

The Society's Casework in 1999: Review of Selected Cases

by

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Local planning authorities in England and Wales 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 total or partial, since 1972. In recent years the number of part demolition cases has settled to something like 6,000 a year and those for complete demolition to about 250-300. The exact number of listed buildings threatened by applications for total demolition in 1998 (the last full year at the time of writing) was 184 (the list of such cases is obtainable from the Society's office). The cases discussed here include some of the most important in the year and also some that are typical. In choosing cases we are necessarily limited by the availability of good quality reproductions. The drawings have been kindly supplied by the architects of the various schemes and the names of the practices are given in the text.

BARN, VICTORIA ROAD, BICESTER, OXON

Government Directions require local authorities only to notify us of applications for listed building consent involving demolition. But we are occasionally consulted about demolitions of unlisted buildings in conservation areas and respond to these if the case seems significant. Two cases sent to us appeared to be owners merely trying to solve maintenance problems by disposing of buildings which, though modest, contributed to the character of the conservation areas in which they were situated. We objected to the loss of a stone barn (Fig. 1) which closed the view along Victoria Road, Bicester, and we were pleased that Cherwell Borough Council agreed with us and refused the application. In a similar case in Brook Street, Welshpool, the local council sought to demolish the Old Bakery, built c.1900 alongside the track of the former Welshpool and Llanfair Light Railway and now given greater prominence in the townscape by opening up for road improvements. We objected because we believed that the bakery added interest and variety on a corner otherwise marked by blind flank walls where other buildings had been

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Fig. 1

Barn, Victoria Road, Bicester

Photograph Alison Maguire

demolished. We are pleased that in one of the first decisions made under the new administrative arrangements in Wales the National Assembly agreed with our view and conservation area consent was refused.

THE REGENT HOTEL, LEAMINGTON SPA, WARWICKSHIRE

The Regent Hotel, listed Grade II*, is one of England's earliest purpose-built hotels, singled out and illustrated as a pioneer in Sir Nikolaus Pevsner's *History of Building Types*. Our illustration (Fig. 2) shows the hotel as it was in about 1860; its surroundings are now less leafy with the shops of The Parade to the north and the Town Hall of 1883 to the south. The hotel has guest registers going back to its opening in 1818. In August 1998 the Society objected to proposals to close it and incorporate its buildings into a shopping centre and cinema complex. This application and a similar one of 1999 are now subject to appeal. The applicants, bowing to pressure for the retention of hotel use, although the building is now completely empty, have made a third application which retains hotel bedrooms in most of the upper floors of the main building but still creates an entry into a shopping centre within the ground floor reception and function rooms. Whilst this recognition of the PPG principle that the best use of an historic building is likely to be its

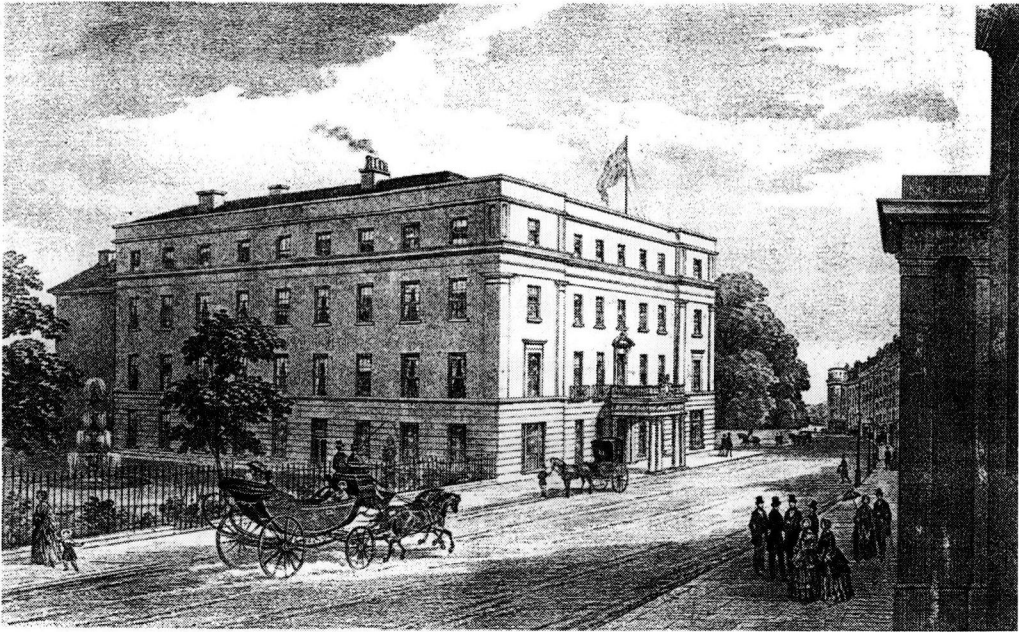


Fig. 2
The Regent Hotel, Leamington Spa as it was in about 1860

original one is welcome, we are not convinced that the revised scheme gives sufficient recognition to the special interest of the building and we have maintained our objection.

BARRINGTON PARK, GREAT BARRINGTON, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Volume 41 of these *Transactions* (1997) recounted the proposal by the owner of Barrington Park in Gloucestershire to remove the wings added by MacVicar Anderson in 1870-3 to a Palladian villa of 1737. The Society opposed this, as did Cotswold District Council, English Heritage and the Victorian Society. After a Public Inquiry the Secretary of State refused consent for the demolition. The case was of particular interest as the Inspector recommended refusal largely on the grounds that the proposed making good and new addition were not of sufficient quality; the Secretary of State accepted the recommendation but went beyond that and rejected demolition of the wings because he considered these were of sufficient interest to justify retention and no case had been made out under the criteria laid down in PPG15.

The owner has now made a fresh application with a different architect, Peter Inskip, which sets out a new case for the demolition of the MacVicar Anderson blocks, showing that the reinstatement of the house would be carried out in a scholarly manner without intrusive addition and that the restoration of the house

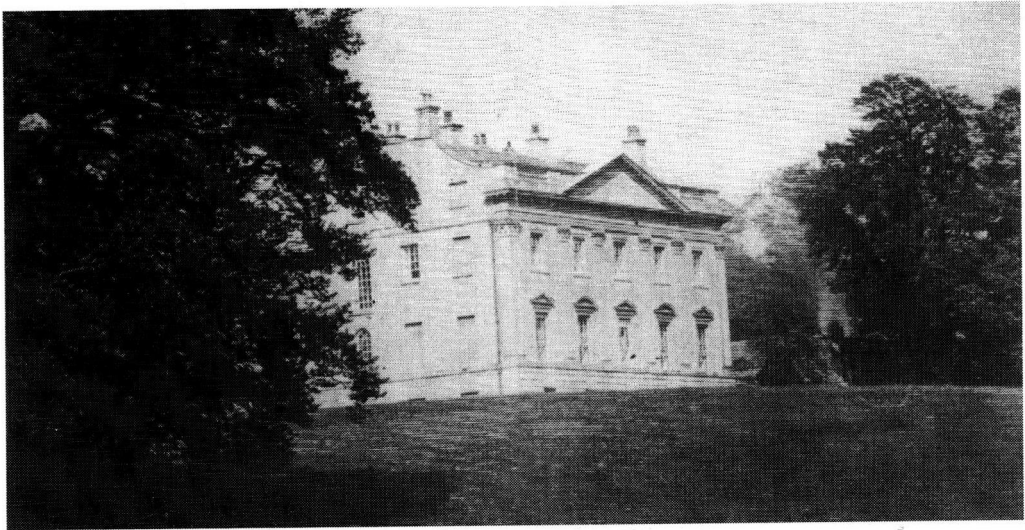


Fig. 3

Barrington Park, Great Barrington, Gloucestershire

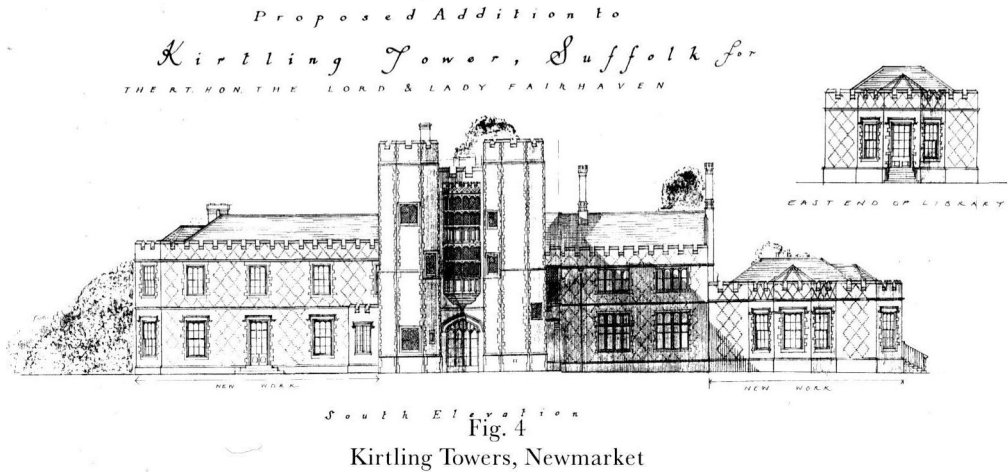
would be linked to the repair of a number of buildings in the landscaped setting. After long consideration, the Society's Casework Sub-Committee agreed to maintain their earlier objections to the demolition of the wings, a view also taken by the SPAB and the Victorian Society. The Georgian Group has endorsed the applicant's scheme. At the time of writing English Heritage and Cotswold District Council had not reached a view. Yet another Public Inquiry seems a distinct possibility. The photograph (Fig. 3), showing the building in the mid nineteenth century, should be compared with that in Volume 41, which gives its present appearance.

KIRTLING TOWERS, NEWMARKET ROAD, KIRTLING, NEAR NEWMARKET

Kirtling Towers (which is in Suffolk for postal purposes but has East Cambridgeshire as its planning authority) is dominated by the great Gatehouse built *c.* 1530 for Lord North. The rest of the building was taken down in 1801 and replaced in part by an asymmetrical wing of *c.* 1872 designed by the renowned Catholic architect and architectural publicist, J.A. Hansom (1803-1882). The latter echoes the Tudor themes of the original, particularly in the use of cluster chimneys and diapered brickwork but deliberately attempts self effacement by being set back, by being low and by being located almost entirely on one side of the gatehouse.

In the last fifteen years or so there have been a succession of proposals driven by differing conservation philosophies which build up to something like a *locus classicus*. In 1984 came an application to demolish the Hansom wing in its entirety, Quinlan Terry proposing a vast and ambitious reconstruction of the lost sixteenth century mansion. Much more recently the Landmark Trust proposed to demolish the nineteenth century work and create holiday accommodation within the 1530

tower. In 1999 a further scheme was proposed, also put forward by the longstanding owners, Lord and Lady Fairhaven of Anglesey Abbey, which envisages a new library abutting the Hansom wing and a new two-storey wing to the west. The architect is Digby Harris of Francis Johnson and Partners of Bridlington in East Yorkshire.



As the drawing shows (Fig. 4), the architectural language is Tudor with the use of diapered brickwork and battlements, as on the Hansom counterpart, but the fenestration takes its echo from eighteenth century Gothick, particularly with the label stops on the ground floor and the swept heads to the glazing of the sash windows themselves. Provided there were appropriate archaeological safeguards, we felt able to acquiesce in this scheme.

THE MECHANICS INSTITUTION, NORTHUMBERLAND STREET, HUDDERSFIELD, WEST YORKSHIRE

The photograph (Fig. 5b) shows the present sorry condition of the former Mechanics Institution of 1859, boarded up, with rain soaking its stonework from defective gutters. We were thus able to welcome a scheme (Fig. 5a) by the North British Housing Association of Bradford (architects, Brewster Bye of Bramley in Leeds, job architect, Chris Austin) to convert the building to housing, although we had some misgivings over the nature of the 'interventions' at roof level and within the entrance (Fig. 5a). The strong rectilinear four-square quality of the building was challenged by the new structure above cornice level covered in a raised-seam metal roofing system and clad in cedar. It did, nevertheless, have the virtue of symmetry.

The present panelled doors go completely for replacement by a full-height glazed screen divided into comparable squares. The two candelabra on the dwarf walls remain and, indeed, have their glazed globes restored. We were disappointed that their role as sentinel to the entrance was to be compromised by the new porch located just behind them.

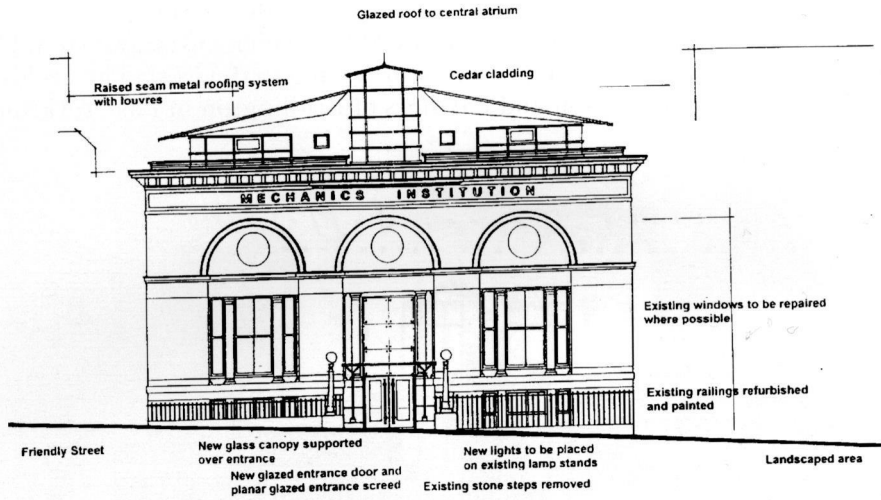


Fig. 5a
The Mechanics Institution, Northumberland Street, Huddersfield

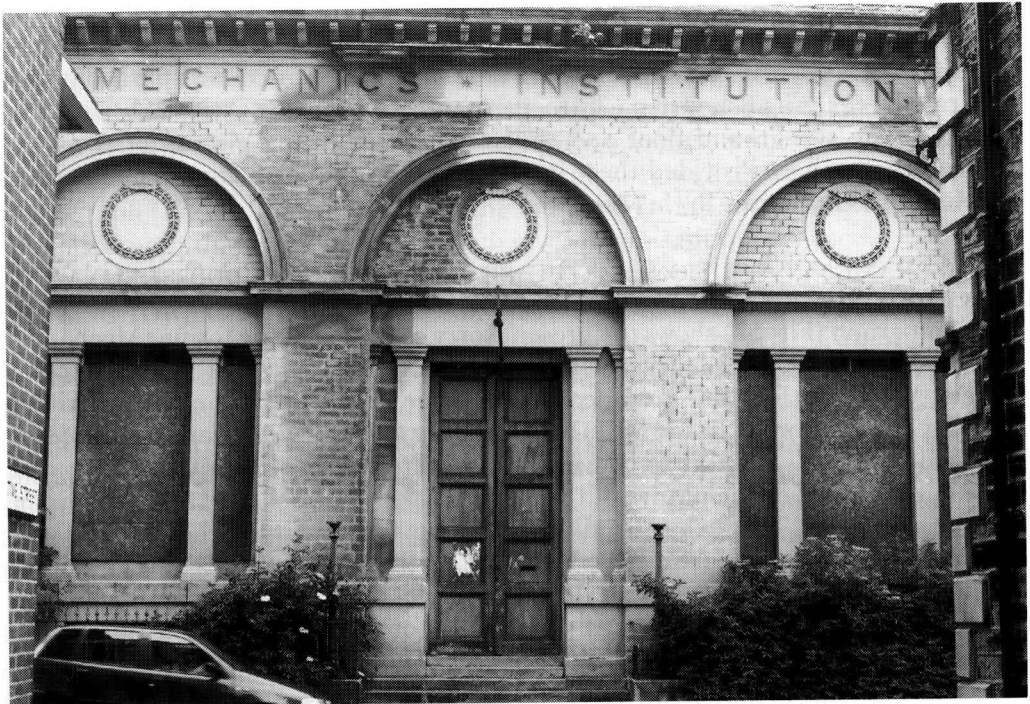


Fig. 5b
The Mechanics Institution, Northumberland Street, Huddersfield



Fig. 6
Nos 1-13 St Paul's Street, Bristol

NOS 1-13 ST PAUL'S STREET, BRISTOL, AVON

The photograph (Fig. 6) shows the melancholy condition of this early nineteenth-century terrace. It has been in disrepair for at least two decades and we were faced in 1999 with an application to 'gut and stuff', in other words demolish the interior and keep the exterior. The inclination was to welcome the interest in saving the building but query the radicalism of the approach. The St Paul's District has become a byword for differing approaches to Georgian terraces. It contains examples of replica rebuild, where Neo-Georgian shells conceal completely modern interiors as in the block shown at the edge of the photograph, retention of façades alone and rebuilding behind, and fastidious retention and repair of the building as a whole. Deciding between the options is often a matter of pragmatism.

In this case the applicants carried out what they called an Ornamentation Audit to prove, at least to their own satisfaction, that there was nothing of interest left inside capable of retention. Even so, yet another display of 'façadism' is something that Bristol can do without.

NOS 69 AND 70 NORTH STREET, RIPON, NORTH YORKSHIRE

Everything shown in Figure 7a is listed except for the white painted building on the left, which is shown more clearly on the Survey Elevation (Fig. 7b), and the blank-faced box immediately adjacent.



Fig. 7a
Nos 69 and 70 North Street, Ripon



Fig. 7b
Nos 69 and 70 North Street, Ripon

North Yorkshire County Council as the highway authority applied in December 1997 and in March 1999 for conservation area consent to demolish no. 69 and no. 70, the early to mid-nineteenth century properties at the corner with Coltsgate Hill, in order to widen the road. We were appalled not just at the loss of no. 70, simple but effective incident in the townscape, but the effect that loss would have in throwing into relief the truly hideous neighbour at no. 69. What was it about the town planning regime of the 1960s that could have allowed such an insult to a fine city?

We urged that if the road widening was forced through, a new and appropriate

building be constructed on the corner, embracing the vestigial site of no. 70 and that of no. 69. So far the County Council does not seem to have heeded that advice and the net result in visual terms will be a disaster.

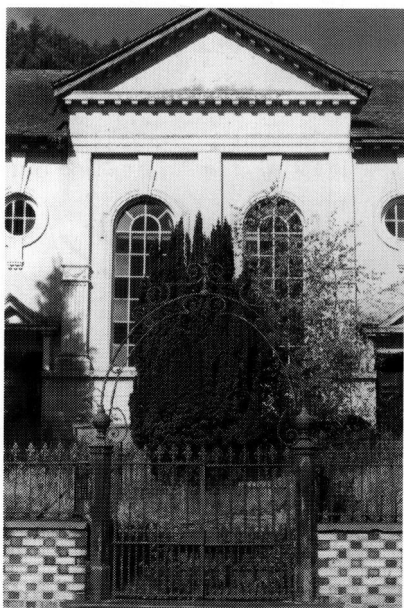


Fig. 8a

The Tabernacle, Talybont, Dyfed

THE TABERNACLE, TALYBONT, DYFED

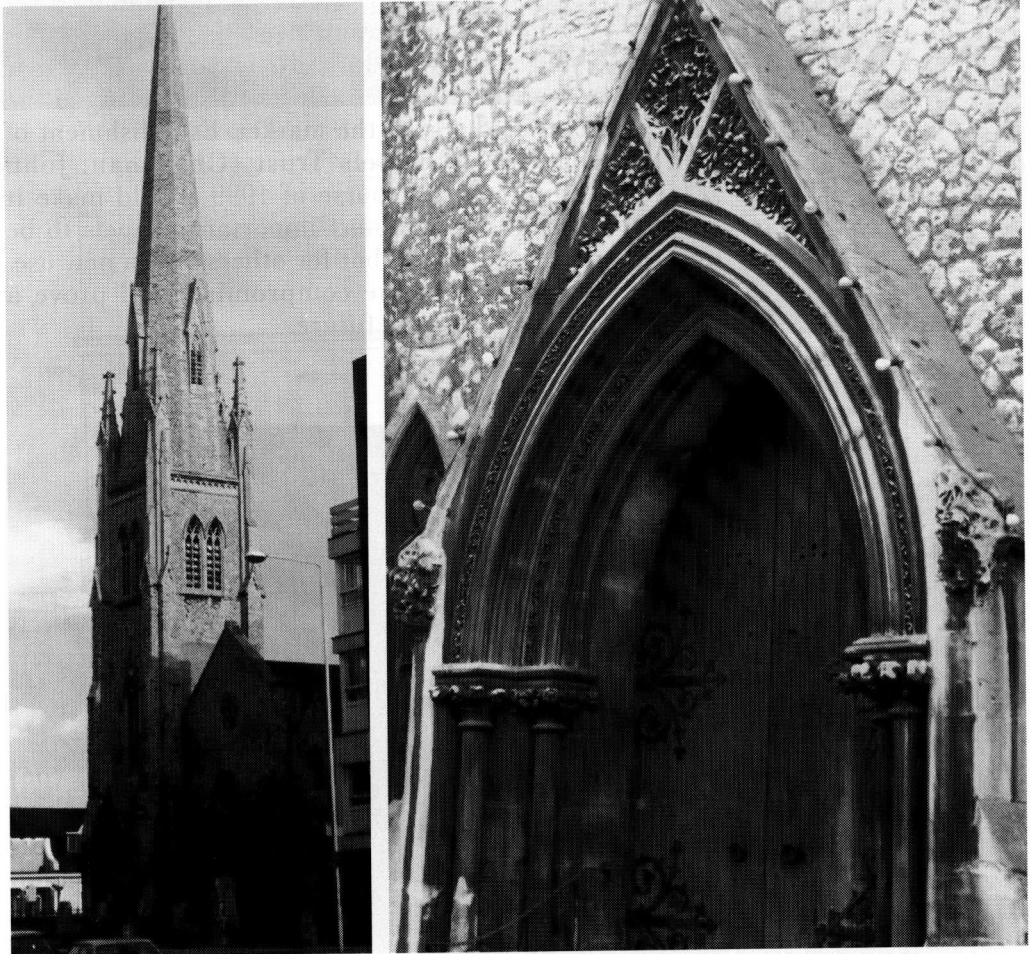
This fine, mid-nineteenth century chapel, forming a group with the adjacent school buildings, was the subject of two applications to demolish, in 1998 and 1999. The front elevation is in fact a twentieth century reworking of the Victorian original but is, if anything, more interesting for showing the strength of the chapel building tradition. As so often the building is set in its own burial ground with handsome railings and overthrow and it cries out for sensitive new use rather than demolition. We have urged the continued test of the market. Establishment of the Wales Chapels Trust (Chairman: John Hilling) in the course of 1999 should make it possible for the most important chapels to be preserved intact, but for others only a new use, mostly with some compromise, will prove a guarantee for the future.



Fig. 8b
The
Tabernacle,
Talybont,
Dyfed

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH, LEWISHAM, LONDON

Lewisham United Reformed Church (built for the Congregationalists) dates from 1880. It is the work of the 'Gilbert Scott of the Nonconformists', John Tarring, although the body of the church was reduced in height, with unfortunate effects on the proportions (Fig. 9a), after bomb damage in the War. The congregation are exhausted by the task of keeping the whole building and came forward in January 1999 with a scheme for demolishing all but the tower and spire and the associated and very good Sunday School designed by George Sherrin, and putting up a new place of worship on the site. Following much discussion, the scheme was approved. This means that the fine western portal (Fig. 9b) will be destroyed despite our urging that it be incorporated within the redevelopment.



Figs. 9a & 9b

The United Reformed Church, Lewisham

ALEXANDRA PARK UNITED REFORMED CHURCH, HARINGEY, LONDON



Fig. 10a

Alexandra Park United Reformed Church, Haringey, London



Fig. 10b

Alexandra Park United Reformed Church, Haringey, London

Tarring at Lewisham epitomized the attempt by nineteenth century nonconformity to equal the architectural efforts of Anglicanism. This building of 1907 shows the much more distinctive style associated only with nonconformists, developed by Congregationalists, Baptists and Methodists at the turn of the century – so far unnamed, but a mixture of Perpendicular Gothic and Arts and Crafts detailing. This example, designed by Mummery and Fleming-Williams, was known as the Whitefield Memorial Church and was meant to be much larger, with a further two-storey wing on the other side of the gabled church. The photographs (Fig. 10a and b) show the strength and originality of the design and the intactness of the Bath stone detailing and other features like the gutter spikes and the Art Nouveau windows.

We expressed great concern at a proposal to demolish occasioned by structural movement and formally opposed it.

THE OLD PRIORY BUILDINGS, PRIORY STREET, MONMOUTH

This exquisite pencil drawing of the nineteenth century (Fig. 11) shows what was once the Prior's Lodgings of the Benedictine House at Monmouth. Although regularized, restored and Gothicized in the nineteenth century the bulk of it remains

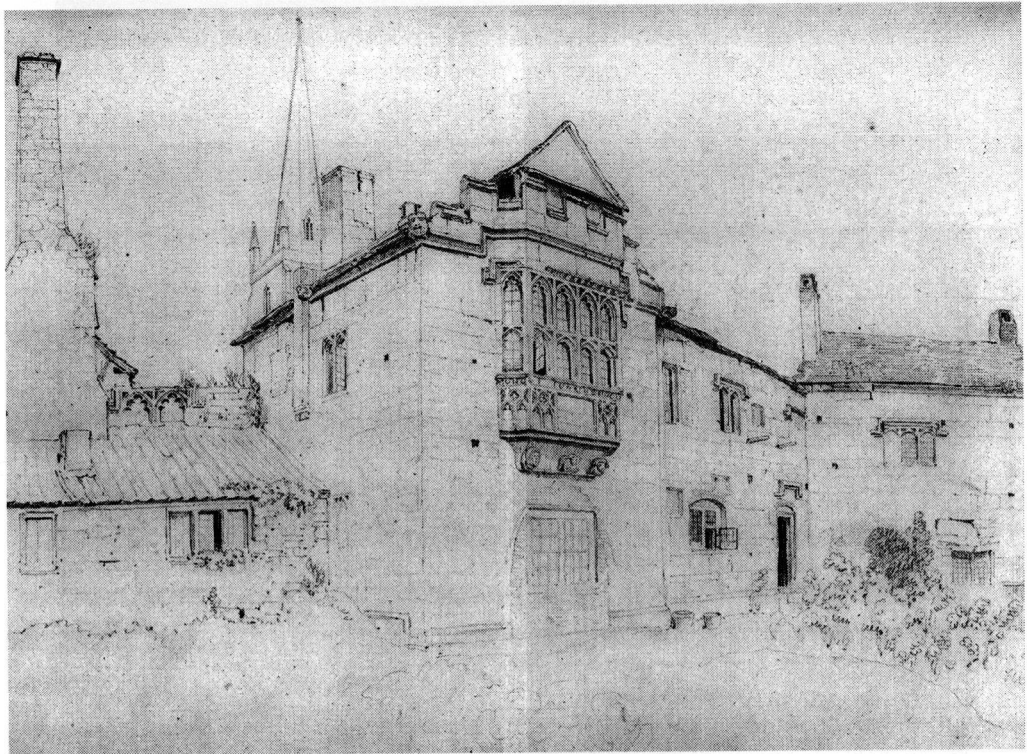


Fig. 11

The Old Priory Buildings, Priory Street, Monmouth

fifteenth century in origin and it is perhaps under-listed at Grade II. Its principal feature, the splendid oriel window, known as Geoffrey of Monmouth's window, with three corbel heads beneath, remains without any apparent alteration.

The building is owned by the Diocese of Monmouth and held in trust for the parish church of St Mary's. Between 1977 and 1997 the main section was used by the Youth Hostels Association, but we were consulted in May 1999 on a scheme to bring the building back into use by the parish, to include a Study Centre intended 'to be a resource for churches throughout Wales'. The changes seemed broadly acceptable and we raised no objections.

NOS 154-162 DERBY ROAD, NOTTINGHAM

This is not great architecture. And yet this grouping of three rather mauled eighteenth century buildings is important on the approaches into the city centre and we expressed concern at the proposal to demolish the building in the foreground of Fig. 12. It appears to be of two builds with a mid-eighteenth century front but an early eighteenth century return elevation, the two being characterized by their differing window treatment, flush sixteen-pane sashes on the return and recessed sashes under keystone lintels at the front. Not a building to go to the stake over but certainly one where the presumption should lie with retention.

The central block became a cigar factory from 1897 and the interior retains



Fig. 12

Nos 154-162 Derby Road, Nottingham

much evidence of this use, including a packing room with fitted benches under the windows, elliptical brick vaults in the basement, and offices defined by matchboarded screens with inbuilt glazing.

ABBNEY HOUSE, BARROW-IN-FURNESS, CUMBRIA

Abbey House, listed Grade II*, is a late and generally critically ill-favoured design by Edwin Lutyens of 1914. It was built for the Vickers family, both to serve as a house for the Managing Director and for the entertainment of guests and clients of the company. In 1951 it became an old people's home and, after a period of uncertainty, an hotel which opened for business in 1986. Now a scheme has been prepared to extend it, underpinned financially by the European Regional Development Fund, in order to promote tourism in Cumbria and to assist the development of the town.

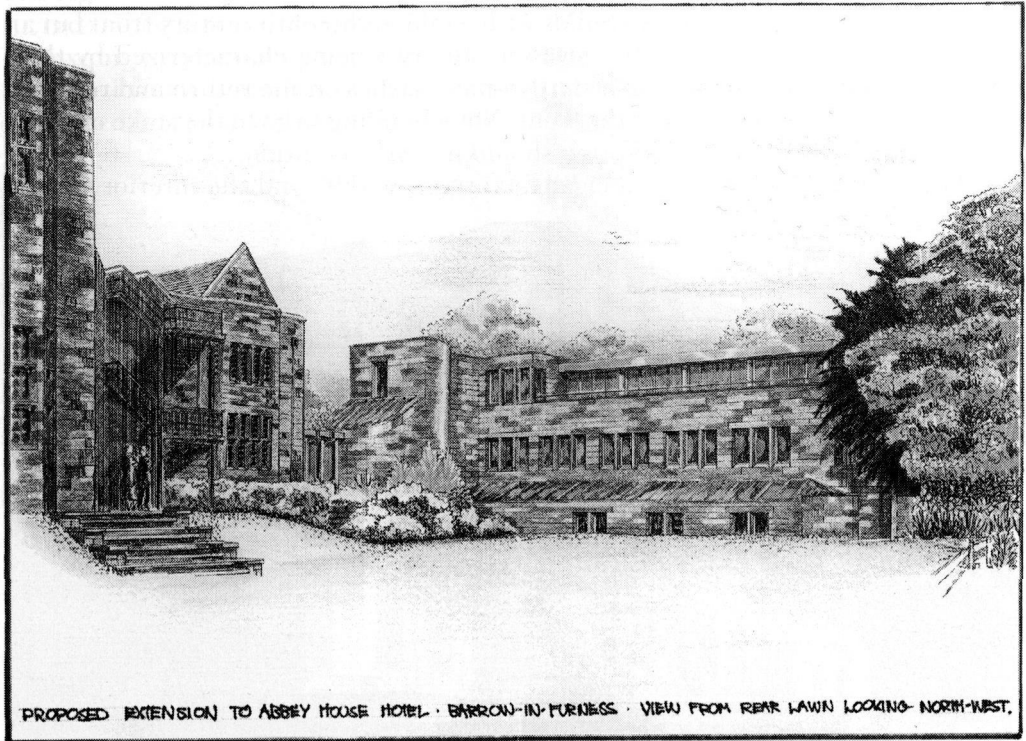


Fig. 13

Abbey House, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria

We did not oppose the principle of the new bedroom wing shown on the perspective prepared by the architects, Craig and Green, and included in the submission by Robert Turley Associates (Fig. 13). We did, however, express concern over three points:

- (a) the extent to which the new wing would project into the garden further east than the present building, so affecting views along the garden front of the house;
- (b) the use of cast stone blocks as a facing material;
- (c) the need for further modelling of the windows, perhaps with additional use of mullions.

The concerns were echoed by other consultees including English Heritage, and the applicants did push the building back and promised to change the material to natural sandstone (despite the inescapable increase in cost).

NO. 5 KING STREET, MELTON MOWBRAY, LEICESTERSHIRE.

Until 1986 no. 5 King Street barely scraped onto the statutory lists, when it was described as early nineteenth century and listed only for its 'group value'. However, a careful internal inspection showed that a modest exterior conceals a remarkable interior – the substantial remains of a fourteenth-century house believed to have been built for John de Mowbray, Lord of the Manor of Melton. The most spectacular survival is the fourteenth-century roof in the south range with two octagonal crown posts with moulded caps and bases. Above these are chamfered struts to the collar



Fig. 14
No. 5 King Street, Melton Mowbray

purlin and collar ties. The sixteenth century wing contains a clasped purlin roof with wind braces. All of this remains concealed from the outside by a coating in nineteenth century render, except for the exposed timber framing on the return or north elevation. The significant discovery resulted in an upgrading to Grade II*. It did not, however, stop the threat to the building which fell into serious disrepair and became the subject of an application to demolish.

The advent of the Heritage Lottery Fund, which is being asked to finance the scheme that is illustrated here (Fig. 14), persuaded the local authority to propose the repair, conversion and extension of no. 5 to provide an art gallery and tourist information centre. This involved a strongly detailed Post Modern extension at one corner designed by Peter Rogan of Mark Stewart Associates of West Bridgford, Nottingham. The existing concrete tile roof is to be replaced by new Collyweston stone slates. The new build incorporates oak boards fixed with stainless steel bolts to the shell and new brickwork to the tower and battered ground floor, left exposed or washed with copperous limewash.

At the time of writing the HLF had yet to decide its reaction to the grant application.

THE FORMER POWYSLAND MUSEUM AND LIBRARY, SALOP ROAD, WELSHPOOL, POWYS
The Powysland Club was founded in 1867 'for the collecting and printing of historical, ecclesiastical, genealogical, topographical and literary remains of Montgomery-

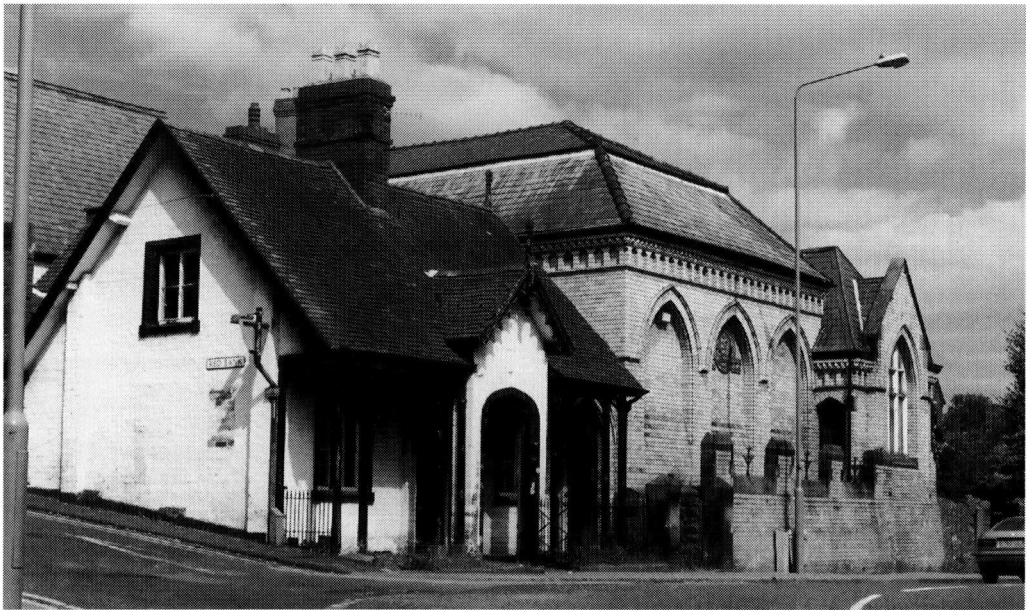


Fig. 15
The Former Powysland Museum and Library

shire'. It opened a museum just above St Mary's Parish Church at Welshpool in 1874 built to the designs of David Walker of Liverpool and extended again in accordance with the original design in 1880. It was one of the very small number of similar establishments in Wales and entertained hopes for a time of becoming a general central museum of Welsh antiquities. From the outset it was intended that there should not only be a public library and museum but also a school of science and art in association with the Science and Art Department of the Committee on Education at South Kensington. A school of art was opened in 1883 in rather severely utilitarian premises to the rear. The Public Library and Reading Room beyond that, again rather utilitarian in appearance, was handed over to the Corporation of Welshpool in 1887. The collection was moved from the museum in 1990 and the need to find a new use is now pressing. Walker's strikingly original design, three giant blind arches in bright yellow brick, lauds it over the cottage orné of 1835 built on the site of an earlier tollhouse at the corner of Red Bank and taken over by the Club in 1873, to be used as the keeper's accommodation.

We were approached by Powys Council in October 1999 seeking advice on ways in which this remarkable complex might be reoccupied. We welcomed the overture and have offered thoughts which we hope may well carry the search for a new use forward.

THRINTOFT GRANGE, THRINTOFT, NORTH YORKSHIRE

The chapel of St Magdalen, in use time out of mind as a barn, is one of only three monastic grange buildings surviving in North Yorkshire. The chapel was endowed in 1253 as a chantry chapel connected to Jervaulx Abbey and the masonry contains

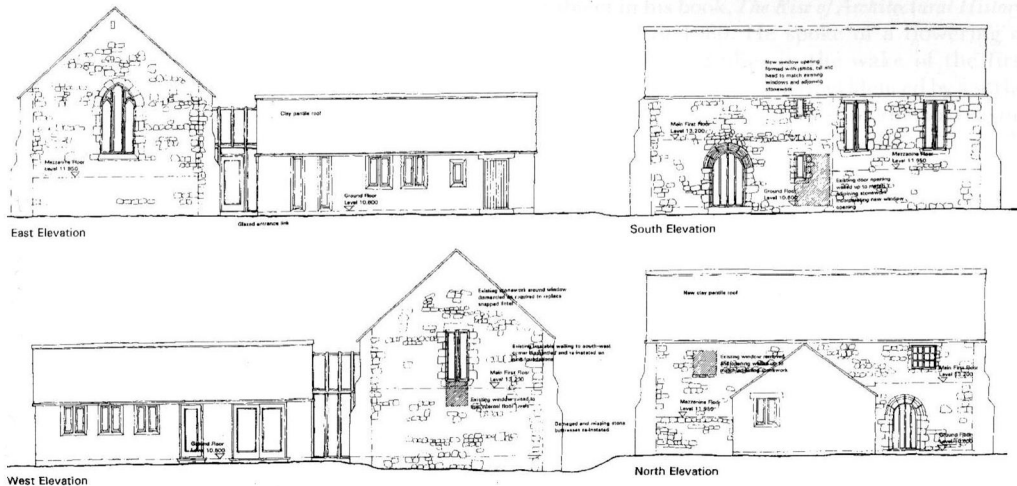


Fig. 16
Thrintoft Grange, Thrintoft, North Yorkshire

signs from each century between the thirteenth and sixteenth. The interior retains a fifteenth century piscina and the remains of tracery in the head of the east window. Following a chequered history which included an application to demolish, we were consulted in 1998 and 1999 on proposals for converting it into a house, with a new single storey wing at the rear (Fig. 16). We expressed some concern at the extent of conjectural reconstruction, but were driven to the conclusion that the condition of the structure was now so bad that if collapse was to be staved off some sort of new use would have to be accepted. The architect was Dave Delany of P & HS Architects and the client was, Pilhoe Developments. Work had started on site by the Autumn of 1999.

