

# SAVE

BRITAIN'S HERITAGE  
NEWSLETTER WINTER 2021



Behind closed doors:  
Historic interiors at risk  
Rural railway stations in peril  
Why do historic urban places matter?



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# SAVE

## BRITAIN'S HERITAGE NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2021

### Director's welcome

by Henrietta Billings



Welcome to the winter 2021 issue of the SAVE newsletter. We kick off with the beautiful front cover image of Capel Mawr, a Methodist Chapel in Talysarn, a small slate mining village in North West Wales. This SOS call to rescue the building – abandoned and disused – is one of a series of dramatic and precious interiors highlighted in our Buildings at Risk Register from across the UK.

Our lead story is the Custom House, the grade I listed former HM Customs building on the banks of the Thames in the heart of the City of London. Following objections from SAVE, the Georgian Group and others, the hotel conversion proposals have been dramatically refused permission by the City's planning committee, and the scene is set for a public inquiry in early 2022. As one of the most imposing landmarks fronting the River Thames, it has been in continuous government use for more than 200 years. Public access to the magnificent Long Room and the riverside terrace is crucial to

its role and contribution to the capital.

Also in London, we helped community groups successfully campaign to fight off plans for large scale redevelopment in the heart of South Kensington. Our conservation officer Ben Oakley spoke at the heated planning committee meeting and we submitted independent computer renderings of the impact of the new development.

In Scotland we are working on alternative plans for Ayr's landmark Station Hotel – a Victorian French château style building under threat from demolition, and continuing the railway theme, we report on our campaign challenging a string of new demolition applications for unlisted historic station buildings in East Anglia.

Professor Rebecca Madgin, one of our guest contributors reflects on her recent research at the University of Glasgow, 'Why do historic urban places matter?'. SAVE was a project partner in this fascinating study which drew on our archive of reports and press releases – linking the important emotional relationship between people and place. Jack Pearce, who led a successful campaign to save the Sandonia Cinema and Theatre in Stafford from imminent demolition, charts the battle and shares pointers for anyone facing similar challenges and demolition proposals.

Back in London we re-visit The Strand and the exciting opportunities

afforded by the pedestrianisation of the Aldwych currently underway – a concept championed by SAVE back in 2015 when we successfully challenged the demolition plans for four houses next to Somerset House, and again in 2017 over our campaign to save St Mary le Strand.

Graeme Bickerdike, leader of the high-profile Historic Railways Estate Group, reflects on his organisation's work to highlight the controversial National Highways infilling of historic tunnels and bridges – and the campaign that has achieved a temporary halt to the government's plans.

Our casework overview highlights our current campaigns from the M&S Oxford Street store (please sign the petition!) and Worcester city centre's re-development plans to Zeals House in Wiltshire and the Ice Factory in Grimsby. We close with a tribute to the architect Doug Reid who died earlier this year. He was a great friend and SAVE collaborator who worked with us on a number of high-profile campaigns – drawing up alternative schemes for Brandon Station in Suffolk and Sarny Castle in Poland for our sister organisation SAVE Europe's Heritage.

Thank you for supporting SAVE this year – as our Friends and Saviours you are critical to our existence and our success. From everyone here we wish you a peaceful Christmas and New Year. Here's to more successful campaigns in 2022. **S**



# Emphatic refusal of hotel plans sets stage for public inquiry

The City of London Corporation has voted unanimously to refuse plans to convert London's Custom House into a hotel, citing the lack of public access and harm to the building's heritage significance. Henrietta Billings reports.

In a highly unusual and welcome move, councillors on the City of London's Planning Committee have backed the recommendation by planning officers to reject plans to convert the grade I listed Custom House to a 200-room hotel. The unanimous vote in October 2021 means the proposals will now be examined by the Planning Inspectorate at a public inquiry in January 2022, following an appeal by the developer that the application had not been determined quickly enough.

Working with heritage and conservation expert Alec Forshaw, SAVE Britain's Heritage submitted detailed representations to the committee, stating that, "*The Custom House is one of London's great public buildings, of national and international importance. SAVE agrees with other objectors that the current proposals harm*

*the historic fabric and appearance of the building...but our main concern is that the scheme does not provide adequate secure, permanent, inclusive and unfettered public access. The harm caused far outweighs the public benefits offered.*"

Of consistent concern throughout the debate was the lack of sufficient public access proposed to the building's interiors and quayside overlooking the Thames, which would be severely restricted to limited areas and times under the control of the hotel operator.

In the officer's report, published ahead of the meeting, planning officers had cited four key grounds for refusing the plans, including insufficient public access, heritage harm, poor design, and harm to strategic views from the rooftop extensions proposed.

The plans have drawn strong objections from numerous heritage groups including the Georgian Group, London and Middlesex Archaeological Society (LAMAS), the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB), and Historic Buildings and Places. The campaign was also highlighted in a detailed article in *Spitalfields Life*.

Our main concern is that public access to the interior (including the Long Room) and to the Quayside Terrace is critical to securing the City Corporation's vision for regenerating the riverside. In our view the current proposals do not provide adequate



This drawing by T.H. Shepherd from 1826 illustrates how public access has been a historic feature of the Custom House and Quay (Credit: alamy)

Right: Aerial view of the Custom House and its grand Thameside setting (Credit: alamy)





permanent unencumbered public access to these spaces. In addition, the potential requirements of the hotel for private and exclusive events appear to take precedent over public access.

### History

The 1820s Custom House overlooking the Pool of London is a grand classical composition in the mould of Somerset House and the Edwardian County Hall next to the London Eye.

For more than 200 years it served as offices for customs officers and retains many fine original features like the grand staircases, vaulted basements and original Regency fireplaces and panelling.

Yet over the last 50 years, this

grade I listed masterpiece has been all but forgotten, screened by trees from river boats and high security fences.

We look forward to the public inquiry and robust and independent scrutiny of the plans. **S**



*The Long Room at the heart of the Custom House, pictured in 1910 (Credit: Chronicle)*

@ [www.savebritainsheritage.org/campaigns/item/750/PRESS-RELEASE-Emphatic-refusal-of-Custom-House-hotel-plans-sets-stage-for-public-inquiry](https://www.savebritainsheritage.org/campaigns/item/750/PRESS-RELEASE-Emphatic-refusal-of-Custom-House-hotel-plans-sets-stage-for-public-inquiry)

👉 See SAVE's alternative scheme for reusing the Custom House drawn up by architect John Burrell here: [www.savebritainsheritage.org/campaigns/article/672/press-release-future-of-magnificent-thames-landmark-to-be-decided-by-city-corporation](https://www.savebritainsheritage.org/campaigns/article/672/press-release-future-of-magnificent-thames-landmark-to-be-decided-by-city-corporation)









# Renaissance in the Ayr?

Following years hidden behind protective scaffolding, SAVE is now preparing an alternative vision for Ayr's landmark Station Hotel with the intention that its future can finally be secured.

For 130 years Ayr's grand Station Hotel has straddled the large Victorian station over the historic mainline from Glasgow to Stranraer. Opened in 1886, the building is arguably the finest of the group of grand hotels built by the Glasgow and South Western Railway along the line in the 1880s. Constructed in a French château style, the hotel is built from beautiful russet red Ballochmyle sandstone which is sadly no longer quarried.

Since 2013, the imposing grade B listed landmark has been left to decay, partly because access to the platform front of the hotel for repairs and maintenance was limited to hours between midnight and 4am.

Structural condition and feasibility reports published in October 2019 and



*The station hotel has been hidden under protective scaffolding since 2018 (Credit: Ayrshire Post)*



*The grand interiors of the south wing still survive despite dereliction (Credit: BCD)*

*Opposite: The French château styled pitched roof of the station hotel's central tower (Credit: Nigel Hackett)*



February 2021 estimated the cost of restoring the station hotel building at £9.9 million, just less than the cost mooted by Transport Scotland in 2018 for demolishing the entire station for a new-build replacement.

SAVE Britain's Heritage has for three years been supporting a local community campaign in fighting to secure a brighter future for the hotel as part of emerging plans for larger-scale regeneration of the town. Last year we published a report *Ayr Station Hotel. A New Journey*, which sought to raise awareness about the building's plight and showcase examples of other railway hotels saved and successfully brought back into use.

With the legal wrangle over the hotel's ownership and upkeep ongoing, we have recently focused our attention on drawing up alternative plans to show how the hotel can be saved and put to viable new use.

The plans will be ready in early 2022, so watch this space! [S](#)



*Aerial photograph of Ayr Station in 2018 with the long hotel running along the western side (Credit: Network Rail)*

*Below: The striking western range of the station hotel before total closure in 2017 (Credit: Nigel Hackett)*

[@ www.savebritainsheritage.org/campaigns/article/706/press-release-ayr-becoming-a-city-of-holes](https://www.savebritainsheritage.org/campaigns/article/706/press-release-ayr-becoming-a-city-of-holes)



Access our report *Ayr Station Hotel. A New Journey* here: [bit.ly/3dJaccC](https://bit.ly/3dJaccC)







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Photo: Brandon Station, Suffolk





# Rural railway stations in peril





**Following SAVE’s successful campaign for Brandon Station in 2020, Ben Oakley reports on our continued fight against a string of new demolition applications for other rural railway stations in East Anglia in 2021.**

Fighting for our railway heritage has been a regular feature of SAVE Britain’s Heritage campaigns since its inception in 1975. However, defeating the threat of demolition is often just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to saving railway buildings.

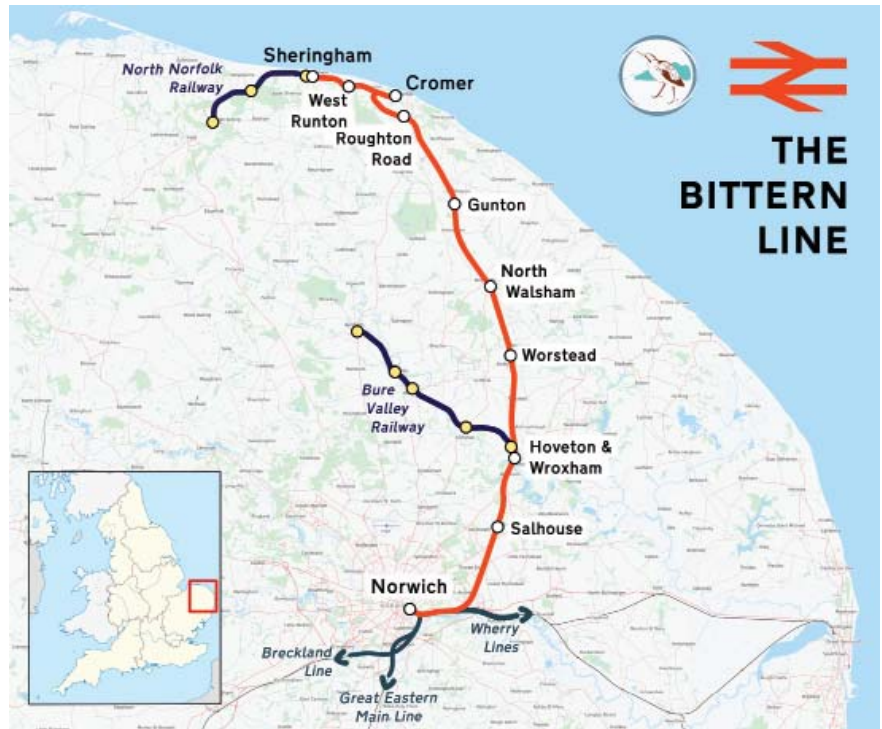
Our eleventh-hour reprieve in 2020 for Brandon Station on the Suffolk Norfolk border between Cambridge and Norwich is just one such example. We were successful in our legal challenge to quash rail operator Abellio Greater Anglia’s application to demolish the 1845 flint building under permitted development rights. Our subsequent listing application was also approved and now we are working with the Suffolk Building Preservation Trust on plans for repair and reuse.

It is therefore all the more concerning that we have had to initiate legal action to save two other rural stations in East Anglia which, just as at Brandon, are subject to demolition applications by the same operator Abellio Greater Anglia.

**Salhouse Station, Norfolk**

Set at the edge of a small village just north of Norwich, Salhouse Station opened in 1874 and is the first of six stations along the branch line up to Sheringham and Cromer built in the 1870s known as the Bittern Line. The Bittern Line initiated an important period of growth in tourism in the region, seeing the Norfolk Broads and the northern coast of Norfolk become the noted tourist spots they remain today.

The station building which survives on the ‘up’ platform dates from 1890 and boasts an unusually



*Route map of the Bittern Line showing the location of Salhouse Station (Credit: Wikipedia)*



*The cast iron columns beneath the canopy at Salhouse have decorative oriental patterns (Credit: Gerard Stamp)*

*Opposite: Salhouse Station with the waiting room and canopy threatened with demolition (Credit: Michael Collins)*



large but charming dogtooth canopy, supported by three ornate cast iron columns and decorative capitals with Japanese inspired designs attributed to the noted Norfolk architect Thomas Jeckyll. An intriguing alternative has also been put forward by Dr Susan Weber and Catherine Arbuthnott of the Bard Graduate Centre in New York in their book on Thomas Jeckyll, suggesting that the station may have in fact been the work of W.N. Ashbee, the designer of several other Great Eastern Railway Company stations around this date.

Despite the building's charm and important historical associations, in June 2021 we received news that Greater Anglia had applied to Breckland Council to demolish the structure under permitted development rights. In response to the council's subsequent decision to approve the demolition, SAVE's Solicitor Susan Ring and Richard Harwood QC have successfully challenged the council's decision which has now been quashed. SAVE is working with the Norfolk Building Preservation Trust and the

local community on a scheme of repair and reuse.

We have also applied for the station building to be listed, with a decision by Historic England still pending.

### **Weeley Station, Essex**

Built in a distinctive slender Italianate style, Weeley is one of four stations built by the Great Eastern Railway when it extended the Great Eastern Mainline from Colchester to Walton-on-the-Naze on the Essex Coast in





1866. Despite surviving the Beeching cuts of the 1960s, Weeley's station building, which originally housed a waiting room and ticket office, has been left empty and neglected for years by the station's current leaseholder Abellio Greater Anglia, who, just as at Salhouse, gained approval in July 2021 to demolish it for a new shelter under permitted development rights.

SAVE has been granted time to try and secure a new use by Greater Anglia and is working with a local rail preservation group to explore options. We have also submitted an



Route map of the Sunshine Coast line showing the location of Weeley Station (Credit: Wikipedia)



application to list the Victorian station house, which includes evidence shedding light on the station's important historic and architectural associations with noted railway engineer Peter Bruff and prolific station architect Frederick Barnes.

Weeley shares a distinctive architectural language with the contemporaneous stations at Alresford and Great Bentley, which are also

unlisted and in the demolition sights of Greater Anglia. Many original architectural details survive, including ornate curved brick window dressings, protruding central dormer windows on either side and an unusual pergola waiting shelter facing the platform.

We are keen to hear of any other boarded up historic stations which may be at risk, especially unlisted ones, so please get in touch. [S](#)



Historic photograph of Weeley Station looking in better shape in 1992 (Credit: Rail Archive)

Left: Weeley Station, with its unusual platform pergola, has long-been abandoned by Greater Anglia (Credit: Michael Collins)

[www.savebritainsheritage.org/campaigns/item/758/PRESS-RELEASE-Quintessential-rural-station-saved-following-legal-challenge](https://www.savebritainsheritage.org/campaigns/item/758/PRESS-RELEASE-Quintessential-rural-station-saved-following-legal-challenge)

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SOUTH KENSINGTON STATION

METROPOLITAN  
AND  
DISTRICT  
RAILWAYS

SOUTH  
KENSINGTON  
STATION

METROPOLITAN  
AND  
DISTRICT  
RAILWAYS

Welcome to  
South Kensington  
Station

Circle line

District line

Priority

Information  
Board

Information  
Board

Finlays

Station  
Tobaccos

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# South Kensington deserves better

Following a three-year campaign by SAVE and local groups, controversial plans for a large-scale development at the heart of historic South Kensington have been refused by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Ben Oakley picks up the story so far.

On 18th November 2021 councillors on Kensington and Chelsea's Major Planning Applications Committee unanimously dismissed highly contested plans for four large blocks of offices and flats around South Kensington Underground Station.

In refusing the proposals, councillors singled out several elements of the scheme for particular criticism. This included the demolition of the listed station 'bullnose' and the five-storey replacement building proposed in its place, and the design and massing of the scheme as a whole which was felt to be uncharacteristic of South Kensington with its rich and varied historic fabric.

The decision marks a major victory for SAVE Britain's Heritage and the residents of South Kensington, almost 3000 of whom wrote in objection to the plans (the highest number of responses ever recorded by the council against a single planning application).

Speaking at the committee meeting, SAVE argued that such a landmark location as South Kensington, exhibiting some of London's richest and most identifiable historic buildings and cultural institutions, deserved a scheme to match both its unique heritage context and deliver step-free access to the station.

Designed by architects Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners, the plans by joint developer Native Land and Transport for London have courted widespread criticism, including four residents' associations, all six ward councillors and local MP Felicity Buchan, ever

since they were first submitted in August 2020.

In contrast, a detailed report published jointly in August 2020 by SAVE and local civic society The Brompton Association – *South Kensington Heritage at Risk!* – sought to illustrate a positive alternative for

development. Images in the report show how a low-rise, heritage-led scheme might look, following the development principles set out in a Development Brief drawn up by TfL and the local community in 2016.

This shows consensus is possible and within reach. **S**



**BEFORE:** The present view across South Kensington Station from Old Brompton Road (Credit: Rendered Image Ltd)



**AFTER:** The same view but with the large blocks proposed above and around the station (Credit: Rendered Image Ltd)

Opposite: South Kensington Station in the autumn sunshine (Credit: Discover Kensington)



Our joint report with The Brompton Association, *South Kensington Heritage at Risk!* can be found here: [bit.ly/3pThDDF](https://bit.ly/3pThDDF)



# SAVE Events 2022



## WALKING TOUR

26th February 2022, 11.00 – 14.30

### Jubilee Line Extension Stations Tour

Join SAVE and former head of design and heritage for Transport for London, Mike Ashworth for a special tour of the award-winning design and architecture of London Underground's Jubilee Line Extension stations, including SAVE's successful campaign to avert the demolition of Southwark Station in 2017.

\* Travel will be by tube so you will need to have a valid Oyster card or contactless card.

Tickets: £18.00 for Friends and Saviours | £22.00 for members of the public


## WALKING TOUR


26th March 2022, 11.00 – 13.00

### The Eastern City

Starting at Liverpool Street Station and finishing at Tower Hill, former conservation principal at the London Borough of Islington Alec Forshaw will lead us through the eastern part of the City of London and the locations of two important recent SAVE cases at Bevis Marks Synagogue and the Custom House.

Tickets: £14 for Friends and Saviours / £18 for Members of the Public

 Keep an eye on our website, Twitter and Instagram pages for updates and future events.

 To book tickets for any of our events, please visit our website events page [www.savebritainsheritage.org/events](http://www.savebritainsheritage.org/events), or contact Leigh Stanford at [administrator@savebritainsheritage.org](mailto:administrator@savebritainsheritage.org) or by phone on 020 7253 3500.

Images from left to right: The striking Bank Street entrance to Canary Wharf Underground Station (Credit: rLondon) / The grade I listed Bevis Marks Synagogue is the oldest synagogue in the country in continuous use (Credit: BBC)



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**HOUSES OF WALES**

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BY THOMAS LLOYD

**SOUTH YORKS**

**BUILDINGS AT RISK**

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# Why do historic urban places matter?

Professor Rebecca Madgin reflects on how and why we form emotional attachments to urban heritage and calls for more engagement with the emotional dimensions of historic urban places.

Historic urban places matter economically, environmentally and socially. Much of the evidence for this view has focused on positive outcomes in terms of facilitating urban and economic development and, increasingly, drawing connections to wellbeing. However, historic urban places also matter emotionally although much less is known about this despite the fact that we probably each have a historic urban place that makes us feel happy or sad or angry or proud and perhaps we have even formed emotional attachments to these places.

Maybe we even share these emotional responses and attachments with others as well in the form of emotional communities. Emotion, therefore, is an inescapable aspect of our everyday interactions with historic urban places. However, it is often implicit rather than explicit and perhaps therefore we rather neglect

**“Emotion, therefore, is an inescapable aspect of our everyday interactions with historic urban places.”**

why and how we feel the ways we do.

A desire to understand how and why people form emotional attachments to historic urban places and the ways in which these attachments are considered within heritage decision making underpinned a recently completed research project. The project was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. SAVE Britain’s Heritage, along with Historic Environment Scotland and Montagu Evans LLP, was a project partner.

Within this project, emotional attachments were defined as the emotional bonds that form between people and place and the insights for this were largely drawn from the discipline of environmental psychology. The project looked at

towns and cities in the United Kingdom, particularly England and Scotland, in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This article draws on the work carried out by SAVE Britain’s Heritage in the 1970s and 1980s by highlighting some of ways the reports and press releases that were published during this period recognised the emotional relationship that existed between people and historic places.

## Why save?

The key starting point is ‘The SAVE Report’ published in *The Architects’ Journal* during European Architectural Heritage Year (1975). This report asked the crucial question: ‘why save?’ and the answers were grouped into three categories: economic, environmental, and emotional. Together they were part of a powerful argument that outlined why and how conservation was important: *“The fight to save particular buildings is not the fancy of some impractical antiquarian. It is part of the battle for the sane use of all our resources.”* (1975: 1288).

The use of the word ‘resources’ is a key indicator of the report’s focus on understanding the perception of the environmental costs and economic benefits of demolishing historic buildings. The report also recognised that emotional relationships between people and place exist and can be affected by the process of urban change: *“Demolition has often involved appalling social disruption where not only fabric but families, business and communities have been broken up. The pain and deprivation caused by the loss of the personal heritage of home, cherished*



Battersea Power Station: You may love it or loathe it, but it is impossible to ignore it (Credit: The Spaces)

Opposite: Collage of SAVE report covers published in our 1990 report SAVE: 1975–1990 (Credit: SBH)



street of familiar surroundings has been cruelly underestimated.” (1975: 1289).

SAVE’s report was published in a time where rapid urban change and large-scale urban renewal initiatives resulted in the loss of the ‘familiar and cherished local environment’ and thus provides an opportunity to understand how and why historic urban places matter emotionally.

### Forming emotional attachments

A close reading of the SAVE reports demonstrated that there was an emotional relationship between people and historic places: Liverpool, for example, “*inspires affection*” (The Agony of Georgian Liverpool, 1984). Historic streets such as Boar Lane in Leeds were said to have “*pleasing features*” (Leeds: A Lost Opportunity, 1986) and the complexity of emotional responses towards individual buildings, such as Battersea Power Station was shown with the belief that: “*You may love it or loathe it, but it is impossible to ignore it*” (The Colossus of Battersea, 1981). Emotional responses are often the most visible aspect of emotional attachments and across the project there were over 30 different emotional responses with six that were dominant: pride, fear, anger, sadness, joy and finally ‘wow’ which comprised admiration, adoration, aesthetic appreciation and awe.

However, a focus on responses does not tell us how and why a place matters so much to people that they form attachments. The research found that we could not simplify the reasons for attachments into one or two factors such as architectural or historic value. Instead there was an amalgam of interlocking parts that together formed the personalities of historic urban places, and it was to these personalities as a whole that people were attached. The personalities are

made up of tangible factors related to the places themselves, their materiality, colour, texture and architectural style as well as intangible factors such as the way places feel, the memories we have, the stories we tell, and our everyday rhythms and uses of historic places. In these ways our attachments to the personalities of historic urban places are grounded in how we see, feel and use physical locations.

One example of this can clearly be seen in SAVE’s work in the 1970s and 1980s to consider the relationship between new and old buildings and in particular a focus on conserving ‘the human scale’. “*What is at stake is the human scale and the human face of London. Traditional terrace housing, plainfare though it may sometimes be, is almost never more than two or three windows wide. Thus for every three windows there is a door on the street and often a show as well, ensuring that people are constantly walking in and out of buildings. By contrast the monolithic blocks that have replaced similar terraces nearby sometimes contain but a single*

*entrance on each side, indeed in some cases a whole side of a block is without an entrance at all. This kills all life and variety at street level.*” (One Damned Georgian Building After Another, 1981).

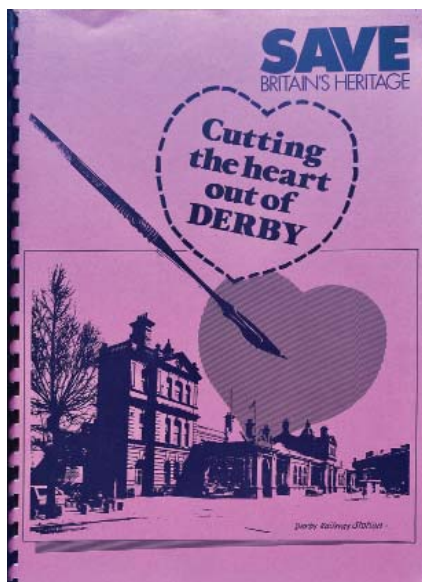
The concept of the ‘human scale’ refers to the importance of nurturing in-situ interactions. These interactions bring together the tangible and intangible dimensions of the personalities of historic places and as such inform the type, nature and intensity of attachments we can develop with place. The extent to which we do develop attachments is however context specific and the overall project did find examples where there was little evidence of attachment, a conscious process of detachment from place as well as a disbelief that attachments to certain places existed.

This brings us to the third and final dimension that reveals who forms attachments and can be encapsulated by the concept of ‘emotional communities’, defined as *those people who respond emotionally to and develop*

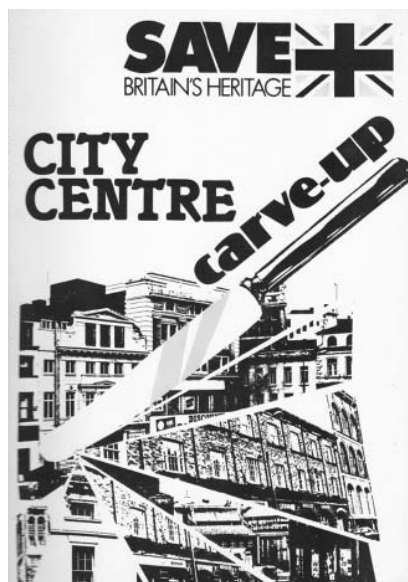
## FIVE EMOTIONAL COMMUNITIES

Type	Main Characteristics
1 Emotional communities of practice	Individuals who are involved in shaping the future of historic urban places
2 Emotional communities of interest	Individuals who coalesce around a shared interest in aspects of historic urban places such as history, technology, architecture.
3 Emotional communities of the everyday	Individuals for whom historic urban places are part of their everyday rhythms, rituals and life patterns
4 Emotional communities of use	Individuals who have a specific use(s) for historic urban places such as to work or to play
5 Emotional communities of memory	Individuals for whom historic urban places form part of their memory





Left: Cover of SAVE's 1983 report 'Cutting the heart out of Derby'  
Right: Cover of our 1982 report 'City Centre carve-up'



emotional attachments with historic urban places. Here the wider project found that there were five different emotional communities.

There were numerous examples of engagement with different communities within SAVE's work including supporting local groups, helping to create single-issue emotional communities fighting to preserve particular places, and overall a recognition that the felt and lived experiences of existing emotional communities were important. This

was often as a result of the fusion of the look, feel and contemporary use of historic places. In Gateshead for example, SAVE reported how, "A spirited campaign was mounted by the many local people who did not want to leave their homes" (What! Conservation in Gateshead?, 1982) whereas in Newcastle the emphasis was placed on businesses as, "The tenants shared the local press's fears that the arcade (Handyside Arcade, Percy Street) would be 'Eldonised' and its character lost. They saw clearly the threat

to their own livelihoods." (City Centre Carve Up, 1982). Finally SAVE also drew on existing information to better understand existing emotional communities as shown in *Satanic Mills* where they drew on the published work of Tamara Haraven and Randolph Langenbach in North America to demonstrate, "the factory workers and their families had a very special feeling for the massive industrial buildings all around them." (*Satanic Mills: Industrial Architecture in the Pennines*, 1979: 3). The overall research project found that emotional communities are overlapping and interwoven, fluid and unbounded, they can quickly emerge and disappear, they can be durable and embedded and they can be oriented towards the past, present or future.

### Recognising Emotion

The findings outlined here are drawn from SAVE's work in the context of large-scale urban change in the 1970s and 1980s. A focus on responses, attachments and communities help us to understand not just why historic places matter emotionally but also to whom they matter.

## The past before us – who cares?

Henrietta Billings reflects on Rebecca Madgin's report and SAVE's contribution as a project partner.

I was delighted to participate in this research project, giving Professor Madgin access to our archives: hundreds of now vintage SAVE reports and press releases dating back to the 1970s that made up some of the primary research material for the report.

How people feel about the historic environment around them has always

featured in our work.

The title of this piece, *The past before us – who cares?* is the amalgamation of two SAVE reports, *Our Past Before Us: Why do we save it*, published in 1981 and *Who Cares Wins*, a report on national buildings at risk from 2004.

Back in the seventies we knew that people cared about the historic environment, we wanted also to

make sure they knew in time to help SAVE Britain's Heritage – a sentence written into our original manifesto document.

I was recently alerted to the book I've just mentioned, 'Our Past Before Us – why do we SAVE it?' which showed we were considering the question about why people care.

This publication is a collection of



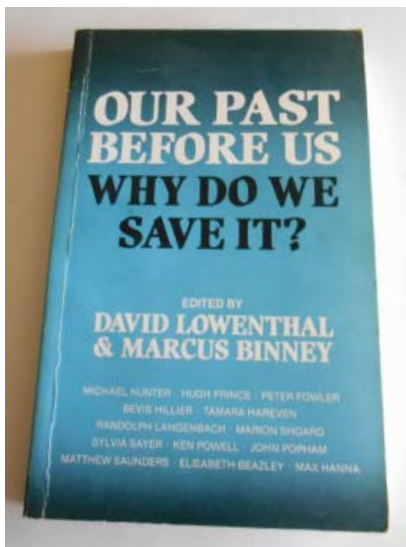
## “People come to us because they feel they must do something.”

essays edited by Marcus Binney and historian David Lowenthal. It specifically has a chapter entitled, ‘Living Places, Work Places and Historical Identity’.

Here the authors note the confines of conservation to buildings of aesthetic or historic importance rather than the everyday which form an important role in the historical memory of a community. The life stories of ordinary people and buildings they used in the past should have more respect, they argued.

This couldn't be more pertinent to Rebecca Madgin's work.

The phenomenal success of TV series like the BBC's Restoration, George Clarke's Restoration Man or David Olusoga's A House Through Time demonstrate what SAVE has always believed – indeed knew to be true. This is that there are thousands



SAVE's 1981 book 'Our Past Before Us – why do we SAVE it?'

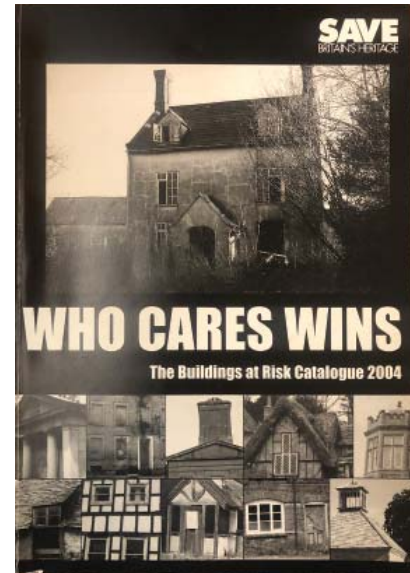
of people who care passionately about historic buildings and find their neglect and decay an agonising, often outrageous sight.

What appealed to me about Professor Madgin's research is that about 95 per cent of the cases that come across our desks, unsolicited from the public, are triggered by an emotional response from people to buildings or places under threat. Quite a lot of cases come from our own research and networking.

These are buildings that people read about in the paper, walk past in the street or stumble upon through social media. While fabric and history play their part, the majority of cases that come to us are from local neighbourhoods in towns and cities.

People's experiences are mainly personal, where they went to school, visited on holiday, where their grandparents worked, where they were born. These places are about people's memories, use, local legends, personal experience. The trauma of losing these landmarks through demolition or decay is deeply felt. Cases tend to come across our desks as a result of urban change or dereliction and decay.

In England in particular, people invariably come to us because they feel unheard and let down by the local planning system which continues to suffer from underfunding and de-skilling. There is a feeling of powerlessness when faced with the might of developers or building owners – sometimes working hand in hand with councils who are developer and decision maker. There is a perception of David and Goliath and of standing up for the underdog. A feeling of professional planners and financial



Cover of SAVE's 2004 Buildings at Risk Catalogue 'Who Cares Wins'

weight versus voluntary community groups. People come to us because they feel they must do something.

We respond to these appeals with letters, campaigns with press releases, reports and alternative schemes. Our alternative schemes are intended to inspire a sense of what these places could be like in the future, a sense of pride, and hope and imagination. They are deliberately emotive. They are designed to bat back the 'eyesore', 'irrelevant', 'ugly' or 'beyond repair' responses and imagine the future from the present. They show that hope is vital to bringing these buildings back from the brink.

What is clear to me is that Rebecca's work is so successful at re-inforcing that people and buildings go together – and that the emotional bond is as strong as it was in the 1970s and beyond. Building a place for that response and attachment into the planning system is long overdue. **S**

@ This commentary was originally broadcast in November 2021 as part of the launch event of Professor Madgin's report, full details of which can be found here: [www.gla.ac.uk/whydohistoricplacesmatter](http://www.gla.ac.uk/whydohistoricplacesmatter)



You can access a recording of Professor Madgin's online talk for SAVE in November 2021 by heading to our events catch up page: [www.savebritainsheritage.org/events/catch-up](http://www.savebritainsheritage.org/events/catch-up)



# Save Our Sandonia!

## Notes from a grassroots campaign

Jack Pearce reports on the grassroots campaign he set up to save Stafford's Sandonia Cinema and Theatre. Without any prior experience, he led the battle to stop the bulldozers and urges others to do the same.

One hundred years ago, the Sandonia opened its doors as the premier cinema and theatre in the county town of Stafford. Standing proudly amongst the factories and terraced streets of the former cordwainers (shoemakers) district north of Stafford town, the Sandonia's unmistakable frontage became familiar to all, with its enormous triumphal arch clad in bright white tiles.

Described as unique in its opulence compared to other theatres and cinemas of this period, the cinema

rivalled anything built at the time in London. However, despite welcoming so many through its doors over the years, the Sandonia sadly closed in the early 2000s, and has been derelict ever since.

As someone born in Stafford, I continually despaired at its decay whilst growing up. Like many others passing by and looking up at its foliage-ridden faience facade, it was hard not to feel downhearted. However, I felt that something had to be done, so despite having no

heritage campaigning experience whatsoever, I began the campaign to 'Save Our Sandonia'.



*The striking tiled frontage of the Sandonia on Sandon Road, Stafford (Credit: SUF)*





Features from the Sandonia's grand faïenced façade (Credit: Save Our Sandonia)

I started by creating a simple graphic and posting it on local social media with a simple question: did people agree that the Sandonia should be saved and restored? The response was overwhelming – within 24 hours thousands liked and shared the post

whilst messages of support flooded in. I soon realised that there were many others like myself who cared passionately about saving this building and crucially, all had differing skills, experiences and backgrounds to help assist in the fight. This initiated a

network of local volunteers who have been crucial to the campaign's success so far, as well as a simple website setting out the aims and objectives of the campaign.

Perhaps the most significant moment, however, was getting into



The Sandonia was scaffolded on the day demolition began illegally in July 2021 (Credit: Save Our Sandonia)





Jack Pearce being interviewed on BBC Midlands Today in July 2021 (Credit: BBC)

contact with SAVE Britain's Heritage. Not only did they have great online resources on how to mount and run a successful local campaign, but they were able to offer tailored advice on the steps we might take next. On the back of this, we made contact with the building's owner and began to discuss ideas on how the Sandonia could be made useful again for the local community.

Yet I had no idea how truly significant SAVE's involvement would be until one Friday afternoon in July 2021 when, despite the assurances of the owner, demolition contractors suddenly arrived and began preparing to tear down the Sandonia. The campaign had been keeping a close eye on the council's planning portal for months and we were certain this was not a legal demolition. SAVE issued a legal challenge to Stafford Borough Council, asserting the demolition works were illegal and must be halted. By the following Monday, the bulldozers were halted and the Sandonia, although damaged, was still standing.

Since then, we've been busy

reaching out to all forms of media and were featured on BBC Midlands Today and BBC Radio Stoke, with news coverage of the attempted demolition in every local paper. This has been fantastic for growing our profile and getting our message across.

SAVE also enlisted the help of an architect, Sean Pemble, to draw

up an alternative use scheme for the Sandonia site, which has been vital in showing what could be achieved through preserving the building. The owner has now applied for planning permission to demolish the building legally, but we remain resolute that it can be saved.

If you know of a building which is under threat and want to do something about it, I cannot recommend enough that you take action even if, like me, you have no prior experience. There are likely to be many others in your community who feel the same way and can offer their skills to help fight for the cause, which together with help from national heritage organisations such as SAVE can make a huge difference.

Whilst the task might seem daunting, and the odds stacked against you, the role of local voices in trying to save our heritage gives historic buildings like the Sandonia a chance. **S**



Impression from SAVE's alternative proposals by architect Sean Pemble showing how the Sandonia frontage and foyer block could be conserved and extended (Credit: Sean Pemble Architects)

@ [www.savebritainsheritage.org/campaigns/item/735/PRESS-RELEASE-SAVE-legal-action-halts-demolition-of-Stafford-gem](http://www.savebritainsheritage.org/campaigns/item/735/PRESS-RELEASE-SAVE-legal-action-halts-demolition-of-Stafford-gem)

@ [www.saveoursandonia.co.uk/](http://www.saveoursandonia.co.uk/)



# Let the Little Houses live again

Marcus Binney outlines on SAVE's recent battles to successfully protect buildings along London's Strand and the exciting opportunities now afforded by its recent pedestrianisation to capitalise on these victories.

Handsome public squares, ringed by noble architecture, are one of civilisation's most enduring creations. London of course has its special brand of garden squares, but here I am thinking of paved squares free or largely free of cars – the Grand Place in Brussels, the Place Vendome in Paris and any number of piazzas in Italy, especially in Venice.

In contrast, for over half a century,

London's Aldwych has been nothing more than an overgrown roundabout with six lanes of toxic traffic imprisoning Gibbs's masterpiece St Mary le Strand on the nastiest traffic island in London. Local residents and office workers have been deterred from entering the grade I listed church for years as it was understandably almost always shut.

Now Westminster City Council

has diverted the traffic round the north side of the Aldwych to create an exhilarating new piazza along the Strand which will allow us to enjoy its beautiful buildings as never before, including the Palladian entrance front of Sir William Chambers' Somerset House.

This is also the moment to capitalise on SAVE's two recent campaigns on protect the Strand, first

*Impression by architect John Burrell showing the Little Houses at 152–158 the Strand, which SAVE fought to retain in 2015, brought back to life with a public piazza in front (Credit: Burrell, Foley Fischer)*







*Aerial view of the Aldwych with St Mary le Strand at the centre and Somerset House in the foreground (Credit: LDA Design and Pixelflakes)*

our successful campaign to save the collection of four ‘Little Houses’ at 152–158 the Strand in 2015, and second the rejection in 2017 of clumsy proposals to convert St Mary le Strand into a Museum of the Bible.

The south side of the Aldwych is being resurfaced for pedestrian use. Commendably the council sees the paving as a two-stage operation – with the first experimental phase intended to help shape decisions on the best long-term paving surfaces and street furniture for the new piazza. The initial surface will be bonded gravel. Already it is a joy to see the students of King’s College London (KCL) and the LSE no longer confined to the pavements, but rather spreading out over the former triple carriageway road. This makes all the more sense given KCL’s recent takeover of the mighty Bush House at the centre of the Aldwych, and the welcome reopening of the Courtauld Galleries in Somerset House.

There must be pavement cafes with chairs, tables and umbrellas, as in

**“London’s streets owe their charm and liveliness as much to small premises as to large ones.”**

nearby King Street in Covent Garden and all over Soho. And where better to service them from than out of the four ‘Little Houses’ which SAVE rescued from demolition six years ago, where our runaway public petition to save them won us wholehearted support from Historic England and over 10,000 signatures from members of the public.

Now these frontages stand boarded up, with nothing more than photos in the shop windows. King’s College has permission to gut them leaving only the facades with university accommodation behind.

I therefore implore KCL, at least in this first experimental phase of pedestrianising the Strand, to rent them out as cafes and bring new life to the new piazza, as envisaged in plans commissioned by SAVE by architect John Burrell in 2015. It can win plaudits







THEN: View from 2019 showing the lanes of traffic which have until now encircled St Mary le Strand (Credit: alamy)

NOW: View in September 2021 showing the car-free Strand taking shape (Credit: Westminster CC)





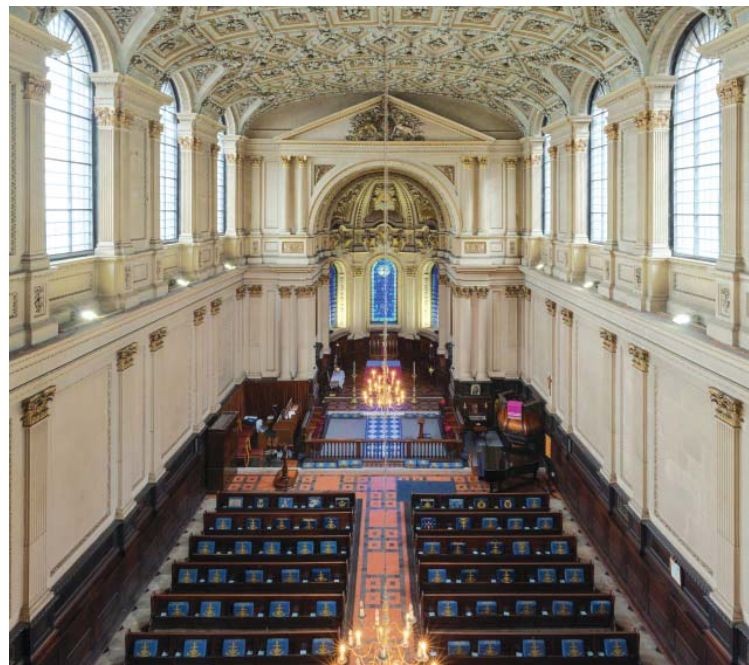


TO BE? Impression from Westminster City Council's plans showing how the newly pedestrianised Strand might look, looking west past St Mary le Strand towards Somerset House, with new planting, outdoor seating and resurfacing (Credit: Westminster CC)

from all sides if it does. London's streets owe their charm and liveliness as much to small premises as to large ones.

St Mary le Strand is a masterpiece that could hold its own in Rome itself. Now with an energetic new incumbent, the Rev Peter Babington, it is opening its doors again to visitors and worshippers. One of SAVE's supporters, Hugh Geddes, has provided the money to clean the grimy glass of the nave windows, letting sunlight stream once again through the clear glass.

Opportunities to create new public spaces in city centres are rare. The Strand project has got off to a brilliant start. Please support our continuing input to ensure it is a transcending success. **S**



The remarkable interior of St Mary le Strand which SAVE fought to protect in 2017 from harmful conversion to a Bible Museum (Credit: Alamy)

@ [www.savebritainsheritage.org/campaigns/article/356/Press-release-The-Kings-Pavement-A-new-lease-of-life-for-152-158-Strand](http://www.savebritainsheritage.org/campaigns/article/356/Press-release-The-Kings-Pavement-A-new-lease-of-life-for-152-158-Strand)



# Disused railway structures: asset or liability?

Graeme Bickerdike reflects on a year that has seen National Highways' work on the railways' great infrastructure legacy debated in the House of Lords and make national headlines before the Government brought it to a temporary halt. So what does the future hold for the historic bridges and tunnels still under threat?

Railway engineers remodelled Britain's landscape through much of the 19th century, creating structures that often take your breath away. Ambition, courage and tenacity were the Victorians' defining characteristics, but the human toll for this progress was unimaginable.

Although social change cut a swathe through the network in the fifties and sixties, the green corridors left behind still offer potential value as

a sustainable transport revolution gets moving, powered by environmental commitments. And still spanning these old lines are iron and masonry monuments to the navvies' endeavour. As the nation that gifted railways to the world, Britain cherishes this rich heritage. Don't we?

National Highways, the state-owned roads company, manages around 3,100 disused railway bridges, tunnels and viaducts on the

Department for Transport's behalf. Instinctively, this feels like a misfit and events of the past year suggest it to be exactly that. With limited experience in the custodianship of heritage infrastructure and a culture of risk-aversion, National Highways has embarked on a programme of liability reduction which could see the loss of several hundred structures over the coming years, although the firm is currently only admitting to 68.

*Residents of Barcombe, East Sussex, gather in protest below a bridge threatened with infilling (Credit: The HRE Group)*







*Isambard Kingdom Brunel designed this bridge near Saltash which National Highways intended to infill (Credit: The HRE Group)*



Infilling is a blunt tool which most civil engineers reject. It has a significant environmental impact – often involving 1,000 tonnes of aggregate and concrete – and blocks wildlife corridors; there is also doubt as to whether it achieves very much in engineering terms. But it means National Highways can wash its hands of a bridge and the £25,000 of expenditure typically spent on it every ten years. That might sound like a sum worth saving, until you recognise that infilling can cost upwards of £150,000, so the taxpayer sees no financial benefit for about 60 years.

What's worse is that National Highways is choosing infill as its preferred asset management option, rather than adopting it as a last resort. This means that many historic railway structures that have a viable future use as part of a cycle path or reopened railway are being lost without an appraisal being made of their wider value.

Earlier this year, when the number

of structures under immediate threat numbered 134, the HRE Group – an alliance of engineers, cycling campaigners and greenway developers – conducted a desk study which found that more than 40 of them already had potential for transport use.

Gracing Cumbria's countryside until this summer was Great Musgrave bridge, crafted in the 1860s by skilled masons. Whilst modest, it was the very definition of a 'heritage structure' and delightfully appropriate for its setting. To the north, about a mile away, is the terminus of the Eden Valley Railway, while further south at Kirkby Stephen the Stainmore Railway has established a base. These two operations aspire to join forces by relaying the line beneath the bridge.

But National Highways had other ideas. In May 2021, its contractor arrived at the bridge, set up a compound and, four weeks later, it was buried. Eden District Council had not understood the significance of the scheme and authorised the





THEN: the masonry arch bridge at Great Musgrave, Cumbria, was needed for a connection between two heritage railways (Credit: The HRE Group)

NOW: in May 2021 the structure was infilled with hundreds of tonnes of aggregate and concrete (Credit: The HRE Group)





work as Permitted Development, only realising their error when it was too late. National Highways claimed infilling was needed to prevent a collapse, despite its own inspection reports recording only a handful of minor defects and the need for localised repointing. Thankfully the Council has insisted that a retrospective planning application must be submitted; if it's rejected, the infill may have to be removed.

Despite making claims to the contrary – both to the media and a government minister – National Highways did not see fit to even mention their destructive intentions to the only two invested stakeholders – the heritage railways whose volunteers had, for 25 years, put their hearts and souls into planning reconnection. Infilling has been a kick in the teeth.

The government placed infilling on hold in response to a backlash over Great Musgrave. Civil engineers queued up to express shame and embarrassment at National Highways' actions, prompting National Highways to establish a Stakeholder Advisory Forum to cast its eyes over future plans. But, behind the scenes, preparations to restart the programme continue.

At Barcombe in East Sussex, a campaign has begun in response to the threatened infilling of a bridge in the village's conservation area. Unlike Great Musgrave, this one has structural issues in the form of fractures down three of its wingwalls. There are as many repair options as engineers willing to express an opinion, but infill is National Highways' chosen direction of travel.

The community points out that the habitat around the bridge is ecologically sensitive and the former railway is now used by wildlife.

## **“As the nation that gifted railways to the world, Britain cherishes this rich heritage. Don't we?”**

The district council is backing them, whilst the local MP – who's in a marginal Tory seat – has lobbied the minister. But National Highways is again pushing forward under Permitted Development powers which leaves objectors without a voice. It's not a good look for a company funded by taxpayers.

There have been climb-downs. A bridge near Saltash – engineered by Isambard Kingdom Brunel – has been given a temporary reprieve despite National Highways telling Cornwall Council that infilling was needed to prevent an emergency arising. In Angus, an unusual masonry arch – protected by a Grade B listing – has also been removed from the at-risk list, as has another in the heart of Northumberland which sits comfortably alongside a delightfully restored station. And a bridge slated for demolition near Oxford is now being restored after villagers occupied its deck when a contractor arrived to knock down its parapets.

There's something fundamentally

wrong with the culture behind this vandalism. National Highways is sitting in its silo managing a spreadsheet, oblivious to the impact of its actions on good people trying to build us a better future. It fails to understand that, as the appointed custodian of our railway heritage, it has been granted a great honour.

It is impossible to predict the future with any confidence. What's certain though is that we have to grab with both hands the opportunities presented by these historic structures as we come to terms with the obligations imposed by climate emergency. We cannot allow National Highways to continue acting against the public interest, at a huge cost both financially and environmentally.

When Great British Railways was unveiled in May, the Government promised to end the industry's fragmentation and “*bring together the whole system*”. In a House of Lords debate, Lord Young of Cookham sought confirmation that this would include National Highways' legacy structures, a suggestion noted “*with great interest*” by Baroness Vere.

Those who see the value in these heritage assets will be crossing their fingers for such salvation. **S**



*Villagers gathered on a bridge at Horspath, Oxford, after a National Highways contractor started to demolish its parapets (Credit: The HRE Group)*



If you feel motivated to support the campaign, please sign the petition against the infilling programme at [www.change.org/theHREgroup](http://www.change.org/theHREgroup). You could also write to your MP, expressing your objection to it.



# Casework overview

## 456 Oxford Street, London

SAVE Britain's Heritage has strongly opposed plans by retail giant M&S to demolish their flagship store at 456 Oxford Street known as Orchard House.

Under the proposals, designed by architects Pilbrow + Partners, the unlisted 1929 art deco landmark would be bulldozed along with two extension buildings to be replaced with a monolithic 10-storey retail and office building. Beyond the heritage harm inflicted on the historic character of Oxford Street, the embodied carbon cost of demolishing and rebuilding the site would be 39,534 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>,

the equivalent of driving a typical car 99 million miles – further than the distance from earth to the sun.

Despite substantial local and national opposition and a listing bid from the Twentieth Century Society, the plans were approved by Westminster City Council on 23rd November 2021, with a £1.2 million 'carbon offset' payment to be made by M&S to the council.

SAVE has now launched a public petition calling on M&S to withdraw their plans in favour of retaining and converting the landmark building, urging the retailer to live up to its commitments to protecting the



*Orchard House, 456 Oxford Street  
(Credit: Buildington)*

brand's heritage and becoming carbon neutral by 2045. Visit our website to sign and share the petition:



<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/stop-the-demolition-of-oxford-street-save-and-re-use-m-s-flagship-store>



[www.savebritainsheritage.org/campaigns/item/757/PETITION-Stop-the-demolition-of-Oxford-Street-save-and-re-use-MS-flagship-store](http://www.savebritainsheritage.org/campaigns/item/757/PETITION-Stop-the-demolition-of-Oxford-Street-save-and-re-use-MS-flagship-store)

## Lowesmoor Wharf, Worcester

SAVE has re-objected to proposals for six large up to 8 storeys in height buildings at Lowesmoor Wharf in Worcester's historic City centre. Despite strong opposition to the scale and massing of the original plans, the amended proposals have seen only a modest reduction in height to the tallest block from 12 to 8 storeys, which will still have a substantially harmful impact on the historic city's famous skyline and the protected Canal Conservation Area where the average building height is two to three storeys.

The plans still involve the complete demolition of Lowesmoor Terrace, a characterful street of historic but unlisted buildings, including the flat-iron shaped former Vesta Tilley music hall built in 1869 and

the locally listed 1935 Bridge Inn, with no justification offered for why demolition is necessary.

Besides the destructive impacts the proposals will have on the Worcester's historic character, we have argued also that regeneration of the city centre should be heritage-led.

The scheme has drawn objections

from Historic England, the Victorian Society, Historic Buildings and Places, the Twentieth Century Society, the Georgian Group, the Theatres Trust and the British Music Hall Society. The application will be decided by the city council's planning committee, with a date to be confirmed in the new year.



*View looking up  
Lowesmoor  
Terrace with  
Vesta Tilly  
House (Credit:  
Worcester  
Archive)*



[www.savebritainsheritage.org/campaigns/article/678/press-release-worcesters-heritage-under-threat-save-condemns-12-storey-tower-block-proposals](http://www.savebritainsheritage.org/campaigns/article/678/press-release-worcesters-heritage-under-threat-save-condemns-12-storey-tower-block-proposals)



## Grimsby Ice Factory, NE Lincolnshire

We have written in support of plans by the new owner of Grimsby's Ice Factory to make the decaying grade II\* listed building secure and weathertight. The proposals, which were approved by North East Lincolnshire Council in November 2021, form the first phase of restoration works which will see the complex of buildings secured, reroofed and made structurally safe.

The plans cover a range of external works, including perimeter fencing, the insertion of security doors to all entrances and a replacement roof using composite sheet metal. This represents a major step forward in the fortunes of a building which has lain empty since 1990.

SAVE Britain's Heritage has had a long-standing interest in Grimsby

Docks and Grimsby Ice Factory since 2012 when we worked with architect Graham Byfield to draw up an alternative vision for the site, showing how it could be revived and restored.

In 2016, along with World Monuments Fund Britain, we also initiated a campaign to stop the

demolition of many historic buildings on Fish Dock Road which helped lead to the subsequent designation of the nearby Kasbah Conservation Area in 2017.

Remedial works are set to begin the early 2022, with detail proposals on the building's long-term use expected later in the year.



*Grimsby Ice Factory in 2016  
(Credit: World Monuments Fund)*

@ [www.savebritainsheritage.org/campaigns/article/466/press-release-save-welcomes-new-conservation-area-for-grimsby-following-our-high-profile-campaign-to-stop-demolition-last-year](https://www.savebritainsheritage.org/campaigns/article/466/press-release-save-welcomes-new-conservation-area-for-grimsby-following-our-high-profile-campaign-to-stop-demolition-last-year)

## Smithfield Market, City of London

Following SAVE's major campaigns in 2008 and 2014 to avert the demolition of Smithfield's General Market and Annexe buildings, we are pleased to see the progress of plans to convert the site into a new Museum of London.

With the Museum's outline plans to restore and convert the site approved in 2019, we have since supported a subsequent planning application to undertake a series of repairs and minor fabric changes to the market's outer roof. The proposed works will see elements of the building's previously neglected exterior fabric repaired and made ready for the site's full restoration and conversion as gallery and museum spaces.

In 2021 SAVE and the Museum of London jointly welcomed HRH Prince of Wales on a Royal Visit to the General Market site. We now look

forward to progress on this project and the opening of the new Museum of London scheduled for 2024.



*The former Smithfield Fish Market building on Snow Hill (Credit: SBH)*

@ [www.savebritainsheritage.org/campaigns/item/717/PRESS-RELEASE-SAVE-and-Museum-of-London-host-Prince-Charles-on-historic-visit-to-Smithfield-General-Market](https://www.savebritainsheritage.org/campaigns/item/717/PRESS-RELEASE-SAVE-and-Museum-of-London-host-Prince-Charles-on-historic-visit-to-Smithfield-General-Market)



## Zeals House, Wiltshire

SAVE Britain's Heritage has been supporting efforts by Wiltshire Council to press the absentee owners of Zeals House to undertake urgent repairs to the grade I listed house and outbuildings which have suffered years of neglect and decay.

Zeals House, on the edge of Wiltshire, surveys a panorama of gloriously unspoilt Dorset country. The ancient manor house is a prize example of a house that has grown over the centuries, and for 500 years

belonged to the same family. Several ancillary buildings in the grounds survive and are grade II listed, including two gate lodges, an orangery, dovecote, stables, granary and icehouse.

Since 1968, the 100-acre property has been sold four times, but since its sale to the present owners, SKE Holdings Ltd, in 2010, it has stood empty and deteriorating.

However, in November 2021, the house and grounds were put up for sale with a guide price of £950,000. We



*Zeals in 1999, looking resplendent and better cared for than today (Credit: G. Cotton)*

hope that once in the hands of new owners, the urgent repairs required will finally be undertaken, and we will continue to support the council in ensuring this is done.

[@ www.savebritainsheritage.org/campaigns/article/737/press-release-bvi-registered-company-neglects-historic-wiltshire-mansion](https://www.savebritainsheritage.org/campaigns/article/737/press-release-bvi-registered-company-neglects-historic-wiltshire-mansion)

## Oldham Mural, Greater Manchester

We're delighted to report two further endorsements of our battle to save the remarkable 1950s mural in the Holy Rosary Church, Oldham, as our campaign takes on a high profile European dimension.

The significance of the piece by Hungarian émigré artist George Mayer-Martón has been highlighted in statements from the Hungarian National Gallery and the Belvedere Gallery in Vienna.

László Baán, General Director of the Museum of Fine Arts, Hungarian National Gallery, has written a statement stating: 'Among Mayer-Martón's mosaics and other wall paintings are the Crucifixion of the Holy Rosary Church in Oldham with its extraordinary technique – the combination of a Byzantine-like mosaic and a fresco – with a high art historical value. ... we believe this composition gives its audience an unforgettable memory of religious emotions. It is our responsibility to preserve and transmit artistic treasures for the next generations, as in the case of this mural too.'

Harald Krejci, Chief Curator of the Belvedere, Vienna, has also written in support. He states: 'The muralist George Mayer-Martón is one of the most important personalities on the Viennese art scene in the first half of the 20th century. As a full member and later Vice President of the Hagenbund, he set important accents within the Viennese art landscape. In particular, his public commissions in England after his escape from Austria in 1938 are extremely important evidence of the cultural transfer between Hungary, Austria and England. Mayer-Martón's testimonies are not only essential for the classification and understanding of post-war art, but also important from a socio-historical perspective. ... This Mural of Mayer-Martón shows at its best the cultural heritage of Viennese Art of the Klimt era and the Secession and their reflections on byzantine art and mosaic. Combined with the heritage of Viennese kinetic art and his knowledge of British Vorticism this mural is unique and outstanding and therefore needs to be preserved.'

The listing application, submitted in August 2020 by Nick Braithwaite, the artist's great-nephew, is still being

considered by Historic England. These latest endorsements follow statements of support last year from Tristram Hunt, director of the V & A, who described the mural as a 'dazzling beauty', as well as support from the Victoria Gallery, Liverpool, the Imperial War Museum London, and the Glynn Vivian Gallery, Swansea.

We remain concerned about the future of this work given the closure of the church. We believe the church – which is generously sized and well built – should be reused rather than demolished, with the restored mural a focal point for the community.



*The crucifixion mural by George Mayer-Martón (Credit: Mayer-Martón Estate)*

[@ www.savebritainsheritage.org/campaigns/article/689/press-release-leading-museums-and-galleries-back-national-campaign-to-save-oldham-mural-of-dazzling-beauty](https://www.savebritainsheritage.org/campaigns/article/689/press-release-leading-museums-and-galleries-back-national-campaign-to-save-oldham-mural-of-dazzling-beauty)



## Boxted Bridge, Essex

We have objected to plans by Essex County Council to demolish and replace a historic steel girder bridge over the River Stour in North Essex. Boxted Bridge, built in 1897 by piers and bridges contractor George Double (1840–1916), lies in the centre of the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The bridge is an important heritage feature of the village and well loved, known locally as ‘The Green Bridge’. In the 1930s the views from Boxted

bridge inspired many paintings by both Sir Alfred Munnings and John Nash.

By 1992 the bridge was showing signs of neglect and was assessed by the council which found the deck to have a reduced load capacity of three tonnes; yet no weight restriction was enforced to protect the structure from unsuitable traffic such as HGVs. As a result, a subsequent reinspection in 2018 found further deterioration which led to the decision by the council’s highways department to replace the

bridge altogether with a new 40 tonne bridge on a wider footprint

We believe the bridge can and should be repaired and saved rather than demolished, whilst also protecting the important site and its setting within the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding natural Beauty.

The local community campaign has launched a petition against the plans which you can sign by following the link below. [S](#)



[www.change.org/p/essex-county-council-save-our-bridge](http://www.change.org/p/essex-county-council-save-our-bridge)



Residents fighting to save Boxted Bridge, Essex (Credit: Lucinda de Jasay)



Behind closed doors





## Liz Fuller offers a rare glimpse inside some of the remarkable buildings on SAVE's Buildings at Risk Register and reflects on the importance of protecting interiors when repurposing historic buildings. Photographs by Eveleigh Photography.

Rarely do we get the opportunity to see inside the buildings we have on the SAVE Britain's Heritage Buildings at Risk Register. Yet their exteriors often conceal interiors of real delight which give them meaning and intimately evidence their history.

Particular sensitivity and care is required to preserve interiors when new uses for buildings at risk arise, which can often limit the options for conversion. The beautiful pews and

pulpits of Methodist chapels for example can pose challenges for repurposing.

But given sufficient inventiveness and pragmatism, it is possible to find solutions and, in doing so, allow the spirit and meaning of the building embodied in its interiors to live on together with its new use. It is not only development pressures which threaten historic interiors but also neglect. Too frequently, interiors

are jeopardised because the external fabric of the building is not maintained with due care.

A stunning collection of photographs taken by Eveleigh Photography reveals some of the breath-taking interiors which stand behind normally closed doors. Here we explore four such examples of buildings from our Buildings at Risk Register with exceptional interiors.

### Capel Mawr, Talysarn

This Calvinist Methodist chapel was built in 1884 in a bold Romanesque style. It stands in Talysarn, a small former slate mining village in the Nantlle Valley. Its "*splendidly sumptuous and unaltered interior*"

is one the main reasons for its grade II listing. The chapel has a beautiful plastered ceiling in an elaborate neo-classical design, with a gallery on three sides supported by fluted cast-iron columns, tiered panelled

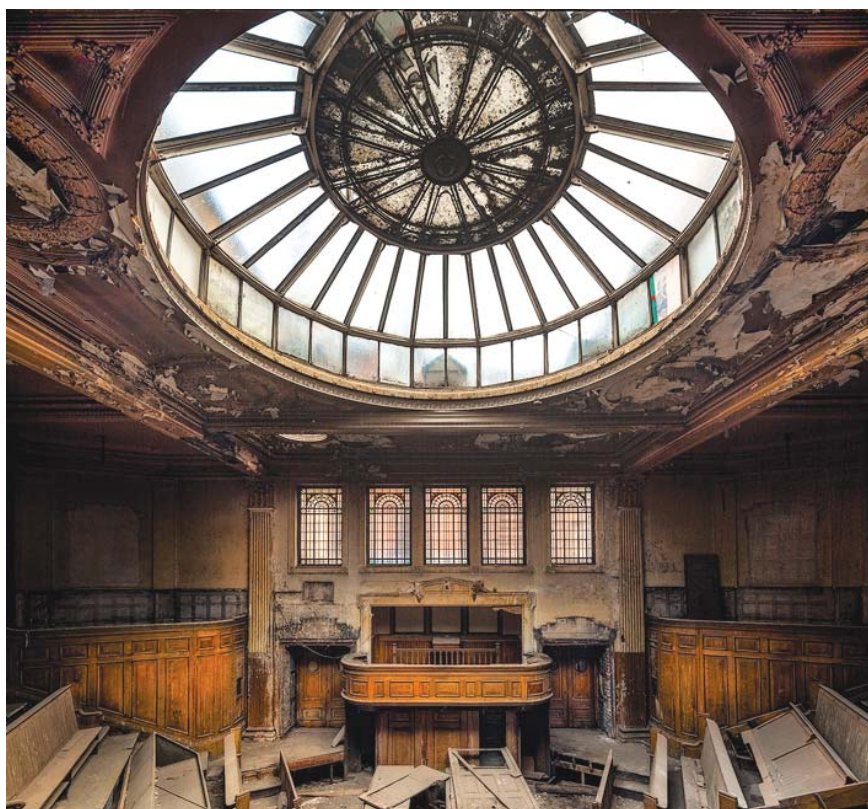
benches and low box pews at ground floor level.

Sadly, the chapel has been empty and disused for some time with no proposals for reuse at present.

### Fruit Exchange, Liverpool

Built originally as a railway goods depot in 1888, this grand building was converted into a fruit exchange in 1923 to handle fresh produce from the Canary Isles arriving at the nearby King's Docks. Within the two auction rooms (one large, one small) many original features survive, as well as striking public areas with fine decorative details. The Fruit Exchange was grade II listed in 2008, with Historic England acknowledging the rarity and importance of its surviving interiors, reflecting Liverpool's growth as a mercantile city.

After years standing empty, plans for an 85-room hotel were approved in April 2020. The auction rooms are set to be retained, restored and used partly as a bar as well an auditorium for events, lectures and conferences.





## Coal Exchange, Cardiff

The Coal Exchange is a symbol of the immense economic influence of Wales in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Completed in 1886, the grade II\* listed building is a majestic essay in Victorian architecture in French Renaissance style. Inside, the Coal and Shipping Hall is a galleried space with Corinthian columns, panelling and stained glass and was used as the trading hall. In the entrance hall, two lion statues support dials giving the tide times. Trading here ceased in 1958 and by 2013, most of the building was closed due to structural concerns.



Following an energetic local campaign, the exchange survived facading proposals and was acquired by a hotel group who did restore

some of the vast building, including the Coal and Shipping Hall, before falling into administration.

## Leas Pavilion, Folkestone

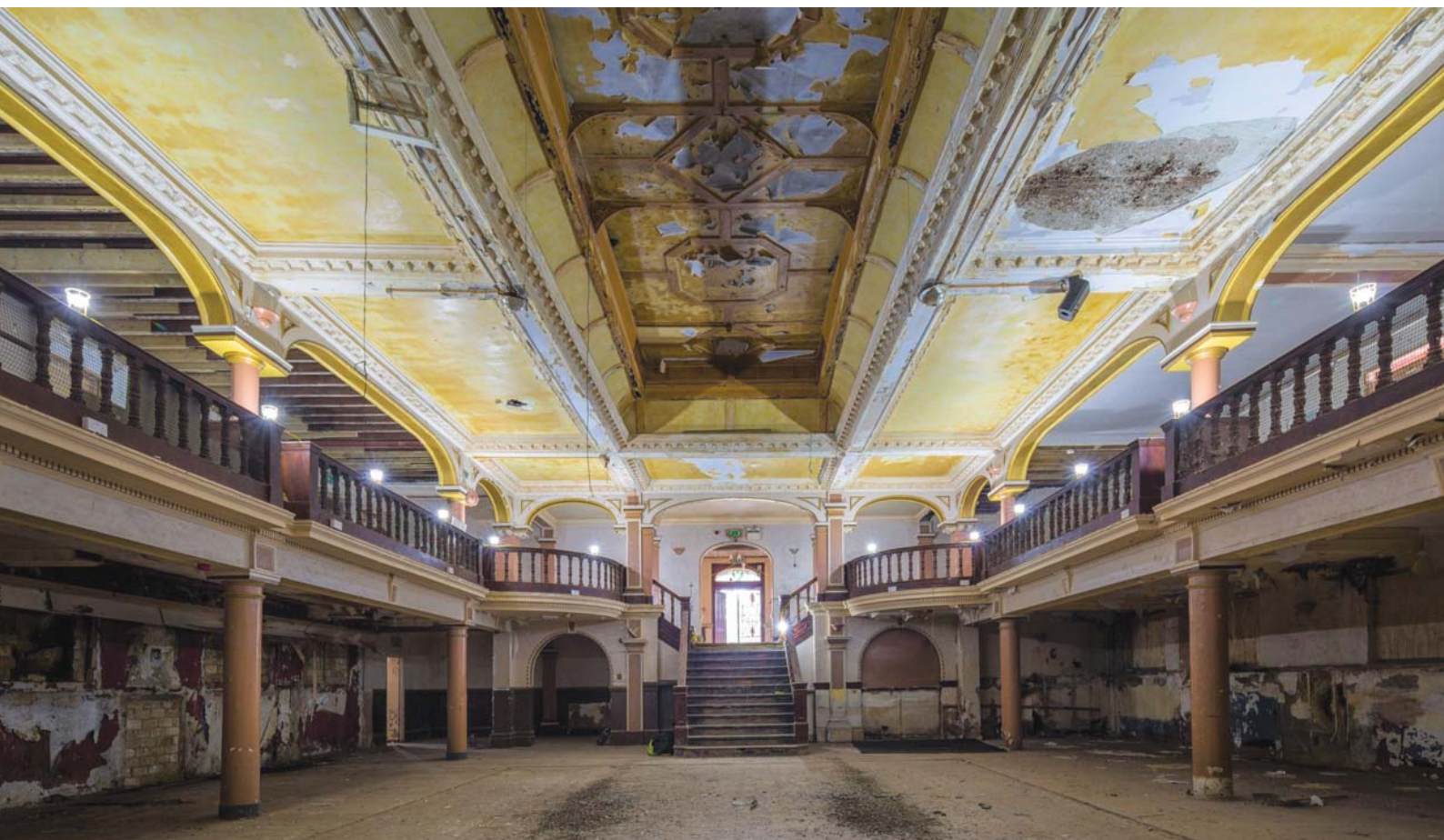
Folkestone's Leas Pavilion first opened as high-class tearooms in 1902. Built below ground level it takes light from above thanks to covenants applied at the time restricting higher buildings. Up to 450 diners used to be accommodated on the finest oak and walnut floor of the main hall below the grand ceiling lantern. During the

First World War the Pavilion became popular with the many soldiers based in the town who could get in for half price.

Closed in 2007, a local group succeeded in getting the building listed grade II but, despite this, a developer obtained permission to build over the top of the Pavilion. No work

commenced and the building's condition deteriorated causing the council to issue an Urgent Works Notice in 2016. Now new plans have been approved which will see a U-shaped building constructed around the Pavilion, preserving its interior and incorporating it in the residential scheme. **S**

@ Full details of all of these buildings are available on our online Buildings at Risk Register which is available to SAVE Friends and Saviours. Find out more about joining SAVE at [www.savebritainsheritage.org/support-us](http://www.savebritainsheritage.org/support-us)





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# Book reviews

## *The Story of the Country House*

Clive Aslet,  
Yale University Press,  
September 2021

Reviewed by Rosemary Baird Andreae



Clive Aslet is known for his fluent prose as well as for his great knowledge of country houses. His latest book does not disappoint. Easy to read and a masterpiece of compression, it is a lucid and loving paean to the country house, not just in England but also with fine examples from Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

Does the former editor of *Country Life* really have even more to say about country houses? Certainly. One of the delights of the book is the little asides, pieces of information that even the scholarly reader might not know: that Henry VIII had a collapsible castle for travelling; that Holkham had an exceptional number of water closets; and that London could be glimpsed from the roof of Clondon Park. In the period of the Regency, people were no longer expected to sit up straight in smart drawing rooms but could recline or loll.

The range is vast, not just in the

glorious sweep of time and type, but also in the condensed history of so many essential related subjects. The Hundred Years War is summarised in two sentences, while Eton College is said to have instigated the fashion for the use of brick. After the complexities of changes wrought during the Commonwealth, a superb virtuoso paragraph introduces the Baroque. Similarly, the lightness of Robert Adams's interiors is beautifully categorised, pointing out that his dining rooms were mainly suitable for daytime dining. The author's own specialisation, the Edwardian period, is densely but intriguingly packed, and the story is brought right up to date, with thought-provoking examples.

Patronage and collecting of the associated arts are included. The Restoration sequences of portraits of 'Beauties'; exotic textiles; sculpture galleries; the Society of Dilettanti; the notions of taste and its proponents such as Horace Walpole. Contribution from the ladies is noted, such the northern castles built for Lady Ann Clifford.

Places are strongly and often romantically visualised, not least in the early sections on the medieval and Elizabethan houses, in which cooked dishes were 'held high' on their way to the table, but also in describing 18th century Gothic with its use of filtering light. Houses are dramatized with

people and events, such as the 'jumping and sporting' children at the Duke of Bedford's lodge at Endsleigh in Devon. Garden history adds to the imagined scenes. Later a concise history of billiards (the green cloth representing grass) and the gleam of 'motors' provide a different kind of colour. This also makes it an ideal book for the non-specialist, even a newcomer to the subject, who might be quickly entranced.

It also helps the non-specialist that leading figures are described with a succinct, authoritative voice. James Wyatt began 'as Adam's imitator and rival'. Witticisms pounce: William Beckford built Lansdowne Tower outside Bath because 'he wanted to enjoy his solitude in public.' Sir John Soane, designing his homes to represent aspects of his life, was 'forever gnawing at his own entrails.' Certain Victorian architects were 'underpowered.'

The cover of this neat little book may make it look like a tin of assorted sweets; or even an Advent calendar. But there are great delicacies inside, highly organised and of far greater richness, subtlety and flavour than the lid would suggest. A joyful read for Christmas and beyond.

Copies available for purchase direct from Yale Books.  
£18.99 | [www.yalebooks.co.uk](http://www.yalebooks.co.uk)



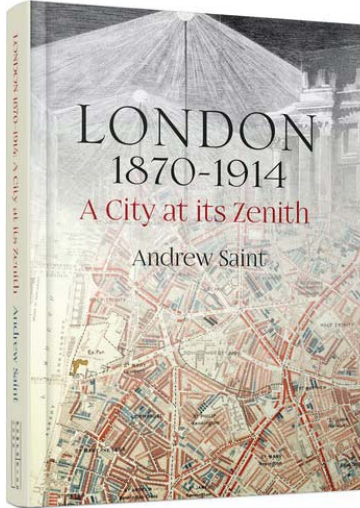
Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire (Credit: Blenheim Palace)



*London 1870–1914:  
A City at its Zenith*

Andrew Saint, Lund Humphries,  
September 2021

Reviewed by Robert Hradsky



The book's start date of 1870 is explained as a homage and successor to the classic *London 1808–1870: The Infernal Wen* (1971), by Francis Sheppard. Saint, like Sheppard before, mastered his subject through working for many years on the Survey of London project.

The book originated in a series of talks for the Victorian Society and is pleasingly brisk in style. Whole movements are dispatched in a few pages each. If the Queen Anne Revival is not your thing, you soon move on to militant socialism and street politics, electric light, music hall, libraries, pubs and so on.

The book is structured with a chapter per decade, but is no dull chronology. Saint doesn't light on a topic unless he has something interesting to say. His stated aim is 'to present London during a momentous period of its history in a fresh way, balancing the social, the topographical and the visible aspects of the great city.'

A key theme is the growing responsibilities of public bodies, beginning with the Metropolitan

Board of Works, which had become a municipal government 'by accident'. Its sturdy fire stations erected in the 1870s are epoch making, as they mark the beginnings of local authority architecture.

The 1880s is characterised by agitation and poverty. We are introduced to the settlement movement, an extraordinary practice whereby Oxbridge graduates would live near the poor to learn from their plight, offering lectures and art shows. Though easy to lampoon, they were serious ventures. Toynbee Hall became an effective research centre into urban deprivation.

Unlike many writers on architecture, Saint understands the politics of the period. We learn how the School Board for London was divided into centrist 'Moderates' and left-leaning 'Progressives'. Fascinatingly, when the Progressives were dominant, schools were given detached workshops for woodwork and cookery, which can be spotted today.

In the 1890s, we are plunged into the decadent world of artists and writers. We meet the drifting poet Ernest Dowson, 'who despised London but needed it.' In the fallout from Oscar Wilde's trial for homosexuality, the talented illustrator Aubrey Beardsley falls from favour but is saved by a single patron, 'a pornographer of stalwart character.'

The period of 1900–14 marks London at the 'arrogant acme of its power'. Planning becomes a major force, with the establishment of Hampstead Garden Suburb and other such ventures, using ideas from Germany. The great urban scheme at Aldwych, often dismissed as dreary, is here seen through fresh eyes, boasting five architectural masterpieces.

The book is very well illustrated and can be highly recommended.

Copies available for purchase  
direct from Lund Humphries.  
£29.95 | [www.lundhumphries.com](http://www.lundhumphries.com)



Rooms at the National  
Gallery designed  
by E.M. Barry  
(Credit: Diego Delsa)



# Tribute to Douglas Reid (1958–2021)

by Marcus Binney

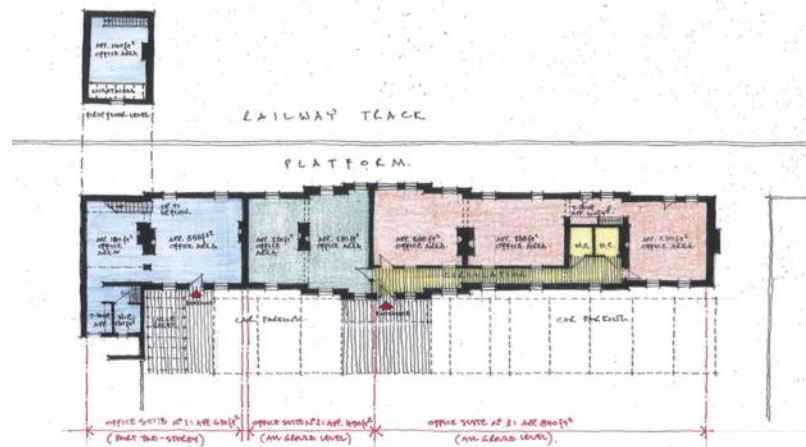
The sudden death of architect Doug Reid robs us of a great talent. Doug's superb drawings, initially always in free hand, helped SAVE Britain's Heritage initiate a series of campaigns, most recently that for Brandon Station in Suffolk, threatened with imminent demolition but now listed. Doug provided us with a brightly coloured and neatly labelled floor plan showing how the single storey building could be reused, and modern facilities introduced. We have teamed up with the Suffolk Building Preservation Trust to take these plans forward.

A still bigger contribution were the rescue plans Doug drew up for 16th century Sarny Castle in Poland. Following the publication of *Silesia Land of Dying Country Houses* in 2009, the Prince of Wales took an interest in the report by our sister organisation SAVE Europe's Heritage. While in Warsaw he hosted a meeting attended by Polish Ministers and Heritage officers. Kit Martin had the idea of a beauty contest to choose a stately home which could be a pilot project for rescuing a long empty and decaying ancestral seat.

Sarny was the choice and Doug,



*Doug Reid with his wife Lynn Reid  
(Credit: Family Photo)*



*Doug drew up plans for reusing Brandon Station in Suffolk (Credit: Breckland Society and Doug Reid)*

working with Kit, drew up a most attractive series of plans, sections and elevations which showed how the castle and magnificent barns, granary and gatehouse could be restored in stages – making fundraising more possible.

SAVE Europe's Heritage struggled to raise the £50,000 guide price at the auction, but the castle was bought by two energetic and imaginative music enthusiasts who broadly adopted the plans and have been steadily repairing the castle following the strategy. They now hold a music summer school every summer and the estate restoration has

continued apace despite the pandemic.

Doug also worked with Kit Martin on the dramatic repair and reuse of mighty Anchor Mills in Paisley illustrated in Big Saves. The quality of Doug's work is nowhere better seen than in his transformation of a disused jute mill in Dundee, renamed Verdant, and now a light-filled gallery interior with slender iron columns and arches supporting a graceful roof over nave and isles.

Doug spent most of his working life with the practice of James F Stephen Architects where his son Allan also worked. **S**





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