

The Society's Casework in 2007-8: Selected Cases

by

MATTHEW SAUNDERS *and* FRANK KELSALL

Local authorities have been obliged to consult the Ancient Monuments Society (and the other National Amenity Societies) on all applications for listed building consent involving demolition, either partial or total, since 1972. In recent years the number of part demolition cases has settled to about 5,000 a year and those for complete demolition to around 100 to 120. The exact number of listed buildings threatened by application for total demolition in 2007 (the last full year) was 108, eight of them in Wales. This compares with 125 in 2006 and 127 in 2005. A full list can be obtained from the Society's office and website. The cases discussed here, which also embrace buildings in dereliction which we have taken up, are a selection of the most interesting, although in making the choice we are circumscribed by the availability of illustrations suitable for reproduction. The drawings have been kindly supplied by the architects of the various schemes and have been reproduced with their permission. More regular casework reviews appear in the AMS newsletter.

TWO NORTHERN CHURCHES

Some redundant churches unsuitable for vesting with the Churches Conservation Trust or with The Friends of Friendless Churches seem to glide into benign new uses. But with others, umpteen plans are mooted, many of which fall by the wayside. The longest standing redundancy took from 1969 until 2005 to resolve. These examples from Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear are not in that league but both have greatly tested the normal limit of three years which the Church Commissioners have laid down under the Pastoral Measure for deciding the fate of disused Anglican churches. In both cases we have exercised a watching brief and commented on associated planning applications.

The first is **St Mark's, Woodhouse Moor in Leeds**. As figures 1 and 2 show this is a Gothic Commissioner Church built from money given by Parliament for 'churching' the burgeoning urban conurbations. It dates from 1823-5 and was designed by Peter Atkinson Jr and R. H. Sharp. Atkinson was surveyor and steward to the York Corporation for many years but also had an extensive private practice, designing thirteen churches for the Commissioners set up to spend the money which Parliament had authorised. Richard Hey Sharp, Atkinson's pupil and later partner, counted among his designs, after the



Figs 1 and 2
St Mark's, Woodhouse Moor in Leeds

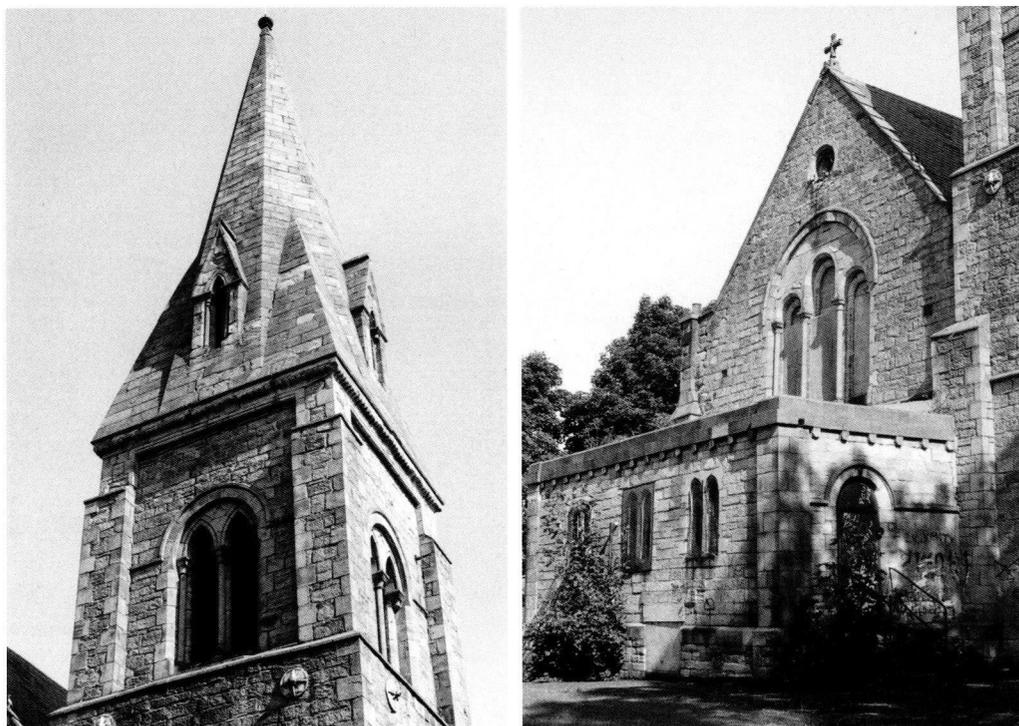
dissolution of the partnership, the remarkable 'Norman' church at Roecliffe in the West Riding of 1843-4.

St Mark's dominates the area around and has a certain nobility of proportion. The patterned maturing of the Yorkshire sandstone lends it considerable visual attraction. There were changes in 1873 when Adams and Kelly put in archaeologically plausible tracery but this is seamless aesthetically. The large churchyard is taken up by hundreds of monuments, some of them (Fig. 3) with a powerful Neo-Classical sensibility. St Mark's was closed formally in 2002 and there are unmistakable signs of deterioration. Plans in 2004 to convert it into offices and a conference centre failed. Then in 2005 the Gateway Church proposed adaptation as a place of worship. This use would fit like a glove so it is good to know that contracts were finally exchanged in March 2008.



Fig. 3
St Mark's: one of the Monuments

The prognosis for **St Cuthbert's at Bensham in Gateshead** is also now good but the search has been considerably longer. Now almost at the end of its second decade of redundancy and the subject of a formal proposal to demolish in 1993, the fact that it has not been burned down is the greatest surprise. It was the work of Newcastle's favourite architectural son, John Dobson, in 1846-8 and shows him working in Early English mode in the spire (Fig. 4) and vague Neo-Norman in the narthex (Fig. 5). It lies



Figs 4 and 5

St Cuthbert's at Bensham in Gateshead

at a fork in the road, which gives it a particular prominence. Unlike St Mark's, there are no monuments in the churchyard. In 1994 a tireless local charity worker proposed conversion into flats for the young homeless. This went to public inquiry, but the scheme was thrown out on the basis of much vocal objection from neighbours. Then in 2001 it was eyed up by the Society of Pope Pius X, the schismatic Roman Catholics, as a place of worship for performance of the Latin Mass. This then won a substantial grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund after promises were given about opening it up simultaneously to the broader community. But then they too walked away when the less troublesome, newly redundant, Christ Church elsewhere in Bensham became available for them to purchase. The Church Commissioners launched one more test of the market and this time an enterprising mixed use, which encompasses the creation of a stained glass museum amid other more commercial applications, has emerged. This has all the makings of a use that will stick especially as the key players are a leading conservation contractor and architect.

WELLINGTON ROOMS, MOUNT PLEASANT, LIVERPOOL

There is nothing quite like Neo-Classicism in its ability to combine severity with architectural presence. The brief here of 1814 for the comparatively obscure Edmund Aikin of London was much like that given to Sir John Soane at the Bank of England. The front elevation of these Assembly Rooms was to deny its single storey by exaggerated height whilst at the same time was to have no windows at all. The result (Fig. 6) is masterly



Fig. 6

Wellington Rooms, Mount Pleasant, Liverpool



Fig. 7

Wellington Rooms: carved panel

both in design and execution, assuredly so with the two panels of angels and festoons (Fig. 7) usually credited to John Gibson. It is in fact more austere than when first constructed, as the great circular porch with echoes of the Monument of Lysicrates was originally open, being infilled after Aikin's death at the age of forty in 1820. For many years the Rooms served as the Irish Club but now as the weeds on the cornice testify, it is in disuse. We have

been consulted on a number of conversion schemes, one of them involving a substantial new structure looming up behind. The very latest proposal envisages the removal of the infilling within the central porch and its replacement by glazing. The latter is regrettable. Peeking into view on the right is the Roman Catholic Cathedral built by Frederick Gibberd to serve many of the city's considerable Irish population.

CEFNMABLI, GLAMORGAN



Figs 8 and 9
Cefnmabli: before conservation

The photographs (Figs 8 and 9) show a great house in extremis, the result of a devastating fire in 1994 and subsequent vandalism. When we first visited Cefnmabli ten years ago it was so derelict, so abused, that salvation seemed very hard to imagine. But it has come.

Written up at great length in the volume of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales on *Glamorgan, The Greater Houses* (1981), this was the home of the Kemeys family from the late sixteenth century until it became a TB hospital in 1923, a use that lasted for fifty years. The Royal Commission drawings show the main south-east elevation, where much of it was a seventeenth and eighteenth century remodelling (Fig. 10),

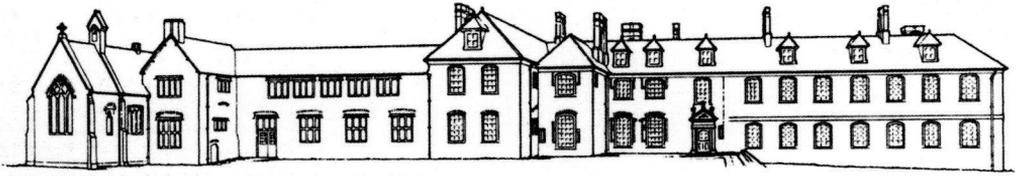


Fig. 10
Cefnmabli as portrayed by the Royal Commission (1981)

and the internal hall looking towards the dais end (Fig. 11). The latter had painted over-doors showing landscape scenes which were removed for safekeeping before the fire. The chapel is largely a reworking by an unknown hand of 1858.

We were consulted in 1998 on a scheme by Davies Sutton for Meadgate Homes to save the building for residential purposes

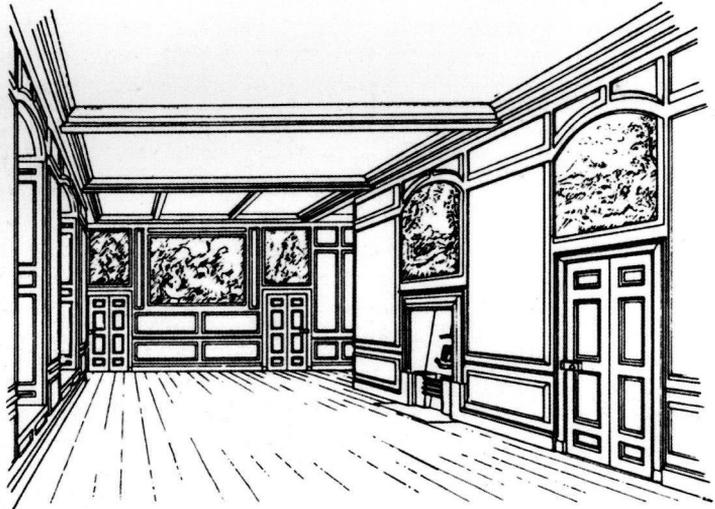


Fig. 11
Cefnmabli, hall: only the paintings survive

and this is what has now been put into effect. We commented at that stage only on detailing, warmly welcoming the proposal as a whole.

SITE BOUNDED BY VICTORIA STREET, BUCKINGHAM PALACE ROAD, BRESSENDEN PLACE AND ALLINGTON STREET, VICTORIA, WESTMINSTER

This huge site, opposite Victoria Station, is best captured in this aerial view (Fig. 12) which confirms that its principal architectural character is given to it by the dreary sixties slab blocks that sprang up here and on the adjacent Stag Brewery site. Now they themselves are to be felled for replacement by equally large but flashier blocks (Fig. 13).



Fig. 12

Victoria, Westminster: the dreary (above) to be replaced by the flashy (below)



Fig. 13

But must they strive so much for effect? As we said in our comments to the City Council – ‘Must the projected redevelopment be so wayward in its geometry? The dives and swoops of Eland House and Cardinal Place already add a restlessness to the roofscape. Yet more capriciously sloping roofs simply add to the lack of repose. And the sticks of bendy white liquorice on the outside of Building 7a [see Fig. 13] seem almost perverse’. And there are to be some serious losses. We expressed regret at the demolition of No. 124 Victoria Street (Fig. 14) built in 1867 by Philip Lee as part of a broader group that



Fig. 14

The Victoria Palace, with the turret, is to stay, but No. 124 Victoria Street (nearest the camera) is to come down

was demolished for the new road system on the site of the Stag Brewery. The Victoria Palace next door is listed Grade II and is to stay. Another casualty is Allington House at Nos 136-140 Victoria Street put up only in 1997. This Post-Modern design in unglazed butterscotch terracotta is by Sidell Gibson and particularly memorable for the sculptured animals, including an elephant, which rear over those using the main door. We have queried demolition in both cases.

EASTWICK PARK DAIRY, BOOKHAM, LEATHERHEAD, SURREY

This is an early-nineteenth-century ornamental dairy described in those terms in a set of sale particulars of 1829. It forms two conjoined octagons linked by a later-nineteenth-century intermediary. They have fish-scale banding among the roof tiles and were once both faced in Roman Cement. The group has been derelict and collapsing for years. The house it served was demolished fifty years ago and the dairy is a lonely, sad, mostly unroofed survivor in what is now the garden of No. 1 Eastwick Drive. One of the longest serving local amenity societies, the Leatherhead and District Countryside Protection Society, has now proposed to re-erect it in the grounds of Eastwick Junior School. The drawing (Fig. 15) shows the completed ensemble after the intended reconstruction by the architects, Nye Saunders.

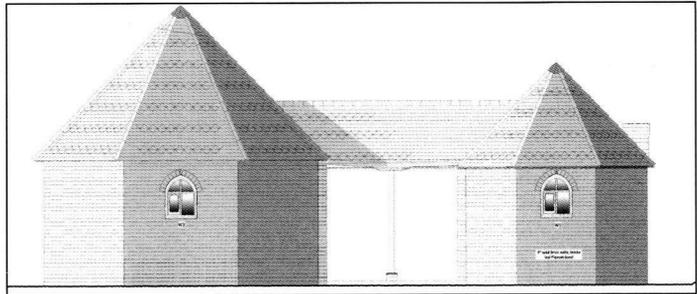


Fig. 15

Eastwick Park Dairy in two octagons

We joined English Heritage in welcoming this initiative, without which the dairy would have collapsed away to nothing.

ST PATERNUS, NORTH PETHERWIN, CORNWALL

The 'greening' of churches is actively encouraged by many dioceses, particularly Truro. The PCC of St Paternus has taken the matter more seriously than most and now propose a wind turbine for the top of the church tower. Comparing the photo (Fig. 16) with the drawing (Fig. 17) does confirm how prominent the newcomer would be. The micro wind



Fig. 16

St Paternus, North Petherwin: very visible 'greening' of a church

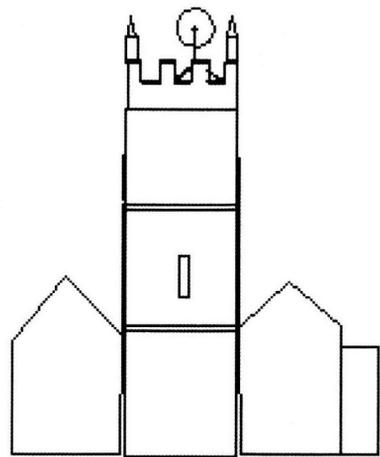


Fig. 17

turbine would generate sixty-five percent of the church's needs when it is used weekly for two hours at a time. It will continue to generate when the PCC demand is zero, which is most of the time, so it is intended to connect it to the grid to which the surplus electricity will be sold. Overall there should be a sixty percent reduction in the church's carbon footprint. We have pressed for the turbine to be placed in the least prominent of positions.

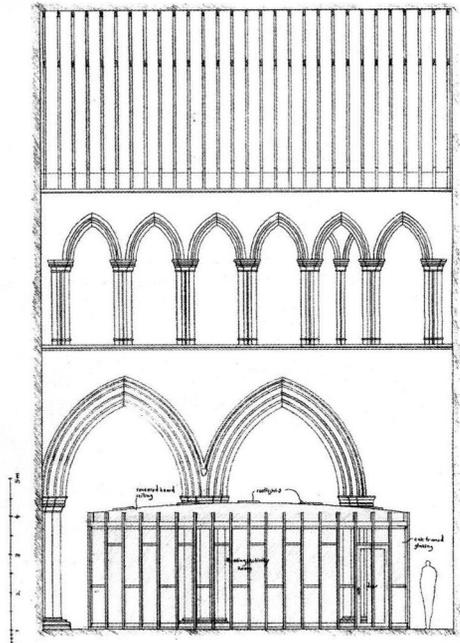
ST AUGUSTINE, HEDON, EAST YORKSHIRE

How to provide new accommodation within an historic church is often another uneasy balancing act. The Casework Sub Committee thought that Matthew Thomas had succeeded in squaring the circle in this scheme at Hedon (Fig. 19). Prompted by an earlier scheme, approved and executed, for loos and kitchen in the north transept, he proposed a lozenge shaped pod in the south transept, to provide a meeting and activity room. The Casework Sub Committee favoured its promise of geometrical precision instead of the present sense of clutter. They welcomed too its intended structural independence from the present floor. If there were concerns they were practical – the avoidance of notices and blinds on its outer walls and clear ideas of how the dome would be kept clean. The architect responded on each of these points.



Fig. 18 (top)
Hedon Minster

Fig. 19 (right)
The south transept 'pod'



SOUTH LODGE, RAVENSWORTH CASTLE, CO. DURHAM

Most of John Nash's Ravensworth Castle of 1808 has gone. The two medieval towers that he spared have in turn survived the demolition men of the 1950s – as has this lodge and gateway. The trouble is that they are now insufferably close to the A1 bypass. The designers, BrightBlue, propose to answer that by concentrating accommodation for enjoyment within a new Garden Room tucked away to the rear (Fig. 20). It tries too hard with the swooping sedum roof

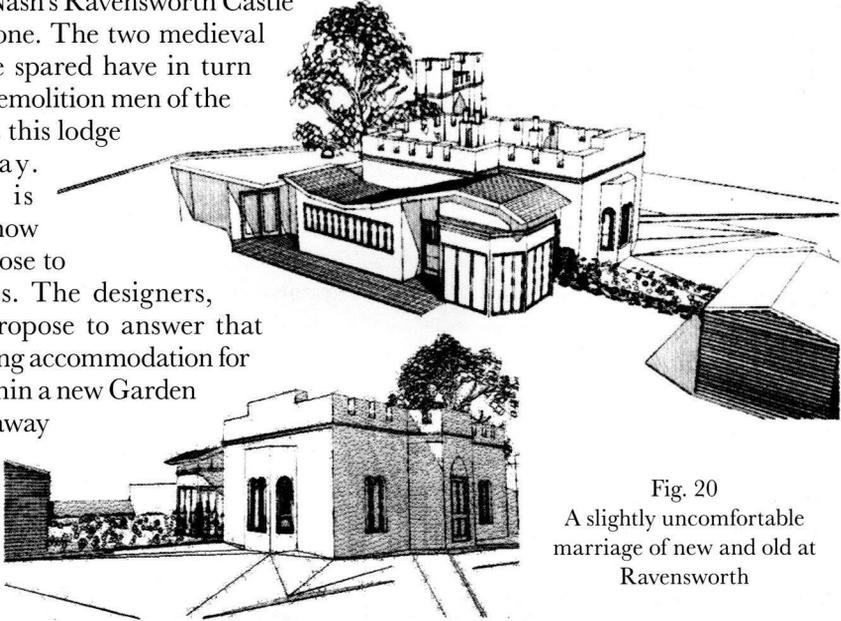


Fig. 20
A slightly uncomfortable marriage of new and old at Ravensworth

but we felt that on balance it was acceptable. We called for the extremity to be pulled away from the western side of the lodge so as to reduce the tension between the old and the new. And we suggested that a battlemented screen wall in stone running north might assist.

CUSTOMS HOUSE, CATHAYS, CARDIFF



Fig. 21
Customs House and York Hotel

The Customs House was built c.1845 to serve the former Glamorgan Canal and is credited to the architect Sidney Smirke. It has been empty for years as has its late-nineteenth-century neighbour, the York Hotel, shown together on the drawing (Fig. 21). It is now proposed to add a new floor to the Smirke and replace the hotel with a new white block (Fig. 22).

The Casework Sub Committee was strongly of the view that the juxtaposition of the new and old was unhappy. The expressed aim of the applicant is to be subservient to the listed building, but the proportions of the new build bear no relationship to the Smirke, whilst

the fact that it rises higher than the Customs House only serves to increase the competitive feel. The Committee thought that it was misguided to attempt any contrived echo of the 1845 building, which as a symmetrical composition is best 'read' independently. In order not to compete with the dignity and balance of the listed building, the Committee urged that the new neighbour be pushed back to reduce direct competition. This would of course be different from the current relationship between the Customs House and the York Hotel but the loss of the latter does offer the chance for a more subtle pairing. In November 2008, we were surprised to be told of a major change, which seemed to make matters worse – substituting a glazed box for the mansard on the Customs House itself.

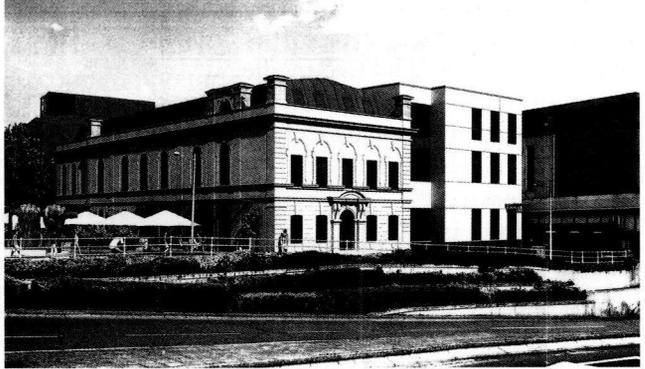


Fig. 22

The Customs House and its new neighbour

GLAMORGAN BUILDING, KING EDWARD VII AVENUE, CATHAYS, CARDIFF

The largest, and arguably one of the most refined ensembles of civic buildings anywhere in Europe is Cathays Park, which forms a complete Beaux Arts Quarter in the centre of Cardiff. One of the principal buildings is the former Mid Glamorgan County Hall of 1908 by Vincent Harris, which since 1997 has been used by the University of Wales.

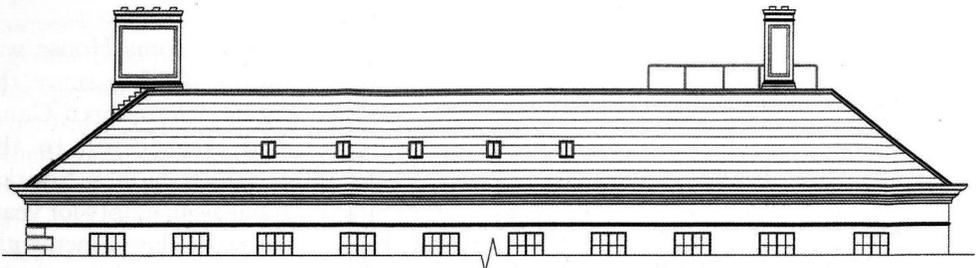


Fig. 23

Glamorgan Building: the 'misaligned' rooflights as originally proposed

The University now plan to use the roof-space for extra accommodation and propose a run of roof lights to light the new offices. But for Vincent Harris, sedate but carefully observed Classical proportion was all important and it grated that the new roof lights as originally designed bore no relationship to the careful rhythm of the windows beneath (Fig. 23). We protested and were grateful that the architects responsible, the James Partnership, saw the point and changed their plans to make sure that the roof lights were relocated over the centre line of the fenestration on what will soon be the penultimate floor.

ST HELEN'S HOUSE, KING STREET, DERBY
St Helen's House is the greatest eighteenth-century house in Derby (Fig. 24). It was built in 1767 to the designs of the city's most celebrated Georgian architect, Joseph Pickford, apparently for John Gisborne MP. In 1863 it was bought by the Governors of Derby School, having been let occasionally as a school in the two decades before. The principal additions were the Pearson Building of 1875, designed by Edwin Thompson and Julian Young, immediately to the north of the main building, the chapel (Fig. 25) by Percy Currey of 1894, the Headmasters House of 1900, a modest design tucked away at the back of the site, and the War Memorial of 1924 by Sir Reginald Blomfield. The school moved out in 1972 and the County Council reopened the complex as an Adult Education Centre. That use ceased in 2004 and the site has been empty since.

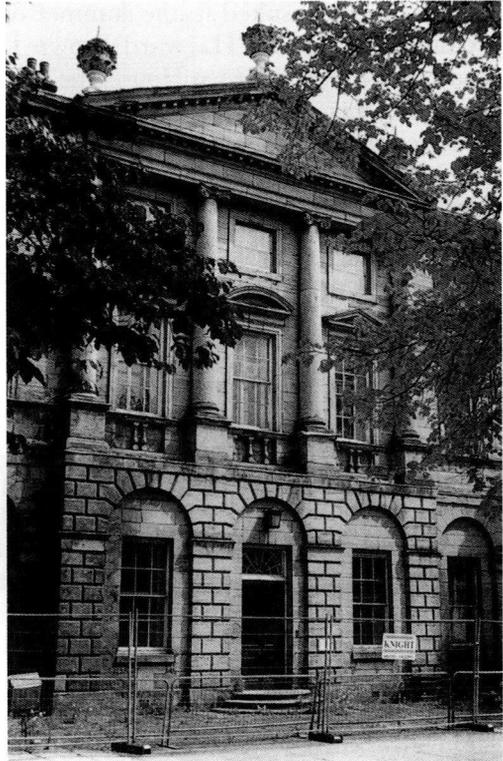


Fig. 24
St Helen's House

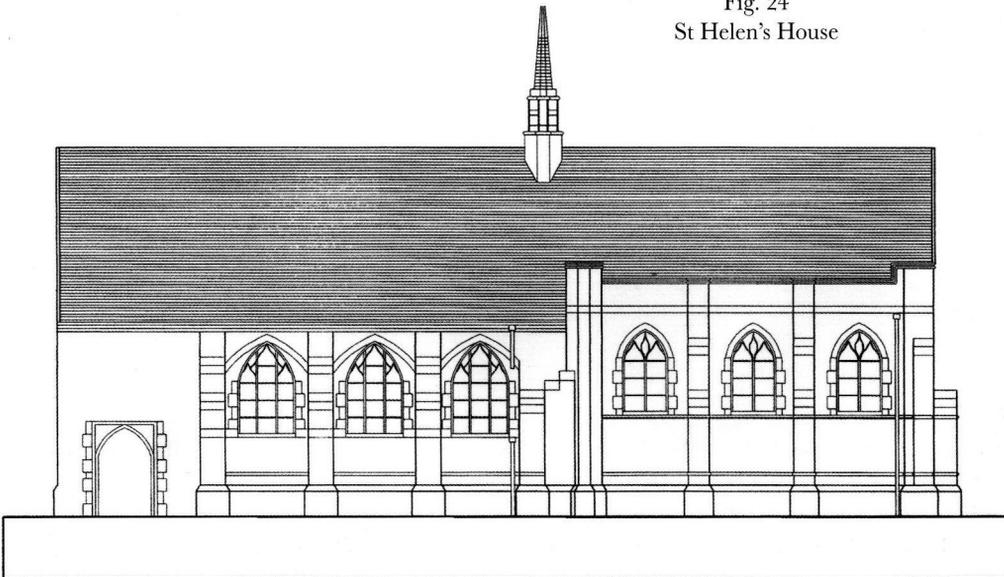


Fig. 25
Percy Currey's Chapel of 1894 is to be demolished

We were consulted in the summer on a comprehensive scheme prepared by the architects, Brownhill Hayward Brown Ltd (for Richard Blunt Ltd). This kept and repaired the Grade I listed House, the Pearson and the Headmaster's House, but swept away the other school buildings and the chapel for replacement by a great crescent of Neo-Georgian design providing apartments and town houses (Fig. 26). Richard Blunt, who is the present owner of the Hall at Clifton Campville in Staffordshire and Staunton Harold in Leicestershire, has a personal passion for Georgian architecture.

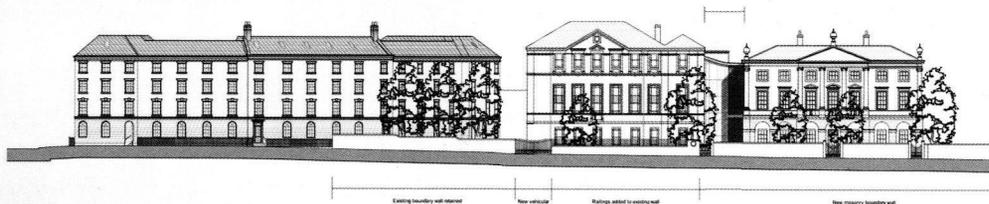


Fig. 26

The proposed sequence of new crescent, The Pearson Building and St Helen's House

We deferred to the Georgian Group on the alterations to St Helen's House itself. The Casework Sub Committee urged that the link between it and the Pearson Building be pushed back from the front elevation – and that the crescent should be reduced in height. As originally submitted it exceeded the height of St Helen's House. Also we felt it very important that the design of the newcomer should be scholarly based – avoiding the lifelessness of Neo-Georgian at its worst.

GILDER TOFT FARMHOUSE, GREAT AYTON, NORTH YORKSHIRE

The staple consultation to the AMS concerns farm buildings and their conversion. One of them affected Gilder Toft, an attractive and unflamboyant early-nineteenth-century group, which has now passed out of agricultural use. The practice, SP & Architects, proposed to extend the farmhouse by a single giant bay, lit as if by an infilled midstrey door to a barn. A balcony was then to open out on the return. Many of the farm buildings

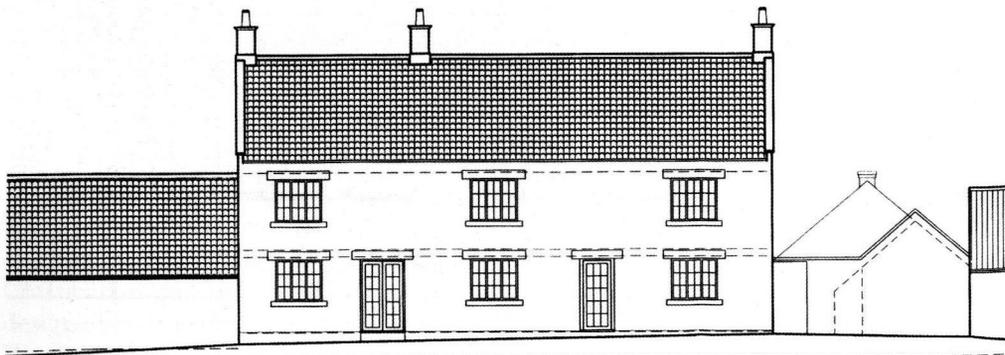


Fig. 27

Gilder Toft as it is now

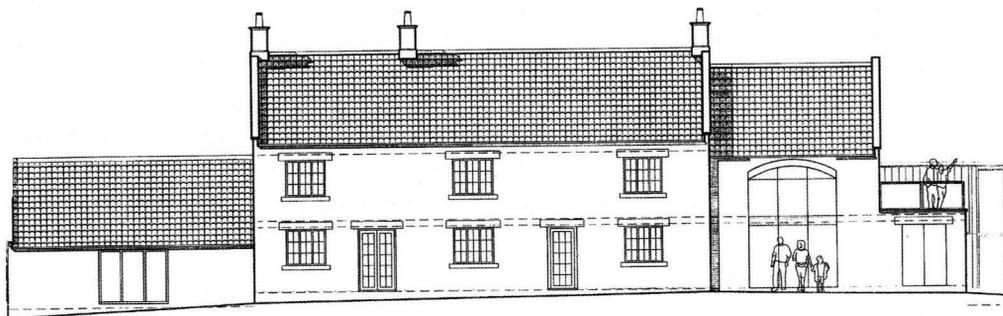


Fig. 28
Gilder Toft as proposed

themselves, arranged around a courtyard, were to be given great swathes of glazing. Drawings (Figs 27 and 28) show the Survey and Proposal for the farmhouse. We were concerned about this use of the language of the barn conversion in such a position and felt that the large expanse of glazing was out of character.

FORTS NELSON AND GILKICKER, HAMPSHIRE

The so-called Palmerstonian forts were built in the 1860s after a Royal Commission had responded to fears of attack from across the Channel, prompted by France's construction of its first ironclad and uneasy diplomatic relations. They were intended to defend key military establishments, especially Portsmouth, forming a linked system rather than individual strongholds. Larger forts were to hold back an army, which may have landed, with smaller coastal forts to protect against attack from ironclads. Some have been adapted and remain in military occupation; some have found new uses and English Heritage occupies Fort Brockhurst as a centre for its collections from excavated sites. The Society dealt with cases affecting both types of fort, offering differing answers to the problems of preserving them.

Fort Nelson (Fig. 29), so called because it is close to the 1807 monument to Nelson on Portsdown Hill, had been rescued from dereliction by Hampshire County Council in 1979 and then let to the Royal Armouries in 1988 as a home for a collection of artillery. This has proved a successful use and has generated the need



Fig. 29
Fort Nelson: the geometry is clearly visible from the air



Fig. 30
Fort Gilkicker

for additional facilities and car parking. Our only concern about an ambitious scheme supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund was a new external cafe building which might damage the reminiscence of the uninterrupted field of fire from the fort. **Fort Gilkicker** (Fig. 30) is on the coast near Gosport and the current proposals are for conversion into housing with only limited public access and interpretation. The proposals included the removal of early-twentieth-century additions put on when the fort was turned into an artillery platform, including a substantial earth bank, which had been raised against the seaward face of the fort. We felt able to support this scheme apart from a proposed additional floor on the landward side residential block.

ABBEY BARNS, THETFORD, NORFOLK

There are two Grade I medieval barns surviving close to the ruins of Thetford Priory. The priory is in the care of English Heritage and open to the public. The adjacent Priory Gatehouse, in guardianship, stands on private land but is visible from the public highway. The two barns are not especially exciting from the exterior, but one is clearly identifiable as an aisled barn and the other has a crown post roof (Fig. 31). For many years they had been used as part of a Norfolk County Council highways depot. When this use was abandoned, ownership reverted to Breckland District Council. There were hopes that the barns could be added to the priory ruins and gatehouse as a single site of the greatest interest, with potential for tourism and education, and an enormous asset to Thetford's heritage. Although English Heritage explored this option it was not pursued and Breckland Council eventually sold the site for development without giving any other

body an opportunity to explore a similar scenario. In 2007 we objected strongly to proposals for residential conversion and enabling development which would irretrievably fragment the heritage asset. Regrettably Breckland Council approved the applications; despite our representations. The Secretary of State refused to call them in on the basis that the proposals were a purely local matter for local determination. Doubts about the validity of the consents have led in 2008 to renewed applications to which we have again objected. We urged Breckland Council to grasp the opportunity for second and better thoughts; and at the time of writing we await decisions. But in view of English Heritage's inexplicable support for a scheme which a few years earlier would have been anathema to them we are not hopeful of a better outcome second time round.

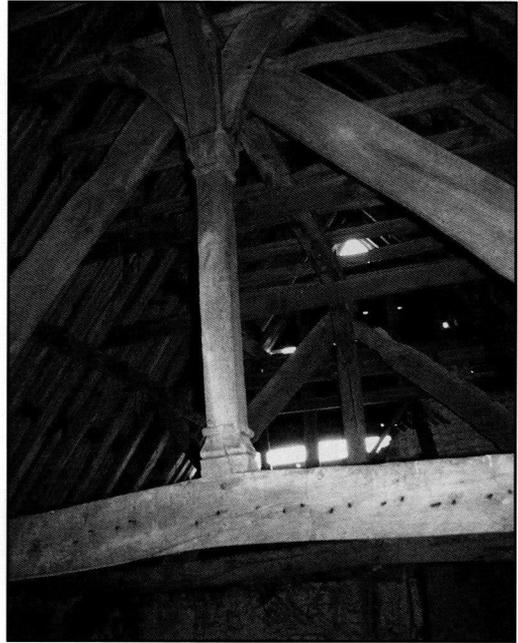
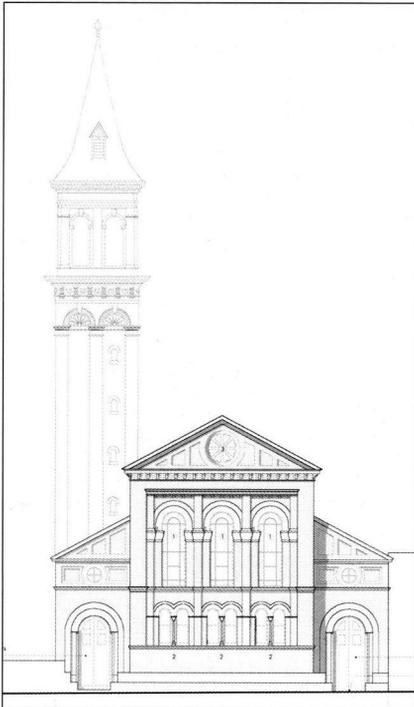


Fig. 31

Abbey Barns: crown post roof



KNOTT MILL (CASTLEFIELD) CHAPEL,
DEANSGATE, MANCHESTER

In the 2008 *Transactions* we reviewed dramatic church conversion schemes – and in the current year yet more have been proposed. One such is Knott Mill Chapel, opened in 1852 and designed by Edward Walters. Walters clearly had Palladio at San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice in mind (Fig. 32) when he conceived the exterior. Knott Hill has had a shaky existence for a number of years, although it achieved popular fame when it was bought in 1992 by the pop impresario, Pete Waterman, who created a recording studio in the basement. The present state of the interior (Fig. 33) confirms the need for a benign new use. Now it has been bought by Blue Tree Estates who have commissioned OMI Architects (job architect, Nick Berry) of Salford to insert an angular shaped pod of offices inside

Fig. 32

Knott Mill Chapel: Palladio in Manchester



Fig. 33

The rather sad interior of Knott Mill Chapel

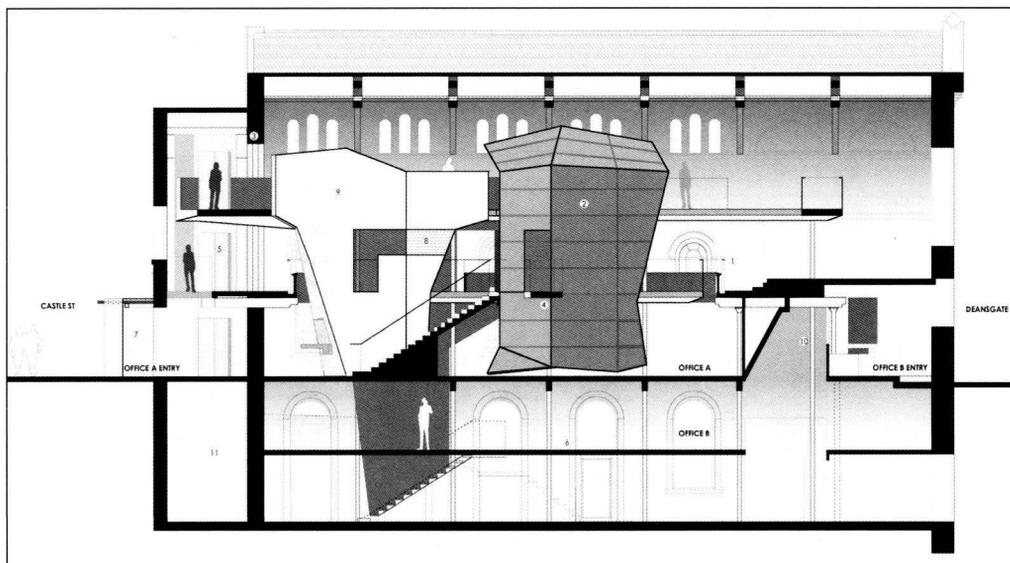


Fig. 34

Knott Mill Chapel: the new 'pod' of offices as now being built

(Fig. 34). At the time of putting in the planning application a user had not been identified, but now that the scheme is under construction, a creative firm has made contact with a view to occupation.

BLATHERWYCKE HALL, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

More country houses succumbed in the fifteen years after the end of the Second World War than in any other period. One such was Blatherwycke (Fig. 35), destroyed in 1948. It was the work of Thomas Ripley of London, who succeeded Grinling Gibbons as Master Carpenter in 1721 and Sir John Vanbrugh as Comptroller of the Board of Works in 1726. There were alterations in 1811, which included the mansard roof shown in the photograph.



Fig. 35

Old Blatherwycke Hall

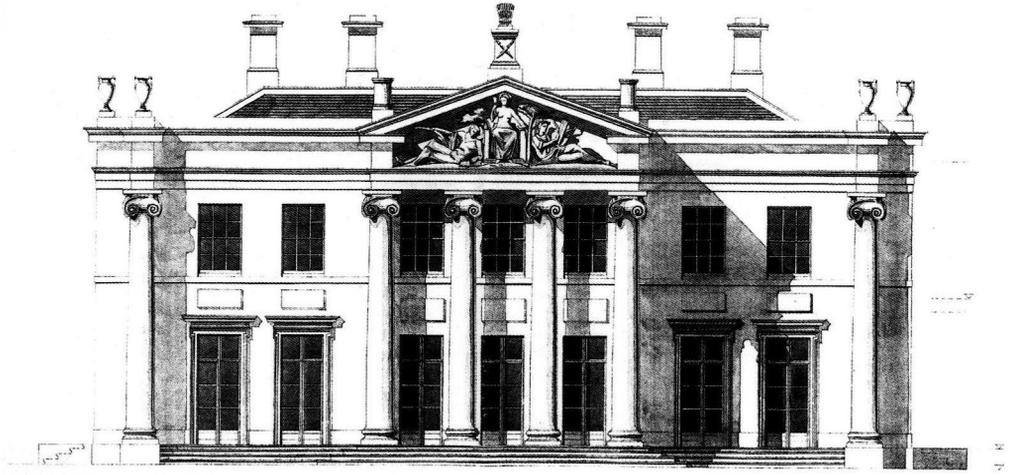


Fig. 36
New Blatherwycke Hall

In 2004 planning permission was granted for a new Classical house on the site and in 2008 we were consulted on the detailed plans worked up for the applicants, Mr and Mrs M. George by Craig Hamilton, Architects of Powys. The house comes as the climax to several decades of activity by the applicants restoring the estate. Craig Hamilton remains one of the most sophisticated practitioners in the Classical language and the new house (Fig. 36) avoids any attempt at recapturing the lost Ridley. The chief characteristic is the use of the late-fifth-century Bassae Ionic for the Order, much loved by C. R. Cockerell. There is an associated scheme to repair the utterly derelict stables of *c.*1770. We felt able to wish the scheme well.