

# Buildings at Risk

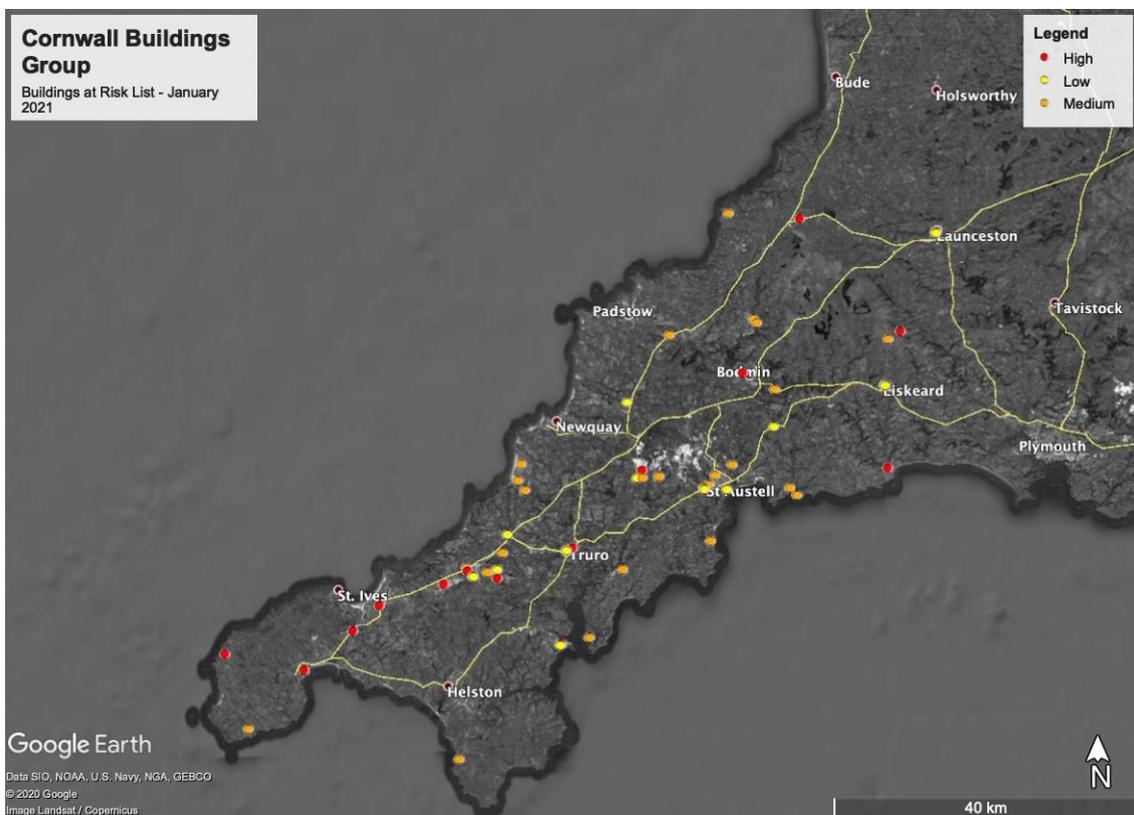
February 2021

Newsletter No.4

**CORNISH  
BUILDINGS  
GROUP**

A three-year project led by the Cornish Buildings Group and supported by Historic England and the Cornwall Heritage Trust commenced in September 2020. The funding supports a case officer in order to help identify and monitor buildings at risk and seek solutions for neglected, redundant or derelict listed buildings and unlisted buildings.

## Buildings at risk map



With thanks to Emma Trevarthen, University of York. The map logs the position of buildings on our at risk

## In the news

### Carharrack chapel, near St Day

This historic chapel has been on the Cornish Buildings Risk Register since 2014. It is also on lists managed by Historic England and SAVE. Its Grade 2\* listed status and a recent Heritage Assessment from the Cornwall Archaeological Unit confirms that the interior of this chapel is of exceptional quality, for this reason SAVE has called for its interiors to remain intact during any restoration.



A planning application has been lodged (PA20/11000) to convert the chapel (left) into a single residential unit. The proposals includes many good conservation-led proposals including retention and repair of most of the very rare box pews in the gallery, to our knowledge the oldest surviving pews on any Methodist chapel in Cornwall. Also, the repair of the apse windows. However, the

considerable effort to save the historic interiors has led to an odd interior arrangement which, we feel, will do substantial harm to the historic fabric.

We commend the applicant for their attempt to do something positive with this chapel however, in our view, the proposals do not go far enough in preserving the historic fabric. We also feel that the Design and Access Statement is inadequate. We make these observations with a heavy heart as refusal may condemn the chapel to further dereliction and decay. The best way of preserving the historic fabric would be to preserve the building as a place of worship or public venue. We understand that limited on-site parking in the forecourt yard and no ownership of land adjoining the chapel make this a challenge. We question whether all such options have been fully explored.

If residential is the only option we hope that the applicant might refine the proposal to include the retention of the gallery and its rare seating in a more complete form.

Furthermore, consideration might be given to sub-divide the ground-floor level by leaving a

large central space but fitting the smaller room spaces required in reversible structures or pods (with translucent inner partitions to retain light from existing ground floor windows). These could be set back behind the columns that support the gallery. In addition, a more sustainable method of heating the building would enhance the argument for its sustainability as a single dwelling.

Also of concern is whether the building will need to be sub-divided in the future to make it more viable and sustainable. If this did happen more damage to the interiors would be the consequence.

On balance, we object to this proposal but in doing so commend the applicant for making an attempt to create a residential space in this chapel. If public use of this very important building is proved not to be workable then we would also encourage the applicant to make further attempts, in conjunction with other stakeholders, to resubmit a scheme that does not incur substantial harm to the historic fabric.



## Polvellan manor, Looe

Our blog post on Polvellan manor has attracted huge interest

<https://buildingsatrisk.wordpress.com/2021/02/08/case-study-polvellan-manor-looe-unlisted/>

We have learnt that a planning application to turn the house into residential units is likely to be submitted soon. The blog post explains its rich history and spectacular decline. This is a prominent building in a significant landscape setting which deserves a brighter future.

## Polwithen House, Penzance



An important part of this project is to identify buildings at risk from inappropriate development. One way to secure protection is to apply for listing status. This project has put forward a listing application for Polwithen House, Penzance.

The house was first mentioned in the *Cornish Telegraph* on 22 June 1870 and listed in the *Horticultural Directory* from 1889.

It was built for William (1815-95) and Mary Bolitho (d,1902), a cousin of William Bolitho of Ponsandane (1830-94). The architect is not known however, it is a highly accomplished and competent piece of high-Victorian architecture. The 1871 and 1881 census returns shows seven and four Bolitho family members respectively living in the house with eight servants.

The family had long interests in the tin industry and were founding members of the east Cornwall bank. The Bolitho Bank (Mounts Bay bank) eventually merged with Barclays in 1905. Several generations of the Bolitho family served Barclays as directors. Other Bolitho houses are listed –Trewidden and Tregwainton (both Grade II) and Ponsandane, not listed but in a conservation area.

William's son, Lieutenant Colonel William Bolitho DSO (*d.*1919), commanded the Royal 1st Devon Yeomanry and served in South Africa where he received the Distinguished Service Order (*London Gazette*, 27 Sept. 1901). He died in Bath of illness after serving during the First World War. His son, also William, Lieutenant, 19th (Queen Alexandra's Own Royal) Hussars was killed in action 24 May 1915 – his name appears on the Menin gate (Ypres). He was also an English first-class cricketer. The family home at this time was York House, Trevelloe, Penzance.

The estate was sold for housing by Clements Inn Safe Deposit & Contract Company in 1905 and by 1906 the house had become the Riviera Palace Hotel (*Cornish Telegraph*, 29 March 1906). The hotel closed in 1917. The property was repurchased by Mrs Frances Bolitho, President and Chairman of Directors for the Penzance Church High School for Girls (*Cornishman*, 13 February 1930) and by 1918 was turned into the Polwithen High School for Girls. In 1928 the Penzance High School for Girls transferred to the Woodard Corporation and was renamed The School of St Clare. In 1995 it was renamed The Bolitho School, its patron being Elizabeth Bolitho.

The house is on the 1st Edition 1:2500 OS map c.1880 and is described as the Riveria Hotel on the 2nd Edition 1:2500 OS map c.1907. The 1932-39 version shows the school, having an extension to the west.

The house is a vernacular revival, Jacobethan-styled, juxtaposition of high and low elements, shaped gables, clustered chimneys, oriel and bayed windows, set within decorative landscaped gardens. The asymmetrical house has some similarities to Polwhele near Truro which was remodelled by Gilbert Scott in the 1860s. The building is a good example of high-Victorian architecture and has to be considered as the finest of all the Bolitho houses.

## How can you follow the project?

Our Wordpress blog <https://buildingsatrisk.wordpress.com/> has proved successful and up until mid- January has received over 3,000 views. Our website has been updated as the project progresses <https://sites.google.com/site/cornishbuildingsgroup/home>

Updates and alerts will be shared via our Twitter feed @CbgCornwall

To keep up-to-date on the project please follow our blog; when we have something to say you will receive an alert. Or you can follow us on Twitter.

## Updates

### 39 High Street, Falmouth

Featured in the last newsletter the site on which 39 High Street, Falmouth, sits is up for sale.

More details can be found at <http://www.sbcproperty.com/britons-slip%2C-britons-yard%2C-falmouth%2C-cornwall~1500>

### St Paul's, Truro

We have written to the Church Commissioners in Salisbury to ascertain the latest on this building. Our online petition to save this building from demolition is still live.

<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/save-st-paul-s-church-truro>

## Requests for information

We are currently working with the Society of the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) on Melador Farmhouse, near St Stephen-in-Brannel (below).

This Grade 2\* listed granite rubble and cob farmhouse has origins dating from the late 16th or early 17th centuries. It has some 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century additions. The building retains good exterior features including a gable end stack with granite shaft, cornice and shaped top and a lateral granite stack on chamfered plinth, with moulded string course, cornice and stone bellcote with crocketed pinnacle.

Inside evidence survives of a through passage plan house with an inner room, hall and passage. The house may originally had an open hall.

Historic England are considering putting the farmhouse on its national Heritage at Risk register, which would bring some further publicity to its plight.



## Good news

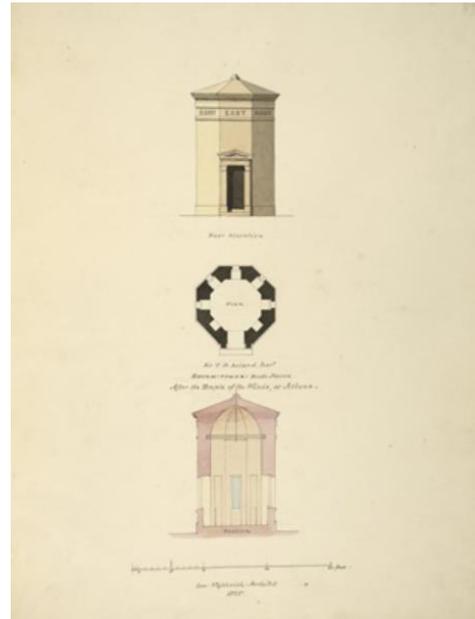
Positive moves are afoot to relocate Stir Thomas Acland's famous 'Storm Tower' at Compass Point, Bude. In an article entitled 'Teetering on the Edge', by Richard Hearn in the February edition of *Cornwall Archaeological Society's Area Representatives Newsletter*, the worry over coastal erosion on this historic monument is laid bare. Although the risk of cliff falls is ever present and not uncommon at this time of year, the climate crisis appears to be accelerating the rate of loss.

The article reads

Originally built circa 1835 and designed by George Wightwick it has already been moved because of erosion around 1900, but failed to be orientated accurately. Now its present peril has brought its surroundings into focus.

It occurs to me that the Compass Point mound could be a dump of topsoil when digging foundations for the tower at the last move. Surely such a valuable commodity would not be thus abandoned! There is no access to the detritus scattered down the sloping cliff face which could yield a relic – even use of abseiling equipment would be dangerous after the winter weather.

Here is the Heritage Gateway entry for the Storm Tower:



Plan by George Wightwick for Sir Thomas Acland.

The Storm Tower at Bude, also known as The Pepper Pot, is an early coastguard lookout tower, built on the cliffs at Efford, overlooking Bude harbour. It was built in 1835 for Sir Thomas Acland by George Wightwick, who modelled it after the 'Temple of the Winds' in Athens. Originally the storm tower was built as a refuge for the coastguard. It was also an ornamental feature on the Efford Estate and



part of Bude's development plans. It was re-sited c.1900 due to the eroding cliffs. It was dismantled and rebuilt further inland but unfortunately seven degrees out of alignment. It is shown on the 1st Edition OS 1:2500 map. The structure is octagonal, and points of the compass are inscribed on each wall face.

The town council has set up a Crowdfunding page which will help to secure the future of Bude's very unique icon.

[http://budeandbeyond.co.uk/save-our-storm-tower/?utm\\_source=rss&utm\\_medium=rss&utm\\_campaign=save-our-storm-tower](http://budeandbeyond.co.uk/save-our-storm-tower/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=save-our-storm-tower)

## Please support us

This project has made a positive start. You can play your part in this work by volunteering to support our aims. You can do this by reporting your concerns about historic buildings or valued heritage assets in your area which are either derelict or not being properly looked after. Please contact Paul Holden at [cbgcasework@gmail.com](mailto:cbgcasework@gmail.com)

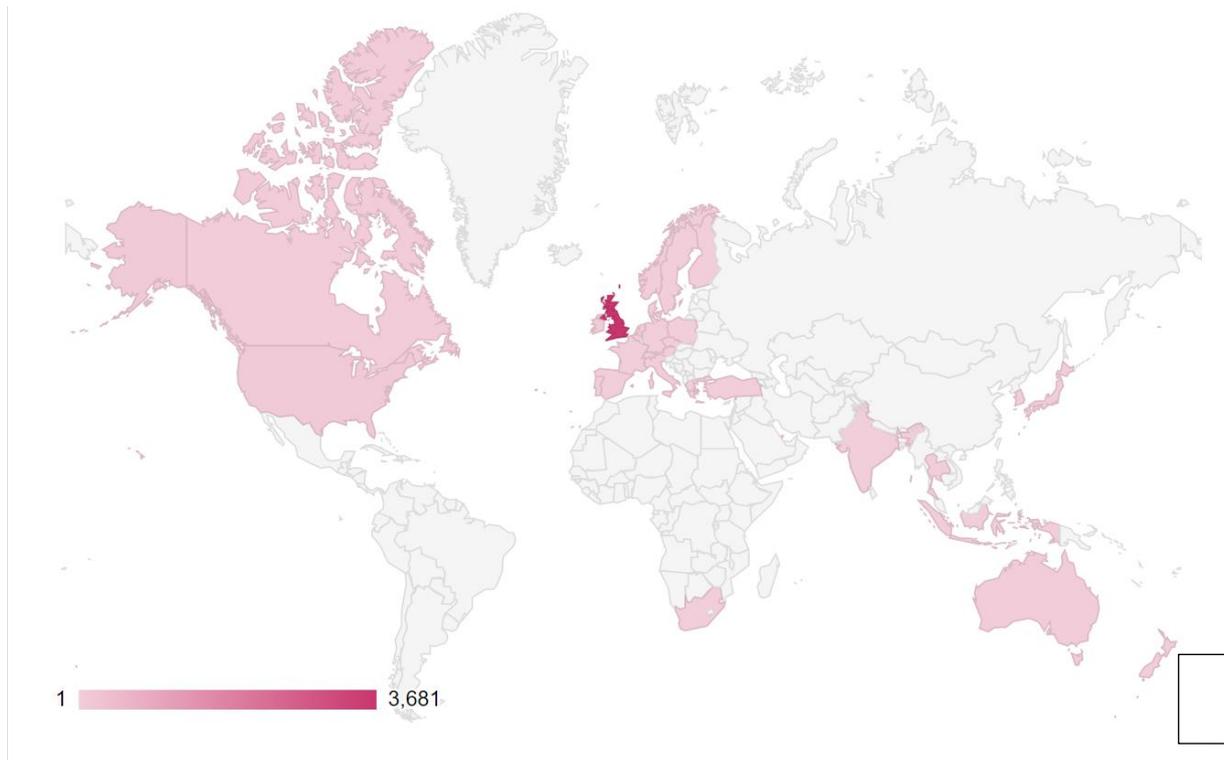
A form that will help us with some background local knowledge is available on our website

<https://sites.google.com/site/cornishbuildingsgroup/buildings-at-risk-register/buildings-at-risk-project-2020-2023>

## And finally...

Have you ever wondered about the power of a blog? No? Nor me, really.

However, on looking at statistics for this project blog I was surprised to find who is reading it and how far its circulation reaches. The map below shows the coverage of our blog from this year only i.e. January to mid-February.



As you can see, we lack coverage in South America and the far-east. Not sure why that should be the case! If anyone knows how we can spread our message wider please let me know.

Thank you for your support Paul Holden, FSA.

