

Cornish Buildings Group 'Buildings at Risk' Project

Caring for Cornwall's heritage

Newsletter No.18 - Extra Buildings at risk in the news

Cornish Buildings Group 'Buildings at Risk' Project Caring for Cornwall's heritage Newsletter No.16 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.

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[Cornish Buildings Group 'Buildings at Risk' Project](#) - Caring for Cornwall's heritage

Private Eye

NOOKS and CORNERS

THE Church of England (CoE) faces increasingly urgent questions about how to care for the thousands of much-loved historic church buildings in its care, as congregations dwindle and struggle to maintain them or spark local outrage by selling them off (*Eyes passim*).

In Cornwall, the deanery of East Wivelshire has bitten the bullet and announced plans for a major audit, as part of its "Vision" for the next decade, with a view to reducing the number of church buildings and "the amount of ministry energy and finance they take up, distracting from the real purpose of the building".

The trouble is that of the 34 churches in East Wivelshire, 19 are grade I-listed, three are grade 2*-listed and eight are grade 2-listed. The diocese of Truro has already said the large Norman St Germans Priory church, in St Germans, cannot be sold; but it seems everything else will be up for consideration, with a strategy to be decided next year.

This includes the 15th century church of St Melor in Linkinhorne, St Michael's in Landrake (which has a 100ft tower to maintain), St Mary's in Sheviock, St Nicholas and St Faith in Saltash and the small but lovely St Germanus church in Maker-with-Rame (pictured above), to name just a handful of Cornish treasures.

An early draft of the deanery's proposals, seen by heritage organisation the Cornish Buildings Group (CBG), suggested between half and two thirds of the churches could close. The version which will be voted on by deanery synod later this month doesn't mention numbers but is clear that the "strain of maintaining what we have... is becoming harder and falling on fewer shoulders".

The criteria for keeping buildings in regular church use will be based (not unreasonably) on how accessible and functional the worship space is, including toilets and heating, and not on the age or beauty of the church. The deanery now says some treasured church buildings could become "Festival Churches" — not used for weekly services but kept in use for a mix of church services, such as Christmas and weddings, and also available for community events such as beer festivals and concerts. But a large venue with fixed pews may struggle for bookings in a small village, especially if there's already a more convenient community hall with a kitchen and loos.

"Nobody can deny that the Church has problems, but possible large-scale closure of Cornwall's churches is a very worrying development," says CBG chair Patrick Newberry. "Cornwall's churches are some of its finest historic buildings, very often the most significant historic building in a community. But more than that, they are important places of sanctuary and calm in a stressed world. Rural communities have lost many facilities, including pubs and shops. If they lose their churches, they will become even more soulless places."

THERE are fresh concerns for Havelock House, the former home of Ulster Television (UTV) in Belfast, as the owner starts a new community consultation after their proposal for 270 apartments on the site was rejected.

London-based Olympian Homes' designs for an eight-storey block of flats was turned down by Belfast city council (BCC) in 2020, and again last year by Northern Ireland's Planning Appeals Commission (PAC). The city council concluded: "The proposed development, by reason of its height, scale, massing and design, would have an over-dominant impact on other listed buildings in the area" — such as Rose Cottage and the Klondyke Building. And the plan "would be out of keeping with its surrounding context."

Havelock House is in the Ormeau area of Belfast, south of the city centre, and is unlisted and thus at risk of possible demolition. According to campaign group Save Havelock House (SHH), the three-storey building has enough architectural value to be preserved and is in good condition so could easily be repurposed. It says the building is an important part of Northern Irish television history, from its long association with UTV.

The original 1871 part of Havelock House was a linen warehouse for James Thompson & Sons, and after the Second World War it was home to a business that made "tennis wear, ladies frocks, and overalls". In 1959 it became home to UTV, the company with the ITV franchise for Northern Ireland, until it moved to a new HQ in Belfast four years ago. Extensions had been added to create TV studios, while the 19th-century framework and façade were retained, albeit with the original brick finish now rendered. After UTV's departure in 2018, until earlier this year Havelock House was used as a space for artists.

While local residents fear that lots of new private apartments would bring yet more traffic congestion and pollution to the area, SHH wants the building to be listed by Stormont's Department for Communities. It says it would make environmental sense to use it as a museum archive of Northern Ireland's television history and as a space for community groups.

● The issue of Northern Irish heritage being damaged by fire, long chronicled by the Eye, arose again when 35 firefighters were called to a seemingly deliberate blaze at the former Stradragh hospital at Gransha, Derry, last month. The buildings were listed this year, and were added to the buildings at risk register just last year.

The hospital is described as a fine example of Edwardian civic architecture, built in three stages from 1897-1933, and is an important part of Derry's social history. The site is owned by Northern Ireland's Western Health and Social Care Trust. There have been calls for it to do more to secure the buildings as fire also broke out in 2016.

Elsewhere, the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland is prosecuting three companies for alleged health and safety offences following the huge Primark fire in Belfast in August 2018. It is understood the cause of the fire is not part of the prosecutions; Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service said a joint investigation with the Health and Safety Executive had found the cause to have been "accidental".

Primark had been based in the city's historic B1-listed Bank Buildings on Castle Place since 1979, until a fire lasting three days in 2018 gutted the classically-styled red sandstone and granite building. The Bank Buildings date from 1880 and are currently being restored by the clothes retailer, which has previously said the earliest the rebuilding would be completed would be this year.



Our blog post on 'Churches at Risk' was picked up in July's edition of *Private Eye* magazine. The article highlighted the Church of England's initiative, aptly called 'On the Way', which, if realised, has the potential to close several grade I and Grade II* listed Cornish churches. Regarding our concerns over the closure of much-loved and valued ecclesiastical buildings Hugh Nelson, Bishop of St Germans, kindly responded to our concerns in Newsletter 18.

We will continue to follow this initiative but in the meantime we have started a conversation with a group called 'Save the Parish, Cornwall', who, like us, are concerned about potential wholesale closure of church buildings across the county.

Historic Buildings and Places e-newsletter



Poynton's Piece, Minions, Cornwall

Highlighting the crucial work of local heritage organisations: The Cornish Buildings Group

The Cornish Buildings Group, supported by Historic England and the Cornwall Heritage Trust, are leading on a three-year buildings at risk initiative which will help identify and monitor Cornish buildings at risk and seek solutions for neglected, redundant or derelict buildings regardless of listing.

This includes buildings like Poynton's Piece, Minions, near Liskeard, Cornwall, pictured above. This pair of mid-19th century unlisted smallholders cottages are situated in a World Heritage Site and, as such, remain a precious reminder of lives lived on the hardest edges of Cornwall's industrial zenith. The buildings currently have no future and may well be lost if nothing is done soon.

The project can be followed via the Cornish Buildings Group's online blog 'Buildings at Risk' Project – caring for Cornwall's heritage.

[Read 'Buildings at Risk' blog](#)

Thanks to Historic Buildings and Places, a national statutory consultee, for covering our work in their Spring e-newsletter. This project remains in close contact with all statutory consultees and national interest groups.

Falmouth Central Methodist Chapel

Following our successful application to Historic England to list the central Methodist Chapel in Falmouth, the full listing is now online at

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1481824>

Additions to SAVE risk register

Eight Cornish buildings, in various stages of decay, have been added to the SAVE risk register. SAVE, a group that campaigns to protect threatened historic buildings, updates its influential national database on an annual basis and we were pleased to respond to a call for potential Cornish additions. We are also grateful for Radio Cornwall's coverage of this story.

The following buildings are new additions to the SAVE list

18 Chapel Street, Penzance, Cornwall, TR18 4AW: This historic townhouse on one of Penzance's central streets has a Georgian frontage but is thought to retain much older fabric. Occupied by the Mayor of Penzance in 1812 and more recently housing the Ganges restaurant until 2006, it has deteriorated seriously with a partial roof collapse.



18 Chapel Street, Penzance



Scarcewater Chapel, St Stephen's

Bible Christian Chapel, Scarcewater, Truro, Cornwall TR2 4EY: In the midst of the Cornish countryside, this diminutive Victorian chapel and Sunday School have a simplicity which is beguilingly attractive. At one time, the buildings had permission for residential conversion, but this was never acted upon. They are now in very poor condition.

Market House and Old Town Hall, Penzance, Cornwall, TR18 2JG: Strikingly beautiful, this grade I listed building has been neglected and without a use for some time. Although the building has secured some money from the Future High Street Fund, to effect specific repairs, new uses are needed to ensure it is kept in good condition.



Market House, Penzance



Pendower Beach Hotel

Pendower Beach Hotel, Cornwall TR2 5PE: In an unrivalled coastal position, these 17th-century farm buildings, later became a popular hotel. A redevelopment proposal including several additional residential units was recently withdrawn. A local group, Friends of Pendower Beach, support restoration but only within the existing footprint of the buildings to preserve their setting and the natural habitat.

Polvellan Manor, Looe, Cornwall, PL13 2AH: Overlooking the estuary and town of Looe, Polvellan Manor was built as a grand Georgian house for the local MP. Since WWII when it served as a maternity hospital, it has been a hotel and a nursing home. Only a few original features remain inside but its historic character is still very clear despite its poor condition.



Polvellan Manor, Looe



Right – Pomery's garage, St Mawes

Pomery's Garage, Kings Road, St Mawes, Cornwall, TR2 5DH: From Pilchard warehouse to garage to local icon, this building survives as one of the last harbourside vernacular buildings and is the repository of unique local history. Despite local interest in creating a heritage centre, it appears that the building could be under threat of demolition with a public consultation opening in June 2022.

Pontus Piece, St Cleer, Cornwall: On the edge of Bodmin Moor, these small dwellings once housed workers at the nearby tin and copper mine. They will be auctioned on 27th July and have a guide price of £175,000. The successful buyer will have a unique opportunity – and responsibility – to restore these treasures and preserve their history for future generations.

This story was also covered on the Cornwalllive website

<https://www.cornwalllive.com/news/cornwall-news/eight-cornish-heritage-buildings-added-7267879>

HOT PROPERTY



RESTORATION PROJECT

Key Facts

After 100 years, the church is being restored to its former glory. The project is a major undertaking, involving the reconstruction of the building and the surrounding grounds. The church is a Grade II listed building, and the restoration project is a major undertaking, involving the reconstruction of the building and the surrounding grounds. The church is a Grade II listed building, and the restoration project is a major undertaking, involving the reconstruction of the building and the surrounding grounds.

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Restoration of Lamorran Church

Bat project saves riverside church as a place for all God's creatures

by OLIVIER VERGNAULT
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A CHURCH has been preserved for the future thanks to the bat infestation that led to its closure eight years ago.

The church of St Moran in Lamorran, on the bank of the River Fal, was locked up in 2014 after the pews became covered in bat droppings.

There were fears it would go the same way as the nearby church of St Cohan in Merther, on the Tresillian River, which has been reclaimed by nature after closing around 100 years ago.

Instead, however, thanks to the Bats in Churches project the building has been restored to its former glory and, far from banishing another of God's creatures, worshippers have given the bats sanctuary in their own lofts in the roof of the church.

Nick Jeans from the Cornish Buildings Group, which encourages the protection of buildings at risk of falling into ruin, said: "If it hadn't been for the bat project Lamorran would probably have been heading the same way as Merther."

"Our reluctance to see the church close and fall into neglect kept us focused on seeing this project through. The church now has a positive future where the congregation in the pews and in the bat lofts can worship side by side."

The church was closed after the harvest festival in September 2014 due to the seemingly insoluble problem with bats.

"The problem was what to do next," said Nick.

"Fortunately our then priest-in-charge, Canon Linda Barley, previously the Church of England's chief statistician, had shared an office with the church's chief ecologist, who wrote to her in 2015 asking, 'Do you know of a church with a bat problem?'"

From that connection, the church became part of the Bats in Churches project run by Natural England, Historic England, the Churches Conservation Trust, the Church of England and the Bat Conservation Trust, with backing from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

After considering eradicating the bats, the congregation instead decided to worship alongside them.

"Bats are not only an endangered species but also one of God's creatures as much as we are," said Nick, "so it was the problem itself that had to be eradicated."

"After some four or five surveys we came up with the potential solution: to separate the bat colonies from the congregation by building two bat lofts, one in each transept, and sealing the ceilings, thus confining them to the roof and maintaining roosting habitats and flight practice in the lofts."

Funding eventually came in 2018 and, with another £70,000 raised by the community over the years, the church now has newly plastered walls, cleaned and restored Georgian pews, restored timber in the nave and new LED lighting.



Published by buildingsatrisk

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.