

Buildings at Risk

May 2021

Newsletter No.7



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

In the news

We have had a successful month in the media. The plight of St Paul's church, Truro, was picked up by Radio Cornwall which resulted in two radio interviews, one about St Paul's itself and another on the wider buildings at risk project. We are grateful to Barry West for promoting St Paul's which set the e-petition rolling again. As I write we have nearly reached 2,600 signatures. This has come to the attention of the Victorian Society who will discuss the case at its next buildings committee. Although the future of this church is still very much in doubt a solution could still be found.

Furthermore, our blog post on [Melador Farmhouse](#) was used as a feature on the [Cornwall Live](#) website. The project was featured in a published article in *Old Cornwall/ Kernow Goth*, the Journal of the Old Cornwall Society, volume 15, No.1, Spring 2021. Our latest blog posts [Focus on Penzance](#) and [Kresen Kernow: The Sweet Taste of Success](#) have received good visitor traffic.

We are grateful to the [Association for Cornish Heritage](#) for hosting our newsletters on their website.

Casework

Pomery's Garage, St Mawes



We featured this building in [Newsletter No. 2](#) which has consequently raised significant interest and feedback. After some conversations with interested parties we decided to submit a listing application to Historic England. This application was based on the premise that Pomery's garage is a significant and much valued historic asset on the sea front of St Mawes. Furthermore, the building contributes to an overall frontage that has Cornish and maritime distinctiveness.

Architecturally the late 18th/early 19th century former warehouse sits within a cluster of vernacular buildings that line the harbour. It is constructed of natural local killas stone with a hipped slate roof. It is rectangular in plan, stands perpendicular to and set back from the waterfront and is built into the rockface at the rear which allows for goods to be delivered at a higher level. It is ostensibly a two-storey building; however, the ground floor is exceedingly high, which allows for an internal mezzanine floor. There is a third floor in the roof-space, with a dormer windows to the front, rear and sides.

Historically it has functioned as part of maritime infrastructure, as a garage servicing locals and visitors alike and has been an artist's studio and gig club. Its forecourt contains distinctive historic fuel pumps which in themselves are a rare survival. The pumps were restored by Shell Oil in 2008

The building was first identified as a pilchard store in 1829 when J. W. Buller (owner of the Manor of Borgellas) was owner. During the 19th Century the building was used as the coal store for the St Mawes Steamship Company. Coal was delivered to the rear, where it could be tipped into the building. During the early 20th Century the building was purchased by Mr Pomery who used the building as a garage for automobile repairs. During this time the doors and windows at the front were enlarged and petrol pumps were installed at the front. Mr Pomery operated a charabanc (bus) service from the building to capitalise the expanding tourist trade.

The National Transport Museum database notes

During the 1930s motor car ownership spread as the price of a car was reduced by mass production methods. The practise of keeping cars in private former stables and servicing them with the help of converted stable lads changed as ownership spread to the middle classes.

Lacking the space and facilities of their own, the new owners needed the services of purpose built garages and petrol stations. These were often converted from buildings which had been in use for instance as a blacksmith's workshop or an iron-mongers' store. Typically there was a workshop for repairs with petrol pumps in

front. After World War II these gradually gave way to purpose built petrol stations normally built with an ancillary workshop and a car-wash.

On the water front in St Mawes there is preserved a good example of a garage of the earlier type, in this case converted from a pilchard store. It owes its survival in the form of a garage to an inhabitant of St Mawes, Brenda Pye, who in 1976 made it into an artists' studio. She subsequently donated it to the St. Mawes Gig Club. It serves as the boathouse for the local gigs and the petrol pumps have been preserved with help from Shell.

In 1978 the artist Brenda Pye purchased the building and the ground floor was leased to the Roseland Gig Club. After Brenda Pye's death in 2015 the building was left to the gig club but the leasehold of the upper floors was bequeathed to the St Just and St Mawes Heritage Group at a peppercorn rent. However, the building was found to be in a poor state of repair and the gig club had no reserve of funds which could be utilised to make repairs.

Pomery's Building is one of the last examples of vernacular warehouse architecture in St Mawes. It dates from a period when St Mawes was a significant settlement in Cornwall, then having borough status (which was lost as a result of the Reform Act 1832), and an important harbour. The building has generally escaped the notice of previous surveyors of historic assets in the area due to the fact that it is a plain old vernacular building. However, now that this is one of the last harbourside vernacular buildings left, it is its relative original condition which renders it exceptional. In small former fishing community, which has subsequently been the victim of creeping gentrification and suburbanisation, this is a rare and important local heritage asset. The building today is neglected and at risk of demolition.

Market House, Penzance

Our recent blog [Focus on Penzance](#) which highlighted the deteriorating condition of the Grade 1 listed market house received much local support. We have expressed our concerns to Cornwall Council and written to Penzance Town Deal to find out more about their recent funding bid to regenerate the town centre.

Another Penzance building in rapid decline is the former Mount's Bay Inn on the seafront at Wherrytown, now lost within a sea of 1960s development. Over the winter this building has been involved in a furious row about planning permission. Certainly a building to watch.



New Concerns

St Agnes Higher Bal

This Grade 2 listed chimney has been fenced off for a decade or so. Over the past few years the adjacent public footpath has had to be closed for safety. The image on the [listing description](#) was uploaded in 2011 and shows fencing in place. We have approached the World Heritage Site team for comment.

This does raise other concerns about mining heritage, in particular chimneys that are notably difficult and expensive to maintain. Another concern is St Aubyn mine, also Grade 2 listed (below) situated between Chacewater and Redruth. Once part of the Grambler and St. Aubyn mine which worked copper and tin lodes, the engine house is situated at the St

Aubyn end of the sett, the Grambler section being to the west near Redruth. The building is showing obvious signs of decline particularly on the chimney where bricks are dislodged and missing.



Good news

The Cornish Buildings Group awards scheme has long celebrated excellence in both conservation and design projects. Our most recent blog showcased the [Old Redruth Brewery](#) a building that stood deserted for many years. A fire seemed to sound the death knell for the iconic structure however, after a huge amount of work by many, the building now enters a new era of its history as a state of the art archive and library. Today, Kresen Kernow is a showpiece of what can be achieved with a redundant building.

The building received the Cornish Buildings Group Award and Cornwall and West Devon Mining World Heritage Site Award which can be added to the Building of the Year Award presented by the Michelmores Property awards scheme and a Civic Trust Award. In addition it was shortlisted for the South West RIBA Regional Awards.

This year's Cornish Building Group awards scheme has attracted entries from Cusgarne Manor and Rosewarne House, two important houses that have diligently been brought back to use by committed owners. We hope to feature both on the blog in due course.

How can you follow the project?

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

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

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

Please support us

We welcome any feedback on any aspect of the project and its aims.

You can play your part in this work by volunteering to support our aims. You can do this by reporting your concerns about historic buildings or valued heritage assets in your area which are either derelict or not being properly looked after. Please contact Paul Holden at cbgcasework@gmail.com

A form that will help us with some background local knowledge is available on our website <https://sites.google.com/site/cornishbuildingsgroup/buildings-at-risk-register/buildings-at-risk-project-2020-2023>

And finally...

Carnon Downs Wesleyan Chapel

An application for advice to demolish an old part-derelict stable attached the rear of Carnon Downs Wesleyan Chapel has been highlighted in the latest Newsletter of the Cornwall Archaeological Society. This project has supported the production of a Heritage Impact Assessment which will inform future decisions regarding demolition .

The Chapel Account Books show that the chapel was built in 1825 and the stable in 1834. The stable, intended for housing 'the Preacher's horses' was built by local resident William Murton who had requested permission to lease land from the Chapel on which to build a cottage on condition that he would add a stable.



To do this Murton was allowed to 'carry off as much earth of the old [Bronze Age] Barrow at the end of the Chapel as he shall think proper'.

We will watch with interest.

Thank you for your support Paul Holden, FSA.

