

Recent Emergency Recording

by

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This article on discoveries made during emergency recording work by the national agencies – the fourth consecutive year of publication – includes a selection of buildings ranging in date right up to a wonderful 1960s icon, Cardiff Arms Park. The range of building types is also varied: there is an inter-war non-conformist chapel, a spice grinding mill (in use until 1994), a Welsh hill farm, town houses by the Adam brothers and the first purpose-built comprehensive school in London. There appears to be no shortage of fascinating buildings to be recorded in advance of alteration or demolition. As in previous years, we are most grateful for their help in providing information and illustrations to staff in the Royal Commissions on Ancient and Historical Monuments (Richard Suggett in Wales and John Cattell and Peter Guillery in England).

Devolution in Scotland and Wales, and in England the proposal that RCHME should merge with English Heritage may have far-reaching implications for the emergency recording of buildings at risk. Given the diversity of exciting discoveries published in these Transactions over the last four years, it is to be hoped that the revamped agencies responsible for survey work will appreciate the importance of systematic, thorough and informed recording.

The editor would welcome comments on the value of this compilation and in order to assist those inquiring about a particular site contact names and addresses are given at the end of the article.

CARDIGANSHIRE

Gelmast (New Farm), Llanfihangel-y-Creuddyn

Gelmast (Fig. 1) was visited by RCAHMW shortly after its sale by the Forestry Commission. Research suggested that this was the site of 'New Farm' established about 1810 by Thomas Johnes of Hafod, one of the champions of the picturesque movement. RCAHMW's survey showed that Gelmast incorporates the major elements of Johnes's new farm. The centrally-planned farmhouse was flanked by a five-bay barn (west) and large cowhouse (east), which defined a yard closed on the south side by a high wall, now somewhat reduced. The buildings are on the whole a utilitarian group, but particular mention should be made of the early, pillared hay-barn adjoining the house (now shrouded by galvanised sheeting) and a free-standing pyramidal-roofed dairy in the tradition of the *ferme ornée*, now incorporated in rear extensions to the farm house.

Gelmast was in some ways a pioneering farm designed to exploit the vast upland commons and roll back the frontiers of unimproved waste land. Despite its

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Fig. 1

Gelmast, Llanfihangel-y-Creuddyn, Cardiganshire

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associations with Thomas Johnes, Gelmast was not intended to be picturesque. Theorists of the picturesque readily conceded that upland scenery could be barren, dreary and lacking in variety. This 'negative' aspect of picturesque doctrine encouraged positive schemes for improvement – as at Gelmast. Here Johnes, as a progressive Whig landlord, proposed to improve the beauty and profitability of a landscape regarded as monotonous and unproductive in its natural, open and treeless state.

GLAMORGAN

Carmel Chapel, Bryn

It is said that each week a chapel is demolished somewhere in Wales. This may be an exaggeration, but it cannot be doubted that at the present rate of loss only a fraction of the 3,500 or so chapels which existed in 1950 will be standing in 2050.



Fig. 2
Carmel Chapel, Bryn, Glamorgan a. exterior b. interior
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Carmel is one of a number of chapels surveyed by RCAHMW in the last few years in an attempt to record the full range of chapel architecture.

Bryn is a nineteenth-century colliery settlement which once supported five or six places of worship. Carmel (Independent) chapel was built on the edge of the village within sight of the (now demolished) colliery. Carmel was first built in 1860 and its successor of 1928 is an interesting and revealing example of the last inter-war phase of chapel building. The final form of the flat-roofed chapel was less a result of the influence of modernist design and more a consequence of the failure of funds and the depression. The local architect, David Evans, made a virtue out of necessity. The original plan was for the new chapel to be raised over a basement containing the Sunday-school room. The basement storey was built with substantial concrete foundations and a concrete roof supported by iron columns. When plans for the upper chapel could not be realised the basement was appropriated for the chapel.

Externally the stone-built, flat-roofed chapel with yellow-brick dressings and red-painted sash windows is little changed (Fig. 2a). Internally, four of the five bays are occupied by the chapel with three rows of benches facing the pulpit and the deacons' enclosure or 'set fawr' (Fig. 2b). The chapel is divided from the raised vestry and school room by a folding screen. When the screen was unfolded, the school room was transformed into a stage and the movable backs of the seating adjusted so that the benches faced towards the platform. Sustained fund-raising through concerts and plays was needed to clear the outstanding building debt. According to the chapel history the new building had cost £1,780.

Latterly, with a declining congregation, services were held in the small Sunday-school room. Only two services have been held in the chapel proper during the last ten years. With a final membership of four, the decision was taken to close the chapel and the last service was held in December 1997. Demolition will follow.

Cardiff Arms Park, Cardiff



Fig. 3
Cardiff Arms
Park, Cardiff,
Glamorgan
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Cardiff Arms Park, the national rugby stadium, was recorded in 1997 immediately before demolition (Fig. 3). Construction of the stadium had begun exactly thirty years earlier, in 1967, and, as research has shown, was a resolutely Welsh affair. The stadium was designed by Cardiff architects (Osborne V. Webb & Partners) and built by Welsh engineers and contractors using materials largely made in Wales. The amphitheatrical design was extraordinarily successful with the 'predatory' concrete frame (to use John Newman's felicitous phrase from the *Buildings of Wales*) tantalisingly glimpsed in the city centre but fully revealed from the River Taff. It is very rare that a post-war concrete-framed building becomes a much loved monument, but this temple of sport was hallowed by the 'golden era' of Welsh rugby in the 1970s. Cardiff Arms Park and the adjoining Empire Pool of 1958 are to make way for a new millennium national stadium and conference centre.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Cleeve Hall, Bishop's Cleeve
 Cleeve Hall was built for the bishops of Worcester, probably in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, the manor of Cleeve having been in their possession for much of the medieval period. The bishops held a three-weekly court there as early as 1288. The house, used for many years as the rectory, originally had an L-plan comprising a hall range with in-line services at its south end and a substantial solar wing to the north. The hall and services were altered during the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, although the hall's massive gable end walls survive. The service end wall retains four original doorways, each with a two-centred arched head. Three of the doorways represent the typical medieval arrangement leading to the services,



Fig. 4

Solar roof, as exposed during restoration, at Cleeve Hall,
 Bishop's Cleeve, Gloucestershire
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while the fourth doorway, situated in the corner of the hall, presumably led to a stair serving a chamber above. However, the most significant aspect of the house is the impressive solar wing, surviving virtually intact with a complete coupled rafter roof (Fig. 4) comprising twenty-five sets of coupled rafter pairs. Each pair has a cranked collar with chamfered arch bracing extending down to a moulded wall plate. This sophisticated treatment contrasts with the relatively archaic overall roof design in which there are no purlins or longitudinal timbers of any description, which over the years has resulted in racking of the timbers. The roof's completeness and its demonstration of both archaic and sophisticated carpentry techniques makes it of considerable interest, but also it has an extensive array of carpenters' marks which have been recorded by RCHME. The presence of these marks in arabic numerals and the general form of construction, which occurs elsewhere in ecclesiastical carpentry of the period, reinforces the historical links with the bishops of Worcester. The solar also retains its original west window surround, which has a stone two-centred arch with a well preserved keel moulding. At the time of recording by RCHME the house was undergoing an extensive programme of restoration in advance of its use as offices by Bovis Homes.

LONDON

Woodberry Down Comprehensive High School, Hackney



Fig. 5
The Arts Block,
Woodberry Down
Comprehensive High
School, Hackney, London
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A mixed secondary school on the proposed London County Council (LCC) Woodberry Down estate in Hackney apparently was mooted in a draft plan of the 1944 Education Act. The estate, which had been proposed in 1936, but whose construction had been delayed by the war, was planned to include schools, a library, shopping parade and health centre as part of an integrated whole. Woodberry Down Comprehensive High School (later Secondary School) was designed by the School Architects' Department of the LCC's Architecture Division and built between 1950 and 1956. It is formed of a complex of one-, two- and four-storey concrete-framed blocks, informally grouped around two courtyards (Fig. 5). The blocks on the south side overlook the west reservoir of the New River. The elevations are treated in a functional manner, being either of plain brick or made up of the concrete frame, brick or aggregate infill panels and metal-framed windows. The one architectural set piece is the hexagonal assembly hall, which retains many of its original fittings (Fig. 6).

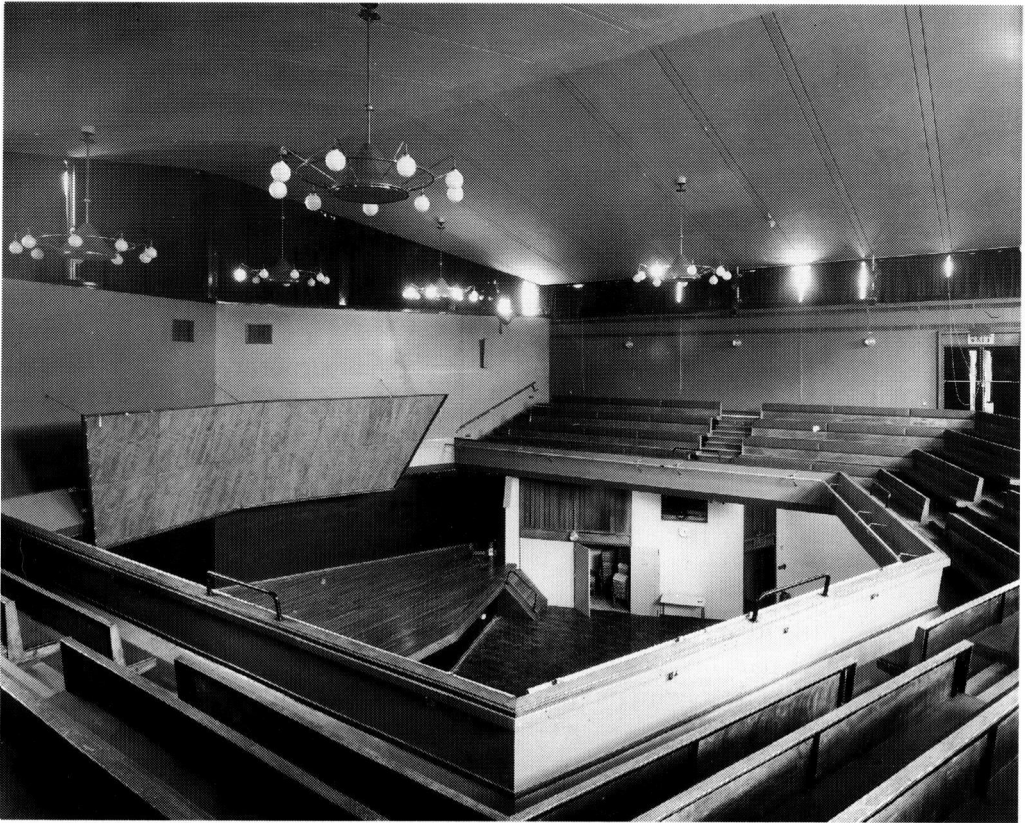


Fig. 6

Assembly Hall at Woodberry Down Comprehensive High School, Hackney, London
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When first built, the school had both academic and practical facilities, intended to give up to 1,250 pupils of both sexes a 'liberal secondary education' on comprehensive principles. In fact, Woodberry Down was London's first purpose-built comprehensive school. Emphasis was given to creating a sympathetic environment both through its layout and the landscaping of the site, and several large works of art from the Festival of Britain were installed around the complex. Much of the school, latterly in use as a college of further education, was closed in 1995 and part is under threat of demolition.

Butler's Grinders and Operators Ltd., Shad Thames, Southwark
Shad Thames runs alongside the south bank of the Thames immediately east of Tower Bridge and continues along the west side of St Saviour's Dock, the tidal inlet formed from the mouth of the River Neckinger. Since at least the late seventeenth century, both sides of the street have been developed for commercial and industrial uses associated with the many wharves on the river, as this area was just downstream from the Pool of London, the heart of the early port.

This complex of brick buildings was probably built in 1839-43 as steam-powered rice-cleaning and seed-crushing mills for Matthew Forster and Company. The five-storey, six-bay front block was the rice mill, which was linked across Shad Thames to a warehouse on St Saviour's Dock. Internally, the rice mill has timber floors on hollow, cylindrical cast-iron columns that alternate with timber posts, the latter probably inserted in association with a later nineteenth-century intensification of storage use on the upper floors. The original engine house and chimney survive to the rear, with evidence for the position of a sixty-horse-power beam engine. Beyond, a five-bay block of three storeys with attics was an oil mill for seed crushing. To the north, low office buildings face the street. Behind these, a second and larger, early boiler house, at right angles to the engine house, was incorporated into blocks that were unified as four-storey warehousing during alterations and rebuilding probably datable to 1872-4. Rice milling continued, from *c.* 1890 under Carbutt and Company, until *c.* 1930 when Butler's Wharf Ltd. acquired the premises for spice grinding (Fig. 7) and storage, which use continued until 1994. The complex was recorded by RCHME with assistance from the Greater London Industrial Archaeology Society (GLIAS).

Nos. 13, 15, 16, 18, 20 and 22 Mansfield Street, Westminster

These houses were part of a speculative development on the estate of the Duke of Portland in Marylebone, begun in 1770 by the architects Robert and James Adam. Ten houses were built. Most were covered by 1772, when the majority of the leases were granted, and the first occupants moved in the following year. The street was completed in 1775.

The Mansfield Street houses were aimed specifically at a noble clientele, in what was fast becoming a fashionable area of the capital. The sites were larger than those for the average London terraced house and each had a small back wing, courtyard and stabling. The houses on the west side of the street were three bays



Fig. 7

Edge-runner wheels for spice grinding at Butler's Grinders and Operators Ltd., Shad Thames,
Southwark, London

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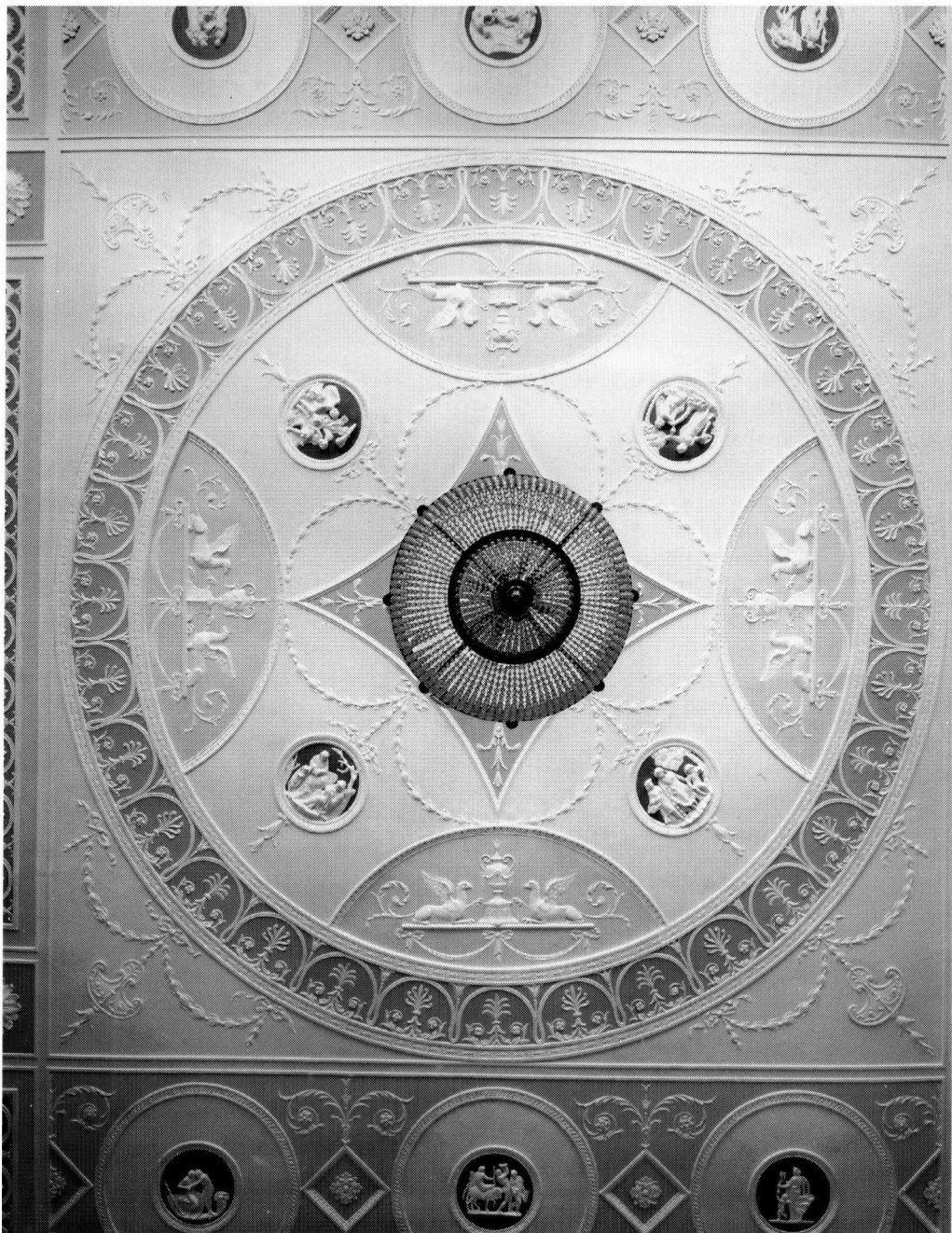


Fig. 8
Ceiling in No. 20 Mansfield Street, Westminster, London
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wide, those on the east, four bays. The traditional yellow stock-brick astylar façades were enlivened with anthemion decorated balconies at *piano nobile* level, while the doorcases were variously elaborated with fanlights, husk swag friezes, and Spalato columns. For speculative houses the interiors were highly decorated, with the Adam brothers' characteristically elaborate ceiling decorations (Fig. 8), delicately carved chimney-pieces, and column screens in the ground-floor eating room. The Mansfield Street houses are early examples of the Adams' taking advantage of the visual potential of the top-lit staircase. Its function as a processional route to the main reception rooms on the first floor was emphasised by elaborate plasterwork decoration and medallions on the walls and around the sky-light, with columned loggias overlooking from the first floor.

All of the houses have undergone alterations, mostly as part of office conversions during the twentieth century, and some of the stables have been demolished or rebuilt. No. 15 suffered a direct hit during the Second World War and only the doorcase and front survive. However, the general fabric of the street has remained surprisingly intact and almost all the houses retain some Adam-style decoration.

MONMOUTHSHIRE

Stelvio House, Newport

Stelvio House (Fig. 9) is a turn-of-the-century mansion built in several phases between 1893 and 1912 for C. H. Bailey, the prosperous proprietor of marine engineering works at Newport and Barry. 'Stelvio' – inscribed in large capitals over the portico – is said to have been the name of a ship on which Bailey served as an engineer. The Bailey family left Stelvio House only ten years after its completion. The large house subsequently became a children's home and latterly council offices. It has been unoccupied and increasingly derelict for the last few years. An action was brought against the owners by Newport Borough Council for unauthorised partial demolition of a listed building (reported in *AMS Newsletter* Summer 1998).

Stelvio House was the largest house on Stowe Hill, an area of late nineteenth-century upper-middle-class villas on the west side of Newport. The exuberant decoration of the west entrance front – ships, dolphins, capstans, etc. – proclaimed Bailey's maritime interests. The multi-gabled three-storey main block and service range of red brick with 'Bath stone' dressings faced south. Internally, the house was dominated by a grand galleried hall which rose through two storeys and was top-lit by a mirrored lantern. The principal rooms and imperial stair were placed on the south side of the hall. The service rooms were beyond the hall to the east and included a large kitchen with a mock Tudorbethan plaster ceiling with pendants.

Increasing dereliction has revealed some interesting and characteristic period structural details. Girders (Dorman Long, Middlesbrough) were used to support the hall gallery, the balustraded flat roofs of the main front were 'floored' with concrete slabs, apparently substantial timbers were laminated, much of the stone carving appears to have been reconstituted-stone mouldings, and the elaborate plaster ceiling of the kitchen was a heavy applied 'paper'. Immediately to the south-east of the house is a tall, detached billiard room with roof-top gazebo. Beyond the



Fig. 9

Stelvio House, Newport, Monmouthshire

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billiard room are the remains of extensive grounds, including an elaborate water garden with an artificial 'tufa' grotto, which are now incorporated incongruously in the gardens of later housing.

For further details of any of the buildings described above or for general information on their emergency recording work, please write to the representative of the relevant agency:

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