

CASEWORK IN ENGLAND

by Matthew Saunders, Secretary

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This article touches briefly on 12 out of the many hundreds of cases dealt with by the Society in the last 12 or 18 months.

1. Morpeth, Northumberland, The Court House

This magnificent castellated structure designed between 1821 and 1831 by the distinguished Neo-Classical architect John Dobson, the designer of late Georgian Newcastle, was recently closed after the discovery of structural problems particularly in the roof. Although Listed Grade II*, an application was made in 1982 to demolish the building in its entirety. This was refused and a compromise solution has been advanced by a private party to create 19 flats in a conversion scheme. However, whilst this would preserve the exterior, much of the magnificent court room would have to be sacrificed to create an internal light well. The conversion proposal was "called-in" for a Public Inquiry in 1983 and the Society hopes to contribute evidence.



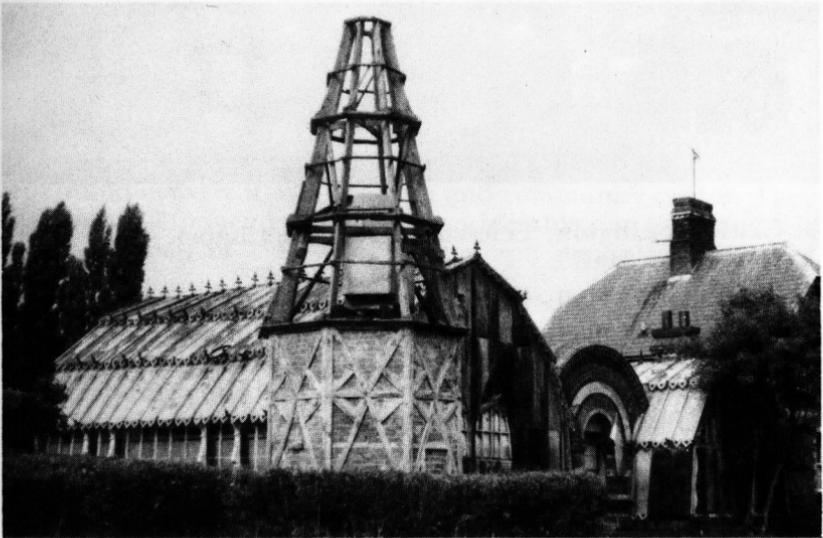


2. Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire, The Red House, Park Road

Permission was given by the Secretary of State for demolition of this fine late 18th century town house in 1983. It lies on the route of a proposed inner relief road. The Society submitted evidence through the Secretary at the Public Inquiry where a strong argument against the new road was mounted by a dedicated group of local people. It is distressing that this was to no avail.

3. Tenbury Wells, Worcestershire, Former Baths, Off Teme Street

It will be a sad day when the conservation movement loses the resolve to defend the eccentric. To Sir Nikolaus Pevsner these former baths to the rear of the Crow Hotel designed in 1862 by James Cranston were "without seriousness or taste". However they show a highly individual and early use of galvanized iron (nailed to thick timber laths laid in decorative configurations and attached to a brick shell). Application has been made on more than one occasion to demolish, the last time in 1982. We urged that they be converted.



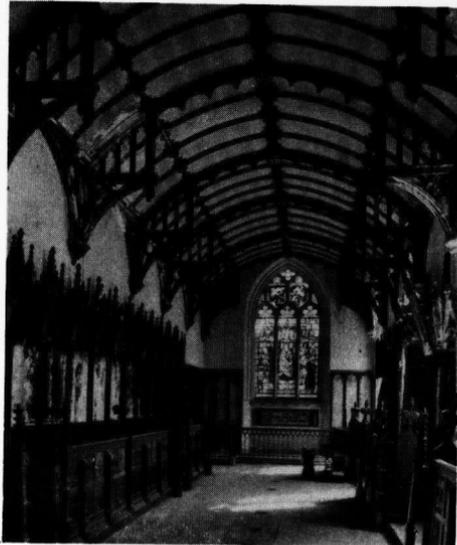
4. Reading, Berkshire, Former Baptist Church, Kings Road

This Baptist Church was founded in 1640 but the present structure dates from 1834 (with enlargements of 1858 and 1860). The top-lit galleried interior has now lost many of its fittings. The building has been the subject of a number of applications in recent years including one for total demolition in 1983. The local authority is at present favouring a solution which retains the facade alone. We continue to advocate conversion to a use that would take advantage of the purpose-built auditorium.



**5. Castle Donington, Leicestershire, The Chapel,
Donington Hall**

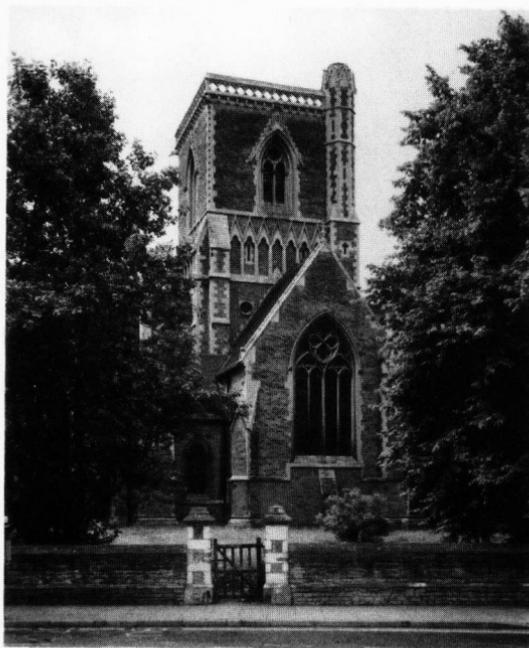
Donington Hall, built in 1793 to the design of William Wilkins, has been successfully converted to provide offices for British Midlands Airways. The attached chapel, however, has proved to be a much more considerable problem. Practically all the decoration, including that to the hammerbeam roof, is in



fibrous plaster. The ingress of water accompanied by the instability of the walls has led to several classic technical dilemmas, the most intractable of which is how to renew the timbers which act as armatures for the plaster without destroying the latter. At the time of writing the Society is hoping that the Historic Buildings Council will be able to encourage a programme of full repair, although exasperation prompted British Midland Airways in 1983 to apply to gut the interior.

6. Rugby, Warwickshire, Holy Trinity Church

Undoubtedly the most tragic demolition carried out in 1983 was that of Holy Trinity, Rugby, built 1852-54, listed Grade A and a leading design of Sir Gilbert Scott. Although the Secretary of State had recommended retention after the first non-statutory public inquiry of its type the Church Commissioners decided against vesting the church in the care of either of the two local societies which had been offered an HBC grant of up to £50,000 and had raised or been promised £16,000 from other sources to repair and convert it as a museum and community centre. They chose instead to spend no doubt a considerable sum to demolish it in the Summer of 1983. The photograph shows the quality of design.



7. Lewes, Sussex, The Jireh Chapel (*photos Crown Copyright, Royal Commission on Historical Monuments*)

A rather modest exterior, faced in mathematical tiles, gives access to an early 19th century chapel interior virtually untouched from the two original building campaigns of 1805 and 1826. The "flying" pulpit leads from the minister's room where the portrait of the founder (Rev. William Huntington 1744-1813) still hangs.



Huntington is buried in the graveyard to the rear. The standard of joinery, particularly in the pews, is high and notable ingenuity is displayed in the hinged rails which lift to give access to the seating in the galleries. Even the original row of hat pegs survives. This chapel was featured prominently by Dr. Mark Girouard in his contribution to the recent BBC Television series

accompanying the "Change and Decay" exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum on the problems posed by historic churches. The dilemma in which the Jireh trustees find themselves is acute; a chapel built to house 1200 now has a congregation of 12 at the best. Their response in the Summer of 1983 was to apply for consent to demolish. The building was at that time listed Grade II but in view of the rare integrity of the interior the Department of the Environment swiftly upgraded it to Grade I, thus rendering the application the first to demolish totally a structure in that grade since 1979. The application was promptly refused and the Society is now in amicable discussion with the trustees to try and find a constructive solution. It is to be hoped that a generous Historic Buildings Council grant will enable them to assess precisely the chapel's structural condition and embark on the necessary repairs the need for which such a survey might dictate.

8. Annesley, Nottinghamshire, Annesley Hall

The small Nottinghamshire village of Annesley on the edge of a Nottinghamshire coalfield has occupied the Society's attention on several occasions in the last few years. Following considerable controversy over the future of the ruined medieval church, concern has now been focussed in recent months on the Hall. Several years of vacancy precipitated in application in July 1982 to demolish most of the top floor and substitute a flat roof. Such a proposal would have emasculated the building, which dates mostly from the late 17th century, and we opposed it strongly. Permission was refused and we look forward to a re-occupation of the Hall in its entirety.



9. Cirencester, Gloucestershire, The Maltings, Cricklade Street

The Society's concern extends to the more interesting monuments of industrial archaeology. The above brewery maltings, constructed in the late 1860s with a four-square massiveness, were the subject of an application to demolish in 1983. There do seem to be clear possibilities for conversion and we have pressed the need for serious exploration of such options.



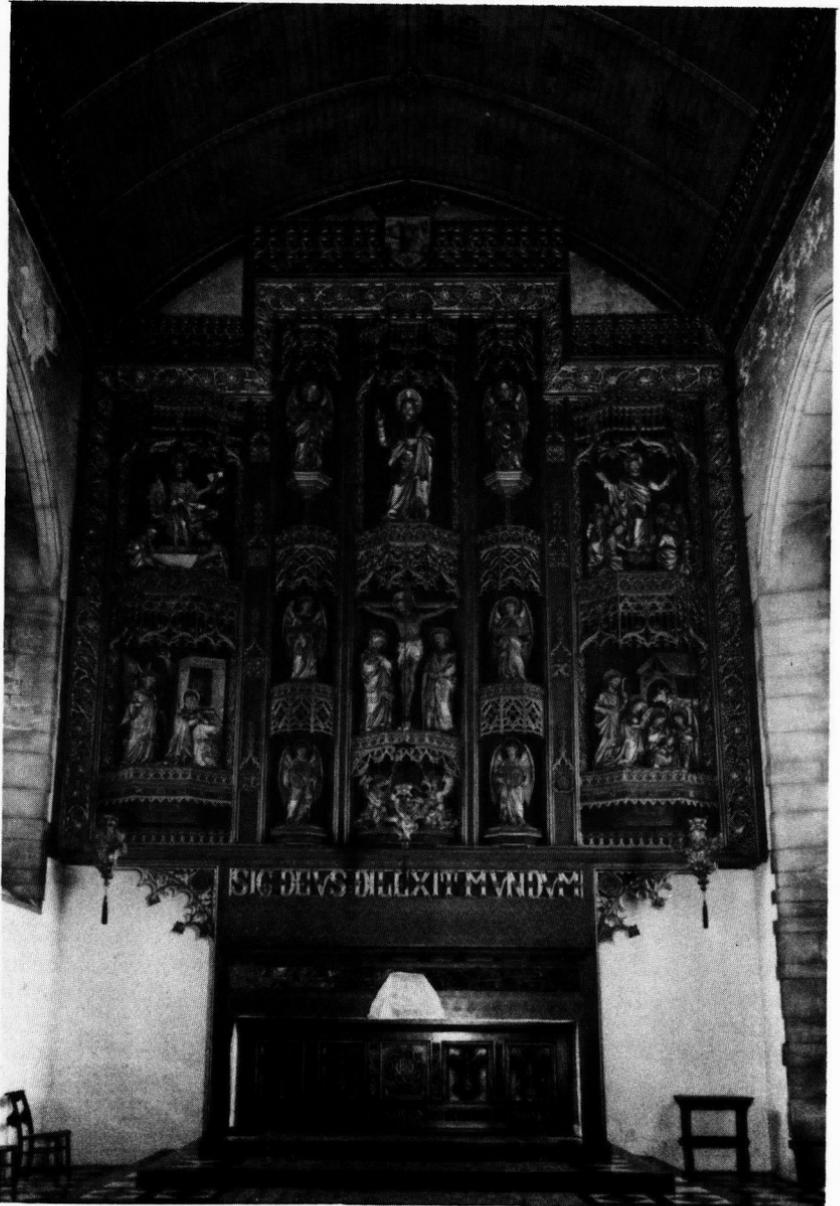
10. Gloucester, The Former Royal Infirmary, Southgate Street

This early photograph of 1926 (Crown Copyright, Royal Commission on Historical Monuments) shows the original section of this hospital, designed c. 1755 by Luke Singleton. Later enlargements, including some of 1827 by Thomas Rickman, are of less architectural interest. All those buildings facing Southgate Street are now disused. In 1982 Gloucester City Council rejected an application by the Regional Health Authority to demolish, although an Appeal was held in 1983. In his decision, announced in November, the Secretary of State granted the Appeal although he imposed conditions about the salvage of two fireplaces, the balustrade of the main stairs and the stained glass in the chapel.

**11. Leeds, West Yorkshire, Former Church of St. Edward Holbeck**

St. Edward, Holbeck, built in 1903 to the designs of G.F. Bodley, is a fine example of the attempts by late Victorian churchmen to brighten the lives of slum dwellers through noble building. Although, following closure in the early seventies, the building was used for several years as an antiques showroom that use has now lapsed and in 1983 the Church Commissioners announced their intention to demolish. The fine reredos shown in the photograph has been moved at a cost of several thousand pounds to the Victorian Christ Church in Moss Side, Manchester, the money being raised by the efforts of the latter's congregation.

However, the church remains a handsomely proportioned work by a great architect. The Secretary of State is presently deciding whether the proposal to demolish should be the subject of a non-statutory public inquiry.



12. Aylesbury, Buckinghamshie, The Nag's Head Public House and the Oddfellows Arms, New street

These two pubs, both occupying corner positions and both generally dating from the 18th century, were the subject of an application to demolish in 1983 in order to allow the construction of an inner relief road. Although long planned and obviously required, the road does cut a destructive path and we are exploring the possibilities of alternative alignment.

