

The Society's Casework, 1987-8: some Examples

by

MATTHEW SAUNDERS

BREWERY CHIMNEY, NAG'S HEAD PUBLIC HOUSE, TUTTLE STREET, WREXHAM
This impressive industrial chimney was the subject of an application to demolish in August 1988. Although unlisted, it falls within a Conservation Area. The structure is in brick, an octagonal shaft topped with a crown course and extended lip, sitting on a broached base over a massive plinth. This has sunken panelled sides and a corbel-table supporting the base of the chimney itself (Fig. 1).

Industrial chimneys have recently become much better understood and appreciated. A publication is expected soon from the Victorian Society in conjunction with the Ironbridge Institute of Industrial Archaeology (to be written by James Douet). John Lowe, Conservation Officer for Burnley, has written a passionate appreciation in *Contact* (Winter 1987-8), the journal of the Civic Trust for the North-west.

The principle of tall chimneys, namely that a tall pipe created a draught which increased both rate and temperature of combustion, was established first in the German publication of 1647 by Glaubier, translated into English five years later. The oldest surviving example in this country, built in 1770 for the smelt mill at Stone Edge in Derbyshire, has been grant-aided by the Ancient Monuments Society. It was under the Victorians that the building-type blossomed; height and splendour of detail became symbolic of the power and prosperity of particular mills. The Liverpool engineer, Robert Rawlinson, encouraged this role in his book *Designs for Tall Chimney Shafts* (1859) which suggested that models should be borrowed from the mainstream of historic architecture. A number of the greatest examples, particularly those at the Globe Works at Leeds and Cox's Stalk at Dundee, borrowed freely from such 'polite' references. Hence the peppering of English industrial landscapes with the occasional parody of a campanile, minaret or watch-tower. The example at Wrexham was no doubt built like many others from the inside without scaffolding. The painted iron hoops around the circumference contained any 'spread', particularly that occasioned by heat expansion, but were also considered at the time to deter lightning.

The Society strongly opposed demolition. New uses are problematic but this must be one of the very few historic structures, of which railway viaducts is another example, where the costs of demolition can frequently exceed those of repair and making safe.

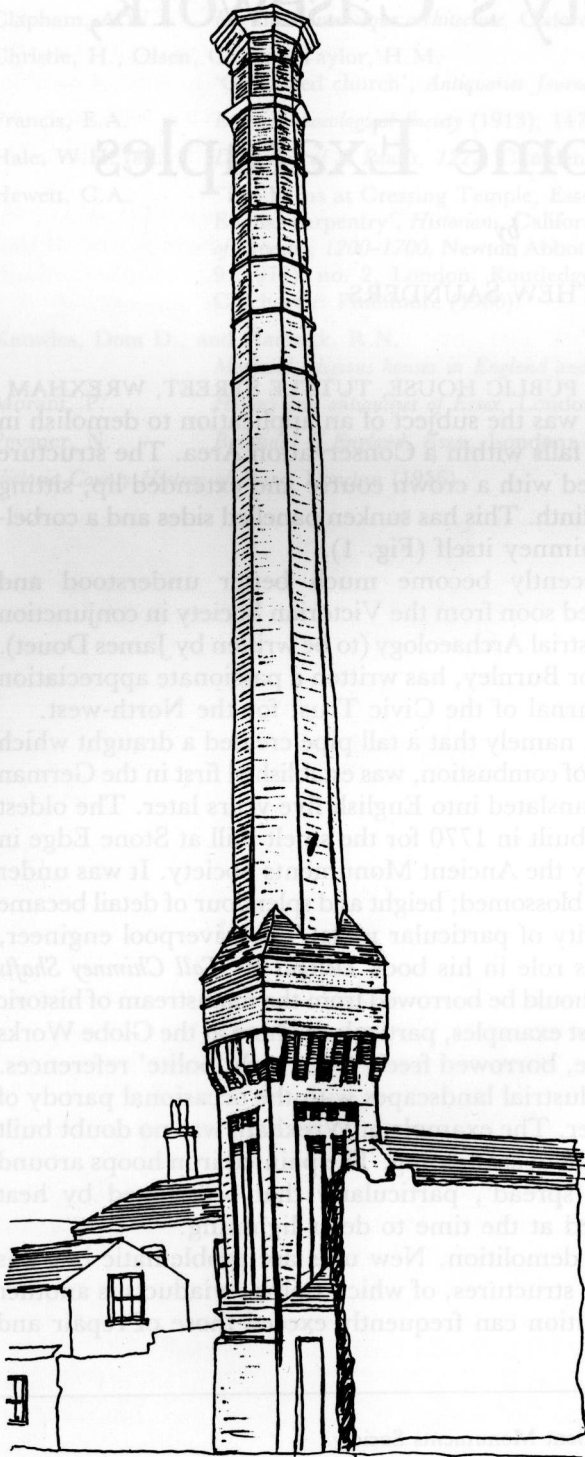


Fig. 1
Brewery chimney, Nag's Head Public House, Turtle Street, Wrexham, Clwyd

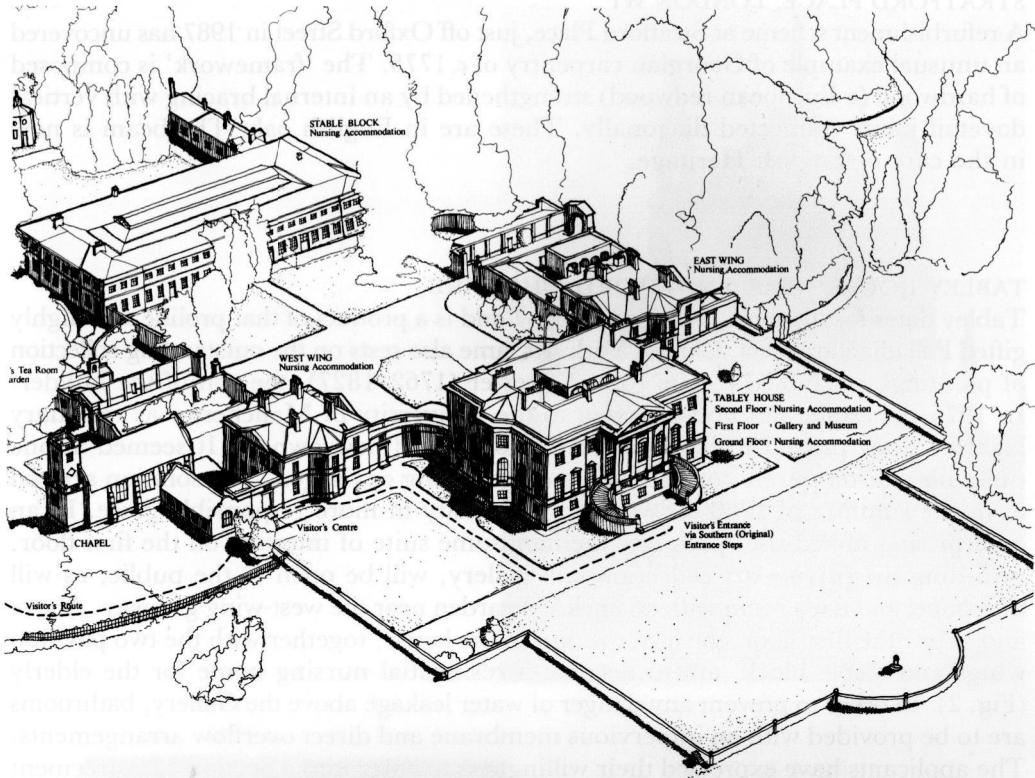


Fig. 2
Tabley House, Knutsford, Cheshire
Bodnitz Allan & Partners
Donald W. Insall & Associates

STRATFORD PLACE, LONDON W1

A refurbishment scheme at Stratford Place, just off Oxford Street in 1987 has uncovered an unusual example of Georgian carpentry of *c.* 1775. The 'framework' is composed of hardwood (a European redwood) strengthened by an internal bracing with vertical dovetail joints connected diagonally. These are in English oak. The beam is now in the care of English Heritage.

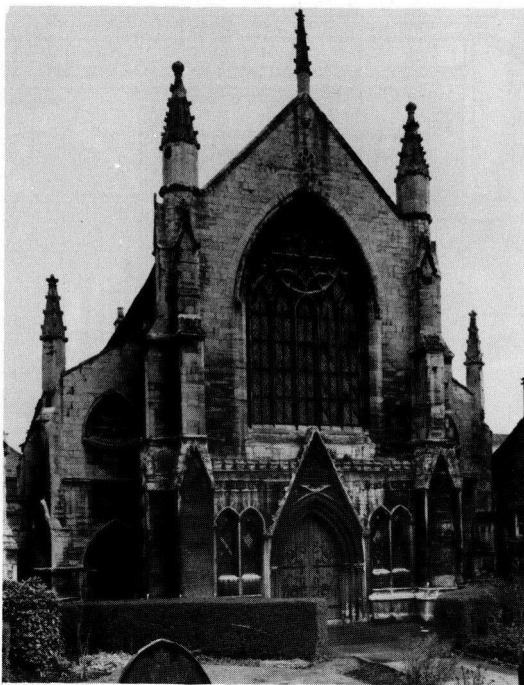
TABLEY HOUSE, NEAR KNUTSFORD, CHESHIRE

Tabley dates for the most part from 1760-7 and is a product of that prolific and highly gifted Palladian architect, Carr of York. Its fame also rests on the outstanding collection of paintings assembled by Sir John Leicester (1762-1827), the son of the builder. In 1975 the estate and house passed to the University of Manchester as residuary legatee. They proved to be somewhat embarrassed new owners. It seemed at one time that sale on purely commercial lines was being envisaged. The solution arrived at in the summer of 1988 showed the University in more responsible guise. In an enterprising mixed-use 'package' the handsome suite of interiors on the first floor, including the private art collection and gallery, will be open to the public, as will the chapel and a tea room with an enclosed garden near the west-wing gateway. Above and below the first floor, the lesser rooms of the house, together with the two pavilion wings and stable block, are to become a residential nursing home for the elderly (Fig. 2). In order to prevent any danger of water leakage above the Gallery, bathrooms are to be provided with an impervious membrane and direct overflow arrangements. The applicants have expressed their willingness to enter into a Section 52 Agreement which would give legal sanction to their commitment to allow public access to the staterooms and introduce a landscape management plan.

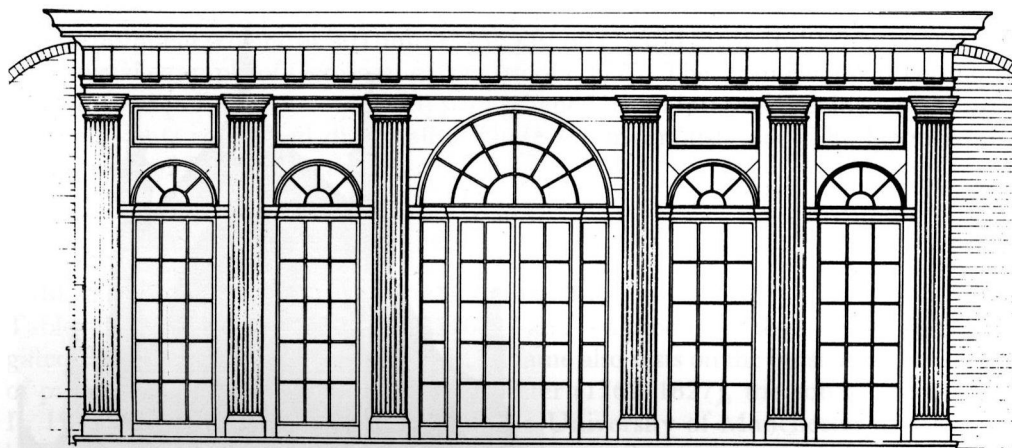
FORMER UNITARIAN CHAPEL, THE CONIGRE, TROWBRIDGE, WILTSHIRE

Externally, William Smith's essay of 1855 in *Decorated Gothic* displays all the self-confidence of the Established Church. This makes the internal arrangement to suit the nonconformist liturgy all the more telling. Where an Anglican church would have placed an altar (at the east end), Smith provided an impressive stone pulpit topped by a 'reredos' and cordoned by three massive sanctuary rails, the whole lot in stone.

This building had long been derelict, the danger becoming acute in 1987 with an application to demolish. That was never determined. Rather it was pre-empted by the complete demolition of the church in March 1988. A few features were saved by an architecture salvage firm but most were destroyed. It was contended that the building was 'dangerous', a view which English Heritage did not endorse. At the time of writing we are still awaiting a firm stand from the Department of the Environment on this serious case, particularly as the Housing and Planning Act of 1986 greatly circumscribed the ability to demolish buildings under a Dangerous Structure Notice without listed building consent (Figs 3 and 4).



Figs 3 and 4
Unitarian Chapel, The Conigre, Trowbridge,
Wiltshire
*Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of
England*



SOUTH-WEST ELEVATION

Fig. 5

The Lemonry, R.A.F. Bawdsey, Bawdsey, Suffolk

LEMONRY, R.A.F. BAWDSEY, BAWDSEY, SUFFOLK

Orangeries are well known, lemonries perhaps less so. This example lies in the grounds of Bawdsey Manor, built in 1890–1906 by Sir Cuthbert Quilter, who seems to have been his own architect although drawing on the advice of Percy Macquoid, an authority on English furniture. The estate is now in the hands of the Ministry of Defence which applied, through the Property Services Agency, in May 1988 to demolish the lemonry including its impressive wooden Doric temple front (Fig. 5).

51 FORSHAW STREET, BARROW-IN-FURNESS, CUMBRIA

This rather bedraggled Classical façade is all that remains of a music hall of 1868. The building was proposed for demolition to allow a broader town centre redevelopment. This was one case where the Society joined with the Victorian Society in acknowledging that the building had outlived not so much its usefulness as its dignity. We did not oppose demolition.

ST HILDA'S CHURCH, DARLINGTON, CO. DURHAM

J.L. Pearson, perhaps the most noble exponent of the Gothic revival, produced in this relatively cheap church of 1887–8, a severe but beautifully-proportioned composition (Figs 6 and 7). Following an earlier declaration of redundancy the Church Commissioners proposed its demolition in 1988 as no new use could be found. The Society is pressing for a continued canvass of the market.



Figs 6 and 7
St Hilda's Church, Darlington, Co. Durham
*Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of
England*

PENDLEBURY HALL, DODGE HILL, GREATER MANCHESTER

Pendlebury Hall, which is listed and lies within a Conservation Area, was opened on 20 April 1882 having been built from funds of £100,000 left in the will of a former mayor of Stockport, Sir Ralph Pendlebury, J.P., (d. 1861). It was built as an orphanage, a moving legacy from a man who had no issue from his two marriages. The building with its tower, ninety-eight feet high, is prominent for several miles around Stockport and surrounded by more than two acres of land.

Following a period of uncertainty when local people feared demolition, Stockport Council has now found what we hope will prove a sympathetic use as a nursing home.

SINAI PARK, BRANSTON, STAFFORDSHIRE

If there is a building *in extremis*, it is Sinai (Fig. 8). This substantial E-shaped courtyard house of the early seventeenth century, but with earlier elements, has been derelict for years. Difficulties of access militate against reoccupation. The building has now been fully surveyed by the Threatened Buildings Section of the Royal Commission of the Historical Monuments of England (which has recently opened a Northern Office in York).



Fig. 8

Sinai Park, Branston, Staffordshire
Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England

21-25 LONDON ROAD, NEWBURY, BERKSHIRE

This well-proportioned early nineteenth-century building was the subject of an unsuccessful application to demolish in January 1988 (Fig. 9). The applicants appealed but we strongly supported the Council and trust that the Secretary of State will find in the building's favour. Newbury has suffered considerable depredation in recent years and it cannot afford to lose any more buildings of character.



Fig. 9
21-25 London Road, Newbury, Berkshire

1-5 ZETLAND ROAD, MIDDLESBOROUGH, CLEVELAND

Zetland Road, facing Middlesborough Station, provides one of the richest stretches of largely Victorian townscape in a much underrated city. It includes, at number seven, the nationally important offices designed for Bell Brothers by Philip Webb. Immediately adjacent at numbers 1-5 is the only survival in the street of a late Georgian terrace—an exactly symmetrical composition of three houses constructed in red brick. Although we resisted an earlier application to demolish we did not oppose a renewed threat in 1988 for it was the considered judgment of English Heritage that there was no alternative. As the quid pro quo for the loss of numbers 11 and 13 would be rehabilitated. The drawings (by Hugh Wilson and Lewis Womersley) show the terrace as it now exists and as proposed after the projected redevelopment (Fig. 10).

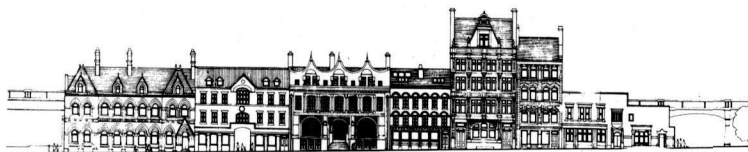


Fig. 10
1-5 Zetland Road, Middlesborough, Cleveland
Hugh Wilson and Lewis Womersley

METHODIST MISSION HALL, DURNSFORD ROAD, LONDON SW18

This late essay in Edwardian Baroque was designed in the 1920s by Sir Alfred Gelder (1855-1941), five times Mayor of Hull and Liberal M.P. for Brigg from 1910-18. It dominates this otherwise drab area of south London and is in its own right a spectacular example of the Methodist Central Hall. The congregation are divided over what to do about the embarrassment of space which such a giant building now offers. Unfortunately the option of total demolition is the one now being pursued despite the existence of an outline plan for conversion. As the Department of the Environment has refused listing, demolition seems likely.

THE CUSTOM HOUSE, TRAFFORD ROAD, SALFORD, GREATER MANCHESTER

This building of 1903 is sound and useable; indeed it is in use (Fig. 11). The threat arises solely from the wish to widen the road as part of the successful regeneration of Salford Docks. The Council has suggested dismantling and re-erection on the new alignment but at the time of writing has stated that they would expect the expense to be met by others.



Fig. 11
The Custom House, Trafford Road, Salford,
Greater Manchester
Brian Blayney

COGGRA FOLD FARMHOUSE, BRADLEY LANE, RADCLIFFE, LANCASHIRE

This seventeenth-century L-shaped stone house with some walls rebuilt in red brick retains a remarkable external plaster decoration representing a tree supporting a form of cross and something resembling a thistle. A scheme of alteration and substantial rebuilding in 1988 threatened to demolish the gable which supports these motifs. We strongly opposed demolition and urged that these potent, rather eerie, examples of folk art be retained.

BARN, HOLY CLAINES FARM, HINDLIP, WORCESTER

This barn is clearly of three builds, if not more. The earliest section is in dressed greensand ashlar, the sizeable brick element retaining eighteenth-century bricks to roughly half its height, the rest being of the nineteenth century (Fig. 12). The whole composition is united by a handmade clay-tile roof with vitrified bonnet-tiles along the ridge. Demolition was proposed in 1988 to offer some marginal improvement to road access leading to a potential development site behind. The Society strongly opposed demolition and put forward various options which would preclude the need for demolition either at all or on the scale proposed.



Fig. 12
Barn, Holy Claines Farm, Hindlip, Worcester

WESTMINSTER PIER

One of the most famous views in central London, that of the Houses of Parliament and the Embankment, would have been radically altered by a proposal subjected to a Public Inquiry on 10 and 11 December 1987. The application, by Thames Water, proposed a two-storey floating-pier structure immediately east of Westminster Bridge. This was to contain 30,000 sq. ft. of commercial space intended to include shops and restaurants. The pier would have been 530 feet long, about 80 feet wide and would have projected some 130 feet into the river. At mean tide it would have risen a full storey above the Victoria Embankment parapet. The materials were mainly steel and glass. The structure had all the appearance of a floating shopping centre rather than a mere landing stage. The Society backed English Heritage in its objection to the proposal and listed building consent was swiftly refused by the Secretary of State.

1-3A STAPLE GARDENS, WINCHESTER, HAMPSHIRE

This terrace of the late eighteenth century seems to be of one build although only number 1, roughly symmetrical about an original late eighteenth-century six-panelled door, is listed (Fig. 13). The other two properties are simpler and have been adapted to commercial use. An application in 1988 to demolish was only the latest in a series of threats to a building which the local authority had regarded as beyond repair since the late 1970s. Construction is in 9 in. brickwork up to the first floor, with a timber framing of very light scantling and brick webbing above. This is of course concealed by a render incised to imitate ashlar. The most unusual features of the building appear to be the substantial curved-timber horizontal braces at the southern end designed to strengthen the flimsy first-floor construction at eaves level. The mixture of windows includes four sashes at the front on number 1 with segmental heads and an older sash to the rear with the fat glazing bars typical of the early eighteenth century, which must have been re-used.



Fig. 13
1-3A Staple Gardens, Winchester,
Hampshire

BRADFORD CITY HALL

The bells at City Hall in Bradford were installed in a heavy oak frame in 1873. They were cast by the firm that still dominates the field, Taylors of Loughborough, and numbered thirteen in all, the biggest weighing 4 tons 7 cwt. As a drawing prepared by Bradford City Council shows, the support is in itself an impressive example of late timber-framing. Over the years, patching of decay using resins reinforced with fibreglass and stainless steel rods, has been carried out and more recently steel support members have been fixed to prop-up suspect wood members. Given that the carillon peal is partly exposed to the weather the depredations of the elements are more difficult to restrict than in other bell towers. As a result the City Council applied in February 1988 to destroy the existing frame and replace it in new galvanized steel. We supported the efforts of English Heritage to secure a less destructive solution.

46-48 KING STREET, LEIGH, LANCASHIRE

These two houses of the late eighteenth century are constructed in English garden-wall bond, the stone-slate roof being crudely skimmed in asphalt. The cross wing with the shop is slightly later. The rather haphazard arrangement of the fenestration would be indicative elsewhere of an earlier core, perhaps timber-framed (Fig. 14). However, these premises are entirely of one build. The threat in this case was posed by road improvement.

THE RAILINGS, CARDEN HALL FARM, WREXHAM ROAD, CARDEN, CHESHIRE

Carden Hall was burned down in 1924 but the gate piers and railings at the entrance survived. The railings are of the early eighteenth century and wrought by the Davies Brothers of Croes Foel. The piers date from a hundred years later. Both features are listed Grade II*. They achieve this grading despite the absence of the gates. The Society was able to welcome very warmly an application referred to it in July 1988 to reinstate those lost gates. The blacksmith executing the work is Paul Dennis of Powys.

MOOR PARK, RICKMANSWORTH, HERTFORDSHIRE

Moor Park is, in the words of Sir Nikolaus Pevsner, 'the grandest eighteenth-century mansion in Hertfordshire'. It is a remodelling of an earlier house begun after 1720 and apparently largely the design of Sir James Thornhill, better known as a painter. It is listed Grade I and is in the freehold ownership of Three Rivers District Council, although leased to a golf club. Faced with the need to raise a substantial sum of money, the Council explored a number of options. One such led to the submission, in the Summer of 1988, of an application by a private developer to reconstruct on the lines of the enclosed painting (prepared by John Simpson & Partners) the east and west quadrant colonnades added *c.* 1725 but demolished in 1785 (Fig. 15). Modern additions on the site would be swept away. The new wings would provide thirty new apartments and the hope is that the income therefrom would drastically reduce, if not totally preclude, reliance on grant aid. A decision is awaited.



Fig. 14
46-48 King Street, Leigh, Lancashire

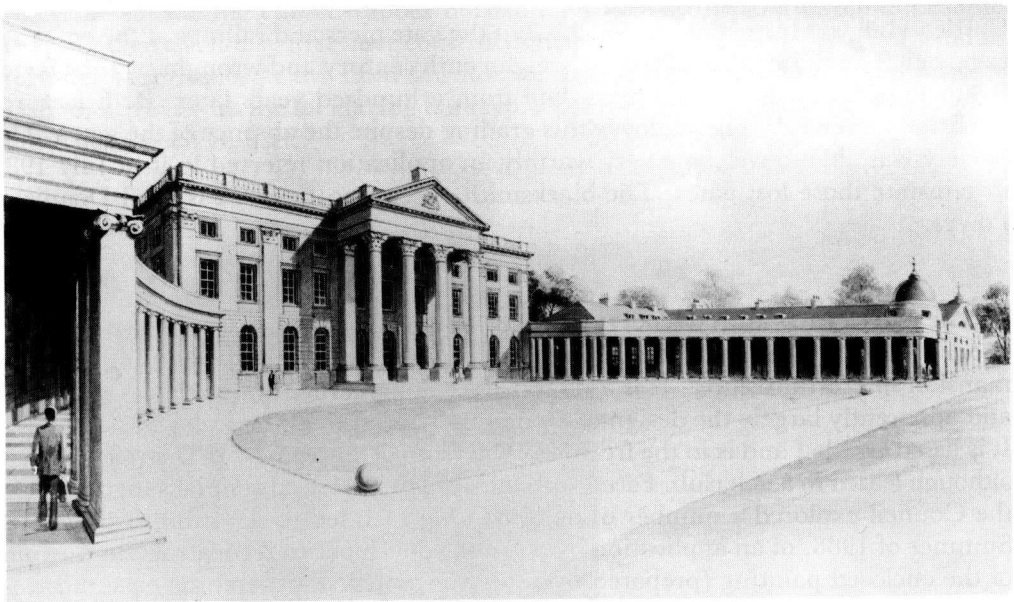


Fig. 15
Moor Park, Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire
John Simpson & Partners

DEE HOUSE, LITTLE ST JOHN STREET, CHESTER

Undoubtedly this is the most philosophically contentious case of the year under review. Dee House was built around 1730 for James Comberbach, a former alderman and mayor of Chester who died in 1735. It retains a fine and original principal staircase, of open string and barley-sugar balusters, or twistlers. The building survived, apparently as a private residence, until it became a Catholic convent school in January 1854 under the aegis of the Faithful Companions of Jesus. They built a substantial new wing between February and October 1867 to a design of Edmund Kirby, providing a chapel, study room and dormitory. The style, in deliberate contrast with the simplicity and symmetry of the 1730 original, was in a rather spare Gothic. The other side of Dee House is now taken by a large neo-Georgian wing of c.1900.

It was Dee House's bad luck to have been constructed over part of the site of the Roman amphitheatre. There are nine certain and three possible amphitheatres known from Roman Britain. Technically they fall into two groups, depending on whether they are attached to a military site (where the proper term is *ludus*) or to a civil site. The example at Chester is one of only three *ludi* known, the other two being in Wales, at Tomen-y-More, Gwynedd, and Caerleon. The Chester *ludus* is of two phases, the first in timber, the second a rebuilding largely in stone. The site was discovered in 1929 and excavated to just under a half of its perimeter by 1969.

In 1986 a private developer promised to complete the excavation of the amphitheatre provided he was given permission to construct a Deva Roman Centre on part of the site, together with a reconstructed quadrant or quarter of the amphitheatre. The resultant Public Inquiry in 1987, at which the Secretary represented the Society, centred on the expendability of Dee House and the unavoidability of its demolition in order to allow excavation. Opposition to demolition was led by the Ancient Monuments Society, the Victorian Society and the Georgian Group whilst support for the amphitheatre over Dee House came from English Heritage and the Council for British Archaeology. The Inspector found in our favour. He was unconvinced that the retention of Dee House and the pursuit of archaeological knowledge were mutually exclusive. Mr Ridley felt otherwise and overruled this recommendation. Listed building consent has been given and Chester will soon be blessed with the curious sight of twenty-five per cent of a reconstructed amphitheatre, with extras promised in Roman costume and 'authentic' spectacles in the arena itself.