

# Buildings at Risk

July 2021

Newsletter No.9

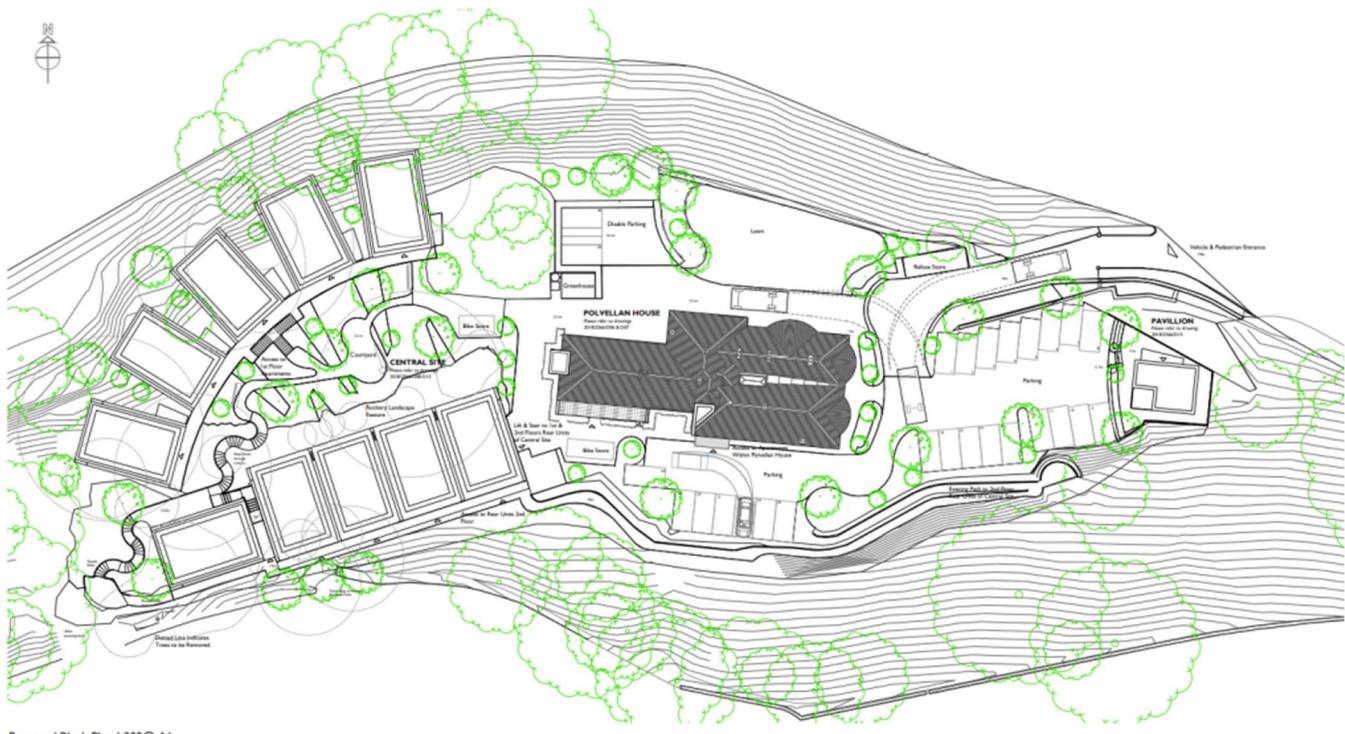
CORNISH  
BUILDINGS  
GROUP

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

A short review of the project entitled [So far, so good](#) can be seen on the blog.

## Casework Updates

### Polvellan Manor, Looe.



Proposed Block Plan 1:200@ A1

#### Proposed Block Planning submitted to Cornwall Council Planning

The Cornish Buildings Group has posted our response to the planning application [PA21/03163](#) for the re-development of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Polvellan Manor, West Looe, into six 'elderly living' apartments and the erection of 19 new-build apartments and single stand-alone house. Our response is as follows...

Polvellan Manor has been on our buildings at risk register since 2014. The building is significant because of its associations with the Lemon and Buller families and as an important base for notable MPs and significant players during the rise of Looe as a commercial town during the 19th century and because the late-18th century house remains a good example of the renaissance in picturesqure Gothic Revival design. Visitors to the house include John Stuart Mill who recorded his visits in his diaries. Beyond the architectural and social significance is the importance of the designed landscape which focusses on impressive views east towards the mill pond and to the estuary beyond and which are an important component of the panorama of Looe seen when approaching the town from the north. These designed ornamental landscaped pleasure grounds were once recognised as a garden of 'distinction and outstanding importance' (KK BWLO/233).

Although nothing is known of the 18th century architects the house was extended in the 1880s and in 1898 the interiors were refurbished by Liskeard architect John Sansom (previously with Richard Coad's practice in London) (KK AD 1563/5/6). Many details introduced by Sansom at Polvellan had been deployed in the post-fire refurbishment of Lanhydrock house, near Bodmin, a project Sansom worked on with Coad and James MacLaren between 1881 and 1885. His work at Polvellan drew on the popularity of the Arts and Crafts and Aesthetic movements. Sansom later built the Victoria Hotel in Newquay and the town hall and reading rooms in St Germans, he also did major alterations at Liskeard church and less major interior changes at Port Eliot. The grounds also appear to have been redesigned at this time. The Cornish Buildings Group efforts to get the building listed were unsuccessful on the grounds that the house had been altered too much, however, we still believe it is a significant heritage asset worthy of great care and sympathy in its restoration. It is certainly of sufficiently high quality to merit listing in a Local List.

As campaigners, to save this building we respect the need for enabling development to make this development a viable option. Yet, in this case we feel that the scale of the development is unrealistic and that the resulting harm is beyond comprehension, in particular the potential damage done to the landscape setting. Regards the main house we have some concerns about losing key phases of its history. The house retains a complex structural development and as such we would like to see more features and fabric retained, repurposed and celebrated. We would also support the proposal that an archaeological building record is carried out.

In the round we are supportive of the conservation and restoration of the heritage asset but would like to see the enabling development reduced significantly. To insert 19 new-build apartments and a stand-alone house, with all the infrastructure that involves, is not a realistic option. This new building, in our opinion, fails to speak to and complement the picturesque architectural language of the house, and while this clash of styles is a concern also of concern is the density of the proposal which cramps the historic asset and fails to give the house sufficient room. Rather, the development should be guided by the landscape in order to maintain the visual appearance and setting of this important asset.

In conclusion we support the restoration of the historic buildings but regret the size of the enabling development, the loss of historic fabric and fittings and the impact on the setting. We would like to see a revised scheme returned to the Design Review panel for comment and assessment'.

## Pomery's Garage and Polwithen House

This project formally applied to Historic England to add Pomery's Garage and Polwithen House to the statutory list which, we hope, will protect it from demolition and inappropriate redevelopment. The finished applications are now being consulted upon before passing to the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport for a decision.

## Wheal Busy, near St Day



Inside Wheal Busy, St Day.

We supported Historic England's application to upgrade the listing of the former smithy at Wheal Busy, constructed in 1872, from Grade 2 to 2\*. However, after examining all the records and other relevant information and having carefully considered the architectural and historic interest of the case, the building did not merit an upgrade in its listing.

The reasons given against upgrading were stated as

**Degree of Architectural interest:**

- \* the special architectural interest of the building, particularly its structural scale and size, is amply captured in its listing at Grade II
- \* the smithy is considered to be a unique survivor within the context of the Cornwall Mining Landscape World Heritage Site, but this does not translate within the national context of listing

**Degree of Historic interest:**

- \* whilst part of one of the oldest and historically-significant mine sites in Cornwall, the 1872 smithy played a very small role within its development
- \* there is no direct association between the C18 technological innovations at Wheal Busy and the construction of the smithy

The wonderfully restored engine house alongside cuts quite a contrast with the former smithy which is in a terrible state with much of the roof missing and the building fenced off. Originally Highways England funding was awarded in 2019 but delayed due to the need to discharge some of the planning conditions. Because of this delay the initial funding was lost and in re-applying for the funding in 2020 new clauses were added which firstly, looked for match and secondly, proposed that part of the refurbished building had some public benefit as a community space. Emphasis is now on the landowner to find a funding source. This decision prevents Historic England adding the smithy to their buildings at risk register which carries only Grade 2\* and Grade 1 sites.

## **Market House, Penzance**

Our recent blog [Focus on Penzance](#) highlighted the deteriorating condition of the Grade 1 listed market house. Some sporadic work is now underway although we have unable to find out exactly what is going on. The Market House and the owners Lloyds bank will benefit from Town Deal money which will be used to restore the building to include a market for 'pre-premises' retail businesses, as well as office space. We will find out more about progress and report in the next newsletter.

## **Tregarne Chapel, St Austell**

[See video of the interiors of Tregarne chapel](#)



### **View from first floor gallery in Tregarne chapel**

A new planning application to convert Tregarne chapel in St Austell to residential units is now on the planning portal. Tregarne chapel and the former Sunday School building had been rapidly declining for well over a decade. The application is under consultation before the Cornish Buildings Group put out our thoughts on the planning portal.

The chapel, also known as Zion Chapel, is at the north-west corner of the Trevarthian Road and Tregarne Terrace junction. It was built in 1891 with a seating capacity 600. It became Zion United Methodist Church in 1907 and then Zion Methodist Church in 1932.

The application for alterations and conversion of dwelling (former Chapel) to form 4 self-contained dwellings and alterations to former Sunday school to create 3 self-contained flats and undercroft garage parking can be viewed at PA21/05140 [Cornwall Council Portal](#)

### **Treyew, former infants school**

This project has lodged an objection to demolish the former infants' school at Treyew in Truro. The media reported some controversy when the building was listed Grade 2. The school was built for Cornwall County Council between 1959 and 1961, designed by Harry Dootson, Michael Kirkbride and Gary Harper of the council's Architects' Department led by F.K. Hicklin, was later extended and used as a community centre. After its construction Treyew School received a Civic Trust Award, was used as an exemplar by the Ministry of Education and received positive coverage in the persuasive Architects' Journal.

#### **Read our blog post '[Treyew, or not Treyew?](#)'**

In response to the immediate threat of demolition, an application was lodged with Historic England who applied a Grade 2 listing on the building because of its progressive design of five linked hexagons thereby creating an inspired, perfectly functional, cluster plan, and the use of locally distinctive materials. Its state of survival, despite its obvious neglect, is remarkable – the importance of the interiors and outdoor 'arena' were particularly noted by Historic England. Beyond the importance of its design and quality of materials used the building contributes significantly to our understanding of the social need for the local authority to provide schooling facilities.

How can you follow the project?

Our WordPress blog <https://buildingsatrisk.wordpress.com/> has proved successful and up until mid-July has received over 9,000 views and 6,000 visitors. 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](mailto:cbgcasework@gmail.com)

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

## News on Chapels

After our feature on chapels in our last newsletter two pieces of news have come in.

Built in 1833 **St Just Miners' Chapel** is a Grade II\* listed building of huge cultural, historical and spiritual significance. For much of its existence it was the hub of the mining community in St Just and beyond. Important and rare architectural features are found within. With its outstanding acoustics, the Chapel is a magnificent setting for music, from a single treble to a full-blooded Cornish Male Voice Choir, from a solo trumpet call to a thunderous paean from the magnificent organ soaring through the night air. It is set within sight of the sea in possibly the most visually powerful, post-industrial landscape in Cornwall. Amongst the graves, all of equal importance to their families, are 15 of the 31 Levant miners killed in the disastrous accident in 1919. For many miners the Chapel was the last recognisable building in Cornwall they saw when they sailed to seek employment overseas.



St Just

Miners Chapel (Grade 2\*)

St Just Methodist Church was placed on Historic England's At-Risk Register in 2017. It is situated in a World Heritage Site. An appeal is running to secure the future of this iconic building. Monies raised will go towards the repair, preservation and maintenance the buildings and graveyards, staff costs to run the programmes and supervise repairs and maintenance, to create a centre of excellence for the teaching of organ and choral music, develop a heritage centre to tell the 'Story of St Just through its People', to enable training opportunities for young people and to keep the Chapel as a place of worship

More can be found on their [website](#)

### Call for Information

This project has been notified that **Trinity Methodist Chapel**, Newlyn (Grade 2\*) is empty. Built in 1834, enlarged in 1866 and with an impressive organ by J.W. Walker & Sons, the chapel is, according to Pevsner, ...one of the best and most complete early C19 chapels in Cornwall. Plain, dignified exterior, rich interior...with grained box pews and box pulpit – a rare survival – incorporated in later rostrum, oval gallery on marbled cast-iron columns with stencilled decoration to panelled front'.

The Ancient Monuments Society notes that 'It cries out for a use that is compatible with its untouched High Victorian interior'. It is on the Historic England register of buildings at risk.



Trinity Methodist Chapel, Newlyn (Grade 2\*)

And finally...

The June 2021 edition of 'From Your Own Correspondents: Updates from Cornwall Archaeological Society's Area Representatives' notes the damage being caused to historic bridges. The Cornish Buildings Group made significant noises about the constant damage to the medieval bridge at Respryn, near Lanhydrock, some years back – an issue that seems to have been solved by stone islands inserted each side of the bridge. Their article is worth repeating in full

#### MOTORCIDE

*Motorcide n. the destruction or damage of an historical asset resulting from the use or misuse of a motor vehicle.* Issue 53 of *From Your Own Correspondents* reported that new defences had been added to Helland Bridge (HER 17108; Listed Building II\* 67735; Scheduled Monument 15578; SX 0652 7149; Helland and St Mabyn parishes) to protect it from the regular damage inflicted by motor vehicles. Cormac did an excellent job in making the approaches more bridge-friendly, as well as placing stones on both sides of the carriageway to protect the parapet. And all seemed hopeful... ...until 19th June, when a car collided with the ancient structure, causing major damage to the eastern parapet, refuge and upper cutwater on the upstream side. The Cornwall Live report of the incident, including video footage, can be found [here](#)





Such was the damage to the parapet that the bridge had to be closed. Charles Henderson praised this lovely 15th century bridge in his *Old Cornish Bridges and Streams* (1928, reprinted 1972) and made this regrettably inaccurate prediction: 'The bridge is fortunately out of the line of a main road, so there is no need to have it widened or otherwise disfigured.' Well, he wasn't to know that the motor car was to become so unhealthily rampant, or that the bridge would form part of a rat-run between the A30 and B3266 roads.

How devastated he would have been to see this and many other lovely medieval bridges, like Trekelland, routinely disfigured by collisions. Credit is due to the authorities for closing the bridge quickly but even then motorists approached the notices and fencing, not prepared to believe that their way was blocked, that the divine right of motorists to travel at will, led on by the siren misinformation of satnav, might be thwarted. What can be done?

What indeed....any thoughts please let us know.

Thank you for your support  
Paul Holden, FSA.