

IN DEFENCE OF CRAFTSMANSHIP: Case Work, 1980

Compiled by Matthew Saunders, Secretary

The Ancient Monuments Society was founded in 1924 to conserve not merely Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings but also examples of "Fine Old Craftsmanship". To represent this aspect of the Society's work the following pages contain photographs of architectural detailing in wood and stone on buildings which we have championed, mostly in the last year.

1. Manchester, Chorlton on Medlock: 62 Nelson Road.



This fine Tuscan doorcase and cast-iron fanlight are on the Georgian house where the Pankhursts held the inaugural meeting of the Suffragettes and which is now threatened by a proposed hospital extension. We feel confident there will be a public inquiry.

2. Sheffield, Gladstone Buildings.

An excellent example of Victorian stone carving, with deep undercutting, on a ground floor spandrel of this imposing 1885 block, framing the view of the Cathedral. The application to demolish was rejected after a public inquiry, to which we submitted evidence.



3. South Mimms, Herts, Clare Hall.



The retaining wall to the 18th century Clare Hall contains carved stone panels depicting ribbons tied in a bow. These came from Wren's St. Antholin's church in the City of London, when it was demolished a century ago. The Society's protests at the proposal to demolish the Hall led to the withdrawal of the application. It has now been bought for rehabilitation.

4. Chesham, Bucks, 4 Market Square.



This delightful Georgian butchers shop faces demolition for "an inner relief road". The wooden canopy, the rods on which the meat was suspended, the console-brackets and the fanlight are all original. The Society has strongly opposed demolition.

5. Worcester, 20—22 The Tything.



The Society has successfully resisted a proposal to remove the central doorway from this untouched mid-Georgian terrace.

6. Westminster, Denman House, Piccadilly.

This Royal Coat of Arms and the string course of luscious grapes would have been smashed if an application to demolish the exuberant Denman House, of 1903, had succeeded. We opposed and Westminster City Council refused the application.

7. Manston, Kent, Grove Farm Barn.

The gentle chicane to the upswinging brace and the base moulding to the jowel indicate the refinement of detailing which can be found in timber framed buildings. Permission to demolish was granted nevertheless in this case.

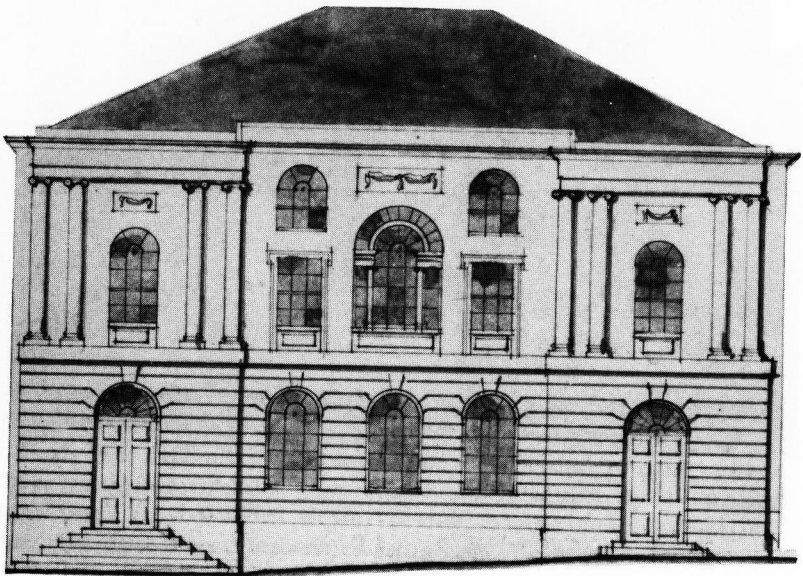
8. Ely, Cambs., 41 Broad Street.



This spectacular roof system, which has been tentatively dated to the 13th century, and is so impressive for its passing braces laid in scissor fashion, bears even more powerful witness to the craftsmanship inherent in traditional timber framing. This, mercifully, is not under threat but is included because it has hitherto been largely unrecognised. (Photo: East Cambridgeshire Council).

9. Glenfield, Leics., The Old Church.

An 18th century print of this 13th century church, which is now roofless. The Society successfully resisted a proposal to demolish the gables of the ruins.

10. Leeds, The Brunswick Chapel.

The pen and wash drawing is by Brian Blayney ARIBA FLI who represented the Society at the two-day public inquiry into the proposal to demolish this 1825 chapel, which is one of the city's greatest Neo-Classical compositions. The drawing shows the front elevation before the creation of a large central door at the turn of the century.

11. Honley, Yorks., 5 St. Mary's Square.



Clearly dated "1685" and with the monogram of its builder. The Society opposed the 1978 application to demolish but we are still concerned that it remains derelict.

12. Bedford, Beds., The Howard Chapel.



This fine tablet of 1776 to Benjamin King, fixed to the wall of the chapel, in Mill Street, is representative of the incidental threat to historically and artistically interesting monuments which accompanies almost all applications to demolish listed nonconformist chapels (which run at the rate of about 20 a year). In theory important monuments in Anglican churches facing demolition or conversion are salvaged by the Diocesan Furnishings Officer. However, there is no equivalent in the nonconformist churches and very often they are simply smashed. But for the Society's action, in conjunction with the Friends of Friendless Churches, even the nationally important monuments carved by Sir Francis Chantrey in Northgate End Unitarian Church in Halifax would have been smashed. As it is, we bought them at the auction and have now donated them to the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool where they will feature prominently in the former cemetery chapel near the Anglican Cathedral, which is to be adapted to a sculpture gallery.

13. Huddersfield, Yorks., Highfield Chapel, New North Road.



This splendid Neo-Classical design of 1843 is as much a triumph for its stonemasons as its architect, yet Kirklees Education Committee wish to destroy it. The Society has opposed in the strongest terms.