

DEVON BUILDINGS GROUP

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 7

JUNE 1989

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Over the last six months the total number of cases in which the Group has been involved passed one hundred. In Newsletter Number 4, I reviewed the DBG's first fifty cases and, keeping up that practice, I have reviewed our second fifty in the present issue. These cover the bulk of our current casework, so I will say nothing further here about this part of the Group's activities.

The winter months have seen a number of important policy developments relating to historic buildings in the county. Two of these bear directly upon the conversion of redundant farm buildings, an issue which the Newsletters have discussed on several occasions, and which was the subject of our 1988 Conference. The Dartmoor National Park Authority has introduced revised guidelines on the conversion of farm buildings within the Park: the Group welcomed these changes and, in our comments, gave them broad support. The current Newsletter contains an article by Freda Wilkinson, a member of the National Park Committee, detailing the new policy and its application to the case of Sanduck Farm in Lustleigh parish. The Borough of West Devon, from which the statistics for 'barn conversions' given in the last Newsletter were drawn, has recently produced a draft policy structure entitled *New Uses for Redundant Buildings*. In general terms this adopts a sensitive approach to the question of conversion, and our response to the document, which is being prepared at the moment, will give support to its proposals and objectives. The third policy document is one that will affect the whole of Devon in the next decade - *Devon 2001*, produced by the County Council. Essentially, *Devon 2001* is a consultation document preliminary to a major revision of the existing County Structure Plan, necessitated by the unprecedented rate of economic change within the county in the last ten years. As members of the Group who have studied *Devon 2001* will be aware, its implications for Devon's historic buildings are far-reaching. A special meeting of the DBG Committee was arranged to respond to the document in detail. It is important that DBG members should be aware of the Group's position in relationship to the ideas and proposals contained in the document, so most of the rest of this report will be concerned with the details of our response.

Devon County Council sought broad-based consultation on the policy document, and this was very welcome. In general, *Devon 2001* showed much concern with the maintenance and enhancement of the quality of life in the county, and a consciousness of the extent to which these could be compromised by the economic

expansion that seems likely over the next decade. Even so, the DBG's major criticism of *Devon 2001* had to be the place that the document as a whole assigned to conservation. Among the different sections into which the booklet was divided, the section dealing explicitly with conservation, 'Buildings and the Landscape' was placed last. This seemed to us not only to be mistaken, but also implicitly to contradict assertions made elsewhere in the document. The section dealing with mineral resources, for example, concluded by stressing "the need to conserve the county's greatest asset, its environment", and similar statements occurred elsewhere. This is surely quite right: Devon's environment - its built environment as well as its natural and man-made landscape - is the county's greatest asset. If the document took this as one of its working principles, as it appeared to do, why was the section dealing with the conservation of buildings and landscape tacked onto the end? Surely, the maintenance and enhancement of our greatest asset should have set the terms upon which the issues raised by the document were considered. Conservation should determine the co-ordinates within which the county's future is planned, and we would like to see this expressly acknowledged in the policy that emerges from the consultation.

Even within its own terms, the 'Buildings and the Landscape' section seemed to us inadequate. It envisaged conservation in the county only "as identified by existing objects and policies". This was wholly insufficient. As every member of the DBG will know, current "objects and policies" are by no means as satisfactory as the document somewhat complacently assumed, and the implementation of those policies is frequently weak and inconsistent. Moreover, the added pressure on the county's buildings and environment that will result from the large economic changes *Devon 2001* described will not be controlled without substantial re-thinking of those "objects and policies". In particular, the DBG argued that the following areas need urgent attention from the county's planners, that they should have formed part of *Devon 2001*, and that they need to be explicitly catered for in the development policies that eventually emerge.

(a) Conservation areas in the county are already subject to erosion, and there is a general unwillingness on the part of district councils to take advantage of the considerable powers they could legally assume in order to restrain undesirable development and alteration. Unless new policies are formulated now, this situation can only get worse given the large increase in the county's population envisaged over the next decade.

(b) Current policy towards traditional buildings in rural areas, and particularly agricultural buildings, has resulted in wholesale conversions and alterations. So much so that there is real danger that Devon will lose a very large part of some of its most characteristic historic buildings. These losses should be prevented before it is too late: the county policy on 'barn conversions' and similar works must be rethought, and its objectives far more firmly directed towards conservation.

(c) Over the last five years the rural areas of Devon have been re-surveyed by English Heritage and an enormous increase in listed buildings has resulted; a similar increase can be predicted for the projected re-surveys of the urban areas, some of which have already taken place. *Devon 2001* did not accommodate any of this. Current policy towards such statutorily protected buildings is often far too permissive, and implementation lax. New guidelines need to be laid down for handling listed building cases, particularly as the present policy of central government seeks to place greater responsibility upon local authorities.

(d) A re-survey of Devon's Ancient Monuments, similar to that which has been carried out for its historic buildings, is currently being planned. Again, *Devon 2001* failed to accommodate this. Strategies for dealing with the inevitable increase in the total of the county's Ancient Monuments should be worked out now.

(e) New buildings in Devon, particularly new housing estates, are frequently insensitive. The large amount of new housing that will be built in the county over the next decade needs to be controlled not only in terms of its location, but also in terms of its quality. No provision for this latter was contained in the consultation document. In the view of the DBG, the County Council should formulate guidelines on the design, materials, grouping, scale and landscaping of new estates. New building can be appropriate to its environment and aesthetically pleasing: specific direction by the County could go a long way to ensuring that it will be.

(f) All these proposals need money. In line with the Group's argument that conservation should set the terms for future development, more resources need to be allocated, both at the county and at the district level, for the conservation, protection and enhancement of the environment.

These were the general conservation objectives that were outlined in the DBG's response to *Devon 2001*. With these terms in mind, we also commented on the various sections of the document to which they were directly relevant.

The largest section of the document, and that with the most immediate consequences for historic buildings, was "Houses and Jobs". Devon will need a total of over 90,000 new houses by 2001, of which something like half are already planned. Many of the projected figures for increases in house-building in individual towns are very worrying. For example, 5000 new houses for Barnstaple, a possible 3200 for Tiverton, 3000 for Bideford, 2800 for Newton Abbot. These are massive increases that could radically damage the character of the towns mentioned, all four of which are, in their different ways, of substantial historical and architectural importance. Other towns seem to be far less threatened: for example, Ottery St Mary, Holsworthy and Ilfracombe only have a projected increase of 200 houses each. We concluded that these towns could all tolerate more than the projected levels of house-building, and urged some re-distribution of the proposed figures. This would only partly alleviate the problem, however. The key planning decision is whether all the new housing that is required should be distributed throughout existing towns and villages, or a large part of it concentrated in designated areas, thereby creating new centres of population. Consistent with the Group's desire to protect the integrity of historic towns, our response favoured those proposals that focus major development in specific areas rather than spreading it through continuing suburban development of existing centres. Thus we supported the proposals for focussed development at Willand/Waterloo Cross in the Exeter and East Devon Area, and at Lee Mill in the Plymouth Area. We also suggested that a greater concentration of development could usefully be considered at Coldeast/Heathfield, south of Bovey Tracey, in South East Devon and at South Molton in North West Devon. If this policy of concentration is pursued, it is vital that the most careful consideration be given to the planning and servicing of what will essentially become new towns; that guidelines for design and landscaping should be established, and that the developments should seek to provide means of employment as well as housing.

The need for centres of population - new or old - to provide employment rather than functioning merely as dormitories, underlay the DBG's response to the "Rural Devon" section of the document. Some villages - Broadhembury is an example - are of such outstanding quality that they merit the most stringent protection. But in general, we need to resist the tendency for Devon's villages to become nothing more than picturesque exhibits, unreal and lifelessly cocooned. Given that existing conservation policies are revised to provide greater protection to the built environment, and that such protection is enforced, there is no reason why small scale development in villages should not be encouraged - in particular, light industrial development. The Group's view, expressed in our comments on *Devon 2001*, is that most villages would benefit from greater diversification: historically, after all, the rural village provided a far wider range of economic activity than at present. Inevitably, the credit bonanza of the last five years, and the apparent emergence of shopping as a major leisure activity, meant that retailing was a significant consideration in the consultative document. We felt that the "Shopping" section gave insufficient weight to the need to maintain the architectural fabric of the centres of Devon's historic towns. Proposals for out-of-town shopping must be balanced against their likely impact on town centres; positive encouragement should be given to the enhancement of town centres and more advantage needs to be taken of grants for this purpose available from central government. To secure the economic prosperity of town centres a rich retail mix should be sought, with particular provision made for small-scale and specialist shops that offer diversity alongside the outlets of the national retailing chains. Substantial economic development inevitably involves new provision for transport, and *Devon 2001* listed current and proposed road schemes in the county. The DBG's casework includes a number of such schemes, and we were concerned that the consultation document did not give more consideration to the impact of individual schemes upon the historic environment. In particular, we mentioned the continuing threat posed to the integrity of Braunton Great Field by the proposed by-pass for that town. Finally, the Group commented on *Devon 2001*'s outline of tourist development: quite simply, the greatest support that could be given to the continuing prosperity of the tourist industry in Devon is the conservation of the county's environment. That, after all, is what tourists come to Devon to enjoy. We stressed that the need for increased holiday accommodation in rural areas should be monitored particularly closely in view of the necessity for protecting the county's stock of traditional agricultural buildings. Consistent with our earlier points, we argued that new building specifically for holiday accommodation could be environmentally acceptable, given that proper controls over design, density and landscaping are implemented.

Following the local government elections in May, the status of *Devon 2001* seems uncertain. Nevertheless, the issues it raised are those that will confront the county's planners over the next decade. Whatever specific form planning strategy takes between now and the end of the century, considerations of conservation and the environment will need to occupy a central place. The rise of the green vote and the prominence given to green issues generally may create the right climate for this; but we must remember that the preservation of historic buildings and the protection of the historic built environment are not major concerns for the green lobby, nor for any of the political parties. The DBG must continue to argue for the importance of architectural conservation in any plans for the future development of Devon.

Chris Brooks

CASEWORK: THE SECOND FIFTY

Earlier this year, the total number of cases taken up by the Devon Buildings Group passed a hundred. In Newsletter Number 4 I reviewed the first fifty; what follows is a similar review of the second fifty.

CW51 Crediton, Churchyard path

The Group protested when the Parochial Church Council of Holy Cross, Crediton - one of the greatest parish churches in the county - proposed to tarmac the pitched stone path leading to the west door of the church. This dates from the early nineteenth century and makes a substantial contribution to the character of the churchyard, and thus the setting of the church itself. No permission had been sought under the Faculty Jurisdiction Measure, and we accordingly alerted both the Diocesan Advisory Committee and the Council for the Care of Churches. After negotiations, the proposals were dropped.

CW52 Bere Alston, Rumleigh Farmhouse

Late medieval in origin, retaining many features of architectural and historical interest, and listed Grade II, Rumleigh is one of the most rewarding farmhouses in Bere Alston parish. We objected when permission was sought to replace its fenestration with plastic windows; West Devon Council agreed and Listed Building Consent was refused.

CW53 Bratton Clovelly, Chimsworthy Farmhouse

Chimsworthy is a house of considerable importance, listed Grade II*. The owners proposed a sequence of repairs, most of which were careful and conservative. Among their plans, however, was a proposal to treat the late medieval roof structure with urethane. Because the use of artificial sealants has, in the past, caused long-term damage to historic fabric, we wrote to West Devon asking for the owners to be advised against their use. The Borough Planning Officer shared our concern and, following discussions with the owners, this aspect of the repair programme was satisfactorily amended.

CW54 Poltimore, Poltimore House

A difficult case, in which the Group worked in conjunction with the Ancient Monuments Society. The seat of the Bampfylde, who became Lords Poltimore in 1831, Poltimore House has a sixteenth-century core substantially extended in the late seventeenth century to form a courtyard plan house of considerable pretensions, with an eleven bay frontage. Further additions were made in the nineteenth century and, in 1908, a western range was added containing a banqueting hall and reception rooms. Listed Grade II*, Poltimore House had been empty for some time when a fire destroyed much of the roof and the upper floor of the 1908 range; the owners applied to demolish the whole range, along with a single-storey range of service buildings. We were prepared to accept the loss of the service buildings, which were undistinguished. Despite the fire damage, however, the principal rooms on the ground floor of the 1908 extension were still intact; most importantly, the banqueting hall remained, with good detailing, a rich plaster cornice, and fine fireplace surround. On balance, we felt that efforts should be made to repair the whole range rather than merely knock it down. At the present time, any proposals are in abeyance and the future not only of the 1908 range but of the whole house remains uncertain.

CW55 Tiverton, Southern Relief Road

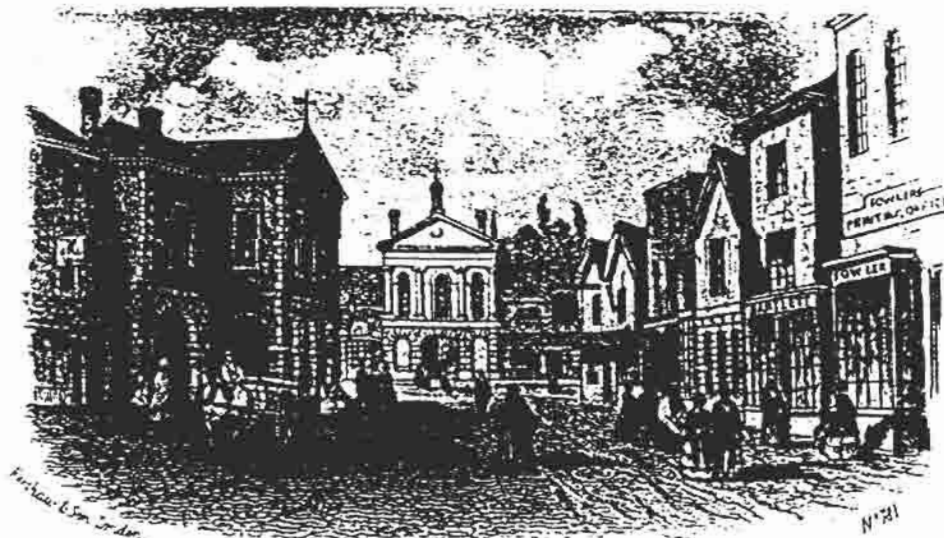
Traffic congestion in Tiverton, which has been bad for a number of years, has been exacerbated by the town's recent and continuing expansion, and a relief road is needed to get through traffic out of the centre. The proposal is to take such a road along the line of the old Exe Valley Railway; this has a number of things to recommend it, but the Group is concerned about its impact on some parts of the town and the threat it poses to the well-managed railway bridge over the Exe south of Tiverton. Plans have not yet been finalized, and we remain actively concerned.

CW56 Crediton, 109a High Street

The Group was asked by Crediton Town Council to advise on a Listed Building Consent application to render the street frontage of this late eighteenth-century brick town house, which is listed Grade II. As the building never had been rendered, and its present poor condition was the result of inadequate maintenance by the owner, we saw no reason to allow him to spoil the building by rendering it. Instead we recommended careful repointing. LBC was refused.

CW57 Great Torrington, Town Hall (Figure 1)

Torrington Town Hall, listed Grade II, is a handsome building designed in 1861 by the leading Barnstaple architect, R.D.Gould. Its top-storey is carried out over an open arcade which forms a piazza, echoing the Market House of 1842 to the south. In common with other groups, we objected to proposals to insert two shops in the arcade - a plan which would destroy the architectural integrity of the building and severely damage the character of the Fore Street area of the town. Torrington District Council turned down the application.



High Street & Market Place?

Figure 1. Great Torrington, the Town Hall and Market House (CW57).

CW58 Plympton, Trevanion

Like so many other parts of the Plymouth conurbation, Plympton's Ridgeway, joining Plympton St Mary and Plympton St Maurice, has been visually and architecturally wrecked over the last twenty years. Trevanion, standing at the St Mary end of the Ridgeway, is a Regency villa with some sympathetic Victorian additions; most unusually, it retained its original grounds. The DBG protested at proposals to alter the house and build in the garden. Although Plymouth Council insisted that the villa itself remained intact, permission was given for the new buildings - a further encroachment on what little is left of the historic character of the Ridgeway area.

CW59 Crediton, 7-9 Union Road

We protested to Mid Devon District Council when plastic framed windows were inserted in place of the original sashes of these early nineteenth-century houses on Crediton's main street: both are listed Grade II, and the owners carried out the work without applying for consent. Clearly unwilling to make a fuss about anything so trivial as statutory protection, Mid Devon obligingly gave retrospective permission - thus setting a thoroughly bad precedent for the rest of the historic buildings in the centre of the town.

CW60 Ivybridge, Lower Mill Aqueduct

Dated 1898, though possibly mid nineteenth century in origin, the Ivybridge aqueduct carried water to power the paper-making works of Lower Mill. It is an impressive structure of rubble masonry and brick carried on eleven round-headed arches, ingeniously engineered to incorporate a sharp change of angle in the launder. Ivybridge Town Council was concerned at plans by South Hams District Council to repair and generally tidy up the aqueduct and its setting, and contacted the Group. Though well-intentioned, the proposed 'improvements' lacked adequate historical basis, were insensitive to the character of the aqueduct, and would have municipalized its whole context, turning it into a bland 'feature' in a public open space. As well as objecting ourselves, we alerted the Victorian Society, who criticized the plans in similar terms. South Hams responded sympathetically, obtaining a proper historical report on the site and making considerable alterations to the original proposals: the result was a far more satisfactory scheme.

CW61 Exeter, St Margaret's School, Magdalene Road

The buildings that comprise St Margaret's School were once private houses in the most fashionable suburb of early nineteenth-century Exeter: three of them were originally part of Baring Place, designed and built in 1812 by William Hooper, one of the key figures in the late Georgian development of the city; the other three were free-standing villas of c.1840. All are listed Grade II, and the school stands in a Conservation Area. The original front gardens of the houses remained substantially intact, making a vital contribution to the historical and architectural fabric of the group and of the Conservation Area generally: when the school governors applied for LBC to destroy the gardens and replace them by a car park, Exeter City Council refused permission. The school appealed and the case went to an Inquiry. The DBG wrote to the Inspector strongly supporting the City Council, as did the Victorian Society and the Ancient Monuments Society, both of whom we had alerted to the case. Despite such strong representations, and despite architectural and historical considerations, the appeal was upheld, so the governors could go ahead and raze a major element in a historic townscape with the full blessing of the Department of the Environment. Indifference to conservation, and to united local and national opposition, seems increasingly a

hallmark of DoE decisions in appeal cases - witness the new housing slapped into the back garden of 9 Colleton Crescent (CW37).

CW62 Torquay, Torre Abbey domestic buildings

We were worried about what seemed to be a threat to an attractive group of Vernacular Revival buildings erected around the entrance to Torre Abbey to house domestic and garden staff. After discussions with the Conservation Architect of Torbay Borough Council, who own the buildings, we felt re-assured that they were in no immediate danger; nevertheless, we are still uncertain about their long-term future, and remain concerned.

CW63 Wembworthy, Eggesford House [Figure 2]

The Elizabethan Gothic pile of Eggesford House was built 1820-30 to the designs of Thomas Lee for the Hon. Newton Fellowes, who became 4th Earl of Portsmouth. When the Portsmouth fortunes declined in the first decades of this century, the estate was sold, the house stripped out, and much of its masonry taken for builder's rubble. Slowly disintegrating since 1917, Eggesford House became one of the most picturesque ruins in Devon. When the present owner put forward plans for converting part of the ruins into a new house, the DBG was anxious to ensure not only a high quality of design, but also the maintenance of the building's romantic landscape value. At a site meeting with the architect, Edwin Anstead, and representatives of Mid Devon Council and the County Conservation Section, the plans were discussed in detail and many improvements suggested. To our pleasure, all these suggestions were incorporated in the amended proposals for the house. These have received consent, but the end of the housing boom and the current standstill in the property market seem to have led to the plans being shelved for the time being.

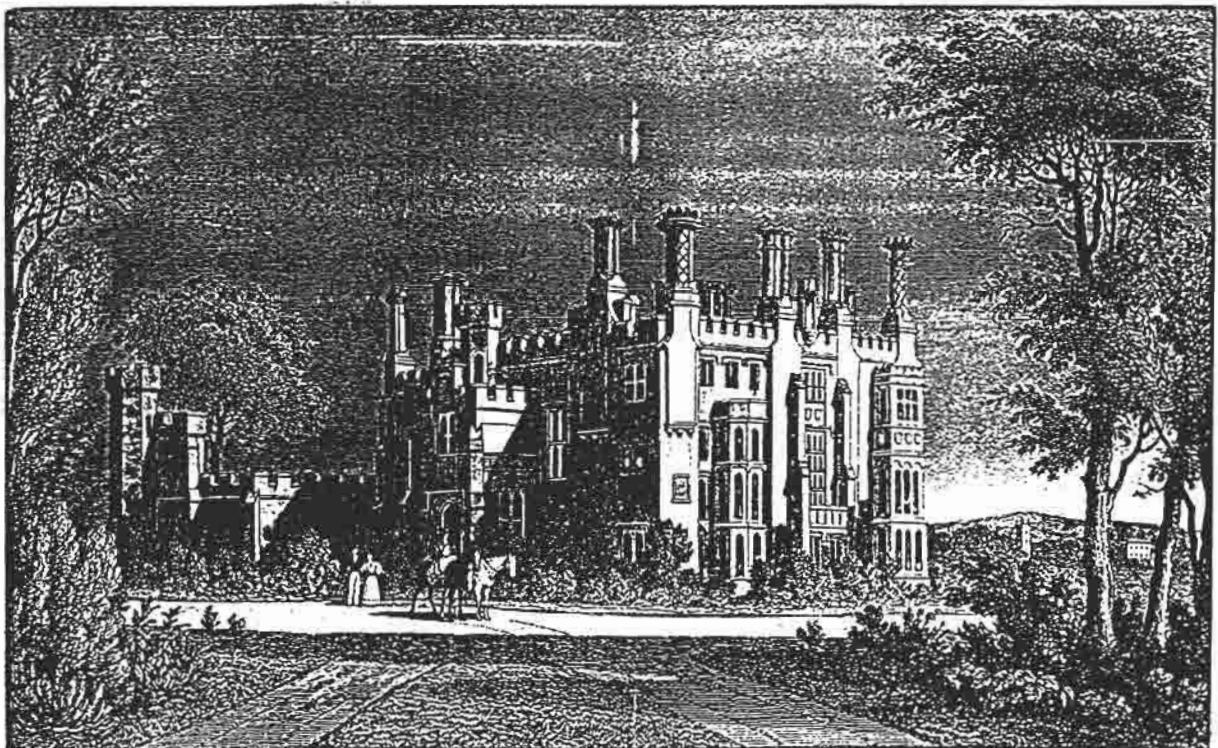


Figure 2. Eggesford House, before dereliction [CW63]

CW64 Honiton, 123-129 High Street

The developers of a new shopping complex in the centre of Honiton apparently forgot that access to the precinct from the High Street would be through two early nineteenth-century listed buildings, for which they would need consent. We objected to an application to demolish and partially rebuild in replica. Following rejection by East Devon District Council, a new scheme was submitted that retained much more of the original fabric of the buildings, though with a lot of pastiche details that we thought ham-fisted. The Group asked for further improvements, but East Devon were more easily satisfied and granted the application. Though they could have been better, the altered buildings are not too obtrusive, and they do show some respect for the character and scale of the High Street.

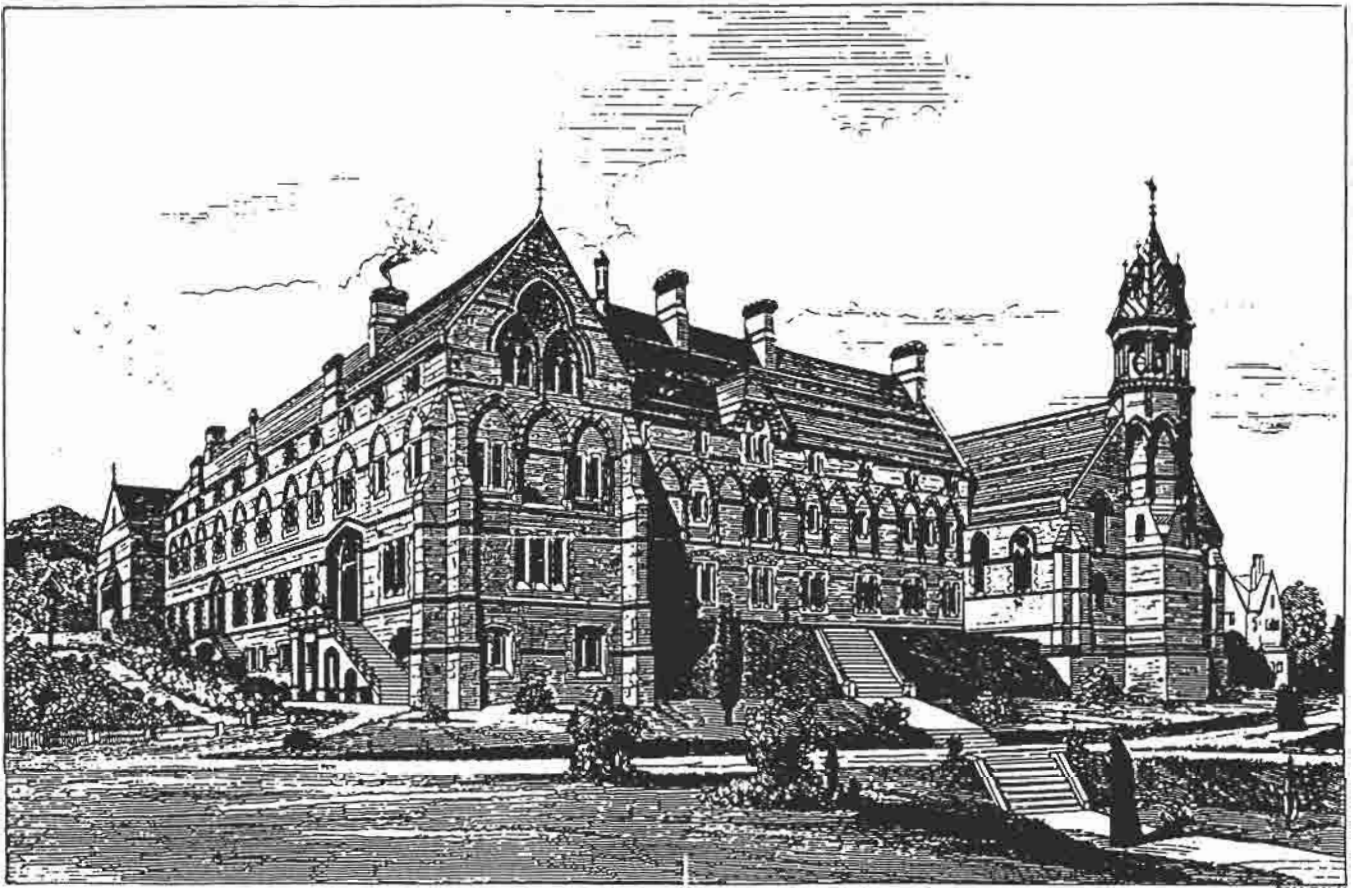


Figure 3. Teignmouth, St Scholastica's Abbey [CW65]
From Charles Eastlake's *History of the Gothic Revival* (1872)

CW65 Teignmouth, St Scholastica's Abbey [Figure 3]

A major High Victorian Gothic complex of buildings designed in 1863 for a Benedictine order of nuns, St Scholastica's is among the principal works of George Goldie, one of the leading Roman Catholic church architects of the nineteenth century. Declining numbers meant that the sisterhood could no longer stay in their convent and we were concerned that the building should be properly protected when it came onto the market - particularly as it has some 24 acres of

ground in what must be a prime development site, just off the Teignmouth-Dawlish road. Accordingly, we wrote to English Heritage supporting Teignbridge Council's thoroughly sensible request that the Abbey's status be upgraded to II*. No proposals for the future of the buildings or the site have yet been announced, and we remain anxious.

CW66 Lynton, The Music Room, Woolhanger Manor

This extraordinary building was added to the manor house in 1894 by Sir Henry Palk Carew: it is a lofty octagon with a glazed lantern, an open timber roof, tall mullioned windows and a pair of fine fireplaces; a large recess on the south side originally contained an organ powered by a water wheel. When the building came onto the market with outline planning consent for residential conversion, we realized that it was not listed and wrote to English Heritage requesting spot listing to secure some measure of protection against undesirable alterations. Unfortunately, English Heritage dislikes upsetting the property market once outline planning permission on a building has been given. As a result, they have deferred inspecting the building until conversion has taken place; by that time, statutory protection could well be too late.

CW67 Throwleigh, Higher Shilstone

Dating from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and remarkably intact, Higher Shilstone is perhaps the finest farm group of its date on Dartmoor, a fact reflected in its Grade I listing. Working on the principle that every component of the group contributes to its outstanding quality, English Heritage recommended Grade I status for all the buildings. This was too bold for the Department of the Environment, who jibbed at such a listing for a dung-pit on the interesting grounds that the Cavalry Club in London was only II*. We wrote supporting the consistency of English Heritage's position but could not shift the administrators of the DoE from their feeling that a Grade I dung-pit would be an implicit slight on the dignity of the Cavalry Club.

CW68 Stoodleigh, Steart Farmhouse

This tangled and continuing case started when we protested against destructive alterations proposed for this largely seventeenth-century farmhouse, which is listed Grade II. We were particularly opposed to the loss of original features and the damage that would be done to Steart's unusual ground plan. Mid Devon Council was still considering the case when work started, without permission, destructively, and illegally. The County Conservation section intervened rapidly and we wrote urging that action be taken against the owner. After negotiations, some restitution was made and amended proposals were submitted. Though a decided improvement, the Group still thought them too drastic and objected again; Mid Devon, however, gave consent. Although the farmhouse has been over-sanitized, much has been saved that would have gone. Now it turns out that working over the house was only the first stage: within the last month the owner has submitted an application to convert the farm buildings to residential use. The proposals are again destructive and would wreck the setting of the house itself: we have objected once again, and await the outcome.

CW69 Bovey Tracey, Pottery Kilns [Figure 4]

Dating from the first years of the twentieth century, this group of three bottle-shaped muffle kilns is the most architecturally distinguished survival from the pottery industry that was once of considerable importance in Bovey Tracey. The kilns, unique in the south west and of considerable rarity in national terms, are Scheduled Ancient Monuments; despite this, permission existed

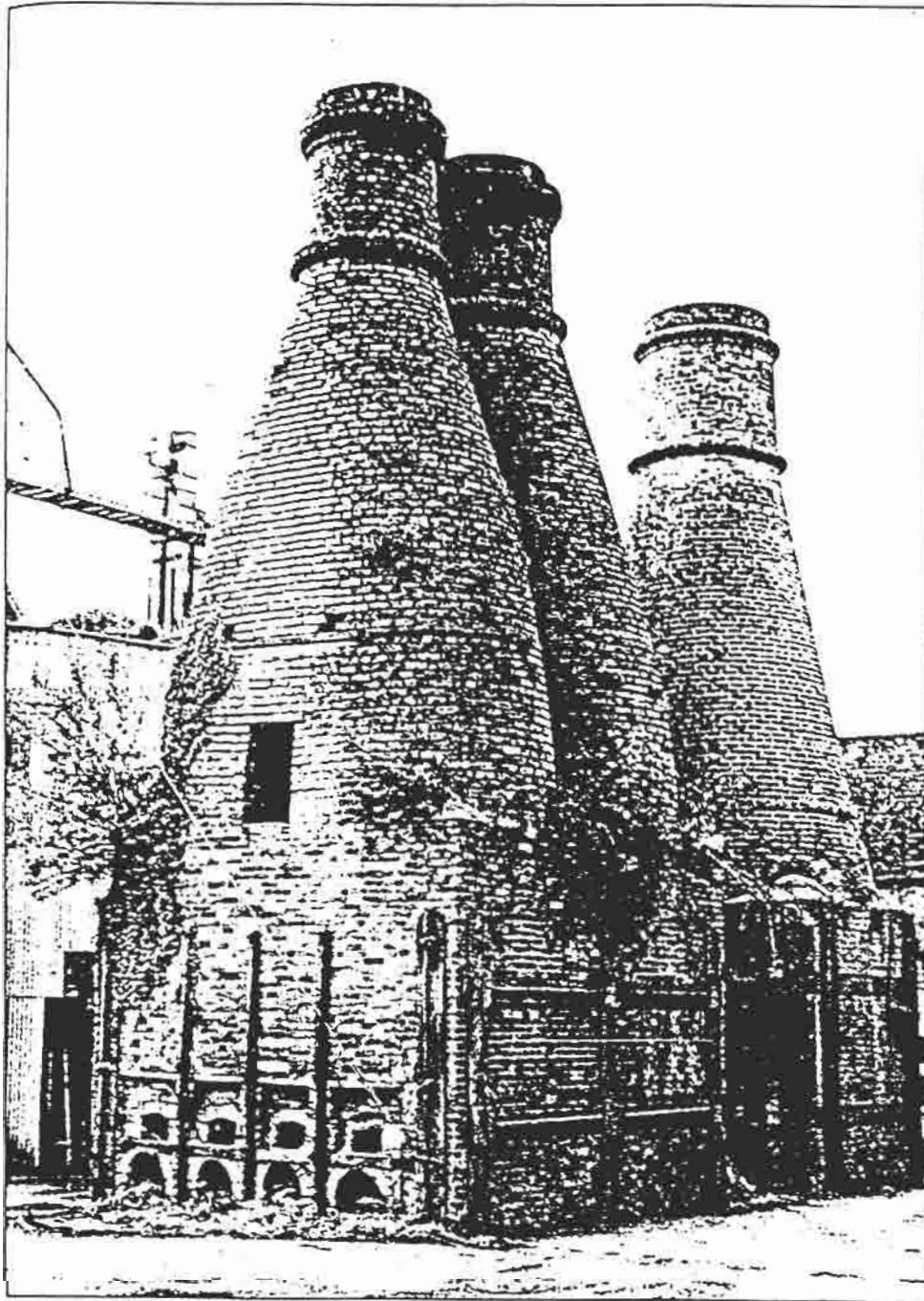


Figure 4. Bovey Tracey, Pottery Kilns

until recently to demolish two of them. Proposed new building on the surrounding site, and an excellent report on the kilns by the Exeter Museums Archaeological Field Unit, led us to write to Teignbridge District Council and English Heritage asking that the preservation of the kilns, with public access to them, should be made a condition of any planning permission for the intended development. We received encouraging responses from both bodies and, as permission to demolish two of the kilns has now lapsed, their future should be secure; the nature of the development on the site as a whole has still to be finalized, however, and we remain concerned.

CW70 Newton St Cyres, Hayne Barton Barns

The DBG, in conjunction with the Ancient Monuments Society, protested vigorously at a crass application for LBC to demolish no less than four cob and stone barns at Hayne Barton Farm, all of them listed Grade II. We have yet to hear from Mid Devon as to the outcome.

CW71 Chagford, Lower Jurston

The farmstead of Lower Jurston is one of the few traditional farm groups in Chagford parish that remain unaltered. The house itself is listed Grade II*, its outbuildings planned around two yards, the whole forming an ensemble of considerable architectural and visual distinction. It was bought up by a developer who applied to the National Park for permission to convert some of the outbuildings to houses. We felt strongly that the whole farmstead was too important to allow of its being turned into yet another residential group and objected. The National Park Committee was of the same mind and permission was refused.

CW72 Dartmouth, Methodist Church

Erected in 1874 to the designs of John Wills, then at the beginning of a distinguished career as a nonconformist architect, Dartmouth Methodist church stands on the Market Square. Its principal front is a fine neo-classical design, unique in Devon and a crucial element in the Dartmouth townscape. When it was vacated by the Methodists in the early 1980s, it passed into the ownership of South Hams District Council. A scheme to convert the building into flats - a suitable use - was abandoned and, after it had stood empty for some years, the Council came up with proposals to demolish it entirely and build a community centre, with the inevitable 'retail facility', on the site. The Group wrote to South Hams expressing concern at the possible loss of so significant a building: their dismissive reply was wholly unhelpful. Although it was in a Conservation Area, the church itself was not otherwise statutorily protected. We sent information about its history and its architect to English Heritage, requesting that it be inspected for spot listing; we also informed the Victorian Society and the Ancient Monuments Society of the situation, and they also made representations to South Hams and English Heritage. After inspection, the church was listed Grade II, to the evident irritation of the Council, who scapped their scheme to demolish it. A new scheme emerged to build flats which would retain the main elevation to Market Square. We thought that this was too much like facadism and, along with the Victorian Society, objected. Somewhat to our surprise, the South Hams Planning Committee turned the scheme down. We await the next development.

CW73 Ilfracombe, 3 Broad Street

Number 3 Broad Street was listed Grade II largely on account of its remarkably complete late Victorian shop interior - a splendid set of Gothic fittings purpose designed as a chemist's. The shop ceased trading a few years ago and the owner wishes to sell: unfortunately he sees the historic fittings as a drawback on the property market rather than an asset. He attempted to give them all away to a Museum of Perfumery in Aberdeen and efforts were made to remove them without Listed Building Consent. Along with a number of other groups we protested: North Devon District Council moved swiftly and stopped work on the shop before serious damage was done. A formal application to strip out the interior was subsequently made; the same groups that objected to the illegal removal of the fittings objected again and permission was refused. The long-term future of the shop is

still uncertain, but, for the time being at least, the fittings are secure in Ilfracombe where they belong rather than gracing a museum in Scotland.

CW74 Braunton, The Great Field

The Great Field, on the edge of Braunton, is a unique historical landscape. The product of the medieval open field system of strip farming it remains substantially intact, though now reduced from its original size, and retains a fascinating sequence of field barns. Along with the Devon Archaeological Society and the Devonshire Association, we protested against a by-pass scheme that would pass through part of the Field. The proposals have been shelved for the time being but the route has not been officially ruled out by the County Engineers and we remain seriously concerned.

CW75 Washfield, Brook Farm

Brook Farm is a remarkably interesting fragment of a major late sixteenth-century house and is listed Grade II*. The DBG wrote to Mid Devon expressing anxiety about alterations to the interior that were taking place apparently without Listed Building Consent. The Council was unable to gain entry and seemed to feel there was little they could do: in the meantime, we fear that substantial damage may have been done to the interior of a major building.



Figure 5. Bideford, The Quay, c.1900
The building on the extreme left is nos.2-4. [CW76]

CW76 Bideford, 2-4 The Quay [Figure 5]

Dating from c.1840, 2-4 The Quay are a single building of three bays designed in a robust neo-classical idiom particularly characteristic of late Georgian and early Victorian town architecture in Devon; the main elevation to the Quay is substantially intact and retains two of its original three shop fronts. Immediately adjacent to Bridge Buildings, 2-4 make a vital contribution to the distinctive architectural character of Bideford Quay; they are listed Grade II. After many years of neglect, the building was purchased by Torridge District Council, who proposed to demolish it and redevelop the site, possibly retaining the original facade. The Group objected strongly, and were joined by the Devon

Archaeological Society, the Ancient Monuments Society and the Victorian Society in arguing that the building should be retained and repaired. Torridge withdrew their proposal, but we are still uncertain as to the building's long term future.

CW77 Barnstaple, Bull Court Warehouse

Listed Grade II, this building is probably the last surviving fellmonger's warehouse in Barnstaple and dates from the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. The Group was alerted by the North Devon Conservation Society to an application to add a large wing onto the building and radically alter its exterior; we objected. North Devon District Council saw the importance, of preserving the building and the plans were substantially amended: permission has been given for a new single-storey wing, which will be relatively unobtrusive; historic features of the exterior will remain unaltered.

CW78 North Molton, Court House

One of the best seventeenth-century houses in North Devon, listed Grade II*, Court House was threatened by a crudely insensitive plan to build a massive extension that would have swamped the original building. The original application was turned down by North Devon, but the owner went to Appeal. The DBG wrote to the Inquiry Inspector in support of the evidence being given by the North Devon Conservation Society: the appeal was refused.

CW79 Paignton, St Marychurch Town Hall

Prominently located at the junction of Fore Street and Manor Road, with a nicely managed corner turret and crazy-paving masonry, St Marychurch Town Hall is an attractive building in its own right, and makes an important contribution to the townscape. It was built in 1883 to the designs of G.S. Bridgman, an interesting architect who was responsible for the mid-Victorian layout of central Paignton and who went on to establish a successful Edwardian practice based in Bristol and Torbay. The building has no statutory protection and is vulnerable to the encroaching redevelopment of St Marychurch: we are preparing an application to English Heritage to have it spot-listed.

CW80 Widecombe, Oldsbrim

The Group gave support to the National Park Conservation Officer in his efforts to prevent unsympathetic alterations to this longhouse, and to stop residential conversion and new building in the farmstead. When work was carried out without Listed Building Consent we welcomed the National Park's decision to take the owner to court.

CW81 Exeter, The Victoria, Union Road

When this public house was being extensively refurbished we wrote to Devenish Brewery expressing our anxiety that its distinctive exterior, clad in green tiles, should be unaffected. The reply was reassuring, and the work was carried out without damage to the building's external appearance.

CW82 Barnstaple, Brannam's Pottery

Brannam's, in Litchdon Street, is probably the last nineteenth-century pottery complex in England still working on its original site. Behind its impressively decorated street frontage, designed by W.H. Oliver in 1886-7, stretch two ranges of workshops and process buildings, incorporating two kilns. Having decided that the existing site was inconvenient, the present management proposed to relocate the works on a new industrial estate outside the town, financing the move by demolishing the existing pottery behind the street front and redeveloping the

area for housing. Initial proposals were drawn up between the owners and North Devon District Council without any reference to local or national conservation interests. When the plans emerged, the DBG joined several other groups in opposing such a destructive scheme. The strength of the objections pushed North Devon into commissioning a proper historical report on the Brannam's site, which was prepared by the Ironbridge Institute - among the leading authorities in the field of industrial archaeology. The report pointed out the major significance of the pottery, and the national importance of the complex. Substantially amended proposals resulted which retained far more of the historic buildings. Even so, the loss of the working pottery from the site, and the destruction, albeit limited, of parts of the complex, are much to be regretted.

CW83 Exmouth/Clyst St George Road Improvement

The road between Exmouth and the southern suburbs of Exeter is one of the most heavily used in Devon, and measures need to be taken to relieve it. We were sent consultation document by the County Engineers containing a number of alternatives, including routes for a completely new road. All the proposals that were based upon an upgrading of the road system had worrying implications for historic buildings - particularly a new interchange in the immediate vicinity of the extraordinary Georgian folly, A la Ronde. We therefore opted for the alternative that envisaged major improvements in public transport and in the rail link between Exmouth and Exeter. The result of the consultation is awaited.

CW84 Plymouth, Belmont House

Listed Grade II*, this is one of the finest houses by John Foulston, responsible for so much of the development of Plymouth in the first thirty years of the nineteenth century. When the owners of several years standing, the Youth Hostel Association, moved out, the Group was asked for advice on the general guidelines for its conversion to new use. Happily, and unusually, we found ourselves in agreement with the position adopted by Plymouth City Council, that there should be no major alterations to the interior plan, that historic features must be retained, and that there should be no new building in the ground.

CW85 Honiton, the Angel Hotel

Located in a prominent position in Honiton High Street immediately next to Charles Fowler's church, St Paul's, the Angel, listed Grade II, is a late Georgian building with two ranges of outbuildings at the rear. We commented on a Listed Building Consent application to convert the hotel to retail use, and the outbuildings to housing. There was no objection to the latter in principle; we felt, however, that the alterations to the hotel were too drastic, and particularly opposed alterations to the fenestration in the front to the High Street. East Devon District Council has not yet managed to inform us of any decision, but no work has taken place to date.

CW86 Bow, Thorne Farm

The outbuildings of Thorne Farm, modest in themselves, are an essential setting for the Grade II* listed farmhouse, which retains part of its medieval roof construction. The DBG objected to proposals for a large-scale conversion of all the significant outbuildings to residential use. We await the outcome.

CW87 Chagford, Higher Weddicott

We opposed an application to reroof this Grade II listed farmhouse by replacing the existing thatch with asbestos slates. Clearly, this was against conservation policy in the National Park and the application was rejected.

CW88 Lee Mill, Paper Mill

Lee Mill is a visually undistinguished village, now dominated by the dual carriageway between Ivybridge and Plymouth, and targetted for substantial industrial and residential development over the next decade. The one building of architectural interest in the village is the nineteenth-century paper mill, probably erected in the 1830s but substantially remodelled following a fire in 1891, when the impressive chimney stack was also built. It had been used for storage for a number of years, but has recently fallen empty. With no alternative use apparent, plans emerged to demolish it and build housing on the site. The mill is not statutorily protected and, regretably, English Heritage turned it down for listing some three years ago. We have asked them to reconsider it, both in the light of the definite threat that is now posed, and on the basis of more historical information that we have been able to send them. We await their decision.

CW89 Fremington, Fremington Mill

The Mill, listed Grade II and retaining much of its late nineteenth-century milling gear, was threatened with demolition to make way for a housing scheme. Along with the North Devon Conservation Society, the DBG objected strongly, particularly as no attempt had been made either to investigate re-use or to offer the building for sale on the open market - both of which are requirements of the legislation governing listed buildings. At a site meeting the Planning Committee of North Devon took the same view and refused permission to demolish, at the same time granting permission for a small development of new houses on one part of the site. The owner, perhaps surprisingly, seemed happy with this and agreed that the mill should be preserved.

CW90 Harbertonford, Crowdy Mill [Figures 6 and 7]

Yet another case involving a mill, this time a traditional flour mill, the only one still working in the South Hams. The present building, superbly sited in a

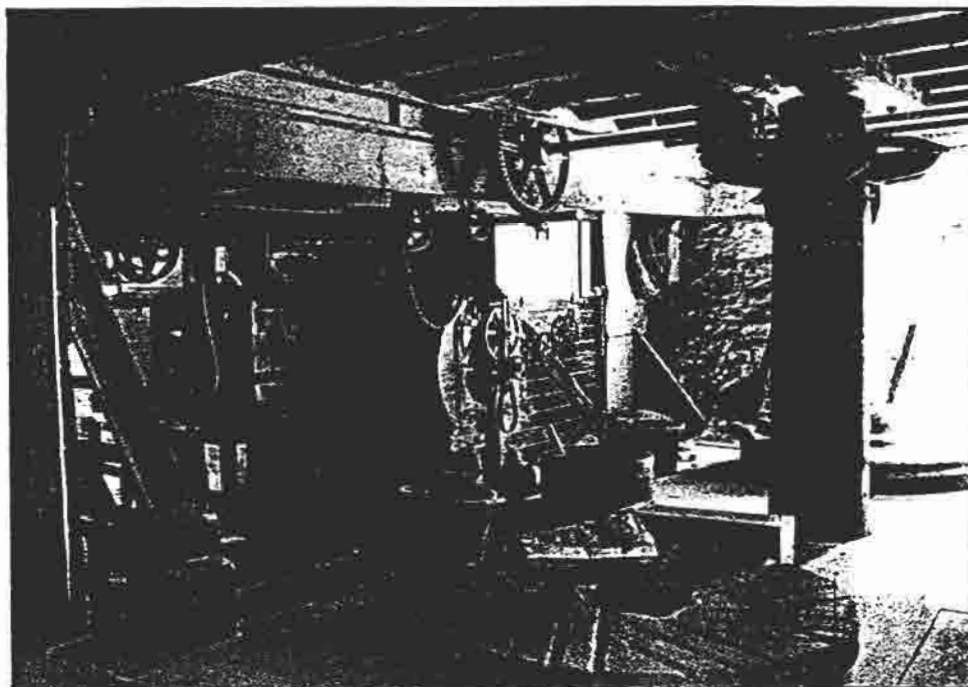


Figure 6. Harbertonford, Crowdy Mill, interior [CW90].

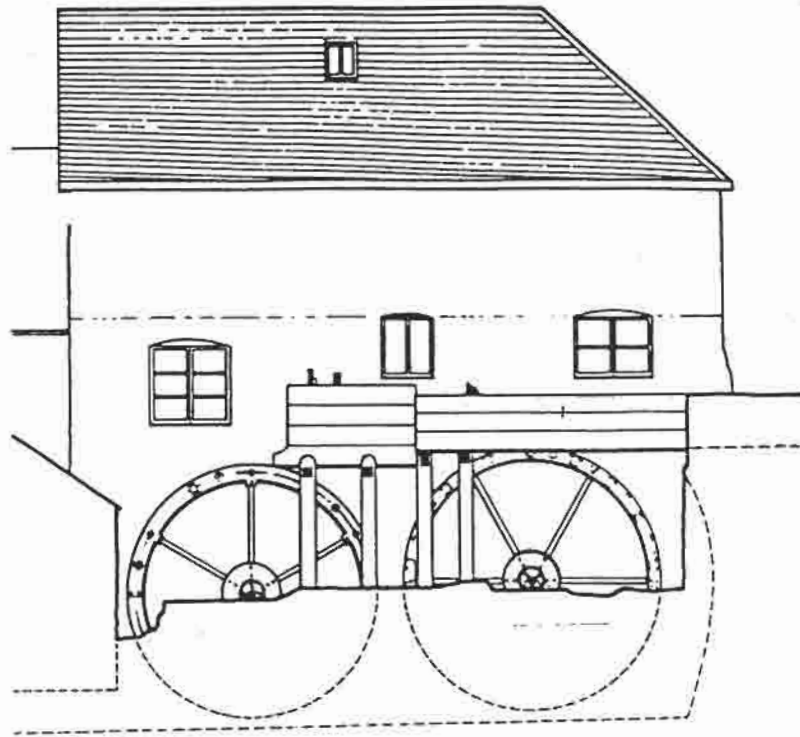


Figure 7. Harbertonford, Crowdy Mill, north elevation [CW90].

quiet valley, dates from the seventeenth century, but was enlarged in the late nineteenth century. It has two counter-rotating wheels, a rarity, and much of its nineteenth-century machinery, all of which has been restored with great care in recent years by the tenant, a member of the SPAB Waterwheels Section. The whole group of mill buildings is listed Grade II. The DBG was contacted by the tenant when the owner decided to sell, with an obvious eye to converting the associated buildings to residential or holiday use - a conversion which would have effectively prevented the continued working of the mill itself. We wrote to South Hams District Council expressing our concern, and alerted English Heritage and the Victorian Society to the situation, both of whom also wrote. These combined representations might well have had an effect, for Crowdy Mill was eventually sold to a new owner keen to keep it running as a working mill, and to keep the present tenant in place and able to continue his restoration programme.

CW91 Burlescombe, Canonsleigh Gatehouse

The fifteenth-century gatehouse of Canonsleigh survives from what was a monastic house of Augustinian Canonesses. Despite its Grade I listing, the roof was removed without Listed Building Consent and with no action taken against the owner; since then its condition has been steadily deteriorating. Proposals to convert the gatehouse for residential use were submitted, though well-intentioned, involved considerable alterations to the fabric and external appearance of the building - largely as a result of trying to squeeze in more accommodation than the structure could take. Along with the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, we commented in detail on the proposals. Mid Devon and English Heritage asked for changes to be made in the original plans and the scheme that has resulted is one that is sympathetic to the building and that should ensure its survival.

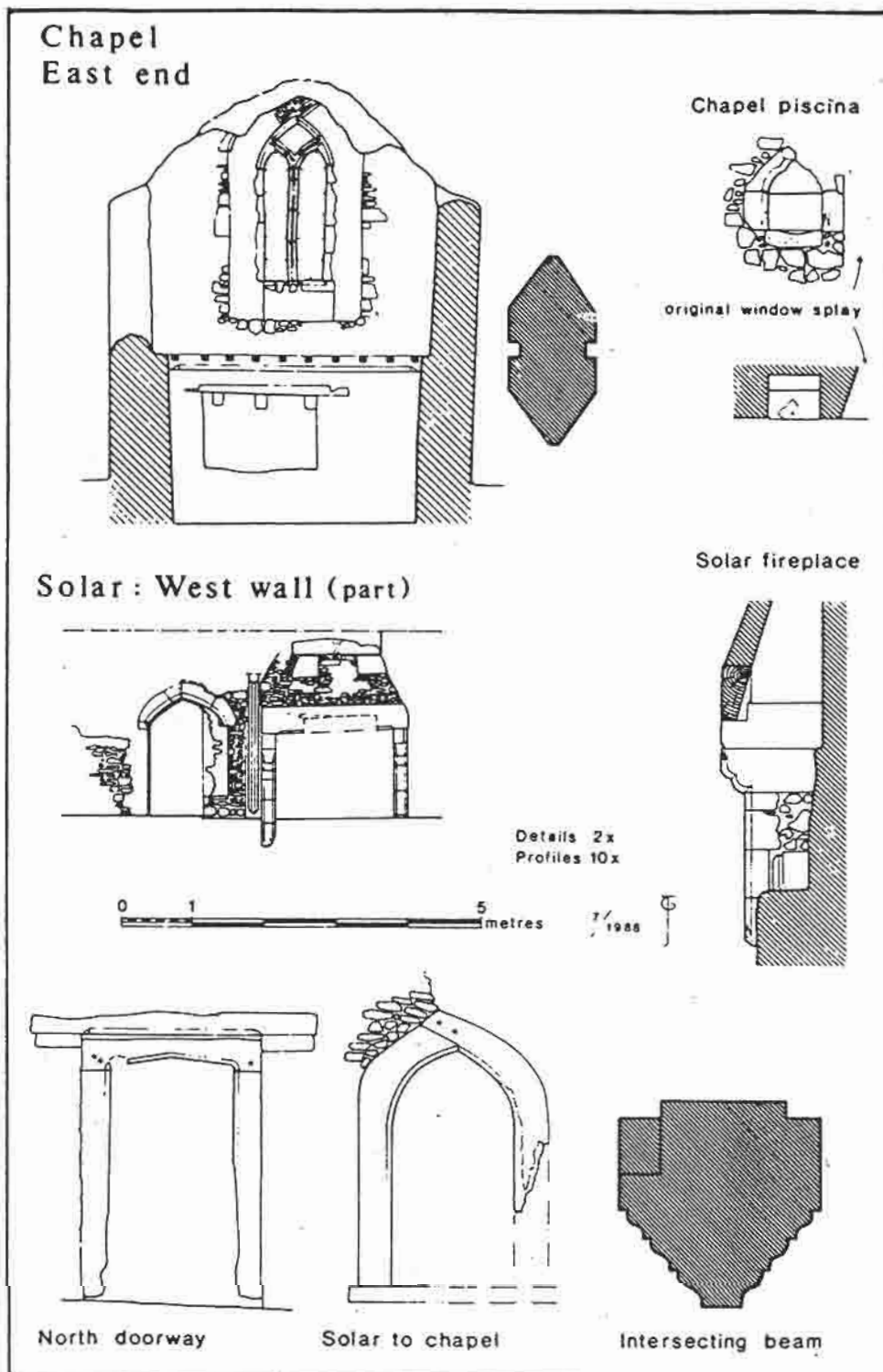


Figure 8. Uplowman, Uplowman Court, the chapel and details [CW92].
Drawings by John Thorp.

CW92 Uplowman, Uplowman Court [Figure 8]

This is one of the saddest of the Group's recent cases. During the re-survey of listed buildings in the county, the crosswing of the farmhouse of Uplowman Court was recognised as an early structure of considerable interest, the fragment of a considerably larger medieval house, and listed Grade II*. The crosswing, used as a store for more than a century and badly neglected, was sold separately from the farmhouse and the new owner put in a drastic scheme to turn it into a house. Worried by the situation, Devon County Council commissioned a report from Keystone Historic Building Consultants, who identified the crosswing as the solar

wing and chapel of a manor house built c.1320 for the de Willingtons. By this time, however, the owner had already started work, for which outline planning permission already existed. The DBG wrote to Mid Devon urging them to request the owner to get more advice and guidance; the County Conservation section and the SPAB were also involved. Amended plans resulted, but these did not reverse losses from the historic fabric that had already occurred, and contained elements that we still thought insufficiently sensitive to the building. We objected, but Mid Devon granted consent. After a fashion, the solar wing and chapel of Uplowman Court still survive, but now incorporated into a building that looks little different from any other barn conversion.

CW93 Lympstone, Greenhill, Greenhouse

We commented on a proposal to reconstruct an early nineteenth-century greenhouse contemporary with a Georgian villa, Greenhill, listed Grade II. Although the plan did not fully copy the original greenhouse, it was broadly sympathetic and seemed necessary given the parlous physical state of the structure.

CW94 Plymouth, The Royal William Victualling Yard (Figures 9 and 10)

Plymouth's great naval Victualling Yard was designed by Sir John Rennie and built between 1824 and 1835. Covering a site of 16 acres, the Yard forms one of the grandest groups of planned industrial buildings in England, and is of European importance. The Navy will not require the Yard after 1992, and the whole site is to be sold off. Its future will be one of the major conservation issues of the next few years, not just for Devon but for the country as a whole. At present there has been little expression of public concern and the DBG has set about informing the national amenity and conservation societies about the case. The whole situation needs publicity, expert consultation, open discussion, and, above all, inventive and sympathetic ideas for re-using the site if these buildings are to receive the treatment they deserve.

CW95 West Worlington, Affeton Castle

This is the gatehouse of the fortified manor house of the Affeton family, essentially fifteenth century with an extensive remodelling of 1868. The Group objected to an application to build a small extension across the front and to alter the fenestration. Although Mid Devon has not yet got round to informing us of the Planning Committee's decision, no new work has taken place on the gatehouse.

CW96 Burlescombe, Ayshford Court Farm

This outstanding group of buildings has as its core the medieval manor house of the Ayshfords, remodelled in the early seventeenth century, and includes a Perpendicular chapel, interestingly restored in 1847, and a sixteenth-century barn with a unique wind-braced roof. We were entirely opposed to a scheme to convert the whole farmstead to residential use: if complexes like Ayshford, with Grade I and II* buildings cannot be saved intact then nowhere can. We trust that Mid Devon will feel the same way, but have yet to hear from them.

CW97 Germansweek, Home Living

Another case involving the wholesale residential conversion of a farm group, this time a large nineteenth-century farmyard, unlisted, but crucially placed in the Germansweek village Conservation Area, close to the church and with the listed but badly neglected Grade II house, Paul's Shop (CW30) on the edge of the group. The DBG objected to what seemed to us a greedy scheme that proposed a large number of residential units crammed into the existing buildings and new houses as

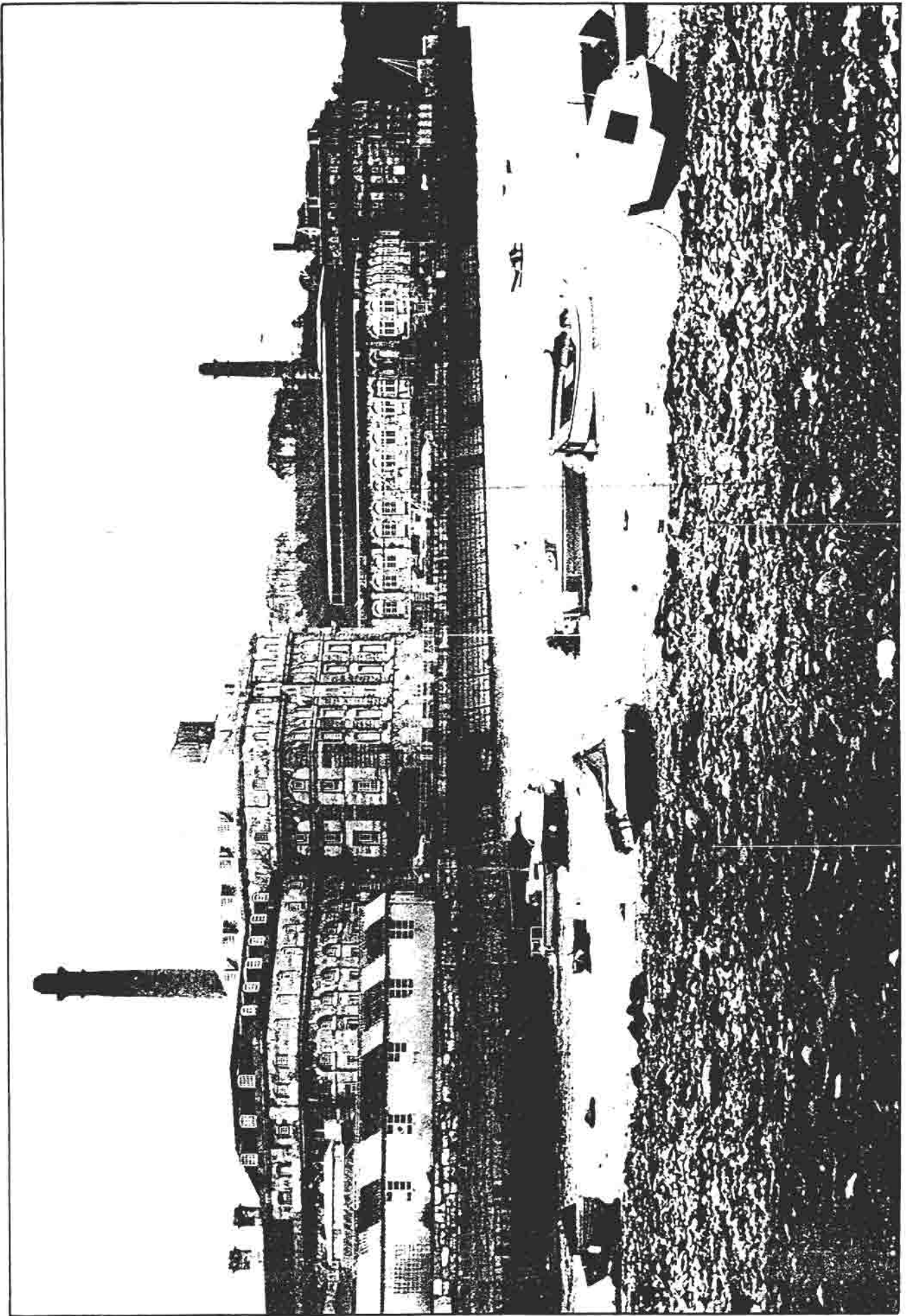


Figure 9. Plymouth, The Royal William Victualling Yard [CV94].



Figure 10. Plymouth, The Royal William Victualling Yard (CW94)...
The Administrative Building, Melville Square.

well: redevelopment on such a scale would damage the whole character of the Conservation Area. We argued that residential use should be concentrated on the Home Living farmhouse and Paul's Shop, both of which, after all, were designed as houses but both of which were omitted from the scheme. The West Devon Planning Committee refused permission for several parts of the proposals, including the new build, but granted consent for the work on the major buildings. Although there was some talk of tying permission to the repair and preservation of Paul's Shop, nothing seems to have been determined - which looks like an opportunity for planning gain that has been missed.

CW98 Sidmouth, The Old Chancel

The Old Chancel is a wonderfully eccentric building, the home of the Sidmouth antiquarian Peter Orlando Hutchinson, who built it in 1860 re-using the medieval

fabric of the chancel of the parish church, demolished in William White's rebuilding of 1859-60. We heard that the present owner had applied to East Devon for permission to alter the glazing, but enquiries to the Council have so far produced no response. Why?

CW99 Tiverton, Pannier Market

Tiverton's rapid expansion in recent years, which has necessitated the Southern Relief Road proposals (CW55), also underpins this ambitious scheme to redevelop and commercially upgrade the central market area of the town, including the distinctive Pannier Market building of 1830. It is proposed to build new ranges of shops on either side of the market building, with new access from St Peter Street and Fore Street. There are a number of good elements in the scheme: the new buildings, though a little over-fond of post-modern clichés, are inventive and varied, and the market building itself appears to be well treated. What is less satisfactory is the handling of the St Peter Street side of the site, where it is proposed to clear a delightful network of walls and alleys, to knock down a decent terrace of nineteenth-century houses, and to demolish a pentice roofed range of stalls that are listed Grade II along with the market building itself. The DBG has objected to this aspect of the scheme, urging a more informal planning approach to this side of the site and the retention and re-use of existing structures; we have involved the Victorian Society in the case and they have objected in similar terms. Various negotiations have followed and await further proposals.

CW100 Lustleigh, Sanduck Farm

It is appropriate, and indicative, that the Group's hundredth case should be another example of an application for the large-scale residential conversion of a farm group, this time an impressive nineteenth-century planned farmyard, listed Grade II. We wrote opposing the scheme and supporting the Dartmoor National Park's new policy on the conversion of redundant agricultural buildings. The application was turned down, but the owner is going to appeal. A full account of the case and of the National Park's revised policy will be found in the present newsletter.

Chris Brooks

A NEW POLICY FOR THE CONVERSION OF TRADITIONAL FARM BUILDINGS IN THE DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK

An article in the last Devon Buildings Group Newsletter, '*Barn Conversions: Some Statistics*', concluded that 'one of Devon's most important and most characteristic classes of historic building is vanishing before our eyes'. The seriousness of the threat has been recognized by the Dartmoor National Park Authority and has led its Committee to adopt a new policy towards the conversion of traditional farm buildings. The lead taken by the National Park is of considerable importance: in the article which follows, the full text of the policy is given, followed by a brief account of its adoption in the case of Sanduck Farm, Lustleigh, in which the DBG was directly involved.

Review of Policy for the Conversion of Traditional Buildings
within the Dartmoor National Park

[1] On 1 May 1987 the Committee agreed a policy framework against which to consider applications for conversion of traditional buildings to new uses. The intention was to operate the new policy for two years and then review it in the light of experience gained. In view of the number and scale of applications now being received for conversion to residential use, and the concern expressed over some recent cases, the process of review should start now.

[2] The justification for permitting development by conversion is based largely on the premise that in many cases this is the best means of conserving the fabric of redundant buildings of historic or architectural value. It is a *conservation* policy which may justify an *exception* to the general policies governing development in the National Park. This concept is important and where it is clearly the case that conversion is not the best means of achieving conservation, then normal policies should apply, and other means of conservation should if necessary be pursued.

[3] Experience has shown that many conversions do very successfully conserve the fabric of important buildings, but it has also exposed areas of concern which may lead the Committee to consider making adjustments to the policy. These are:

(i) *The prospect of a high proportion of traditional farm buildings going out of farming use because conversion to residential use is so financially attractive.* Conversion to new use totally changes the character of a farm building, or group of buildings, and may fundamentally affect the setting of the farmhouse itself. Character is often as important as fabric and difficult judgements will be necessary where it may not be possible to conserve both. There are however certain categories of building where it is usually the case that conversion is not the best means of conserving either. Longhouse shippens are already recognized as falling into this category, and conservation is achieved through grant aid. The principle could be extended to other defined categories of building.

(ii) *The question of redundancy.* Advice from ADAS is almost invariably that traditional farm buildings are unsuitable for and cannot reasonably be adapted to, modern farming use, and are therefore redundant. They may be used because they exist, but they are not an essential part of the farm system. In the great majority of cases this argument has been accepted, but it is fairly certain that this acceptance, and the expectation of conversion is leading to premature withdrawal of buildings from farming use. This in itself is a good reason to refine the policy, so that expectations of planning consent are realistic. There are also cases of 'anticipated redundancy', dependant upon provision of new buildings which may not yet even be included in an approved Agricultural Improvement Scheme, nor have been notified to the NPA under the provisions of AFSDO. In these circumstances it is possible that the anticipated redundancy will not become actual. The present policy should be amended to make it clear that no consent for conversion will be given until a building is actually redundant.

(iii) *The scale of development.* In both conservation and social terms the scale of some individual proposals has given rise to concern. Change of character is again a factor, and the acceptable provision of adequate parking may be difficult. The social implications relate to the influx of 'outsiders' into rural communities, the inability of local people to pay the prices asked, and eventual submergence of the rural agricultural way of life in an area. Conservation reasons for reducing the number of units can easily be argued within the context of what is after all a conservation policy. Limitation on social grounds is more difficult to support in planning terms. However, the NPA's object of policy 'to promote the social and economic well being of the local community' and Structure Plan Policy CO7 do provide a basis for considering social factors. Each application will need to be judged on its merits on this point, but the policy should be amended to make it clear that social impact will be a factor in reaching a decision.

(iv) *Housing for local people.* Provision of housing to meet a local need may provide a justification for proposed conversions which would otherwise be refused. The policy should be amended to make this clear.

(v) *Structural condition.* There is a potential problem if a proposal is approved and then during conversion it is discovered that structural problems prevent adherence to the agreed plans. Currently the District Council's Building Inspector is consulted where necessary but in some cases it may be necessary to insist on a full structural survey. This should be made clear in the policy.

(vi) *Isolated buildings.* Isolated field barns and other buildings not forming part of an inhabited group raise particular issues because although conversion may be the best way of conserving the fabric of the building, conversion to residential use can involve access, tracks, fences, cultivated gardens, clothes lines, electricity lines, parking etc. which all have an adverse impact on the landscape within which the building sits. In some circumstances no conversion will be appropriate when all of its implications are considered, and grant aid will be the only appropriate way to conserve a building of value. In other cases conversion to a bunk barn or 'stone tent' may be a more acceptable new use. Sometimes conservation may be achievable through a Management Agreement over a wider area. The present policy should be extended to make the policy on isolated buildings clear.

(vii) *Extensions.* The need for conversions to take place entirely within the existing building envelope is implicit in the word conversion itself, but this should be made clear in the policy.

(viii) *The new building alternative.* Where a consent for new development in the countryside would normally be expected (eg. a farm worker's dwelling or an extension to provide ancillary residential or workshop accommodation), and conversion of an existing redundant building is an acceptable alternative, then it should be made clear that normal criteria of historical or architectural merit may not have to be met.

[4] Taking all of the above into account, an amended policy is suggested in the following recommendations; italicized sections are changes or additions to the present policy.

Suggested Revised Policy

A Policy Framework for the Conservation and Conversion of Traditional Buildings.

[1] The Objective: To safeguard the architectural and historic heritage of buildings on Dartmoor and to put the stock of genuinely redundant buildings to good use.

[2] The Means of Achievement: Through sympathetic planning policies, and careful and sensitive development control.

By extending the knowledge and understanding of the nature and total stock of Dartmoor's traditional buildings.

By grant aid.

By encouraging the maintenance of traditional building skills.

[3] Planning Policies: The interpretation of the Structure Plan policies as they apply to Dartmoor will be as follows:

(a) General. There will be a presumption for maintaining traditional buildings in their present use and form, *particularly where they or others in their setting are listed as buildings of architectural or historic importance or are considered to be of comparable quality.*

(b) Conversions within towns, villages and hamlets. Notwithstanding [3a] above, the conversion of existing buildings within towns, villages and hamlets to residential, holiday, craft, light industrial workshop and similar commercial use will normally be allowed provided such buildings are suitable for such conversion, that their form and character is conserved and subject to normal requirements relating to access, foul drainage, impact on neighbouring interests etc.

(c) Conversion of traditional buildings outside towns, villages and hamlets. Conversion to residential use, holiday accommodation, commercial and industrial workshop use outside towns, villages and hamlets will only be allowed where:

(i) The buildings are *actually* redundant at the time of application and, in the case of farm buildings, cannot reasonably be adapted to modern farming use.

(ii) The buildings are suitable for such conversion and the conversion is justified in terms of conserving the form, character and historic value of the buildings in question, *any group of which they form a part and the locality and landscape in which they are located. There are particular categories of building which will not normally be considered for conversion under this criterion because of their scarcity, their internal features, their peculiarly unsuitable characteristics or their particular historic value as individual buildings or as part of a group. These are listed below in Appendix 1. Isolated buildings will normally be unsuitable for conversion to dwellings or workshops because of effects on the surrounding landscape. Some may be suitable for conversion to other uses requiring minimum change to their external environment. In all cases the provision of*

parking space should be within the buildings to be converted where this can be achieved without unacceptable alteration to them.

(iii) *The scale of the proposal is acceptable in terms of its impact on the character and social structure of the local community.*

(iv) *The full design of the proposed conversion and its relationship to neighbouring buildings, are submitted at the outset to enable proper assessment of the building's suitability for conversion to the use proposed.*

(d) *Where there is any doubt about whether the structural condition of the building will allow successful conversion, a full structural survey will be required at the outset.*

(e) *Where farm buildings are converted to holiday accommodation, Section 52 agreements may be necessary to ensure the holiday use remains ancillary to the farm use, and to discourage subdivision.*

(f) *Where holiday accommodation is permitted the use will where necessary be specifically defined and its occupancy will be restricted by means of a condition stating that no individual or group shall occupy the accommodation for more than 28 days in each year.*

(g) *In circumstances where a new building or extension would normally be permitted but where conversion of an existing redundant building offers a preferable alternative, the normal criteria relating to architectural or historic interest may not have to apply.*

(h) *Permitted development rights will be removed by means of conditions to ensure that future alterations to the converted buildings and their immediate surroundings can be controlled.*

(i) *Requirements such as the provision of a reasonable means of access, an adequate drainage system etc. should be satisfied although such matters may not be over-riding where the primary consideration is the conservation of the building or group.*

(j) *Housing for local needs. The NPA will continue to work with District Housing Authorities as well as Housing Associations to ensure that adequate housing to meet local needs is available and to ensure such housing can be reserved for such local need. The provision of such housing through, inter alia, the conversion of suitably located traditional buildings will normally be encouraged within the policies set out above. In some circumstance where conversion to unrestricted residential use would not normally be approved, it may be appropriate to give a permission for housing which is guaranteed to be available in the long term to meet the identified needs of local people.*

(k) *Conversion should normally be entirely within the existing building envelope.*

[4] *Grant Aid: Where redundant buildings have a particular historic or architectural value which would not be appropriately conserved by conversion (i.e. those categories listed in Appendix 1) then a consent will not be given.*

However, in those circumstances, and subject to the availability of resources, the building will normally be given priority in allocating cash from the NPA's Historic Buildings Grant Scheme. It might also qualify for grant from English Heritage or, in appropriate circumstances, from Management Agreement funds.

Appendix 1 : Buildings which will not normally be considered for conversion

Longhouse shippens; listed lincays; farm buildings providing an essential agricultural setting for a Grade I or Grade II* farmhouse; farm groups of particular significance, eg. the best examples of estate architecture; buildings constructed for specialist activities and functions, eg. mills; farm buildings with particularly good interiors, eg. internal features or furniture or machinery of historic interest which cannot be retained in the conversion scheme; medieval and late-medieval farm buildings; agricultural buildings within farmstead groups (i.e. clusters of two, three or four farmsteads) of particular merit or historic association, eg. Lettaford, where there are three longhouses with associated buildings; minor buildings (unlikely to be converted separately, but their use or retention unmodified should be carefully considered in large schemes) - ash-houses, dovecotes, pigsties, fowls' houses, ice houses, kennels, round houses, farm offices, granaries; cart sheds will not normally be considered suitable for conversion to a dwelling, although other uses, eg. garages, may be deemed suitable; other farm buildings which are considered to be outstanding examples of their type; industrial or other non-agricultural buildings which are considered to be of outstanding historical significance, or which have internal features, or furniture or machinery of historic interest, which cannot be contained in the conversion scheme.

This draft policy revision was presented to the Dartmoor National Park Committee at its meeting on 7 October 1988, when it was accepted as a basis for consultation with District and Parish Councils, and with interested bodies.

At the next DNP Committee meeting, there were eight planning applications for 'barn conversions', all of which the planning officer had been dealing with before the policy amendment. It is part of a planning officer's job to help and advise applicants on the likely outcome of their proposals even before they have made a formal submission and paid the planning fee. Thus, by the time an application reaches the Committee for a decision, the officer may have spent months persuading an owner to make modifications, or to adopt alternative approaches: obviously, changes in the planning criteria during the consultation process can make things difficult both for the applicant and the officer. Nevertheless, the Committee's amended policy on converting traditional buildings on Dartmoor had to be implemented at some point. Of the eight applications at the meeting, four were refused and it was decided to hold site inspections for the others: two were for a farm near Mary Tavy, and two for Sanduck Farm, Lustleigh. Officers had recommended approval for one of the two Mary Tavy applications, and for both at Sanduck.

At the Mary Tavy site meeting it was decided that one barn could be converted, but that the other was not worthy of conservation and so was turned down. The Sanduck case was more contentious. The planning officer was strongly in favour of approval and advised the Committee accordingly. The applicant had had permission in 1986 to convert one barn to holiday accommodation, but this had not been implemented. The present applications covered all the remaining farm buildings - a traditional corn barn, to be made into one residential unit, and a

range of nineteenth-century stone livestock buildings with tallets over, occupying three sides of a courtyard and proposed to be converted into three units. The elderly lady owner had already sold a large proportion of the farm land, leaving forty acres with the farmhouse and buildings, and maintained that the buildings were now redundant for agricultural purposes. From my own experience I knew that there were agricultural uses to which the buildings could be put: indeed, I would have been happy with buildings half as good in the first thirty years of my farming career. Moreover, they provided just the sort of handsome, well-built livestock accomodation that would attract a 'hobby farmer' or stable owner - precisely the sort of potential purchaser who would be able to afford to buy the whole property.

Although the Committee members at the site meeting voted three to two to refuse consent for the conversions, the planning officer decided that the case should go back to full committee. At this point, feeling that Sanduck was a test case for the new conversion policy and knowing that similar large-scale schemes were pending, I contacted the Devon Buildings Group Secretary, the Council for the Preservation of Rural England, and a Small Farmers' representative. All three wrote to the Dartmoor National Park Authority urging that the new policy on conversion be implemented. Their letters were read out at the next Committee meeting, and members voted eighteen to two to reject the Sanduck applications. At the same meeting, the Committee was unanimous in approving a new application from the same owner to allow the 1986 permission to be altered from holiday accomodation to residential use. The applicant has now gone to appeal.

The February meeting of the Committee received the results of the consultation on the newly adopted policy. As well as local District and Parish Councils, local amenity societies had been consulted, as also had the National Farmers' Union and the Country Landowners' Association. Of twenty nine replies, twenty agreed with the amended policy in every way: among these was the DBG, whose response warmly welcomed the revised approach, and who simply suggested that certain points in the document would benefit from further clarification or emphasis. The NFU preferred a converted building to a redundant or derelict one; the Nature Conservancy Council and the Devon Wildlife Trust wanted provision made in the policy for bat and owl habitats. Only three consultees seemed against the new policy - Burrator Parish Council, Okehampton Hamlets Parish Council and, to the Committee's surprise, the Dartmoor Preservation Association. The letter from the Association made the following points:

County Council policy appears to accept that provision must be made for incomers. Conversion can help supply this need for dwellings. Rates revenue and greater use of local services could bring positive economic effects. Incomers have a part to play in this. It appears that the Authority may be prepared to accept derelict buildings in the countryside.... There is nothing wrong with capital gains being made out of barn conversions. Financial considerations should not enter into planning matters.

Surprise evaporated, however, when it was realized that the author of the letter was none other than the lady applicant from Sanduck Farm - an active member of the Dartmoor Preservation Association. At its next meeting, the Committee heard that the DPA had dissociated itself from her reply.

In March 1989, the Dartmoor National Park Committee formally adopted the new policy towards conversion of traditional buildings on the moor. The policy had been revised in some of its details and simplified in others in response to some of the consultees' suggestions: 'redundancy' was more clearly defined; 'hamlets' removed from the 'towns, villages and hamlets' part of the document; provision was made for consulting the Nature Conservancy Council in the event of applications that could affect wildlife habitats. As it now stands, the policy is a strong statement against the presumption of conversion. It should make a major contribution to preserving the character and identity of the traditional buildings that are so important an element in the unique make-up of Dartmoor.

Freda Wilkinson

REPAIRS TO THE CEILING PAINTINGS OF GREAT POTHERIDGE

Great Potheridge is in Merton parish, some three miles south east of Great Torrington. It was the family house of General Monk, who rose to prominence during the Civil War and was the moving force in the Restoration of Charles II in 1660. He was created Lord Albemarle as a consequence, and proceeded to rebuild Great Potheridge on a scale commensurate with his new dignity. The present house is a fragment of the grand mansion that grew during the second half of the seventeenth century. It comprises part of the great hall and a substantial south wing. One of the most striking survivals from the original scheme of interior decoration in the south wing is the ornate plaster ceiling above the main staircase. It has a large and flamboyant plaster cornice and is divided into three panels, each of which contains a painting surrounded by a richly moulded foliate border.

All three paintings had suffered some degree of damage (Figure 11) and had received previous attempts at repair, the success of which was varied. The northern panel, oval in form, depicts three putti against a background of clouds:

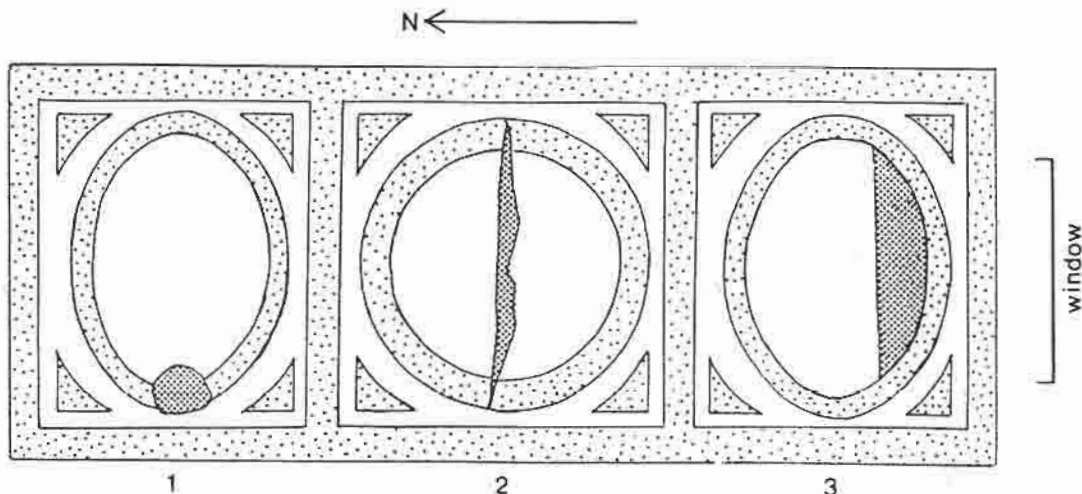


Figure 11. Diagram showing areas of damage to the ceiling panels over the staircase at Great Potheridge.

like all the ceiling paintings, this was carried out in oil bound paints. The panel had suffered severe damage at its eastern edge; new laths had been inserted and a very crude lime plaster repair patched in. The nature of the damage, together with loose floorboards and pipework above, suggests that the damage may have been caused by the traditional plumber's foot. The circular central panel depicts a reclining woman attended by cherubs. Here the damage comprised a system of cracks running east to west across the southern side of the panel. The cause of the cracking is uncertain, but appears to be the upward movement of the joist above. The cracking had resulted in the complete loss of some sections of plaster, while others had been refixed with large handmade nails. The areas of replaced plaster had been crudely touched in, the overpainting including the face and breast of the central figure. The heavy varnish over the whole of the panel has darkened severely, thus obscuring much of the detail and colour of the painting. At some point, and for some reason not now apparent, the original plaster in the quarter of the southern panel nearest the window must have been lost: it had been replastered quite carefully, though unattractively painted. The painting on the remainder of the panel depicts three cherubs, one of whom sits astride an eagle.

In their current condition, all three panels have cracked plaster, though there seems no sign of continuing structural movement and there is no loose plaster at present. The north and centre panels both suffer from darkened varnish, but this is absent from the southern panel. All three paintings have suffered limited flaking of the paint surface, but this loss has been random in occurrence and has no obvious cause. Paint adjacent to the flaked areas is still well attached.

The aim of the repair work was to discover the extent of damage to the painted panels. Loose flakes of paint were to be reattached, the obtrusive repair to the northern panel was to be replaced, and the central panel was to be examined to assess the extent of the overpainting. Surface grime was to be cleaned from the paintings, and retouched areas were to be blended better with the original work.

On the northern panel, the old repair was removed and the laths examined from below. The nails were slightly corroded but were not felt to be in a serious enough condition to need replacement. Likewise, the laths themselves were in good condition and showed little sign of damage from rot or beetle attack. The floorboards in the attic above the northern panel were lifted and some three hundredweights of debris removed. It was not possible to gain full access to the internal structure of the cornice moulding, but it is probable that it will have a similar accumulation of rubbish in it. The repair to the panel was remade with lime plaster. Three coats were laid on, the first two using coarse sand and hair, the third using lime and plaster of paris. The completed repair was coloured to obtain an unobtrusive blend with the original painting.

The cracked and nailed area of the central panel was closely examined, but revealed no loose plaster. Despite the risk inherent in removing the nails, it was felt that this should be done at some point in order to obviate the possibility of future damage from corrosion. The crude overpainting on the head and breast of the main figure was removed. The original paint was found to be largely intact, though a segment of the face had been lost: this must have been the reason for the retouching, which attempted to recreate the eyes of the figure. The clumsiness and obtrusiveness of the overpainting is a striking

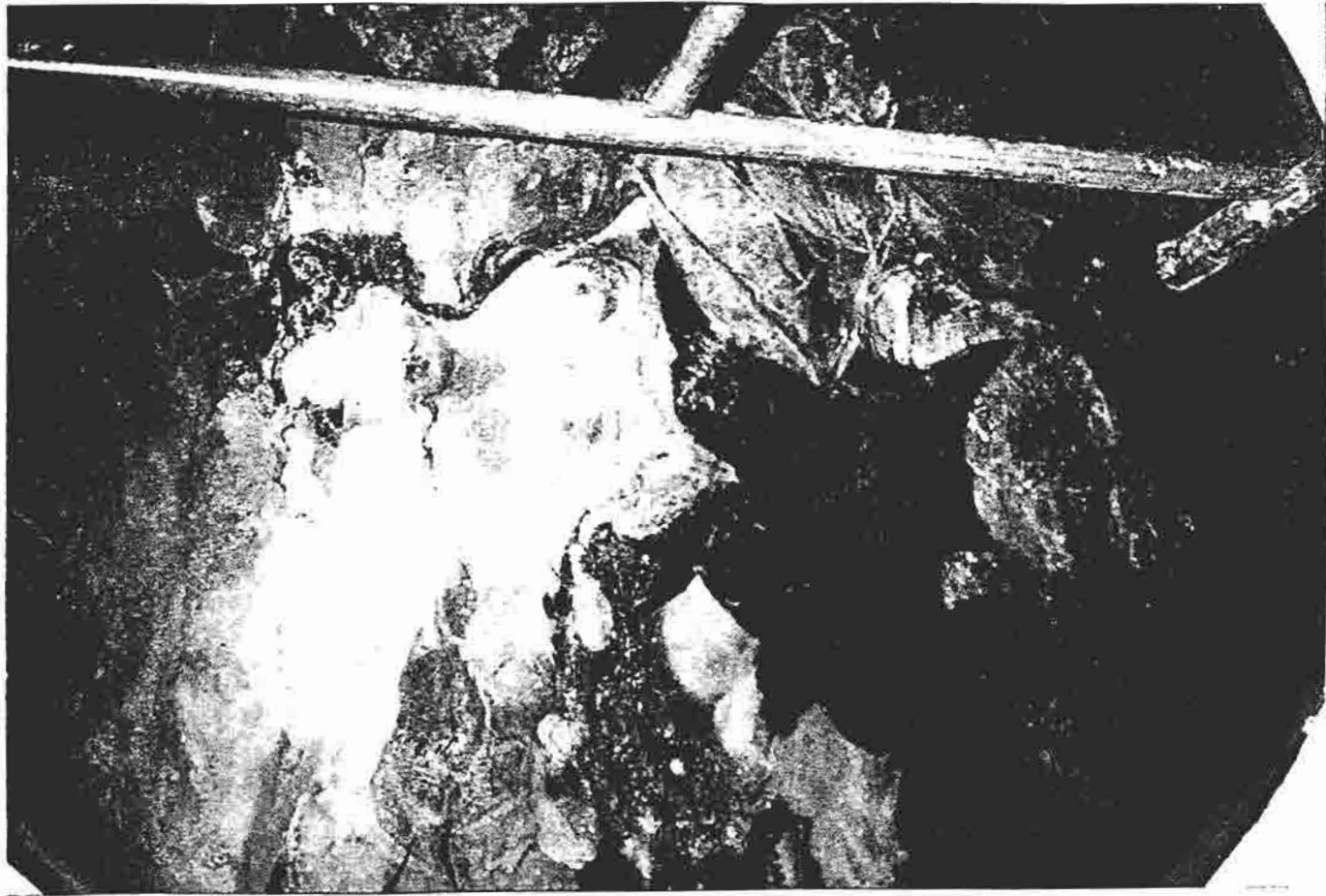
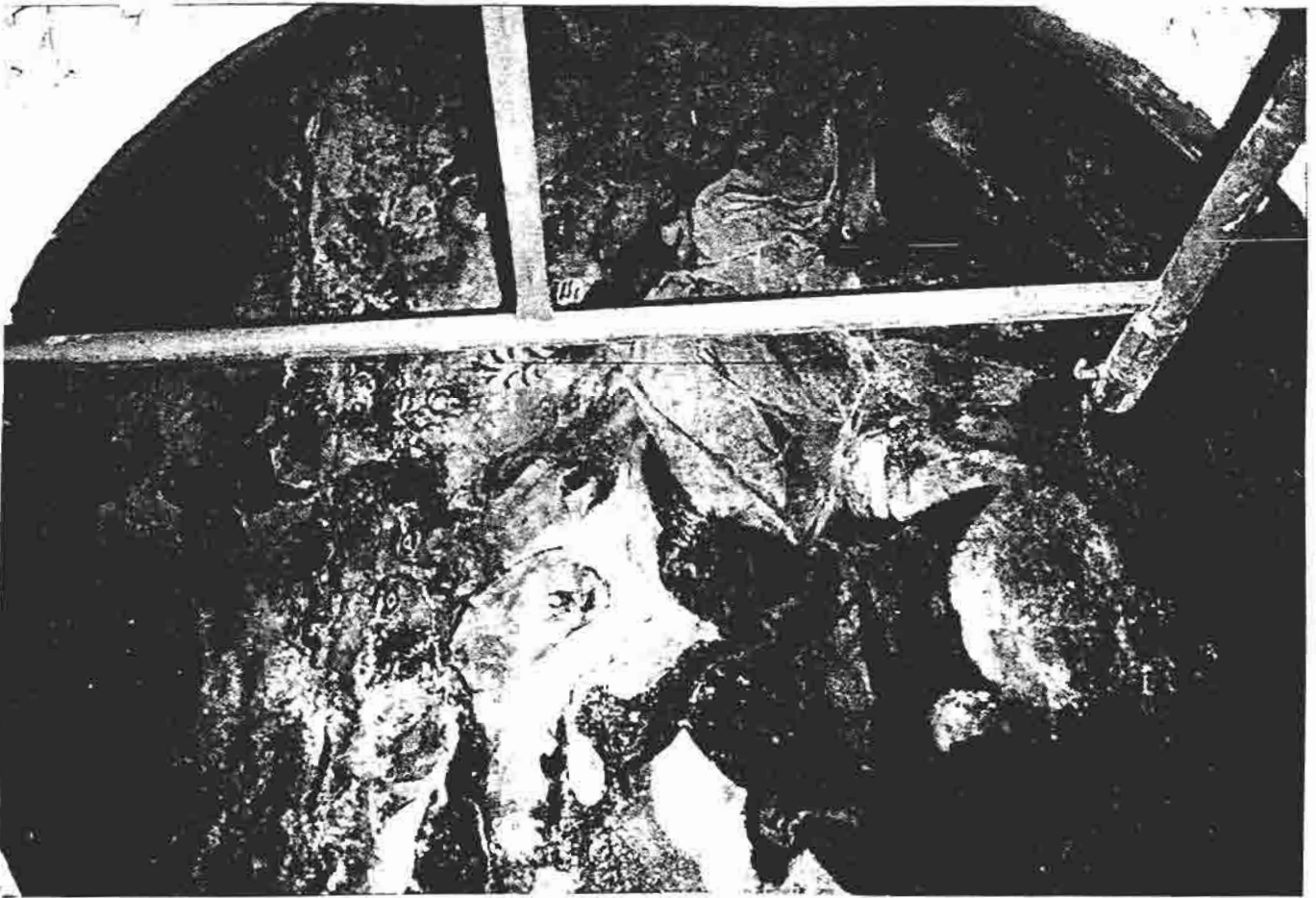


Figure 12. Great Potheridge; staircase ceiling painting before and after conservation and cleaning.

example of the dangers involved in well-intentioned but inept restoration. The repainting of the new segment of plaster was restricted to toning and to suggesting the outline of the face [Figure 12]. Loose flakes of original paint were reattached. The darkened varnish which covered the whole panel was removed only where it overlay the retouched areas of the figure.

No serious defects were found on inspection of the southern panel: conservation was limited to reattaching a small area of flaked paint, removing superficial dirt, and toning in the unpleasantly coloured repaired area of the plasterwork.

The programme of work at Great Potheridge was made possible by the enthusiasm of the owners, the Clinton Devon Estate, with grant aid from English Heritage; it was carried out by Stonecraft Conservation. The ceiling is at present physically stable, but the condition of the nails visible in the damaged area of the central panel should be monitored, as also should the condition of the reinforcing mesh in the repairs of the ceiling structure. Recent modifications to the roof structure may lead to changes in the stresses affecting the joists above the ceiling, and this will similarly need to be watched. As far as the aesthetic impact of the paintings is concerned, this would be greatly enhanced if the darkened varnish remaining on the northern and central panels were removed.

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