

The
Cornwall
Architectural
Trust



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CONFERENCE 2017
'DESIGN for CORNWALL'

**CORNISH
BUILDINGS
GROUP**

Friday 7 April 2017

at THE BURRELL THEATRE, TRURO SCHOOL, TRURO

The Cornish Buildings Group, Cornwall Council, Royal Institute of British Architects and The Cornwall Architectural Trust presents new and challenging papers at a one-day conference based around the topic of architectural design.

'Cornwall is still a land apart, even if crossing the Tamar on the modern A30 at Launceston or by the rail and road bridges at Saltash has lessened the significance of the historic river boarder' wrote Peter Beacham in his revision of Nikolaus Pevsner's *The Buildings of England: Cornwall* (2014).

Our conference theme is to explore and discuss the question:

**WHAT ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN PHILOSOPHY
IS APPROPRIATE FOR 'A LAND APART'?**

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

9.30 Opening Statement from Edwina Hannaford, (Cornwall Council, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Environment Strategy)

9.40 Paul Holden (Chairman, Cornish Buildings Group)

Place-making, “critical regionalism” and local distinctiveness: what can we learn from the past?

STRAND 1 PLACE MAKING

10.00 Mark Pearson (Executive Director, Architecture Centre, Devon and Cornwall. Chair of the Cornwall Design Review Panel. Director, Pearson Lubbock Architects)

Place-making as a guiding principle for the achievement of good design.

10.30 Nichola Tasker (Head of National Projects, English Heritage); Matthieu Mallié (Ney and Partners, Brussels) and William Matthews (William Matthews Associates, London).

New design in historic contexts: a new footbridge for Tintagel Castle.

11.00 Break

11.30 Tim Gray, Estate Surveyor to the Duchy of Cornwall, Hugh Petter, Director of ADAM Architecture and (TBC) from the Prince's Foundation for Building Community.

Cornish identity in new development – challenges and opportunities.

12.00 Questions and lunch

STRAND 2 CRITICAL REGIONALISM

1.30 Colin Pugh (University of Manchester School of Architecture)

Critical Regionalism and the contemporary architecture of Cornwall.

2.00 Student presentations and questions, coffee

STRAND 3 LOCAL DISTINCTIVENESS

3.00 Colette Beckham and James Evans (Cornwall AONB)

The jewel in the crown sparkles through great design.

3.30 Steve Havers, (Local Plan and Policy Manager, Cornwall Council).

Defining a new Cornish vernacular.

4.00 Patrick Newberry (Awards Administrator, Cornish Buildings Group)

‘A real building is one on which the eye can light and stay lit’: 40 years of the Cornish Buildings Group Awards’.

4.30 Questions and closing remarks

5.00 Close

ABSTRACTS

STRAND I PLACE-MAKING

Mark Pearson: 'Place-making as a Guiding Principle for Good Design in Cornwall'.

Introduction – the power of place! Inter-disciplinary ideas that can stretch across all scales of design within the built environment. The notion of a genius Loci and Norberg-Schulz's simple definition of place. Broadening the principles to embrace the everyday promotion of environmental quality – Place Alliance's definition of good places. Place and the symbiotic relationship it has with Community. If architecture is frozen music then is urban design frozen anthropology? The mistaken understanding of 'local distinctiveness' as very often applied within design policies of Local Plans... Some 'horrors' and some more positive examples.

In Defence of Place – a closer definition of the problem, globalisation and the wearing down of those natural influences that might generate particular character. The dilemma of advanced technology – Gemeinschaft versus Gesellschaft is not a new conflict! Ken Frampton's 'Critical Regionalism' as a counter to consumer culture and the optimised deployment of capital. Theoretical dead-ends and Populist reaction – Duchy of Cornwall's 'Romantic Regionalism' and the failure of political Localism as a positive cultural force.

What mechanisms might we deploy to promote a revival in Cornish architecture and design? –better design policy within the Cornwall Local Plan – but what would it look like? What might really effective neighbourhood planning look like? A renewed public interest in place – but how would it be cultivated? Experience from the Cornwall Design Review Panel and a case for a broader outlook/expanded brief? What role for the Cornwall Buildings Group and other organisations? A call to arms! – a place-making charter for Cornwall.

Nicola Tasker, Matthieu Mallié and William Matthews:

'New design in historic contexts: a new footbridge for Tintagel Castle'

In 2015 English Heritage launched a design competition for new footbridge at Tintagel Castle, linking the remains of the medieval castle's island and mainland wards, 50 m above sea level. From 135 expressions of interest from an international range of designers a shortlist of six teams were invited to develop proposals. The competition was won by collaboration between Ney & Partners and William Matthews Associates, Belgian engineers and British architects respectively.

Tintagel is one of the most significant and inspiring historic sites in the country. Its known period of occupation spans 15 centuries from the late Roman period to the present, including the stronghold of Cornish kings in the 5th and 6th centuries, trading with the Mediterranean, and a medieval castle from the 13th to the 16th century. Tintagel is now one of the most visited sites in Britain, drawing visitors from around the world for its unique mix of dramatic landscapes, history and the legends of King Arthur and Tristan and Isolde.

By initiating the competition English Heritage aimed for the highest possible design standards and many of the suggested topics for discussion at the conference are relevant to the winning scheme; in particular how good design can complement heritage assets. If selected to present, the team would discuss the evolution of the footbridge design to date as well as illustrating other relevant projects completed by the designers.

Tim Gray, Estate Surveyor to the Duchy of Cornwall; Hugh Petter, Director of ADAM Architecture and (TBC) from the Prince's Foundation for Building Community.

'Cornish identity in new development – challenges and opportunities'

This paper will look at how the Duchy of Cornwall, working collaboratively with the local community, Adam Architecture, The Prince's Foundation for Building Community and South West housebuilders, has sought to capture and reflect the Cornish identity at its Tregunnel Hill and Nansledan developments in Newquay.

It will examine how Cornish place-making can be achieved by capturing the spirit of Newquay's urban fabric yet

not be afraid to re-interpret it. Architecture reflects traditional local styles through calm, simple and coherent design that is brought to life with colour, texture and a palette of local materials including Cornish granite and slate. A Pattern Book and Building Code knit together the whole, while a Design and Community Code protects against inappropriate change.

Using local materials brings its own challenges, including cost, the need for a robust supply chain, and the willingness of housebuilders to adapt. The paper will examine how these issues have been overcome and the benefits that flow from a commitment to local sourcing.

Place-making is reinforced by a Cornish naming strategy for every street, square and public space, while a masterplan approach creates sustainable walkable neighbourhoods where people can meet their daily needs on foot.

STRAND 2 'CRITICAL REGIONALISM'

Colin Pugh:

'Critical Regionalism and the contemporary architecture of Cornwall'

Kenneth Frampton in his essay entitled 'Prospects for a Critical Regionalism' defines an exemplary work of architecture as that which 'evokes the oneiric essence of the site together with the inescapable materiality of building'. He proceeds to cite the philosopher Paul Ricouer as advancing the thesis that a hybrid 'world culture' will only come into being through the cross fertilisation between rooted culture on the one hand and universal civilisation on the other. The concept of 'building the site' attributed to Vittorio Gregotti is a central point of reference in a place where infrastructural development processes (including transport, agriculture, industry, tourism) have perpetually redefined the economy and ecology of the peninsula and become the accumulated architecture of 'a land apart'. The presentation will explore the challenges and opportunities that may influence this forward trajectory.

As part of this strand Masters students will showcase developing thesis projects based on a number of sites in Cornwall.

STRAND 3 DESIGN AND LOCAL DISTINCTIVENESS

Colette Beckham and James Evans:

'The jewel in the crown sparkles through great design'

'A land apart' - Cornwall's unique landscape, natural environment, heritage and culture, as well as its geography, sets it apart from the rest of England. The beauty and distinctiveness of its landscape is its unique selling point and a significant proportion of its economy is directly dependent on this.

If Cornwall is the crown, then the Cornwall Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is the jewel, nationally protected for its landscape quality. However the AONB is a living working landscape and some development is necessary to ensure sustainable communities.

The Cornwall AONB Partnership has just published its new five year Management Plan (2016-21) entitled 'Place and People' which firmly underlines the crucial role which high quality sensitive design plays in conserving and enhancing Cornwall's protected landscape. It states that necessary new development should be designed to respect quality of place in the use of distinctive local building styles and materials; dark skies and tranquillity. The Plan directs to the use of local vernacular stone and also encourages design that provides gains for biodiversity and is sensitive in its treatment of historic buildings.

This year also sees the adoption of the Cornwall Local Plan following its examination. As part of the Local Plan, the Cornwall AONB Unit will work with planning to produce a supplementary planning document to guide development and the design of development within the AONB. The AONB Unit wishes to use the opportunity of the Conference to inform the Supplementary Planning Document and explore some thinking on what exemplar design looks like in the jewel in Cornwall's crown.

Steve Havers:**'Defining a new Cornish vernacular'**

Cornwall is a special and varied place. The past is written all through our built and natural environment. This local distinctiveness is highly valued and is fundamental to our quality of life. This is discussed by other speakers.

Over recent decades this has taken a knock as the speed of development has, arguably, overtaken quality and our ability to maintain the coherence of place. We need to recapture the relationship between design, sense of place and community, while also addressing serious pressures on our environment. We need to be clear what this is, while also being clear who it is for.

Cornwall Council can lead the development of a clear vision for this but it is important the vision for quality design is jointly decided. What are we collectively striving for? We need a dialogue to bring this to the fore and this conference seems an ideal place to start this necessary discussion, it needs wide participation and will take time.

As a key player in the management of change, Cornwall Council will put forward a draft set of principles for debate and an indication of the mechanisms we believe will be needed to support high quality design in future.

Patrick Newberry:**"A real building is one on which the eye can light and stay lit': 40 years of the Cornish Buildings Group Awards'**

Since 1981 the Cornish Buildings Group has run an annual awards scheme to further its aims of encouraging good new architecture and the protection of historical buildings in Cornwall. The Awards Scheme has become widely respected and may, justifiably, be described as the Oscars of buildings awards in Cornwall.

This paper will draw on the history of the scheme and, by reference to award and commendation winners will examine how the quality of architecture in Cornwall has improved over the last thirty-five years. It will highlight examples of designs and restorations which have responded well to Cornwall and to a sense of Cornish distinctiveness, looking at issues such as how well new buildings have settled in Cornwall's beautiful landscape, how new designs have responded to urban settings and how additions and improvements to historical buildings have responded to the original fabric.

The paper will draw on successful and unsuccessful entries for the Awards, illustrating good and bad examples of how architects have responded to the challenges of building or restoring historical buildings in the County. In looking at these examples, key themes in the development of taste in domestic and commercial architecture will emerge. The difficulties of creating a distinctive architecture for Cornwall in an age of ever greater globalisation will also be explored. The paper will conclude by looking at some of the challenges that the Awards judges face as they seek to encourage good architecture in the county.
