

# The Society's Casework in 1997 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 on all applications for listed building consent involving demolition, either total or partial, since 1972. This duty has been reaffirmed in the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's Circular 1/97, issued on 29th August 1997. In recent years the number of part demolition cases has settled to between 6-7,000 per year and those for complete demolition to about 250-300. The exact number of listed buildings threatened by applications for total demolition in 1996 was 260 (the full list of such cases is obtainable from the Society's office). The cases discussed here are not necessarily the most important of the year but they are among the more interesting. In choosing cases to illustrate we are necessarily limited by the availability of good quality reproductions.*

5 SLEAFORD ROAD, BOSTON, LINCOLNSHIRE.

The bulk of the 260 buildings which came under threat of total demolition in 1996 were Grade II, the grading enjoyed by some 93% of the total. This villa with a front elevation of c. 1830, built on one of the approach roads into Boston was just one example (Fig.1). As the photograph implies, the issue was not its condition but its location. The applicants wished to pull it down in order to obtain access to development land at the rear. The AMS objected strongly and Boston Council has refused consent. The applicants have appealed and a Public Inquiry was set for October 1997. We have submitted evidence to that Inquiry, stressing the building's importance in the streetscape and its intrinsic quality. It demonstrates the command which local builders had of the proportions and language of classical architecture well into the nineteenth century.

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Fig.1  
5 Sleaford Road,  
Boston

FORESTERS' HALL, PIKE STREET, LISKEARD,  
CORNWALL

John Ruskin rarely had so direct an impact on the architecture of a provincial town as he did in Liskeard in this design for the East Cornwall Savings Bank (which doubled as a Foresters' Hall)(Fig 2). And his influence was decidedly late. The bank was designed, by an unknown hand in 1896, barely four years before Ruskin's death in dementia at the age of eighty-one.

This building is not under threat of demolition, but it is one of those whose cause the Society championed in 1996-7 because of its vacancy. Already scarred by the demolition of a neighbouring building, the photograph shows its condition in July 1997, when it was being offered for sale. The building is listed so cannot be peremptorily altered or demolished, but we wrote to the planning authority stressing its importance as it receives not a single mention in Pevsner's *Buildings of England* volume for Cornwall of 1951.

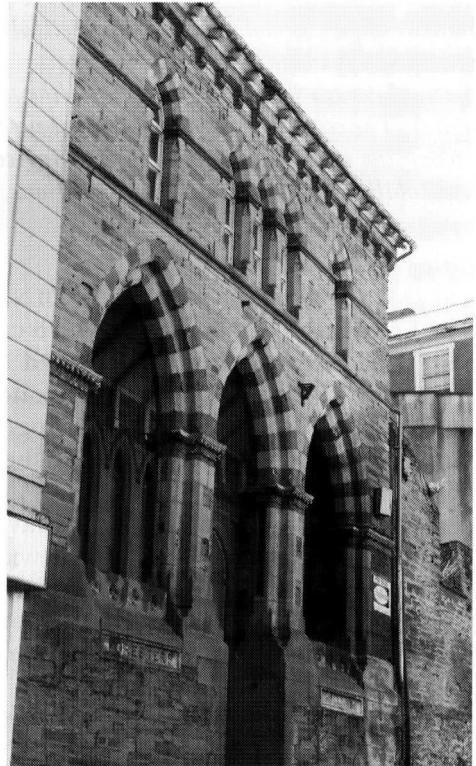


Fig.2  
Foresters' Hall, Pike Street, Liskeard

ST JAMES'S CHURCH, WARTER, EAST YORKSHIRE

St James's Church, designed by Habershon and Pite in 1862-3 for the fifth Lord Muncaster, is important less for the church itself than for its fittings. The photographs show details of two - the exquisite monument to Lady Isobel Wilson, daughter of the seventh Duke of Roxburghe, carved by George Frampton in 1908, and part of the window of 1909 by R. Anning Bell and H. A. Dix (Fig.3 a-b). We



Fig.3  
St James's Church,  
Warter  
a. Frampton's  
monument to Lady  
Isobel Wilson



b. Window by  
Anning Bell and  
Dix

were represented at the meeting called four years ago to consider the fate of St James's after it had been declared redundant, and were able to offer advice and encouragement on the establishment of a trust to take it into care. This became a reality in 1996 and the building and its remarkable fittings are now in safe hands. The architect for the repairs is Martin Stancliffe.

THE VICTORIA PAVILION, WILDER ROAD, ILFRACOMBE, DEVON.

The present Pavilion or concert hall, prominently sited adjacent to the sea at Ilfracombe, was opened on 18th May 1925 on the site of a predecessor of 1888 which had the appearance of a huge and distinguished conservatory. The replacement was designed by Frederick Chancellor at a cost of £8,000 (Fig.4). The style is that associated with a number of public buildings at seaside resorts constructed between the wars, particularly the numerous Kursaals. The idiom at Ilfracombe is Italianate, particularly in the great gable which forms a backcloth to the two towers. Although unlisted, the building does possess architectural presence. We reluctantly felt unable to oppose demolition in light of an especially damning structural report. The functions currently provided by the Pavilion are to be replaced



Fig. 4

The Victoria Pavilion, Wilder Road, Ilfracombe

in an adjacent structure of double cone profile, to be erected with the help of the National Lottery.

ST ALBAN'S CHURCH, CHEETHAM, MANCHESTER

Despite optimistic reports in earlier AMS Newsletters, at the time of writing the prospects for St Alban's, Cheetham in Manchester look very grim. Built in 1857-64 to the designs of J. S. Crowther, Sir Nikolaus Pevsner in the South Lancashire volume of *the Buildings of England* enthused: 'an excellent building with a strong southeast tower, a high polygonal apse and a high clerestory....impressive interior with four-bay arcades and a very high chancel arch....Crowther was a learned architect, fully in command of English, as well as French, motifs'. Closed in 1994,

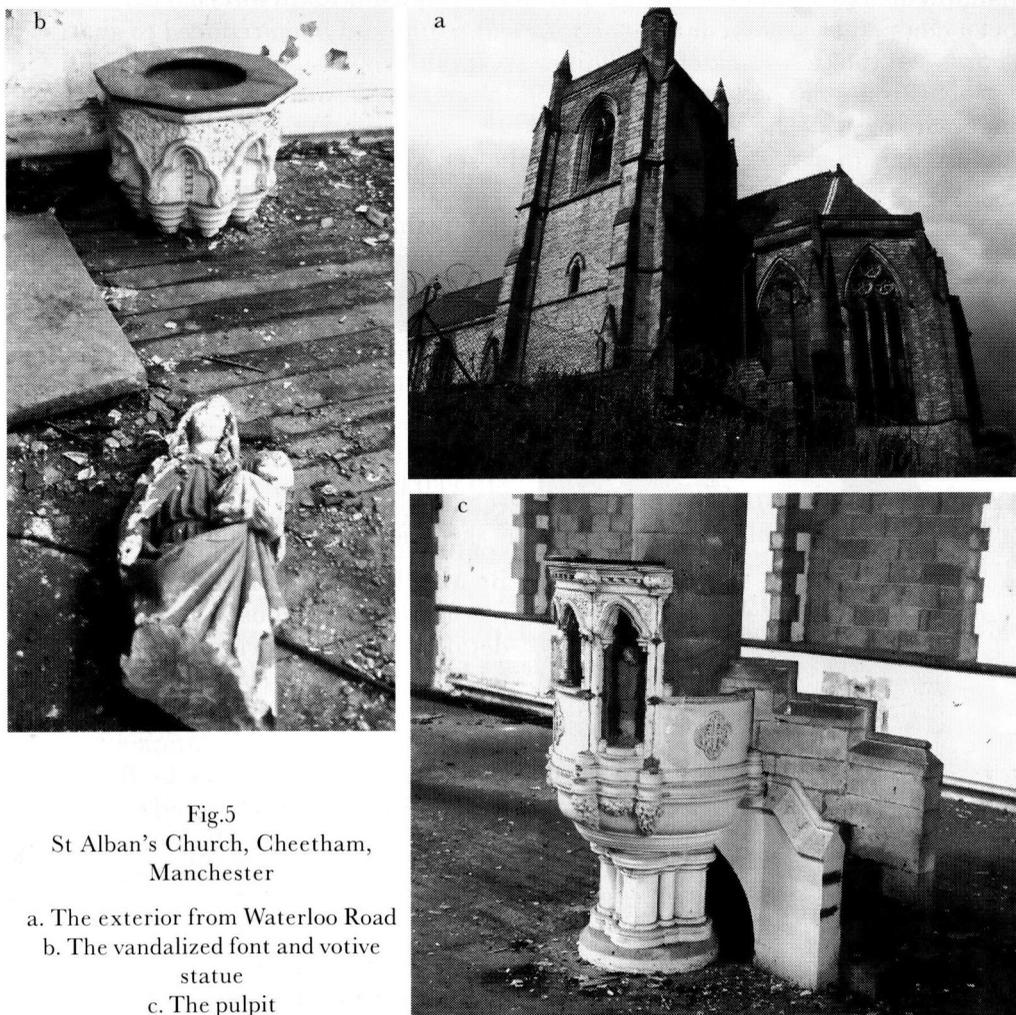


Fig.5

St Alban's Church, Cheetham, Manchester

a. The exterior from Waterloo Road

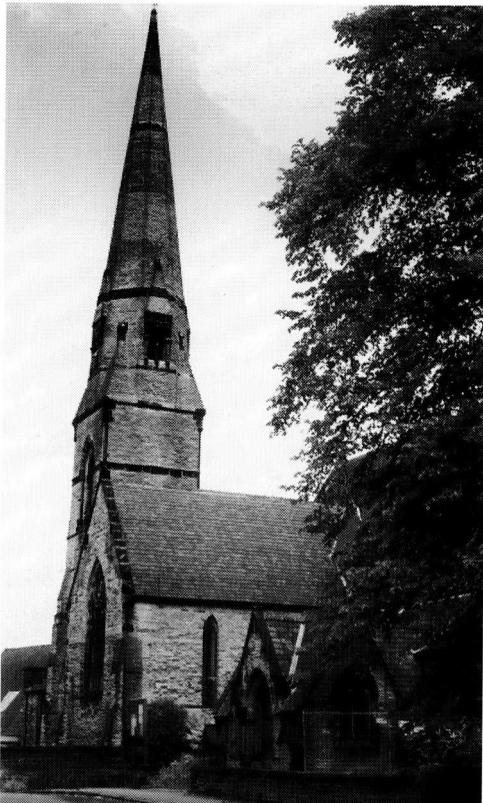
b. The vandalized font and votive statue

c. The pulpit

after the congregation had defected to Rome over the issue of the ordination of women priests, the building has since been subjected to sickening vandalism. Even as the photographs shown here were being taken (Fig.5 a-c; see also the front cover), children were scampering around the church, indifferent to any architectural or sacred quality it might possess. In the light of the decisions of the Advisory Board for Redundant Churches in both 1985 and 1994 that St Alban's was not good enough for vesting with the Churches Conservation Trust, we realised that only a new use would save it. Accordingly, the AMS placed an article in the local paper, and subsequently contact was made with someone who seemed to have serious intentions of using it with architectural imagination as offices. However, the inexorable vandalism, which the diocese strove to prevent, meant that by August 1997, the city council regarded the building as dangerous. By that time all but a handful of slates had been stripped from the roof, almost all internal carvings had been chipped or smashed, and the font and pulpit had been reduced to shattered shards. In the first week of September an application to demolish was submitted.

This is a wretched and disgusting fate for a noble piece of architecture in an inner city parish, where it seems no building can be protected from relentless theft and vandalism, however high or strong the security fence. The threatened loss of

St Alban's has made us all the more determined to see that other buildings of quality in the area, particularly St John the Evangelist in Waterloo Road by Paley and Austin of 1869-71, currently the subject of an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund, do not go the same way.



#### ST ANDREW'S CHURCH, SHARROW, SHEFFIELD.

St Andrew's is another nineteenth-century church. Designed in 1869 by J. B. Mitchell-Withers, the building is picturesquely composed and individually detailed High Victorian at its best (Fig. 6 a-b). The precedents are of the thirteenth century, but the plate tracery, where the detailing is stamped through the stone as if with stencils, shows how these were freely interpreted rather than simply lamely copied. We joined with the Victorian Society and English Heritage in

Fig. 6

St Andrew's Church, Sharrow, Sheffield

a. General view of the exterior

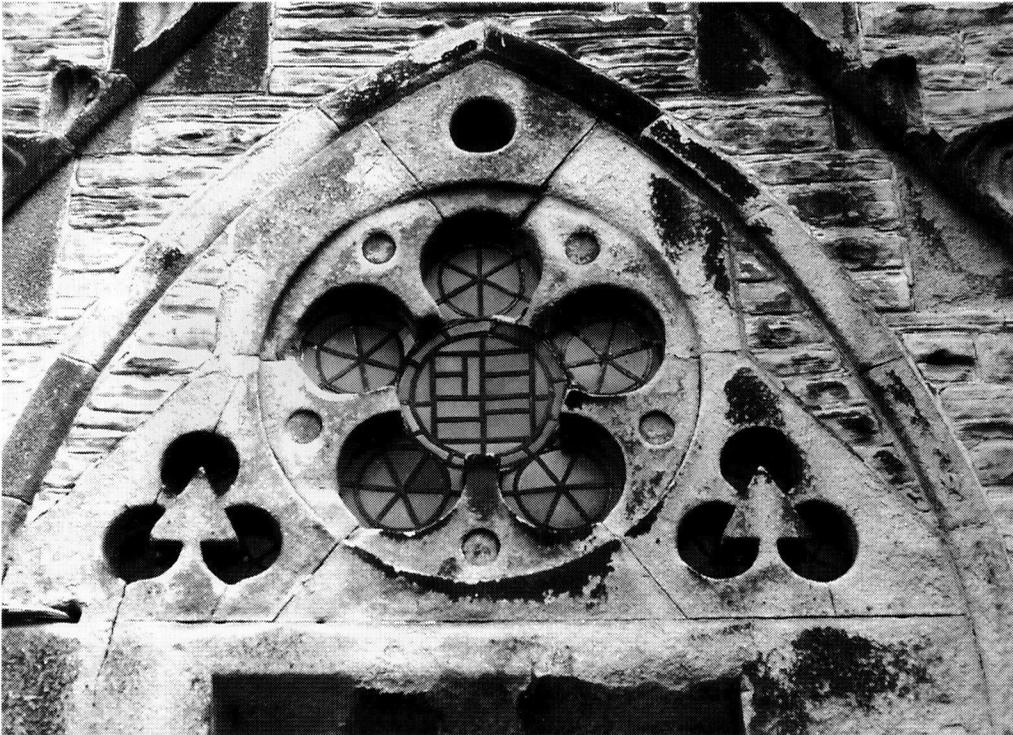


Fig. 6  
St Andrew's Church, Sharrow, Sheffield  
b. Detail of the tracery

opposing a scheme to remove all the glass from the church, after a structural crisis had forced sudden closure. This was not out of any reckless disregard for the glass, rather a strongly-held belief that this was an over-reaction and would draw the attention of the vandal and thief to the building as one which clearly had been abandoned. We urged the diocese not to close the building, but now that our advice has been ignored we shall press for a sensitive new use.

42 CRICKLADE STREET, SWINDON, WILTSHIRE

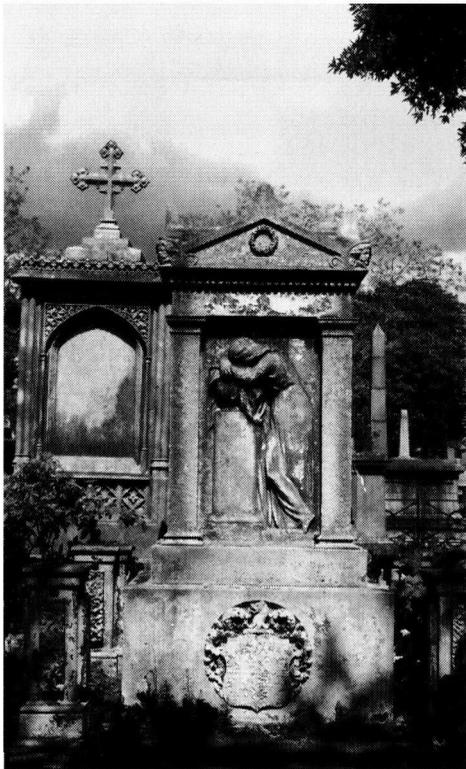
For Pevsner, No. 42 'is the best house in Swindon by far'. It dates from 1729 and represents the Baroque at its most fruity (Fig.7). Now occupied as solicitors' offices, the AMS was consulted on a proposal for substantial and unequivocally modern extensions - in effect a long glass box. Despite its size this would not be visible from the all-important frontages and we did not lodge an objection.

KENSAL GREEN CEMETERY, KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA, LONDON

The cemetery of All Souls at Kensal Green in Harrow Road, opened in 1833, is the



Fig. 7  
42 Cricklade Street, Swindon



largest of the eight cemeteries opened in those years to tackle the problem of overcrowded and unhealthy churchyards in central London. This remarkable agglomeration of monuments, sylvan glades and tree-lined avenues is well-protected by The Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery working in concert with the General Cemetery Company, which still owns it (Fig. 8 a-b). The Historic Chapels Trust is now responsible for the non-conformist chapel, where repairs and the rebuilding of the columnar quadrants were completed in 1997 with very considerable grant aid from English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund. We joined The Friends and local people in objecting to a scheme for the redevelopment of the four-storey block shown in the photograph, which already destroys the sense of *rus in*

Fig. 8  
Kensal Green Cemetery, London  
a. General view of cemetery

Fig. 8  
Kensal Green  
Cemetery, London  
b. The block  
overlooking the  
cemetery,  
proposed for  
redevelopment



*urbe*, which was once the key to the cemetery's character. This 1960s block, which actually abuts the stoa which sits against the boundary wall to Harrow Road, was proposed for replacement by a new block of student accommodation almost half as tall again. There is no logic in making a bad situation worse. The council agreed and the application was refused in September.

THE WELLINGTON INN AND SINCLAIR'S OYSTER BAR, THE SHAMBLES (MARKET STREET, CORPORATION STREET AND CANNON STREET), MANCHESTER

One of the most controversial and philosophically intriguing cases of the year was the application lodged in July to move and reconstruct central Manchester's last surviving example of timber-framed construction. The late-medieval Wellington Inn, connected by a two-storey rebuild of 1925 with Sinclair's which, despite the appearance of timbering on the outside, was a brick-built structure of *c.* 1800, has been famously moved once already. This was in 1971, when Freddie Charles reconstructed them on a site 4'9" higher than the original, on a service podium, in order to permit redevelopment of the surrounding area. The new centre, an uncompromising essay in unlovely concrete and the lonely historic buildings, constituted one of the most unlikely of post-war shotgun marriages (Fig. 9 a-b).

No doubt the marriage would have lasted had not the shopping centre increasingly become outdated, but above all had not the IRA bomb devastated the city centre in 1996. The master plan, which won the competition for the resulting rebuilding, swept away the shopping centre and provided for a new road – New Cathedral Street – connecting St Ann's Square with the Cathedral. The projected alignment of the street and the size of the £100,000,000 Marks & Spencer store planned for half the site of the shopping centre, dictated the removal of The Shambles. As part of the reconstruction package £1,500,000, mostly of public money, was found to pay for its reconstruction and relocation which was proposed for a site formerly occupied by a nineteenth-century building, damaged beyond



Fig. 9

The Wellington Inn, The Shambles, Manchester

a. As reconstructed in 1971. The new bressumer and angle post on the left are recent repairs following the IRA bomb

*Kathy Fishwick*

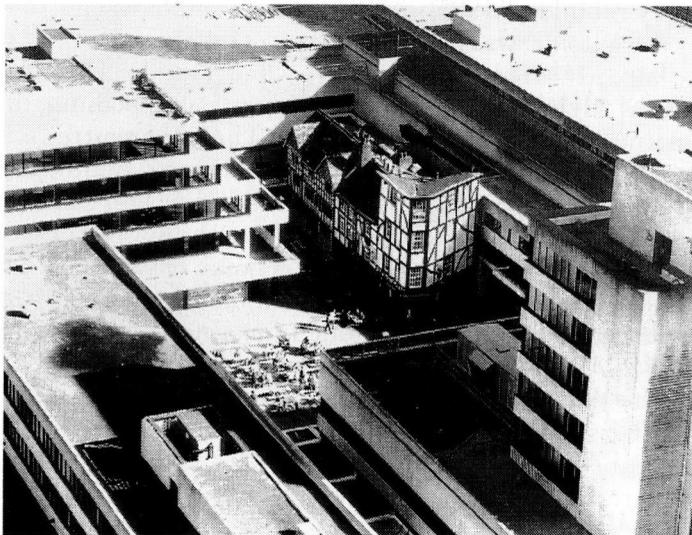


Fig. 9

The Wellington Inn, The Shambles, Manchester  
b. The Shambles in its present inglorious setting

repair by the bomb, adjacent to the Cathedral. In order to make it fit, what had been a continuous terrace – in effect a genuine Shambles or street – was to be broken in two and reassembled on the new site as an L. Much new woodwork and fabric was introduced in 1971. Now even more would be necessary because the rear elevation, hitherto abutting the pre-bomb Marks & Spencer, had to be re-created (this being done in a mixture of timber-framing and Post Modern). The point of junction between the Wellington and Sinclair was to be taken by a glass-fronted staircase tower. The Society's Technical Subcommittee eventually came to a decision that alienation from an historic site (even if the latter had been artificially raised some 4'9") could not be supported, the misgivings being reinforced by considerable doubts over the nature of the rebuilding and the new site. Objections have been lodged with Manchester City Council and with the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions, but to no avail – consent has been granted.

The 1971 reconstruction receives a chapter to itself in F. W. B. and Mary Charles's *The Conservation of Timber Framed Buildings* of 1984.

#### THE OLD TOWN HALL, YORKSHIRE STREET, OLDHAM, GREATER MANCHESTER

The front section of the Town Hall at Oldham dates from 1841 and was designed by the little-known but clearly interesting local architect, Joseph Butterworth, who was dead by 1849 (Fig. 10). Two more building campaigns followed in the 1870s, when the architects were Woodhouse and Potts, and in 1911-17, the latter resulting



Fig. 10

The Old Town Hall, Yorkshire Street, Oldham

in a distinguished essay in Edwardian Baroque at the other end, facing Greaves Street.

Twenty years ago the Society was consulted on a proposal to demolish all of the later work. The suggestion of 1997 was less radical but still proposed the demolition of all of the return block, faced in white tiles, as part of a redevelopment covering the adjoining bus station, to provide a new shopping centre. Inside, only the 1841 interiors and the staircase to the 1917 block were proposed for retention. We expressed considerable reservations over the scale of destruction and opposed strongly the design of the shopping centre elevation, which crowds the 1841 portico and has learned nothing from its grace or repose.

#### SKER HOUSE, KENFIG, PORTHCAWL, GLAMORGAN

Some consultations are easy to react to. When we were informed by Bridgend Council of the application by the Buildings at Risk Trust to repair the long-neglected Sker House we hastened to support the proposal, once the documentation had been digested. Sker dates essentially from the sixteenth century and occupies the site of an earlier medieval grange of Neath Abbey (Fig. 11). It was later made famous by R. D. Blackmore, author of *Lorna Doone*, in his book *The Maid of Sker*.



Fig.11

Sker House, Kenfig, Porthcawl  
*John Chapman Photographic, Swansea*

Consistent neglect over decades had brought the house to the brink and the south wing progressively collapsed in the 1960s and '70s. Now a grant of £413,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund should enable the conservation of the house and the improvement of its setting to be completed. The architects for the repair are Davies Sutton of Pontyclun and the clients, The Buildings at Risk Trust.

THE NUNNERY, 166 ORRELL ROAD, WIGAN, LANCASHIRE

A fanciful name does not conceal the fact that this is a late Georgian villa, the unusual bellcote on the roof being explained by its subsequent use as a convent school (Fig. 12). The property came to the attention of the Society as the result of a proposal to construct a gargantuan porch, more than twice the width of the window



Fig. 12  
The Nunnery,  
166 Orrell Road,  
Wigan

above, enclosing the present simple, unpretentious door and fanlight. This would then have had a glazed, bubble-like, storm porch set within it. The proportions were glaringly inappropriate and we strongly opposed the proposal, which was refused permission both by the local authority and by the Secretary of State on appeal.

FISHERMEN'S SHEDS, THE PROMENADE, SHERINGHAM, NORFOLK

In August the Technical Subcommittee of the Society discussed at some length a proposal for a new lifeboat museum at Sheringham. This would not ordinarily be controversial, but the site chosen was occupied by one of the few surviving ranges of original fishermen's sheds, the earliest one built *c.* 1845 (Fig. 13). The end of the site is taken by a purpose-built lifeboat station, donated by Henry Ramer Upsher of Sheringham House in 1894. Concern over the loss of these evocative buildings



Fig. 13  
Fishermen's  
Sheds, The  
Promenade,  
Sheringham  
*Nicholas Knights*

was compounded by the size of the projected redevelopment.

We shared the local sense of disquiet that genuine buildings of historic interest were being destroyed to make way for self-consciously presented 'heritage'. Alternative plans show how the lifeboats, of which the town is justifiably proud, can be displayed, if the idea of a single, centralised site for them is dropped.

**BARN, NICHOL HOUSE, COLNE ROAD, TRAWDEN, LANCASHIRE.**

The massive front wall of this great barn within Pendle District epitomises the unrepeatability and the fragility of vernacular architecture (Fig. 14). Blocks of

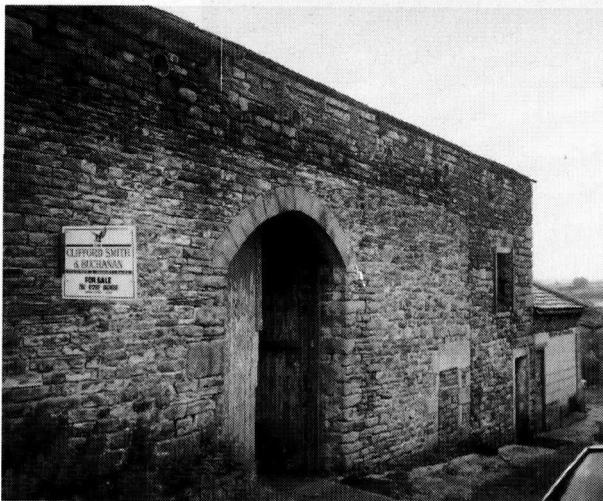


Fig. 14

Barn, Nichol House, Colne Road, Trawden

varying sizes, textures, colours and weathering patterns, with clear building lines indicating where the structure has been widened and heightened, can so easily be obscured and damaged by conversion to provide a house, or in this case three houses. We commented in great detail on the scheme which, if executed with care, might work with the grain of the building rather than against it. The conversion has in its favour a willingness to limit the new apertures planned for the front elevation and to arrange them in a consciously irregular manner.

GREAT TANGLEY MANOR, SHALFORD, SURREY.

One of the more interesting applications on which we were consulted was the proposal in 1996 by Penelope Adamson (on behalf of the owner Mr Marix-Evans) to reconstruct the rear bridge at Great Tangley, which had passed the point of reasonable repair. Philip Webb's original plans of 1894 for the bridge, which gave access across the moat to the Manor (a house where the earliest section is dated 1584), were faithfully used by Mrs Adamson and the result is an excellent example of the continuity of the carpentry tradition of the Arts and Crafts Movement, itself inspired by the middle ages (Fig. 15). The bridge is slightly unnerving to cross because there is a handrail on only one side.



Fig. 15  
Great Tangley Manor, Shalford  
The reconstructed bridge

WHITECHAPEL MANOR, BISHOPS NYMPTON, DEVON

It is possible to pick out in the central middle distance in the photograph the profile of the Grade I listed Whitechapel Manor, largely of the sixteenth century, set in the rolling Devon countryside (Fig. 16). We joined the owners in lodging an objection to the proposal to construct several hundred holiday units, set within the wooded



Fig. 16  
Whitechapel Manor, Bishops Nympton

area which lies between the building and the camera. A similar scheme was rejected after a Public Inquiry and we are not satisfied that the Inspector's adverse observations after that hearing have been addressed in the second, renewed, application.