

DEVON BUILDINGS GROUP

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SECRETARY'S REPORT

There has been more than the usual gap between this Newsletter and the previous one. As a result, I have both an Annual Conference and an Annual General Meeting to report.

In June, the Group held its fourth Annual Conference in Barnstaple, largely organized by Pauline Brain and Derek Abbott, and concerned with addressing the recent history and immediate future of conservation and development in the town. Attendance was a little disappointing, particularly after the very large number of members who attended the Conference on farm buildings in the previous year: it may be that, on sunny Saturdays in early summer, the fancy of DBG members turns to the Devon countryside rather than the Devon townscape. Whatever the reason, those who did not manage to get to the Conference missed a morning of very lively lectures, starting with a historical introduction to the town by Professor Joyce Youngs, and continuing with papers offering different perspectives on Barnstaple's development in recent years. The afternoon tour featured a whole sequence of interesting buildings, many of them, particularly the industrial buildings we looked at, relatively little known but certainly deserving to be known better.

As a coda to the afternoon we visited Tawstock church. Tawstock has the most remarkable collection of monuments in any parish church in Devon or Cornwall, most of them of the Bouchier-Wrey family, the earls of Bath, ranging in date from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. Splendid as they all appear, the physical and structural condition of many of these monuments is worrying, and, indeed, dangerous, as was explained on the Conference tour by Bruce Induni, who conducted the Group around the church. The Secretary of the Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches, Marion Bethel, was among the party and, within a few days, had contacted the incumbent about the condition of the monuments. As a result, the church commissioned a preliminary report from Bruce Induni and this will form the basis for a programme of repair and conservation. Although the costs involved are large, the importance of the monuments means that funds can be sought, and should be available from national

sources. Tenders for the necessary repair work, which will be phased, have been invited and, as I understand it, the initial stage of the programme has been agreed. Certainly, we can feel pleased that the Group has been instrumental in beginning the process that should secure the long-term survival of the Tawstock monuments. Our involvement at Tawstock may be seen as an earnest of the Group's expressed desire to become more involved in the future of Devon's rich and important heritage of churches and chapels. This will find further expression in this year's Annual Conference, The Rural Parish Church in Devon, which will be held at Kelly House and Kelly church on Saturday 12 May. By now, all members should have received a preliminary notice of the Conference, and I will send out full details nearer the date to all those wishing to attend.

The Group's Fourth AGM was held at Broadhembury in East Devon at the end of October. Nearly fifty members attended, drawn, no doubt, by one of the most picturesque villages in the whole county. Historically, it is also one of the most interesting, originating in its present form as a late medieval planned settlement, and, since the last years of the nineteenth century, an estate village scrupulously looked after by the Drewe family. The afternoon tour of the village was organized and conducted by Jo Cox, and it was possible to visit the interiors of a number of the houses. We finished with afternoon tea in Broadhembury House as guests of Mr and Mrs Drewe, who generous interest and support made the whole day possible.

The AGM itself saw the retirement of two members of the Committee. Allen van der Steen retired as a result of the greatly increased work of his architectural practice - a success which it is a pleasure to be able to report, but which involves an inevitable loss to the work of the Group. Peter Dare also stepped down from the Committee. As many members will know by now, Peter is taking up a two-year contract as Master Mason responsible for the completion of Brisbane Cathedral in Australia. Brisbane was designed by John Loughborough Pearson, one of the most distinguished Victorian church architects and, of course, the architect of Truro Cathedral. As a Victorian specialist, I am personally delighted that the completion of one of the last great nineteenth-century cathedrals should be in such expert hands, but it does mean that Peter's expertise will be lost not only to the Devon Buildings Group for the next few years, but to the West Country as a whole - and that is going to be a gap that will be difficult to fill. In addition, Isabel Richardson retired as the DBG Treasurer. In any voluntary society the office of Treasurer tends to be one of the most thankless, and it is always the post for which volunteers are at their scarcest. In Isabel, the Group has been very fortunate, and it is largely through her management that the DBG's finances have been handled so efficiently over the last three years, and that our present financial position is so healthy. I am also conscious, as Secretary, of how much work Isabel has saved me, particularly as she has combined the role of Treasurer with that of dealing with the Group's membership. We all owe her a considerable debt of gratitude. I am glad to be able to say that, although she has retired as Treasurer, Isabel is continuing as a member of the Committee, which should be a considerable comfort to her successor as Treasurer, Mark Lewis.

Since reaching our one hundredth case, the Group's casework has continued to grow. Several have concerned Conservation Areas. These cases have made clear how fragile the character of many such Areas actually is, and how limited Local Authority powers actually are, particularly when it comes to resisting pressure for new development - which can frequently be over-development. Members may

recall the DBG's involvement in the case of 9 Colleton Crescent, Exeter, where permission was granted on Appeal to build town houses in one of the gardens behind this fine Georgian terrace, despite its II* listing and the fact that it is in the middle of one of the best Conservation Areas in Exeter. A similar application was made to build a house in the garden of 6 Pennsylvania Park, again in a Conservation Area, but this time at the rear of a row of houses described by Bridget Cherry in the recently revised *Buildings of England* volume for Devon as 'the *pièce de résistance* of Georgian Exeter. We wrote objecting strongly to the proposal, but there was a serious worry that the Colleton Crescent decision might have been seen as a precedent for allowing the scheme to proceed. Fortunately, probably as a result of the slump in the housing market, the application was withdrawn before the matter could come to the test.

Commercial developers are also hungry for building space within Conservation Areas. Mark Lewis's article in the present *Newsletter* describes the very worrying developments that are about to transform the heart of Tiverton, all of which is a Conservation Area. In Ilfracombe, Carkeek Developments Limited, of Plymouth, applied to demolish the Victorian house that had once been the vicarage of Holy Trinity church, and that stands on the edge of the central Ilfracombe Conservation Area. Carkeek proposed to replace the vicarage and its substantial grounds, with a thumpingly designed supermarket set in an expanse of tarmaced carpark. Along with the North Devon Conservation Society and local residents, we objected, and ensured that protests came from the national amenity societies as well. North Devon District Council turned down the whole scheme. The town centre Conservation Area in Dawlish has been less fortunate. Whereas at Ilfracombe and at Pennsylvania Park, the buildings directly concerned were listed as well as being in a Conservation Area, the Dawlish case involved unlisted buildings. The Royal Hotel and the Richmond Hotel stand on opposite corners immediately next to Brunel's fine little station, with which they form an important group. The Royal, though totally altered internally, was the end building of a mid-nineteenth-century terrace, the rest of which is listed; the Richmond is a solidly characteristic later Victorian hotel, with a single storey contemporary public bar attached, still retaining a bust of Prince Albert in a niche over the entrance. Developers applied to demolish both hotels. Although neither fulfil the necessary criteria for listing, they are precisely the kind of building that Conservation Area legislation was designed to protect. Along with the Victorian Society, we objected to the applications. Unfortunately, Teignbridge gave permission for the demolition of the Royal. We have not been informed of the decision on the Richmond, but its future is clearly uncertain.

Meanwhile, and inevitably it seems, applications to convert redundant farm buildings to residential use have continued to roll in. Over recent months the Group has objected to conversion proposals at: Higher Hatch Farm, Loddiswell; Wooda Farm, Kings Nympton; New Park Farm, Molland; Wallon House, Drewsteignton; Wonson Farm, Throwleigh; and Lovaton Farm, South Tawton - and these only constitute a selection of cases where the conversions were particularly damaging to the historical identity of the buildings. Among these new cases, that of Chaddlehanger Farm in Lamerton, West Devon, is particularly difficult. The building affected is a longhouse, listed Grade II*, and of outstanding interest. It seems to be of fifteenth-century date and was probably abandoned as a dwelling place around 1600, since when it has served as an agricultural building without further subdivision or alteration. A striking feature of its layout is that the wall between the hall end and the passage is secondary to the original structure, and there is no wall between shippon and passage. This leads to the conclusion

that, in its original form, there were no structural divisions between the shippon, the passage, and the hall, which must have been separated by low screens. An extraordinary, and perhaps unique, survival of a primitive longhouse form, Chaddlehanger is threatened by conversion. The case was particularly difficult because the owner was not just another landowner or farmer keen to take advantage of last year's property boom in order to diversify their income. The owner, an elderly lady, needed to convert the longhouse so that she might have some financial support in retirement. Even so, the initial proposals were too drastic and we wrote to West Devon Borough Council urging that a new approach be adopted. Negotiations followed, involving Devon County and English Heritage, and a scheme emerged that envisaged minimum conversion, principally for holiday let, confined to the hall end of the longhouse - that is, to that part of the building that, historically, had had a domestic function. There is some possibility that the Landmark Trust may be interested in buying the building on these terms. Even so, it seems a great pity that so unusual and important a building should be altered from its present state at all. Not so many years ago, an argument could have been made for its becoming an English Heritage Building In Care - but the present government's opposition to this function of English Heritage makes any such argument impossible.

A disappointing development for efforts to protect historic farm buildings from residential conversion, was the result of the Appeal against the Dartmoor National Park Authority's refusal of planning permission for the conversion of the impressive nineteenth-century farm group at Sanduck, in Lustleigh parish. The refusal had stemmed directly from the Authority's revised policy on traditional agricultural buildings, which the Group supported and which was described in detail in the last *Newsletter*. The Inspector's decision to uphold the Appeal seems to have resulted in a worrying loss of confidence in the National Park Authority, and there is pressure for the revised policy to be abandoned. Such a response to the Appeal decision is unjustified: there were special circumstances in the Sanduck case, not least that the proposals had been prepared under the unrevised policy, and the Inspector recognized this in his findings. Although the decision was disappointing, it does not constitute a precedent and should not be allowed to deflect the revised policy.

Another old case involving farm building conversion, and one that is going to depend upon the outcome of a Public Inquiry, is that of Ayshford Farm in East Devon. Ayshford is a group of buildings of major importance, centred on the medieval manor house of the Ayshford family and including a fine barn, with a jointed-cruck and wind-braced roof of seven bays, and a delightful little Perpendicular chapel. The Group objected strongly to proposals to convert the barn to housing: if architectural groups like that of Ayshford, all of it listed, cannot be protected from major alteration, then nowhere is safe. East Devon District Council had no such worries, however, and granted permission; as a result the scheme was called in by the Department of the Environment on the advice of English Heritage, and the case will be decided by Public Inquiry. The DBG will be represented and will give evidence. We must hope for a favourable result: if consent is given it will be a major setback.

Chris Brooks

SILVERTON MILL

Silverton Mill is set at the boundary of Broadclyst and Silverton parishes on the road linking the two villages. The site is owned by the National Trust and the mill is run by the St. Regis Paper Company (U.K.) Ltd. It relies on the water of the River Culm, as do the Hele and other paper mills in the same valley.

On the mill site there are six houses, a nineteenth-century office block, a laboratory and the present large mill - mainly corrugated iron - with smaller ancillary buildings. A survey of the cottages by the National Trust, and the archive work which followed, took the history of the site back as far as the sixteenth century.

A lease dated 26 April in the sixteenth year of the reign of Henry VIII, that is 1524, shows that 'the Mylne place' by 'Elleries Bridge' was held by a man named Rauffe Bennet and included 'two tenements...with a garden and two horchardes contayning one acre.' It would seem that the property remained in the Bennet family for some time. A document of 1590 states that 'Joane Bennet, wydoe to Henry Bennet' held

two tenements called the Mille Place being a convenyent house for a yeoman very comodyously situate on the river called Colme hard by Etherlyes Bridge with Orchard, Garden and all outhouses answerable.

Tenements at the Bridge are mentioned in a lease dated 1668. This was drawn up between Edmund Prideaux of 'Fforde Abbye', Amy his wife (of the first part) and John Hawkins (of the second part). Prideaux granted to Hawkins, 'all that cottage called Tapperne House lying near Etherlyes Bridge and the tofte of another cottage there.'

It has been suggested that this Tappern House could possibly be the seventeenth-century part of the office still standing at the mill. This is known as the Cottage Office Block, and contains the remnants of a seventeenth-century cross-passage house, the oldest surviving building on the mill site. (Ellerhayes Bridge, crossing the Culm just below the mill, is also seventeenth century, listed grade II.) The Cottage Office Block has a passage with an old stack backing on to it, and a room to the right with a continuing thick cob front wall. The room beyond this was possibly part of the original house but the wall has been removed in later alterations. To the left of the stack the cottage has been truncated by a road, which was pushed through in the 1970s when a road was pushed through as the mill buildings expanded to the east (figure 1). The remaining roof timbers of this house also suggest a seventeenth-century date: one truss remains, very solid, with a mortised, tenoned and pegged joint at the apex which is much lower than the present roof level. It is positioned over the east partition of the cross-passage and is closed on both sides by daub with a lime skim on it. The stack is ashlar with a stone dripline angled for thatch, and also has remnants of daub and lime skim on it. The rear part of the present building, which had a corner fireplace on the first floor, seems to have been added in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, and is shown on the 1842 Broadclyst Tithe map. The crosswing and shop were built in the mid nineteenth century, though accurate dating is made difficult by the extensive alterations that have been made to all the additions.



Figure 1. Silverton Mill; Cottage Office Block.

Documentary evidence shows that the mill burnt down c.1730-40 but the house appears to have remained intact. The present day building is certainly situated near Etherleigh Bridge, yet it is far enough away from the mill (rebuilt on the same site) to have survived a fire. In 1758, Hawkins surrendered the tenement to Sir Thomas Dyke Acland. Further information about the mill itself and its history is provided in a letter dated 8 November 1762, written from London by John Knight, who had once held the rights to the mill, explaining how he had lost those rights. Some 'unavoidable misfortune' apparently befell Knight and he was forced to take a second mortgage on both the mill and the tenement from Samuel Lyne, an attorney of Launceston, Cornwall. It was at this point that the mill burnt down and 'security became scanty'. The fire occurred some time before 1740, when William Moore took over the property. In effect, Moore swindled Knight out of the property, as Knight's letter goes on to explain:

'....the administrator of the mortgagee....proposed to take a less sum than was really due provided prompt payment was made; upon this I employed Moore, ye druggist, who offered his service to settle the affair in trust for me, this he did for a sum considerably less than was really due but fraudulently and contrary to the many repeated promises and letters produced from under his own hand, he takes ye assignment to himself, proceeded to eject from both the tenement and Mills and turned his sister out of doors without any manner of compassion or ever afterwards taking the least notice of her, though reduced to straights and difficulties, so that you here behold me divested of my Estates.'

Knight records that Moore had held the property ever since 1740, albeit dishonestly, and he describes how previously the Estate 'on which ye Mills stood' was worth about £4 per year. It included 'ye tucking Mill House...which when he took possession was well tenanted and in good repair, that he has since let down and I think he ought to build it up again.' This is the first reference to the mill's use as a tucking or fulling mill, producing woollen cloth. The associated house, Knight states, had an annual value of forty shillings.

In a letter of 29 April 1763, Sir Thomas replied to Mr. Knight, inquiring 'whether you would relinquish your Right or rebuild the mills'. Sir Thomas's letter goes on:

'I have a fine job of work on my hands as the Parish has a long charge on ye premises for arrears of taxes as the premises are quite overrun with brambles and briars, but however, 'tis better late than never to take some steps to restore it to its former condition, for which purpose I have thoughts of rebuilding the Mills etc.'

In the October of 1763, Richard Morgan took out a lease on the mill, undertaking to rebuild them within two years, 'in the same manner or near it as the said Mills were before they burnt down.' In the Indenture the mills are referred to as grain mills, and the document speaks of 'All that plot of land on which there lately stood a set of water Grist Mills.' Morgan evidently fulfilled his undertaking: a mortgage agreement between Morgan and St. Barb Sydenham Esq. dated February 1766 states that 'the said Richard Morgan hath erected, rebuilt and compleatly finished the said water Grist Mills', and adds that he 'is erecting on the same premises and which is near compleated another set of Mills for the dressing of leather.'

In 1768, St. Barb Sydenham surrendered his mortgage to Morgan who granted the property to Thomas Burrow. He, in turn, mortgaged it to Mrs. Elizabeth Ffort. From this transaction we learn that the holding consisted of 'Grist Mills with the Dwelling House, Cellar, Linney, Stable and Hogstyes.' Burrow and Morgan are both named in a sale notice printed in the *Exeter Flying Post* in January 1783. The sale involved:

All those good accustomed mills commonly called by the name of Etherleigh Mills, consisting of four pairs of stones, mounted on spur tackle, 2 Double-Ring Water Wheels and every article for flour-dressing and girting, situate in the Parish of Broadclyst, in the County of Devon...for further particulars apply to Mr. Thomas Burrow the owner thereof or Mr. Richard Morgan of Bradninch aforesaid.'

In October 1783, a paper mill was established alongside the grain mills by Mr. William Matthews of Huxham. He had come from Hele Mill which he had converted from flour manufacture to papermaking with the help of Thomas Dewdney of Newton St. Cyres in 1767. A deed drawn up between Sir Thomas Dyke Acland and William Matthews mentions the grist mills as well as 'The Paper Mills and Mill House lately erected by the said William Matthews'.



Figure 2. Silverton Mill; Bridge House

William Matthews died in 1790 and was succeeded by John Matthews. A counterpart lease made between the latter and Sir Thomas in 1811 refers to a fire which occurred during John Matthews' ownership which, at that date, had continued for twenty-one years:

in consideration of the expense which the said John Matthews hath been put to in consequence of some of the buildings...having been destroyed by fire, Sir Thomas Dyke Acland doth demiseall that plot of ground with the dwelling house and water grist mills sometimes since erected.

The present day Bridge House (figure 2) was built in 1828-29 by John Matthews. In February 1828 it was agreed that Matthews be granted 'Mill Meadow', part of Mill Tenement 'late in the occupation of James Veitch', and on that site he would:

at his own expense within one year from the date thereof erect and build on the said premises...a good and substantial dwelling house with suitable and proper outbuildings and in all respects finish the same in a workmanlike manner according to the accustomed rules of building at the expense of at least £600 on a plan to be approved by the said Sir Thomas Dyke Acland.

A later deed confirms that Matthews built the house, and the tithe map shows it standing in part of a field called Mill Meadow (figure 3). The Broadclyst Tithe Apportionment is dated 1842; John Matthews the elder died in the previous year, so the Apportionment shows the property owned by Sir Thomas Dyke Acland and occupied by the Trustees of the late John Matthews. Subsequently, these Trustees assigned the property to Charles Matthews and Richard Martin, a papermaking

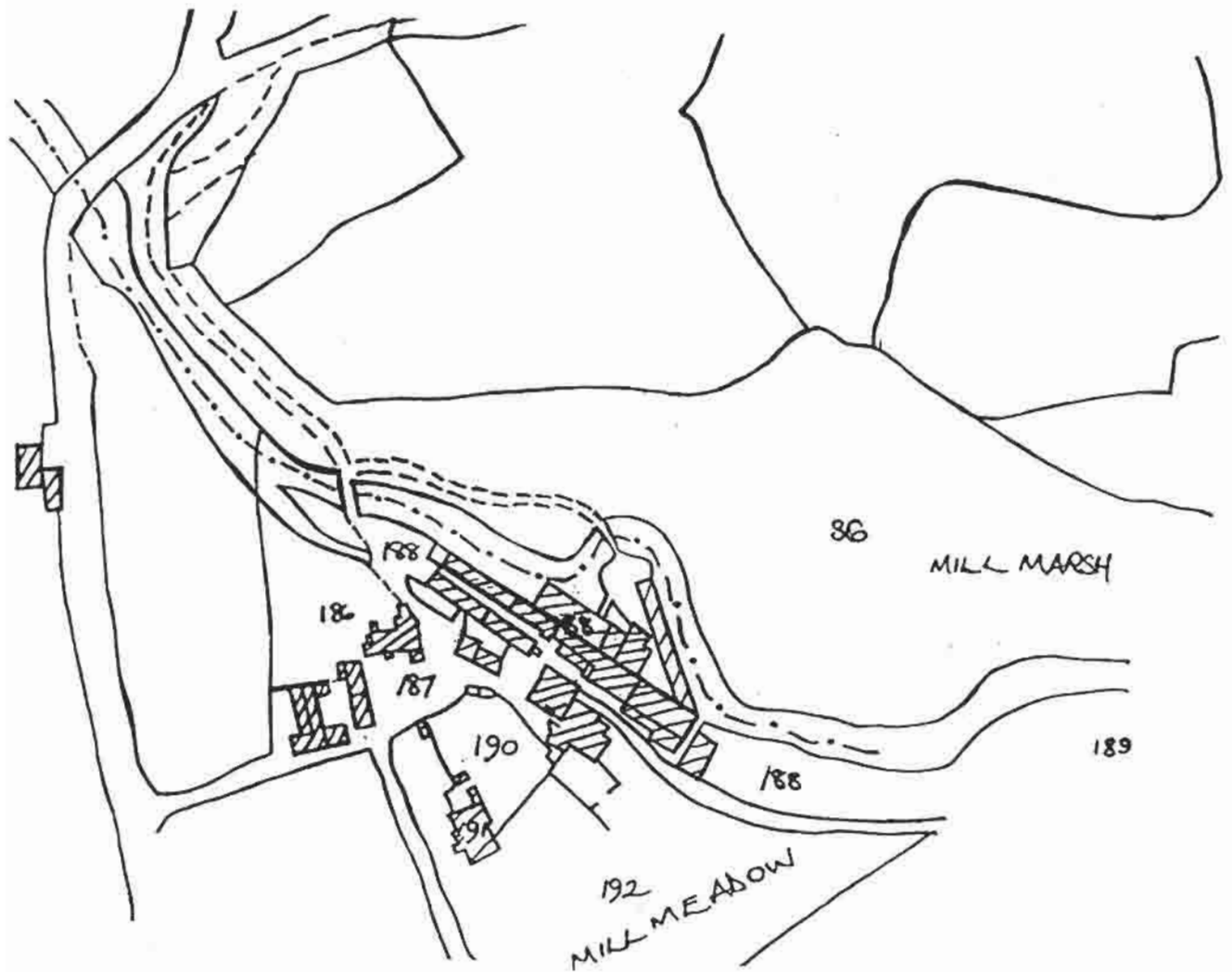
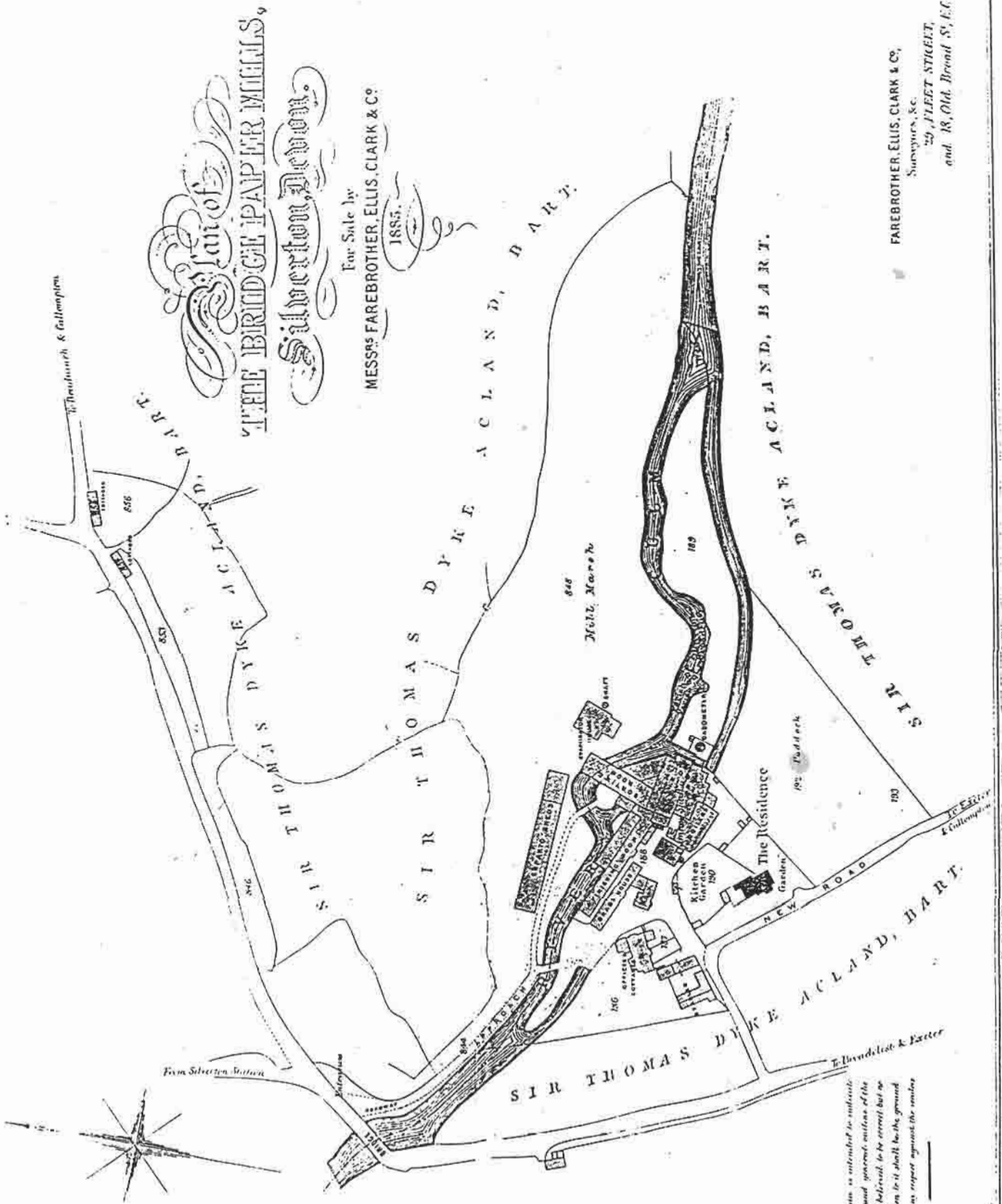


Figure 3. Silverton Mill from the Broadclyst Tithe Map, 1842.

partnership. Under the entry for Broadclyst in White's 1850 *Directory of Devonshire*, the firm appears as Matthews and Martyn, paper manufacturers, of Bridge Mills. The partnership added to the existing buildings: an 1857 counterpart lease mentions that Mill Tenement - as opposed to Bridge House - now possessed '2 new-built stables'; and in 1864 the partners were granted a piece of land in order to construct a railway siding for the mill.

The Matthews and Martyn partnership was dissolved in 1873, to be succeeded by John Matthews Drew. The deed of October 1873 by which he took over the property grants him the 'dwelling house with the stables, coach houses, cottage, paper mills, engine house, gas works, store, yards, gardens and offices and a field or close of land.' The document also mentions cottages in the occupation of Richard Martyn or his tenants or the workmen of the firm, and lists all the implements of the mill, which, the text tells us, is now more commonly known as 'Bridge Mills' - its name in the 1850 *Directory* - rather than the earlier 'Etherleigh Bridge Mills'. Included in the agreement are sixty acres of the adjoining Pitt or Penstone Farm, which John Matthews had leased in 1830. John



Laiton
THE BRIDGE PAPER MILLS,
Silverton, Devon.

For Sale by
MESSRS FAREBROTHER, ELLIS, CLARK & CO.
 1885.

FAREBROTHER, ELLIS, CLARK & CO.,
 Surveyors, &c.
 29, FLEET STREET,
 and 18, Old Broad St, E.C.

NOTE. This plan is intended to illustrate the position and general outline of the property & is believed to be correct but no exception taken in it shall be the ground of claim in any respect against the vendor.

J. No. 104, London

Figure 4. Auctioneer's plan of Silverton Mill, 1885.

Matthews Drew's proprietorship of the mills was a disaster. In her book *Paper in Devon*, Susan Chitty states that Drew was completely inexperienced in papermaking. Nothing daunted, he took over Kensham Mills as well as Bridge Mills. This merely compounded his failure. In the event, he lost not only all his own money but that of his brother as well.

As a result of Drew's failure the mill was sold in 1885 by Messrs. Farebrother, Ellis, Clarke and Co. of London. Usefully, the schedule of the sale and the associated plan show the purpose of each building in the mill complex (figure 4). The schedule shows that the mill's costly machinery was capable of turning out about 1500 tons of paper annually. The mill buildings are described as being 'substantially constructed of brick' and comprising:

a large engine house about 85ft by 95ft ... Boiling and Bleaching houses and Sorting Rooms, 2 Machine Houses and Finishing Rooms. Steam Boiler House and Two Lofty Chimney Shafts. Stores and Esparto Sheds and other buildings, several foremen's and workmen's cottages with offices, stabling and extensive yards.

The auctioneers stressed that, despite Drew's failure, the mill was an economic proposition and could be reopened at a few hours notice. The mill remained in paper production, taken over by the partnership of Messrs. Hall and West, followed shortly afterwards by the Hansard Union Paper Company, the firm responsible for the paper used in Hansard Parliamentary Reports.

In the schedule of 1885, Bridge House is called 'The Residence'. It is described as being 'very pleasantly situated with carriage approach from the new road to Cullompton' and as including a 'Large Walled Kitchen Garden, Flower Garden, Lawn and Paddock'. The layout of the house still remains substantially as it was in 1885, and is that of the original plan of 1828 (figure 5): on the ground floor, 'Entrance Hall, Dining Room, Breakfast Room, Kitchen, Pantry, Stone Paved Dairy and Scullery, Good Cellarage under'; on the first floor, '5 Bed Rooms, Study, Servants Bed Room and Room in Attic and W.C.', along with 'a Secondary Staircase' which 'leads to the Servants' Rooms'.

James Hall was in residence in Bridge House until October 1892. In that year the mill was purchased by Reed and Smith, and William Henry Reed is recorded as living there in 1893. Many features of the house appear to date from alterations made at this time. The original sashes were replaced by bow windows in the major ground floor rooms, with stained glass decoration of leaves or birds. The balustrade on the main staircase was replaced with a heavy newel and square balusters. The oval lantern in the landing ceiling was retained, and the cellars, with their wine bins, and the attic were kept unaltered. The king post roof structure, however, appears to be late nineteenth century, made of softwood, but incorporating a few reused hardwood purlins - presumably from the earlier roof.

According to Elijah Chick's *A History of Methodism in Exeter and its Neighbourhood*, published in 1907, William Henry Reed was responsible for building the Methodist chapel in the mill complex, converting it from a barn that had formerly served Bridge Cottage, the seventeenth-century house. Apparently, Reed wished to have a place of worship near the mill, but encountered opposition from the Church of England. The chapel was first opened for worship at Easter 1893,

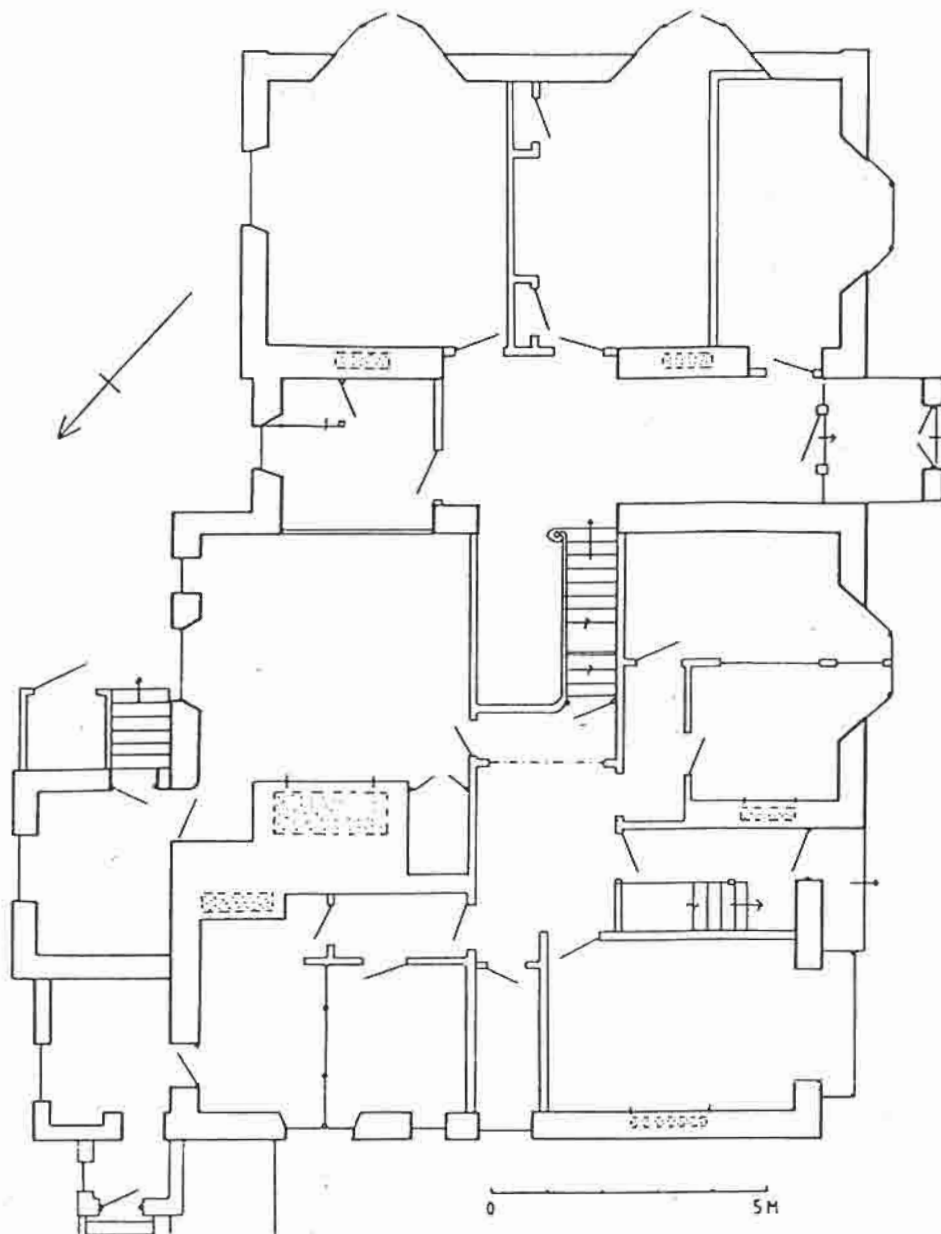


Figure 5. Silverton Mill; ground floor plan of Bridge House.

with the extraordinarily-named Reverend E. Sinzininex preaching. The chapel had a constant membership of thirteen people, with Reed himself becoming the Society Steward. The chapel building still survives (figure 6): it is of solid stone and retains evidence of its use as a barn in the blocked openings opposing each other in its long sides. As well as blocking these entrances, a single doorway was inserted at the east end, and windows with margin lights, similar to those in the first floor of Bridge House, were put in. The chapel continued in use until 1964 and several people in the district still remember attending it, including some of the mill workers. After closure, it remained empty for some years, until being converted to its present use as a laboratory.

As well as the spiritual welfare of his workers, Reed also seems to have been concerned about their housing. The farm building on the west side of the chapel was converted into two small cottages: the walls were raised, additions



Figure 6. Silverton Mill; the Chapel

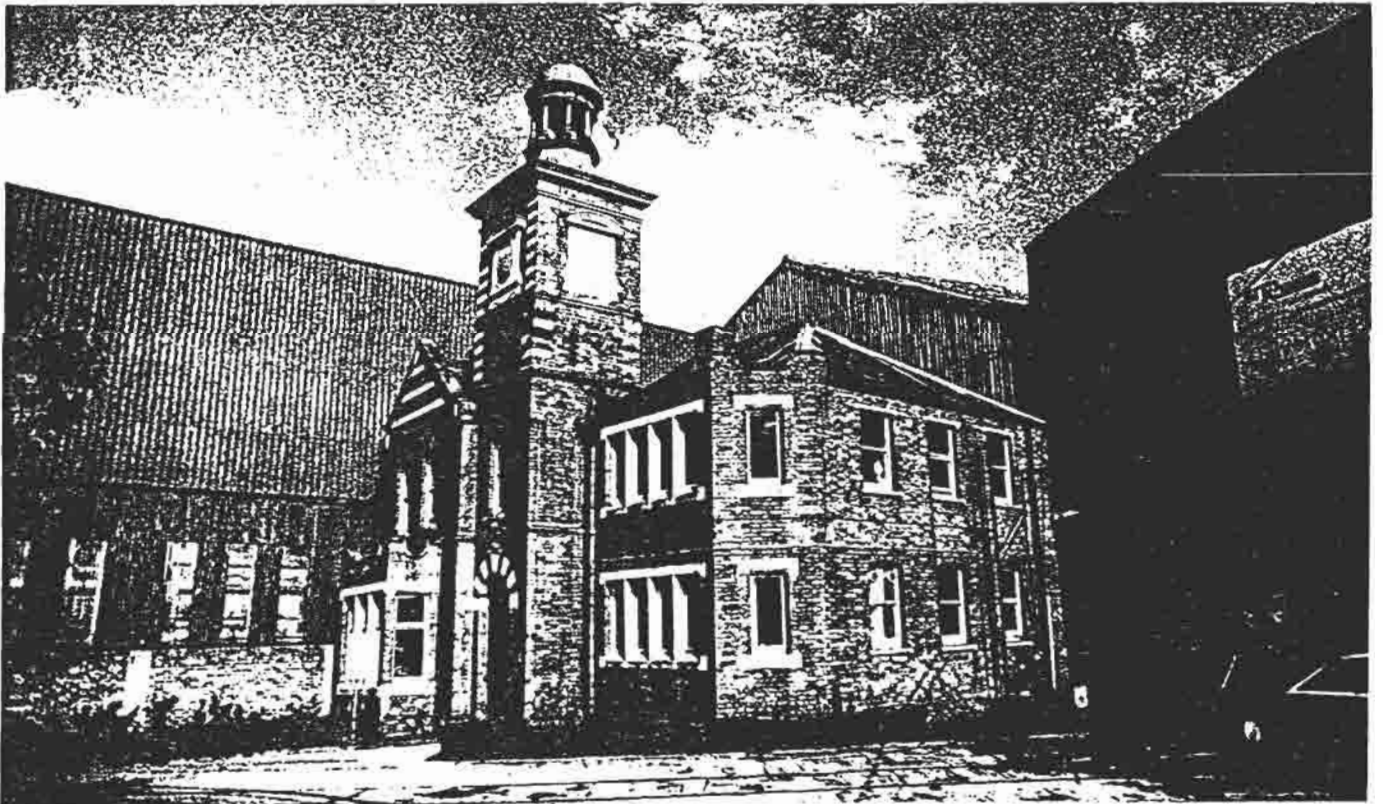


Figure 7. Silverton Mill; the Main Office Block.

made to the rear of the building, and long gardens provided. The cottages have been much altered and little precise dating evidence survives; however, from the less changed of the two, Chapel Cottage, it was seen that the cottages were created around 1900. In addition to this housing provision, Reed was also interested in the Ellerhayes development, on the road to Silverton from the mill, which was built between 1900 and 1910.

The grandest of Reed's architectural works at the mills was the Main Office Block, built in the Queen's Jubilee year of 1897. The position chosen, almost on the edge of the mill leat, was an odd one, as this part of the site was liable to flooding. The building still survives (figure 7), though now dwarfed by the modern mill building next to it. It is built of red brick with a clock tower and cupola. The left side was always two storeyed but the right was originally single storey only, the present first floor bricks being held by a slightly different mortar. The original appearance of the Main Office Block is clear in a photograph of c.1900 included in Anthony Taylor's 1987 publication, *Culm Valley Album*. The drain pipe hoppers on the building are dated 1897. Among the internal fittings, the ground floor fireplace is prestigious but odd, being set back in a bay with a window each side. It has a moulded surround with three panels above the mantelshelf and a frieze of fruit and foliage over these. The manager's lavatory, though a later addition, similarly asserts social prestige, with the seat and cistern on decorative cast iron brackets, as is the marbled porcelain basin with its shell-shaped soap dishes.

Since the Second World War there have been a number of changes to the older buildings in the mill complex, as well as substantial new building. In the 1950s, the stables that were recorded as being 'new' in 1875 were demolished and a house built using part of the walls. Housing was subsequently proposed in the field opposite Bridge House but only one house was completed, and it reverted to office use in 1989. Bridge Cottage, formerly occupied by the engineer and manager, is now the Cottage Office Block; Bridge House itself has been used as offices since the 1970s; Chapel Cottage was turned into an overall store and rest room in the 1980s. Only two cottages on the mill site remain occupied. Of the industrial buildings on the site, the most significant loss has been the 120 feet tall brick chimney used by the plant: because of a change over to oil burners, it was pulled down in the mid-1960s and replaced by a 100 feet steel tube clad in aluminium.

Despite the two known fires, despite vicissitudes and alterations, Silverton Mill has managed to survive, unlike its counterparts at Kensham and Huxham, both destroyed in the last decade of the nineteenth century and not rebuilt. The changing uses of the Bridge Mills complex are characteristic of such sites, as Jean Chitty has pointed out.

The expansion of the paper mills related closely to existing fulling and grist mills, since their very existence was a guarantee of a proven, viable site. Also much of their machinery could be adapted to papermaking. Sometimes a paper mill could be found adjacent to or under one roof with other mills, but as the woollen industry declined they tended increasingly to take over the fulling mills.

Silverton Mill continues to prosper on a site where mills have stood, and a range of manufacturing processes have been carried out, since at least the sixteenth century.

Isabel Richardson and Su Huxley

We would like to thank the following for their help: Lady Acland, The National Trust, Devon Record Office, Roger Thorne, staff at Silverton Mill and the West Country Studies Library.

The two maps (figures 3 and 4) are reproduced with kind permission of the DRO.

TIVERTON TRANSFORMED

Tiverton has grown throughout the years as a small market town coping with and catering for the needs of the local community, both town and country. From the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when Tiverton was a major textile centre, the town has always supported a significant level of industry, while retaining major economic links with the agriculture of the surrounding countryside - a connection focused in the Pannier Market. Its three substantial Anglican churches - one medieval, one eighteenth century, and one nineteenth century - reflect the town's steady development; its importance as a centre of prosperous dissent is evident in its imposing nonconformist churches; civic pride finds its clearest expression in the swagger of its 1860s Town Hall. Larger buildings apart, however, much of Tiverton's architectural character derives from the cumulative effect of its more modest buildings, particularly from the mix of houses, workshops, and shops that surround the central market area.

In many ways, particularly in the centre, Tiverton is an old-fashioned town. That might well be about to alter irrevocably. Changing attitudes over the last few years, and changing aspirations in the community - whether it can still be called 'local' or not is debatable - underpin a shift in the town's character. As the influx of people to the South West continues to increase, Tiverton has obviously been targeted as a centre within Mid Devon which can withstand considerable growth and development. There has already been substantial investment in a Business Park - that characteristic high-tech product of the 1980s - and more is planned; a rash of industrial units has spread around the margins of the town; large housing estates are in prospect; a considerable expansion in shopping facilities is demanded. The construction of the North Devon Link road, Tiverton Parkway station and the Eastern Distributor spur off the Link road to feed the proposed Southern Relief Road, are all part of a Master Plan to 'utilise the full potential of the area'.

The results of all this are about to hit the historic centre of the town in a sequence of new proposals. The Pannier Market project, the Southern Relief road - both DBG cases - a multi-storey carpark at Phoenix Lane, pedestrianisation of the town centre, an enhancement scheme for Castle Street, and a large-scale extension of the Town Hall, are all planned for the early 1990s. Castle Street is already in the process of transformation. The electricity and telephone cables are being put underground and the poles removed, new cobbles are being

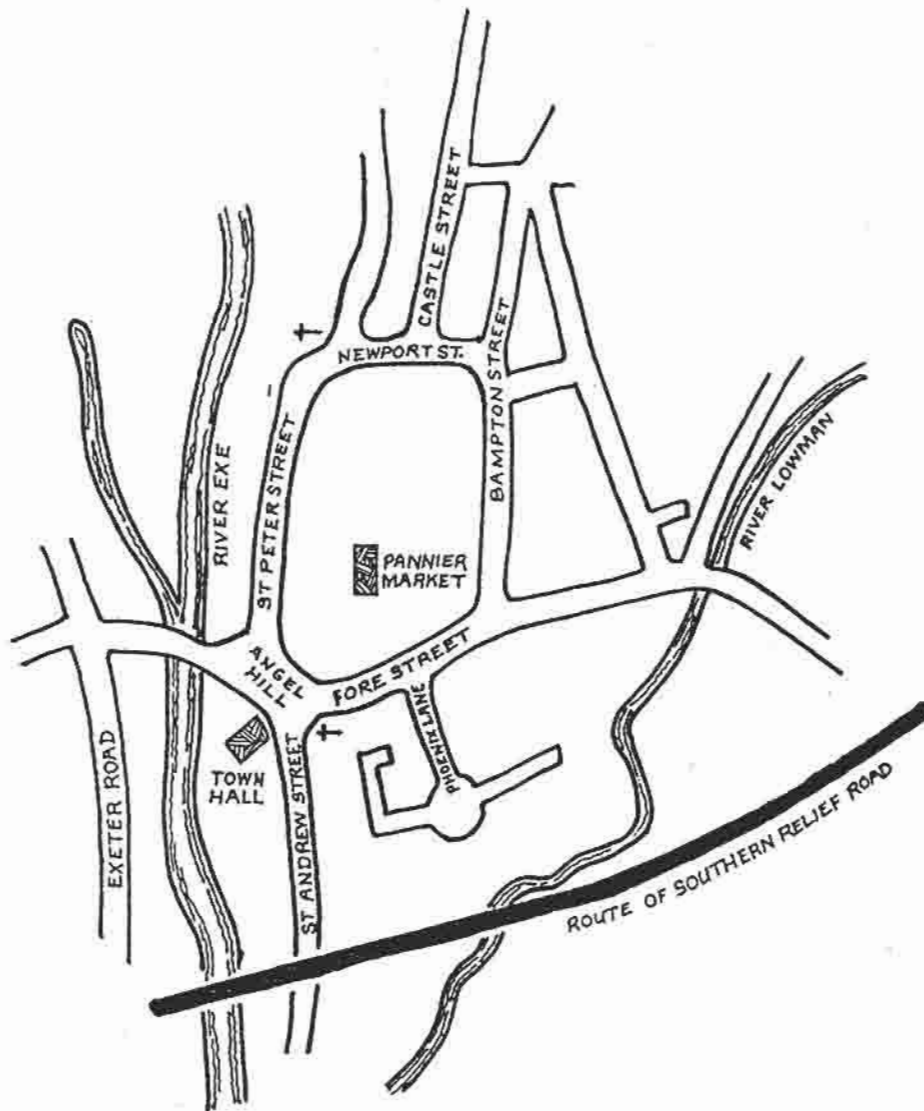


Figure 8.
Central Tiverton.

laid alongside the old cobbles bordering the town leat, which runs down the middle of the street, and walkways laid across the tarmac where the bridge crosses the leat. Efforts are directed towards the removal of latter-day trappings in order to accentuate what has been identified as the main historic feature of the street, the town leat. Well-intentioned as all this is, it does threaten to turn Castle Street into a heritage ghetto, unrealy set apart from any touch of the twentieth century.

The thinking behind the Castle Street enhancement looks particularly odd when set against Rosehaugh Heritage's proposed development of the Pannier Market, on the other side of Newport Street. Here the leat plays no significant role whatsoever. Instead, the emphasis is purely on commercial development; 'combined residential and retail developments are not economically viable', we are told. Curious how so many town centres - Tiverton included - have survived so long, with their unviable mix of shops and houses. The planned development intends to build on a section of the town centre which is believed to be virgin, never before built on, as far as is known, and for many centuries an open market trading area. It would make sense to provide adequate funding for an archaeological dig and research to attempt to establish what may have gone on in this area in former years, before the site is irrevocably disturbed and overlaid with concrete and tarmac. At present such funding is uncertain.

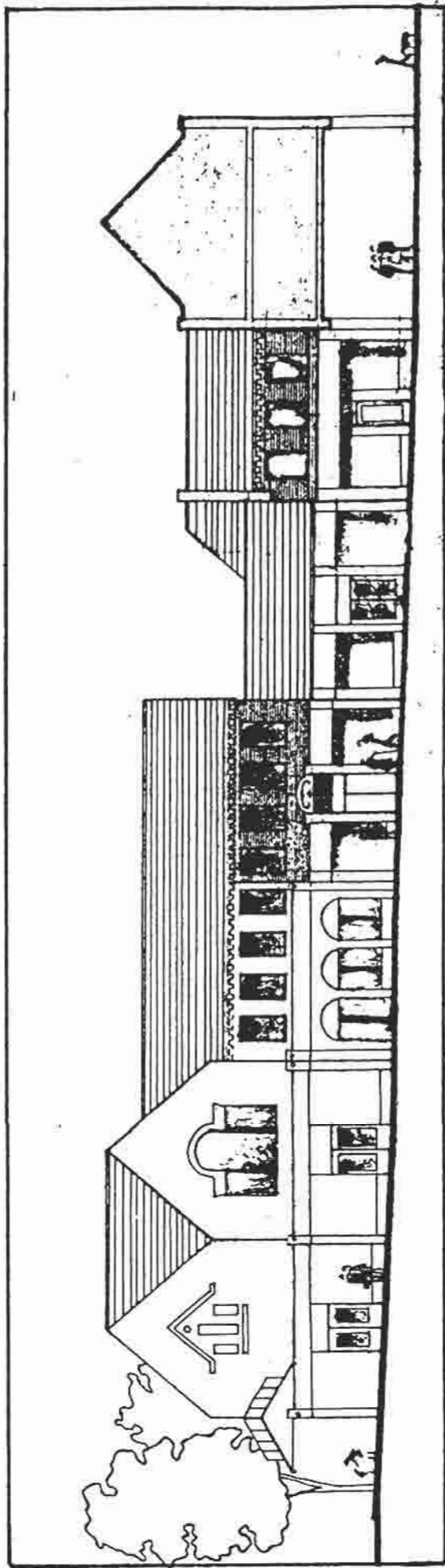
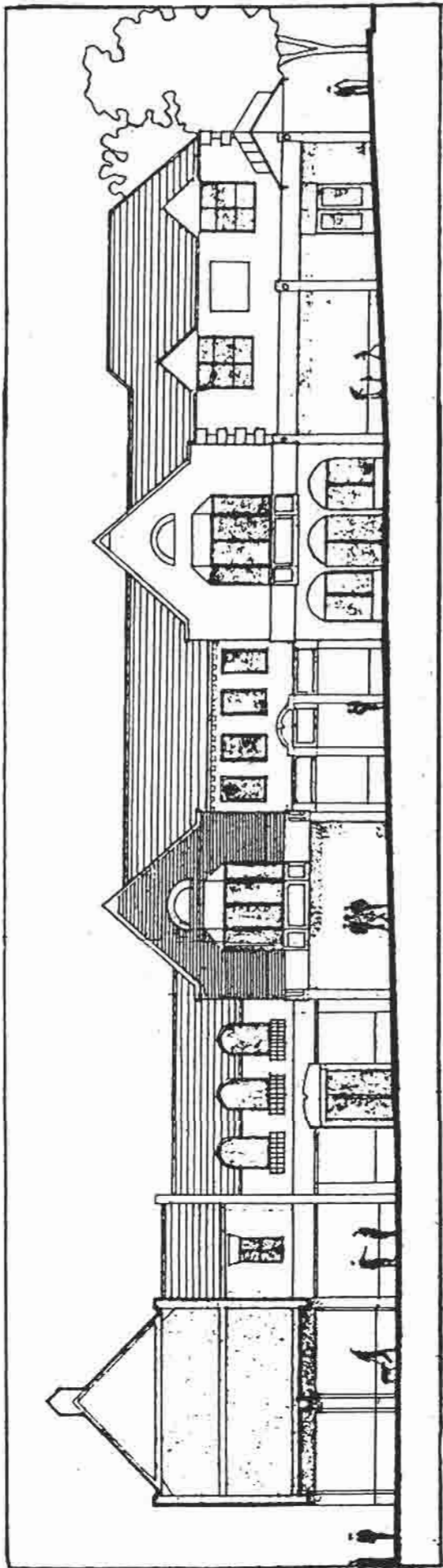


Figure 9. East and west elevations from Fitz Benoy's designs for new shops flanking the Pannier Market, Tiverton.

The developers' plans involve the demolition of a listed, open-fronted line of stalls running parallel to the main Pannier Market building, knocking down a nineteenth-century terrace of cottages immediately behind these stalls, and clearing away a network of alleyways which connects the market area to St Peter's Street. Through these alleyways, at present, runs 'ye olde leat' from heritage-conscious Castle Street. It is not spectacular. But it is characteristic Tiverton townscape - close-textured, informal, accretive; and if the planners think that the leat is a major enough historic feature to centre an enhancement scheme around in Castle Street, why is it not being treated as a historic feature of the Pannier Market site ?

The proposed development, for which Rosehaugh have employed the Newark firm of Fitz Benoy as architects, plans to 'restore the market building to its former glory along the lines of the original design', but intends to flank the Pannier Market building with a row of two-storeyed retail premises to each side (figure 9) creating an 'intimate, old street' feeling. But such a feeling is completely wrong for a building which was designed to stand alone in the open area of the market, and not be dwarfed by other structures. Another arcade of shops is also proposed leading into Fore Street. All the new shops - of which there are plenty - are designed in the post-modern manner deemed appropriate to Rosehaugh's 'Heritage' tag: irregular elevations, lots of different roof-lines and gables, and a pick-and-mix selection of window forms. The picture is completed by the addition of connecting glass-covered walkways at the four points of the compass, ensuring that the delicate pedestrian can walk from the car park, through the Pannier Market development, and into Fore Street, without having to risk exposure to the weather. Fore Street itself is soon to be pedestrianised in the great cause of easier shopping - that major leisure pursuit of the late twentieth century.

Having arrived in pedestrianised Fore Street, we find the nearest vehicular access points will be either in the market, from whence we came, or in Phoenix Lane, where the market developers will hopefully be donating some funds towards the construction of a castellated multi-storey car park by Mid Devon District Council. This is intended to make up in part for the parking spaces lost during the market redevelopment, and to allow the motorists on the proposed Southern Relief Road their only chance of getting in to the town centre. Coggan's Well in Fore Street, the point at which the all important town leat erupts for all to see, does not feature on the pedestrianisation plan either, despite the fact that an annual celebration is held on the site to mark it's existence, with the Mayor throwing pennies to an assembly of school children. Or perhaps one should say 'used to be held': last year, for various reasons, none turned up; one school felt it was beneath their children's dignity to scramble for coppers in the street. So there's a small triumph for gentility !

The proposed pedestrianisation of the town centre is still not finalised. However, it will involve rehashing the one-way system to enable sections of the town to be traffic-free, while still allowing the motorist access to those parts of the town which would most easily have been reached through streets which the pedestrianisation will block off. Whether this will make the dispersal of traffic in the centre of Tiverton any more rational than at present seems dubious. Any available parking will have to be paid for, of course, and will, presumably, be centred in the multi-storey car park: how that structure will contribute to the town's skyline remains to be seen.

The Southern Relief Road, which will carry through traffic past the town centre with barely a glimpse of the place, is to follow the disused railway line from Blundell's Road to Westexe, squeezing it's way between existing structures and destroying three railway bridges in it's path. One of these is the listed railway bridge over the Exe, which, though plenty strong enough to cope with the weight of traffic likely to cross it - it will be used by the construction traffic in the early stages of the project - is unfortunately not in line with the proposed path of the new road and, because of the difference in levels, is incompatible with the planned junction in Westexe with the Exeter road. By way of compensation, the fine masonry of the bridge will be demolished with special care so it can be used to repair other historic bridges in the county. As for the road itself, it looks likely to slice off sections of the town's outskirts, involving residents there in long detours to gain access to the centre.

To create a fitting administrative nucleus for the transformed town, Mid Devon District Council has decided to bring together all it's departments on one site. They are planning to extend the Town Hall, on the corner of Angel Hill and St Andrew's Street, to accommodate the staff currently in offices spread all over the town. This will mean demolishing various buildings down St Andrew's Street - one of the most sensitive and visually most attractive streets in the town centre - and building on the old tennis courts which run along the northern bank of the Exe just below the town bridge. Judging from the sketch proposals for the extension (figures 10 and 11), prepared by MWT Architects, efforts have been made to keep in scale - though much of the detailing looks suspiciously close to the Heritage Kitsch manner that hovers around Fitz Benoy's designs for the the new shops on the Pannier Market site.

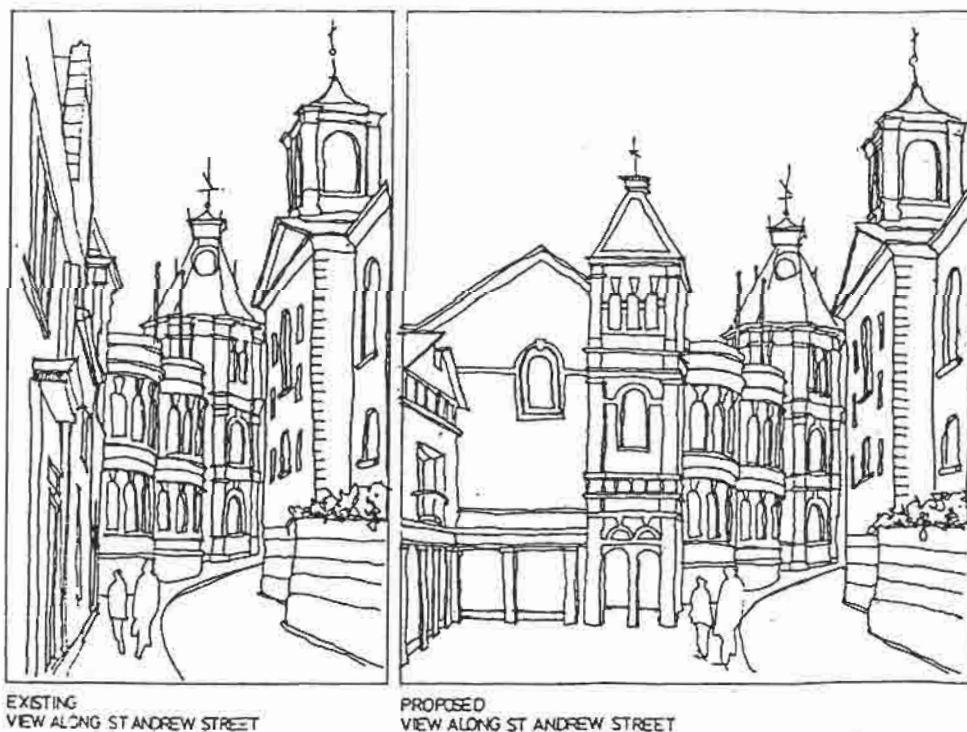


Figure 10. MWT's sketch proposals for new Civic Offices at Tiverton.

Whatever the merits and demerits of the Relief Road and the Town Hall extension, there is no doubt that they will change completely the view down the river from the town bridge. In the foreground to the left, where at present there is an unbuild-up area - the tennis courts - will be the new civic offices. Downstream the familiar railway bridge will be replaced by a modern road bridge, the form of which, to judge from what the County Engineers have said, will be decidedly odd, dropping so sharply to the right, because of the change in levels, that it will actually be necessary to lower the riverside walk beneath.

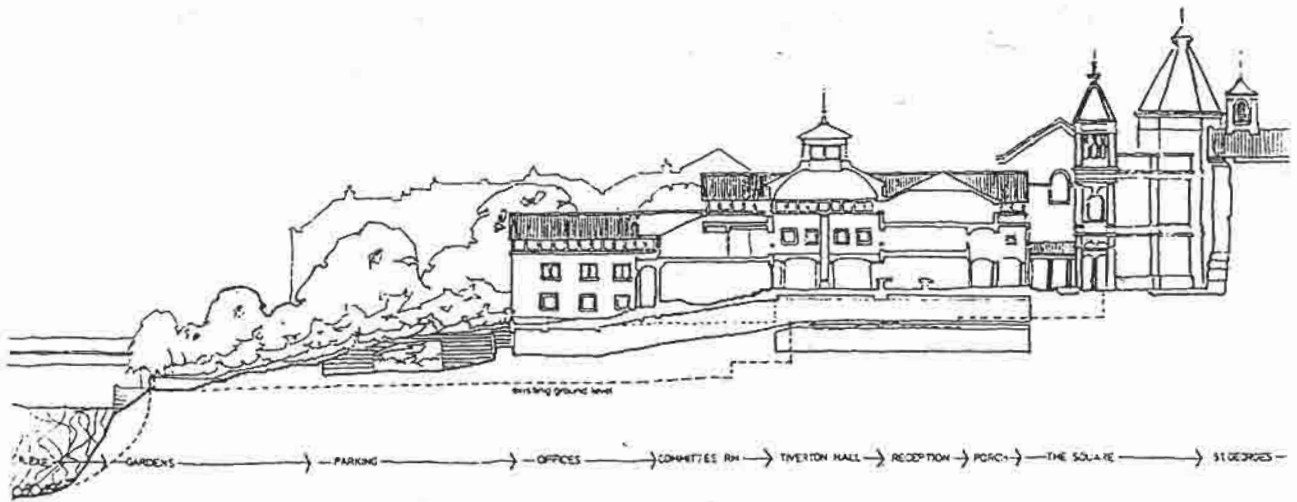


Figure 11. MVT's site section for the new Civic Offices in Tiverton.

The whole redevelopment of Tiverton town centre, in all its different phases, is planned to take place within the next few years, with the possibility of some of the schemes running concurrently. Quite simply, the centre of the town, for several years, will be turned into a building site. Has anyone really considered the chaos this will cause? Has anyone thought about the consequences for the market traders and the town centre businesses, trying to hang onto their customers in the midst of it all? And when, sometime in the future, the transformed town centre emerges, will people come to shop in a sequence of sanitised precincts? Particularly when the inevitably high rents - to say nothing of the new business rates - have driven out the small local shopkeepers who have, until now, occupied the town centre.

Tiverton could probably absorb one or two of the proposed changes, and could even benefit environmentally from some. There can be no doubt, for example, that the traffic in the centre needs sorting out. But the cumulative effect of all the proposed schemes will destroy the distinctive identity of central Tiverton. The fear is that Tiverton will become just another small town that has given way to the pressure of the developer, its historic core dominated by 'heritage' design and the corporate images of the national retailing chains. If this can happen to Tiverton, how many other market towns in Devon are being viewed as potential development sites? How many more will be altered out of recognition, sacrificed to the ring road, the multi-storey car park, and the pedestrianised shopping mall?

Mark Lewis



Figure 12. Exeter Guildhall; Bartlett's view of 1829.

EXETER GUILDHALL: A CONSERVATION REPORT

Throughout much of last year, the High Street front of Exeter Guildhall, built in 1593, was undergoing a major programme of conservation and repair, carried out by Dart and Francis. [For an account of the history of the fabric see *DBG Newsletter Number 3*, April 1987].

In March, the building was scaffolded and a number of preliminary surveys of the fabric took place. Firstly, an Endoscopic Survey by the structural engineers, Gifford and Partners of Southampton, revealed numerous structural voids within the infill, both above the loggia arches and behind the entablature. Before repairs could begin, these needed to be filled. This was done in May and June, using a gravity grouting apparatus, filling the voids with Pozament (St Paul's mix). Initially, the recommended mix was too viscous, but a satisfactory strength and flow was eventually achieved. During the grouting, areas of leakage were blocked with clay and, on completion, entrance holes were plugged with lime

mortar. A series of 1:10 scale drawings were marked up during the work showing entrance holes and recording the quantities of grout used: copies of these drawings have been deposited with the Planning and Property Department of Exeter City Council.

With the grouting successfully completed, the repair programme could proceed. This had been agreed with English Heritage, represented by Rebecca Barker, following an inspection of the Guildhall in March by Peter Dare and Andrew Lawson, of Dart and Francis, and the City Council's supervising architect, Mr M.J. Baldwin. The inspection found that the general condition of the building was much as could be expected from its position on a busy main street. The masonry surfaces were coated in a layer of dirt which was contributing to the decay by sulphation of all the original Beerstone. The extensive replacements in Portland stone, carried out in the 1970s, were also covered with grime but had not otherwise been affected.

The upper levels of the building had been exposed to soiling by pigeons, particularly behind those columns which had been used for nesting: although a pigeon repellent had been applied, it had had little effect. Because the centre of the front bulged forward, and because the lead flashing had no angle for weathering, some areas of masonry had been heavily exposed to rainwater and were showing signs of organic growth. On the lower level, the richly moulded Beerstone capital extensions that punctuate the entablature above the loggia, had been exposed to many years of weathering due to the erosion of the string course above. Although this had been replaced in Portland stone, it was evident that the run off areas below, particularly on the corners, had been terminally affected. The western elevation was in the worst condition: as the most exposed side of the Guildhall front, it had been subject to continuous cycles of wetting and drying which had accelerated the process of decay by sulphation. Finally, the initial inspections revealed remnants of polychrome and a later oil-based limewash on all the original areas of Beerstone.

The programme of work Dart and Francis adopted was based upon a philosophy of minimum intervention. As far as possible, masonry was to be conserved and consolidated: only where decay was structurally dangerous or of major detriment to the building's decorative qualities, was stonework to be replaced. The policy was to repair, not to restore.

Work started in June, once grouting had been finished. With a minimum of water, all the stonework was cleaned using fine mist sprays and toothbrushes. All the friable and unstable stone surfaces were stabilised by at least forty coats of lime watering, and weathered areas were repaired with lime mortar. Open joints were repointed, and cracked joints were raked out and repointed, again using lime mortar. Where replacement was necessary, the new stone was carefully selected to match, as far as possible, the grain and bed of the adjacent existing masonry. The new stone was fixed with threaded stainless steel dowels and resin, with the positions recorded on scale drawings, and lime mortar then used to grout and feather the new work into the old. The lower level of lead weathering was removed, and a mortar weathering applied to the top of the Portland stone string course, using stainless steel mesh for a key. Two new areas of lead flashing were fixed on the south-east and south-west corners. Finally, in November, the whole of the building was sheltercoated, with the coat left slightly thicker on the areas of Portland stone in order to lessen their harshness of line and texture in comparison to the original Beerstone.

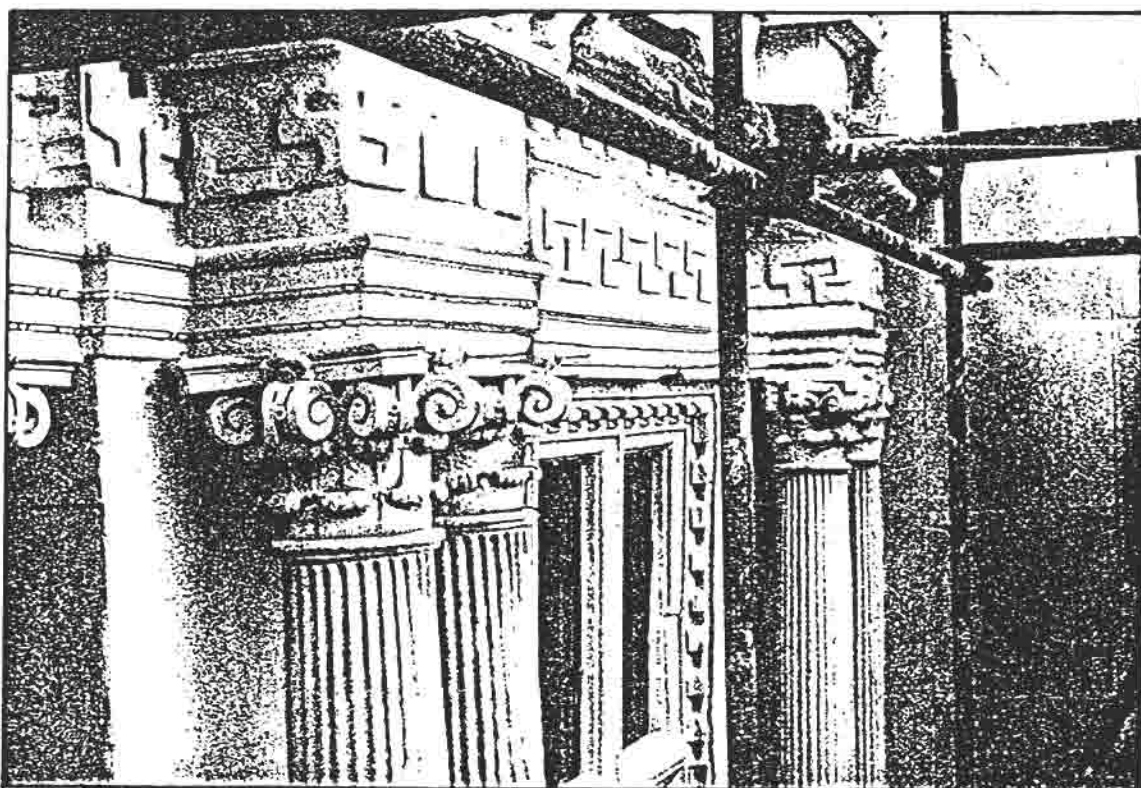
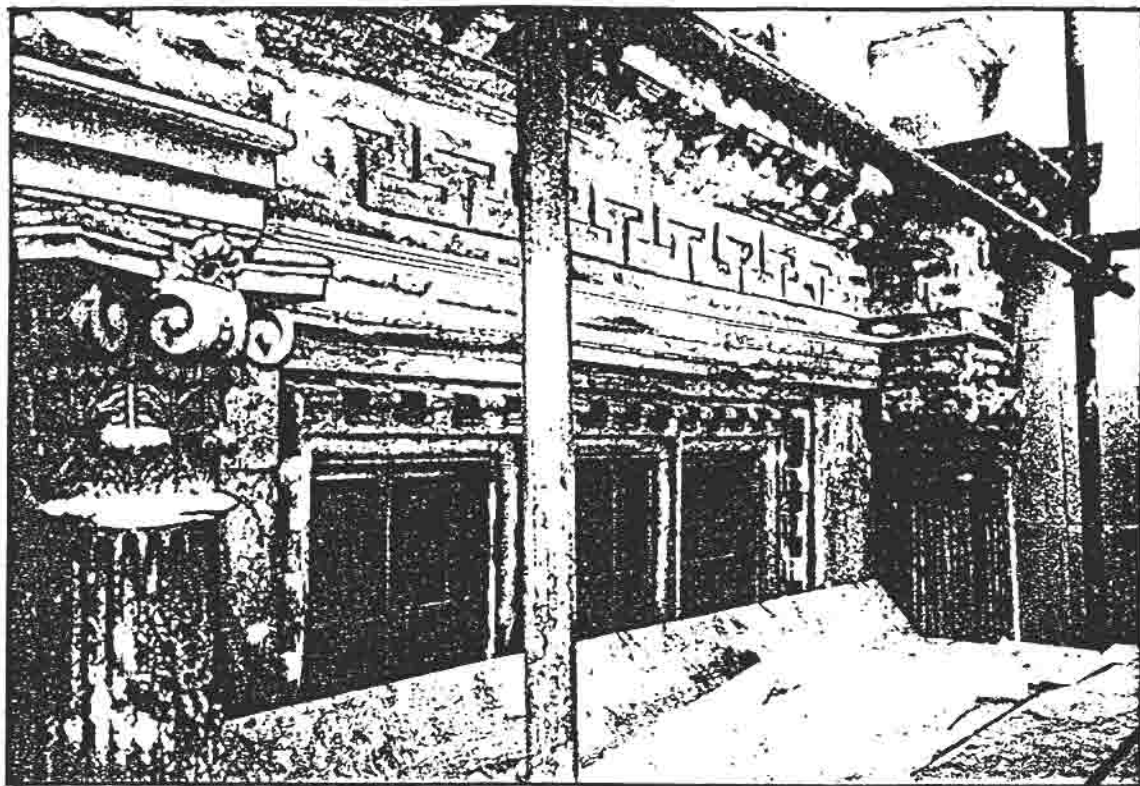


Figure 13. Exeter Guildhall; the upper level, with mortar repairs in progress, and after sheltercoating.

Throughout the work, for both limewater and mortar, Cheddar lime was used, slaked at the yard of Dart and Francis. A yellow coloured sand from Warmwell Quarry in Dorset was used, fine for the mortar and sheltercoat, coarse for the mortar weathering. The lime mortar mix was 3 parts fine Warmwell sand to 1 part slaked Cheddar lime; the sheltercoat mix was 1 part sand to 2 parts slaked lime, diluted to a correct consistency with 1 part skimmed milk to 5 parts water. The eventual colour was arrived at after numerous site tests, and was achieved by adding 5ml. of a natural buff colour formalin and 2.5ml. of a natural russet colour formalin to each mix.

A number of problems were encountered in the course of conservation. The first concerned the numerous remnants of polychrome, which were particularly extensive on the top section of the sheltered east elevation. All the pigmentation was recorded and a report is being compiled by Eddie Sinclair, the painting conservator employed in the programme. After recording, the fragments of colour had to be stabilized and protected in a way that did not conflict with the overall conservation strategy. The painted areas were cleaned with great care using fine mist sprays, cotton wool and soft brushes. A very dilute sheltercoat was then used to feather round and eventually cover each fragment, before the normal sheltercoat was applied on top: the pigmentation should thus remain protected as long as the sacrificial coat is preserved.

A further difficulty came with the removal of the irreversibly decayed Beerstone of the capital continuations on the corners of the entablature. This revealed more extensive masonry failure than had previously been expected. Rather than adopting a policy of wholesale replacement, which would have run counter to the thinking behind the overall conservation strategy, it was decided to consolidate these areas. Accordingly, a series of 15mm. holes at an angle of 30° were drilled every 200mm. along all the mouldings that showed failure: resin was then injected into these holes, followed by stainless steel dowels which, it was calculated, would force the resin into the finer cracks within the masonry; final consolidation was provided by the sheltercoat.

Problems were also caused by the pigeon repellent that, with little success, had been used all over the stonework. It was a clear, oil-based gel and its

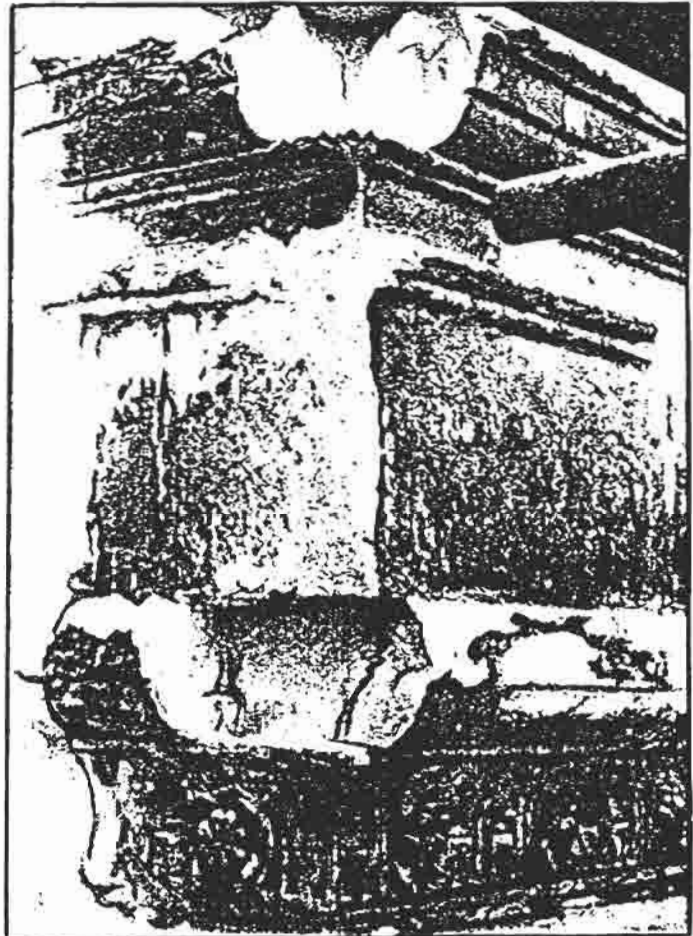


Figure 14. Exeter Guildhall.
Masonry decay at the lower level.

adhesiveness had attracted atmospheric dirt which had then been transferred into the pores of the stone. Not only has this scarred parts of the Beerstone with dark lines, it has also, in places, created an impermeable barrier within the stone that has caused the surface to take on a sugary quality. Scraping and washing removed as much of the gel as was possible, but the dark lines reappeared through the sheltercoat - though fortunately not in areas visible from the ground.

A final problem, not yet satisfactorily explained, was brought on by the sheltercoating. After the sheltercoat had been applied, a patchy brown staining appeared. As these stains were concentrated in areas that had received grout, it can be assumed that the staining was activated by moisture, but its cause remains uncertain. There are known difficulties in using sheltercoat or limewash on stones containing iron, which Beerstone certainly does. On the other hand, the staining could be caused by the presence of linseed oil, which may have been used in earlier paint or limewash. If this were the case, the sheltercoat would act as a poultice, drawing the oil out of the stonework. Whatever the reason, experience of such staining on other buildings suggests that it will slowly disappear. In the meantime, it is hoped that the slight patchiness that is now apparent is not too detrimental to the appearance of the building.

The completed conservation scheme should be the starting-point for a regular and structured programme of monitoring and maintenance. The water penetration that has caused the acute erosion of the capital continuations in the entablature, is likely to produce salting. The use of resin and reinforcement in these areas should be seen as a short term solution that will need careful observation, particularly as many of the sections affected function as protection for decoration. The sheltercoat will give protection to the whole structure. But it is, by its nature, sacrificial, and must not be regarded as permanent. Within time it will show signs of wear and failure: when these occur it should be renewed. As it was decided not to use netting, soiling from pigeons on the upper levels of the building will continue, accelerating the decomposition of the stone and the mortar repairs: it is therefore important that soiling needs to be removed regularly, and the affected areas cleaned. This will be particularly necessary behind the columns, where the pigeons have their nest sites. Because of the structural bulge in the south front, it is impossible to prevent continuous wetting in certain areas: these parts of the front need to be watched carefully. As they will certainly give rise to organic growth, even after the cleaning and sheltercoating, the future use of a biocide should be considered. Finally, as with every historic building, there must be regular monitoring and maintenance of all lead flashings and hoppers.

Andrew Lawson

ECONOMIC GROWTH AND THE CONSERVATION OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS IN DEVON

The article that follows is based upon my report to the Devon Buildings Group's 1989 AGM. In the course of 1989, the total number of cases handled by the Group passed a hundred, and we are now well into our second century. In *DBG Newsletter Number 7*, I gave details of cases 51 to 100: here I will attempt to draw some general conclusions from that casework about what seem to be the major issues affecting the conservation of historic buildings in the county.

Firstly, Devon continues to be one of the fastest growing counties in England, both economically and in terms of population. Some raw statistics will indicate precisely what this involves. Given that the influx of people into the county has continued at the rate at which it has been maintained over the last fifteen years, Devon's population, at the time of writing, has just passed a million for the first time in history. This represents an increase of some 70,000 people since the late 1970s, and statistical projections suggest that the total population could be as high as 1,100,000 by the beginning of the next century. This means, of course, not only major new house building across the whole county, but also continuing pressure on the existing housing stock. In employment terms, the projected increase in population will involve the creation of 80,000 new jobs between now and 2001.

And then there is the traffic that all this will generate. Given the fact that central Government policy over the last decade has strongly favoured road transport and the motor car rather than public transport, such population growth means a startling increase in the number of cars on Devon's roads and in Devon's towns. Something of the scale of the problem can be judged from the fact that, in the ten years between 1976 and 1986, the number of cars registered in the county increased by 40%, as against a national average increase of some 25%. And this over a period when there was also a 25% increase in the number of cars entering Devon. This has already involved major new road schemes, several of which are still in the process of completion: the North Devon Link is now almost finished, the Okehampton By-pass is open, and work on building a dual carriageway between Okehampton and the Launceston By-pass will begin in 1991. When complete this will make the A30 continuous dual carriageway from Exeter to the Cornish border.

Such road schemes have drastic implications, not only for the general appearance of rural Devon, but also for Devon's towns, large and small, which are the destinations for most of the traffic. The traffic pressure on town centres is exacerbated by the social and cultural changes that have turned shopping into a leisure activity - seemingly, at times, the major recreation pursued by the British people. In the fifteen years between 1971 and 1986 the national average increase in shopping expenditure per person was an astonishing 40%, and there is no reason to suppose that people in Devon are any less consumerist than the rest of the population. Put simply, the next ten years will see a continuation of the process whereby substantially more people come to live in the county, bringing with them a steep increase in the number of cars on the roads, and demanding larger and more varied shopping facilities in and around the towns.

Much of the Group's casework has been concerned with the impact of these changes upon Devon's housing stock, and particularly with the conversion of the county's historic and traditional agricultural buildings into part of that

housing stock. This of course was the subject of our third Annual Conference and the problem was the focus for my Secretary's Report in 1988. One of the difficulties in considering the issue is ascertaining the numbers of buildings involved, and the rate at which conversion is happening; an article in *DBG Newsletter Number 6* attempted to establish some firm statistics and came to the alarming conclusion that, in 1987, permission for between five and six hundred conversions was given in rural Devon, a rate that clearly indicated, as the article concluded, that 'one of Devon's most important and most characteristic classes of historic building is vanishing before our eyes'. That article was written before the 1988-9 slump in house prices, and before mortgage rates began to increase steeply. It is too soon to say what the effect of these has been, but it seems increasingly certain that they have created what is at least a pause in the headlong business of residential conversion. Applications for conversion continue to be a significant part of the Group's casework, though I have the impression that the pressure in this area has slackened in the last nine months.

If there is a pause then it needs to be taken advantage of, because all the longer term economic indicators - like the projections for the county that I have already outlined - suggest that the residential conversion of agricultural buildings will continue, even if at a reduced rate. In this context, two documents produced in 1989 were particularly welcome: West Devon Borough Council's draft policy paper *New Uses for Redundant Buildings* and Dartmoor National Park Authority's *Review of Policy for the Conversion of Farm Buildings*. The DBG wrote in support of West Devon's paper, which adopted a generally sympathetic approach to the problems of redundant farm buildings, and we await the final policy document and - more importantly - evidence of how successfully it is to be implemented. The National Park's revised policy - a full account of which appeared in *DBG Newsletter Number 7* - is already in operation. However, the unfavourable result of the Planning Inquiry into the case of Sanduck Farm in Lustleigh - which challenged the applicability of the revised policy - seems to have led to a faltering of confidence on the part of the Park Authority. It should not. The revised policy is the right one to follow, and, since the outcome of the Sanduck Farm Inquiry, the DBG has written to the Park Authority arguing that the Inspector's decision did not represent a challenge to the policy as a whole, nor should it be allowed to deflect that policy. Even so, the extent to which the revised guidelines will continue to determine the National Park's attitude to residential conversion now appears uncertain.

The second area that I identified as feeling most directly the impact of Devon's current and projected growth was the county's road system. At present there are 37 major highway schemes under construction or in an advanced state of design in the county, with a further 20 projected for the next few years. Many of these have major implications for historic buildings, and we have been actively concerned about the effects of the Tiverton Southern Relief Road, the proposed upgrading of the Exeter-Exmouth Road, and the route of the proposed By-pass for Braunton - this last one of the most worrying in that previous proposals envisaged a route through the Braunton Great Field. In common with other conservation groups, we have pressed the county engineers for assurances that the integrity of the Great Field will be respected, but they have so far declined to rule out such a route. One of the most recent of the Group's cases involving highway schemes has been a proposal for a short section of Inner Relief Road in Dartmouth. Although only a few hundred yards long, this proposal would involve the demolition of two listed buildings, the islanding of two others

between streams of traffic, and the disruption of the dense architectural fabric of the town just off the market square. The damage that was done in the 1960s and 1970s to our historic towns by inner relief roads is now widely acknowledged and lamented. Given the tight urban fabric of a town like Dartmouth, such damage is inevitable when roads are taken into the historic core. Fortunately, the scheme has now been shelved - though for how long remains unclear. What it reveals, however, is the need for an alternative traffic strategy, not only for Dartmouth but for other historic towns in Devon. If the unique architectural identity of a town like Dartmouth is to be preserved then vehicular access to the centre needs to be restricted, not facilitated or encouraged. Park and Ride schemes - already in operation in Dartmouth - need to be extended, and central areas need further pedestrianization, or further limitation on access for cars. More traffic in the centre of historic towns only leads to more congestion, and, in the long run, further demands for more stretches of Inner Relief Road - with the inevitable architectural consequences.

This brings me squarely to the third major area of concern: the future of Devon's towns, particularly in the face of what we have been taught to call the retail revolution - and its concomitant, militant consumerism. This last year has seen a clutch of cases involving shopping redevelopments in town centres.

In Barnstaple, at last year's Conference, DBG members saw the extent to which the new shopping precinct, now under construction, has involved the demolition of a large area within the town's historic core - and the way in which this has been associated with a new road system that, to my mind at least, has dismembered a significant part of the town. Over the past couple of years we have objected to various aspects of this redevelopment, and had some success in helping to prevent the loss of individual buildings. But I am afraid that these successes have been marginal when set against the cumulative damage that has been done by the scheme and by works associated with it.

A major scheme at Tiverton has now received planning permission and will involve the building of two ranges of shops on the market square, either side of the early nineteenth-century Pannier Market. Although relatively sympathetic in design and character, this redevelopment will involve the demolition of a listed range of market stalls and the loss of a network of walled alleyways to the west of the square. Along with the Victorian Society we urged amendments to the proposals, but Mid-Devon District Council seem to have allowed the scheme through largely as proposed. More worrying still is the fact that the Pannier Market scheme is only one in a group of major proposals for Tiverton that will radically transform the identity of the town centre: an article by Mark Lewis in the present *Newsletter* considers the possible impact of the changes.

Newton Abbot is also to receive a new shopping mall, though this is being quite carefully fitted into the existing fabric of the town centre. In Ilfracombe, there were proposals to demolish the vicarage of Holy Trinity, on the edge of the central conservation area, and replace it and its fine grounds with a carpark and a food hypermarket: we objected strongly, along with local residents and a number of other amenity groups, and North Devon District Council refused permission. As for shopping developments outside towns, members will recall the Group's objections to the proposed hypermarket redevelopment of the Digby Mental Hospital site south of Exeter: given the general attitude of the late and wholly unlamented Secretary for the Environment, Nicholas Ridley, it came as little surprise when he gave permission for the scheme. As the proposals, to judge from

the artist's impressions, seem to be a synthesis of Disneyland and Hieronymous Bosch, it would now be a kindness if the hospital buildings were demolished entirely: their incorporation in the scheme is merely an insult to architectural preservation - which is perhaps what recommended the development to Mr Ridley.

All these schemes, however, pale into insignificance beside the proposals that, albeit obscurely, now seem to be emerging from Plymouth for the re-use of the Royal William Victualling Yard. In my Secretary's Report at the 1988 AGM, I outlined the then recent proposals for a £300 million redevelopment of the whole dockyard area.¹ The initial designs for what was described as 'a Covent Garden style complex' for the Victualling Yard proved to be lamentable, a tired and trivializing response to what is probably the proudest group of naval buildings in Britain. Mercifully the PSA, who are responsible for the Yard and who remain the owners until 1992, turned the scheme down. More recently, however, an even vaster set of proposals has been brought out under the auspices of the city planners. The Plymouth Waterfront Strategy, as it is entitled, envisages incorporating the Victualling Yard - still there as 'a Covent Garden style complex' - in an eleven-mile redevelopment of the city's harbours, docks and seafront, which will include a light railway modelled on that of London's Docklands development, and which proposes 'a transformation of the Citadel and the Hoe into an Edinburgh Castle-style tourist attraction'. There will also be marinas, offices, housing, restaurants, and lots of shops - a grand total of fifty distinct projects within the eleven-mile stretch, most of them to be developed by private enterprise.

Not the least extraordinary feature of all this is that the scheme has been put forward without any exposure to the national press, with little or no coverage in the professional press, and with minimal discussion with national conservation or advisory bodies. The regional group of the RIBA was asked to comment in general terms, which it did. But there has been no consultation with any of the national and statutory amenity societies: not one of The Ancient Monuments Society, The Council for British Archaeology, The Georgian Group, The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, or The Victorian Society has so far been asked for its comments. Nor, as far as I am aware, has English Heritage. This state of affairs cannot be allowed to continue: the Plymouth Waterfront Strategy must not go ahead without full public scrutiny. Large areas of historic Plymouth have been lost to unsympathetic redevelopment over the last twenty-five years, and the destruction has been allowed to happen seemingly without protest or intervention from anybody outside the city - and with little enough protest from inside it. I do not believe that anybody who cares about historic buildings could stand at Charles Church in Plymouth, and look round at what has been done to the city in the last quarter of a century, and feel anything but the most profound unease at the idea of what the city planners might inflict on Sutton Pool, the Citadel, the Hoe and the Victualling Yard if given their head.

Having said that, however, it seems to me true that the Plymouth Waterfront Strategy does at least represent an attempt to give shape and direction to the development of the city over the next decade. That is, it genuinely embraces the need for large-scale planning. What is wrong with it - at least, as far as one can gather at this stage - is not that it is large-scale, but that it seems to be conceived entirely in commercial terms, with historic sites figuring primarily as opportunities for commercial exploitation. That must be resisted, but we should not allow this to become an argument against planning itself: the answer to bad

or insensitive planning is good planning, not no planning at all. The scale of the forces that will determine the development of Devon over the next decade, the forces of population growth and economic change that I outlined earlier, make long term strategic planning essential.

It was for this reason that, last year, the Group gave a broad welcome to Devon County Council's consultation document *Devon 2001*, and responded to it at considerable length. I gave details of our response in *DBG Newsletter Number 7*, and it is not necessary for me to recap here. *Devon 2001* was essentially an attempt to begin the process of revising the existing Devon County Structure Plan. There were aspects of the proposals with which we disagreed, and significant shifts of emphasis that we believed to be necessary. But whatever the points of difference, *Devon 2001* was an authentic long-term planning initiative; conservation was a major goal within it; and a genuine attempt was made to achieve broad-based consultation. I think, therefore, we should be dismayed by the fact that *Devon 2001* has now been shelved - the result, apparently, of a change in the political complexion of County Hall. It was thrown out as being 'over ambitious'. But what is to take its place? How will planning that is unambitious even begin to cope with the impact of the changes that will affect the county over the next decade?

The existing County Structure Plan cannot cope for the simple reason that it was drawn up before the nature and scale of those changes were apparent. Appropriate planning for Devon as a whole cannot be left to the cumulative efforts of the individual district councils: they need to be able to fit their strategies into the wider guidelines of a county policy. And if anybody believes that design can be left to the decisions of individual developers, or that the operations of the free market will produce adequate planning, then they should visit London's Docklands and reflect on the fact that the whole area was, only ten or so years ago, a site of major historical and architectural significance. It is now an uncoordinated assemblage of office blocks with enclaves of expensive housing guarded by security men.

The complex nature of the social and economic issues confronting Devon are such that large-scale and long-term strategic planning that has conservation at its core is essential. Without it, in ten years time, we could be talking about a Devon whose countryside was little more than an extended suburbia with a national park unreally isolated in its midst, and whose towns and cities were a sequence of shopping malls and heritage theme worlds.

Chris Brooks

REMEMBER !

DEVON BUILDINGS GROUP ANNUAL CONFERENCE SATURDAY 12 MAY

THE RURAL PARISH CHURCH IN DEVON

PLEASE LET CHRIS BROOKS KNOW IF YOU WANT TO ATTEND
