# CORNISH BUILDINGS GROUP

#### THE CHAIRMAN

This has, as so often, been a year of both hope and frustration. We have been, slowly and gently, trying to move the internal business of the CBG, our administration, our connections with members and the outside world, into the Computer Age, even if not quite yet into the 21st century. Many of you will by now be receiving communications via email, rather than the now, sadly, less than Royal Mail; rest assured that those who, for whatever reason, prefer contact by phone or post will not be abandoned to cyber purgatory and will still be kept in touch in the old ways – this is, after all, the most inclusive of all organisations.

I hope that many will have looked at and enjoyed the website. We still haven't got this right, despite the mighty efforts of council member Paul Holden and the generosity of our external website host and administrator. Getting an effective website remains a priority – not just because it advertises us as a society, but increasingly because we see it as a way of producing and disseminating the intellectual output of members – read some of the articles on the site and you'll see just how wide, serious and entertaining that output is – something we really need to shout about; the website will be one of our best assets in time to come.

Hope and frustration, if it is to be the theme of this address, ran through much of the wider business of the CBG. As a reward for hope in recent years we saw a continuing quality in the winning entries in this year's awards scheme - a theme you will recognise from several chairman's addresses of recent years (I know you all avidly read back issues of the Newsletter) – both in the conservation projects, and new build schemes. No greater contrast could be imagined in scale, purpose and detail than between the winning scheme at Lower Polpry and the specially commended Bodmin Police Station. Jim and Rosa Knudstad's archaeological reconstruction of the ruined remains of a small 17th century house at Lower Polpry reveals not only its hand-built and crafted restoration, but their sheer love of stone and timber and quality finish, while the police station is a dominant, modern block on the Bodmin skyline, which yet espouses green principles, a design closely suited to its specialist purpose, but with a well-crafted and elegant exterior.

As always, we continue to encourage and

celebrate both approaches - not for us the ill-conceived copy of faux-historical detail, the CBG has always been proud to prove that the overtly, even stridently modern, eco-friendly, radical or simply whacky and fun can sit happily alongside the serious and thoughtful restoration of the ancient. And perhaps that's where that frustration comes in: partly because we know there are other good schemes out there that were not entered, either through a lack of knowledge about us and our scheme, or a lack of confidence on the part of the developer; partly because many of the entries not shortlisted were not as good as might be hoped - there still remains the volume housebuilding industry yet to convince of the benefits of really good and innovative design.

Our site visits continue to provide contrast and interest, from the smallest of farmhouses, or considering the very details of the stones of St Austell, to some of the grandest places in Cornwall (Mount Edgcumbe). The CBG even went international in 2010 – with a visit to Kelly in Devon – reputedly (one of) the oldest continuously inhabited houses in Britain belonging to just the one family. While it is always a joy to visit these places one must share with the owners the frustration of huge costs and uncertainty over the future of such a remarkable

place – anyone who visited or saw Kelly on the telly (pardon the alliteration) will know just what a task faces the Kelly family here.

It is sometimes hard to see hope springing from the strange, uncertain and straitened times we now live in – not helped it must be said by the strange, uncertain and straitened policies and edicts coming from central government which increasingly threaten to send us back along the hard-won road of good design and effective conservation - but perhaps more of that would be appropriate next year when we see the full effects of changing regimes. Mind you, we were promised that the full benefits of the transfer to a new unitary authority would come to fruition over the past year – and still we await the full reorganisation of the new Cornwall Council, we wait to see what role CBG will play amongst the conservation area advisory committees and design panels, in Heritage Kernow or other partnership groups – brave new words for a brave new world, but in the end will we still be able to put forward out own dearly held views on the two basic things we strive for – a sense of Cornwall, and above all a sense of quality?

Can you detect the twin themes of hope and frustration yet again? Let me then end on a note revealing our ineffable sense of hope and



Award winner for 2010, Lower Polpry, Blisland. A fine 17th century house, restored from a derelict state by two CBG members, Jim Knudstad & Rosa Frey; see page 2

spirit – despite your council being laid low by illness, one most cherished and valuable member in particular, members both within and outside the council rallied round to organise visits, organise meetings, run the website and email systems, keep our thing together. I shan't single out the names of these heroic individuals – I hope they know how well appreciated their efforts over the year have been by me and all the rest of us – and that's what's the best of the CBG as a group of like minded friends. I have the greatest hope that the CBG will continue to succeed in its own, perhaps modest, but essential way in the future, because of the qualities of you, its members.

## ANNUAL AWARDS SCHEME 2010

It is now thirty years since the launch of our annual awards scheme by which it was hoped to encourage higher standards in new buildings and the restoration of old.

It is ironic that the first winner in 1981 was the Falmouth Maritime Rescue Centre now threatened with cutbacks and an uncertain future.

Over the years, awards have been given to the restoration of some notable historic buildings. These include Marlborough House, Falmouth; Miners Row, Redruth; Stuart House, Liskeard and last year the mediaeval gildhouse at Poundstock plus many more.

New buildings in recent years have reflected the growing concern with environmental issues. 'eco-friendly' and 'zero-carbon' have become the latest buzz words. In 1998 the judges felt the design of too few new builds made use of the modern materials and techniques at the disposal of architects and builders. Gradually, however, this has changed and in recent years some innovative new schemes

have been commended including Fairglen Low Energy houses, Hayle the slate award winner in 2008/09 and last year's zero-carbon house, Burntwood near Pensilva

The local authorities have always been supportive of the awards and the former district

councils entered schemes in their final year which won both praise and commendations. We hope this will continue under the new unitary council.

On looking back at previous Newsletters, I was surprised to see that the Delabole Slate Company has been donating the slate plaques since 1983 and we are very grateful to them for this generous gesture.

Anyone who sees the display of each year's entries, put together very professionally by Terry Knight, will know that the judges are not averse to constructive criticism and it's to



above: one of the engine houses at Trewarvas on the cliff edge, near Porthlevan, restored by the National Trust

be hoped that this has had some influence in raising standards.

Entries for last year's awards were down on the previous year but there was still an interesting mix of old and new buildings.

The main Slate Award went to Lower Polpry, Blisland, the almost total reconstruction of a 17th century vernacular house by CBG members Jim Knudstad and Rosa Frey. Those who went on the group's visit in the summer of 2009 will know that this was a very deserving winner.

Special Commendations were given to the striking new Bodmin Police Station which stands alone looking out over the town and to the Salthouse, Carbis Bay. It's hard to believe that this sleek modern house is not brand new but the transformation of an outdated 1960's dwelling.

Commendations went to: The Gildhouse, Poundstock, probably the best surviving church house in Cornwall. The sympathetic repairs have ensured that this building will continue to serve the community into the future.

Burntwood, Pensilva, described by the architect as a zero-carbon house. The use of local

left: looking down from the road to 'Salthouse', Carbis Bay; the timber-clad top floor replacing a cramped dormer roof space, while maintaining views from above the site.

below left: the new Police Station above Bodmin, with dominant overhanging eaves to control solar gain below: Interior of a top floor bedroom in 'Salthouse' with glass-fronted balcony overlooking St Ives Bay.







materials such as cedar roof shingles ensures that it fits well into its woodland setting. Photovoltaic cells generate electricity and water heating is from solar energy.

Also commended: The National Trust Engine Houses, Trewavas, Porthleven. Perched as they are above a sheer cliff, these presented the restorers with quite a challenge. The resulting work, in particular the pointing, is exemplary. The National Trust has always been an enthusiastic supporter of the awards and the standards of their entries have always been high.

And finally 65-67 Meneage Street, Helston, a restored shop front and part of the Helston Townscape Heritage scheme initiated by Kerrier District Council. The repair and re-instatement of historic features, using old photographs, has produced a fitting transformation.

The presentation ceremony was held in the garden at Bosvigo House, Truro on a pleasant June evening. Our thanks go to owner Mrs Wendy Perry.

JOANNE LAING



**AWARD** 

'Lower Polpry', Blisland

Jim Knudstad & Rosa Frey

SPECIAL COMMENDATION

Police Station, Bodmin

Stride Treglown Architects

'Salthouse', Carbis Bay, St Ives

Lilly Lewarne Practice

COMMENDATION

The Gildhouse, Poundstock

Jonathan Rhind

'Burntwood', Pensilva zero-carbon house

ARCO2 Architecture

Trewavas Old & New Engine Houses,

near Porthleven The National Trust 65/67 Meneage Street, Helston

Helston Town Heritage Initiative

Other shortlisted entries were:

Pilchards Café, Boscastle (NT) St Michael's Church, Baldhu

'Bryher', Penpol

see FRONT COVER for general view of Lower Polpry

right from the top:

General view of the entrance approach to Burntwood, near Pensilva

Part of the Helston Heritage Initiative, the cottage and shop in Meneage Street, now carefully restored Interior of Lower Polpry, the main Award winner The Gildhouse, Poundstock following the restoration and a general upgrading of facilities

below: the interior upper meeting room in the Gildhouse











#### **NIKOLAUS PEVSNER**

Some members may be curious as to progress on the long awaited and enlarged edition of Nikolaus Pevsner's Cornwall volume in the 'Buildings of England' series. The Cornish volume, the first in the series was originally published in 1951 and updated, with fairly minor additions, in 1970. Peter Beacham, author of the new volume has had his planned retirement from English Heritage delayed several times, but he will now be on the project full-time in a month or so. However, work has already been underway for some years and, apart from Peter's efforts, several members of the Group have been writing and researching contributions to this major work. Those familiar with the much larger updated volumes already produced for many other counties can appreciate the amount of work required to update the slim

volume that has sufficed for so long in Cornwall. The new edition will not only cover the last 60 years, but will be broader in the building types covered, and incorporate the results of many years further research in many fields. Most of us can only recall Sir Nikolaus Pevsner as an elderly German emigré architectural historian who spent many years visiting remote rural churches to produce his ground breaking and learned pocket guides. Little is now remembered of the man himself, especially by our younger members. The following recollections have been contributed by Giles Clotworthy, formerly of the National Trust, thanks to our Council Member Paul Holden. They provide a fascinating picture of the man and his work in progress on another of the early volumes.

I first met Nikolaus Pevsner in my first year at the Courtauld Institute, where I began a B.A. course in 1964.

For Courtauld undergraduates with a particular interest in the history of architecture, it was possible to 'sit in' on weekly evening lectures he gave on European architecture at Birkbeck College for students studying for an extra-mural degree. For someone who had admired his writings for several years, it was a great thrill to join in what were inspirational sessions in the fairly informal atmosphere of a large tutorial group.

One evening we found ourselves walking back to the tube station together and he asked me my name. On being told "Clotworthy" he immediately recalled the link with Rashleigh Barton, an obscure 17th Century manor house in a remote part of north Devon which he had visited many years previously when writing 'The Buildings of England - Devon'. He described, to me the particularly elaborate plasterwork of the decorative ceilings which he believed to have been executed by a family of Devon journeymen plasterers - the Abbotts of Fittelstock. I recall being not only hugely impressed by his knowledge, but also rather ashamed that an émigré from Germany knew so much about the 'family seat' which I had never even seen although we lived within forty miles of it!

It was considered a great honour to be invited to drive Nikolaus Pevsner on one of the county tours, and there was by way of a tradition that one hoped to do it in the summer after finishing the final year of the three year course. Neil Stratford had done it the year before me, I believe, in 1966, and encouraged me to do it as he had found the experience a richly informative one, as did I. We didn't get paid, of course, and we lived fairly frugally in modest bed and breakfast accommodation when no alternative had been offered by a friend or supporter of NP's great endeavour.

Whilst doing North Lancashire the monks at Stoneyhurst put us up most generously for several nights and were most hospitable - silent breakfasts, but jovial suppers in the refectory with ample jugs of home brewed ale.

We were lent a cottage on Lake Coniston,

with a rowing skiff at the foot of the garden. NP had been, as usual, working flat out for 14 hours a day for a long time and was very tired. However, I persuaded him to come for an evening row on the lake and, as I enjoyed the exercise of a vigorous pull, he fell asleep in the stern. We travelled some way before he woke and immediately demanded to be taken back to work. By then I was tired and he grew more and more impatient with the length of the return journey. Attempts to share my delight in the beauty of the natural scenery fell on extremely unappreciative ears!

We drove around in NP's tiny and far from new Austin A40. I had only just passed my driving test so was not an experienced driver and he found my style at the wheel rather unnerving at times — as he recorded in the Forward to the resulting book! I suspect his late dear wife conducted him more sedately in the earlier years. However we had to crack on if we were to cover the ground in the time, and we had some brisk debates while he read the map and I followed his detailed instructions within the framework of the day's itinerary which it was my job to plan at the end of the previous day.

An old Hampstead friend of NP's had established the tradition of giving him a supply of delicious homemade fudge at the start of each trip and we savoured a piece at moments of triumph or adversity. There were, inevitably, conflicts of driving versus map reading and when they had been resolved the party who was proved right claimed a lump of fudge as his reward. On one occasion we were bowling along a narrow road and came to an acuteangle bifurcation of the ways - NP said 'Left!' and then at the last moment, 'No, no, right!' We ended up on the grassy triangle in the middle of the junction in fits of laughter, and both accorded each other a piece of fudge!

One of NP's particular bête noires was ill-informed vicars. Having gained entry to a parish church (often locked, but usually the key was to be found in one of a number of standard hiding places), it was my job to 'head off' any cleric who appeared and showed interest in the obviously detailed scrutiny his church was receiving. Occasionally one would know who

NP was and would seek to engage him in a long discussion - but there was no time for that.

A favourite trick of his in order to see both the rectory and manor house in a village would be to drive in to one and, if accosted, ask if we had arrived at the other, and vice versa.

The technique known as 'Sweepers' required a stronger nerve. If the owner of a substantial house had not responded formally to a letter written in advance, NP was not deterred and always tried to examine the exterior at least. We would enter the drive, ignoring all manner of deterring signs, and slowly approach the house while NP scribbled notes as the architectural information became visible. I have a vivid memory of a family enjoying tea on the lawn in front of one stately pile who looked on in astonishment as the A40 chugged around them on the gravel turning circle. "Slower, slower," called NP; the tableau gradually came to life and figures began to move towards the intruding car, until at last NP had seen enough and I could put my foot down and make a dash for the exit. A successful close shave 'Sweepers' was always cause for much self-congratulation, and a fudge treat. As far as I know, the police never were involved in these acts of trespass.

Equally nerve wracking were visits to several huge Victorian mansions by Pugin and the like which had been turned into lunatic asylums, the inmates at times literally pressing their sad distorted faces to the car windows as we studied the cliff-like Gothic edifices of depressing red brick.

The unusual nature of our journey of discovery was aptly summed up by the landlord of a bed and breakfast establishment in Morecambe who had looked on in some surprise as we re-arranged his living room after supper to lay out maps and papers for the evening's work. In reply to his enquiry, I explained who NP was and the purpose of our mission. He went away shaking his head, to return sometime later to explain, in broad Lancastrian, "Y'know, it's a funny life you're leading lad driving around looking at old buildings with an old man." Said within earshot of NP, I was mortified – NP was tickled pink!

June 1993

GILES CLOTWORTHY

A PEVSNER FOOTNOTE: In our 2003
Newsletter I wrote on 'What are we leaving for Future Generations', making a plea for good modern buildings, rather than twee and inaccurate 'Cornish' Cottages and commented:
Looking forward to some new and updated version of Pevsner, what will we have contributed to the rich heritage of our built environment?

Now, with that 'new and updated' edition of

Pevsner's *Cornwall* in progress, I seem to be involved in helping to find worthy buildings of the 20th century!

It seems that during the first half of the century there were few innovative buildings and these usually the result of some direct influence from outside the County. After WWII new schools, and public buildings such as New County Hall - and even some housing - showed the way forward, though few may have real lasting

quality and those that do are generally well known!

So do you have a favourite building in your part of the county, less well known, tucked away down some narrow lane? Maybe a local planning cause célèbre of long ago, now almost forgotten! From Edwardian 'Arts and Crafts' to modernist, I would be interested to hear of those less well known and recognised examples.

JOHN STENGELHOFEN

## **HOW THE SYSTEM CAN GIVE US A SOLUTION NOBODY WANTED!**

Our Council member Madeleine Pender represented the Group at the Appeal Hearing by Palm Beach UK Ltd against the decision of Carrick DC, (superseded by Cornwall Council), to refuse planning permission for flats to replace the Palm Beach Hotel, Queen Mary Road, Falmouth in September 2009.

Things appeared to be going well, but unfortunately the final result was that we have a piece of Disneyland Victorian, no better than other recent seafront development in Falmouth. For want of a little compromise at planning stage we have lost the opportunity of a good modern building - and there are few enough of those in the County.

HISTORY OF THE APPEAL SITE: The Appeal site lies within the Falmouth Conservation Area on Queen Mary Road facing Gyllyngvase Beach. The former hotel became a residential home which closed and the building suffered a serious fire. Permission was given for demolition and the site was cleared for redevelopment. Planning permission was obtained in 2002 to construct a Victorian style mansion block of 12 apartments on three floors with further accommodation in the roof space, the front to be 'embellished with red tiles'.

CONSERVATION AREA REPORTS: In 1998 the Council's Falmouth Conservation Area Appraisal described Queen Mary Road as sandwiched between the sea front and Boscawen Road with 'not much that is of particular interest here but equally little that detracts from the overall special character of the area.' A more recent analysis of Falmouth set out in the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Urban Study, intended to provide a framework for sustainable regeneration in historic Cornish towns identified this southern portion of Falmouth as a 'polite green suburban and seaside area' with a character originating from a scatter of 18th and 19th century houses in wooded grounds.

THE INQUIRY: This followed Carrick's rejection of a revised application. The Inspector made a site visit on the first day. Miss Cooke (Design Principal, Cornwall Council) was subjected to several hours of cross examination on almost every point made in the Council's Proof Document. Mr. Payne (Planning consultant, for the Developer) contended that the Appeal site's essential character was to address the seafront. As a corner site nearest to Cliff Road it was a continuation of Cliff Road and should

left: two views of the revised scheme, showing a rather good modern solution of four storeys on the main street elevation with an additional corner tower forming a stop end to development along the road. Simple massing, consistent and well proportioned elevations without arbitrary changes in materials, and sensibly flat-roofed to minimise the height.

bottom left: what we are getting: the roofscape purporting to be traditional with local materials! The red tiles of the original design replaced by slate hanging, a heavy slate roof, well dormered, and then 'half-timbered' gables. How uncomfortable large glazed areas look in what is attempting to be traditional!

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мемвекsнир secretary Madeleine Pender 01872 520168 Lamorran House, Tresillian, Truro, TR2 4AA address the seafront in the same manner. He felt the landscape aspect was of little merit.

Mr. Tear, the architect criticised the unsatisfactory aspects of the permitted development and contended that the new proposal was of a far superior design and was more sustainable. He said if the Appeal failed the developer intend to construct the permitted scheme (2002).

A local resident, Paul Hills was questioned on his submission that the digital images provided by the appellant did not show the true scale of the proposed development. He claimed that the development would affect the amenities of his and neighbouring dwellings.

Mrs. Pender was questioned by Counsel on whether the proposal had been discussed by the CBG Council and also whether she could recall what had been said at the Design Review Panel when the scheme had been presented at the pre-application stage. She recalled there had been concerns about the scale.

There followed further examination of the Appellant's submissions by the County Solicitor.

The Inspector then informed Mr. Hills and Mrs. Pender that they were entitled to submit questions to the Appellants. Mrs. Pender questioned Mr. Payne's opinion of the lack of merit of the landscape surrounding the development considering there were several dwellings within large well landscaped grounds by well recognised architects. She also asked why no sight lines had been provided from the north, east and west.

**THE CONCLUSION:** On the 20th November 2009 the Inspector delivered the report. The Appeal was dismissed. The main issue was the effect the proposed development would

have upon the character and appearance of the area. \*

The principal massing of the building would consist of four storeys across nearly the full width of the site fronting Queen Mary Road which is in marked contrast to the existing pattern of development. Furthermore the northern elevation facing the coach park to the north would be four storeys, stepping down to two storeys to within I metre of the boundary of the site. The two wings would be unified by a tower of five storeys. The frontage and the northern elevation would be at least one storey higher than other existing buildings on this side of the beach and considerably wider. Their juxtaposition would be visible in a range of public views from the north east and in the Inspector's opinion 'their dimensions would appear excessive and overbearing.' The tower, although an integral part of the design would emphasise the disparity of scale.

The Inspector noted that there were elements of the design that were an improvement on the permitted scheme and agreed that its simple sculptural form was a virtue as was the use of traditional materials, granite and slate, rather than the red tiles to be hung on the facade of the permitted development. However the 2002 scheme pays careful attention to the scale and form of the surrounding built environment and the inspector felt that the 2002 scheme would harmonise more effectively with its setting.

The Inspector did not agree that the currently proposed scheme would have a greater impact in terms of light, privacy, noise and outlook on neighbouring properties in Boscawen Road than the 2002 scheme.

The Council had formed the opinion that the Appellant was not likely to construct the 2002 scheme should the appeal fail. However this was not the case; the scheme previously approved by Carrick will remain a memorial to Carrick's planning department.

MADELEINE PENDER

\* Apparently the actual quality of the designs was not considered particularly relevant! Editor





## PROTECTING CAMBORNE

The planning laws we have become so used to over the last 60 years or so include efforts to preserve those buildings and their settings which are considered worth keeping for the enjoyment of present and future generations.

Cornwall has a very considerable number of listed buildings, and almost all old communities have at least parts of them designated as Conservation Areas. We can be thankful that characterful old farmhouses, numerous industrial relics, churches and selected chapels, dwellings or more formal design, slate tombstones, milestones, and many more structures are protected, at least to a certain extent, from profiteering, malicious destruction or unsympathetic alterations.

However, there are elements of our built environment in Cornwall which have no such protection, and often it is among those overlooked features we find those buildings we treasure most. As an example, take Camborne, a town unloved by those who do not live there, but one of considerable history and character. Its main shopping thoroughfare, Trelowarren Street, is straight and long, punctuated at its eastern end by the impressive Centenary Methodist Church of 1839. Was that an accident? Our forefathers seemed to have the happy knack of placing what they considered to be important buildings in strategic locations which, in addition to emphasising their social status, also provide a satisfying focal point.

Luckily the 'Centenary' is a listed building, still serving its original purpose. Other significant buildings in the town are not so fortunate. The road towards Helston from the chapel, Trevenson Street, leads to The Cross. Around this 5-road junction was placed by the Victorians a number of buildings important to the town at the time, and thereby reflecting its civic ambitions and a major part of its social history.

Where Basset Street and Cross Street converge is the Passmore Edwards Free Library (not listed), designed by the renowned Cornish architect, Silvanus Trevail, and for which the foundation stone was laid in 1894. Libraries such as this, encouraged by the benefactions of Passmore Edwards, sprang up in almost all the larger Cornish towns, and represent a major investment on the part of our forefathers in the educational and social well-being of their communities. After all, erecting the building was only the start.

On the corner of Cross Street and Trevenson Street are the Camborne Urban District Council Offices of 1903 (listed), extended later

to accommodate the town's fire engine; and continuing to Helston a little way along South Terrace is the former Tehidy Estate Office (listed) of 1841 and 1877, which was converted to a Community Centre in 1937.

At the south-western end of Trevenson Street stands the old Camborne Public Rooms (not listed), currently undergoing conversion to flats for a housing association. Originally opened in the early 1890s, many of the older generations will now remember it primarily as the home of the Holman's Museum. A recent attempt by the CBG to have it listed was turned down by English Heritage.

This group of buildings at The Cross are not here by accident. Evidently the area was seen as one where the civic duties and functions of the town should happen. Being near the railway station, it also offered an appropriately dignified introduction for those visiting the town. The Library and the Public Rooms, important though they are to the street-scape, are unlisted, despite the Library being arguably the most notable and striking building of the group. Both remain substantially the same externally, and it is their contribution to their immediate environment and the town's historic heritage which needs protection.

English Heritage imported a field officer from the north of England on a brief contract to assess the worth of buildings in urban Camborne-Redruth as an afterthought to the larger rural parishes survey programme of the 1980s. He considered individual buildings (or understandably simply failed to find them in the limited time available) but evidently chose to discount the relationship of groups of late Victorian contemporary buildings at unmissable locations such as The Cross.

Cornwall Council has assessed them as 'significant' buildings within the Conservation Area (ratified April 2010, possibly accepting the former Kerrier District Council officers' deliberations), but that may be somewhat meaningless, as part of the Holman No 3 works adjacent to the Public Rooms, albeit constructed c 1939, has very recently been demolished despite being identified on the relevant mapping as within the 'significant' group.

Historically, buildings within the Conservation Areas of Cornwall have been almost protectionfree as impoverished local authorities have viewed the zones more as a means of obtaining funds for townscape projects rather than spending funds on undertaking legal enforcement against infringements by those owning properties within them. So listing has been the only real protection on offer.

Camborne has suffered more than most Cornish towns from a lack of understanding until very recently of the value of its built heritage, and it is perhaps only with its disappearance, that we begin to appreciate how much has been lost, not only in visual and aesthetic deprivation, but more especially in the inability to take any pride in what has replaced the losses. The fine and impressive range of Holman's Foundry buildings along Wesley Street on the town's north-eastern edge has been replaced by a boring 2 metre high wall and vegetation concealing an acre of tarmac and a Tesco store of no discernible merit at all, a 'design', perhaps like all the goods it retails, universal and placeless in character.

At the other end of the main street there once stood the Camborne School of Mines building of 1882, in itself a statement of the importance of that institution to the world's extractive industries and of Cornish mining to the very existence of this substantial town as we know it.

That too was demolished at the behest of Tesco's to make way for their first incursion into the town, a building now occupied by Argos and yet another example of a joyless town centre shed. The adjacent 1890 Basset Memorial wing of the School of Mines (not listed) still stands but its long-term future too must be uncertain.

All these Victorian and Edwardian buildings are in local terms notable structures, good quality formal buildings commonly embellished with fine granite coigns in the local manner. They are not exceptional or adventurous architectural gems when measured against the standards of wealthier major cities of the British Isles, but they are our little gems and represent a locally, or regionally distinct character which might be thought to have national or even international significance given the context of the Cornish Mining World Heritage Site. In Cornish terms they certainly stand out, and for that reason it is immensely regrettable that in the matter of acquiring legal protection they do not measure up and are ignored. Also overlooked is the cohesiveness with which they were planned, their thoughtful groupings, the intent to let each part of the town have an identifiable role, and, not least, to imbue the inhabitants with pride in their thriving and active community.

So it is something of a challenge for CBG members who might wish to preserve something of our heritage as well as simply note their passing. It is unlikely that we shall keep everything, or indeed wish to. Change can be for the good, but experience to date suggests that, in the case of losing our Victorian or Edwardian buildings of stature, the substitutes consistently do not measure up. What we can do is to insist that buildings we cannot protect do at least have equally good replacements, and ones which make some attempt to reflect the ambitions and concerns of the local residents rather than the imposition of speculative grant-grabbing developments imposed, by imported 'experts' on what they perceive to be our economic and social requirements, to make our towns exactly the same as the towns they have upped

TERRY KNIGHT

and deserted. The Cross, Camborne, facing the Public Rooms is the



#### THAT HORROR OF PASTICHE . . . . a conditioned reflex?

Planning officers, architects, conservation pundits and other informed professionals subscribe to an almost universal mantra. It goes like this: 'Certainly there is room for a new building; but we don't want to see some kind of pastiche.'

What many of them mean is a repugnance for designs in the manner of former times and (especially) the use of classical detail or Gothic extravagancies. Because many are beguiled by technology, they retain a kind of respect for formulae regarding scale and proportion. Designs employing the 'golden section' might prove suitably recondite. Those unacquainted with that useful rule may take it to infer that ideally, the width of a rectangular opening should be roughly two-thirds of its height.

Few wish to grasp the nettle by defining what they actually mean by 'pastiche'. Chambers Dictionary says: 'a jumble: a pot-pourri: a composition (in literature, music or painting) made up of bits of other works or imitations of another's style'. In reality, what they think of as pastiche is wholly pejorative. It embodies what they personally dislike or despise.

However, a moment's thought will reveal that architectural history is littered with what could fairly be called pastiches - one movement to another. From the ancient Greeks, evolve the Romans, then on to the Renaissance, Mannerism, the neo Classical, Greek Revival and the great neo-Baroque town halls of industrial England.

Interspersed with the recurrent taste for classicism were the romantic allusions to the Gothic style. The exquisite magnificence of European ecclesiastical architecture was to be pastiched by Horace Walpole at Strawberry Hill in 1748. After that, in the 19th.C, came a deluge of intensely grand and confidant exercises in Gothic pastiche for churches, cathedrals, baronial country houses and public buildings. Alongside all these endeavours were more modest constructions in the same vein.

There is, of course nothing new in the moralising tone adopted by those involved in design. The sainted William Morris, who is eternally quoted for his dictum that things should be either beautiful or useful, laid great emphasis on the worth of honest craftsmanship and genuine materials; but was not above departure from grace.

He commissioned the architect Philip Webb to create The Red House in Bexley Heath, as eclectic a pastiche as you could find on a long day's march. Also, in my view, a deeply dispiriting building. None the less, it contains a good bit of the revered craftsmanship and honest materials which might excuse any lapses in taste.

A truism, much loved by those who are singularly short of that commodity, declares: 'Wouldn't it be a dull world if we all had the same kind of taste?' There's no denying it.

What is hard to subscribe to is the assumption that the use of historic design elements - whether classical, Gothic or indeed ultramodern – is necessarily a doomed enterprise. Often, buildings may escape obloquy by reason of their invention, theatrical or even comic effect.

Clough Williams-Ellis's romantic coastal village

Portmeirion in North Wales is a case in point. It is a magpie assembly of acquired or created buildings, as untypical of traditional Welsh architecture as you could imagine. Intentionally in the spirit of Italy, it can, from a distance, be mistaken for somewhere like Amalfi. On closer inspection, it displays a great deal of charm and some of the insubstantial quality of a stage set. But it is hard not to love it.

One of the favourite styles espoused by Victorian architects, like our own Hicks of Redruth, is what might be called North European Renaissance, with more than a nod in the direction of Vredeman de Vries's 'Architectura' of 1577. Lots of somewhat zany elaborations still prove rather endearing. Pastiche? I should say so! Sylvanus Trevail and William White were also tremendous pasticheurs in their own ways.

People like me, who can be a touch pedantic about such matters, do have a certain revulsion for what we think of as anaemic and badly informed traditional design. Faux Georgian housing and repro 19th.C shopfronts with all the wrong features, come to mind. The objection is not that they ape the past, but that they raise one's expectations only to dash them in the crudity of the detail. They create clumsy pastiches.

There is an idea put about by the cognoscenti that additions to old buildings must be 'of our time'. Echo the verticality of the openings, for example, but on no account produce a fair imitations of a Gothic cloister to adjoin a Gothic cathedral. Why on earth not?

Perhaps the real answer is that cusped stone tracery is mighty expensive. Our Victorian ancestors had plenty of cheap labour and often deep pockets. Yet, for all that, certain-people think it in some way morally dishonest to build what they deem to be 'fake' additions. To my mind morality has nothing to do with the case. Beauty, unrelated to honesty or morality, may be effected by contemptible people for questionable ends.

So let me make a plea on behalf of what they refer to as 'pastiche'. Let us at least try to differentiate between what gives visual pleasure or is merely neighbourly; and the barrow-boy interpretations of the hacks. Maybe, it would be better still to eschew the word pastiche altogether and leave it to the musicians, the painters and the novelists. HUGH LANDER

#### PAUL HOLDEN FSA

Congratulations are due to our new Chairman, Paul Holden on his election as a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London. The National Trust issued a press release on the occasion which reads:

'Paul Holden, House and Collections Manager for the National Trust at Lanhydrock House, has been elected as a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London (FSA). The society was formed in 1707 and was charged by its Royal Charter of 1751 with 'the encouragement, advancement and furtherance of the study and knowledge of the antiquities and history of this and other countries'. This internationally recognised society has 2,700 Fellows which include many distinguished archaeologists and art and architectural historians holding positions of responsibility across the cultural heritage. The election process took over 6 months to complete as new Fellows peer reviewed and elected by the society's membership. Paul's election was based on his extensive published research over the past 10 years, in particular numerous articles on Cornish and architectural history coupled with two book projects first, the Lanhydrock Atlas (Cornwall Editions, 2010) and second, his forthcoming book on the antiquarian Samuel Molyneux (London Topographical Society, July 2011).

More on Samuel Molyneux can be found

#### http://www.bl.uk/eblj/2010articles/article10.html

Paul Holden says 'It is a great honour to be elected to such a prestigious and learned society with such a rich cultural past. Over the years I have been very fortunate to have had great support and encouragement from my peers, academics and editors of various publications. It is also gratifying to be recognised by the academic world for my achievements and contribution to Cornish history'.

## http://sites.google.com/site/cornishbuildingsgroup/

The Cornish Buildings Group occupies a unique place in the county. Despite our members having a great diversity of backgrounds, we all share a common interest in the built environment, both modern and historical. As a council we recognise the need for engagement hence over the past year we have been developing the Cornish Buildings Group website.

The aim of the website is to reach out to our existing membership and encourage recruits through better promotion of our activities in particular events, creating an interest in specific fields of architecture, raising the profile of the award scheme and making available our printed material.

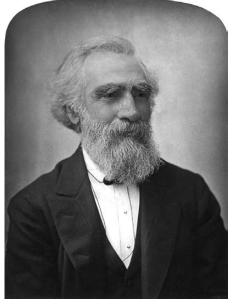
The website provides an opportunity for involvement in the group's activities. Writing a report on a group visit is just one way of getting involved. Perhaps, a review on a new, or old, book on Cornish buildings, recommend sites for group visits, a worthy restoration or development for our annual award scheme. Why not send in a research paper on an aspect of Cornish architectural history or encourage a friend to look at the website, who knows they too may like to join. Perhaps you may just like to use the website to keep up with our news and events.

The site can be found as above and can develop in any way we choose. So please don't be backwards in coming forward - suggest what you would like to see on the site, after all it is yours and we would welcome any suggestions. See the contacts page on the website for **7** where to send your contributions. We look forward to hearing from you. PAUL HOLDEN

#### JOHN PASSMORE EDWARDS of BLACKWATER 1823-1911







above: J Passmore Edwards in old age, photograph by Argall of Truro.

above left: the Mary Ward Settlement, Tavistock Place, London, by Smith and Brewer, 1895-8. The Grade 1 Listing description ends: 'The combination of Arts and Crafts detailing, a Lethaby-inspired symbolism, and the demonstration of its social purpose through the well-preserved interior makes this an exceptional building.' Probably Edwards' best known London project was the Whitechapel Art Gallery, 'Listed Grade II\* as 'an important work of Art Nouveau architecture in England by Charles Harrison Townsend'. left: Passmore Edwards first project, on a rather smaller scale, the Blackwater Institute, opened in 1890. Below: Truro Library, opened 1896 (left) and the larger part, the Technical School opened 3 years later, but now also part of the Library, both by Silvanus Trevail. (Photographed in 1974 when, after demolition of the old Post Office, your editor caught this un-repeatable view!)

The name of J. Passmore Edwards must be familiar to most of our members, indeed it should be known to anybody familiar with Cornish towns as few do not have a memorial to him - whether library, school or institute. The story of the Blackwater boy who made his fortune in London is less well known, but now with the Centenary of his death we have an ideal opportunity to find out more.

The proceeds of his newspaper and publishing empire enabled him to fund the building of some 70 buildings, in Cornwall and London, for the benefit and education of the poor. He considered libraries to be the key to this and as a result he financed 25 libraries, 8 in the county, and bought 80,000 books to stock the shelves, but also built the art galleries in Newlyn and Whitechapel, 9 cottage hospitals, convalescent homes, institutes, and various others buildings, many of which continue to benefit the community.

An extensive programme of lectures, exhibitions and other events, all over the county, has been organised by Dean Evans and details of these can be found at www.pe-c.info along with lots of well illustrated information. A excellent book has just been published written by Dean Evans (see below), who also supplied us with the top photographs.

From the point of view of the buildings he funded it is interesting to compare those in London with the Cornish projects, which tended to be rather conventional. Newlyn Art Gallery by James Hicks, in your Editor's opinion is probably the best 'down here', so if you like that, you will certainly be interested to find the varied and innovative buildings he funded in London and the home counties area.

Funding the Ladder: the Passmore Edwards Legacy, by Dean Evans, 2011, published by Francis Boutle, London price £20.00 ISBN 978-1-903427-66-8

