

# Top 10 Buildings at Risk in Cornwall

The logo for the Cornish Buildings Group is presented in a white rectangular box with a grey drop shadow. The text 'CORNISH BUILDINGS GROUP' is written in a bold, black, serif font, stacked in three lines: 'CORNISH' on the top line, 'BUILDINGS' on the middle line, and 'GROUP' on the bottom line.

**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 and unlisted buildings.

The list portrays a wide range of building types, not all have any statutory protection. In putting this priority list together the Cornish Buildings Group have considered all 70 buildings on their risk list. They are presented here in no particular order, nor is blame apportioned to any owners. Buildings become 'at risk' for many reasons so this representative selection exists to show the general problems of neglected buildings in Cornwall.

More details can be found on the project blog at <https://buildingsatrisk.wordpress.com/>

You can report buildings at risk at [cbgcasework@gmail.com](mailto:cbgcasework@gmail.com)

Details on how to join the Group can be found on our website <https://sites.google.com/site/cornishbuildingsgroup/home>

## **For Editors**

Since 1969 the aims of the Cornish Buildings Group have been to stimulate interest, appreciation and knowledge of good building in Cornwall, and to encourage the erection, protection, repair and recording of such buildings.

Like any amenities group, we depend on numbers, strength and support of our membership, who provide the force and knowledge that have made us effective for over fifty years.

We encourage the protection and repair of historic buildings whether these are listed buildings or simply good examples of traditional building. We aim to encourage good architecture and to raise the general standard of building throughout the county. We hope that our generation may leave behind it buildings which will be looked back on with that same pleasure and enjoyment that we experience when we look at the architecture of past ages.

## **For further details contact**

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## The List

### St Paul's Church, Truro (HE Grade II listed, conservation area)



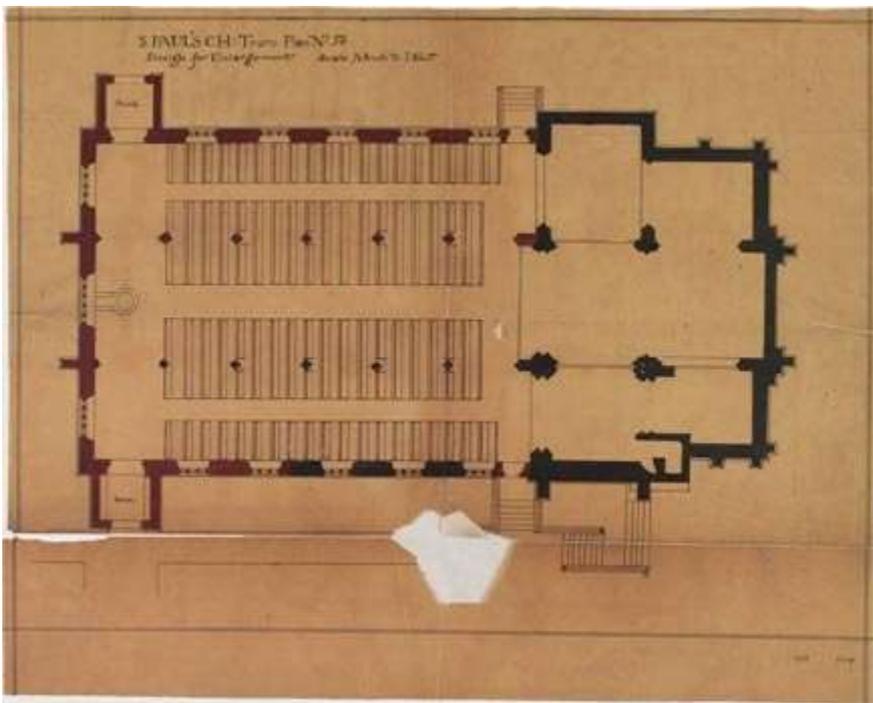
St Paul's, Truro. An iconic building for Truro, now facing demolition.

The church has a six-bay aisled nave, with a south porch at the west end, a two-bay chancel with an organ chamber north of the choir and a brick vaulted crypt beneath the east end. The three-stage embattled tower with angle buttresses has corner statues of Sir Richard Grenville, Sir John Elliott and Bishop Trelawny and three niches (with two carved statues surviving of Christ and St George, St Paul has been removed) to the second-stage. Peter Beacham wrote 'the exterior is highly accomplished' in his 2014 revision of the Pevsner guide.

Time is running out for this Grade II listed church that forms an important part of the conservation area. The demolition of this building will do considerable harm to the local area and will have an adverse effect on the setting on a major approach route into the city. The Cornish Buildings Group online petition has surpassed 2,600 signatures.

<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/save-st-paul-s-church-truro>

In the 1880s St Paul's church (1840s) was extended in the Perpendicular style using dressed coursed local stone, granite and Polyphant stone dressings and a scantle slate and dry Delabole slate roof with coped gable ends.



Inside there is some good detailing, including works by the workshops of Robinson of London, and stained glass by Laver, Barraud and Westlake which includes a seven light 'Te Deum' east window in memory of the Mayor of Truro, Sir Philip Protheroe Smith (d.1882) and 15th century stone pulpit from St Clement's Church.

## Lamb and Flag Smelting Works, nr Hayle (Grade II listed, in World Heritage Site)



The structure has long been a concern for the Cornish Buildings Group, and, despite our interventions, it has deteriorated even further in recent years.

Situated next to the Lamb and Flag pub (the name refers to the symbol of purity stamped into tin ingots at the works) on the A30 west of Hayle, this Grade II listed building is also in the Cornwall Mining World Heritage Site.

Established in c.1715 as 'Treloth' the site is reputed to be one of the first smelting houses to use reverberatory furnaces. The smelter was rebuilt in 1825 (when it was worked by a company called Doubus) and was further extended shortly after. It was one of the most important smelting centres in Cornwall until 1840 – it was finally closed in 1883. Unfortunately, much of this early fabric has now been lost through its abandonment. We last visited the site on 4th November 2020 and saw that the roof, described by Historic England as 'original king post-roof is heavily smoke blackened', was in a truly dire state.

Despite putting pressure on Cornwall Council in spring 2018 to enforce repairs, we are not aware of any progress being made to stabilise or weatherproof the structure. We will continue to monitor and would welcome any news from our members as to its future.

The building has long been a concern for SAVE Britain's Heritage.

## Poynton's Piece, Minions, St Cleer (not listed, in World Heritage Site)



Poynton's Piece situated in the Caradon Hill and Minions area, one of ten areas of Cornwall and West Devon that were given World Heritage Site by UNESCO s in 2006. The Liskeard and Caradon railway once ran immediately past the front of the houses.

This unlisted pair of mid-19<sup>th</sup> century vernacular smallholders' cottages in the parish of St Cleer are situated alongside a section of the Liskeard and Caradon railway between Minions and Crow's Nest via the Gonamena Incline. The railway was abandoned in 1877 however the cottages have continued to be used as a residential property until recently. The decline of the buildings from the early-summer 2021 when we first saw them, is stark – indeed, a section of roof, shown in the picture, has collapsed very recently.

While there are a handful of listed examples of smallholders' cottages across England, none in Cornwall have yet been granted this level of protection. Our conversations with Historic England has suggested that the loss of historic fabric made by the disintegration of the building would not make it a clear candidate for listing.

## Wheal Busy, near St Day (Grade II listed, in World Heritage Site)



For many years the Cornish Buildings Group has been concerned about the condition of the smithy building at Wheal Busy in Chacewater. The Grade II listed structure stands separately from the scheduled parts of the mine – to its east, south and west – but all elements are located within the World Heritage Site. The smithy has an extensive scantle-slate roof and impressive cast iron lintels, made by the Perran Foundry, over its two main entrances. The building owes much of its form to a major reworking of the mine in the 1870s as suggested by the inscriptions on the lintels which reads 'Great Wheal Busy Mines 1872'. It is thought to be the largest historic blacksmiths shop on a metalliferous mine in Britain.

The Wheal Busy engine house was successfully restored in 2014, and the World Heritage Site team has prioritised Wheal Busy Smithy as a conservation project ever since. In early 2019 the Smithy was approved for £1m in funding from the Highways England A30 Environmental Designated Funds however for various reasons this funding failed to materialise. This has plunged the smithy into an uncertain future.

## Polvellan Manor, Looe (not listed)

Built by the notable Lemon family in 1787, and, from 1814, leased to the Bullers of Morval, Polvellan was described by C S Gilbert in 1820 as a 'gothic cottage'. As such it remains a good early example of the renaissance in picturesque Gothick cottage orné design. Visitors to the house included John Stuart Mill who recorded his visits in his diaries, now published. The building passed out of the family by 1851 after which the house was enlarged and refurbished. The altered house was surrounded by designed ornamental landscaped pleasure grounds, recognised in the late-20th century as a garden of 'distinction and outstanding importance'.



The Cornish Buildings Group were unsuccessful at getting the building listed and have commented against the recent planning application.



Interior plasterwork, much has been lost.

Inside, the house retained good plasterwork, some still in evidence in the early-2000s. Plans were produced in 1881 to alter and extend the house, however it was eventually altered in 1898 by Liskeard architect John Sansom. Much of Sansom's work has now been lost. During the 20th century Polvellan was used as a maternity hospital and, from 1938, a private hotel which tracked the rise of tourism in the area, a number of extensions and alterations were made to accommodate the changed use. Work was begun to convert it into apartments, but in 2016 this work remained incomplete. A new application was lodged in 2021.

<https://buildingsatrisk.wordpress.com/2021/02/08/case-study-polvellan-manor-looe-unlisted/>

## 4 Penryn Street, Redruth (Grade II listed, in conservation area and World Heritage Site)



A Grade II listed pair of early 19<sup>th</sup> century shops, 4 Penryn Street is an important part of the streetscape of Redruth. Its importance is further stressed by its position in a conservation area and the World Heritage Site. The building itself is constructed of uncoursed killas rubble with granite quoins, part rendered with slate roof and brick chimneys.

This plain, classical style house with recessed porch and first floor oriel is a wonderful survival and deserves a more optimistic outlook than it does now. A listed building consent application to convert the building into two ground floor shops/offices with four dwellings above was withdrawn in June 2021.

Being in the High Street Heritage Action Zone area, there are hopes that Historic England funding may offer it a brighter future.

[Redruth High Street Heritage Action Zone | Historic England](#)

## Roseland Gig Club, St Mawes (not listed, in conservation area)

In 2015, following the death of Brenda Pye, the Roseland Gig Club and the St Just and St Mawes Heritage Group inherited her house, Pomerys Garage in St Mawes. The Gig Club retained the ground floor of the old garage for their gig store and the top two floors of the building were left to the Heritage Group. It was Brenda's wish that her sitting room, on the middle floor, be kept much as it was when she was alive, complete with her art collection, and that it be open to the public. The other rooms on this floor are to become a permanent exhibition space for the heritage collection.



The building remains a significant and much valued historic asset on the sea front of St Mawes adding to an overall frontage that has Cornish and maritime distinctiveness. After an unsuccessful application by the Cornish Buildings Group for listing the building may now face demolition and replacement.

Architecturally this late 18th/early 19th century former warehouse sits within a cluster of vernacular buildings that line the harbour. Built of natural local killas stone with a hipped slate roof, it is rectangular in plan and stands perpendicular to and set back from the waterfront.

The building was first identified as a pilchard store in 1829, then owned by J W Buller, Lord of the Manor of Borgellas. During the 19th century the building was used as a coal store for the St Mawes Steamship Company. 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. Pomery's garage operated a charabanc (bus) service from the building to profit from the rapidly expanding tourist trade.

## Northlights, Camborne (not listed, in conservation area and World Heritage Site)



The building utilised a relatively novel system of glazed roof lights in order to maintain a good level of natural light for working by. This system of roof lights led to its appellation as the North Light Building and gave the building its distinctive bayed roof that lends so much to the character of the area

Twice turned down for listing, what remains of this building is important to the local conservation area and to the area's World Heritage Site status.

The Northlights building was built in 1912 as an expansion of the Bickford Fuse Factory. The building was constructed as a jute yarn spinning shed and on completion was one of the largest structures within the factory. What remains of the external granite shell on Pendarves Street is a local landmark and much-admired local heritage asset. Its significance is based on the fact that it is the home of the most important invention of the mining industry, the safety fuse. Its strong architectural form in granite and brick has had a defining influence on the design of the development.

In 2011 a scheme was put forward by CSA Architects. Proposals for the 24 acre site included the 'creation of new office space through the renovation and reuse of the historically significant 'North Lights Fuse Works' building'. The scheme failed. Conditional planning permission was granted in 2015 for retail development and part demolition of the site. Again, nothing has materialised.

It is on the SAVE Heritage at Risk register.

## Former Ganges Restaurant, Penzance (Grade II listed, in conservation area)



In terms of historic character, the building still retains much of its 18th and 19th century character as a town house and contributes greatly to the grand 18th century historic character of Chapel Street.

18 Chapel Street, formerly the Ganges Restaurant, closed in c.2006, since when the Grade II listed building has fallen into disrepair and created a blight on the conservation area. In 2017 a 'Save the Ganges' campaign group was launched in which one shopkeeper stated '...people are very surprised a building could be left in its current state on such a beautiful street', pointing out how hard other residents and business owners were working to preserve and enhance the built environment.

Positive moves were mooted in 2018 when *Cornwall Live* (who described the building as an 'eyesore' adding that it was 'falling apart') reported that plans were afoot for Cornwall Council to 'acquire and renovate' it, using powers of compulsory purchase if necessary. But since then, there has been no apparent change of condition beyond a quick coat of exterior paint. Dangerous roof tiles, removed after they started to fall into the street, have not been replaced, and the interior appears to be protected from the elements only by felt and battens. Little work has been done on the roof where slates are missing.

## Carpenters Workshop, St Day (Grade II listed, in conservation area and World Heritage Site)



This unassuming mid-19th century vernacular building is Grade II listed and is sited within a conservation area and the World Heritage Site. It is in poor condition with major localised problems. The parish council and local history group have petitioned the owner, but the building continues to decline. It is not an architectural masterpiece, but it is an important heritage asset which contributes to the character of the village.



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