

CORNISH BUILDINGS GROUP

THE CHAIRMAN

In the last Newsletter our Chairman's report offered a salutary message of hope and frustration. As your new Chairman I would like to revise those themes for changing times to read threat and opportunity.

Regarding threat, throughout 2011 your Council has become increasingly concerned at the threat posed by the government's National Planning Policy Framework. Although our remit is essentially to promote and encourage good new architecture and the protection and repair of

old buildings, like many like-minded groups and organisations we feel that changes to the planning system could have a detrimental influence on the natural and historic environment. We fear the potential for bad architecture, a result of rushed developments built in inappropriate areas. Saying that there can be little argument that the complex and bureaucratic planning laws would benefit from a shake-up, but to put economic factors and the vested interests of developers before community welfare is essentially wrong. A few examples of why the proposed policy is flawed immediately spring to mind. The draft policy document offers a strong presumption towards sustainable development especially when 'development plans . . . are not up-to-date'. This is only feasible if Cornwall's Core Strategy document, currently being written and due to be presented to central government by March 2012, is sufficiently rigid and addresses all relevant issues. Without these assurances we fear a 'free for all' system where planning decisions reached by local communities will be easily challenged and overturned at appeal. At a recent public meeting David Edmondson, Cornwall Council's Area Chief Planning Officer, said '[local community will] have more say on specific detail



The Award Winning Kestle Barton, Manaccan, see page 3. An excellent example of natural materials and natural colours to skillfully renovate an old farm complex for new uses.

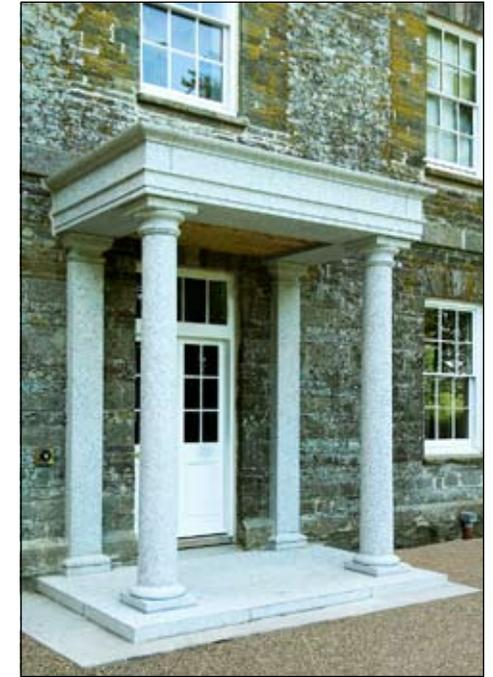
because lesser detail will be included in the core strategy'. This places huge pressure on community groups to formulate neighbourhood plans which by definition have to be specific, pragmatic, innovative and fully appreciative of local needs, landscape character and distinctiveness - all in all a huge undertaking. One further concern is the adverse effect of local government reform particularly the reduction of local authority historic environment specialists. If neighbourhood plans are to work effectively and in consideration that the amount of planning applications are likely to rise under the new systems then surely support staffing levels should rise not fall. We fear that this makes the built environment a soft target. After all skilled conservation and planning officers with local knowledge are vital to ensure a fair and transparent planning system. Mistakes like the recent overlooking of an objection from the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England regarding a wind turbine application may become more commonplace in the future.

These proposals will undoubtedly leave the county open to unsuitable and unsustainable developments such as the Truro Eastern District Development which is just one of the many cases we have commented on during 2011. During our Council meetings we discuss and form opinions on planning applications and give sound comment and feedback. Our objection to the Truro development was twofold. First, we saw the development as an intrusion on the landscape, thereby destroying the sense of place. Secondly, we felt that the proposed new buildings were ill-informed pastiche – a design strategy, it would seem, based on Poundbury in Dorset which has become a combination of such random styles as Romanesque, Greek, Georgian, Dorset cottage, and Gothic. One critic recently described Poundbury as 'winsome' adding 'with its paranoid insistence on conjuring a bygone world that never existed, which illusion is painfully punctured by the appearance of modern steel frames in the half-built buildings'. In our opinion Truro and this Area of Great Landscape Value deserves better consideration. We do not believe that urban sprawl overflowing into a rural valley with views of a supermarket and parking infrastructure replacing scenic grandeur is acceptable to Truro's great sense of arrival.

Despite the threat many opportunities are open to our group. This year we have made every effort to engage more with our members. Our many and varied visits continue to be a great success with many members enjoying the social and intellectual freedom it has to offer. It is very difficult to gauge where to go and when to go so if you have any suggestions for trips or have access to an interesting building please let us know. The 2011 AGM was well attended, the River Tamar trip proved very popular and was oversubscribed while the October visit culminated with the discovery of a decorated Celtic cross shaft which was being used as a garden step. Under the guidance of our awards secretary the award scheme goes from strength-to-strength and this year attracted another large and varied entry.

Looking ahead I have several aims as your new Chairman. First, I would like to raise our profile amongst like-minded groups and through the media. This will ensure mutual respect from our peers and the increased media focus will make us more effective in fields of influencing opinion. Furthermore, a higher profile can only have a positive affect on boosting our membership. Second, I really want to make the CBG Council work for our members. We want to hear about the issues that concern you in Cornwall. Neglected buildings and planning may be your concern? Please tell us what you see and hear. You may like to nominate a building for our awards scheme or feed in ideas for the Council to consider. We have set up a new email address for you to make contact with us, it is cornishbuildingsgroup@gmail.com. To be more accountable our website has been improved and is constantly reviewed and updated with new information. Please save it as one of your 'favourites' so you can see what we are doing and why we are doing it. It will tell you about the awards scheme winners, offer learned papers on Cornish buildings old and new, give access to back copies of newsletters, give you news of current issues regarding buildings in the county and, more importantly, offer you a chance to get involved. I encourage all members to interact with the site, email us reports of CBG outings, review a book on Cornish buildings, ask the CBG Council questions, nominate buildings for awards or recognition – it's so easy the website is at: <http://sites.google.com/site/cornishbuildingsgroup/>

ANNUAL AWARDS SCHEME 2011



Although we are supposedly in the middle of a recession there were still over 30 entries for the 2011 award scheme.

On looking through them again for this article, it struck me just how varied were those entries.

They included the renovations of a cathedral spire and a former tin mine, a new state-of-the-art university building and, most unusually, the 'art wall' at Wadebridge. The latter comprises a long, curved white painted wall on which aspiring Banksys can try out their artistic talents in preference to defacing the buildings of Wadebridge.

This year's entries were evenly divided between new build and restorations, though disappointingly only two were shortlisted.

continued from page 2

There can be no doubt that there are interesting times ahead – times that offer numerous threats and opportunities. The CBG Council offers a huge amount of expertise in many specialist areas, expertise that penetrates further into other

left: the new glass roofed entrance, infilling a gap between blocks at Launceston Town Hall; a dark corner has been transformed into the centre of extensive improvements. right: the former Stoke Climsland Rectory - exemplary restoration and excellent workmanship in the new granite portico.

Awards - The main Award was given to Kestle Barton at Manaccan. The ancient farmstead has itself been restored but the judges were looking at the barns which have been impressively converted into an art gallery and holiday lets.

Architect Alison Bunning and her team have managed this with as little change as possible to the exterior appearance of the barns using traditional cob repair and lime renders and mortars.

Special Commendations went to Pendragon House, Stoke Climsland a former rectory which

committees and groups throughout Cornwall. In the last newsletter our previous Chairman Nick Cahill thanked the Council and members for their continued support. I echo those thanks and would like to thank Nick for his leadership during his term as Chairman. **PAUL HOLDEN**



above: the interior of one the converted barns at Kestle Barton, the living area and kitchen in a holiday apartment.
 above right: the long neglected Grade II* listed Treneere Manor, Penzance, built in 1758. Now part of the extended Penwith College campus, restored externally and carefully converted internally to its new educational uses.

had more recently been a residential home. It has been impressively transformed to a private home again by architects LePage of Saltash.

The other Special Commendation went to Launceston Town Hall whose character has been enhanced through a sensitive refurbishment.

Alterations include a new glazed reception area which blends well with the original Victorian building.

It was reassuring to note with both these buildings how the refurbishment of historic features took precedence over change.

Commendations were as follows:

Treneere Manor, Penzance, a sympathetic restoration of a grade II* 18th century house into a Higher Education Centre for Truro-Penwith College.



King Edward Mine Museum, Troon, an impressive renovation of another grade II* building which is part of the World Heritage Site.

Truro Cathedral, restoration of the central tower and spire where the original Bath stone had been much eroded over the years. Syerford Stone from the Cotswolds was used as a suitable and harder wearing alternative. Fortunately two of the judges had previously seen the work in progress and so it was not necessary for the team to clamber to the top of the cathedral!

Cross Street News, Camborne where a dilapidated Victorian shop front has been finely restored as part of the town heritage initiative scheme.

The presentation of the awards was held at Stuart House, Liskeard, a previous winner, on a rather damp June evening.

Our thanks once again to Delabole Slate Co. for the plaques and to Council member Terry Knight for putting together the display of entries. This is now touring some of Cornwall's libraries.



above: The exterior of King Edward Mine's new Winder and Compressor house, a replacement following the 1957 fire. Construction follows closely the original surviving buildings most of which are Listed Grade II*.

right: The interior; a Holman's horizontal winding engine built for the original house in 1908, returned here after 15 years at Castle-an-Dinas Wofram mine, a move to help the war effort.

I would like to encourage members and anyone else who sees this newsletter to look out for any developments they think should be entered into next year's awards. These can be recent or renovated buildings, private, public or commercial. If you let me know I am happy to follow-up your suggestions.

JOANNE LAING, Awards Administrator
 jo60laing@yahoo.co.uk

– or look for details on our website!

below, far-left: the exterior of the Town Hall at Launceston
 below left: In Camborne the Newsagents in Cross Street forms a much improved stop to the view down Chapel Street
 below: a further external view of Kestle Barton, part of the group of former farm buildings also shown on the front cover; a worthy award winner and an example for others.



2011 AWARDS

AWARD Kestle Barton, Manaccan

Alison Bunning, Architect

SPECIAL COMMENDATION

Pendragon House, Stoke Climsland

LePage Architects

Town Hall, Launceston

Kivells Chartered Surveyors

COMMENDATION

Treneere Manor, Penzance

Poynton Bradbury Wynter Cole, Architects

King Edward Mine Winder & Compressor House

Martin Richards for Cornwall Council

Truro Cathedral Central Tower & Spire

WR Bedford for the Cathedral Chapter

Cross Street News, 43 Cross St, Camborne

Cornwall Council

Other shortlisted entries were:

Delabole, Quarry View housing; Lemarne,

Trebartha, North Hill; Cowlands Pottery;

Camborne Old Clink; Tremough Media Centre





TRURO EAST DISTRICT CENTRE

This year's Newsletter can hardly ignore Truro East District Centre (TEDC), at present causing some controversy in mid-Cornwall and much wider interest as a Duchy of Cornwall project.

Many of you will be familiar with these proposals, and the progress of the planning application but if not you should look at the well illustrated and informative Design & Access Statement that forms part of the planning application and is available online[¶]

The project initially provided an eastern 'park-and-ride' facility sited at the junction of the A390 road

The supermarket: a large single storey shed 'without windows but made into architecture with a well-articulated façade.'
from the Design & Access Statement submitted with the planning application

St Austell and the A39 from Newquay but has now expanded into a major retail and housing area. However, this is Duchy of Cornwall land and so we can be reassured that this will not be the familiar, slightly tacky, edge-of-town commercial development. We have a respected London-based architect, Ben Pentreath, with a track-record of work at Poundbury, the Duchy's extension on the edge of Dorchester. In 2006 he received the Georgian Group's Architectural Awards 'New Building in the Classical Tradition'

....AND THE ARCHITECTURE?

The Group's Council has debated the pros & cons of the Truro East proposals – trying to avoid the general planning issues and keep to purely architectural matters.

I would simply like to put forward my own reservations on the architectural proposals, and ask why these buildings have to look like something else, looking backwards to that idealised past portrayed in those 'heritage' gift catalogues. Why not look forward and accept that we have these modern innovations like supermarkets – together with cars, buses, TVs and computers.

With the County's population up 55% in 50 years we can't expect to keep all our green fields, and it seems that Cornwall Highways have made a good case for the Eastern park and ride to be sited here and after all car parking can be landscaped to minimize the impact.

But a supermarket and housing as well may just be a step too far, the start of ribbon development that will engulf Tresillian, a city stretching to Threemilestone. The chosen name TEDC suggests this; of what can it be the Centre, otherwise? Now the planning application includes

a household waste recycling centre to make a viable package – in addition to the space for 1600 cars and 6000 new trees.

So, looking at the architecture, is it appropriate to take as our 'pattern' the classical mansion set in a landscaped park, to hide a modern air-conditioned supermarket – and talk of the Market Halls of our 19th century towns with a vision of a site where '*formal classical buildings interface with a more rural vernacular edge*'*.

The old District Councils imposed the Cornish cottage image wherever possible while modern buildings were allowed in major projects such as the Tate, the Maritime Museum and at Eden. Largely funded and designed far away in London – as were most of the progressive buildings of the earlier 20th century. Taking full advantage of their sites, these exciting buildings have come to be accepted and appreciated by visitors and local people, even if they did appear a bit different at first! Architects in the county on less prestigious projects would receive comments from the planners asking for dormer windows, red ridge tiles, false chimneys and probably a little bit of stone, ('*on the front - at least*'). Anything to make it look more like something else – preferably a film set from a du Maurier tale of 'old Cornwall' – without the pirates.

But surely we have moved on! The principles of modern design in building are based on the rejection of historic references, resulting in a simple functional aesthetic derived from the honest exploitation of the opportunities of modern materials and the expression of the building's purpose and therefore achieving a more satisfactory place to live or work in the 21st century.

So here we have a conflict at TEDC; environmentally friendly, well insulated, low energy buildings hiding behind '*a simple, stripped classical language that borrowed directly from the architecture of Truro and the South West*'*, the period that saw '*much of 18th and 19th century Truro was constructed of Bath Stone*'*. The towns of Cornwall, as elsewhere, also expanded in the late Victorian, Edwardian or Inter-war periods, so why do we choose to mimic the grandest of all, the classical revival – is it surely no more than a matter of taste and fashion that changes – after all we know the Victorians didn't like Georgian! Should 'classical' be used for future supermarkets in other Cornish towns and who will decide which style for other building types?

Major schemes like this raise the acceptability for pastiche, giving builders and designers the opportunity – though lacking the skill – to perpetuate some inappropriate or ill-informed

'classical style'. Considerable skill and expertise in the rules of classical design are needed and no doubt will be applied here, but with minimal architectural criticism in the planning department, we no longer have that necessary control over the more inept attempts. This can be seen on one of the other entrance to Truro!



Sadly between the columns in the drawing above can be seen the glazed entrance screen indicating that the classical skin is only a portico away from the real high-tech supermarket behind.

Any similarity to the 'pattern' would more accurately reflect the day 'the gardens are open to the public' – when the mansion is surrounded by a sea of visitors parked cars.

JOHN STENGLHOFEN

[¶] The applicant's website can be found at www.truroedc.co.uk and the alternative view is at www.savetruro.co.uk
* these quotations have been taken from the Design and Access Statement submitted with the planning application.

OBITUARY

RUTH DUNSTAN

Members of the Cornish Buildings Group will be saddened to hear of the death of Ruth Dunstan – one of our longest serving supporters. Ruth, who died in August last year after a short illness at the age of 89, would have been better known to many as Ruth Jones, the well established Falmouth estate agent.

A knowledgeable and doughty fighter for old buildings, she was for some year's a member of the Group's Council, bringing to bear not only her understanding of architecture, but also a wide love and professional interest in the fine arts and antiques. With her daughter Esther, she held many specialist auctions in the town.

Born in Redruth, she moved to Falmouth at the age of five. Educated at Falmouth High School, her father's death and mother's illness prevented her capitalising on her academic potential. This meant leaving school at 17 to work in the Library Service. During the war she worked in the Falmouth Docks office and afterwards, while employed by the C R Corfield practice, was involved in compiling bomb damage essential repairs specifications. After subsequently working for Lamb Bros., estate agents, she finally set up her own business in a rented room at No 8, Arwenack Street, using a borrowed typewriter and without a car.

As the business grew and thrived, she bought the premises, eventually becoming a Fellow of the Valuers' Institution. During her career she also engaged in business partnerships with her sister, with Mr Donald Palmer and with J A Treglown.



In 1956 she married Bob Dunstan, a former journalist, at that time licensee of the King's Head in Falmouth, whose first marriage had failed after the tragic death of a 19 year old son in a motor cycle accident.

Always keen to give something to the community, Ruth served on Falmouth Town Council and Carrick District Council. She was also, at one stage, a member of the Falmouth magistrates' bench.

CBG members would not necessarily have known that she was an accomplished water-colour painter; but those who served on the Group's Council in the '80's would have experienced her generous hospitality and excellent cooking.

People who knew Ruth fairly well were aware of her forthright approach to life and the courage of her convictions. Any backsliding and she was capable of administering a rap over the knuckles. She was a staunch friend and a formidable enemy. If that makes her sound too much a ship in full sail, it should be remembered that she was highly literate, a lover of poetry and could quote extensively from memory – like the watercolours, a more tranquil element of her varied nature.

Ruth is a great loss to Falmouth, to the Cornish Buildings Group and, of course, more than anything, to her daughter Esther, who was a partner in the business from 1979, shared No 8 Arwenack Street and looked after her mother when Ruth became older and more frail.

HUGH LANDER

LOOKING AT PORT QUIN AND DOYDEN HEAD

With stunning views across Lundy Bay the picturesque hamlet of Port Quin was first mentioned in the fourteenth-century as being the seat of the Porquin family. Its sheltered position saw the harbour develop, like nearby Port Issac and Port Gaverne, to service the landing and processing of pilchards. So important was Port Quin that John Norden included it on his c.1580 map of Cornwall. However, bad fishing seasons coupled with regular winter storms (the worse being in 1697 and 1752 in which the male population was practically wiped-out) effectively broke the male spirit and the female resolve. John Betjeman later reflected on this loss when he wrote:

Across stupendous cliffs, as full of flowers as a rock garden, is another little fishing port – Port Quin, an empty Port Issac, mournful and still. For here the old cottages and nearly all ruins; the harbour is deserted, the gardens, once so trim, are grown over with elder and ash saplings, honeysuckle and fennel. The salting sheds are in ruins too. The story is that the whole fishing fleet of the village went down in a gale, and 32 women were left widows.

The nineteenth-century Port Quin census returns show that families were large and properties small. Living in the hamlet was a miller, a shoemaker, some masons, several paupers and a couple of master mariners. High on the Doyden headland were lead and antimony mines and Port Quin, not surprisingly, supplied miners. Yet, by this time farming had become the main focus. The Guy family of Roscarrock owned much of Port Quin and it was Mark Guy who extended his farming enterprises closer to the hamlet. Of those recorded in the 1841 (27 houses/ 94 population) and 1851 (24 houses/ 60 population) census returns most were agricultural labourers presumably employed by Guy or on Samuel Symons lands on Doyden Head. Survival was however short-lived and the collapse of agriculture and mining at the turn of the twentieth-century meant that the hamlet could not sustain itself any longer leading to the inevitable consequence of migration and eventual abandonment.

In 1956 the National Trust acquired 40 acres of land comprising of Port Quin and Doyden Head from a bequest made by Mrs Annie Woodward

and Mr E.S. Arnold. Two holiday cottage complexes were subsequently set-up, the first on Doyden Head in St Minver parish which made use of the Edwardian Doyden house and the mysterious Doyden castle with the second on the seafront of Port Quin, in the adjoining parish of St Endellion, which embraces a range of vernacular buildings relating the now defunct pilchard industry.

DOYDEN HOUSE

Tradition has it that Herbert Latimer Conor (1847-1940) was out fishing from Port Issac whilst on holiday, spotted the land at Doyden and spontaneously purchased it for £500. By 1910 he had built an L-shaped holiday home with a water garden on the west side – traces of which still remain. Before retiring to Doyden house in the 1920s Conor had a distinguished military career in the South Staffordshire Regiment and was a prison governor serving with some distinction at H.M. Pentonville, Horfield (Bristol), Cardiff, Knutsford and Chelmsford before retiring as Governor of Parkhurst.

His holiday home was practical rather than opulent. The front door was positioned on the south, sheltered, side of the house which led onto well proportioned reception rooms that boasted stunning views towards features known as Carnweather and the Moulds and the Iron Age cliff fortress known as the Rumps. The modest service rooms were situated to the rear of the house. The stable block at the back of the house has space for a single carriage, groom rooms on the first floor and a harness room at the far end. On acquisition the National Trust removed a three storey tower that was in a perilously poor condition. In this tower the 1921 census reveals that there was a drawing room, main bedroom and Auntie Ethel's room. Doyden house was the ideal property for Conor to enjoy his retirement with his family. His granddaughter, Elizabeth Madden, recalls holidaying at Doyden in the 1920s 'swimming out to the cow and calf rocks [and] sliding down on tin trays from the Castle path to Doyden cove'.

DOYDEN CASTLE

Doyden castle is neither castle nor folly. Rather it was built by Samuel Symons for the specific purpose of gambling and drinking.

Samuel Symons (d.1854) inherited some of the Trevigo estate in 1808 but leased 12 acres of

2010 AWARD DISPLAY

The 2011 Awards exhibition will be at the Libraries shown below - your last chance to see the display!

from March 12th	2012	Helston
from April 12th	2012	Penzance
from May 12th	2012	Hayle

Dates for the 2011 Awards exhibition will be given in the Group website when the venues have been arranged.

8 Please check dates with the Libraries before making a long journey in case of late changes



Extract from
John Norden's Map of
Trigg Hundred, c1580

arable land around the Doyden headland from the Julian family. His shrewd business acumen saw him acquire lands throughout North Cornwall including 65 acres of farmland at Tintagel in the 1820s. However, his dealings were not always honourable and he was called to Bodmin to answer for tithe tax evasion.

Symons lived in a house (since demolished) with his wife and young daughter only a few hundred metres from Doyden castle. Access to the castle was from a footpath that linked both entrances. The front door on the south west leads into a large reception room with bay window overlooking the sea, whilst a north-easterly entrance passes directly into the basement with its large wine cellars. Quite how often or indeed who frequented Symons den remains a mystery.

A further mystery is the building itself. No record of its date or construction exists. The first record of the castle is on the St Minver tithe map in 1838 – yet, its Gothick design would suggest that it was built somewhat earlier. Positioned on an imposing promontory overlooking the hamlet of Port Quin, Doyden castle is competently built in good quality ashlar stone, granite dressings and stone buttresses on the corners. The drop arched first floor windows with Y-shaped ecclesiastical tracery may well be architectural salvage from a local demolition perhaps even Roscarrock House, a nearby manor house, which was described in 1817 as 'falling into decay' or the chapel which was 'in great part demolished'. A similar use of traceried windows, stonework and battlements

can be seen on the garden front at Prideaux Place near Padstow of c1810.

GUY'S AND QUIN COTTAGES, PORT QUIN

This small group of picturesque stone cottages have, in more recent times, been named Guy's and Quin cottage, Carolina cellar and Larcombe cottage. A date stone on Quin cottage records 'M. Guy 1828'. Mark Guy of Roscarrock House owned much of Port Quin and the year 1828 marks the passing of the estate from father to son. A prosperous landowner and yeoman farmer Guy was listed in the 1851 census returns as being 71 years old 'a farmer of 698 acres' whose manor house maintained 12 servants. Although once a seventeenth-century fishing cottage the extension in 1828 may indicate a change of use or function towards farming or small business use. The 1842 tithe map shows a long narrow range at the back of the cottages which may have been an old fish cellar long since removed.

CAROLINA CELLAR

As the fishing industry was largely over by the start of the nineteenth-century this fish cellar would appear to date from the mid- to the late-eighteenth century. Cellar refers to a building that processes fish; in this case, pilchards. Adjoining the property are the remains of a brick wall with niches in which wooden poles were inserted holding large stones that crushed the pilchard catch into wooden barrels or hogsheads (4cwt). Along with the salting (whereby fish was layered in salt and left out to dry for several weeks) this work was carried out by the hardy women

of Port Quin. Catching the pilchards was the preserve of the men who used a system called seining. Using a large net called a seine spread between three boats shoals of pilchards were dragged into shore and landed – the high point on Doyden head (by the castle) would have been an ideal spot for the look-out to see the shoals and direct the fishermen to the catch. In 1812 a Port Quin seine was offered for sale along with the 'Venice Sean' cellars, warehouse, 2,000 bushels of salt, nets and a boat. Perhaps this was the Carolina cellar? This two storeyed stone building would have stored the salt and pilchard catch on the ground floor while the nets would have been kept and repaired on the first floor.

LARCOMBE COTTAGE

At the rear of the cellar is a small two storey stone cottage. This building is the only survivor of a terrace of fisherman's cottages which were shown on the 1842 St Endellion tithe map. It is likely that Larcombe cottage is in fact two cottages incorporated into one when the rest of the terrace was demolished. Moving from the front door into the kitchen with its large fireplace incorporating a dome oven with clay door, alongside is a Regency style curved-back cupboard which would appear more suited to the yeoman farmer's house than a lowly fisher-

man. As it is now the kitchen adjoins the parlour with a more recent extension to the north. If this was indeed two cottages, each with a single bedroom on the first floor, a good idea of how it must have been can be seen in many a Newlyn school painting.

PAUL HOLDEN



"From green and pleasant land to urban sprawl!"

Reproduced by kind permission of PRIVATE EYE magazine/Roger Latham

TRENETHICK



The courtyard elevation

Photo: E Berry

Trenethick Manor House (formerly called Trenethick Barton Farmhouse) is a rare and important semi-fortified house that was largely rebuilt by the Hill family in the 16th century, together with the addition of a gatehouse and high courtyard walls (all now listed at grade I).

At this time the Hill family were making money from the local tin industry and were one of the principal local families, including the Godolphins of Godolphin, who contributed to the success of Helston as a coinage town.

The gatehouse (now called the Barbican) is arguably the most iconic feature of the property. This building is very rare in Cornwall and there are few other examples of its type and period that can be compared to it. The building is a purpose-built semi-defensive gatehouse relating to high courtyard walls. The building was clearly designed to give a strong impression of security and at the same time to announce the importance of the great-house beyond. The security of the house was later further improved by the addition of strong rooms, some of the earliest examples to survive in Cornwall. The upper part of the gatehouse is slightly jettied at both front and rear, a fashion feature that owes its origins to the timber-frame tradition of overhanging upper floors.



Looking through the Barbican to the Courtyard and straight on through the House

Photo: E Berry

For many years historic structural failure within the gatehouse was noticeably accelerating and causing concern that the front of the building might imminently collapse. Urgent measures were required and the present owner instigated a programme of consultation (including the close involvement of English Heritage) that resulted in agreement on repair methodology. Consequent repair has been carried out by conservation specialists to an exemplary standard.

The repairs included the rebuilding of the granite ashlar first-floor part of the front wall to its original vertical position together with straightening up the doorway jambs. To ensure long-term structural integrity discreet stainless-steel reinforcement was incorporated into the repairs. The

roof has been re-slated according to its former construction and appearance, including the reinstatement of historic crested ridge tiles.

Internally the lime render has been reinstated to the room space and the stone rubble side walls of the gateway have been limewashed. The original roof truss and the older roof timbers have been retained and the roof has been left open to view as originally intended.

At key stages of the project the building was photographed and analysed and a brief historic building report (funded by the owner) was presented to the consultees.

The owner of the property must be congratulated on rescuing one of Cornwall's most notable and unusual buildings.

ERIC BERRY

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