as going much further than their counterparts in Scotland and England. But to fail to make the findings public or to report on the impact of this information having been obtained lacks public accountability. With the widely criticised funding cuts to heritage organisations in Wales that were publicised earlier this year, it seems more critical than ever to maximise the impact of the work that is already being done. **S**

Civic pride

Local authority finances have been in the news, putting town halls in the spotlight. In the first of a two-part series, Robert Drake picks some of the country's most interesting 20th-century examples. Photography by John East

Norwich City Hall, Norfolk (grade II*)

Almost certainly the finest English public building of the inter-war period, sited above the Market Place in Norwich. The 185 foot high tower acts as a beacon and successfully contrasts with the elongated front with its slender portico at the centre. CH James and SK Pierce won the competition on the strength of their work at recently completed Hertfordshire County Hall and at Slough, Bucks. Scandinavian is the driving influence – particularly Tengbom's Concert Hall in Stockholm. Norwich City Hall is of grey-red brick with dressings of Ketton stone on a steel box frame and with a continuous balcony over 360 feet long. Flanking the outer staircase, a pair of fine bronze lions stand guard by Alfred Hardiman of 1936. Inside three bronze doors decorated with plaques by James Woodford depict scenes from Norwich's history complemented by fine textiles where the predominant tone is a distinctive red.



Walthamstow Civic Centre, east London (now Waltham Forest, grade II)

Walthamstow became a municipal borough in 1929 and Philip Hepworth won the competition for a new town hall in 1932. Hepworth finished the arresting civic complex with the cupola in 1942, and the slightly later assembly hall of 1943 to the right. Hepworth was an architect to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission after WWII and was responsible for the Dunkirk war memorial of 1957. Sweden was certainly the source of this restrained classicism which was popular with English architects. Inside, the exigencies of wartime meant that some Victorian furnishings had to be recycled from the previous town hall as seating in the council chamber. With local authority re-organisation in London in 1965, when Walthamstow amalgamated with neighbouring Leyton and Chingford, the civic centre stayed the centre of local government in the new Borough of Waltham Forest and it remains in this role. It has recently been refurbished.



Barnsley Town Hall, South Yorkshire (grade II)

A large town hall complex in this South Yorkshire industrial and former coal mining town is by architects Briggs and Thornely of 1932–3. In an elaborate neo-classical style in Portland stone, with a 21-bay front, its tall tower is a distinctive landmark in the district. The frontispiece is a war memorial by WT Curtis with sculpture in bronze by John Tweed of an infantryman in his greatcoat and a winged figure of Victory behind. The interior was refurbished in 2012 as a museum and archive centre. It is an impressively scaled monument which reflects the determination of the local authority to fight back against the Depression of the inter-war years. Briggs and Thornely were Liverpool-based architects who built the Stormont Assembly in Northern Ireland in the 1920s, one of the Three Graces on the Liverpool waterfront (Mersey Docks and Harbour Board Offices) and Preston Municipal Offices.

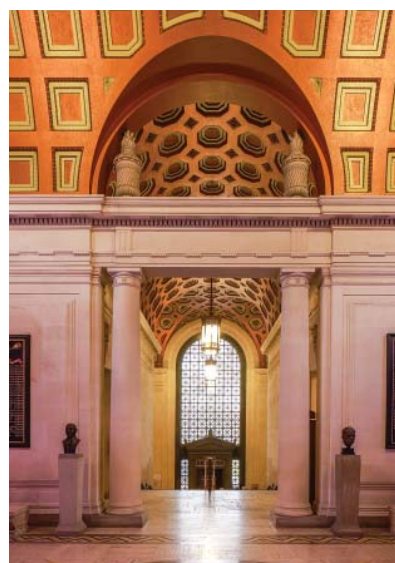


Stretford (now Trafford) Town Hall, Greater Manchester (grade II)

Bradshaw, Gass and Hope was a leading town hall architectural practice of the inter-war period based in Bolton which built an extension to the Victorian Town Hall in Bolton and many others including in Chesterfield, Luton, Bromley and Wimbledon (now Merton). At Trafford they built an imposing town hall for the former Borough of Stretford, south east of Manchester. This well-preserved and imposing neo-classical town hall of Ruabon brick has a high clock tower and angled end bays with concave fronts. Inside it has a well-preserved interior with statues by the Bromsgrove Guild; on one side Elektra holding a globe and on the other, Niord with sea beasts, probably a reference to the nearby Manchester Ship Canal. The council chamber has a glazed oval lantern, committee rooms with oak panelling and furnishings by Waring and Gillow. It was listed grade II in 2007 after a campaign by C20 Society.

Swansea Guildhall (now the Brangwyn Hall, grade I)

Swansea Guildhall is the major civic building of Wales, in a stripped neo-classical style. In Portland stone with a towering clock tower, it features the prow of a Viking long ship attesting to Swansea's origins. Designed by well-known Welsh architect Percy Thomas and opened in 1934, the interior is particularly well-preserved. Entry is through a dramatic tunnel vault coloured bronze and green which leads to a similarly vaulted ante-hall. The council chamber is one of the finest surviving 1930s interiors in the UK, top-lit from a coffered ceiling. The spectacular concert hall, now known as the Brangwyn Hall, has a huge organ and rectilinear pendant light fittings. It famously contains 17 British Empire panels by Frank Brangwyn originally intended for the House of Lords as a WWI memorial. Brangwyn created a luxuriant and brilliantly coloured jungle containing his customary tropes of exoticism and harbour scenes of manual labour in a tropical environment. **S**



Events: Summer 2024

For tickets and more information visit: savebritainsheritage.org/events/current or email our events manager George Jerger: george.jerger@savebritainsheritage.org



WALKING TOUR

Saturday, 6th July 2024

London's Regent's Canal – SAVE walking tour

Join SAVE and Lettie Mckie for a tour of London's Regent's Canal, exploring its history, architecture, and modern redevelopment. From its 1820 origins in Georgian London to today's revitalisation, we'll discover Regency villas, Victorian gasholders, and repurposed gasholders along the route.

Tickets: £15 Friends & Saviours | £19 Members of the public



*Diespeker Wharf
(Credit: Daniil
Korbut, Unsplash)*



WALKING TOUR

Tuesday 9th July 2024

Rediscovering Peckham: An architect-led walking tour

Join SAVE and Benedict O'Looney for a walking tour of Peckham town centre, exploring the area's rich architectural heritage and community-driven conservation efforts. See the meticulously restored Victorian Peckham Rye Station and we will end the tour at Frank's Café on top of the re-purposed multi-storey car park offering a panoramic view of London's skyline.

Tickets: £16 Friends & Saviours | £19 Members of the public



*Peckham Rye Station
(Credit: Paul Childs,
Railway Heritage Trust)*



WALKING TOUR

Tuesday 23rd July 2024

London's only Lighthouse – Tour with SAVE's chair Eric Reynolds of Trinity Buoy Wharf

Join SAVE and Eric Reynolds, SAVE's chair of trustees, for a tour of the successful revival of Trinity Buoy Wharf. Discover this vibrant hub, transformed from abandonment to a thriving centre for art, education, innovation and workspace, where restored historic buildings seamlessly blend with modern structures.

Tickets: £15 Friends & Saviours | £19 Members of the public



Trinity Buoy Wharf (Credit: Trinity Buoy Wharf)



WALKING TOUR

NEW DATE Saturday 27th July 2024

Chasing the Tyburn, The West End's Lost River – SAVE Walking Tour

Join SAVE and Dr. Tom Bolton, author of London's Lost Rivers, on a 3.5-mile walking tour tracing the ancient River Tyburn from Baker Street to Vauxhall Bridge. Explore the common history of the river below and that of the parallel streets above and reflect on its loss as a natural resource amid the climate crisis.

Tickets: £15 Friends & Saviours | £19 Members of the public



*Chasing the Tyburn
2023 (Credit: Leigh
Stanford for SAVE)*

★ SUPPORTERS' TOUR

Wednesday, 11th September 2024

Friends & Saviours' Event:

Behind the scenes at St Barts

Join SAVE and Will Palin for a tour of the grade I-listed North Wing at St Bartholomew's Hospital. On this special tour we will witness the ongoing conservation efforts up close and meet the artisans responsible for the intricate craftsmanship while also exploring the architecture of this extraordinary building.

Tickets: £16 Friends | £12 Saviours



Great Hall at St Bartholomew's Hospital (Credit: Matthew Andrews)

🚶 WALKING TOUR

Saturday, 28th September 2024

Sacred and secular:

Inside the Square Mile – a SAVE Walking Tour

From Guildhall Yard to St Paul's Cathedral, join SAVE and Alec Forshaw for a walking tour focusing on a wide variety of old and new architecture in the western part of the City of London. We will start in Guildhall Yard, the secular centre of the City of London, and finish close to St Paul's Cathedral, its ecclesiastical heart.

Tickets: £16 Friends & Saviours | £19 Members of the public



St Paul's
(Credit: G Jerger
for SAVE)

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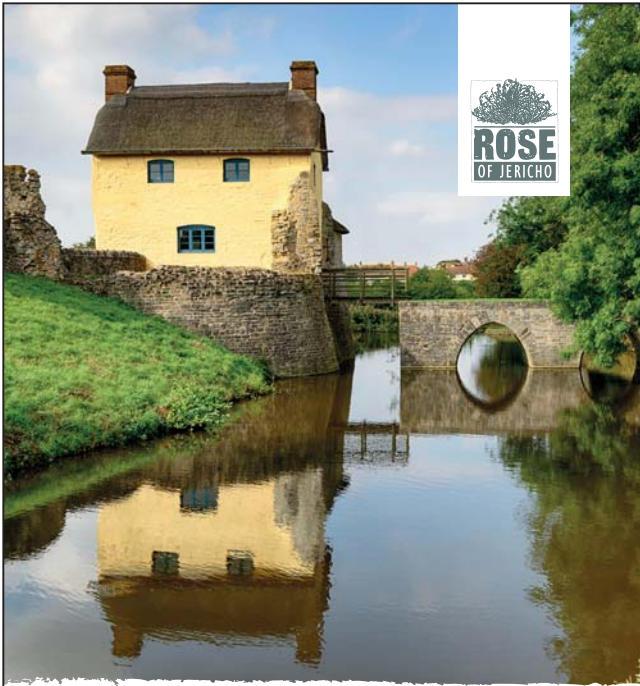

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Voices from the Frontline

Spotlight on a local campaign: Meersbrook Park Bowling Club, Sheffield

More than a century after it was founded, the sylvan South Yorkshire bowling club was in decline and at risk. Then the community rallied round. Local campaigner Nick Roscoe takes up the story

Tell us about the building and why a campaign was needed

Meersbrook Park Bowling Club was founded in 1907, one of Sheffield's first park-based crown green clubs. The men's pavilion was supplemented by the larger and more picturesque ladies' pavilion in 1928. During the 1930s and 1940s the club had four British champions among its ranks.

Many clubs, park-based council-run ones in particular, are now sadly at risk. Despite bowls being great for physical and mental health, cash-strapped councils are generally looking at how to reduce funding, rather than thinking how to revitalise the sport.

In 2021 I became aware of a Sheffield council's "Better Parks"

proposal to allow a local business to operate on one of the club's two greens because of the club's falling membership. The covid lockdowns were a terrible blow for many clubs. Inactivity prevented many older players from returning to the game and by the end of 2022 the club had only 12 members.

How did the campaign get started?

A few friends joined at the start of the 2023 season. We practised together, supplemented the club's teams and began getting external advice. We knew that social bowling (rather than serious competition) was going to provide the necessary boost to membership.

How did you keep the momentum going?

Our message was always along the lines of: "Bowling is great fun for all ages – why not give it a try?" When we realised it was even more fun than we had expected it got much easier to keep on with our various efforts.

What are your favourite things about the bowling club?

The greens are enclosed by shrubs and trees, creating a sheltered peaceful haven. It's great when matches are being played, but is a beautiful parkland space when they are not.

There is a feeling of walking back into history as you enter the ladies' clubhouse. Walls are adorned with



photos of former champions and ordinary players alike, all from different eras.

High points

We ran “taster sessions” for people to try bowls for free. Lots of people came, enjoyed themselves and asked to join. We boosted membership to 80 by midsummer 2023.

Witnessing a friend refurbishing specialist lawn mowers and using them to bring the “disused” green back into use.

How have SAVE helped with this campaign?

By publishing this! Meersbrook Park Bowling Club seems safe for now, but hopefully readers will consider their own local clubs, rally a few friends together and forget about the “it’s just for old people” nonsense.

Top tips

Use different methods – website, social media, leaflets, press, local radio etc – to target as many relevant people as possible.

Get support from external organisations: Sport England and Steve Hawksworth (of Bowls Development Alliance and BCGBA) have been a huge help. **S**



All photos credit: Nick Roscoe



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