

SAVE BRITAIN'S HERITAGE

Newsletter – December 2007

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This edition of the SAVE Newsletter is devoted almost entirely to Smithfield in London. SAVE has long been involved in this area: in the late 1980s when the Grade II* listed meat market buildings (1860s, Sir Horace Jones) were facing closure because they did not meet EU hygiene standards we offered our assistance to the City in finding new uses.

The General Market Buildings, Smithfield, London

How did we get to where we are?

Over the last ten years we have become increasingly concerned at the fate of the unlisted **General Market building**, its **Annex**, the **Red House cold store** and public **lavatory** block which form a group at the western end of this magnificent market complex – which remains the largest and architecturally most impressive in Europe. In 2004 we launched our report “*Don't Butcher Smithfield*” relating to concerns that this group of buildings around the General Market faced redevelopment. It sold out.



A plan of the market complex from the 1890s with the General Market on the left and annex below. The Red House (1888-9) is not yet built

Sure enough, our fears became reality and a set of plans came forward from a developer called Thornfield for the redevelopment of the buildings and their replacement with large office blocks, designed by architects Kohn Pedersen Fox, akin to those on the Farringdon Road which borders the western end of the site. These plans

have undergone three sets of changes intended to make them more acceptable.

The second set of plans for the site faced being called in for scrutiny at a public inquiry by the Secretary of State, and so the third and latest set came forward – this too was called in. SAVE pushed for the public inquiry (originally planned for the summer of 2007) to be delayed so that the new plans could be properly studied – and the inquiry was scheduled for twenty four days, with two weeks in November, two weeks in December and two weeks in January next year.

Following the last newsletter, SAVE's resources have been substantially focused on the inquiry. Major public inquiries are serious endeavours requiring heaps of evidence and heaps of copies of evidence. SAVE has been very fortunate in having the legal assistance of **Mr David Cooper** and latterly **Mr David Smith** (at minimal cost) to ensure we meet the inquiry's demands. We have a number of witnesses, all giving their time for free – **Dr Jenny Freeman**, on Sir Horace Jones; **Sophie Andreae** (former SAVE Secretary and Chairman) on the conservation area; **George Ferguson** (President Emeritus of the RIBA); **Ian Lerner**, property agent, and your Secretary **Adam Wilkinson** on how the case relates to planning policy.



From this.....

....to this (note that the picture is taken from the other side of the road – now why would the developer do that?)



What does it mean for SAVE?

The upshot of this is quite literally tens of thousands of pages of photocopying. We had to provide seven copies to our evidence to Thornfield, the City of London and

English Heritage. Thankfully the planning inspector, Mr Barton, only required four copies. We are immensely grateful to the **Vivat Trust** for the loan of their photocopier, which has been working overtime in both black and white and colour: the cost of this part of the exercise would have otherwise been horrific.

The other result of this is that since our wonderful victory at Dumfries House we have been solely focused on Smithfield, a reminder of the very real limitations of the organisation – many of the small but very deserving cases that people come to us with on a regular basis, and with which we are usually able to deal relatively quickly with maximum effect, have fallen by the wayside. This is indeed an unhappy state of affairs and the pile of cases awaiting your Secretary's attention weighs heavily on his mind. We will be fundraising for a part time caseworker to take on some of these smaller cases. All donations towards this particular position will be most gratefully received. As a consequence, this newsletter is mostly about Smithfield.

SAVE is also immensely grateful to all the volunteers who have helped out behind the scenes in bringing this production to the grand stage of the public inquiry, from **George Jerger** taking on the administrative tasks in the office with **Dan Roberts**, to **Ev Cook** for her years of research on the General Market buildings and ground breaking research on the history of cold storage (which surely merits publication), to the unknown individual who dropped a précis of the City's deal with the developer in the post to us (what gold-dust that is)... the list goes on.

The inquiry has started, we are giving evidence in January, but your Secretary is there every day, and we encourage Friends and supporters to come along for a couple of hours and listen to proceedings – and individuals will have a chance to have their say if they let the inspector know in advance.

This is an epic inquiry, make no mistake about it.

The buildings

The buildings in question are the General Market (Sir Horace Jones, completed 1883), its Annex (Sir Horace Jones, completed 1888 and originally built as a fish market) and the Red House cold store (Reeves and Stych, completed 1899). The Red House was listed by the Secretary of State following a concerted campaign by SAVE, but we failed to have the other buildings on the site added to the list – indeed Thornfield applied for a Certificate of Immunity from Listing for these and was promptly given one. This gives five years' immunity.

All the buildings are in the Smithfield conservation area, which was specifically extended in 1986 to include them on the grounds of their architectural and historic interest, forming a part of the wider group of market buildings. There is therefore a legal presumption in favour of their preservation, which means in practical terms that anyone wishing to demolish them has to prove that there are

over-riding community benefits that would arise from their demolition. This is not at all easy to prove.



A view of the Red House cold store from the south

The buildings have been largely out of use for varying lengths of time – it is not known when the Red House ceased operation, while the Annex market closed in the 1980s. The General Market building is still part occupied. The Smithfield Market Tenants Association claims that there is a waiting list for market stalls in the main meat market and poultry market (1961-3, TP Bennet and Ove Arup, Grade II listed).

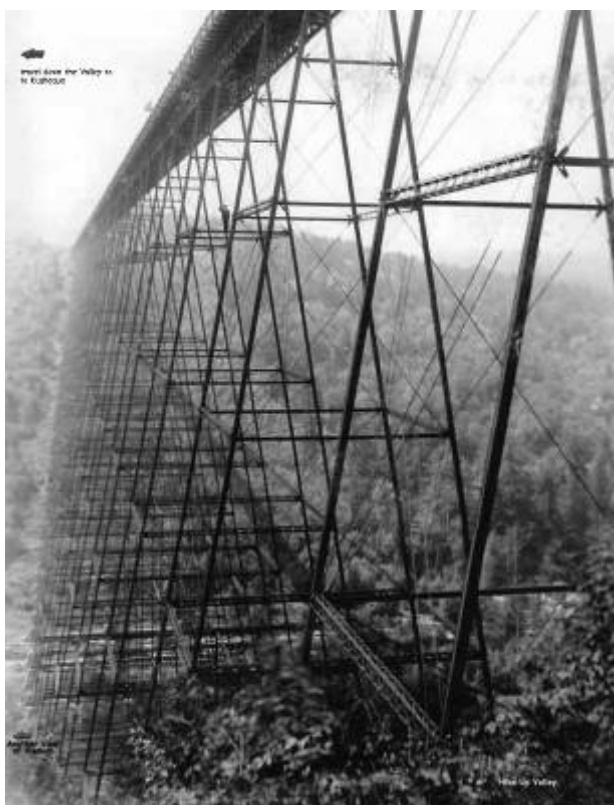


Detail of the General Market showing Jones at his most playful

They are all handsome red brick buildings with Portland stone dressings and in the case of the General Market and Annex, handsome scissor brace roof structures. The General Market sits on a massive deck structure, in effect a giant bridge over a vast railway cutting which was the

London and Chatham Railway's sidings. Just to the west of this is the culverted Fleet River, running down to the Thames along Farringdon Road. In other words, ground level is about 15m below the level one perceives it to be.

This remarkable engineering feat by Jones was achieved through the use of Phoenix columns, an incredibly strong yet light type of wrought iron column which allowed greater distances to be spanned than your normal column at that time – it is a series of V sections bolted together. In America it rose to prominence in the construction of bridges – some mighty spectacular, and then found its ultimate role in the construction of tall buildings (and hence, ironically, the birth of modernist architecture through Louis Sullivan) in Chicago.



The Kinzua Viaduct in the USA, constructed with Phoenix columns – on its completion in 1882 the highest and longest railway viaduct at 301.5 feet high and 2,053 feet long, by engineer Octave Chanute.

What is at stake

What is at stake in the public inquiry, however, is not just good architecture and remarkable engineering (Jones was also responsible for Tower Bridge – another fine engineering feat this time dressed up as a Gothic fairytale). It is also a question of the nature of future development in the City of London, the value of conservation areas, English Heritage's ability to win major inquiries and the principle of the treatment of public infrastructure

(a) For the future development of the City of London.

The City of London has a remarkable history and in places a stunning heritage – not least in the City Churches, one of the finest groups of churches in the world. The post war era has also produced some

interesting buildings, although pretty much anything built between the wars is currently being pulled down and replaced with something by an architect who has built something shiny somewhere else – city developers must be the magpies of the architectural world, hoping that their architects are solid silver, not electroplated silver-nickel.

This voracious appetite has rarely abated in the post war period and has seen the loss of many fine Victorian and Edwardian commercial buildings (see the SAVE report *From Splendour to Banality*, if you can locate a copy) alongside the more famous losses such as the Coal Exchange. A major inquiry of this sort is perhaps what is needed to help the City think again about what it is really competing against – New York? Paris? Frankfurt? Canary Wharf? – and to focus on what it is realistically going to achieve in the demolition of buildings that make it a good place to work

(b) For conservation areas

In spite of all this, the City's conservation areas remain relatively intact and provide the opportunity not only to preserve but to enhance – a measure surely meant as the opportunity to undo the errors of the past, but nearly always interpreted as a reason to pull down a half decent building that contributes to the general historic ambiance, and replace it with a monster.



On the right, Heron Tower, and on the left 1 Heron Plaza, replacing a historic building in a conservation area – constituting “enhancement”.

Perhaps the worst example of this in recent years was the City allowing the demolition of Staple Hall (Richardson and Gill, 1931 – see *SAVE Newsletter* November 2004, and the image above) to make way for a twenty storey tower next to the permitted but not yet built forty storey Heron tower – on the grounds that its impact, compared to that of the Heron tower (which is outside the

conservation area) would be minimal. And the architect of both these? Kohn Pedersen Fox. It would seem that more value is placed by developers on an architect's ability to get a planning permission than his ability to create things of both function and beauty.

In other words, conservation areas are now game for developers on the hunt for space in this most valuable part of the British Isles. Of course, what the City forgets is that in potentially opening up these conservation areas to inappropriate development it is destroying the one thing that makes the City an attractive place to work and visit.

This inquiry is being fought on conservation area grounds – Thornfield argues that its scheme will enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area (although the City argues that this is a special case because of the railway structures). If this development is not stopped, all unlisted buildings in conservation areas in the City will be vulnerable.

(c) For English Heritage

English Heritage finds itself in a difficult situation. It has not won a major public inquiry in the City of London for a long time. Admittedly, it was forced to fight against its original position at a recent inquiry into a tall building by Raphael Vinoly (which it had initially supported) – however, when the UN cultural body, UNESCO, threatened the removal of the Tower of London's status as a World Heritage Site, the Secretary of State called in the Vinoly application to a public inquiry and forced English Heritage to oppose the proposals.

Consequently it is vital that English Heritage is on the winning side this time in order that both developers and the City take heed of its advice in the future, rather than ignore or coerce the organisation through the old "you stand in the way of progress" routine, exploiting its potentially politically vulnerable situation – the current government is more interested in the construction industry as an employer and earner of GDP than the heritage industry

Much to its credit, English Heritage has taken a strong stand on this case and is making a good go of it at the public inquiry, weighing in strongly to support the campaign initiated by SAVE.

(d) For infrastructure

The other major principle at stake (there may be others – on a postcard to the SAVE office please) is that of the treatment of public infrastructure. Under an 1880 agreement, the City of London is responsible for the condition of the decks over the railway on which the General Market building sits. A responsible landlord would ensure that these structures were maintained properly on a regular basis.

SAVE served a Freedom of Information Act request on the City of London for all information over the last thirty years relating to the maintenance of the deck structures. All that was returned was a series of letters between the

City and Railtrack (and then Network Rail) discussing what the condition of the structures might be.

It is clear from the report on the deal between the City and Thornfield that the City has long intended to redevelop the General Market buildings. Clearly there would be no benefit to the City in maintaining a structure which it saw as being in the way of a large profit.

If permission for this scheme is granted, it will give the green light to owners of public infrastructure to allow them to run it down through a lack of maintenance, in order that at some stage in the future they can redevelop it at great profit (but not to the public), and that heritage comes second to this. This would clearly be an unacceptable state of affairs.

What makes Smithfield special?

The Smithfield area of London, just to the north of the City, has always been a little bit outside the respectable centre of the town – the "smooth field" was the site of major public executions (such as William Wallace) and an annual horse fair. Attempts to tidy it up, such as canalising the Fleet River in 1680 didn't really work – the Fleet became little more than an open sewer and the houses around it riddled with the urban poor. To the south things were a little better with St Bartholemew's hospital, which still holds the Gibbsean plan form from 1730-68 with a quiet courtyard at its heart. The church of St Bartholemew the Great sits in a clutch of buildings with mediaeval origins, one of the few areas to escape the Great Fire of 1666.

The live cattle market was a smelly and dirty activity, and with the increasing understanding of disease and an emphasis on hygiene, the City decided to move the live market up to Islington, and convert the site for the sale of meat. The City Surveyor, Sir Horace Jones, was commissioned to design new market buildings for this purpose, and the result was the 1866-8 east and west meat market, now listed at Grade II*, and still in use. The market buildings were a resounding success and the City commissioned another market building, the Poultry market, completed 1875 in the same style, with Portland stone dressings to the red brick body of the building, a long and low structure with tall corner towers like the meat market. This was damaged in the war and then destroyed by fire in the 1950s. Its replacement, with a spectacular concrete dome over the main hall, is listed Grade II.

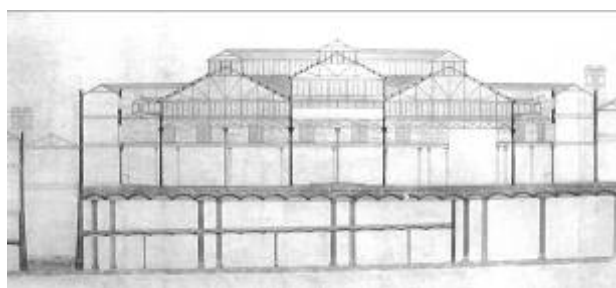
The grand plan for Smithfield Market was completed with the construction of the General Market building in the 1880s. Jones retained the style of his previous buildings, but took advantage of the step down in level to the culverted River Fleet to break up the elevations of the building with an elegant step down the hill. Having learned from his previous buildings, he included shops around the perimeter of the building and internally the layout broke away from the longitudinal setup of the other market buildings, with the long run of stalls from the other buildings ending under the grand timber dome of the General Market. Jones had to build all of this over

a live railway – the area was used for sidings as well as a line from the docks, requiring Jones to construct a massive bridging structure for his building to sit on. For this he made use of a recent innovation from America, the Phoenix column, which bolted together sections of cast iron to create an extremely strong structure – these columns were common in railway bridge construction in the USA (see above) and became the tool that enabled the construction of high buildings (and consequently-ironically - the birth of modernism). In spite of repeated requests from SAVE the General Market remains unlisted: English Heritage’s listing team considers that war damage to one corner and the replacement of the grand dome with a shallower one in the 1950s detracts from its architectural and historic interest.

Two further market buildings were constructed – the Annex to the south of the General Market (1886-8), also by Jones, and then to the north, the Fruit and Flower Market (b.1892, d.1944, 8th March, 11.30am, hit by a V2 rocket), by his successor Peebles, but using forms developed by Jones in his earlier drawings for the General Market (ironically proven by the developer’s research).



The now lost Fruit and Flower Market (above) to the north of the General Market using a roof form developed by Jones for the General Market (below)



At the time of the construction of these buildings, refrigeration mainly was achieved through the use of ice imported from abroad. In the final two decades of the 19th century powered refrigeration on a large scale was perfected. This enabled the import of meat from the colonies – such as New Zealand lamb – and its storage

before distribution. A revolution in nutrition was begun. Cold stores were developed around the market buildings, the earliest purpose built being the Red House (1898-9) – attached to the Annex Market – and the next the White House. Both are now listed (the Red House only following a direct request from SAVE to the Secretary of State).

This 800 metre run of market buildings and their associated buildings surely forms one of the finest groups of market buildings in Europe – surely an asset – and is protected as a whole by its designation as a conservation area.

Why are the buildings threatened?

The railway cutting over which the City of London built the General Market still contains a live railway, but the sidings are now a rather voluminous car park. The original deal with the railway from 1880, still in force, holds the City responsible for the upkeep and repair of the deck structure. However, it would appear that there has been a serious lack of maintenance over the last thirty years, and the structures are now in need of repair.

For the City, this is a clever opportunity to pass on its duty to maintain public infrastructure, while making a quick bob. It has done a deal with a developer called Thornfield, based around the principal of pulling down the building and deck, and replacing them with a new “maintenance free” deck structure and a shiny new office building (with shops and an “urban market hall”) on top to ensure that everyone involved in the project comes up trumps in financial terms.

The claim made by the City and the developer is that the deck structures are in such awful condition that if they are not pulled down they will fall down. Heaven help the poor travellers on the Thameslink line. The claim is also made that there is no possible alternative use of the General Market, its Annex and the Red House, and so the only solution is the demolition of the General Market and the gutting of the Red House and Annex.

What are the alternatives?

SAVE’s argument all along has been that these buildings can easily be reused and that the question of the condition of the railway decks is a red-herring, much as with our successful fight at Paddington station where claims of railway need were hugely overplayed to justify a commercial development.

Since closing the General Market in 2001 the City has been approached by a number of well backed and experienced developers wanting to take on the General Market, Annex and Red House, and bring them back into use. Rather than exploring these as a responsible authority might, it has chosen to brush them all off. It has not marketed the buildings as planning policy guidance demands in the situation – indeed it would appear that the City has been looking to demolish the buildings for a long while in spite of the positive contribution they make to the conservation area.

The most obvious suggested use for the buildings is as a market of some sort. It is this plan that entrepreneur Eric Reynolds of Urban Space Management is pursuing at the public inquiry. Such a scheme could also raise the funds for the repair of the deck structure – which is really the duty of the City. The City's estimate of £6m for the repair of the deck structure is small change compared to its massive reserves, with a big benefit.

The public inquiry

Following great efforts by SAVE and its supporters, many of whom wrote to the Secretary of State, Thornfield's applications were called in for consideration at a public inquiry. We are now deeply into this – with the developer having given evidence over the last two weeks. SAVE will give evidence in the week of 8th January, although this is a little flexible, and the City and English Heritage in the two weeks starting 11th December. What follows are our briefings on the first two weeks to give you a taste of proceedings.

The public are welcome to attend the inquiry, which is being held on the 8th floor at Bankside House, 24 Sumner Street, London (directly behind Tate Modern).

The inquiry sits from Tuesday to Friday, 10am-5pm except Friday (9.30am-3.30pm) The order of evidence amongst the main parties is Thornfield, the City, English Heritage and then SAVE

The first week at the public inquiry saw the battle lines set, attacks launched and defences set.

Following a discussion as to whether SAVE should be allowed to cross examine Thornfield and the City's engineering witnesses (Thornfield's QC, Mr Katkowski, generously conceded the point on the grounds that SAVE is a charity); opening statements were read by each of the four parties - Thornfield and the City on the one side, and SAVE and English Heritage on the other.

SAVE's opening statement focussed on the development being about profit, not need nor conservation, and English Heritage made the point that in 2002 the City could have sold the building for £8m (against a repair cost for the railway tunnels under the structure for £6m at that time).

Thornfield made the case that the railway tunnels under the structure are in such a precarious situation that they have to be taken down and a new deck erected - and the only way of doing that in the time table allowed by Thameslink works is through a large commercial development.

The City's opening statement made it quite clear that this is a special case - although the General Market buildings contribute positively to the conservation area (and so there is a legal presumption in favour of their preservation), the benefits of Thornfield's scheme for the travelling public are so great as to outweigh the loss of the buildings.

Thornfield started their evidence with Mr Polisano of architects Kohn Pedersen Fox. He talked the inquiry through his designs for a seven storey office with shops and a public space on the ground floors (which are on two levels), and for the construction of four storeys within the retained walls of the Annex and listed Red House.

Mr Polisano was cross examined first by English Heritage's QC, Mr McCracken. This showed that retention of the existing buildings was no part of his brief, that the context for his new building was more the Farringdon Road than the Smithfield Conservation Area, and examined details of his design such as his "irregular" braces, "gruyere" screen and "stealth" roof. Mr Polisano mentioned that he had not really thought about other UK market halls while considering his new public space / market hall.

Mr David Cooper, for SAVE Britain's Heritage, aided by Mr David Smith QC cross-examined Mr Polisano on the nature of the materials he chose for the buildings and their relationship with the character of the conservation area, the longevity of the building, and his most recent set of changes to the design (this being his third scheme for the site).

The third day of the inquiry brought with it a request from SAVE for Network Rail to appear at the inquiry to explain, amongst other things, the nature of the timing of Thameslink and how this might impact any schemes above.

Following this, Dr Steedman took the stand for Thornfield, on the engineering case for demolition. He noted that the deck structure the General Market sits on is in a poor state of repair, which he considers "unsafe", and that repair is not an acceptable option. He labelled one repair technique devised by Alan Baxter Associates (when acting for Thornfield) as "a waste of time" and pulled the "old foundations" trick.

Dr Steedman was cross-examined first by English Heritage. He stressed that the deck structure was "clearly unsafe" in spite of their being no visible signs of collapse, and that the lower flange fixings were the elements in worst condition. The cross-examination sought to show that the question of timing the works to coincide with Thameslink was a way for the City to save money rather than a matter of necessity, and then demonstrated that the degree of uncertainty about the works needed to demolish and replace the buildings and deck structure would mean that the works would extend beyond 2009.

On the fourth day of the inquiry Mr Cooper for SAVE cross-examined Dr Steedman. This affirmed that the responsibility for the deck was the City's, not Network Rail's, that the deck structures were in their current state through neglect, and had they been maintained properly they would be perfectly serviceable. Mr Cooper focussed Dr Steedman on the question of safety - if the tunnels were so dangerous, why are trains running through them?

Mr Cooper then took Dr. Steedman on to Network Rail's position, as stated in their only communication to the inquiry, from which it was clear that there was extra time after 2009 for works to the decks (meaning repair could be an option), that Network Rail did not appear especially interested in the nature of those works (i.e. repair or replacement), that safety was not mentioned as an issue in the letter (in spite of Dr Steedman's assertions), and that if repair was truly pressing, Network Rail would have drawn up their own alternative scheme for the decks the buildings sit on, given the number of obstacles the current application faces (including a potential judicial review).

Mr Kut gave evidence on the viability of Thornfield's scheme and on the merits or otherwise of alternative proposals for the General Market buildings by comparing them to standard valuation models.

The second week started off with discussion by English Heritage's QC, Mr McCracken, as to whether the environmental impact statement tallied with the planning application, particularly in reference to the building's green credentials.

The first day was largely taken up with detailed discussion of the economics of the scheme and of alternatives, with Mr Kut being cross examined by Mr McCracken. A key point which arose seemed to be that the developer would require a pre-let of 60% of the building before construction could go ahead, yet the full timetable for demolition (which cannot happen in a conservation area without a signed contract for construction) would be about 4.5 years. Mr Kut noted that it would be difficult to achieve such a pre-let.

It was noted that all appraisals of the alternatives to demolition assumed that the developer would be paying for the repair of the railway decks, even though this is the City of London's obligation.

Possibly the most confusing quote of the day and entire inquiry, which came from Mr McCracken when asked which question he wanted a witness to answer, was "the question that I put to you earlier and that you answered in the way that you did".

Dr Chris Miele then gave evidence on how the new scheme would be beneficial to the heritage of the area. His cross examination by Mr McCracken looked at how some of his reports had come about, the effect of the proposals on the skyline of the conservation area, the impact on the interior of the listed Red House, and the discreet nature of Victorian engineering in the area, contrasted with the structural braces of the proposal.

Mr Cooper for SAVE cross examined Dr Miele on his arguments that the PPG15 criteria for demolition should be laid aside in this case. A certain pleasure was no doubt taken by those fighting the demolition proposals in seeing Dr Miele essentially agree with Mr Cooper that less weight should be applied to the economics of repair because of the neglect of the buildings, and that "real

efforts" to find new uses for the buildings meant "significant" or "genuine" (no discernable efforts have been made by the scheme's proponents or the City in this area). After some further persuasion, Dr Miele conceded that planning guidance insists that the building should have been offered on the market before permission to demolish was applied for.

Mr Simmons then gave evidence on the planning issues for Thornfield, summing up the issues raised by the rest of his team. Mr McCracken's cross examination looked at the capacity of the area for extra jobs. There was a little confusion as to whether the area is in east or central London (the London Plan being the cause of confusion).

Mr Cooper's cross examination revealed that Mr Simmons felt that even if the proposal did harm to the conservation area it should get permission. He did however eventually agree that if either the Thameslink window of opportunity for works to the tunnel or the actual need to replace the decks proved not to be real, the presumption in favour of preservation of the General Market, as a building that contributes positively to the conservation area, remains.

Day three of week two started off with Prof Tavernor giving evidence on the townscape impact of the proposals, which he felt was entirely positive, while stating that the historic General Market building has a negative effect on the character of the conservation area - indeed he felt that it was a conventional Victorian building.

Mr McCracken's cross examination focussed on the roofscape of the conservation area and the discordant scale of the proposals when compared to the scale set by the Grade II* listed Meat Market and the Grade II listed Poultry Market.

SAVE's cross examination was left to your not-entirely-disinterested narrator, who Prof Tavernor helped by showing that the scale of the proposals was unprecedented in the conservation area; its materials entirely alien to the conservation area; that a number of Thornfield's images of the proposals were inaccurate; that the conservation area edge was clearly defined by existing post war development (and so didn't need a new building to mark it) and that the General Market building is not isolated within the conservation area.

The afternoon was taken up with Dr Matthews for the City of London giving evidence on the deck structure and its state of repair. This looked in quite some detail at previous structural analysis, rivet condition and the timing of repairs. He noted that there was no need to close the Thameslink line for safety reasons at the moment, and made it clear that the "high risk" involved in repair was to do with its timing, not with the actual repairs. He detailed a possible repair scheme for the deck.

The final day of the week saw Mr McCracken cross examine Dr Matthews on how parts of the deck could be replaced without resorting to total demolition, as well as

on repair. Those at the inquiry were treated to a discussion of bottom flange integrity rebolting amongst other things. The timing of possible repair schemes was discussed in depth and it was noted that the City has a right to whatever possessions of the railway are required for the repair of the decks under the 1880 agreement. It was established that in a very worst case scenario, repair might take twenty four months.

SAVE did not cross examine Dr. Matthews

What can you do to help?

Please write (and ask your friends to) to the Inspector, Mr Kenneth Barton, at the Planning Inspectorate, The Temple Quay House, 2 The Square, Temple Quay, Bristol BS1 6PN making the points that the existing buildings contribute positively to the historic Smithfield area, that the current plans are entirely insensitive and will result in buildings that dominate the area, that the demolition is unnecessary as the decks the buildings sit on can be repaired, and that it is the City's duty to repair them

"Standing on Snow Hill and looking at a single bay of one of these buildings, one can see the supreme skill with which the soft red rubber bricks were worked to create the arched ventilation opening, with its cut brick sill below. The way the bricks have been worked makes them appear as easy to shape as a dish of strawberry mousse"
Ptolemy Dean

"All of these buildings are of architectural and historic interest, and deserve not only respect but careful treatment and conservation, not demolition, or gutting and stuffing. I urge their retention, conservation and a scholarly approach to the design problems for which there are actually professionally qualified people capable of doing the work" Professor Emeritus James Stevens Curl

"What other nation would demolish buildings of this resonance, quality and pedigree?" Tim Knox, Director of Sir John Soane's Museum

"All that is required is a recognition that later Victorian architecture of this school is understood and appreciated now for what it is and that we no longer expect all Renaissance architecture to be strictly governed by antique precedent in the use of orders. The Germans didn't demolish the Riechstag because the original dome had gone" Prof David Walker

Pathfinder

For some reason Government refuses to divest itself of the house-builder driven bulldozer that masquerades as the Housing Market Renewal Initiative. A recent report from the National Audit Office damned the scheme with the faintest of praise, noting that housing markets had indeed improved in areas covered by the initiative – but that it is impossible to tell whether it has had any material impact beyond already demolishing 10,000 homes (and in some cases exacerbating the situation).

The recent government spending round promised another £1bn to the project over the next five years, and there were noises from various ministers that this would have strings attached – to do with house building targets it seems rather than renovation and renewal of existing stock. While the change in focus away from demolition is welcome (even with a little creativity – it is now claimed that initial demolition targets were 90,000, not the 200,000+ targets in various Government documents or suggestions of 400,000 in the Pathfinders' document *"Moving forward: The Northern Way"*), any clear direction in the policy is lacking. There has not yet been a national press conference by Government explaining the policy to anyone, perhaps not all that surprising really.



DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT
Housing Market Renewal

REPORT BY THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL HC 23 (2014) 200-208 11 November 2015

In terms of local fights, the valiant efforts of Simon Hugill in Darwen have come to the point where the THIRD public inquiry into the compulsory purchase of the Red Earth Triangle has resulted in defeat for the local campaign. The Edge Lane campaign in Liverpool is nearing its second public inquiry and SAVE will give evidence. It is surely patently unfair that if a public authority does not get its way the first or even second time around it is allowed another crack of the whip – surely if defeated once these democratically elected bodies should tell their officers and the unelected Pathfinders that enough is enough – if they have signed contracts with big development companies for the land it is they who should take the hit for their folly, not local communities.

Nuffield Place, Near Henley-on-Thames

“Humble” is a word that is increasingly rare in our days of media-hungry two-bit stars seeking fame for an utter lack of talent and a wardrobe of expensive designer rags. The very antithesis of this must be William Morris (no, not that one), 1st Viscount Lord Nuffield, a man who made more money than is imaginable and then gave large amounts of it away - £30 million over the course of his lifetime, or about £600 million in 1997 money, much of it for medical research. His fortune came from the Morris Motor Company, which he set up and developed, starting in Cowley, Oxford, producing 400 cars in 1919, leaping up to 56,000 in 1925.

Nuffield College in Oxford today bears his name and owns his home – a relatively modest but attractive house of 1914, extended 1933 (see *Small Country Houses of Today*, Sir Laurence Weaver), not a giant palace, on the edge of the Chilterns overlooking the Oxford plains, not far from Henley-upon-Thames. This house and its unrestored gardens are currently open to the public and the house is pretty much as it was when Lord Nuffield died in 1963. It is a friendly, entirely unpretentious vision of 1930s domestic bliss. No flashy turrets, heated swimming pools, grouse shooting or swanky interiors here. Indeed in Lord Nuffield’s modest bedroom, one of the wardrobes disguises a built in workshop.



Nuffield Place, with the 1930s extension to the right

The house is run by a small charity, which keeps it open and runs educational programmes. However it does not have control of the contents nor the actual house, both of which are owned by Nuffield College. Its latest Warden is a former member of the Bank of England’s Monetary Policy Committee. His thoughts on heritage are not widely known, but rumours have been growing that he is seeking to sell the house and turn in a tidy profit for the college.

This leaves the trust in a twist. If it starts a campaign, it might get booted out of the house. If it doesn’t start a campaign, it might get kicked out. Legal advice is that it is only there by the grace of the college. Naturally our advice has been to fire up a campaign and we will ride in support – this modest man’s wonderful legacy remains an example to us all.

Tipton Joint School

More evidence that the listing process in England is bursting at the seams. We have reports from the Black Country of an application for listing being made by the Tipton Society for the 1913-14 Tipton Joint School. However, its owner, the irrepressible Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council moved in and pulled down the school shortly thereafter. Three weeks later (and three months after the initial application) the amenity society received a post card from English Heritage saying that they were “considering it”. A case for the former Culture Minister, Tessa Jowell’s, virtual heritage?

Regent Palace Hotel, Piccadilly Circus, London

Efforts by SAVE and the Twentieth Century Society a couple of years, ago resulted in a scheme for the demolition of this robust Edwardian hotel at the heart of London being withdrawn by the Crown Estates, which frankly should have known better than to try to demolish this sort of building. Another happy result of the campaign was the listing of the building at Grade II.



One of the many faience details that would be lost as part of the demolition scheme

However, this did not appear to be enough to distract the Crown Estate from its dastardly aims – it has now come back with a scheme which retains the corners of the building but rips out its guts and replaces them with an office which might generously be described as a little fussy in its design. The Crown Estate’s claim is that the building cannot make money as a hotel, and that its floor to ceiling height of 2.84m is not flexible enough to allow

its adaptation. Oh, and the cost of repairing the faience exterior is too expensive.

This really is first-class baloney. The Crown Estate has been busy redeveloping Regent Street as a prime retail location (it was hardly second-rate before), and a part of its plan is to ensure that there are plenty of people around there who can afford the shops – thus the plan for an office block rather than a large hotel providing cheap accommodation at the heart of the city. Cheap hotels simply are not on its agenda. The argument put to SAVE by the Crown Estate was that this scheme would allow the retention of the Metropole building on Northumberland Avenue – again entirely specious.

The Crown Estate quite simply has a moral duty as a public guardian of historic buildings (however accidental this may be) to ensure that the historic buildings in its care are made use of in a positive way, and are not disposed of or demolished for short term, short sighted reasons. An organisation such as this should be immune to fashions and able to take the long term view as to how its heritage can enhance its estate rather than wiping it out in pursuit of the highest financial return: best value is not always about top dollar.



The 1960s-style block is the replacement proposal

SAVE has opposed the new scheme for the Regent Palace Hotel in the strongest terms and will continue to do so – we find it hard to believe that the building does not have an economically viable future. Ironically, the Crown Estate is busy repairing and refitting the fine art deco annex building next door (not surprisingly unlisted).

Kensington Palace Hotel

Another day, another decent conservation area building is condemned by a bunch of local authority officers as the replacement is going to be so much better. In this case, the buildings in question formed part of an 1870s terrace, typical of the area and eminently adaptable to any number of economically viable uses. However, starchitect David Chipperfield pulled a rabbit out of the hat with a design that wowed officers so much that they

recommended to the planning committee that the terrace be pulled down and replaced with his startling design. For your benefit we have included before and after pictures. In our humble opinion, it could have been designed by a ten year old with a ruler.



Perfectly decent historic buildings forming part of a conservation area, which will be “enhanced” by the construction of the building below, or so we are told



This case is symptomatic of a wider problem in the conservation world – of officers in local authority desperate to meet government targets for speeding up the planning process acting under delegated powers – those pesky planning committees take up so much time and might reject applications, creating even more work. As a result we are seeing increasing numbers of demolition decisions taken without review by committees – a balance which is in SAVE’s view essential.

In Tower Hamlets we have been busy supporting Tom Ridge’s brilliant campaign to prevent the demolition of pretty much everything historic in the borough – its board schools are disappearing at an alarming rate and its amazing industrial buildings are continuously threatened – the pressure will mount up as we come close to the Olympics and developers seize more opportunities in the area. It takes something like twenty letters of objection to get a demolition case before a committee. Outside of this, his efforts to have the wonderful “Fish Island” area or printworks designated a conservation area have drawn a blank, in spite of some excellent research by English Heritage (who have rather lamely refused to list pretty

much anything in the area which Tom has put forward for listing - always superbly researched and often with SAVE's support). The latest building he is fighting for is the **Mowlem Special School** – a sweet building which would easily convert to new uses. English Heritage has again refused to list.



Mowlem Special School facing the chop

Perhaps the most revolting example of officers overruling members SAVE has come across in the last year was a meeting your Secretary attended with campaigners for the (now lost) **Dalston theatre** in North London – the officers at Hackney called the meeting to negotiate, and then refused to budge one inch (other than offering to incorporate a salvaged capital or two) throughout an hour's meeting, with one of the young antipodean planning officers grinning at us throughout, knowing full well it was all a set up to shut these pesky campaigners up for a week or two. The democratic instincts behind the planning process are being eroded by targets and the lure of more money for meeting them, and old buildings needlessly suffer.

Sandford, Fife

SAVE was alerted to proposals to subdivide the main block of this major work by Mackay Hugh Baillie Scott earlier in this year. Sandford started out as a thatched cottage around 1902 by Baillie Scott for Harben J. Valentine of the postcard firm (started by John Valentine, an engraver, in 1825). Baillie Scott oversaw its enlargement in 1909, and following a fire in 1912 he undertook further work for Valentine, rebuilding and enlarging the house with a double height hall and a pergola court (and with tiles, not thatch, on the roof). The building was then taken on by Sir William Walker, and extended under Baillie Scott's direction in 1936.

Prof David Walker, who notified us of the threat, writes "It is as a house of 1912 that Sandford must be evaluated. Although arrived at piecemeal the house has a remarkably unified appearance. Its bold roof-forms, unusual plan with low-level double-height hall in the fall

of the site, and elevated forecourt screened by a pergola, make it one of Baillie Scott's finest designs from any period in his career. The obvious comparisons are with his surviving houses of the same period. Its harled exterior may be simpler than the more richly crafted Pilgrims and Michael in Kent, Undershaw in Surrey and Waldbuhl in Switzerland, but it is arguably more adventurous in composition, challenging comparison with Voysey at his best."



Sandford's main front (above) and courtyard (below)- a handsome composition not easily lending itself to subdivision



The building's last incarnation was as a hotel and while the application sought to demolish a 1970s bedroom wing it simply did not respect Baillie Scott's original layouts or fenestration. The proposal to divide the main block up into four units was simply at odds with its form, meaning and function; separating main rooms, removing staircases, creating doors in windows and so forth would have ended up with a dreadful chimera. Added to this, the gardens would also be subdivided. With this level of subdivision the chances of reuniting the house to Baillie Scott's plans – which in this case would be a laudable aim – would be lost for generations. Thankfully, the application was withdrawn in November – we hope that a more suitable scheme will come forward in time.

The Baltic Exchange

One of SAVE's biggest battles of the 1990s has come to a bittersweet conclusion. Our active involvement in the case ended some years ago, with our judicial review of Mr Prescott's decision to allow the demolition of the Grade II* listed Baltic Exchange being withdrawn after

we were outrageously threatened with costs of £10,000 per day by the building contractors.

The building was dismantled and put into storage (which varied from warehouses to muddy fields) in the hope that someone might take it on. One or two bits turned up in odd places – a couple of light fittings at auction, tiles from the bathroom in a fashion magazine photo-shoot – but it appeared a pretty hopeless cause.

Consequently, SAVE was delighted to hear that a couple of chaps from Estonia have bought it with the intention of re-erecting it in one form or another in Talin. It is just a little bit pleasing to know that even if we don't have the nous to look after our own history, somebody else understands its value.

Buildings at Risk

It has been all change in the SAVE office once again. David Plaisant left SAVE in July and we wish him well in his new role at the RIBA as Public Affairs Coordinator. Catherine Townsend took his place as Buildings at Risk Officer in September. Unfortunately our two fantastic volunteers, Dan Roberts and George Jerger, who had both committed vast amounts of their time to us, have also had to depart in order to continue their studies – we owe them both a huge debt of gratitude. A new volunteer, Francesca Callow, has agreed to join us once a week to help with the large quantities of Buildings at Risk research and updating that exists.

To reiterate the importance of the Buildings at Risk Register, there is no other body that collates a list of grade II listed buildings that are at risk of vacancy and subsequent deterioration, from across England and Wales. With grade II listed buildings forming 94% of the total listed buildings, the register is vital in monitoring and safeguarding Britain's crumbling heritage.

Work has already commenced gathering updates for the existing buildings upon our database. As the news of these current entries reaches us, great efforts are being made to update the website as quickly as possible, so that the information our Friends can access online is as accurate as possible.

Initial contact has been made with many of the Local Councils, National Park Authorities, County Councils and Building Preservation Trusts around England and Wales in order to glean more fantastic buildings in need of new uses to feature in our, as yet still unnamed, 2008 Buildings at Risk Register, due to be published in May.

There is a lot more work to do before we can go to print and we are always grateful for buildings that you have spotted which we might not have come across ourselves. Just to remind you we are interested in Buildings at Risk that are vacant and, in general, grade II listed. However we are keen to hear about any buildings of historic and architectural interest that appear to be suffering and unoccupied. If you do have any such examples then please email Catherine with an image and as many

details as possible about the building including its name and location to save@btinternet.com.

At this stage we can predict that the 2008 publication is likely to feature such buildings as the huge nineteenth century Wear Mill in Stockport, painted by Lowry and featured in our publication 'Satanic Mills'. Although roughly 10% of the building is occupied it is a vast space which is in need of a new use in order to secure its future. On a smaller scale there is the seventeenth century Old Grammar School in South Kesteven which is for sale. Or for a more secluded retreat, you might be interested in the Saethon Farmhouse in Wales.

121, Ness Road, Shoebury, Essex

In October, a member of the Southend Building Preservation Trust contacted us to express their concern for 121, Ness Road. We were told about the plight of the building which has fallen into a desperate state of disrepair following dereliction and fire damage. Consequently the property has been left boarded up, missing much of its roof and has become very overgrown.



121 Ness Road – roofless and overgrown – a classic SAVE picture from over a fence and behind a tree

Although unlisted, the building is situated within an important conservation area, to which if repaired, it would contribute a great deal. Shoeburyness Conservation Area is of national significance and is situated at the mouth of the Thames Estuary, where there has been a settlement on the site since the Iron Ages. The current Garrison dates to Napoleonic times and it was after the Royal Artillery moved there from Woolwich to use the Ness for practice firing that the area became established as a town.

There are a number of listed buildings in the area, and the special architectural and historical interest of the whole should be preserved and enhanced. The Trust has expressed their interest in the building to Southend Borough Council, but so far their efforts have been to no avail.

Thus it is that two letters have now been sent to the District Council to express our concern, as well as that of the locals, and to endeavour to find out what the Council,

as owners, intend to do with the property. Local authorities should be setting an example in their treatment of historic buildings, as outlined in planning policy guidance, rather than blocking the way of restoration where the opportunity exists. At the time of print, a response had still not been received.

Coity House, Forgeside, Blaenavon, Wales

In October, SAVE wrote to Cadw to support an application for grant aid made by the local conservation officer.

Coity House has been on our register since 2003. The house itself was built circa 1860 for the works manager of the Forgeside Ironworks Complex. It is located within the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site, one of the finest surviving examples in the world of a landscape created by coal mining and iron making in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

The two storey rendered house has been vacant since the late 1980s. In 2003, an application for a grant was submitted to Cadw but was rejected. Since then the building has deteriorated increasingly rapidly. Its risk level has increased from 3 to 1 (the highest) in only 3 years. Despite large losses to the structure of the building, sufficient fabric remains for a sympathetic restoration of the building.

SAVE held the opinion that the building should be granted the funds to enable the current owners to restore the house to its original form. Unfortunately Cadw rejected the application on account that it did not consider the building to be of outstanding interest. However, we were informed that if Torfaen County Borough Council designated a conservation area, Cadw would reconsider their decision.

Gutterclear

SAVE's perpetual mantra that prevention is better than cure is to be applied to churches in the Gloucester Diocese through a maintenance scheme run by Maintain our Heritage. Over the last five years Maintain has run a pilot maintenance scheme in Bath over a twelve month period to assess all aspects of such as service – from access to demand report techniques – and has carried out a major research project, with the assistance of a range of funding bodies.

The latest venture into churches is supported by the Prince of Wales, and private donors and English Heritage are helping pay for the administrative backup. The scheme will offer churches (and all other places of worship) a gutter and downpipe-clearing service, which will complement quinquennial inspections. Schemes using slightly different models are underway in London Diocese and St Edmondsbury. Unlike the Dutch Monumentenwacht, the aim of these services is to be self sustaining and not require subsidy, and so in theory eventually expandable to other buildings. We will watch

the Gloucester scheme with great interest and wish it every success. www.gutterclear.org

Victorian Architecture: Diversity & Invention

Professor James Stevens Curl's new volume on Victorian Architecture has found a happy spot on our bookshelves – lavishly illustrated, splendidly written and magisterial in its scope, it is a joyous testament to the notion that architectural historians never really retire, they just become more practiced at their art. The campaigner in Curl remains as strong as ever – the title page includes the quote from the Aeneid "*Forsan et haec olim meinisse iuvabit*" (Perhaps one day it will be agreeable to remember even these things).

Curl's view is neither limited to the UK nor purely to buildings – there is a chapter on *Reform and Hygiene* which takes us under the streets, and he reminds us that Gothic was far from all pervasive as a style. He captures the excitement of the new materials and the brilliant way Victorian architects put them to use through both text and lavish illustration, making use of colour plates to illustrate the richly textured interiors of churches, pubs and Parliament.

At 636 pages this is a seriously hefty tome and one which amply illustrates the diversity, creativity and skill of Victorian architects, coloured with some wonderful personal insight such as Curl recalling Lime Street Station in 1947, before the clean air acts as "a fascinating, yet horrible vision of a Sublime Inferno".

Pub Spire Books, £69.95, ISBN 978 1904 965 060

Pevsner: Worcestershire

It is always a pleasure to look at a familiar place through different eyes, and so reviewing the updated and expanded edition of one's own county in the Pevsner is a fun exercise in skipping around the countryside, in this case through plum orchards and past asparagus fields to smaller country houses such as Craycombe or Evesham Abbey Manor, through still recognisably mediaeval towns (some retaining, I have always thought, their mediaeval populations), on to the arts and crafts delights of Madresfield via the wonderful abbey remains of Pershore, Evesham and Malvern. One floats down the rivers Avon and Severn, eventually to the county town with its glorious cathedral sitting in judgement over the cricket club. Alan Brooks captures all of this, along with the historic farms, pubs and churches that form the rural landscape with concision and ease, wearing his scholarship lightly – the only gripe with it your Secretary could find is that his old 17th century boozier with a perfect 1950s interior doesn't get a mention...

Alan Brookes and Niklaus Pevsner, pub Yale 846ppp £29.95 ISBN 978 0300 112 986

London Above Eye Level: Glimpses of the Unexpected

John Murray's splendid stocking filler tests your powers of observation with around 100 images of the often very fine sculpture on London's buildings – dragons, lions, wolves, elephants – it's a dangerous world up there – tempered by putto, Graces, thinkers, angels and warriors. A slice of architectural fun to remind you that there is more to the city than the street level.

Pub Frances Lincoln, 160pp £9.99 ISBN 071 122 8310

In Search of the Perfect House

SAVE's President Marcus Binney has pulled off a massive feat in compiling a number (well, 500 to be precise) of the best houses he has visited in his career into a handsome volume. Rather than being the usual selection of National Trust owned country houses, Marcus has stuck pretty well to those in private ownership, providing an enticing and delightful selection, each one written up with his usual vigour - a blend of architectural history and stories about the buildings make the book an eater of time.

Amongst the selection is a fair number of old SAVE cases, a number of others entirely unfamiliar and yet thoroughly delightful, and a few that might be recognised by followers of Marcus's writings in *The Times* "Bricks and Mortar" section.

In the tradition of buying presents for people that you secretly want yourself, we're buying a truckload and strongly recommend this as essential reading to all incurable romantics and lovers of old houses.

Copies available from SAVE for £30 each

*Pub Weidenfield and Nicolson 880pp
ISBN 978 029 784 556*

A Guide to the Industrial Archaeology of Lancashire

The slightly unprepossessing title of this booklet disguises a rather wonderful, simple and old fashioned study of county's amazing industrial past, with concise Pevsnerite descriptions that remind you of the massive achievements of the industrial age – canals and cuttings, viaducts and mills, weaving sheds and swing bridges, amusement parks and bus garages all make the grade in this unfussy little number.

Pub AIA 56pp ISBN 978 095 289 3097

SAVE NEEDS AN ADMINISTRATOR!

SAVE is looking for a part-time administrator to help run its small and slightly unconventional office. Administrative experience is required and knowledge of databases operation is desirable. An interest in heritage and the organisation's activities would be a bonus. The position is two days per week, and the salary is £17,500

pro rata. If you are interested, please contact the office for a full job description and application form on 020 7253 3500. The deadline for completed application forms is **Monday January 7th**.

Thanks to Alice Robinson

SAVE would like to take the opportunity to express its sincere thanks to Alice Robinson for all her assistance over the years, from the No1 Poultry case onwards. As a barrister with a taste for planning and listed buildings law, Alice has given SAVE countless hours of her expertise both formally and informally, helping SAVE articulate its arguments through the courts to ensure local authorities and ministers listen. Alice has now taken up an appointment on the circuit bench and we wish her every success in her future.

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