

## A SELECTION OF CASES FOUGHT IN 1981

*by Matthew Saunders, Secretary*

### **Otford Palace, Sevenoaks, Kent**

Otford Palace, in use by 1518, was very largely the creation of Archbishop Warham and remains one of the major early Tudor monuments of the South East.

The photo shows the most extensive of the surviving ranges representing the western half of the north range bounding the gigantic Inner Court. The tower on the left stood at the north west corner of the Palace; its square turret contained garderobes and its polygonal one the newel stair. Inside, each storey was composed of a single heptagonal room; their three fireplaces remain and also a complex system of doorways at each level to garderobe, stair and the double-storeyed galleries which adjoined its east and south sides.

On the right is the ground storey rump of one of the twin towers which flanked the Great Gatehouse.

Linking the two structures are the original ground-floor walls of a complete gallery with a modern superstructure added when the range was converted into cottages c.1900. This gallery had a timber framed first floor now completely missing. The ground floor wall facing the inner Court has eleven unglazed 'cloister-lights' (two destroyed by later chimney breast) and a doorway, all now blocked but some with modern windows inserted.

The three storey tower is now in need of urgent repair and its plight is true of a worrying number of other Ancient Monuments. The public expenditure cuts mean that the Department of the Environment is refusing to accept monuments of the quality of Otford for guardianship, preferring instead to offer 50% of the cost of repair to the existing owner—in this case Sevenoaks



One of the major Tudor monuments of the South East: Otford Palace.

District Council. The latter, however, is delaying execution of the repairs and as the buck is passed the building declines further.

It is disturbing that monuments as outstanding as Jervaulx Abbey are among those which the Department has recently felt compelled to refuse to take into guardianship. And that monuments as outstanding as Rochester Castle and Castle Acre Priory are, or were earlier in 1981, closed to the public because of staff shortages.

*(With grateful thanks to Mr. Anthony Stoyel for the description)*

### **Warehouse between 26 & 42 Fore Street, Ipswich, Suffolk**

Warehouses of the 15th or 16th centuries are exceptionally rare. The discovery therefore in the Summer of 1981 of the substantial remains of just such a structure in Fore Street, Ipswich, led to its immediate listing. The photo shows the angled braces and the jowled posts designed to take the heavy loadings. There had hitherto been no clue to the survival of this framing, for externally the whole structure is sheathed in ugly corrugated iron. The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings hopes, and we join with them, that a proposed road will now be rerouted so that this historically important structure may be retained.



Early Tudor Warehouse, Ipswich, Suffolk, showing wall posts, tie beams and bracing on the first floor north-south range.

**Ranworth Old Hall, Woodbastwick, Norfolk**

This rather enigmatic early 16th century house lies in picturesque isolation among the Norfolk Broads. It appears to be the rump of a larger E-shaped house, the central porch of which survives, relegated to the role of garden ornament. This is intriguing because of the way it illustrates the transitional period at the end of the Gothic pre-eminence. The blind first floor window is Tudor Gothic, but the doorway below is topped by a pediment. Here Gothic merges with the Classical. The same blurring of the styles is seen on the slightly later 1579 monument in Ranworth church to Thomas Holdiche where a pedimented and pilastered surround encloses a four centred arch complete with foliated spandrels and chamfer stops. The Hall itself is marked by original mullioned and transomed windows and a large crow-stepped gable. There are surrounding farm buildings



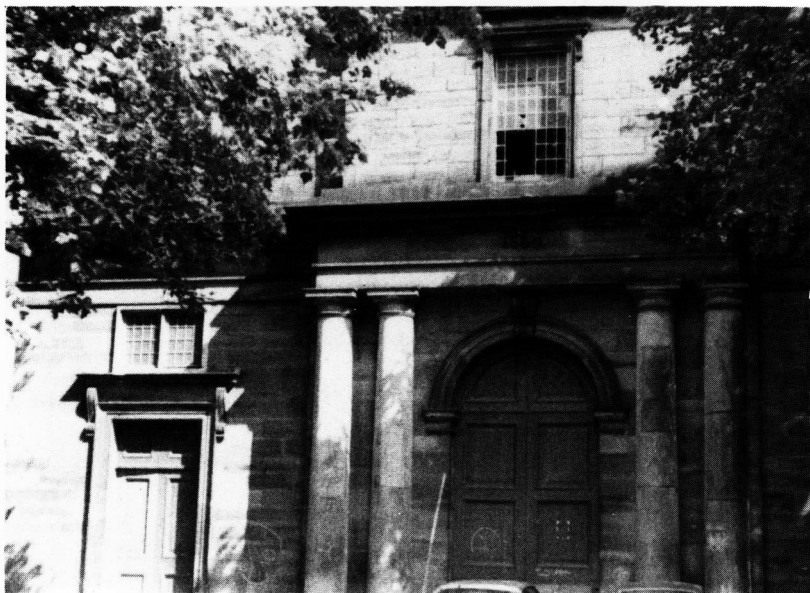
Ranworth Old Hall: the 16th century porch.

in brick and flint, some are thatched and some sections are certainly of the 16th century.

Right at the end of 1980 application was made to demolish this complex, returning the site to grass. The porch was to be re-erected on a new house at Buckenham. The Society felt strongly that this building was capable of use and opposed the application. We were successful, and ourselves submitted two planning applications, so that a potential user would know precisely where he stood on what would and would not be allowed in the way of uses. There was also a very useful meeting with the officers of Broadland District Council, where we were able to offer much advice on how the repair and reuse of the Hall might be enforced. However, the Council refused both our applications in October and supported a proposal for "controlled ruination".

### **St. George's Church, Wolverhampton**

St. George's, Wolverhampton, designed by James Morgan, a pupil of Nash, was built between 1828 and 1830 on a site purchased by public subscription. The total cost was £10,268. The interior was reordered in 1897 by the Arts and Crafts architect, F.T. Beck, in a distinctive but idiosyncratic manner.



St. George's Church, Wolverhampton: the West Front, dated 1830.

Deprived of most of its congregation by clearance and a relief road that cuts a swathe nearby, St. George's was closed five years ago. Although the glass was removed, most of the fittings and monuments remained in situ and they have been subjected to a vandalism that defies description. The Society tried to save the font, but in the three weeks between employing the contractor and his being able to get to the church, it had been smashed beyond repair.

The Society strongly opposed the proposal of the Church Commissioners to destroy the whole of this impressive building, and after our lobbying of the Local Authority, the City Council is exploring ways in which it might save all or part of the building.

### **Chapel, London Road Cemetery, Reading, Berks.**

The case of the Nonconformist chapel at Reading was sadly one lost in 1981. The Victorian Society and ourselves were unable to persuade the Secretary of State to refuse listed building consent, and the difficulty of finding a new use and of funding essential stone repairs has damned the building.

The chapel, built in 1842 and designed by W. Brown, formed



London Road Cemetery, Reading: the Chapel and weeping elm.

a Romantic composition with the beautiful and probably contemporary weeping elm and the striking pair of matching cast-iron monuments either side, both to prominent ironmasters of the local works. The photo shows that to James Andrewes (d.1841). Both are listed in their own right and will remain. We are trying at the time of writing to see if the chapel can be resited, but the chances are not good.



The cast-iron tomb of James Andrewes.

### **Nos. 80/81 King William Street, City of London**

In Summer 1981 application was made to redevelop the former headquarters of the London Life Association in King William Street following the departure of the company for Bristol. The building was constructed between 1925 and 1927 and is one of the finest designs of the leading Classical architect, W. Curtis Green.

The building is unlisted, and the case was an important one because it arose very soon after Mr. Heseltine had announced the

adoption of new more generous criteria for the listing of buildings constructed between the Wars. If the Minister abides by these criteria, which allow for the protection of the leading works of the leading architects, the building should be listed by the time this piece is published. The case is incidentally of further interest because the full Common Council of the Corporation endorsed the request for listing. (October 1981: D of E refused to list).



The former headquarters of the London Life Association, King William Street, City of London.

**Angel Mill, Westbury, Wiltshire**

The great textile mills of the South West represent one of the most valuable legacies of the Industrial Revolution.

Angel Mill, Edward Street, Westbury, stands out as probably the earliest Wiltshire mill to rely on steam power. The foundation stone was laid on 1st March 1806, and the simply detailed symmetrical block which dates from that time still survives, even if somewhat hidden by a new wing, in identical style, of 1856, and a single storey front block of 1868 with a grand overthrow in stone.

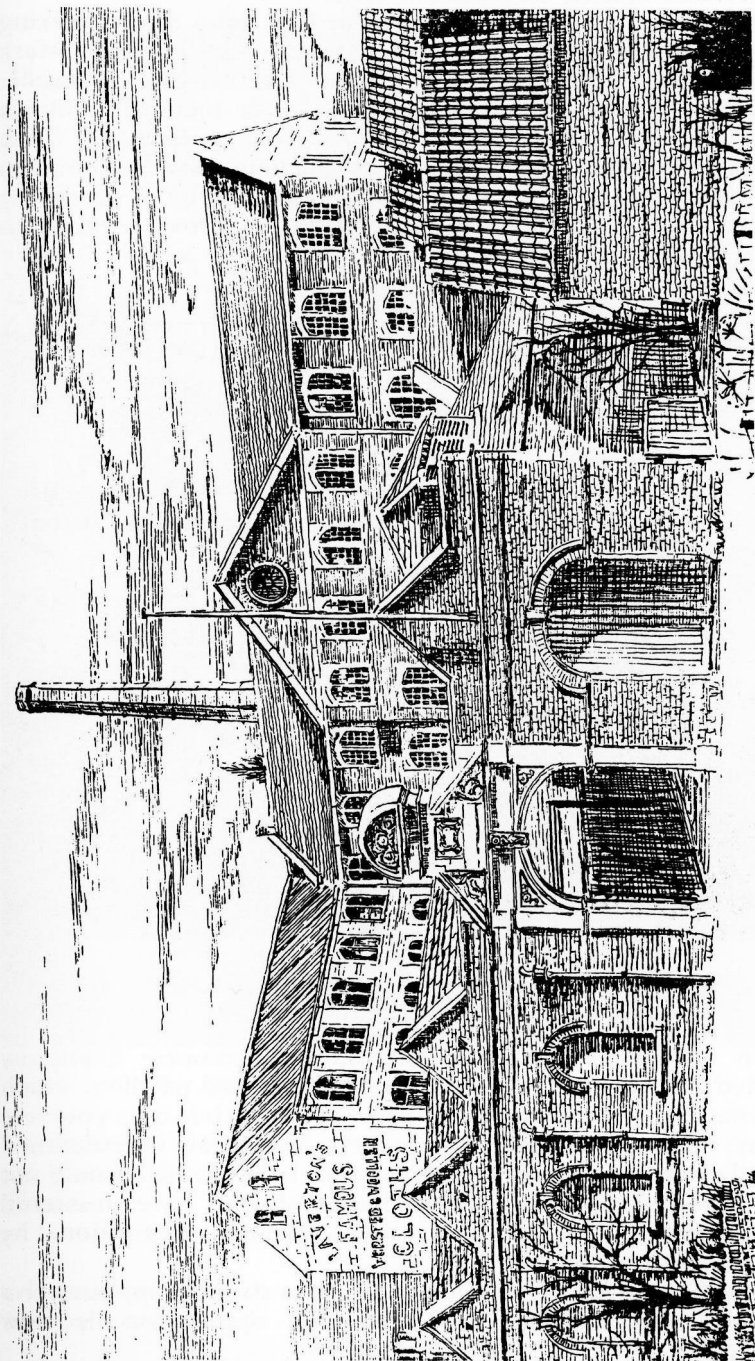
Architecturally the 1806 block takes its cue in terms of composition from the mid Georgian country house with the central pediment, but internally, on the top floor, the extraordinary roof system derives from the demands of pure function, and very exciting it is. So that the work area might be lit by continuous mullioned glazing, the row of square-sectioned jowled posts are supported by passing braces which in turn hold up the sill of the long window. The principal tie-beams across the work space are given a marked camber which endows the whole roof system with a feeling of dynamic tension.



Framing on the top floor of the mill.

In November 1980 the Society was informed of an application to demolish the whole of this very important complex. Despite our objections and those of others, the councillors of West Wiltshire District went against the advice of their officers and agreed to demolition. The Secretary of State, however, called a public inquiry which was held on 19th August 1981, and we were represented on that occasion by Mr. Peter Blakesley, DipArch Cons.(Leics.) RIBA. The application was rejected.





Angel Mill, Westbury, from a drawing by Alan Andrew.

**Piercefield House, St. Arvans, Gwent**

Piercefield House was designed by (Sir) John Soane working for two successive clients—George Smith and Lt. Col. Mark Wood, MP, from 1785 onwards. Joseph Bonomi was responsible for the saloon and staircase of 1797. Both men left alone a substantial rear wing which appears to date from the 16th century house formerly on the site. Piercefield was abandoned in 1923 and fell into a wretched decay accerbated by its use in the 1940s for target practice by the United States Army (this explains the blastholes in the walls).



Piercefield House, St. Arvans, Gwent: the Soane Facade, showing shell damage.

In November 1980 the Chepstow Racecourse Company applied to demolish the shell of the Hall and East pavilion, which it owns, and re-erect the building in facsimile but on a concrete frame. The replica would, however, have been overwhelmed visually by a huge new hotel immediately behind which would not only have destroyed the wooded backcloth, but have countered the symmetry of the recreated Soane composition by asymmetrical massing.

The Society joined with many others in strongly opposing this scheme, and another less ambitious application is now anticipated.



The East Pavilion at Piercefield House, also damaged by shells.