

SW Bulletin No. 25 - January 2014

More Modern Additions to Bath



A study of the Grade I listed St John's Hospital in Chapel Court, Bath BA1 1SJ. Rebuilt in 1716 by the architect William Killigrew and continued after 1727 by John Wood the Elder, the residents of this important group of buildings have recently benefited from double-glazing to help reduce noise levels and improve thermal comfort. Can you spot the new period-emulation sashes? (Clue: The two ground floor timber sashes at top are 18th century originals!)

Your Contributions

Special thanks to Kate Williams and Adrian Neilson for their respective articles on *The Bottle Inn at Marshwood* (this Bulletin) and *Bath Jewish Burial Ground* (Bulletin 24). Kate and Adrian will each receive a £10 voucher for books or wine (their choice). Please send your articles to the editor for inclusion in the next Bulletin; the cut-off date for submissions is 14 April 2014.

Design Quality, Materials and Standards - Who Decides?

Late last year I attended the annual design awards ceremony organised by the civic society of an industrial town in the East Midlands. Eight projects were short-listed in three categories, namely new buildings, refurbished buildings and environmental projects. The aim of these awards is to recognise architectural merit and reward those projects which attain high standards. All highly credible stuff for a town shaped by hugely influential philanthropic forefathers during the 18th and 19th centuries which culminated in a vast manufacturing enterprise with its own highly distinctive form of 'industrial classicism' red brick architectural style. But I digress somewhat. The key point about the awards was that they were widely inconsistent in their recognition of that elusive 'high standard'. Admittedly, the environmental project winner and refurbished industrial building winners were major undertakings, each with a significant social contribution to the town. The new building? Well, it was for a national restaurant chain and of a glass/ concrete 'kit build' design fast becoming ubiquitous in many towns across the country; you won't have to travel very far to see what I am describing here! All of which begs the question "who really decides what is good design quality" and in what developmental context? Malcolm James

Modernism In From The Cold!

Now a paintball park but previously a bastion of slightly darker secrets is the former No. 10 Group Royal Observer Corps (ROC) headquarters at Poltimore near Exeter (EX4 0BB). Dating from 1962 at the height of the Cold War this rather squat but robust concrete building has recently been awarded a Grade II listing by English Heritage on account of its rarity (one of only two surface-type ROC buildings surviving in England), architectural interest and technological innovation (by virtue of its solid construction to withstand blast and the effects radioactive fallout in the event of enemy attack), relative intactness, historic interest (symbolic of an important period in national history) and the technological innovation by virtue of the ROC's key NATO role in nuclear threat monitoring for state defence.



Kate Baxter-Hunter

Friday 20th September 2013 dawned fair in Bristol for the 100 delegates attending the IHBC South West conference, "Characterisationmaking sense of place". The venue was the impressive Grade I listed late 18th century St Paul's Church designed by Daniel Hague, and affectionately known locally as the 'wedding cake' church because of its tiered tower profile.

The church was declared redundant in the 1980's and its condition deteriorated rapidly. However, it has since been restored by the Churches Conservation Trust (CCT) who instigated a major repairs programme in 2001. An economic future has been achieved by its dynamic new use by *Circomedia* - the circus skill and physical training school. The venue can also be hired for meetings and conferences. So, the numerous resident (and very unwelcome "flyers", namely pigeons) have been replaced by new aerial artists - one of whom entranced the delegates with a graceful display during the lunch interval!



Speakers considered the history and development of the concept of historic characterisation; the importance of considering the context – not only the physical but also the cultural contexts – and what it is that defines a place/landscape. The process of historic landscape characterisation was summarised as "where we are in the present, looking back to the past and thinking about the future".

Delegates were reminded that historic characterisation is fluid, inclusive, interdisciplinary and subjective, so the use of fixed values is best avoided. Also, that change can be a dynamic positive force, aiding understanding and catalysing opinion. A variety of thought provoking case studies demonstrated the various

tools and techniques which can be used to study characterisation. In particular, how these can work with many different audiences and at different scales or landscape types, e.g. rural or urban, from planned squares to farmsteads, churches, abbeys, airfields or terraced housing.

Examples of tools used included mapping, photography, databases, and symbols. The role of local community involvement, such as at St Barnabas Primary School in the St Paul's area of Bristol was specifically highlighted. The positive outcomes of this project were seen to increase understanding at both the community and conservation professional levels, engendering mutual respect and providing the local community with a strong sense of place.

Bristol City Council's "Know your Place" project is enabling local communities to contribute to a website which facilitates 'exploration' of their neighbourhood through the use of historic maps, images and linked information. Individuals and groups can submit additional material such as old photographs and narratives to the Bristol Historic Environment Record (HER) and also nominate buildings for inclusion on the evolving local list. Other parallel projects are feeding into police and neighbourhood plans.

Community engagement may also open significant funding possibilities and historic characterisation can be a powerful asset for developing and implementing successful regeneration projects. It was however stressed that specialised professional language and jargon can sometimes be seen as a barrier to communications; who other than conservation professionals are likely to understand the term "characterisation"? More user-friendly terms and engaging language, such as "Exploring your Town", and symbols, can be effective mechanisms to break down these barriers and appear easy to grasp by subject audiences.

Some of the practical difficulties of achieving historic characterisation within heritage statements were also addressed. Multiple ownership, for example, can limit the desire and prohibit funding, restricting briefs to focus on individual elements, which then restrict consideration of the

wider context. Where a wider characterisation approach is achieved it may still be a challenge to ensure that the resulting information is properly absorbed into and then acted upon by the relevant powers, including local planning authorities. HERs offer a way to feed into the planning system, together with development frameworks, specific characterisation policies, regeneration and development strategies and of course, specialist conservation input.

The closing summary reflected that historic characterisation adds to wider understanding and it can deliver sound evidence-based results. Projects become exciting detective work, can engage and empower local communities and support the localism agenda. Characterisation aids planning at many levels from major strategies to individual applications; it can also foster new partnerships as well as strengthening existing ones, with potential funding opportunities.

Characterisation essentially recognises the uniqueness of every place and its project-oriented focus enables it to successfully reach out to communities where designation cannot.

Val Harrison

(images courtesy of Jonathan Taylor and by kind permission of Circomedia)

<http://www.bristol.gov.uk/page/planning-and-building-regulations/know-your-place>



Planning Appeal: Land at Tengore Lane, Langport, Somerset (APP/R3325/A/12/2183158)

The appeal was made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against refusal by South Somerset District Council to grant planning permission for a solar. The key issue concerned the potential impact of the proposed development on the character of the landscape and setting of the English Civil War battlefield at Langport, 1645. The subject area is located to the east of the Registered Historic Battlefield. Solar panels of 3 metres height covering an area of 9 hectares were proposed, providing 5.82 MWP of renewable energy to the national grid annually.

The inspector adjudged that the 'industrial' character of the proposed development would be "uncharacteristic" and in stark contrast to the rural agricultural landscape. Irrespective of the additional planting over time to 'soften' the visual impact, it was considered that the solar panels and ancillary equipment "would appear as an obtrusive feature amongst the traditional farmed fields". Within the context of the battlefield site itself, the inspector concluded that the proposed development would adversely affect its (still discernible) setting and therefore be harmful to the significance of the designated heritage asset. The appeal was dismissed on the grounds that the benefits provided by the renewable energy generation would not be sufficient to outweigh the harm introduced.

Greg Venn

Planning Appeal: Hillersdon House, Cullompton, Devon (APP/Y1138/E/13/2197384)

The owners of a mid-19th century Grade II* listed country house must revise their restoration plans following the dismissal of an appeal against a refusal for listed building consent made by Mid-Devon District Council. The proposed development involved the removal of an internal 'utilitarian' timber staircase, which although damaged over time, likely dates from the original building of the house. The appellants argued that

previously consented works to remove walls in the vicinity of the staircase would render it redundant within the context of a revised spatial arrangement.

In dismissing the appeal, the inspector considered that the removal of the staircase "would constitute a loss of historic fabric". Accepting the less formal layout and 'simpler' detailing of the family rooms and service wings, they were nonetheless adjudged to "make a valued contribution to an appreciation of how the entire building (and its resident 'community') would have functioned...". The social interpretation of an earlier internal layout is therefore a key factor which contributes positively to the significance of a listed building.

Diane Hartnell

External Decorations: A Whiter Shade of Pink?

The owner of a 17th century Grade II listed cob and stone cottage in Kennford, Devon has been refused (retrospective) listed building consent to retain its 'garish' pink external colour scheme. Despite claims that the redecoration "restored the colour to what it was" (13 years ago), the local authority judged that it was "the wrong type of pink, as it is particularly vibrant".



Lantern Cottage with its two shades of pink: the contentious scheme (top) and after repainting (bottom) (images courtesy of Maureen Pearce)

Planning Appeal: The Barn, Ham Court, Charlton Kings, Cheltenham (APP/B1605/F/12/2185153)

Sixteen unauthorised solar panels fitted to the roof pitches of two curtilage-listed barns must be removed following the dismissal of an appeal against listed building enforcement action brought by Cheltenham Borough Council.

The Barn and the neighbouring Court Barn date from the 17th century and were converted to residential use in the 1980s. Their construction utilises a mixture of timber framing with brick and render infill panels (The Barn) and local stone/ brick (Court Barn).

The roof forms, diverse materials (i.e. natural stone slate and partly renewed tile) and distinctive undulating ridge lines make the barns prominent architectural features which can be seen from a considerable distance.



The inspector judged that the ridge profiles and roof coverings were fundamental to the architectural interest of the barns. Installing solar panels on to these roofs therefore imposed harm by virtue of visually obscuring key features in contravention of local policy BE9; which seeks to ensure that any external alteration of a listed building does not adversely affect its character.

In dismissing the appeal, the inspector concluded that the appellants had failed to show that other means of providing renewable energy and/ or achieving energy savings were non-viable for the site. The owners have four months in which to remove the solar panels, despite arguing for a longer time limit to comply.

Wendy Tomlinson/ Charlotte Lewis (image courtesy of Wendy Tomlinson)

The Bottle Inn is a traditional 16th century public house of cob/ rubblestone and thatch construction located in a rural Dorset hamlet. Like many public houses, it was built near the local church but it was also where the community originally paid their tithes. During the late-18th century it became the first public house in the area to sell bottled beer; hence its current name. The village shop stood in the adjoining grounds and during World War II the pub housed the village school. Famously known for its annual World Nettle Eating Championship and charity Beer Festival, the pub sits within a substantial site giving far reaching views across the Dorset countryside.

The building has sadly suffered mixed fortunes since being owned by a couple who ran it as a public house during the 1980s. Despite its success as a business, the owners emigrated to Australia and let the premises. Before doing so, they gutted the building of all its catering and beer equipment, leaving it as a shell for any naively hopeful tenant who might wish to take it on. Since this time, there have been three tenants, all of whom have had to invest heavily in the furnishing of the building and believing that the owner would be true to their word in carrying out maintenance. Rather unsurprisingly, no maintenance has been carried out since the owner departed to sunnier climes!



The Bottle Inn mid-2011 with deterioration of the thatched roof coverings visibly apparent

The Bottle Inn was viewed as a going concern by West Dorset District Council for some time, but it was at the end of the second tenant's occupation that the authority's conservation and enforcement teams became fully aware of the extent of the building's problems and instigate construction action towards its repair.

Angry with the owner's unfulfilled promises, officers were given free access to inspect all parts of the building. A survey revealed a range of serious fabric issues including a leaking roof, rainwater ingress through the chimney stack, vermin infestation and moss damage to the thatch (resulting in collapse to both the main roof and porch), decaying timber window frames and slipped roofing tiles to the lean-to. Outbuildings (including the former village shop) were also crumbling.

Officers were given the contact details of the owners but before they could communicate further the tenants disappeared, taking everything (including the kitchen sink!) with them. Trying to take enforcement action on Australian citizens proved almost impossible but 2012 brought renewed hope when prospective tenants approached the local authority. Following a series of fully transparent discussions about the building's eventful past and the repair obligations of owning/ occupying a Grade II listed building, they decided to meet the challenge of restoring it to its former glory as a country pub. The new tenants agreed and fulfilled more than their share of the requirements of the Section 215 Notice, realising quickly that again, the owner was not going to pay out for any building maintenance or repair costs.



Thatching works underway to the porch, 2012

The current landlord has already made a significant investment in the pub's internal furnishings and decoration, as well as to its structural repair and maintenance. The Bottle Inn reopened its doors to the public in 2012 and in 2013 once again hosted the World Nettle Eating Competition. It has been given a new lease of life and all parties involved in rescuing it from the brink of dereliction

sincerely hope that new ownership will secure its long term future.



Restored to glory and business as usual: The Bottle Inn in 2013 with repairs completed

A local group, tired of the way this important building has been left to suffer by its uncaring owners have formed a coalition with the new landlord and together they are taking legal action to attempt its outright purchase. Whilst disagreements remain over value, they are hopeful that perseverance and dogged determination will ultimately prove successful in giving The Bottle Inn a much needed long-term future of prosperity.

©Kate Williams

(Kate wins a £10 voucher for either books or wine for this submission. Your entry could be next!)

<http://www.bottle-inn.net>
<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/professional/advice/advice-by-topic/buildings/maintenance-and-repair/vacant-historic-buildings/>

More Ghosts Sightings

Following the article on 'Ghost signs' in Bulletin 24 it seems that these important and often cryptic reminders of our heritage are more widespread (and intriguing) than might be expected:



Adjacent ghost signs advertising 'Players Please' and 'Wills Gold Flake' spotted on the east gable of building in Walcot Street, Bath in June 2013

The Sandford Orleigh Screen is thought to have been constructed during the 1530s and is attributable to the early Tudor period. Its origins are unclear and research is still continuing on this rare and exciting piece.



The renaissance style carved wooden screen came from the chapel of St Leonard in Newton Abbot. However, the quality of the work with its rich religious imagery and symbolism suggest that it may have originally come from Torre Abbey in Torquay after its dissolution in 1539.

The Chapel of St Leonard dates from 15th Century although there are references to a building on the site in 1220. Incidentally, chapels were dedicated to St Leonard after King Richard I prayed on the spot where St Leonard was martyred, which then led to churches being named after the saint.

In 1836 the chapel was part demolished to support road improvements (they did it even then!) leaving only the tower which is now Grade II* listed. At the time of the demolition the screen was purchased by George Templer for his new home at Sandford Orleigh; a listed Grade II mansion in the Picturesque 'Gothick' style now in private ownership. The screen was re-formed into an impressive chimney piece for the main drawing room.

George Templer was famed for the production of Dartmoor granite and as the builder of the Haytor Granite Tramway. His company Devon Haytor Granite provided building stone for the British Museum, the National Gallery and London Bridge. Sandford Orleigh was later the home of Sir Samuel White Baker, who discovered one of the sources of the Nile and Sir Samuel's guests to his home included Edward, Prince of Wales and Gordon of Khartoum who spent his last night in England with them in 1884.

In later years Sandford Orleigh was converted into smaller residences which in turn led to the screen being donated to the Newton Abbot Town & Great Western Railway (GWR) Museum. The museum successfully achieved Heritage Lottery funding for its restoration as the 'Heart of Oak Project' and it is currently being restored by Hugh Harrison and Devon craftsmen in their workshops.

The screen consists of sixteen panels. Due to previous dismantling it was unfortunately incomplete when restoration commenced. The panels are most interesting, but the level of craftsmanship and quality of work of the restorers is equally so. The screen was initially cleaned and new panels are currently being carved and it is gradually being re-configured.



The following photograph depicts a clay sculpture of a 'Glaistig' which is a type of 'fuath' or green maiden; 'chimeric' in the sense that it is half woman and half beast (don't you just have those days!). It was sculpted based on historic photographs of the screen when complete at Sandford Orleigh and the clay sculpture will be the basis for a newly carved oak Glaistig.



Work is still ongoing but the intention is to house the screen in Newton Abbot and to provide public access for the first time in 175 years. In the meantime we are learning more about the significance of the screen and marvelling at the traditional craft skills still being practised to restore it into the 21st century.

Text and images ©Maureen Pearce

<http://www.museum-newtonabbot.co.uk>

<http://www.heart-of-oak.info/research/>

<http://www.devon.gov.uk/templeryway/leaflet.pdf>

VAG Winter Conference

Having been a member of the Vernacular Architecture Group (VAG) for almost a decade, I thought that it was about time I attended more of their events! Braving the ongoing torrential downpour which saw in the the new year, I ventured up the Fosse Way to Leicester for the VAG's winter conference. Held over two days in the modern campus facilities of the University of Leicester's Oadby Student Village, the conference draws on academic research and practitioner contributions from individuals and regional groups covering a broad range of social and economic history topics, as well as building fabric recording.

The theme of this year's conference was 'Attention to Detail'; specifically the importance of seemingly insignificant details which are often overlooked during the recording process or when hitherto hidden fabric is revealed during opening-up works. Subject matter included the analysis of part of a 17th century timber framed building recently 'de-constructed' in Oxford, the significance of 'rafter holes' and truss 'pegholes', Arabic assembly and other (e.g. Baltic) marks on timber elements, red ochre markings and the development of 15th century chimney stacks in East Anglian towns. The interim results of an on-going English Heritage study into timber burn marks presented overwhelming evidence of their deliberate nature from the late-16th century onwards but was inconclusive as to their motivation, i.e. ritual, apotropaic in the sense of 'turning away' evil influences, etc.

Whilst sitting through 20 PowerPoint presentations may not seem like everybody's idea of the perfect weekend, I can honestly say that for £100 this conference provides leading-edge material at a bargain cost and includes overnight accommodation with full meals! The subject matter is both stimulating and thought provoking, enriched by the interaction and networking opportunities with fellow delegates (over 110 at final count). IHBC also recognises the conference programme as providing part of the compulsory requirements for a full member, so make a note in your diary for January 2015!

Slightly closer to home is the VAG 4-day Spring Conference which this year centres on Cheltenham. The provisional programme includes day visits to Wotton-under-Edge, Acton Court and Gloucester. Dates are 8-12 April 2014 with residential and non-residential options available; <http://www.vag.org.uk> for details.

Malcolm James

Unightly Goings On in the Churchyard



This disabled toilet block was recently spotted in a Grade I listed Gloucestershire churchyard. The facility is a rebuild of an earlier structure hidden by dense foliage. Apparently it has church Faculty consent but the ungainly appearance and "necessary" modifications to the boundary wall (adjoining a Grade II listed property) raise serious questions from both secular planning and neighbour's perspectives.

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