



# SAVE

BRITAIN'S HERITAGE  
NEWSLETTER WINTER 2024

SOS for Scotland's heritage  
New power generation  
Rescuing a Building at Risk





Yore Mill, Aysgarth, Yorkshire by Eveleigh Photography

# Leave a **gift** in your will and protect **historic buildings** for **generations** to come.

Leaving a gift in your Will to SAVE is a powerful way to ensure our work continues, and to give threatened buildings a future. Your bequest will allow the trustees of SAVE to direct money where it is needed most. We do not receive government funding and so a gift in your will, whatever size, will make a real difference.

We understand that legacies are personal, but if you wish to find out more about supporting SAVE in this way please email Leigh Stanford at [administrator@savebritainsheritage.org](mailto:administrator@savebritainsheritage.org), call 020 7253 3500 or visit [savebritainsheritage.org](http://savebritainsheritage.org).

**SAVE**  
BRITAIN'S HERITAGE

Charity no: 269129

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**Professor Warwick Rodwell OBE** is an architectural historian and archaeologist. He is consultant archaeologist to Westminster Abbey and was formerly visiting professor in archaeology at the University of Reading.

**Neil Horsley** is a town planner based in West Yorkshire with over 40 years' experience in the field of urban regeneration.

**Paul Sweeney** is a Member of the Scottish Parliament for Glasgow (Region), a former MP for Glasgow North East and a trustee of the Glasgow City Heritage Trust.

**Benedict O'Looney** runs an architecture studio working on new-build and conservation projects particularly in Southwark, where he also chairs a conservation areas advisory group.

**Ben Stephenson** is director of BAS Placemaking Consultancy, a High Streets Task Force Expert, chief executive of Angel Islington Business Improvement District and founder of the Bristol Urban Forum, based in Sparks, Bristol.

**Dr Andy Brown** is analytics director at Historic England and former South East planning and conservation director.

**Robert Drake** has had a long involvement with C20 Society particularly on places of

worship and municipal buildings and was a member of the casework committee until 2022.

**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*.

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

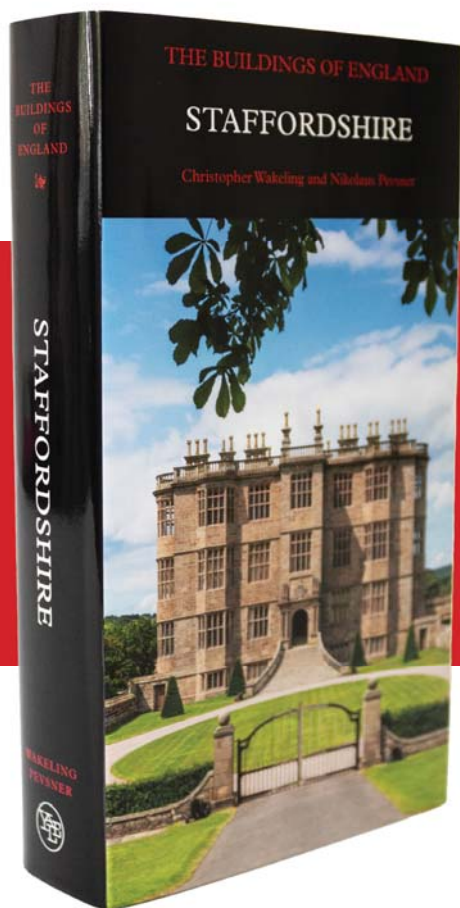
*Front cover: Demolition of the C-listed India Buildings in Glasgow has cost the council £1m. (Credit: Paul Sweeney MSP)*

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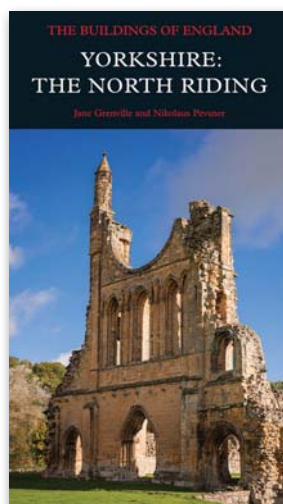
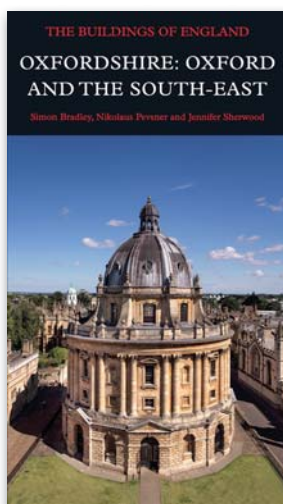
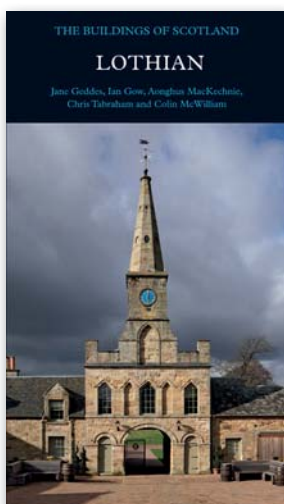
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# SAVE

## BRITAIN'S HERITAGE NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2024

## Director's welcome

by Henrietta Billings



Welcome to the winter edition of the SAVE Newsletter, marking the close of another incredibly busy year. From the ongoing M&S challenge and the launch of our urgent petition to the Scottish Parliament on threatened listed buildings to assessing the new proposals for Liverpool Street Station (emerging as we go to print), and finalising our new website – there isn't a dull moment!

We've also responded to the government's consultation on the National Planning Policy Framework – the key planning document for all of England's local planning authorities. With Labour's focus on housing numbers, we've been keen to champion Historic England's new research –

which estimates that re-purposing existing empty buildings could deliver 670,000 new homes – a good chunk of the government's own five-year housing target of 1.5 million. It reinforces much of what we've learned through leading the M&S campaign about the importance of reducing embodied carbon emissions by renovation over new build, bringing handsome buildings back to life and at the same time boosting the town centres where many of these buildings are located.

In this issue, as we await the final decision from the Secretary of State, architect Julia Barfield outlines the long-lasting impact of the M&S campaign on the property industry (p4) and Ben Stephenson considers the obstacles and opportunities of repurposing department stores – with some eye-catching examples in Taunton, Bristol and Gloucester. And we chart the growing dominance of re-use projects in RIBA's most prestigious architectural award, the Stirling Prize (p26).

We celebrate modern architecture and outstanding public-sector design on p8 and Robert Drake picks some of the country's most interesting 20th-century

town halls – with beautiful photography from John East (p42).

Warwick Rodwell tells the rescue story of Northwold Manor in Norfolk – a previous Buildings at Risk catalogue cover star (p10), and writer and photographer Neil Horsley talks us through the key ingredients of saving and re-purposing our great 19th and 20th-century textile mills on p16.

Paul Sweeney MSP, who we've been working with closely in Glasgow, urges the council to use its statutory powers to halt the current spate of demolitions – instead of mopping up the mess once the buildings have collapsed (p22 and the cover).

Gillian Darley digs into our archives reflecting on the legacy of our seminal report and exhibition on railways, *Off the Rails*. We also hear from the Friends of Carlisle Victorian and Turkish Baths on their work.

We're looking forward to celebrating our 50th anniversary with you next year, and will be revealing our planned national programme of events and activities in the New Year. Wishing you a peaceful Christmas break and thank you for supporting SAVE. **S**

### SAVE Britain's Heritage campaigns for threatened historic buildings of all types and ages.

We do this through the media, the planning system and where necessary the courts – in collaboration with local groups and others.

Uniquely we work with architects, engineers, planners and developers to offer alternative visions for threatened buildings. These are designed to spark debate and show how much-loved places can have a vibrant future.

We respond boldly and urgently to crises and actively seek out sustainable new uses. We believe reusing buildings is good for people and planet, saving precious resources and revitalising communities.

In our 50 years we have scored many major successes, from Smithfield Market to Wentworth Woodhouse. We are fiercely independent and raise all our own support. We can't do any of this without you!



# Not just any campaign...

SAVE's high-profile battle for M&S Oxford Street will have a lasting impact on the property industry, writes London Eye designer **Julia Barfield**

The future of Marks & Spencer's flagship 1929 building at Marble Arch may have already been decided by Angela Rayner when this article is printed. If that is the case I hope Angela has come down on the right side of history.

Whatever her decision, this case has caught the public imagination – hundreds of members of the public cared enough to raise more than £20,000 towards SAVE's legal costs. It has helped change the way the construction industry thinks about demolition, moving the dial towards retrofit, as knowledge of the uncomfortable realities of embodied carbon have become more widely understood.

We are in a planetary emergency, Westminster council, the GLA and the UK government have all declared. The science is clear – and it is the science that needs to guide our choices. The IPCC told us in 2018 we had 12 years to avoid catastrophe. We see growing evidence all around the world that it is happening – with floods, droughts, fires and melting ice caps. We are on track for a 2°-3° future above pre-industrial levels. There is really no room for error or playing politics.

This is clearly the most important issue of our time. The question is: is M&S *acting* as if there is an emergency? In my view, throwing a huge carbon bomb (40,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>) unnecessarily into the



*Credit: Timothy Soar*

**“The case has helped change the way the construction industry thinks about demolition”  
– Julia Barfield**

atmosphere – as this project proposes to do – is definitely not acting like there is an emergency. It misunderstands the urgency of our situation. What the science tells us is that what we do in the next few years is critical.

Happily, policy is catching up with



*Above and top right: Orchard House, built in 1929, occupies a prominent corner of Oxford Street next to grade II\*-listed Selfridge's (Credit: Matthew Andrews for SAVE Britain's Heritage)*

the UK's legally binding net zero commitment – and, just as importantly, with public opinion. Westminster, City of London, Camden, Ealing and several other boroughs are introducing retrofit-first policies.

As architects we are trained to take a brief from our client and come up with the best design response. The brief here was clearly to maximise the site's potential and the architects have fulfilled their brief well, creating a building minimising operational carbon that five or eight years ago would have been considered fine. However now that we understand the upfront impact of embodied carbon it really isn't. Particularly building two extra basements, which are the worst in terms of embodied carbon!

As architects I believe we also have a higher responsibility; to the planet, as well as to our clients. As do clients. It is disappointing that one of the

country's best-loved retailers appears to be choosing profit over planet. Conversely, if the brief to the design team had been to maximise the site's potential within the constraints of a retrofit, I am sure the team would have done a great job and M&S could have demonstrated true climate leadership.

Less than half a mile down the road the old House of Fraser building (similar age: 1930s) is currently undergoing a £130m retrofit. The old Debenhams is also being retrofitted (though more fabric is being lost) and of course Ikea has spent millions converting the glorious old Topshop into its flagship city-format store. Imaginative clients want these buildings!

It is entirely possible to successfully retrofit existing buildings. We at MBA found, while doing a deep retrofit of three very similar buildings into one (including a 1930s building), that we were able to radically transform them



into high-quality contemporary work space. Obviously all buildings are unique. But surely a deep retrofit needs to be properly tested in this instance.

We can't afford to waste perfectly sound buildings any more! [S](#)

## Because there is no Plan B...

M&S's plan to demolish its flagship 1920s building in London's West End and replace it with a huge office block ignited public indignation and quickly became one of SAVE's biggest cases.

We commissioned expert analysis of the carbon implications and successfully urged government to hold a public inquiry. In 2022 we fought – and won – the historic two-week inquiry, the first to have heritage and carbon at its heart.

The SAVE team – including barrister Matthew Fraser and expert witnesses Simon Sturgis, Dr Julie Godefroy and Alec Forshaw – was buoyed by your support. You helped smash our crowdfunder, signed our petition and wrote to the inspector. He also received submissions from Kristin Scott Thomas, Griff Rhys Jones and technical specialists including Julia

Barfield, all of which made headlines and helped influence an entire industry.

M&S challenged Michael Gove's decision on procedural grounds and the case was sent back to the new Secretary of State for redetermination. We coordinated a joint open letter to

Angela Rayner in the *Times* signed by 25 leading figures, from Bill Bryson and Kevin McCloud to London School of Architecture head Dr Neal Shasore. Working with *The Architects' Journal* we also held a design competition which demonstrated imaginative alternatives to demolition.



Clockwise: Bill Bryson, Kevin McCloud, Sanaa Shaikh, Dr Neal Shasore, Griff Rhys Jones, George Clarke (Credit: Bill Bryson: National Churches Trust, CC2.0, Kevin McCloud: National Archives, OGL3, both via Wikimedia Commons)



# Scottish Parliament responds to SAVE's petition

Thousands call for national debate on demolition of Scottish heritage

SAVE Britain's Heritage has launched a public petition, calling on the Scottish Parliament to host a national debate to bolster safeguards for threatened listed buildings.

The petition, which currently has over 3,000 signatures, calls for an urgent parliamentary debate to address a gap in legislation that leaves listed buildings across the country vulnerable to demolition.

The current loophole allows councils to demolish listed buildings under emergency safety powers without providing evidence to justify their actions. The case follows the highly controversial demolition of the category B-listed Ayr Station Hotel by South Ayrshire Council.

The council said demolition was over public safety concerns, following two arson attacks last year, but it proceeded without making public the reports or surveys to justify the decision and without providing evidence that alternatives to demolition were robustly explored.

In September, the widely objected to demolition of the category B-listed ABC Cinema in Glasgow commenced under emergency safety powers, despite united calls from national heritage groups to retain the robust, concrete portico entrance that acts as a landmark feature on this much-loved building on Sauchiehall Street.

While fully recognising the

paramount importance of making dangerous buildings safe, enhanced guidance is needed to address this policy gap, setting out the minimum structural evidence and process before undertaking demolition works to listed buildings on public safety grounds, including when consulting national heritage advisor Historic Environment Scotland. This will ensure only the minimum demolition necessary takes place to make the buildings safe, avoiding excessive or total demolition.

SAVE's petition is calling for policy safeguards to ensure that listed buildings like Ayr Station Hotel cannot be demolished without robust and transparent justification. We are



*The category B-listed landmark in summer 2018 (Credit: Nigel Hackett for SAVE Britain's Heritage)*





Paul Sweeney MSP speaking in support of SAVE's petition at the CPPPC meeting, 9th October 2024 (Credit: Screenshot from Scottish Parliament TV <https://www.scottishparliament.tv/>)

specifically calling for the following policy controls to be introduced alongside existing public safety legislation:

1. Enhanced policy guidance setting out the minimum evidence and processes required by local planning authorities before making decisions on demolition of listed buildings under emergency powers.
2. A mandatory policy requirement for local planning authorities to engage conservation-accredited engineers in all cases involving listed buildings.

## UPDATE: 'Enormous public interest'

SAVE's petition was considered for the first time by the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee (CPPPC) at a meeting on 9th October 2024. Paul Sweeney MSP and Carol Mochan MSP spoke strongly in support of the petition's urgent call to address this policy

gap. The committee favourably found the petition to be of "enormous public interest" and called for an expert roundtable to be convened at an upcoming CPPPC meeting to further examine this nationally important issue. We await a date for this next meeting.

## Current conflict of interest

In cases involving the use of emergency powers on grounds of public safety, current legislation creates a potential conflict of interest for local authorities between the legal duty of planning departments to protect listed buildings under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1997 and the duty of building control departments to make any dangerous building safe, including via demolition, under section 29 of the Building (Scotland) Act 2003.

The drawn-out demolition of large parts of Ayr's Station Hotel following September 2023's arson attack which damaged the building, has brought this issue into the national spotlight. Following the fire, South Ayrshire Council assumed legal responsibility

for the site, with building control proceeding to demolish the south wing of the building, without publishing detailed evidence to justify its actions, and with no requirement to gain approval from Historic Environment Scotland before doing so.

Meanwhile, the ongoing demolition of the landmark ABC Cinema in Glasgow [see page 22], which is located next door to the internationally significant Charles Rennie Mackintosh Glasgow School of Art, under emergency powers demonstrates how urgently this loophole in legislation – which allows councils to demolish listed buildings under emergency public safety powers without providing robust justification – needs to be addressed. **S**



A surviving section of the north wing on 29th May 2024, as substantial demolition works to the tower and north wing neared completion (Credit: SAVE Britain's Heritage)

# ‘Remarkable set of stations needs celebration and recognition’

SAVE backs listing for Southwark Tube station and calls for assessment of all modern Jubilee Line stations

SAVE Britain’s Heritage has written to Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy calling for an assessment of the 11 stations on the modern Jubilee Line extension (JLE) which all opened in 1999.

Our letter made headlines everywhere from the *Evening Standard* to *Time Out*, which noted that scenes from *Star Wars: Rogue One* and Danny Boyle’s *28 Days Later* were shot at Canary Wharf station.

It came as Historic England opened a new listing assessment of Southwark Tube station, which was still underway as we went to press.

SAVE previously called for the assessment of all the Jubilee Line extension stations in 2017. We are again urging the government – which ultimately takes decisions on listings – to take this opportunity to carry out a

survey of all 11 stations, each of which was designed by a different architect.

In our letter to the Secretary of State we said the buildings, which all opened in 1999, should be assessed as a group for their architectural and historical significance. “SAVE considers the modern stations on this line to be award-winning public architecture at its best, designed by some of the greatest architects of a generation,” we wrote.

The Jubilee Line extension stations were commissioned by Roland Paoletti soon after he completed the impressive new metro in Hong Kong. He chose a group of talented architects both established and at the beginning of their careers – including Sir Norman Foster (Canary Wharf), Will Alsop (North Greenwich), Sir Richard MacCormac (Southwark), Ian Ritchie

“It is one of the most important and thrilling examples of public transport infrastructure and architecture in Britain”

— Henrietta Billings

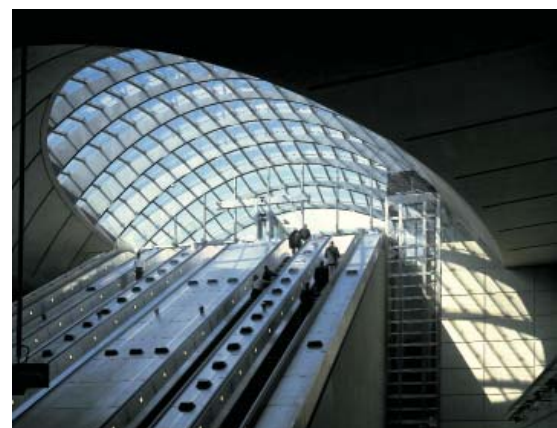
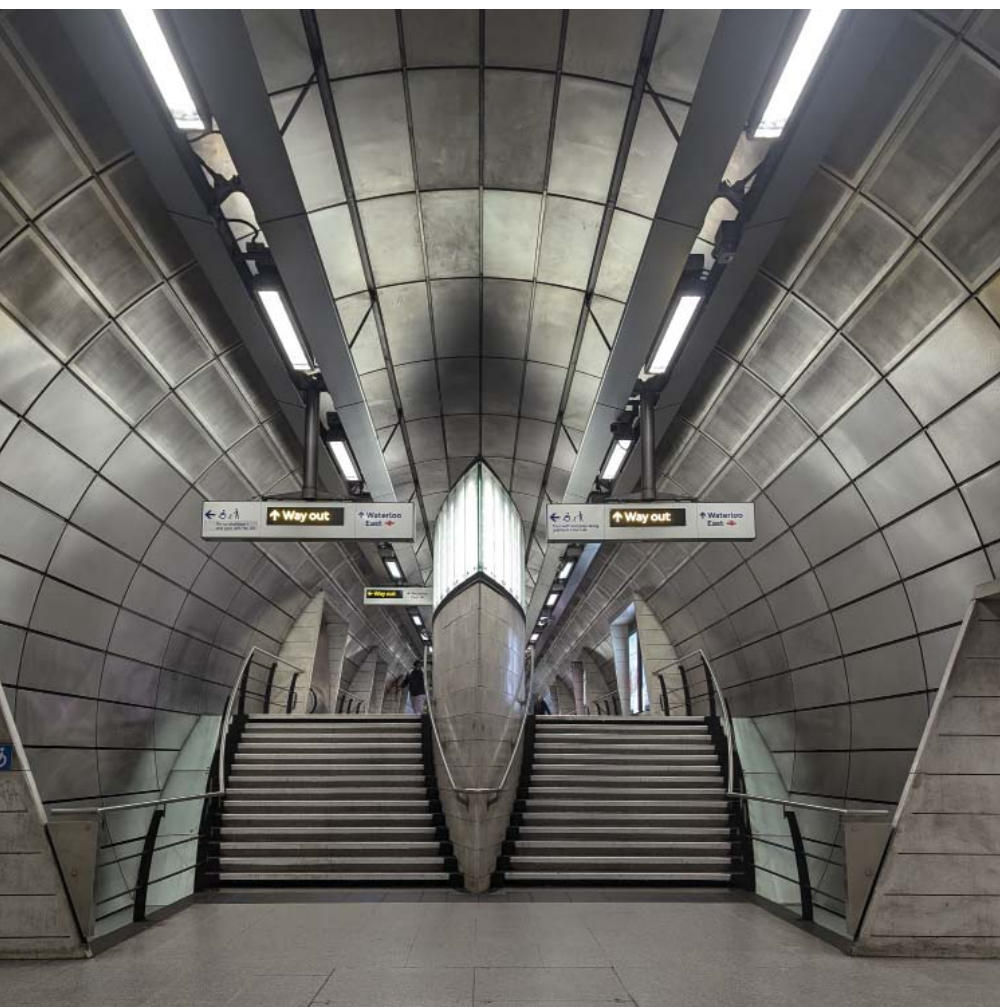
(Bermondsey), Chris Wilkinson (Stratford), and Sir Michael Hopkins (Westminster).

Under Paoletti’s guidance, each station was unique and yet united by a common design philosophy in which the different architectural practices worked in collaboration with an engineering firm.

For Southwark station, Paoletti commissioned architects MacCormac Jamieson Prichard (partner in charge Richard MacCormac). Built between 1994–1999, it is an outstanding example of public architecture. With

*Left: View of the lower concourse at Southwark station, a streamlined and logically planned space. (Credit: SAVE)*

*Below: Canary Wharf station by Foster + Partners. (Credit: Nigel Young)*





its rotunda entrance and striking blue glass wall, it won awards from the Royal Institute of British Architects and The Royal Fine Art Commission.

As described in the *Times* (2nd March 1999) by Marcus Binney, founder and president of SAVE, MacCormac’s logically planned station design unfolds “like an opera in three acts. The entrance to the sunken rotunda ticket hall is like a descent into a whirlpool, with four flights of concentric steps narrowing into two”.

The station as a whole exemplifies construction of the highest quality, with “subtly coloured and highly-polished” concrete finishes and an operatic glass screen designed by artist Alexander Beleschenko inspired by Karl Friedrich Schinkel’s seminal set design for *The Magic Flute*. The curved wall consists of 630 triangular panes of blue glass, secured by stainless-steel spiders to withstand the wind forces generated by the trains in the tunnels.

Alexander Beleschenko and the author of *The Jubilee Line Extension*, Ken Powell, are both supporting the new listing bid for Southwark.

Henrietta Billings, director of SAVE Britain’s Heritage, said: “The Jubilee Line extension is one of the most important and thrilling examples of public transport infrastructure and architecture in Britain. Roland Paoletti commissioned up-and-coming designers as well as established practices, with outstanding unique and creative results for each station that have stood the test of time. Southwark, along with all the extension stations, needs celebration and recognition now and for future generations. We welcome this new listing assessment and urge the Secretary of State to go further and list all 11 stations.”

In 2017, a listing application for Southwark station, put forward by the Twentieth Century Society, was triggered by reports that TfL planned to demolish its concourse as part of a major redevelopment of the site.



Alexander Beleschenko’s spectacular blue-glass wall on Southwark station’s intermediate concourse. Image: MJP Architects as architects for the station (photo: Peter Durant)

Historic England, the government’s advisor on heritage, ultimately turned the station down for listing.

In response to the decision not to list, SAVE coordinated a letter published in the *Times* (31 July 2017) signed by leading architects and architectural historians, including several of the architects involved in the JLE project, calling on the Secretary of State to assess all the modern Jubilee Line extension stations for their architectural and historical significance.

In 2021, new plans for a 17-storey office block above Southwark Tube station were approved by Southwark

council’s planning committee. The plans did not affect the station’s interiors. With works yet to commence, a report in July 2024 to TfL’s Land and Property Committee revealed that the developer Helical recommended the office scheme be redesigned as purpose-built student accommodation and affordable housing. It is currently unknown what impact this new scheme would have on the station building if permitted.

A new recommendation from Historic England and a decision from the Secretary of State on listing for Southwark is expected over the next few months. **S**



# No Time to Die

Boarded up and in a state of collapse, Northwold Manor was not a project for the faint-hearted. This is the story of how a Buildings at Risk cover star was saved. Words and pictures: **Warwick Rodwell**

In 2010 I decided to sell the Regency former vicarage in Somerset that had been home for 35 years and relocate to ancestral East Anglia. Rather than retire, a new challenge and change of

direction was needed, so I relinquished all but one of the archaeological consultancies that I had accrued over the previous half-century (keeping only Westminster Abbey)

and took on a historic building that had no apparent future and was in dire need of a new owner. Fortunately my wife, Diane Gibbs, was supportive of this proposal. We





began perusing lists of “buildings at risk” and casually looking at listed houses on the market in Norfolk and Suffolk.

### Purchasing the Manor House

Eventually a building found us, rather than vice versa. In April 2013 we were sent a newspaper cutting appealing for a new owner to come forward and take on the grade II-listed Manor House at



Northwold, which King’s Lynn Borough Council was about to acquire by compulsory purchase. The council aimed to pass it on to a responsible owner within 28 days of acquiring the property, with a “back-to-back” sale agreement. Diane and I visited Northwold and discovered that the manor house had a 200ft frontage and was prominently situated on the main street, directly opposite the fine grade I medieval parish church.

The brick-built house was of several periods, outwardly 18th and early 19th century, with an older rubble “cottage” wing at the east end, later used as the service range for the main house, and all set in one acre of walled garden. Everything seemed perfect, except the physical condition of the property. It had been uninhabited since 1955,

windows boarded up for the past 40 years, and was used as a store for old furniture and domestic chattels. Every room, from the cellars to the attics, was solidly packed with worthless impedimenta. Much of the interior was physically inaccessible and glimpses by torch-light into the rooms had to suffice. Access was further restricted by collapses of ceilings, floors and one staircase. For decades, rainwater had poured in through the failing roofs and advanced decay was apparent throughout. We were looking at a hopeless case.

The situation in the grounds was no less discouraging. Total collapse of the chalk-built structures forming the east courtyard range had occurred, and the entire garden had disappeared under scrub and self-sown ash, acacia and

## BaR success story!

In 2010 SAVE’s Buildings at Risk catalogue *Live or Let Die* featured the handsome but clearly neglected front doorway of Northwold Manor in Norfolk. A new book, *Northwold Manor Reborn*, tells the story of how it has been saved and sensitively restored in fascinating detail. The book has been written by the saviour of the building himself, Warwick Rodwell, who together with his wife, Diane Gibbs, spent 10 years completing the project.

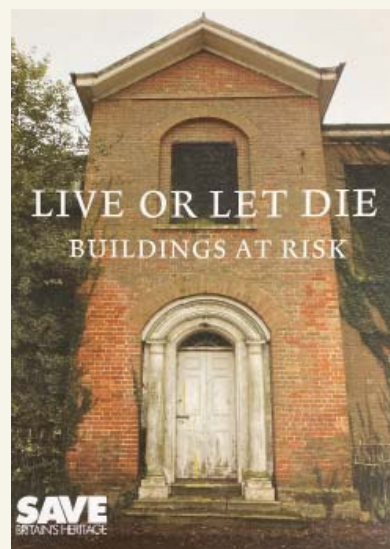
Following the challenges and rewards of such an ambitious restoration, the book describes the process of uncovering just what terrible condition the house was in and how options for approaching the work were weighed up to find solutions for creating a habitable and well-organised home.

The history of the house, the village in which it is located and the families who occupied it are all told. With an incredible range of images recording the process from the very beginning, this is a compelling and personal story.

Now complete, Northwold Manor has become not just a beautifully restored house but one invested with a new and vital spirit.

In this piece written especially for SAVE, Professor Rodwell tells us how he and his wife came to take on this project and how it took shape.

Liz Fuller







*Previous page: Rear elevation and garden post-restoration.*

*Above, from top: West wing, rear, in 2014; Street elevation in 2010; Street elevation in 2020*

sycamore trees, not to mention three wrecked cars, four caravans, timber shacks and a prodigious quantity of scrap metal and building debris. The mantle of vegetation was so dense that no part of the house could be detected on aerial photographs. Inside, the central roof and some of the floors were held up by acrow-props; elsewhere, upper floors were partly supported by the stacks of furniture on to which they had slumped.

Having seen other buildings in a similar state of dereliction I was unfazed by the sorry scene and urged Diane to ignore the debris: look past it and envisage the historic building and its setting as they must once have been. That is what we would aim to reinstate. When confronted with a once-fine, abandoned and decaying historic building, I often wonder how any sane owner could allow this to happen: financially, it is a wasting asset. Elucidating the story of dereliction at the manor house was breathtakingly instructive. In 1956 the property was bought by speculators, who then sold it on to others (four times over). In 1961 a planning application was made to demolish the entire complex and redevelop the site as a housing estate. Mercifully, that did not come to pass.

The house was then bought by the architect who had submitted the demolition proposal; he left it standing empty for years and vandalism set in. In 1971 he transferred ownership to his wife, who began to fill every room with old furniture, purchased locally at auctions. Soon, all the windows were boarded up, no maintenance was undertaken and a major eyesore was created in the heart of the village conservation area. As the house fell deeper into dereliction, the local authority slowly began to take an interest and in 2003 issued a repairs notice, which was ignored. As was the urgent works notice that was served two years later. Ignoring such notices is, of course, a criminal offence, but no



prosecution followed. For the next 10 years the council attempted to negotiate a restoration programme with the owners, and Norfolk Historic Buildings Trust expressed an interest in acquiring the property. But it was all to no avail, and the house simply continued to deteriorate. It was never put on the market. SAVE drew attention to its plight and illustrated the house on the cover of its Buildings at Risk catalogue for 2010–11.

Finally, in 2013, the council sought and obtained a compulsory purchase order and advertised for a buyer who would carry out a sensitive restoration without subdividing the property or building more units of housing in its garden. With these conditions it was of no interest to developers, but it appealed to us. Diane and I were the only bidders. Just as we were about to complete the deal with the council, the owner attempted to get a High Court ruling to overturn the CPO. When the judge threw that out as vexatious, she appealed and secured another hearing, with the same result. Hence we were kept waiting for nearly a year before the purchase could be completed.

### Restoring the manor house sensitively

The elongated plan of the manor house and total lack of bathrooms, lavatories, corridors and other necessary facilities rendered servicing the building extremely difficult. In the early 20th century matchboard partitions had been inserted to subdivide the larger rooms and create passageways. The partitions had all been removed when the house was a furniture store, revealing the historic rooms as they were meant to be. To create workable circulation and provide for servicing, there were only two options: either to compartment the major rooms by reintroducing partitions, or to construct additional accommodation, as necessary. We regarded the first



Entrance hall in 2013 (top) and after restoration (2021)

option as unacceptable: the integrity of the historic spaces had to be respected. In the same spirit, we were determined not to demolish any historic fabric or pierce walls to create new windows or doorways.

About 40% of the complex was either a roofless ruin or had been demolished long ago, and that included the Regency orangery, only two sides of which still stood (being of brick). The obvious solution to augmenting the volume of the property was to

restore the roofless areas and rebuild on the footprint of the demolitions. Thus the orangery was rebuilt as a library, which we needed to house 6,000 of our books. Adding an upper floor provided bathrooms and dressing rooms for the west end of the house. At the east end, similar provision was made by a new addition at the rear, providing a utility room on the ground floor, and bathrooms above. The ruined dairy was reconstructed to create a workable kitchen. The



Aerial view, October 2023. From l-r: East wing and north and east courtyard ranges; link structure; central block; west wing with new additions behind

17th-century game larder had served as a kitchen in the 1950s, but it measured only 3m x 2m. The original kitchen was unworkable in a modern sense because a huge fireplace occupied one side, there were two windows in another, and six doorways in the remaining two sides. It made a good breakfast room.

### The archaeology of the house

When we acquired the manor, nothing was known historically or architecturally about it. In 1951 it was listed as late 18th century, based solely on the street elevation, and Pevsner noted it as “several nice houses around the church, especially one with a shaped gable” (ie the manor house). But it comprises a complex of structures of different dates, the archaeology of which has been thoroughly investigated. From east to west, the street frontage consists of:

(i) Tudor cottage with stone gables and timber-framed side-walls, later modified and courtyard ranges added to the south.

(ii) Link structure in red brick, between the courtyard range and the main house, 1850s; this was the dairy and larder.

(iii) Five-bay symmetrical fronted red brick house, T-shaped in plan, with three shaped gables; the accommodation comprised two main floors, attics and cellars. The brick shell was mid-17th century and originally fitted with mullion-and-transom windows, twice refenestrated with sashes in 1722 and c.1760–70.

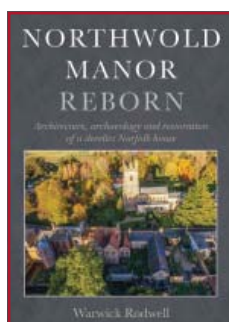
(iv) New entertaining wing built in two stages, 1814. It consists of an imposing entrance tower and staircase hall, opening into a dining room (which periodically served as a ballroom), and beyond that lay the orangery. On the

first floor, above the dining room, was a fine drawing room.

An inventory of the Stuart house, made in 1678, has been discovered. It describes the accommodation on the ground floor as a hall, parlour, kitchen and game-room, with three chambers above and three more in the attic. Excavation indicated that this house superseded one which was timber-framed and had a square stone turret at one corner, presumably the solar stair. The masonry indicates a Tudor date.

Another discovery was an unknown poetic description of the manor in 1858. It provides many clues about the layout of the garden, which correlate with the 1837 title map and 1884 first-edition Ordnance Survey map, demonstrating that when the Regency entertaining wing was erected an impressive axial vista was created from the front door of the house, through the hall and down the full length of the garden, to the southern boundary. We have resurrected this feature and graced it with fountains

The study and restoration of Northwold Manor took 10 years to accomplish. Inevitably the cost far exceeded the saleable value of the property, but that was obvious from the outset. Our mission was to save a historic house that was regarded as a “hopeless” case, restore it sensitively, and end up with the delightful home where we now live. Our efforts have been rewarded by winning two local awards, a commendation by The Georgian Group, and the raising of the listing by Historic England from grade II to II\*. **S**



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Photo: Ayr Railway Station, South Ayrshire

# New power generation

As a celebration of the great Pennine mills is published, its author explores what fuels a successful regeneration. Words and pictures: **Neil Horsley**

Textile mills were the foundation of the industrial revolution and were the backbone of wealth creation in Britain in the mid to late 19th and early 20th centuries. I would argue that mills are as important a part of our national heritage as churches, cathedrals and country houses.

Unfortunately, all too many lie vacant, are semi-derelict or remain under threat of demolition. According to Historic England in 2021 there were 688 vacant or underused mills in Yorkshire and Lancashire which, if re-developed, could create 42,000 homes and 84,000 jobs.

Mills have a vital role to play in the re-use of brownfield sites, thereby reducing pressure for further greenbelt developments. However, for many in the property sector, they are historic relics from a bygone era which are too expensive and difficult to convert to other uses.

Over the last three years I have been working on a project called *Mills Transformed*, documenting the repurposing of derelict textile mills by inspiring people who have found creative new uses for such buildings.

This has involved visiting 33 mills across Yorkshire and Lancashire which have been regenerated and repurposed. There are numerous success stories of how large-scale mills have, against all odds, been renovated to accommodate a wide range of uses such as housing, business workspace, artist studios, galleries, colleges, café restaurants, retail outlets, music venues etc. There is much to learn from these case studies as to how such transformations have been achieved.

It's fascinating to look back at SAVE's report *Satanic Mills: Industrial Architecture in the Pennines* produced back in 1979 which argued for the retention of mill buildings as part of the nation's industrial heritage. SAVE's research found that few if any local authorities had specific planning or economic development policies to safeguard mills. In the case of Oldham, the council's plan in 1977 was to actually demolish around 150 mills releasing 700 acres of development land and to permit only the most modern and fully occupied mills to remain. Ironically over 43 years later Oldham's approach has gone full circle

with Oldham council being one of the few local authorities to have developed a dedicated mills regeneration strategy.

My research for *Mills Transformed* has involved interviews with mill owners, developers and end-users and the book documents their insights into what makes a successful mill renovation. What comes across strongly is that behind every successful scheme are one or two individuals who have enormous vision, tenacity and perseverance while developing whole new skill sets to bring about such renovations. These individuals should be celebrated for their achievements in preserving and repurposing great swathes of our industrial heritage.

Although substantial progress has been made in recognising the heritage value of mills and delivering successful restoration schemes, we are only part way into the process. Considerable work is still required to save and repurpose mills, many of which are close to a state of terminal disrepair.

What is apparent is an increasing divide between cities and towns across northern England due to the influence of localised property markets. Any





vacant mill in or near Manchester city centre will now be acquired and redeveloped by the private sector as a matter of course due to the high end-values, ability to attract investors and strong demand for apartments and commercial space. However in Bolton property values were so low as to make, in the case of the grade II-listed Beehive mill, a conversion scheme unviable, resulting in demolition. Similarly, across the Pennines in Leeds a dynamic property market will drive investment into former mill buildings, whereas there is little developer interest in similar properties in nearby West Yorkshire towns.

The question is therefore how to kick-start a second wave of mill regeneration where there is market failure and little if any interest from the private sector. Is there anything that can be done and if so who should lead? I would argue that ultimately leadership has to come from the local authorities within whose boundaries vacant mills stand. Local authorities have an electoral mandate, are closer to the ground, understand the challenges better and have leverage as the planning authority. If they do not take on this role it is difficult to see who will.

At a time when local authority

budgets have been slashed to the bone it is very easy for a mindset to prevail that nothing much can be done as councils do not have the finances needed to initiate major mill regeneration projects. However, the public sector's ability to support mill schemes will vary over time according to the availability or otherwise of financial resources.

The level of potential support for a mill development can be regarded as an incremental ladder of engagement ranging from low to high interventions. These could include a local authority:

- Assuming a general championing role talking up the importance of retaining and repurposing mills.
- Engaging positively with and supporting individual mill schemes and their proponents.
- Partnering with Historic England to commission an audit of mills at risk within the council's boundaries and establishing priority projects with wider benefits.
- Appointing a dedicated project manager within the council to co-ordinate cross-department working.
- Undertaking safeguarding measures to secure mills that are subject to vandalism.

- Developing specific project proposals ready for when government funding schemes become available. This could include bids for gap funding to enable a scheme to achieve viability.
- Designing a range of mill neighbourhood area environmental improvement measures.
- Giving proactive and creative support through the planning system for individual schemes, together with wider policy measures to safeguard mills.
- Supporting schemes via flexibility over social housing and developer infrastructure contribution requests.
- Protecting mills using measures such as the designation of conservation areas as has been pioneered by Leeds City Council.
- Becoming a partner in a joint venture with a private-sector partner in a mill development scheme.

The list goes on. Mills can be given new life to provide homes and jobs but it needs the energy, vision and long-term commitment of many public organisations especially local authorities.

*Left: Salt's Mill, Saltaire.*

*Below: Old Town Mill, near Hebden Bridge. Overleaf: Corporation Mill, Sowerby Bridge*









## Full steam ahead: Stories of success

### Sunny Bank Mills, Leeds

Sunny Bank Mills in Farsley was founded in 1829 by a group of local weavers and grew to be one of the world’s most important fine worsted mills. By the 20th century, the mill was one of Leeds’s premier worsted spinners and weavers employing up to 900 local people.

The manufacture of worsted cloth ended in 2008, leading to its closure. Two years later William and John Gaunt (pictured), sixth-generation family owners, began renovating the mill complex to create local employment while preserving the site’s industrial heritage. A masterplanning framework was developed to repurpose the mill buildings in order to create office, specialist retail, gallery, workshop spaces, café, bar, archive facilities and artist studios.

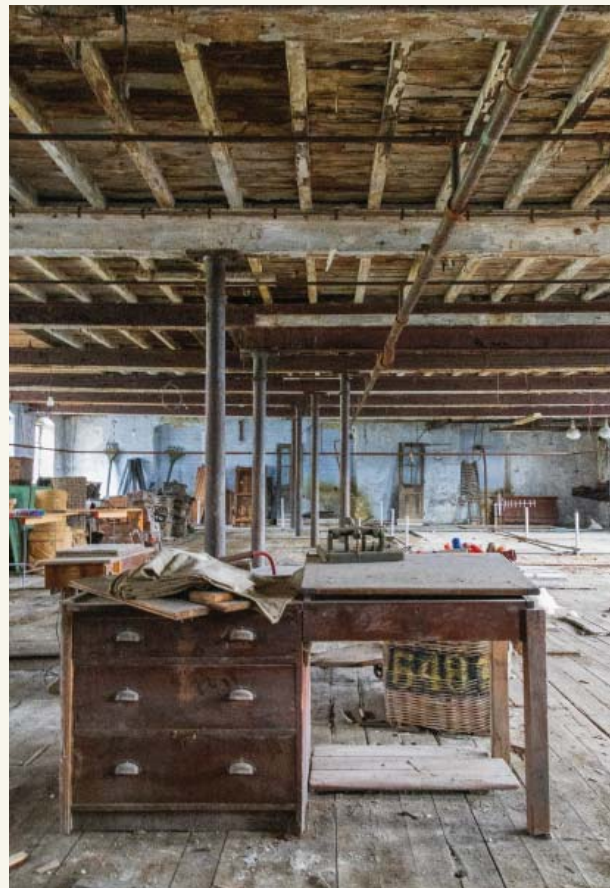
The Gaunts’ original vision for Sunny Bank Mills has been adhered to with a focus on renovating individual buildings, creating commercial space, and recruiting tenants, which in turn generates income enabling the redevelopment of other mill buildings and parts of the site. Selective demolition of buildings with little or no architectural or historic value has taken place to

create space for new developments and improved access and car parking. The cornerstones of the mills’ development has been its focus on cultural regeneration.



Sunny Bank Mills has built up a critical mass of over 100 business tenants and is now the single largest creative industries hub in the Leeds conurbation, attracting 500,000 annual visitors to the complex. The scheme has been self-financing, with over £4m re-invested in the mill site since 2010. No public grants have been received for capital works. The mill has been featured on national television, as the location for the filming of *The Great British Sewing Bee*, while according to local property agents its regeneration has led to increasing demand for residential properties in Farsley village.

According to John Gaunt: “Our regeneration of Sunny Bank Mills is rooted in the community and heritage of Yorkshire’s wool industry. I love the energy, skills and passion that so many people bring to the mills.”





## Gibson Mill, Hebden Bridge

Gibson Mill was built in 1803 by Abraham Gibson and is situated within Hardcastle Crag woodland near to Hebden Bridge in West Yorkshire.

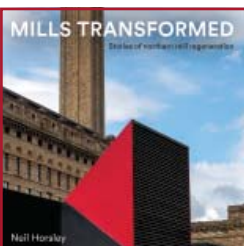
In 1902 Gibson Mill was transformed into an “emporium” offering a dance hall, dining room and boating on the mill pond. After the Second World War, a roller skating rink was installed in the weaving shed. The mill slipped into decline until in 1950 Lord Saville gifted the mill and 214 acres of land to the National Trust.

Gibson Mill has since been converted by the National Trust into a self-sufficient off-grid environmental education visitor centre and sustainability showcase. Electricity is provided via a hydro system using the mill’s 1926 turbine. A smaller turbine is also used during periods when water levels are low. Solar thermal panels and solar photovoltaic panels, installed along the ridgeline of the mill, combine to provide hot water and electricity, while a system of batteries stores surplus generated electricity.



A log-burning stove and boiler provide cooking, hot water and space heating. The mill also uses the natural spring water from Hardcastle Crag as its water supply.

According to the National Trust: “The mill is 100% self-sufficient in energy, water and waste treatment. The combination of technologies used, the size of the building and the fact that it does not link up to the National Grid, make the mill unique in Great Britain.” **S**



*Mills Transformed* is published in December 2024, priced £25. It will be accompanied by a photographic exhibition at Bradford Industrial Museum. For the latest information and to support the project visit [mills-transformed.com](https://mills-transformed.com). A limited number of signed copies of *Mills Transformed* is available directly from the publisher, at £25 inc P&P within the UK (overseas carriage charged at cost). For details of how to pay by card or bank transfer, contact [john@johnhudsonpublishing.com](mailto:john@johnhudsonpublishing.com), or post a cheque for £25 to 22 Stratford Grove, London SW15 1NU.



# 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.

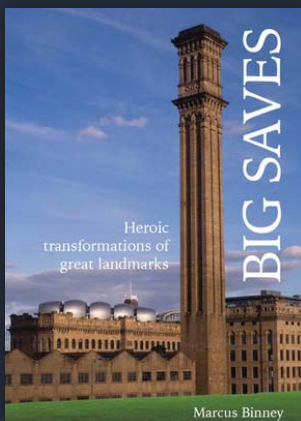
This report focuses on three areas – central Manchester, Rochdale and Oldham – showcasing many fine but vulnerable buildings and examining how Greater Manchester can build the future without destroying its past.

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## CANTERBURY TAKE CARE!

This collection of essays by several leading authors explores the architectural history of one of the most important historic cities in England, from the Anglo-Saxon period through to the controversial post-war redevelopment of the city. Published September 2021.

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## BIG SAVES

Big Saves is a showcase of how Britain has led the way in breathing new life into great historic buildings, from naval dockyards to textile mills, grand hotels to hospitals, town halls to power stations, and many more.

These are buildings which half a century ago would rarely have survived. Their revival is a creative process showing that all over Britain and beyond, historic buildings can be beacons of new life in both booming and declining economies.

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**SAVE**  
BRITAIN'S HERITAGE

# Who will fight for Scotland's disappearing heritage?

We must close the legal loophole that allows the unnecessary demolition of Scotland's listed buildings, writes Glasgow MSP **Paul Sweeney**

Glasgow's architectural heritage has suffered several serious blows in recent months.

A deliberate fire – the second in the space of nine months – destroyed the roof of the category B-listed former Prince and Princess of Wales Hospice building on Carlton Place in August.

In the same week, a dangerous building notice was served on the former ABC cinema, ordering the demolition of the familiar facade that has stood defiantly on Sauchiehall

Street since the much-loved 148-year-old venue was gutted by the second Glasgow School of Art fire in June 2018.

As chronicled in the late Frank Worsdall's powerful 1981 work, *The City That Disappeared*, Glasgow has an ignominious track record of needlessly destroying its architecture – but it does not need to be this way. It is not only demoralising for Glaswegians who love their city's heritage, but it's also incredibly wasteful. It is a perpetual

war of attrition that continues with the same perniciousness four decades on.

Carlton Place is one of Scotland's best examples of a Georgian terrace, a beacon of the Scottish Enlightenment and a gateway to the city's south side designed by Peter Nicholson in 1802 as part of John Laurie's new town. In Edinburgh, it would be a highly desirable street with full occupancy; in Glasgow, it is largely derelict and dilapidated with weeds sprouting from gaps in the stonework.

Infuriatingly, when I ask Glasgow City Council officers what more they are going to do to stop listed buildings rotting away to the point of collapse, they say that it is the responsibility of the building's owners.

The council should be much more proactive in using its statutory planning powers, such as urgent works notices and listed building repair notices, to prevent further decline rather than just mopping up the mess once buildings have collapsed.

The ongoing demolition of the category C-listed India Buildings drapery warehouse – also in Laurieston – after a roof collapse in April has cost the council around £1m, while displacing dozens of residents in the neighbouring building who have been made homeless for seven months now. The absentee landlord that caused this disruption faces no penalty for their negligence.

The council could have proactively tackled the owner by serving a listed



*Demolition of the C-listed India Buildings has cost £1m (Image courtesy of Paul Sweeney)*





Fire severely damaged the roof of the B-listed former Prince and Princess of Wales Hospice. (Image courtesy of Paul Sweeney)

building repairs notice, and if that had not been successful in forcing the owner to carry out the required maintenance work within two months, a compulsory purchase order could then have been served and the property transferred to the local New Gorbals Housing Association for conversion into flats.

The council does seem to be more trigger-happy in serving dangerous buildings notices, however.

No sooner had a planning application for purpose-built student accommodation been submitted for the former ABC venue in July, than the council bypassed the normal process for demolition of a listed building by ordering the total demolition of the historic venue's façade.

The original building plan in the Mitchell Library highlights that the monumental entrance portico that was built in 1929 by Charles McNair is solid concrete with a cast-iron glazing screen by Walter Macfarlane & Co's Saracen Foundry, the same as Selfridge's in London. I asked one of Scotland's top conservation-accredited structural engineers to inspect drone footage of the building and he is of the view that it remains structurally sound, with heavy roof plant still sitting intact

more than six years after the fire. The portico is a much-loved landmark and it should be retained as part of any new development.

Historic Environment Scotland agrees, stating: "Retaining the portico does not appear to be incompatible with the proposals for deconstructing the rest of the building... the portico should, therefore, be retained unless it can be demonstrated that it too is not capable of being propped and repaired."

No compelling structural engineering evidence has been presented by the developer or the council that demolishing this grand old art deco icon of Sauchiehall Street is necessary, but that has not deterred them from enabling its destruction to facilitate a new-build development.

It is unacceptable that planning authorities can exploit dangerous building notices under section 30 of the Building (Scotland) Act 2003 to fully demolish listed buildings without first presenting evidence from conservation-accredited structural engineers to demonstrate that there is no alternative to demolition. That's why I have teamed up with SAVE Britain's Heritage to launch a parliamentary petition calling on the

Scottish Government to close this legislative loophole and bolster safeguards for threatened listed buildings (see p6). It will have its initial hearing by the Public Petitions Committee by the end of the year.

Our architectural heritage is precious and, for the listing process to have the weight it should have, a demolition should only be a last resort once every avenue to save the building has been exhausted. That is why this parliamentary petition is so important. **S**



Architect's drawing of the ABC cinema. (Image courtesy of Paul Sweeney)

# How a community got its first class station back on track

Architect **Benedict O’Looney** recounts the determination, imagination and collaboration behind the ongoing project to restore Peckham Rye Station

When I moved to Peckham in the late 1990s most of the once grand Victorian station at Peckham Rye was bricked or boarded up.

The station’s users were confined to the booking hall and stairs up to the four platforms. The side wings and lofty upstairs rooms of this statuesque “Second Empire” station were shut up, invisible to the public.

In 2005, along with energised locals from Peckham Vision and the Peckham Society, we decided to do something about this. With the support and encouragement of the local authority we campaigned to get Peckham Rye grade II listed and then set about a series of physical improvements, first revealing the building’s striking “lost” interiors and

more recently leading the restoration of its wonderful High Victorian façades and roof, winning a National Railway Heritage Award in 2023.

The community’s focus on its revival is natural: it is one of the finest historic buildings in Peckham and a significant south London transport hub served by four railway lines.

Our advocacy for its restoration was part of a wider campaign to create a conservation area in Peckham town centre, driven by a determination to turn a corner on decades of loss and degradation of Peckham’s architectural and social heritage.

Aided, even compelled, by a wonderfully researched and illustrated historic area assessment from Historic England, Southwark council

designated a conservation area for Rye Lane and Peckham High Street giving a measure of protection to a wonderful collection of mostly commercial buildings, ranging from early 18th-century timber-framed cottages and shops to grand Victorian and Inter-war department stores. With six department stores and other noteworthy shops, Peckham was once the “golden mile” of shopping in south London.

By 2011, when the conservation area was designated, our work restoring the station was well underway. We had unbricked the windows of the immense Old Waiting Room and both wings, closed-up and disused since the time of the government’s Beching Cuts in the 1960s.

The Old Waiting Room is more than 2,000sq ft, with a tall vaulted roof. One of the reasons we think it is so large is that Peckham Rye was one of the junction stations for visitors to the Crystal Palace nearby on Sydenham Hill, in which the directors of the London Brighton and South Coast Railway (LB&SCR) were heavily invested.

## A serious talent

The architect of Peckham Rye Station, Charles Henry Driver FRIBA (1832–1900) was a serious talent and the LB&SCR were fortunate to have him. Driver began his career as a railway architect working for the Midland

*Peckham Rye Station’s grand elevation facing Rye Lane returned to its original 1865 appearance, with its façades and roof restored. The Suffolk White bricks have been cleaned and re-pointed; the lost iron roof cresting re-cast in Essex; and the Victorian ‘patent’ roof tiles re-made in Hull. (Credit: Paul Childs/The Railway Heritage Trust)*





Railway, designing Kettering and Wellingborough stations, with their flamboyant cast iron canopies and Teulon-esque polychrome brick detailing. By the mid-1860s, Driver was chief architect of the LB&SCR for whom he developed an immediately recognisable, high-keyed, house style deployed with vigour across the expanding network.

Like Wren's City churches, each of CH Driver's railway stations is unique, meeting diverse settings in town and country. Driver used bold, almost Michelangelesque, masonry detailing with a fusion of Gothic and Classical ornament typical of advanced architects in the 1860s and 70s.

Add to this mix a fearless embrace of polychrome brickwork, the result was an exciting and eye-catching architectural identity for the LB&SCR. (Find this today at Portsmouth & Southsea, Leatherhead, Battersea Park, Denmark Hill and other stations.)

In these same years, Driver was bringing architectural chutzpah to London's Metropolitan Board of Works designing the Abbey Mills and Crossness sewage pumping stations for Joseph Bazalgette along with much of the architectural detailing of the board's Thames Embankment.

## Faded time capsule

With the derelict interiors of the north and south wings now revealed, the interior restoration of the internal spaces was initiated.

The north wing, unused for a decade, was last a betting shop, partly carved out of the original booking hall in 1962. Now blocked by the shop, the Art Deco former station loos were moth-balled. Re-entering them, a faded time capsule of mid-century interiors was revealed by our torches (with some remarkable graffiti). All designed and built by the stylish Southern Railway architects in 1935. We found and restored a fabulous Jesse Rust glass mosaic floor. We were also

able to re-use much of the remarkable period sanitaryware and joinery, retaining the original paint finishes where possible. Following this work the north wing has become popular local refreshment rooms.

Our project on the south was equally filled with challenges and discoveries. First we found a lost stone and cast-iron stair, peering down through the partially collapsed floor of the former platform master's office. Seriously exciting. Driver was one of Victorian Britain's leading designers in cast iron. We were astonished to find his florid, Art Nouveau-like cast iron balusters on a stone, cantilevered stair.

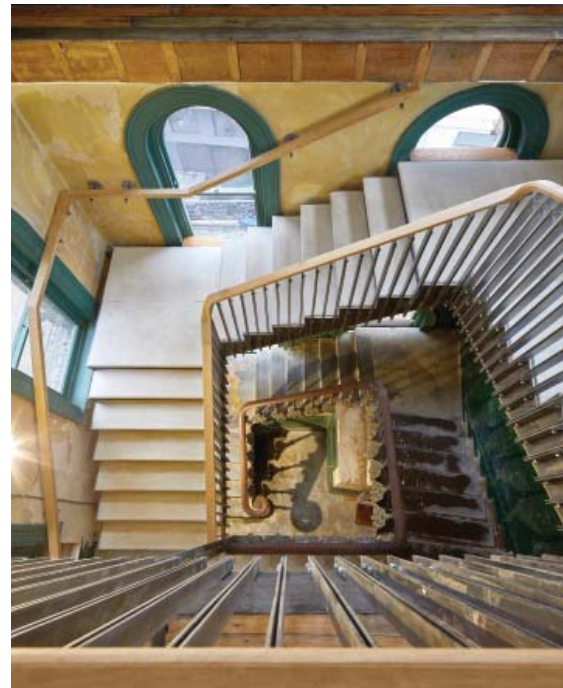
Bringing this stair up an extra storey to meet the Old Waiting Room was key to our objective of opening up the vaulted hall for public use, without going through the station gateline.

## Gilding the crest

Our most recent project was a joy to be involved in. Network Rail decided to address the station's long leaking roof. With the significant cost of the scaffold, and with generous support from the Railway Heritage Trust, they embarked on a comprehensive restoration of the roof and facades guided by a carefully researched listed building application we produced almost a decade before.

Lost stone detailing was re-made. The Suffolk White brick façade was cleaned and repointed, more than 40 windows and doors were refurbished, the lost Taylor's Patent roof tiles were remade. To top it all, the lost iron roof cresting, a characteristic CH Driver detail, was re-cast at the AATI foundry in Essex. The Heritage of London Trust co-funded the iron cresting, allowing us to get Network Rail behind the gilding of the foliate elements.

Southwark council is in the process of demolishing the 1930s shopping arcade in front of the station which will reveal its grand Victorian façade to Rye Lane and the new station square.



*The existing cantilevered stair was extended up a floor (Credit: Edmund Sumner)*

The restored elevations are radiant.

Local talent has staged plays, films and concerts in the Old Waiting Room. Its rebirth as a public venue for Peckham was spectacularly marked by the American artist Sarah Sze's installation *Metronome*, presented by Artangel, which attracted 40,000 visitors last summer. We hope the Old Waiting Room will become a lively cultural venue for the community.

As Britain's busiest junction station without lifts, an exciting new scheme has recently obtained listed building consent to create a new western entrance to the station, adding lifts to all platforms and generous new stairs. A glass atrium will gently enclose upon the station's west façade. The story of improving this magnificent local landmark – the work of many excellent collaborators – continues. **S**

Read more about the station restoration project and much more in a richly illustrated new book, *Peckham Heritage*, co-authored by Benedict O'Looney: <https://peckhamheritage.org.uk/buy-our-book/>



# Fount of creativity

Everyone's a winner when we repurpose buildings. Here **Ben Stephenson** considers cathedrals of consumerism. Overleaf we look at everything from car parks to churches and consider the creative dividend of reuse

Understanding how to reuse former department stores across the UK is a challenge for our times. As high streets undergo a period of unprecedented transformation, those of us who occupy our time in helping direct and predict this transformation talk about little else. It's not just a question of

typology. There is no simple answer to the question of how to repurpose department stores that we can apply from place to place. In doing so, we would be making the same mistake as in the 1990s when the answer to our changing requirement was out-of-town shopping centres.

If there is one constant in this debate, it has to be that context is everything. What we do with our high streets, old department stores included, must reflect the needs and desires of the people who live and work there. They must respond to new problems – some of which of course

## Recycling historic buildings is inspiring architects, rejuvenating communities – and shaking up the big awards

When the Landmark Trust's daring conversion of Astley Castle, a 12th-century fortified manor house in Warwickshire, was awarded the UK's most prestigious prize for contemporary architecture in 2013 it caused a stir.

In the decade since the RIBA first awarded its **Stirling Prize** to a retrofit project, 40% of the winners have involved recycling buildings (including a pier in 2017). This year's shortlist was a record breaker, with four of the six involving historic buildings (though the winner was the Elizabeth Line). The finalists included:

- The decades-long transformation of King's Cross's scarred railway lands, where the retention of 20 original buildings has been central to its success;
- The latest stage of the restoration of Sheffield's iconic 1950s Park Hill estate (see interview overleaf);
- The refurbishment and reconfiguring of London's National Portrait Gallery;
- The repair and conversion of a dilapidated Dorset dairy farm into accessible holiday accommodation.

It's not just the Stirling bringing retrofit into the mainstream. All



*The Apartment Store idea for converting Taunton's old Debenhams into housing won the 2024 Davidson Prize. Credit: Studio Saar, Landstory, Stories, BAS and Megaphone Creative*

the industry magazines now have retrofit awards.

This year's £10,000 **Davidson Prize** for innovation was given to a team of architects, developers and filmmakers for their visionary Apartment Store idea which "applies a defibrillator to the heart of the UK's towns". Using Taunton's vacant mid-century Debenhams as a model, and inspired by SAVE's 2022 *Departing Stores* report, they showed how disused department stores could be converted into housing and a "circular economy" hub – with lessons for high streets everywhere. (See main piece.)

It is a proposal very much in tune with SAVE's campaign to save M&S

Oxford Street, and with the aims of our own ideas competition, re:store, run with the *Architects' Journal*.

Amandeep Singh Kalra, chair of the Davidson jury, said: "It is no secret that the built environment accounts for nearly 40% of global carbon emissions and although the industry is waking up to this, more still needs to be done... Although choosing the winner was tough, we felt Apartment Store would not only provide new, sustainable homes but also address the challenge that high streets throughout the UK are facing, turning them back into thriving hubs for the community. The jury could all see themselves living there."





*Park Hill dominates Sheffield – seen here from the railway station. Credit: Tim Crocker*

are widespread – but with local approaches. If high streets aren't just about shopping any more, then we can press them into service addressing the housing shortage, social isolation, health inequality, climate adaptation and the undervalued cultural sector. We just have to do this with local talent, local ownership and local support.

The Davidson Prize-winning proposal for the beautiful former Debenhams in Taunton is one such approach. It takes as its first principle the need to treat development as a local asset. Upper floors provide a range of residential units, from affordable “pocket”-style housing aimed at Taunton's young, locked out of the housing market, to larger flats as people upsize. As they retire, they can downsize again and never have to move out of the building. Flats are coupled with uses on the roof – food-growing space, maker space, social space – and at the ground floor – services to support interaction like laundry, dining and workshops.

The ground floor also needs to bring

something new to the town: in our case, a circular economy hub that means residents of the building and the town can borrow tools and upgrade their own living spaces by swapping skills, including local craft and building skills. Items made or grown on site can be sold in surrounding shops. The space becomes semi-permeable, representing a new layer of social infrastructure and governance for the town. Although speculative, the concept was informed by talking to people about their dreams for a future Taunton and creates a concept that local people lead and, it is hoped, eventually own in the form of a community trust.

The former Marks & Spencer in Bristol's Horsefair has in the past couple of years trailblazed this local approach to repurposing. A partnership between the Global Goals Centre and Art Space Life Space, Sparks ([sparksbristol.co.uk](http://sparksbristol.co.uk)) has transformed from a four-floor behemoth into an experience-led centre of sustainability, social connection, innovation, reuse and

**“If high streets aren't just about shopping any more, we can press them into service to address other needs”**

debate that is now serving as a destination, supporting rather than detracting from footfall in the city centre.

The space, which is cleverly divided into “departments”, holds events, repair workshops, fashion and furniture sales, food and education uses and is a hive of activity. Having secured an extension on the lease, even as Marks & Spencer has announced it will be returning to a different property in Bristol city centre next year, it will serve as a draw for, hopefully, years to come.

Another example: the former Debenhams in Gloucester is being transformed into a campus and lecture theatres for the local university, showing that we should think innovatively about our old buildings to bring them back into use in a way that solves local challenges. In conversion terms, deep floorplates are an obstacle to many, but an opportunity for an increasing number of others.

To enable this sort of thinking, though, there are real issues to address around the release of empty property, often from remote pension and investment funds that are motivated more by the value of a property on paper than by the state of our town centres. These systemic issues require concerted effort at government level to unpick, but it is imperative to do so if we are to have the tools we need to steward change in our places. **S**

*Ben Stephenson is director of BAS Placemaking Consultancy, part of the team that won the 2024 Davidson Prize along with: Studio Saar, Landstory, Stories and Megaphone Creative*

# Home truths

The decades-long reinvention of Sheffield's Park Hill estate shows that buildings we would once have written off can be reborn. **Elizabeth Hopkirk** talks to architect Annalie Riches

It's a good pub quiz question: what is Europe's largest listed structure? You're probably thinking it's a royal palace, a medieval castle or maybe a bridge. You'd be wrong on all counts. And yet the answer is a little bit of all those things.

It's Park Hill, the late 1950s social housing estate that stands on one of Sheffield's seven hills, commanding views across the city. A citadel of

concrete, its 1,000 homes (palaces to the residents who moved there from the slums) are contained in four huge twisting blocks linked by bridges and characterised by "streets in the sky" – access decks famously wide enough to accommodate a milk float.

It was one of four megastructure estates built by Sheffield around the same time. The Kelvin, Hyde Park and Broomhall estates were all but

demolished by the end of the 20th century after falling into decline. Park Hill would have gone the same way if it hadn't been listed at grade II\* by English Heritage in 1998. The council then sold the entire estate for £1 to Manchester-based developers Urban Splash who slowly set about its creative regeneration.

Twenty years later and they're still going. It's been a tough journey but, ultimately, remarkably successful: both the first and second phases were shortlisted for the Stirling Prize. People now queue up for the chance to live in what was, for years, demonised as a sink estate. A hit musical has even been written about the place, *Standing at the Sky's Edge*.

Given all this, is Park Hill the poster child that can inspire other big social housing estates to be retrofitted rather than razed? SAVE spoke to Annalie Riches, founding director of Mikhail Riches, the architecture practice behind the latest phase of work at Park Hill.

## Moving on from the wrecking ball

For the last half-century, since the televised demolition of the vast, failed Pruitt-Igoe public housing scheme in St Louis, Missouri less than 20 years after it opened – an event famously branded "the day modern architecture died" by critic Charles Jencks – the wrecking ball has been the preferred solution for problematic council estates everywhere.

We now know this is hugely wasteful in carbon terms and so the challenge is on to find ways of

*Park Hill, Sheffield after Mikhail Riches' redevelopment (Credit: Tim Crocker)*





retaining and upgrading existing estates when they reach the end of the road.

Historic England’s recently published *Heritage Works for Housing* report makes the case for using historic buildings to tackle the housing crisis, saying it can “act as a catalyst for positive change, place-based regeneration and an opportunity to foster civic pride.”

That people want to live in historic buildings is confirmed by Tim Heatley, co-founder of Manchester-based developer, Capital & Centric, whose Crusader Mill flats were praised in SAVE’s *Boom Not Bust* report and which is even turning car parks into housing. He says: “When we have conversion and new-build projects side by side, we see the conversion enquiries outnumber the new building enquiries by a factor of four.”

**‘The carbon argument is becoming much stronger...’**

“Making the Stirling shortlist was amazing,” says Riches. “Showing that buildings of this era can be saved is important so it’s brilliant that Park

Hill is getting this level of interest.”

Riches is convinced that a retrofit-first approach has become essential. “It should be the automatic first thing you look at now,” she says. “The carbon argument for saving buildings like Park Hill is becoming much stronger. You should have to justify why you are not able to.”

What are the barriers to reusing council estates – or indeed converting other large-scale buildings into homes? Number one is VAT. Retrofit projects are taxed at the full 20%, while new-builds are zero-rated. Equalising VAT would be a no-brainer, she says.

There is also an image problem: it’s much easier to generate excitement (positive and negative) with glossy pictures of a striking new design than with a refurb where the moves are subtler though no less skilful.

Riches feels there’s a perception among her profession that these are not very interesting jobs. “We might have to let go of our preconceptions of what makes a great building,” she says. “We need some more exemplar projects to show this can be really exciting. Maybe the mindset is

changing but I don’t think we’ve got there yet.”

Park Hill is a great start, demonstrating that even the toughest buildings can be reinvented.

**‘We really fought to keep the bricks’**

One of the most eye-catching elements of the first phase of Park Hill’s redevelopment (2007–2011, Hawkins\Brown and Studio Egret West) was the replacement of the brick façade panels with colourful anodised aluminium. Their hue lightens as they climb the building, like the original brick panels but in much brighter tones: burnt orange, Sicilian lemon, lime green.

When Mikhail Riches proposed retaining the brick panels on phase 2 their client – and even Historic England – took some persuading. “We really fought to keep the bricks,” says Riches. “It was very controversial because they were really dirty and did look bad.” Her team held their nerve and she remembers her relief when the scaffolding came down.

It wasn’t the only nerve-wracking moment. “It’s been such a difficult

*The cast of Standing at the Sky’s Edge in the West End. (Credit: Brinkhoff-Moegenburg. Featuring the ‘I Love You Bridge’, copyright 2001 Jason Lowe)*





project,” she recalls. “It was built during covid, the materials got stuck in the Suez Canal. There seemed to be a problem every week!”

The flats’ thermal performance was also a massive challenge. The concrete frame, while structurally sound, acts as a massive “cold bridge”, leaking heat. Mikhail Riches commissioned a specialist 3D model and discovered every room – indeed every surface and corner – needed bespoke insulation to tackle heat loss, condensation and noise transfer (original residents were reportedly driven mad by the sound of hobnail boots).

“It’s not possible to make Park Hill Passivhaus [ultra-low energy, like Mikhail Riches’ Goldsmith Street housing in Norwich] within the fabric because you don’t have enough floor-to-ceiling height, but we have certainly made a massive improvement,” she explains.

While most of the work is invisible, they had a bit of fun insulating the concrete reveals. Viewed face-on, the block’s muted brick palette is all you see, but tilt your head and splashes of blue, green and lavender become visible, a nod to its jazzy neighbour.

The principle of reuse is becoming a guiding influence for Mikhail Riches. They recently won a competition to



*The Sainsbury's site in Wolverhampton, empty since 2014. When the store was built in 1988 the derelict grade II-listed former St George's Church was incorporated as office space – an early example of retrofit that brought a civic landmark back into use. Credit: Capital & Centric*

design a new neighbourhood on the five-acre brownfield St George's site in the centre of Wolverhampton for Capital & Centric.

Mikhail Riches was the only team to propose retaining an unpromising derelict supermarket. It was a move that impressed the judges. Their vision had the edge, said jury chair Angela Brady, a former RIBA president, “particularly with its retrofitting of the Sainsbury's in such an imaginative way”.

“It’s the kind of building you wouldn’t look at twice,” admits Riches.

“To be honest, my automatic thought was, ‘the supermarket’s got to go!’ . But we started looking at it in detail and realised it would make great homes because the structural grid works really well. It can support a lot of load so we can build three more floors on top. You end up with these great double-height spaces and really fun cool homes in an old Sainsbury's. The idea that the most mundane kind of building can become great homes really excites me.” **S**

*Developer Capital & Centric has submitted plans to turn a 1960s car park in Newcastle-under-Lyme into 114 dual-aspect flats and communal facilities. Credit: Shedkm architects*





# It's going to be a very creative time for architects

The emerging generation are embracing the concept of working with existing buildings, Chris Williamson tells **Elizabeth Hopkirk**

The next president of the RIBA is feeling optimistic. Chris Williamson has been touring the architecture school degree shows, traditionally showcases of outlandish new designs – not infrequently on the Moon. This year he was struck by how many students are embracing pragmatic ideas like reuse and focusing their projects on existing buildings.

“There’s a lot more emphasis on conservation projects and an excitement about the future,” he reports. “My generation wanted to change the world; this one wants to work with what’s here. When Neil Armstrong walked on the Moon we were profoundly affected and thought technology was the answer to everything. Now we’re not so sure. There’s a great sensibility in graduates now about craft and reuse.”

Williamson has been president-elect since September. Current president Muyiwa Oki told SAVE last winter: “We can’t build our way out of the climate crisis” – and Williamson says that won’t change when he takes over.

“Climate change is the number one priority and repurposing existing stock is going to be a major theme,” he says. “Obviously we are still going to build from scratch but there’s certainly a movement to conserve as much as possible and to avoid demolition. It will be a very creative time for architects with that agenda,” he predicts.

It was a shared interest in sustainability that led him and Andrew Weston to found Weston Williamson in 1985, a practice specialising in public transport projects. While he is no sentimentalist he is mindful of past errors: “I am still reeling from the 1960s when we made the most horrendous mistakes with urban design and

architectural philosophy, so I think it’s better to err on the side of caution.”

He mentions the Mappin & Webb building at Bank in the City of London (an infamous 1994 demolition opposed by SAVE) and believes Lord Palumbo would never today be allowed to demolish so many buildings in a historic context – not least for environmental reasons. “These days it would be a non-starter.”

## Level playing field

Williamson supports policy reform to promote sustainable choices. “Architects and developers I know do

want to do the right thing,” he says. “We need legislation to say what we can and can’t do.”

He also questions existing industry accreditation. “It amazes me that a building like 22 Bishopsgate, the tallest in the City of London, all steel and glass, can be rated green excellent. It can’t be sensible to build skyscrapers with that amount of glazing. I did a Breeam assessment course [the UK’s green building accreditation] to find out how it worked. If you have 2,000 cycle storage spaces you get points, even if they’re not used. The tools are very blunt.” **S**

## Putting his money where his mouth is

Williamson has recently completed his own retrofit project, converting a former Methodist church into a community arts centre, Ilkon, in Ilkeston, Derbyshire. He was spurred into action by a local newspaper headline describing his “idyllic” home town as a “crack town” after steel, coal and Raleigh bikes left.

“The church had been derelict for seven years and no one wanted it, but it’s a fantastic space and a lovely old building. It’s what we ought to be doing.”

Located on key train lines, he hopes it might become a hub, attracting young artists and students priced out of cities.

“It only takes one or two people to help rejuvenate a place – people like Urban Splash whose projects include Park Hill and Lister Mills,” he says. “You can do some fantastic things with these buildings. We just have to be more creative.”

He praises the redevelopment of King’s Cross, shortlisted for this year’s Stirling Prize, where the blend of old and new is “what makes it a beautiful place”, and is encouraged that one of its key visionaries was head-hunted for Canada Water, a vast £5.6bn regeneration project in south-east London.



# Stop press! Reusing historic buildings boosts creative economy

The heritage sector directly contributes more than £15bn a year to the economy. Its indirect impact is even greater. New research from Historic England shows how old buildings are a catalyst for creativity. HE analytics director **Andy Brown** reports

**Investing in our cultural past can boost a town's faltering economy**  
“Out with the old, in with the new” is a well-worn phrase still applied to many situations. But what if the “new” actually depended on *keeping* the “old” rather than discarding it? What if the “old” was respected as a continuous wellspring of ideas that drove innovation? Then “out with the old” would be a short-sighted action we’d soon all regret.

At Historic England we recently set out to investigate whether such a connection could be made between “the old”, in the form of historic buildings and places, and “the new” in the form of innovations which are key to growing the UK economy. To do this, we commissioned Professor Silvia Cerisola from the Polytechnic University of Milan to apply to England the techniques she had been developing for the Italian economy.

The result is our recently published report, *Cultural Heritage, Creativity and the Creative Economy*, which demonstrates that there is a link between historic places and increased creativity and economic activity. It shows that the heritage that surrounds us and belongs to us all has a significant positive effect on artistic creativity as well as a positive impact on scientific creativity.

**“Statistically, a rich historic environment enhances economic creativity”**

## What did Cerisola find?

Professor Cerisola constructed an econometric model to explore statistically the relationship between exposure to historic sites and local economic performance. She carried out similar work previously for regions in Italy but the high-quality data from the UK Census and the National Heritage List for England meant her analysis here was, in her words, “a significant step forward”.

By crunching the numbers for the density of historic sites in an area compared with measures of artistic, scientific and economic creativity, Cerisola could demonstrate statistically two important relationships: not only that heritage density had a direct positive impact

on GDP growth but also (and more revealingly) that heritage density had an *indirect* positive impact on economic performance via artistic or scientific creativity.

Statistically, a rich historic environment enhanced economic creativity which, if combined with a human resource of people in arts-related jobs or of people in creative technical jobs such as computer programming, engineering or market research, led to higher growth than in areas without this mix.

## Why does this matter?

This research signifies an increasing maturity in the justifications for investing in heritage. We have long known that heritage makes a



*The Observer Building is now full of life (Credit: Hastings Commons)*



## Hold the front page: A case study from the Sussex seaside

The Observer Building in Hastings opened in 1924 as a bustling newspaper office and printworks, its reinforced concrete frame built into the cliff above a series of caves. After the newspaper left in 1984 its slow decay began. Despite 13 owners and nearly as many planning permissions no one could make it work and few repairs were carried out.

Finally in 2018 a local community group managed to buy it with a mortgage from the Ecology Building Society. Hastings Commons, which specialises in bringing back into use difficult and derelict buildings in the White Rock neighbourhood, secured investment of £6.7m, including £3m from Historic England's Hastings High Street Heritage Action Zone (HAZ).

It appointed architects IF\_DO to restore and convert the building which now has 64 creative workspaces, a creative tech hub and a refurbished board room. The restored Observer Building is a vibrant community hub

supporting the growth of Hastings' creative economy, with 2,100sq m of vacant commercial space already brought back into use across the HAZ.

The 23 tenants and 123 flexible co-workers collaborate, host events and run workshops to help vulnerable youth develop creative skills.



substantial contribution to the national economy – indeed more than the defence sector or the automotive sector, according to national economic estimates carried out for Historic England by the Centre for Economics and Business Research (Cebr).

Re-using historic buildings, we can show, is a crucial part of achieving net-zero by 2050. More recently we have been able to quantify for the first time the benefit of heritage to the nation's wellbeing – up to £29bn a year. But crucially, what Professor Cerisola's research gives us is a new and more sophisticated argument for why heritage is worth investing in, even in straitened economic times.

This is because innovation is crucial to the new government's prescription for the problems our country faces.

Innovation is the action of putting ideas to practical use – it is applied creativity. So making the case that heritage is a driver of creativity, which in turn creates economic growth, is a new string to our sector's bow.

### What comes next?

Continued public funding for heritage conservation can never be taken for granted, especially at a time when money is even tighter than usual. We need to continue to make the case for heritage for its sizeable contribution to the economy (estimated at £44.9bn in 2022, according to our latest figures) but we also need to further prove how investing in our shared heritage benefits our society and economy.

The analysis by Professor Cerisola sits alongside other pioneering work

that Historic England is undertaking, most notably in developing "culture and heritage capital" accounting techniques, similar to the approach used by our natural environment colleagues, to show the value of our cultural heritage to people and businesses.

Through research like this, and further work in this area, we can shed the tired "out with the old" idiom and instead start saying "in with the new, thanks to the old". **S**

To find out more about Historic England's socio-economic research programme visit <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/heritage-counts/>

# Casework Review

## Electric Cinema, Birmingham

SAVE has written in support of listing the Electric Cinema in Birmingham which was, until its recent closure in February 2024, the oldest working cinema in Britain. Originally designed in 1909 by leading theatre architect Bertie Crewe and constructed during a wave of cinema building in the UK, the Electric is a historically and culturally significant building. Having been in almost continuous use as a cinema since it opened, this recent closure and loss of use is strongly concerning. A local campaign to ‘Save the Electric Cinema’ has been mounted with a view to protecting the wider Station Street where the Electric is neighboured by a number of historic cultural venues, including The Crown, a vacant grade II-listed former pub where Black Sabbath held their first ever gig.



## St Mary's Somers Town, London

Following a constructive meeting with the Diocese of London and national heritage bodies in February, SAVE is delighted that the threat of closure of St Mary's Somers Town has been lifted, with efforts now focused on a fundraising drive to carry out essential repairs to this 200-year-old church. In light of the welcome news this September that the National Heritage Lottery Fund's new strategic initiative will see them invest £100m in places of worship over the next three years, we understand that St Mary's Somers Town will apply for lottery funding for much-needed repairs. We continue to support the Friends of St Mary's Somers Town in a bid to keep the doors open to this church, which is a highly valued community space.

## Elsenham Station Master's House, Essex

We are supporting the listing of the historic Station Master's House at Elsenham. The building is threatened with a certificate of immunity from listing, leaving it vulnerable to demolition. Built in the early 19th century at a time of pioneering railway expansion, the charming red-brick building survives as a terminus of the historic Elsenham and Thaxted Light Railway line, known as the “gin and toffee” line. The Station Master's House forms a group with the grade II-listed waiting room opposite, a charming mid-19th-century timber framed building with its original ornamented canopy providing shelter for waiting passengers.





## ABC Cinema, Glasgow

When a second devastating fire all but destroyed the internationally significant Mackintosh Glasgow School of Art in 2018, the listed ABC Cinema right next door was also impacted. SAVE coordinated a letter to *The Herald* calling on the current owners of the ABC Cinema, OBARCS (ABC) Ltd, and future developer Vita Group to save the eye-catching portico entrance of this Glasgow landmark and retain it as part of future proposals for this site. The letter was co-signed by the Glasgow City Heritage Trust, the Cinema Theatre Association and Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland, all of whom objected to the plans. Demolition works have slowly commenced, as permitted by a dangerous buildings notice, but the concrete portico entrance still appears robust. This case adds yet more urgency to SAVE’s petition calling on the Scottish Parliament to safeguard listed buildings at risk of unnecessary demolition under emergency public safety powers.



## Hillhead Baptist Church, Glasgow

Alarming left roofless since emergency works carried out in 2022, SAVE joined heritage bodies in Scotland in expressing strong concern about a scheme to bulldoze this handsome B-listed church, built in 1883 by architect Thomas Lennox Watson. Described in Pevsner as being of a “simple classicism”, the grand entrance is framed by an Ionic-pedimented temple front. The plans, if approved, would see the building levelled and replaced with an unsympathetic block of flats.

## Brandon Station, Suffolk

We are pleased to report that, following a successful public meeting in June – where representatives from Greater Anglia, the Railway Heritage Trust, Historic Suffolk and SAVE addressed a packed room – the Friends of Brandon Station group has now been formed, and their first meeting was held in August. The Friends are working to find a future use for this historic, knapped-flint station building. We are looking forward to working with the Friends to help secure a long-term solution for this important building.



## Aire Place Mills, Leeds

In Leeds, we joined the Leeds Civic Trust in resisting plans to demolish a number of characterful unlisted buildings within a former mill complex under the “prior approval process”, a legal loophole that does not require full planning permission. Until recently, the buildings were in use by a number of independent businesses and groups, including Aire Place Studios (APS) a community group providing accessible and inclusive gallery, studio and workspaces for local artists. APS is now fundraising to secure new premises. Consultation on the demolition plans is still ongoing, despite an original determination deadline of July 2024.

### Former Saville Theatre, London

Highly controversial plans to partially demolish the grade II-listed former Saville Theatre and add a six-storey roof extension sparked widespread concerns, including from SAVE, Historic England and the Theatres Trust. Extensive internal and external remodelling, including excavating the building’s basement to accommodate the new theatre, would cause serious harm to the Saville Theatre’s historic and architectural importance. The building has a striking architectural presence in London’s West End, featuring a decorative 40-metre frieze by sculptor Gilbert Bayes. Since it opened in 1931, this building has had a star-studded history, hosting iconic music acts in the 1960s including Pink Floyd, Jimi Hendrix and the Rolling Stones.



### Medlock Mill/Hotspur Press, Manchester

An urgent application made by a local campaigner to seek listed status for Medlock Mill in Manchester, also known as Hotspur Press, has been supported by SAVE. Significant findings by Historic England indicate that Medlock Mill is the oldest standing textile mill in Manchester. Having been constructed as a steam-assisted, water-powered textile mill, it is a rare surviving example of a transitional stage in mill technology in a city where the textile industry had a central role in its historic expansion. While we are supportive of finding a sustainable new use, we consider it to be of paramount importance that the building is listed to ensure development is sympathetic to its outstanding importance and rarity.

### Bradley Lane Mills, South Devon

Teignbridge District Council is pressing ahead with highly controversial plans to demolish historic Bradley Lane Mills, despite strong objections from SAVE, Newton Abbot & District Civic Society, the National Trust, Victorian Society, Historic Buildings & Places and World Monuments Fund Britain. In July, the council announced plans to use a £1.5m pot of public funds – intended for regeneration – to demolish these historic mill buildings, which it owns, with an urgent deadline to spend the funds by March 2025. Alongside the Newton Abbot & District Civic Society, we have been leading a campaign since 2022 urging the council to re-use, rather than flatten, this historic site.





# Events 2025

For tickets and more information visit: [savebritainsheritage.org/events/current](https://savebritainsheritage.org/events/current)



## ONLINE EVENT

### SAVE Scoop: Conservation News Bulletin

Tuesday, 14th January 2025 | 18:00–19:00

Catch up with the latest news from SAVE's casework desk at this online bulletin from our conservation officer Lydia Franklin. From campaigning for better safeguards for threatened listed buildings in Scotland, to fighting to protect a historic mill complex in South Devon, SAVE is busier than ever fighting for historic buildings across the UK.

Tickets: £6 (including Eventbrite booking fee)



## ONLINE EVENT

### Rural Risk: Can rural ruins be rescued?

Tuesday, 11th February 2025 | 18:00–19:00

Join us for a look at the issues facing rural buildings in the UK with Liz Fuller, our Buildings at Risk officer. Using examples of buildings on our Buildings at Risk register, Liz will look at the factors which make rural buildings particularly vulnerable and ask what can be done to help them find new uses.

Tickets: £6 (including Eventbrite booking fee)



Hill End Cottage, Bishops Castle, Shropshire  
(Credit: Richard Hayman)

**Register your interest in future events:**  
[george.jerger@savebritainsheritage.org](mailto:george.jerger@savebritainsheritage.org)

Central and Piccadilly Line tours, London  
Angel Islington walking tour, London  
Wentworth Woodhouse visit, Rotherham  
City tours of Liverpool, Manchester and Newcastle

Look out for SAVE 50th anniversary events throughout 2025!



## WALKING TOUR

### Discovering Smithfield

Wednesday, 9th April 2025 | 18:30–20:00

Join London historian and conservationist Alec Forshaw for a walking tour of Smithfield, looking at the remarkable variety of architecture in this fascinating part of central London. Alongside Horace Jones's masterful 19th-century market there are the medieval and Tudor remains of St John's and St Bartholomew's Priors and the Charterhouse, early Georgian houses, ornate Victorian warehouses and eye-catching buildings from the 20th and 21st centuries.

Tickets: £16 Friends & Saviours |  
£19 General public | £12 Students



Charterhouse Square  
(Credit: G Jerger for SAVE)



## WALKING TOUR

### Bournemouth

Saturday, 10th May 2025 | 11:00–13:30

Join a guided walk around Bournemouth with local historian Hattie Miles to explore its fascinating architecture. Highlights include the town hall, the Art Deco Daily Echo building, the town's first house and a hotel that altered the council's seafront plans in the Eighties. Starting at the pier, the tour covers landmarks and hidden gems from Bournemouth's rich history.

Tickets: £14 Friends & Saviours |  
£16 General public | £12 Students



Bournemouth Pier  
(Credit: James McPherson, Unsplash)

# Buildings at Risk

## Rural ruins

Are redundant historic farm buildings doomed? **Liz Fuller** looks at the particular challenges facing agricultural buildings

With hundreds of tumble-down historic cottages, barns and farms on the SAVE Buildings at Risk register, isn't it surprising that so many stand neglected for decades despite picturesque locations and tantalising histories? Why is it that these buildings seem so resistant to rescue? The causes of rural dereliction are difficult to address. A principal cause is redundancy resulting from the changing patterns of the rural

economy. Larger-scale machinery and evolving farming practices mean barns designed for manual labour, horse-drawn carts, or even tractors and trailers are impossible to use to store modern vehicles and materials. Isolated buildings without modern services present practical problems over and above the restoration of their fabric. The expense of maintaining redundant buildings is often beyond what a farm or estate can afford.

Ownership of both buildings and the access route to them can be complicated, whether as a result of being held in trust or having multiple or unknown owners. This adds legal and administrative hurdles to finding solutions and may make it difficult to transfer an individual property and its access to new owners.

Take **Hill End Cottage in Shropshire**, a ruinous timbered cottage which stands, isolated, in a

*The grade II barn at Boraston Court in Shropshire is a beautiful structure on a working farm. Now redundant, like so many rural buildings it needs a use which supports its maintenance. (Credit: Eveleigh Photography)*





## What could help?

- More funding sources especially for buildings which require large sums, sometimes in the millions of pounds, even to stabilise them. The Defra-funded Farming in Protected Landscapes (FIPL) scheme has offered possible funding routes for repairs in certain areas as well as active management programmes, but it is likely to be discontinued in

the next year. A new source is the National Lottery Heritage Fund’s Landscape Connections scheme which aims to support long-term projects “to boost nature recovery and connect people to our treasured landscapes”.

- A greater sector focus on the issue of rural buildings with a national network designed to share successful or

creative approaches and know-how and provide support and advice.

- Collaboration between landowners, conservation organisations and rural campaign groups on projects to find solutions for historic structures and, in doing so, boost the local economy and provide facilities which could benefit communities.

sheltered site overlooking a valley. It is, however, without services or easy access by car. Grade II listed, it dates from the 17th century with 19th-century additions and retains great character and charm despite its terrible condition.

In Herefordshire, grade II-listed **Knoll Cottage**, a 17th-century timbered farm worker’s dwelling stands on a country road through the picturesque village of Bircher. It has been slowly deteriorating for years. The council issued an urgent works notice in 2018 which resulted in some emergency repairs. However, it has now lost its thatch and its jettied porch is supported by a prop. In 2022 the cottage was put up for sale and we believe it has yet to find a buyer though it is not currently on the market.

Even superlative examples of historically important barns struggle to find solutions. **Bentley Hall Barn** in Suffolk (grade II\*) is a beautiful 16th-century barn thought to date from 1580–82. It has been described as among the largest and most impressive timber-framed Elizabethan structures in Britain, extending to over 54 metres in length by 7.5 metres in width. In very poor condition for some years, it is on Historic England’s at risk register. The owners have tried to sell and most recently it was reported that a schedule of works had been drawn up and an urgent works notice issued. The hope is that repairs are

made and a use that is sensitive can be found.

Speaking to conservation officers around the country, it is clear there is a high level of concern that many rural buildings have no practical means of rescue. Tobias Carleton-Prangnell, senior conservation officer with Dorset

Council, describes the future for historic farm buildings, even listed ones, as “unfortunately very bleak”. He says that sources of funding are severely limited and there is often a need for substantial sums just to stabilise what can be complex structures requiring highly expert input.



*Hill End Cottage in Shropshire enjoys a beautiful setting but has no services and its condition is worsening. (Credit: Richard Hayman)*





*Knoll Cottage is a 17th-century timbered farm worker's dwelling in Herefordshire. Credit: Eveleigh Photography*

He advocates identifying a building's optimal, sustainable use, allied to the production of a management plan to support future maintenance. Important also, he says, is community engagement. He cites the increasing requirement for local amenities in rural areas and the potential for disused rural buildings to become functional and valued community assets. Increasing awareness and understanding of the importance of vernacular buildings as part of their landscape and setting is also important, among many other factors.

The regeneration potential of historic buildings in urban settings is now more generally recognised as bringing wider value. Schemes such as HE's Heritage Action Zones which direct efforts to small urban areas, in particular high streets, have enabled repair work, generated interest and helped attract further funding. However, it is hard to think of any



*Knoll Cottage, Bircher, Herefordshire, once work began to repair its roof.*

equivalent initiatives for rural buildings. A different approach would be needed, perhaps designed to promote adequate maintenance first and then, where appropriate, conversion to new uses.

In North Lincolnshire, historic built environment officer Felix Mayle has

been working with HE to put together a package of repairs to grade II\*-listed Manor Farm in North Killingholme which is about to begin. This is an early brick manor farmhouse dating from the 16th and 17th centuries on a scheduled moated site. It has been empty and neglected for decades.





*Bentley Hall Barn in Suffolk is one of the largest and most impressive timber-framed Elizabethan structures in Britain*

It has taken several years to get to this stage, but is an example of effective collaboration. Its potential for complete restoration is clear but it would be an ambitious project.

Creativity and collaboration are needed now to find fresh approaches for the range of historic rural buildings which are at risk. Whether looking at the finest examples of agricultural

buildings or more common barns and small farmhouses which are so much part of the history and character of the countryside, a more focused and cohesive approach is overdue. **S**

## Buildings at Risk update

### Buildings at Risk in Wales

SAVE wrote to the Welsh minister for culture to draw attention to our article, *A Survey of Nearly Everything*, in the last newsletter. We argued that the scope of Cadw's survey, using a heritage consultancy, of all listed buildings in Wales on a five-year rolling basis appears comprehensive. However, the failure to put the information on buildings at risk to use or make it available to others in the sector is a huge missed opportunity. We also raised the concern that the survey significantly under-records the number of historic buildings at risk and the level of risk. We have now heard back from the minister who confirms the intention is to make

more information from the survey public in the future. But it is far from clear when and how this will be done.

### Historic Environment Scotland's Heritage at Risk register review

Historic Environment Scotland's report on the efficacy of its Buildings at Risk register makes interesting reading. Ultimately it concludes that updates will be paused while the findings are digested and a new approach determined.

SAVE gets a specific mention: "... SAVE Britain's Heritage Buildings at Risk register is possibly the best example of a register explicitly focused

on attracting restoring purchasers, generating press interest and securing public support." However it notes, rightly, that we do not hold ourselves out as presenting formalised data on the buildings. The report does go on to observe that "SAVE's reputation for successfully facilitating resolutions of, in some cases, extremely challenging cases suggests that this approach remains effective."

The report, published in September, raises good questions about how best to use and present information on buildings at risk, which will be of interest to anyone who cares about our built heritage, whether in Scotland or not. We will continue to reflect on its conclusions.

# Civic pride

In the second of our series celebrating town halls, **Robert Drake** picks some of the country's most interesting 20th-century examples. Photography by **John East**

## Newcastle-upon-Tyne Civic Centre, Barras Bridge, Newcastle (grade II\*)

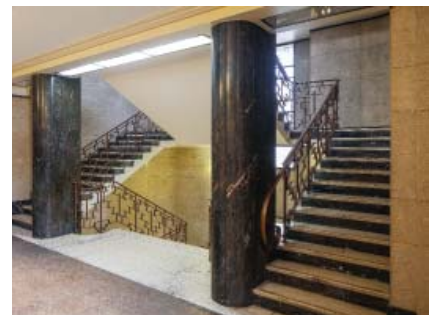
This was the major “city hall” project of the post-war era in England designed by city architect GW Kenyon, completed in 1969 and notable for its integration of fine materials and art work. From the ceremonial entrance way (lined with nine flambeaux and metal screens by Charles Sansbury), to its stair tower containing a carillon and dominated by a copper-clad series of fins supporting seahorses from the city's coat of arms (by JRM McCheyne), one enters with high expectations. The civic centre, as is often the case, is part office building and part function suite but with an exceptionally high quality of fittings. David Wynne designed the River God Tyne fountain and a flight of swans in the courtyard. Inside, the grand stair hall has an eleven-tiered chandelier decorated with more seahorses (by AB Reid) in keeping with Newcastle's maritime traditions. On one side is an elliptical council chamber, panelled in cedar of Lebanon, and on the other side a banqueting hall, the interior lined in red hide and which has a John Piper tapestry. The “rates hall”, where householders and business owners could pay their rates, has two murals by Victor Pasmore, with more murals in the marriage suite by

Elizabeth Wise. The building has many links to Norway not least to Oslo City Hall as a strong inspiration in its architecture and design, in its materials including slate from Norway, and the fact that it was opened by King Olav in November 1968.



## Hornsey Town Hall, north London (now in Haringey, grade II\*)

Hornsey Town Hall was won in competition by the young New Zealand architect Reginald Uren and completed in 1935. He was heavily influenced by Willem Dudok's Hilversum Town Hall in the Netherlands. With its commanding tower and horizontality well set back from Crouch End Broadway, it has an intact interior, especially the council chamber. Set in a precinct flanked by gas and electricity showrooms built as part of the complex (now in other uses), it forms a marked contrast to the Edwardian shopping street in which it sits. With local authority re-organisation in 1965, Hornsey became part of the much larger Borough of Haringey which meant a superfluity of places from where the council could meet and run services and Hornsey gradually lost out to other parts of the new Haringey. It is now being converted into a hotel and arts centre with flats in the grounds.





### Hammersmith Town Hall, west London (grade II)

This is by the well-known town hall practice E Berry Webber, which also designed major civil complexes in Southampton, Peterborough and Dagenham in East London. Berry Webber adopted a fusion of modern Swedish and Dutch motifs combined with English Regency. The building was substantially finished by 1939 but some features and sculpture, including free-standing columns at the southern entrance (now bounded by the A4), were never installed. It is built of brick with an interior courtyard

with elevations of yellow stock brick. The interior of the north side is decorated with attractive riverside mural scenes by Alfred Daniels and John Titchell installed in 1956. The council chamber and ante-chamber areas on the south side retain original fittings. The town hall remains in use while the redevelopment of the wider civic quarter designed by Rogers Stirk Harbour & Partners nears completion.



### Braintree Town Hall, Essex (grade II\*)

A small town hall paid for by the wealthy Courtauld family who financed many embellishments. Designed by Emmanuel Vincent Harris and completed in 1928, it is neo-Georgian, two storeys with a steep hipped roof and Baroque stone bell turret surmounted by a bronze figure of Truth by Hermon Cawthra. It is now used as a museum and information centre. It has a virtually complete interior, including wall paintings by Maurice Greiffenhagen in the council chamber and a map of Essex on the ceiling in the chairman’s room of 1929–30. Vincent Harris was one of the most successful town hall architects of the inter-war and post-war periods. He designed Bristol Council House, Leeds City Hall extension and many others. His last work, Kensington Central Library, provoked the so called “Anti-Ugly” demonstrations by art students in 1959 as they considered it too traditional and not in a sufficiently modernist style.



# Postcard from... platform 1

Gillian Darley takes another delve into SAVE's archive and this time considers the legacy of our seminal report *Off the Rails*

Soon after SAVE was founded, the exhibition *Off the Rails: Saving Railway Architecture* was held at the (fondly remembered) RIBA Heinz Gallery in Portman Square. Marcus Binney and the late David Pearce masterminded it and two years later converted the topic into a handsomely illustrated book. Peter Parker, who became the new British Rail chairman in 1976, was quick to visit the exhibition and congratulate SAVE for its concern, signalling a change of atmosphere by emphasising the importance of “existing resources”, as I wrote in the catalogue.

Against a nightmare situation of creeping dereliction (exacerbated post Dr Beeching, whose drastic cuts had been made just 10 years earlier) and an increasingly uncertain future, Parker, a trustee of the Civic Trust, appointed a distinguished environmental panel to support a new Director of Environment, Bernard Kaukas. With his background as a chief railway architect and development director, Kaukas could be described as a gamekeeper turned

poacher: he was an entirely credible professional in the role. His choice was a masterstroke since he was engaged and willingly committed himself to the same heritage objectives as Parker – frequently, those for which SAVE was fighting.

Perhaps I delude myself but, with a handful of exceptions, almost 50 years on railway stations seem to have become flag-bearers for towns and cities with ambitions for a better future? Even with our railway estate so splintered between innumerable companies, a state of affairs recognised as disastrous, there have been some stand-out examples.

Consider Huddersfield, with its stately porticoed elevation and slightly Palladian pavilions, one of which houses the Head of Steam pub, with one exit on to platform 1 and the other on to St George's Square, where Harold Wilson awaits customers. Or Boston (Lincolnshire) where the renovation of the station, now including a community café and start-up business space, signals a programme of

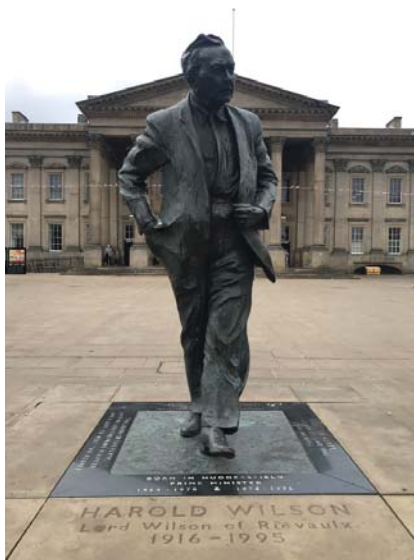
“levelling up” in an exceptionally depressed, if splendid, town. Sometimes, the mere fact that the station building remains gives a line character, so that in Market Harborough the homely Queen Anne revival building brings elements of warmth and domesticity to an entirely functional set of structures serving the mainline. Coexistence is an option.

The old companies' choice of architectural style and materials is one delight of travel by train. Lest my blithe optimism dent the picture, SAVE's winter Newsletter in 2021 carried an article by Ben Oakley detailing a series of demolition applications along some East Anglian spur lines, such as the Bittern Line which focused on the Norfolk Broads and further north to Cromer and Sheringham. In October 2021 planning permission was granted for the demolition of pretty little Salhouse station, its waiting room and a fretted timber canopy, although that move was stalled the following year. A replacement shelter on the opposite



This page: Boston Station, Lincs. Opposite, l-r: Local hero Harold Wilson greets passengers in Huddersfield; Market Harborough Station





Bentley unlisted and unloved. In 2016 Greater Anglia offered all three to Tendring District Council for £1 each. No word came. So I must be content with the stations I grew up with, from Sudbury to Marks Tey, which have been branded, following the dictates of cultural tourism, the Gainsborough Line.

While the full force of publicity falls on unfortunate redevelopments at major city termini, as Liverpool Street currently awaits the results of yet another return to the drawing board, and potentially the sustained ire of a united front of heritage organisations and the great and good, it is a harder task to rally troops around modest, often unlisted structures in distant parts of the country. SAVE's dogged work at Brandon and other stations in rural East Anglia continues largely away from the spotlight.

Although the fragmentation of British Railways into disparate

companies rarely benefited the structures in their care, it is important that a re-unification doesn't undermine the achievements of SAVE's pioneering campaign. Over the decades few building types have picked up greater public support, locally or nationally, and there is no sign of it lessening. **S**



platform shows what would be lost and "gained" if the clearance went ahead.

Meanwhile on the so-called Sunshine Line, a branch from Colchester out to Clacton, Frinton and Walton-on-the-Naze, SAVE was opposing demolition proposals for Weeley station, shuttered for years and like its confreres Alresford and Great

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# Voices from the Frontline

## Spotlight on a local campaign: The Friends of Carlisle Victorian & Turkish Baths

Carlisle's spectacular listed baths were described by SAVE as a 'gleaming temple to cleanliness and health for over 100 years' when we added them to our Buildings at Risk register. We hear from the local group working hard to reopen them

### Tell us about the building and why a campaign was needed

Carlisle's Public Baths opened in 1884 as a place where people could bathe, wash and launder clothes. They consisted of men's first- and second-class plunge pools with dressing boxes, men's first- and second-class baths, separate ladies' facilities with a waiting room, first- and second-class private baths, and a plunge pool. There was a laundry area and a house for the live-in attendant. The nearby Hudson & Scott factory had a steam engine which provided the steam to heat the water of the plunge pools.

The plans and design for the Turkish Baths were drawn up in the Victorian era but the building was delayed and

they opened in 1909. The Turkish Baths consisted of hot rooms, a shampooing room, a plunge bath, a cooling room, needle and shower baths with tiling and glazed faïence work in an oriental style by Minton Hollins of Stoke-on-Trent.

In 2021, the building of new swimming pools at the city's main leisure centre threatened the closure of the Turkish Baths.

### How did the campaign get started?

The Friends of Carlisle Victorian & Turkish Baths were set up in May 2021 after Carlisle City Council commissioned a feasibility study to look at repurposing the baths. The initial campaign was for the Turkish

Baths to remain open when the pools closed.

The Friends' publicity about the Turkish Baths resulted in an increase in users, with many locals visiting for the first time. Visitors were also attracted to the city to experience the last working Turkish Baths in the North West of England.

### How did you keep the momentum going?

The amazing amount of support for our campaign, from regular users of the baths, the local community and people in other parts of the UK and further afield, was heart-warming. It also gave us encouragement to continue to work to save this important remaining piece of the city's, and also Britain's, heritage.

### High point...

One highlight was a rally outside the civic centre when a council meeting was due to discuss the baths' future. A large number of people attended, many dressed in swimming costumes and bathrobes.

### And a low...

However in October 2022 Carlisle City Council voted to close the Turkish Baths due to the lack of a budget or operator to keep them open.

### What's next?

The Friends are now working towards a community asset transfer from Cumberland Council (which replaced



Above: Bathing suits deputation outside civic centre. Opposite: The baths contain a wealth of historic features (Images: © Friends of Carlisle Victorian & Turkish Baths)





Carlisle City Council in 2023) with a vision to celebrate the heritage of the baths which were built to support the health and wellbeing of local people. The vision would see the whole public baths building form a new health and wellbeing centre, with the Turkish Baths as the centrepiece. This would serve the needs of local residents as well as boosting the tourist and night-time economies.


**How has SAVE helped your campaign?**

The Friends became a charity in April 2022. In the same year, the Friends received an AHF grant towards a




viability study and SAVE added the Turkish Baths to their Buildings at Risk register and wrote to the council leader urging urgent action. The following year the Victorian Society added the Turkish Baths to their heritage at risk

register. The Friends have joined the Historic Pools of Britain group and receive support and encouragement from a number of other campaigns and friends groups for historic pools. **S**






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# European honour for SAVE's founder

SAVE's co-founder and president Marcus Binney received the highest heritage accolade in Europe at the Europa Nostra Awards ceremony in Bucharest this autumn.

His lifetime of achievement was recognised with a prestigious Heritage Champions award.

Marcus and his wife Anne Binney were invited to the event by leading European heritage body Europa Nostra.

Known as the heritage "Oscars", the ceremony took place in the Romanian Athenaeum, one of the most important cultural institutions in Bucharest, during the 2024 European Cultural Heritage Summit.

In a message to the audience, Romanian president Klaus Iohannis said: "In such a complicated period, monuments, museums, memorial houses, traditions, and their guardians become even more important as cultural landmarks of our fundamental

values, which we must pass on to future generations."

Marcus co-founded SAVE Britain's Heritage 50 years ago with Sir Simon Jenkins and John Harris. He has also been chair and trustee of numerous other UK and European heritage organisations.

His greatest successes include:

- Fighting and winning two public inquiries to save **Smithfield Market** in London (it is currently being converted into the new home for the London Museum).
- The rescue of **Dumfries House** in Scotland (with the King).
- Lobbying government to stop **Battersea Power Station** being demolished when it was decommissioned in 1983.
- Saving **Billingsgate Fish Market** and **Bankside Power Station** (now Tate Modern) from the bulldozers.
- Setting up the building preservation

trust that rescued mighty grade I-listed **Wentworth Woodhouse** in South Yorkshire.

- Helping stage the V&A's seminal **Destruction of the Country House** exhibition in 1974 – which revealed to a shocked public how many stately homes were being destroyed. The public outcry led to the foundation of SAVE the following year.

Marcus was one of four "Heritage Champions" who were recognised for their "tireless efforts" to save Europe's built and cultural heritage. To sustained applause, he received his award from Europa Nostra vice-president Professor Jacek Purchla for being a "tireless champion in saving heritage-endangered buildings in the United Kingdom and all over Europe."

Congratulations, Marcus, from everyone in the SAVE office – and far beyond! **S**



Left: European Heritage Awards Ceremony 2024 at The Romanian Athenaeum in Bucharest. Above: Marcus Binney, president of SAVE Britain's Heritage, receiving the award from Petr Svoboda, chair of the selection committee, and Jacek Purchla, vice-president of Europa Nostra and chair of the awards jury 2024. (Images © Felix Q Media / Europa Nostra)





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