

ST DAY OLD CHURCH

St Day Old Church, is a unique and remarkable Gothick structure, described by Betjeman as "an ecclesiastical toy fort." It closed in 1956 and lost its roof in 1985, then underwent a major programme of stabilisation in the early 2000s, funded by public money. It has been open to the public almost every year since, with many hundreds of visitors. It has provided a much-loved venue for plays, concerts, exhibitions, and educational visits. The Diocese of Cornwall now wishes to dispose of it, probably for residential development. St Day Historical and Conservation Society, which instigated the restoration programme in 1988 and has had the day-to-day management of the building ever since, strongly opposes these plans, and is working towards forming a trust to take on the church. The Society now has the help and support of the Cornwall Heritage Trust and the strong backing of the local community, and, with the help of crowdfunding, is raising funds for the maintenance of the church. More moral support and financial help is always welcome! For updates, photos, and more information see the St Day Old Church Facebook page. This is a unique opportunity to put conservation principles into action and return an iconic structure to its rightful place as the focus of the local community



and the Cornish Mining World Heritage Site.

CBG has been watching this for many years, and supports these efforts which have been led by our members Mark Johnson and Bernadette Fallon.

UPDATE: A request for pre-application advice on the possible conversion to residential use, was made to Cornwall Council by the Church Commissioners in January 2016; we await further news of this!
Editor

...MORE OF INTEREST AT OUR WEBSITE ADDRESS: <https://sites.google.com/site/cornishbuildingsgroup>

right: Spotted by Jo Mattingly, on display - with other awards - in the entrance to the Porthmeor Studios, in St Ives. Our 2013 Award plaque is partially obscured by the RIBA award but, since ours is slate and theirs is glass, the inscription can still be read!

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NEWSLETTER 2015

CORNISH BUILDINGS GROUP

THE CHAIRMAN

The past year has been a busy one for your Council. In March we organised an interdisciplinary conference at the National Maritime Museum in Falmouth. Hosting such an event following the publication of the new Pevsner Guide seemed an obvious step given our input and long-held interest into this much anticipated project. The conference delivered two days of quality lectures that examined the architectural history of Cornwall from the Conquest through

to the modern era; indeed so popular were the papers and themes that we were twice oversubscribed with delegates. On behalf of our Group I would like to thank those who made it such a memorable event particularly all who attended, our partners the Cornwall Heritage Trust, Yale University Press and the National Trust and the speakers for making it a fascinating couple of days. Later in the year a volume of the conference papers will be published in partnership with Francis Boutle Books. Because of the



*Who looks after our built heritage?
This is Cusgarne Manor, near Gwennap, recognised as of national importance with Grade II* Listing. Cornwall Council attempted to take over complete responsibility for seeing such buildings are kept suitably repaired - with no interference from Historic England. But given their recent track record here and in other II* cases we would ask are they really fit-for-purpose now, even with the help of Historic England?
In January Cusgarne was sold and so we look forward to its saving, with care, by the new owners.*

photo: Eric Berry, 2015

success of this event and the demand for another I am happy to announce here that we will host a second conference early in 2017 based around the subjective theme of good design.

Our Group is no stranger to discussing what constitutes good design; a tangible reminder of this can be seen in our Awards scheme. This year was a particularly good competition with some 40 entries reflecting not only good design but also exemplary conservation practice. Our new Awards Administrator Patrick Newberry was 'thrown in at the deep end' but what a great job he did in gathering the entries and promoting the scheme around the county. Last year's winners and shortlisted entries are featured elsewhere in this newsletter while a banner display has toured the libraries of Cornwall during the past year. Our Awards evening, hosted by the National Trust at Lanhydrock, proved to be a wonderful showcase for our Group, those in attendance included representatives of Cornwall Council, Historic England, Royal Institute of British Architects, Cornwall Heritage Trust, Cornwall Buildings Preservation Trust, and of course, many of the competing architectural practices and private owners. It is a testament to the hard work of the Group that this scheme goes from strength to strength indeed, this year it has received national attention through being featured in 'Heritage Counts' published by Historic England.

Another success this year has been working with statutory consultees on various aspects of case-work. Working alongside the Victorian Society, Georgian Group and the Council for British Archaeology our Group has raised the profile of neglected and derelict buildings such as St Columb Rectory, Marlborough House, Falmouth, and Charlestown Chapel. Our *raison d'être* is to ensure that buildings at risk are not forgotten, something we have done with varying degrees of success. Your Council has forged an important dialogue with Historic England about our local authority's lack of resources given to manage the built environment. We feel passionately that austerity measures and reduced resources are putting the county at risk to inappropriate development and irreversible damage to the buildings we cherish, buildings like Saltash Station and the

Old Fire Station at Redruth which have been left derelict for over a decade.

A consequence of our concerns has been the compilation of a register of buildings at risk. Such a list will focus our attentions where it matters thereby making every letter and communication count. It was gratifying that our risk register has been recognised by Historic England and went on to inform the national heritage at risk register compiled by SAVE. As a consequence we attended the book launch in London. You can view our Risk Register on our website; it is a fluid list in that buildings can be added or removed hence we urge you to have look and suggest any buildings that you feel should be included.

We have also made it known that we wholly oppose any powers devolved from Historic England to Cornwall Council as laid down in the Case for Cornwall. In our opinion it is wrong for local authority to even consider taking on extra responsibilities when the make-up of the planning service is severely weakened through manpower cuts and when it is clear that the service is struggling to maintain its statutory duty towards our built environment.

During the past year we have spoken out on many new planning applications where we feel design is lacking or where the historic setting of buildings is compromised. We also reserve the right to comment on wind turbine applications that affect the setting of historic buildings, a case we continue to pursue with local partners is that of South Torfry where after rejection of turbines the owner wants to develop huge swathes of land with solar panels. The harm that can do to the landscape and outward views is so evident on the A30 above Truro.

Despite all this activity we must not lose sight of our social calendar. Once again we have had some wonderful summer outings to places that do not normally facilitate visits. Jenny Gason, our Secretary, has once again summarised our summer outings elsewhere in this newsletter. Our thanks must be extended to those owners who have welcomed us all to their stunning properties. Our outings programme always begins with the spring Annual General Meeting, this year hosted

by our member Lesley Price at Rosewarne, a splendid early 19th century Greek Revival house in Camborne. This year we ended with the Autumn Party at the Elizabethan manor house of Trerice, thanks to the National Trust.

What maintains the momentum of our Group is the support of our membership and the continued work of your Council as has been the case since 1969 when the Group was first formed. It does not take a mathematician to work out that 2019 will be our landmark 50th anniversary; how we mark this milestone is yet to be decided. My aspiration as we head towards the half-century is that we continue to be a strong and independent voice and as a consequence our authority and presence continues to strengthen. If we can achieve this then our contribution in keeping this county special is assured. For me our conference proved a platform to talk about our built heritage, our casework gives us a voice in protecting what we care for and our Awards scheme champions

what will be cherished in the future. Cornwall has an amazing array of buildings, from Gothic hen houses to grand stately mansions, from listed roadside signposts to post-modern houses on picturesque creeks, from simple coastal developments to huge industrial landscapes and from railway infrastructures to the World Heritage site. Together they make Cornwall a landscape to revere and collectively our work can make our built environment one and all can be proud.

PAUL HOLDEN, FSA

STOP PRESS:

*The mystery provenance of the canvas panels illustrated on page 13 might now be solved – as we are just about to go to the printers!
A suggestion that they were at Godolphin has now been confirmed by John Schofield. They were previously at Godolphin having been purchased by John's parents from the former owner of Trerice - before the National Trust.
But how long were they at Trerice; were they there since the 17th century?* Editor

CBG BUILDINGS AT RISK REGISTER

The idea of a Buildings at Risk register is to focus our casework on the most needy cases in the county. This list is fluid and will be updated on a regular basis. Buildings on the list do not need to be listed nor do they need to be on any other list held by local authority or statutory consultees. We rely on members of the Cornish Buildings Group to highlight their concerns and feed into our ongoing casework. Our role is to ask appropriate questions to the appropriate people and draw in support from partner groups.

Please support this list. Let us know your concerns and help us save Cornwall's rich and varied heritage.

See our website for details and updates.

A summary of the list as at the beginning of 2016 is as follows:

Saltash Railway Station

(c.1890, not listed)

Redruth Old Fire Station

(c.1900, Grade II listed)

Marlborough House

(c.1810, Grade II* listed) See page 17

St Columb Rectory

(1840, Grade II* listed)

Church of St Peter, Mithians

(1861, Grade II* listed)

Charlestown Chapel (1827, Grade II* listed)

Loggans Mill, Hayle

(1852, Grade II)

Carharrack Methodist Church

(1815, Grade II* listed)

13 High Street, Launceston

(16th/17th century, Grade II*)

Sara's Foundry, Redruth

(19th century, Grade II*)

Church of St Paul, Truro

(1844, Grade II listed)

Church of St Samsom, Golant (medieval, Grade I listed)

King Edward Mine, Troon.

The Count House (c.1870, Grade II*)

Assay Office (c.1870, Grade II*) and Boiler House (1904, Grade II)

Historic England Heritage at Risk Register.

Chapel Mill, Tregargus, St Stephen's in Brannel (Late 19th century, Grade II*)

ANNUAL AWARDS SCHEME 2015



The first of our Award winners, the Falmouth Maritime Rescue Centre designed by the Property Services Agency. Later alterations were carried out in the same distinctive style to keep up with technological advances.

The CBG Annual Awards are the Oscars of building awards in Cornwall. Each year we scour the county for good examples of new architecture and historical building conservation and celebrate the best of the best. In 2015, after a relatively quiet few years of entries, consequent upon the recession, we saw a significant bounce back in terms of the number and quality of entries – both new buildings and conservation projects – and the judges faced a considerable challenge deciding upon the winning entries.

It may be worth a word on how the CBG arrives at a set of winners each year. From January to March anybody (owner, architect, builder or a member of the general public unconnected with the building) can nominate a building for the Award scheme. In April, the fourteen strong Council of the CBG meet for an intensive session where all entries are reviewed and a short list of buildings drawn up. The short listed are then visited by the judges in one glorious day trip around Cornwall, inspecting each project in turn, before returning to a Council member's house for a lively debate to identify Award winners and any projects which the judges believe merit a commendation. The process may sound a little rudimentary, but in practice it works very well. The CBG's Council is a wonderfully eclectic group of people ranging from experienced architects, archaeologists, some of the county's foremost building conservation

professionals and architectural historians to lay members who simply have an abiding love of good buildings. All of the judges care passionately about the built environment of Cornwall and the annual debate to determine winners is not only well informed but intense and vigorous. No entry wins without having been rigorously examined and tested.

There are many aspects of each entry that judges have to consider against an overall background that the Awards aim to encourage lastingly good architecture in Cornwall. The buildings future generations will venerate as of high quality that will naturally earn a place in future editions of Pevsner's *Buildings of England*. The Council tries to avoid hard and fast rules and judges need to bring all of their critical faculties to the process, whilst suspending their own individual prejudices, which is a difficult balance to achieve. Fortunately, the collegiate nature of the CBG means that amicable peer pressure will generally be brought to bear if a judge is falling prey to his or her individual prejudices. That said, judges are encouraged to bring individuality of opinions to the process.

One of the reasons that we try to avoid hard and fast rules, is that there are many traps into which it is all too easy to fall, for example, simply applying present day received wisdoms. As we know from a study of the past, received wisdoms, particularly about architecture, change. To illustrate the point, just read a Victorian topographical history to see numerous examples of buildings that we would, today, regard as fine Georgian architecture, dismissed as "modern" buildings, of no great interest. Or read the writings of the more extreme functionalists in the nineteen thirties, who argued that if the functional aspects of a building are scrupulously satisfied, architectural beauty would naturally and necessarily follow – with the implication that, if the viewer of the building did not find it beautiful, he or she was simply looking at it in the wrong way. Taken to extremes, this view is manifest nonsense, although the fundamental principle of good design that form and beauty are closely related to the honest expression of function has been espoused by architects as diverse as Vitruvius, Pugin, Lloyd Wright and the New Brutalists.

2015 AWARDS

AWARD Maer Barn, Bude

AWARD Island Hall, St Agnes, Isles of Scilly

COMMENDATION Edge O'Cliff, Carbis Bay

COMMENDATION Gillanglaze, Feock

COMMENDATION Gatehouse, Trenethick Barton, Helston

Bazeley Partnership, Architects

Poynton, Bradbury Wynter Cole, Architects

Arco² Architecture

John Pardey, Architect

Neil Mundy, (the owner)

There are many aspects of an entry that judges need to consider. For new buildings questions which need to be addressed include does the building work in its context? Is the use of materials good? Is the chosen style appropriate for the nature of the building and its surrounding buildings? Does the building fulfill the function for which it was intended? Has the building been built with due regard to sustainability? For restorations, questions might include has everything practical been done to preserve the original fabric of the building? Where interventions have been made, are they appropriate and sufficiently sensitive? Has the building found a sustainable new use? And above all, for both new and restored buildings, does the end result look right? Which might sound too subjective a question for a process which is intended to be objective. But there is something about good architecture which stands out very clearly. Nikolaus Pevsner once said that "A bicycle shed is a building. Lincoln Cathedral is architecture the term architecture only applies to buildings with aesthetic appeal." Not everybody might agree with him, but most probably would and it follows from his point that good buildings do have a habit of looking right.

Turning to the 2015 Awards, we look first at the two entries selected to receive full Awards:



AWARD

Maer Barn at Bude

BAZELEY PARTNERSHIP

An inspiring example of how to restore a significant historical building. Listed Grade II*, the barn contains four, probably 14th century, arch braced roof trusses, making it one of the most interesting mediaeval survivals in Cornwall. The building had been in a perilous condition for years, being on Historic England's at risk lists and a great cause of anxiety for all concerned with the preservation of old Cornish buildings. Mr and Mrs Rob Colvill stepped in with great courage and, supported by the Bazeley Partnership, carried out an exemplary restoration, carefully conserving the surviving historical fabric, whilst making a series of sensitive interventions, some in a contemporary style and others in appropriate historical styles,



above: Interior of the winning Maer Barn, Bude
right: the garden elevation at Maer barn, showing the glazed roof to the new link.



left: Award winning Island Hall on St Agnes, the original chapel on the left. below left: the interior looking into the main circulation space and towards the entrance area and the old chapel.

to make the building habitable as a family home. The result is a triumphant restoration creating a stunning family home.

AWARD

Island Hall, St. Agnes, Isles of Scilly

POYNTON BRADBURY WYNTER COLE

The other recipient of a full Award was the Island Hall. The people of the island of St Agnes, working with Poynton, Bradbury, Wynter, Cole, created a new community hall which combines large spaces for cultural and sporting activities with smaller workshop and office spaces, designed to encourage start up businesses to help stem the drain of young talent from the island. The building cleverly incorporated a nineteenth century chapel

which had previously been poorly converted into a community hall. The new work was robust and sat well in a beautiful setting only a short distance from the beach. What was particularly encouraging about the building was that it had evidently worked extremely well as a focal point for the isolated community, adding considerably to the lives of the population.

The judges also gave three commendations:

COMMENDATION

Edge O'Cliff

ARCO² ARCHITECTS

Two were to distinctive modern houses, one, Edge O'Cliff, designed by ARCO², occupying a prominent cliff top site overlooking Carbis Bay.



left: The road access and entrance on the upper part of the site; right: the garden elevation, looking over Pill Creek

COMMENDATION

Gillanglaze, Feock

JOHN PARDY ARCHITECTS

Gillanglaze, overlooking the creek at Feock, again uncompromisingly modern in design and works well in its particular setting, overlooking the iconic Creek Veau House, designed by Richard Rogers and Norman Foster's practice, Team 4, in the 1960s.

COMMENDATION

Trenethick Barton, near Helston

The third commendation went to a truly heroic restoration of the gatehouse and barbican.

Owner Neil Mundy completed an erudite and exemplary restoration of the Grade I listed gatehouse, which was in imminent danger of complete collapse, taking the structure down stone by stone,

left: Edge O'Cliff, looking across the sand towards Hayle. below: A view from the cliff below looking up to Edge O'Cliff.

below right: The barbican at Trenethick after restoration.



rebuilding it exactly as it was with great care, thus saving one of Cornwall's most historical buildings. It is easy to take for granted the dedication of owners of listed buildings, so it was a particular delight to be able to salute the efforts of one such owner who, happily, has also become an active member of the CBG.

SHORTLISTED

As previously noted, the standard of entries this year was extremely high. Details of the other shortlisted entries are given on the Group's website, but in summary they were:-

Morrah Library, Penzance – a sensitive addition to the historical library building in a complementary style, designed by Denis Myner (whose bequest funded the building) and executed by Poynton, Bradbury, Wynter, Cole.

Fowey Old Post Office – another exemplary restoration of a fine historical building. In this case an early eighteenth century house, which is an important part of the streetscape of Fore





above: The extensively restored Wetheram House
above right: Oakleigh at St Austell

Street in Fowey, having become very neglected following its use as the Post Office.

Wetheram – an exquisite restoration by Russell Taylor Architects of the beautiful former rectory at St Tudy. The building had fallen on hard times and was in a poor state of repair, although containing some fascinating work by inter war society architect, Basil Ionides.

Oakleigh, St Austell – a comprehensive restoration of a handsome Victorian merchant's house, welcome as this type of building is all too often overlooked by saviours of old buildings.

The 2015 entries show that there is much at



present to be glad about in both new building and architectural conservation in Cornwall. It is very encouraging that there are still "heritage angels" prepared to rescue Cornwall's ancient buildings and clients of taste, prepared to commission the best of modern architecture, hopefully creating the future iconic buildings of Cornwall.

PATRICK NEWBERRY

Closing date for this year's Award scheme is 31st March 2016, so, if you know of a good new building or restoration that you think merits consideration, please nominate it for an Award. Details of how to nominate can be found on the CBG website or telephone Patrick Newberry, Awards Administrator, on 01579 370119.

Photographs of the Awards are from those submitted with the entries

standard by starting the year off by inviting us to Rosewarne House, Camborne, which she and her husband are bringing back to life from its sad derelict state and extensive fire damage. We donned hard hats and clambered around the sensational 1810 building. We much look

left: Detail of the elaborate detailed plasterwork that suffered in the fire at Rosewarne and (below) a small 'lookout' perched above the roof of the conservatory.-



Outings photos: John Stengelhofen

forward to a further visit in a year or two to see its successful conversion to twelve apartments. Lunch and the AGM was held at nearby Tehidy Golf Club.

In May we enjoyed a double act from John Stengelhofen and Stephen Tyrrell as we tiptoed through the bluebells around the ruins of Carclew. Earlier that day we had visited the old Vicarage at Mylor, which received a CBG commendation in 2008. We were kindly entertained with a splendid coffee party there before a tour of the parish church by Jo Mattingly.

The June outing was a bit worrying as the owners of Treguddick, near Launceston, were dealing with drainage and plumbing problems and asked to cancel. In the event they valiantly agreed to carry on as planned and even managed to lay on various vitals. The afternoon found us at Trecarrell where we received a warm welcome from Mr and Mrs Burden around a smouldering fire in the Great Hall before visiting the chapel. The CBG's last visit to Trecarrell was in 1993 and it was good to be reminded what a very special place it is.

In July Stephen Tyrrell kindly arranged a visit to Trevego and Collan Barton on the Boconnoc estate and Anthony Fortescue was able to join us that morning. Some of you will remember that in 2000 he kindly invited the CBG to be the first group to see the start of the successful restoration of Boconnoc House; this work was Commended in the Group's 2013 awards.

We enjoyed another glorious day with Stephen in September visiting two historic houses at Trewane and Pengenna. Both have undergone terrific transformation recently - the former with an extension to the 16C tower to make it a more convenient family home, the latter to take it from a 16/17C working farm to a wedding/events venue.



above: Elaborate plasterwork decoration in Trevego was a surprise after the very plain exterior of the Grade II* late 16thC farm on the Boconnoc Estate

October found us in the far West underground at Geevor – a fascinating visit. The year ended with the Annual Party, held at Trerice. Christmas decorations vied with the wonderful plaster work for the most attention.

Many thanks to everyone who has helped to make 2015 such a successful year – owners and leaders particularly. Any suggestions for future outings are always welcome.

JENNY GASON

below left: Treguddick in the June sun, another II* house of 1576, in South Petherwin

below: Grade I Great Hall at Trecarrell Manor in Lezant



CORNISH UNIT HOUSES

Many years ago, while students, we used to visit Cornwall regularly being interested in the remains of industry as well as buildings more generally. We noticed estates around Camborne with houses built of pre-cast concrete components – which seemed to be rather neater than the other post-war ‘prefab’ systems we knew. Following the initial small single-storey units put up immediately after WWII, many systems were developed to provide larger, more standard council houses usually as three bedroom semi-detached units; like the earlier ones, these often made use of war-effort factories no longer having to churn out Spitfires or ammunitions. This introduced the possibility for materials such as aluminium and manufacturing methods not previously used in Council house buildings.

Many of these were not very attractive, if not ugly, although a few were designed by architects. For some reason the Cornish Unit did seem to be an improvement on many, as well as being an advanced system of components which could be adapted to numerous different building types.

In factory-made building systems external corners pose a real problem. Construction often consisted of a series of posts with panels forming the walls between, but at a corner this could result in some heavy complicated adaptation of the posts. Here we saw a splendid solution though: avoid corners by simply taking a curved wall unit round the corner, so only the slimer standard posts were then required. It would be interesting to know of earlier uses of this, but certainly it is a design principal that has been used widely ever since.

The Cornish Unit was developed in what was to become the Building Division of English China Clays, the project being promoted by



A PAIR OF CORNISH UNIT HOUSES AT ST AUSTELL
 Architect: A. Edgar Beresford, Esq., F.R.I.C.A. Builders: John Williams & Co., Cornwall Ltd.
 In association with H. Tonkin, Esq.
 At the present time, production of these houses is concentrated on fulfilling orders from Local Authorities. In the days to come, the many advantages of this system of construction will be available to private persons.
SELLECK, NICHOLLS & CO. LTD. EAST HILL, ST. AUSTELL
 PRODUCERS OF CORNISH UNITS

the innovative Reg Tonkin who had developed a system of roof slabs using china clay waste as an aggregate which was much used in flat roofed schools at the time, known as ‘Tonkindeck’. He also introduced ‘Reformite’ the textured concrete block made by splitting larger blocks giving a ‘stone’ finish. This followed a visit to blockworks in the USA during the 1960s, this resulting rustic surface being much used in the county during the 1960s and 70s, again often in school buildings.

Unfortunately none of these postwar systems had proper insulation although few conventional houses built were any better - even much later! This has proved a real problem, very difficult to solve, and often has resulted in drastic changes to their appearance, although many externally unaltered examples have survived.

But why were these buildings not only advanced, they looked better – the question was who actually designed them: was there an architect?

Scouring possible sources one early reference was an advert of 1947 for Cornish Unit houses - with both Tonkin’s name and the architect, Mr A E Beresford – but then who was he? Not a name one knows amongst those who practised in Cornwall during the mid and late 20thC. A computer search soon provided the information and possibly explains why they are notable.

Arthur Edgar Beresford (1880-1952) at the age of 25 joined Mackay Hugh Baillie Scott, forty years

top: Advertisement in the St Austell-based Country Town, A Cornish Quarterly Summer 1947, with a rare credit of the architect.

left: Standard semi-detached house in Camborne with a Cornish Unit garden shed - again without ‘corners’.

his senior, as an assistant. From 1919 he became partner in Baillie Scott & Beresford and continued as such until the office was bombed in 1941. Baillie Scott was a significant later Arts & Crafts architect; his book *Houses and Gardens* (1906) was translated into German, and he was apparently respected even by early modernist architects. Unlike Voysey and others, he was interested in designing smaller houses as well as those with more substantial budgets. His plans were innovative, most of his houses having reception rooms

opened up, flowing into each other - often with partitions or curtains - and he preferred to avoid rooms leading off a corridor, so it might be said he invented the open-plan layout. He certainly freed up the rigid plans of the past, still perpetuated by most unimaginative housing builders to this day.

Forty years working with Baillie Scott could not but have influenced Mr Beresford and this must be considered a reasonable explanation.

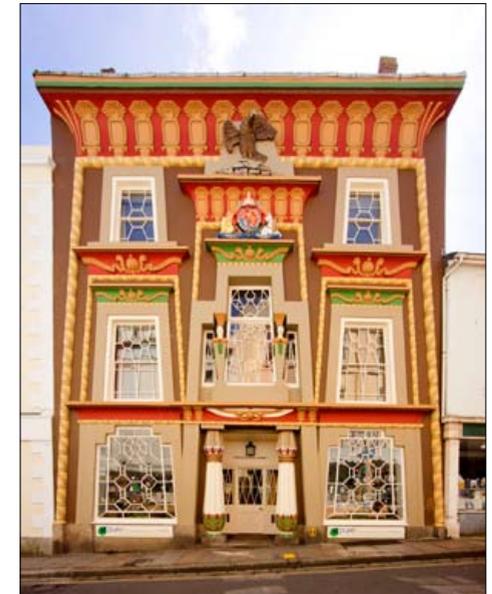
JOHN STENGENHOFEN

THE LANDMARK TRUST IN CORNWALL

2015 marked the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Landmark Trust, saviour and guardian of unusual buildings. The Trust was founded by a remarkable man, Sir John Smith, a banker who gained practical experience of saving interesting buildings as a member of various National Trust Committees. Smith spotted a gap in the conservation world – smaller and more eccentric buildings, which often fell outside the remit of existing conservation bodies and which, in the 1960s, were being lost in alarming numbers. The full story of the Landmark Trust is too long to tell here, suffice it to say that Smith through a mix of personal dynamism, deep knowledge of old buildings, shrewd financial acumen and an enviable list of contacts put together a formidable organisation that both rescues apparently hopeless cases and provides long term solutions for them, usually as holiday cottages.

The Landmark Trust now has over 190 buildings in its care in the UK and overseas. Of particular interest to CBG members is the fact that of the Trust’s 190 or so buildings, fifteen are in Cornwall. Eleven are modest cottages in sensitive locations, such as Porthmeor, Coombe (near Morwenstow) and Frenchman’s Creek, all well worth saving, even if not of great individual architectural merit. The other four Cornish properties are architectural gems, albeit still relatively modest.

Most flamboyant is the Egyptian House in Penzance (above right). By an unknown hand, this deliciously eccentric building bears strong resemblances to P F Robinson’s Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly (demolished in 1905) and Foulston’s 1823 Civil and Military Library in Devonport.



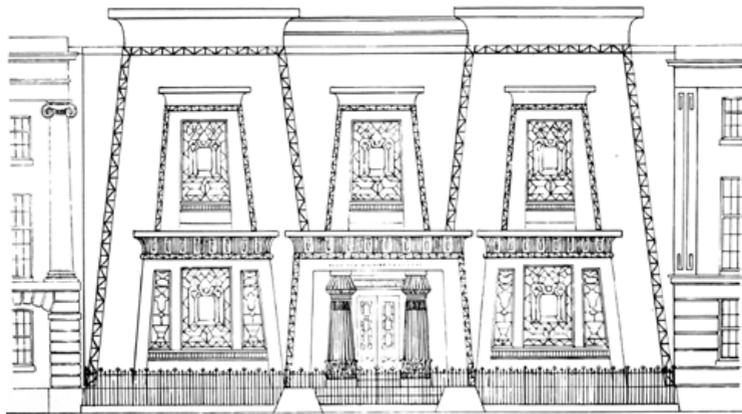
The Egyptian House, Chapel Street, Penzance

Photo: John Stengelhofen

The new edition of Pevsner speculates that the Penzance building might be by Foulston, citing a St Aubyn connection between the two buildings.



The College at Week St Mary (see over)



Close examination, however, shows that the Devonport building (above) is much simpler than the Penzance version, which bears a closer resemblance to Robinson's lost Piccadilly building, particularly in the use of stepped windows and the female *terms* in the central window.

At the other end of the county is a much older Landmark, The College at Week St Mary (previous page). Built in the early sixteenth century by Thomasina Bonaventure, a local girl who married three wealthy men (sequentially!), including a Lord Mayor of London and established the college as a free school for local children – a very early example of such a school being founded by a woman.

Also in the east of the county is Danescombe a converted mine engine house near Calstock (below), the interior partly carried out by Sonia Rolt, wife of the great industrial archaeologist, L T C Rolt, who had been a friend of Smith's. Conversions of engine houses often go badly awry, the design work at Danescombe is a model of how to make sensitive, but appropriate, inter-

ventions when changing the use of a building. Last of the Cornish Landmarks, also in the east of the county, is the Whiteford Temple. Built in 1799 as a folly in the eighteenth century landscaped park of the Calls at Whiteford, the temple is sited at the head of a tributary of the Tamar with spectacular views over the Tamar valley with Dartmoor in the distance. Another building by an unknown hand, it might have been designed by Sir John Call, who some speculate had designed the lost mansion at Whiteford. It had been reduced to a lowly state as a cow byer by the time that Landmark Trust found it (below). Today it is handsomely restored, including two Coade stone bas-reliefs, set into the principal façade.

The Landmark Trust continues to rescue interesting buildings, so if you know of an imperilled building of architectural interest, consider getting in touch. Meanwhile, if you fancy a holiday where you can combine a great location with the pleasure of fine architectural surroundings, go on line and see what delights are available.

PATRICK NEWBERRY



top: The Library illustrated in Foulston's own publication.
left: Danescombe converted engine house.
above: Whiteford Temple when derelict.

'DINNER ON THE CEILING' AND OTHER USEFUL INSIGHTS INTO CORNISH HOUSEHOLDS, 1500 TO 1700

Christmas reading this year included *West Country Households, 1500-1700* (Society for Post Medieval Archaeology Monograph Series no. 9, Boydell Press, 2015), edited by John Allan, Nat Alcock & David Dawson. Priced at a reasonable £30, this long awaited, very readable, and richly illustrated hardback volume began as a series of conference papers given as far back as 2007 and contains much that will be of interest and stimulate ideas for Cornish Building Group members.

The book comprises three sections focusing on the form and development of West Country houses, their decoration, and material culture. Although one could have wished for a Cornish example in Nat Alcock's study of the vernacular house, he does include a useful, if probably incomplete, map of long-house distribution in Devon

below, *Two of the four panels*
Can anybody help identify the original location of these paintings?



and Cornwall. John Schofield's definitive study of Godolphin House follows, while Exeter town houses invite comparison with extant houses in Fowey, Penryn and Looe. Another chapter by Peter Brears, whose contributions to this book are among the most fascinating and unexpected, reinterprets many smoking chambers as malt kilns; malt being an essential and regularly produced component of ale. The clinching argument seems to be that such chambers are too close to the fire for successful smoking of meat to take place.

Section two appears at first sight to be wholly Devon-focused - from polychrome decoration on a plank-and-muntin screen at Marker's Cottage, Broadclyst (religious and Renaissance motifs combined) to stained hangings of woodland and hunting scenes c. 1720 at Yarde rather reminiscent of contemporary stump-work embroidery at Trerice. Painting, plasterwork and tiles also feature in this section and very likely will help in the future interpretation of some Cornish household inventories and well as reconstructions of surviving decoration. Some North Devon tiles

are extant at Launcells church, though secular use was probably confined to an area nearer the kilns, while c.1720s painted hangings from a house at Bude are now in the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Museum, Stratford-on-Avon. This reference reminded of some late 17th century canvas Old Testament Scenes I recently saw in an Ashburton antique shop purporting to come from a house in North Cornwall (see illustrations on p13). One wonders, too, if the fashion for mid-17th century sgraffito-decorated fireplaces ever crossed the Tamar; examples having been found in Hartland and Plymouth and at least three places in Somerset. Perhaps sgraffito is something we all need to look out for as we peer up fireplace chimneys on CBG visits.

The final section focuses on artefacts from a white ale jug in the Royal Cornwall Museum and cooking gear, including brass vessels cast alongside bells, to table glass and imported Portuguese faience. Describing such items accurately is extremely

difficult as terminology changes over time and can be based on form or function or both. The use of contemporary depictions and inventories is strongly advocated here, though always balanced by other sources. Randle Holme's 1688 Cheshire treatise on heraldry, the *Academy of Armory* shows a wide range of domestic artefacts as potential heraldic symbols – a sort of checklist for the nouveau-rich merchant aspiring to gentry status. Finally, two chapters explore the ghastly good taste of the period. Firstly, the 'Dinner on the Ceiling' of my title discusses the extraordinary plaster ceilings with plated centrepieces of cod's head or pears found at 144 Fore Street Exeter, enough to put one off one's food one would think. The reinterpretation of St Nicholas Priory interiors by such experts as Peter Brears and Victor and Janet Chinnery includes necessarily garish modern replicas akin to Stuart House, Liskeard, albeit the latter depicts a slightly later period.

JOANNA MATTINGLY

MUSINGS ON 'HOUSE OF THE YEAR' COMPETITION

Did you watch the 'house of the Year' competition on Channel 4 last Autumn? It was a fascinating snapshot of the contemporary house, focussing on the Architect and the client rather than the jeopardy emphasised by its sister program 'Grand Designs'.

The competition was organised into regions, and from those regions 7 housing projects were chosen for the grand final. The overall winner was predictable - Flint house - a brand new house in isolated Countryside (the Chilterns AONB) belonging to none other than Baron Rothschild. Its external form is definitely original, and the judges commended its 'simple original idea' with its roof outline of giant steps and little brother opposite,

the guest wing, that uses the same motif. The building was impressively clad in colour graded knapped flint by local craftsmen.

Almost all of the houses featured in this competition were Modernist in conception: they had flat roofs and white walls and randomly spaced windows with no reveals or mouldings: they belong to a tradition that consciously avoids all historic reference except the modernist vocabulary, and for my money, they all looked terrifyingly similar and blandly predictable. There was the one in Sussex that looked just like Corb's Villa Savoye and the white one from Northern Island looked like a computer rendition rather than a real building. During the whole competition, regions and final,

I remember seeing only one building that had a traditional symmetric pitched roof.

My own personal favourite was, predictably, that pitched roof building - a Mill conversion in Scotland, where a long, narrow stone mill building with few openings was reinvented as an atmospheric home by inserting a cheap timber frame between-the-now-raised roof and the original masonry. Under the entire eaves of the roof was a 2ft. horizontal strip of glazing to light up the spaces inside: the building was modern and traditional at the same time, adding another historic layer to an already historical location. It built onto the past in an inclusive way, and was effective because of its superb but subtle detailing. The new was in an equal conversation with the old, and it was working as a home as well as being a clever piece of Architecture.

That is quite different to most of the important houses of the C20 that completely failed to be homes, while clearly being inspirational objects for Architectural students and lovers alike. I've made the pilgrimage to Frank Lloyd Wright's Robie House in a Chicago suburb twice and it looks absolutely fantastic, but it completely failed as a house consuming vast quantities of coal and is now a university office building. Mies van der Rohe's Farnsworth house near Chicago ended in client suing the Architect (I think the client was to blame, she wanted an English country cottage and chose to employ ultra modernist Mies . . . clients are often lazy and don't research their Architect's powers.).

Last year I visited Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye outside Paris with the family and it prompted different opinions: my Artist wife Louise absolutely loved it, seeing more and more different views and I guess the poetry of the building; my eldest son was also a fan liking most Modern things;



Le Corbusier's famous Villa Savoye, near Paris, completed in 1931; one of the outstanding monuments of the architecture of the inter-war period.

but for me and my youngest son it looked like a sick Temple in the February rain that had aged disgracefully. It could never have functioned as a house, and has far more in common with a garden temple in some landscaped garden like Rousham or Stowe.

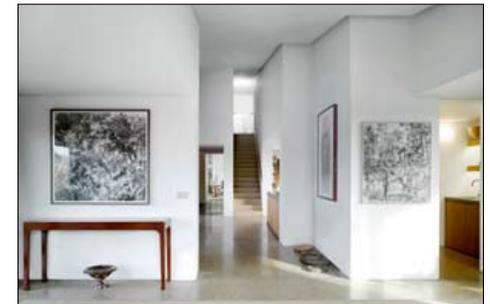
Perhaps we need to make the distinction between these two quite different types of building: the architecturally innovative garden Pavillion and a place one might call home. Time will tell to which category Lord Rothschild's Flint House belongs.

MATT ROBINSON

To see all seven buildings in the competition go to: www.architecture.com

Your Editor was most impressed by the Flint House and since there are few such unique modern buildings in the south-west, has included these photographs by James Morris, kindly supplied by the architects Skene Catling de la Peña. One day may we see an equally imaginative and beautiful modern Cornish house – using slate?

far left: General view of the Flint House
below left: Closer view showing flint walling
below right: Interior view in the Flint House



A DECISION TOO LATE - LYSNOWETH

Lysnoweth, as Truro Tax office, may not have been loved – but that was not sufficient reason to destroy a very typical building of its period. Opposition to crude attempts to alter the elevations were started by Cornwall Councillor Bert Biscoe who the Group have been in contact with over concerns at the loss of 20th century buildings in Truro - such as the Police Station.

This looked at first to be a prime example of previous fashions – in any design field – being scorned by the next few generations. As our member Nick Cahill has pointed out, the Listing criteria depends on the buildings significance in terms of design, innovation, materials, construction techniques, community and social values and historic association etc. It is then for future generations to assess the lasting quality and significance of such buildings as Lysnoweth. Victorian Gothic was still denigrated in the '60s before its promotion and appreciation by, amongst others, John Betjeman!

The developer here proposed breaking up the simple grid of structural bays, the continuous horizontal glazing, altered the glass to solid ratio and considerable changes to cladding with the introduction of boarded cladding in timber (or was it uPVC?) - never a common material in Cornish towns. Other planning applications were made, the second - a partial improvement - being approved in May 2015. The final application added a complete additional floor, and an earlier application (both having been refused by Cornwall Council) were then the subjects of appeals by the developer - to test how much more he could get.

Lysnoweth was a modest 3/4 story block tucked away behind Lemon Street, in the Conservation Area, but not Listed.

..... FIT FOR PURPOSE?

The Group is concerned by the impact of wind turbines on important Listed building as pointed out by our Chairman.

One example, some of our members may have missed in the news last June, were reports of a High Court hearing that revoked a planning permission, granted by Cornwall Council, at Tredinnick Farm, near Mitchell. Making no defence, the Council simply paid the costs of the local resident who bought the action.

16 In determining the application for a 77m (253ft) wind turbine, not far from Trecice, errors in dealing

The Inspector found "It is particularly prominent in views from the city centre around the multi-storey car park and where the appeal building rises above the terraced cottages of Charles Street . . . the prominence of the appeal site makes the building particularly sensitive to change".

The Inspector visited the site last September and at the end of December his decision was to dismiss both Appeals by the developer. In an interesting Appeal Decision the Inspector says "Whilst the existing building is not formally recognised for its architectural value, it is a feature of its time . . ." and he found the introduction of modern colours into the cladding and "breaking up the rhythm of the existing fenestration" to be unacceptable and would lead "to harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area". He concluded that the harm arising to the significance of the conservation area and the setting of the neighbouring listed building would be less than substantial but despite the public benefits that would arise from works in refurbishment he found these do not outweigh the arising disbenefits.

Permission granted by Cornwall Council last year patently conflicts with the comments made by the Inspector. For instance, the dominant material, the pre-cast concrete panels, with exposed granite aggregate finish, were much used in the 1960s, and here still looking good in a pleasant granite colour - although better if cleaned. The approved application will now cover these over with a 'light beige' render! The Group certainly welcomes the points the Inspector makes, and trusts these will be applied in future applications, particularly on that rapidly disappearing stock of 20th century buildings in Truro. *Editor*

with the application included not reporting the concerns of English Heritage and the National Trust to the Committee; it was considered the Council had made "unlawful errors of fact". One solicitor said there was a "systemic problem" in Cornwall Council's planning department where the developer has a choice of planning officer to deal with their application, it was suggested "does not instil public confidence in the fairness and transparency of the planning process".

A Council spokesman said they will be "considering how it can further improve its procedures and learn from this decision". *Editor*

MARLBOROUGH HOUSE, FALMOUTH

Having loved this house from childhood in 1979 the opportunity came up to own it after being introduced to the elderly owner by my dear friend the late Ruth Dunstan. Being involved with the restoration of Greatwood at Restronguet it was not a good time for another large project.

Very soon after completion the adjoining stable block with its stunning cupola, then in separate ownership, became available and we were fortunate to re-instate the whole back into single ownership.

The late Roger Corfield, diocesan architect at the time, was appointed and following a full survey it was revealed that total replacement of the roof coverings, lead valleys and cast iron rain water goods was necessary. This necessitated the erection of a huge scaffold covering the entire building. All roof slopes were recovered using Delabole scantle slate laid on a lime mortar together with new lead to the east and west wing valleys.

Whilst scaffolded all elevations were given a light sand blast to remove the old oil based paints on the stucco and to give the new paint a good key. Repair to all the box frame windows and sashes was the next stage of the renovations and this included complete replacement in some cases, especially the lovely curved dining room window which was totally replaced in mahogany giving special attention to the very fine reeded glazing bars.

The only disagreement between the architect and me was in regard to the exterior paint colour. He insisted on painting the whole building in a Magnolia colour but the house was always historically painted a pale pink – I won the argument! The compromise was to paint the joinery magnolia and the very palest pink on the stucco. This colour



arrangement was mentioned by the Civic Trust as 'Being surprisingly successful'!

All elevations and joinery were treated with six full coats of paint and by this time the building was watertight with its new roof, guttering and windows but most importantly safe. The day the scaffolding was removed and the building revealed it was absolutely breathtaking.

At the same time as the external works were progressing, Jane Schofield, who at the time was a student at Falmouth School of Art was working magic on the plaster cornices inside. She carefully removed all traces of old distemper from the intricate plaster mouldings with a dental pick and remade all missing pieces together with a classical Grecian statue, being one of a pair in the niches either side of the front entrance door.

Perhaps the most important internal feature is the surviving monochrome, panoramic Grisaille wallpaper by Dufour et Leroy titled 'Les Jeux Olympiques' in the main drawing room, this was expertly restored by a very skilled conservator from Bristol along with coloured wallpapers on the first floor which have since been removed. There are also exquisite mahogany, brass inlaid doors to the ground floor reception rooms.

All services were renewed which involved electrics, central heating and sanitary ware and all associated plumbing.

Marlborough House, as a result of being neglected and essential maintenance not being completed for the past ten years by an uncaring owner is now in dire need of professional, immediate attention and significant investment as it is now a building at risk. It appears that the lead valleys over the east and west wings have not been maintained which has allowed significant ingress of water for many years which has caused a serious outbreak



right: The original Grisaille wallpaper by Dufour & Leroy in the Drawing Room before the major restoration by John Milan in the early 1980s



see previous page photos: The standard of workmanship in plaster and wrought iron in the gallery above the circular main staircase and a general view of the house, from the garden in c1980.

of dry rot which left untreated puts the structure of the building at significant risk.

I pray that after so much skilled repair, investment and passion in the 1980s that the new owner will urgently and expertly repair it very soon. With the winter of 2015/16 already being one of the

wettest on record, deterioration is inevitably still happening and questions need to be asked of the powers that be such as Cornwall Council, Falmouth Town Council, Historic England and the Georgian Group?

JOHN MILAN

THE BIRDCAGE, PORT ISAAC

'For the little houses (the oldest are sixteenth-century), though so huddled together and so steeply hung onto cliffs, are like all fishermen's houses, wonderfully clean and polished'.

John Betjeman's fond memories of a 'clean and polished' Port Isaac are instantly recognisable today yet, historically the village was once quite the contrary being considered by many as a dirty and dangerous place to be. First mentioned as a small fishing village in 1338, John Leland confirmed its early sixteenth-century position as a 'pretty fisher village [with] a pier and some shelter for fisher boats'. John Norden, writing in 1584, remarked that Port Isaac had 'wonderfully increased in buildings' which was clearly to the disadvantage of 'the little cove and haven [of Port Gaverne]' that had 'all decayed since the growing up of Port Isaac'. Unlike its neighbour Port Isaac capitalised on the rapidly escalating pilchard processing industry, building fish cellars which along with a new inn concentrated homes and business around the harbour area known as the Platt. The 1699 Joel Gascoyne's map of Cornwall shows the main centres of habitation being around the Fore Street and Church Hill areas

As trade developed, so did the village. During the eighteenth - and early nineteenth - centuries more inns were built, a chapel (1750) followed, then a market house on the Platt (c.1780), a school (1804), a Quaker meeting house (1806) and more substantial housing for well-to-do merchants. In the opinion of some contemporaries village expansion eventually facilitated its ruin. The village physician John Watts Trevan described Port Isaac in the 1830s as

... the most thickly inhabited place in this parish it contains about one hundred and forty dwelling houses inhabited mainly by seafaring people being as mean dirty and tumultuous place as can well be conceived... the street narrow and filthy as almost to render them inhospitable in the time of wet weather.

Such were the conditions in Port Isaac when the property today known as the Birdcage was built.

Its builder was a local shoemaker Valentine Powell Richards (1819-1881). In the 1841 census he was recorded as living with his mother Joan, sister Jane and two boarders – a tailor and seaman. In 1843 he married Rebecca, daughter of Captain John Tanner of the Port Isaac coastguard service. Born in Waterford, Ireland, Rebecca must have

been quite a local curiosity as the census returns show few village residents being from outside Port Isaac let alone outside of the country. Whether Valentine had other business interests or whether he made his money solely through his trade as a cobbler we cannot be sure yet, soon after 1842, he built a new house on the partially developed Rose Hill area to the east of the village. Nestled within the small dangerous alleys (ideal for smugglers and robbers) known as 'drangs' the towering three-storyed, three roomed, property later known as the Birdcage was built using the traditional methods and materials as rubble slatestone, some timber framing, cob and slate hangings. Its height suggests that it was squeezed into a small area – perhaps a small garden plot of an existing house. As such the building can be seen from most places in the village. Perhaps, this worked to Valentine Richards advantage as being away from the main thoroughfares some visibility for his cobbler's workshop would have been beneficial. The 1851 census suggests that Valentine was living above his cobblers shop with his wife and two children, May and John.

By 1861 the cramped domestic space and the death of his first two children prompted a move to a house called Richards Cottage. Two more children are listed in the 1861 census; Clara aged 5 and the 2 month old Rebecca – both tragically died in infancy. In 1868 Valentine and his wife had moved again, this time into newly built cottage at the top of Fore Street on the very edge of the village. Carrying an inscribed datestone

'V.P.R. 1868' on its south gable end Cliff Cottage (as it is now called) has equally spectacular views onto the harbour and out to sea. Its position and the progressive nature of its construction (picturesque Gothic) suggest that Valentine was quite a well-to-do person. This area of Fore Street was being developed despite the decline in the fortunes of the fishing industry – a Methodist Chapel was built in 1868; a lifeboat station soon followed in 1869 and new school (1877) designed by the renowned Cornish architect Silvanus Trevail. Rebecca died in 1876 while Valentine's death was recorded in Bodmin in 1881. The headstone at St Endellion church records a 4 month-old baby Charlie Richards (d.1880) – seemingly, Valentine was all to briefly a father once more at the age of 61.

What happened to the Birdcage after Valentine's death remains unclear however, by 1910 the Burton family were the recorded owners. Soon after it regained its position as the village cobbler's workshop, this time run by Jim Lark. After the Second World War it was sold to Alexander Gorton who employed the architect W H Scott to refurbish the property. As a rare example of Cornish vernacular architecture the Birdcage was given grade II listed status by English Heritage. It was given to the National Trust by the representatives of the late Irene May Gorton in April 1980.

PAUL HOLDEN

below right: View of Port Isaac, showing the Birdcage slightly left of centre at the top edge, in its context overlooking the harbour.

below: The Birdcage and the flight of steep steps leading to the front door



photos: Eric Berry

