

# **Cornish Buildings Group 'Buildings at Risk' Project**

caring for Cornwall's heritage

## **Newsletter 23**

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



### **Focus on St Austell Area**

#### **Behind the Facade**

The Capitol cinema St Austell, Mount Charles, opened on Monday 22 February 1926. A large crowd was present to welcome in the new picture palace – the opening attraction was Charlie Chaplin in *The Gold Rush*. The theatre also housed a cafe and dance hall. On 8 January 1978 it was taken over by the Classic Cinemas chain and later acquired by WTW Cinemas. The building has more recently operated as a full-time bingo hall. The building in Alexandra Road which includes a parade of four shops and 35-space car park is currently on the market for around £2 million.

Although not specifically at risk at the moment the building offers huge heritage potential for restoration and conservation. We will watch with interest.

With thanks to Barry West.



## **8 Fore Street, St Blazey**

This project has joined local groups and interested parties to ask Cornwall Council to act on the neglect of a Grade II listed building in St Blazey.

The listing for No 8 Fore Street, St Blazey (NGR: SX0691154842) states

*Early C19. Stucco, No 8 is studded with seashells. 2 storeys. 4 sash windows, mostly with glazing bars. Modern 3-light ground floor window to No 8. 2 modern glazed doors. Slate roof. Curiosity value.*

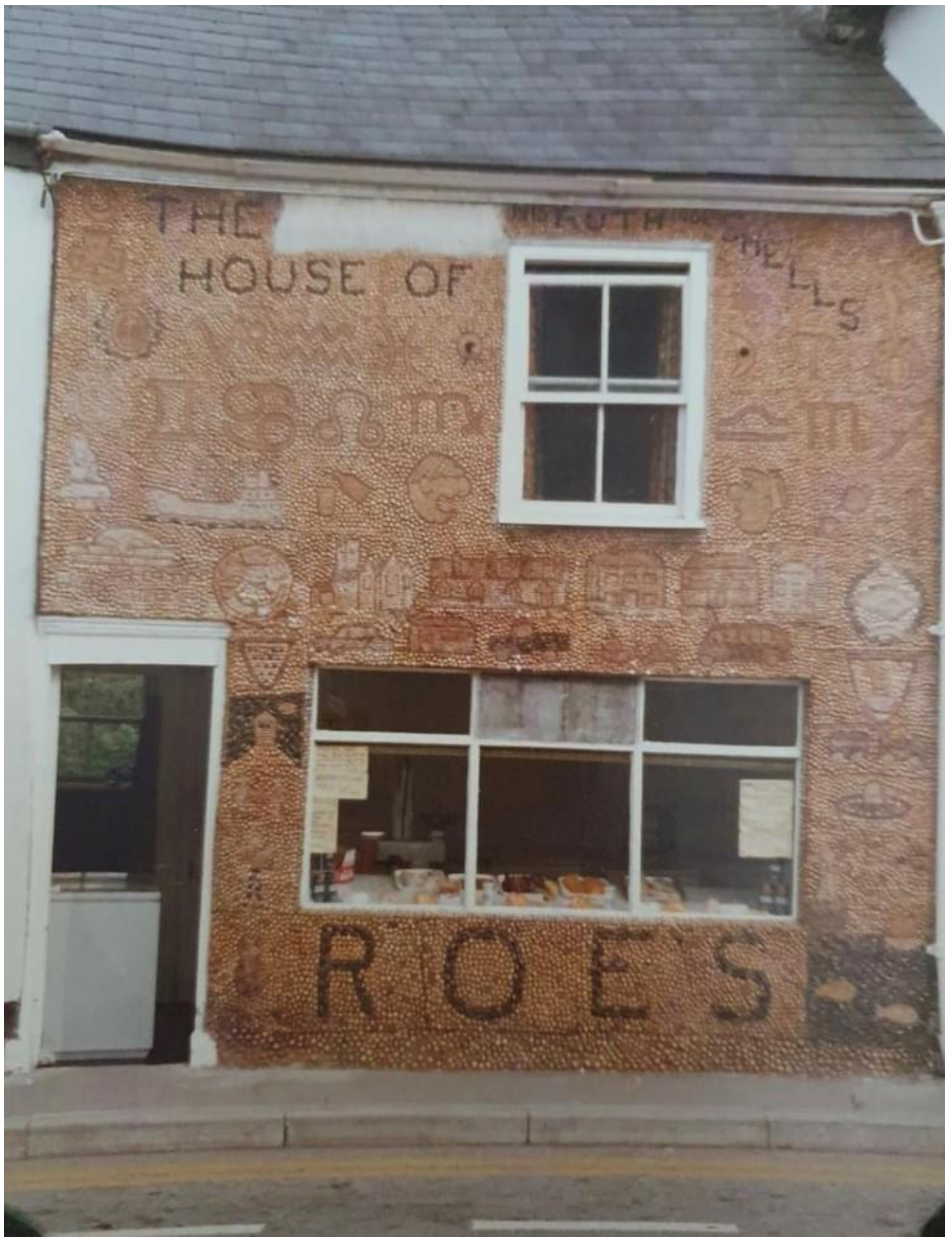
In 2013 the HER noted

*The building is 1st mapped on the 1840 tithe map and is shown later on the 1st Edition OS plan. It is understood that the building was formerly a fishmongers shop, which featured a wider ground floor shop window. If there are any historic photos of the building in the early and mid-20th century these would help inform our understanding of the alterations that have been carried out, I have looked on the Francis Frith website but could not locate any relating to this building. It has been suggested that the decorative shell frontage related to the former fishmonger use of the building, although I note the applicant believes the shells were applied in the 1950's by an artist.*

*The shells to the upper floor survive in a less altered form, the applied shell finish features interesting decorative detailing and patterns, and their artistic and curiosity value forms an important part of the significance of the building. The shell finish applied to this building is in the spirit of historic shell grottos found within historic parks and gardens and is unusual in this context.*

In 1974, when first listed by Historic England, the polychromatic house and boasted legible patterns formed by the shells depicting various symbols and local landmarks.

We understand that a previous owner had painted the exterior of the building before selling (Planning permission refused PA13/01385 and failed at appeal in 2014 APP/D0840/E/13/2202264) to a new owner who has subsequently tried to delist the house, an application which has also been refused. The consequence of applying the Dulux Weathershield applied finish (without permission) is that the render has now delaminated from the wall causing a significant amount of debris to fall into the road.





The Cornish Buildings Group are requesting

### **1. Enforcement**

To investigate this case and determine whether the paint finish causing the render to delaminate was illegal and whether this constitutes neglect of a listed heritage asset. We understand previous enforcement requests have been ignored by the owner of the property. The damage caused to this heritage asset of great local value and interest is immeasurable and it would be desirable to see the shell patterns restored to the condition that they were at the time of listing when they would have been considered as of regional significance.

### **2. Building Control**

To determine whether the house render falling from the house onto the pavement constitutes a health and safety issue. It is of note that the pavement is a popular route for adults and children to use the local convenience store.

It is the opinion of this project that a serious breach of planning regulation has occurred at this site. We have alerted the case to the local MP, SPAB and SAVE and Historic England who champion buildings at risk on a national basis.

## In other news

### Hotel Bristol, Newquay



Our involvement in objecting to the demolition of the Hotel Bristol, Newquay, has brought a huge amount of support from statutory consultees.

*The Buildings at Risk Project (Cornish Buildings Group) object in the strongest terms towards the potential demolition of this non-designated heritage asset. The volume of public concern noted on the portal speaks for itself, and shows how valued this heritage asset is to the townscape and setting of the historic holiday resort. Furthermore, its design contributes to the local distinctiveness and sense of place of the town and, with its wider grouping of Victorian/ Edwardian hotels tells a story of growth, fashion, and urbanisation of Newquay. Repurposing this building will have a positive environmental effect. This project fully supports Newquay Town Council's comments regarding the significance of this historic building and shares its wider concerns over loss and design quality, scale and mass of the proposed replacement.*

## **CORNISH BUILDINGS GROUP COMMENTS ON CORNWALL COUNCIL PLANNING PORTAL**

In their objections the Victorian Society stated

*The proposals envisage the demolition of the existing buildings and their replacement with a much larger residential development. This would result in the loss of a building which should be considered a non-designated heritage asset and would harm the character of the surrounding area which is characterised by the presence of historic hotels and villas. The scale of the new building would also be completely out of character with its surroundings*

The Council for British Archaeology added

*An improved scheme should start with an assessment of which structures on site could be reused and where demolition is justified. As well as climate target benefits, an approach that retains the structures which well articulate Newquay's historic development maintains an ongoing sense of place, along with a resilient and sustainable future focus*

While Historic Buildings & Places commented

*HB&P recommends the application is withdrawn until a more sensitive scheme is developed that would adapt the existing buildings to the front of the site and explore opportunities for new development on the vacant land to the rear.*

In addition, Cornwall Council Planning Portal currently lists 691 public objections to the proposals which surely suggests that this scheme should be withdrawn.

Further to drawing statutory consultees into the debate we secured a feature in *Private Eye* magazine which neatly summarises the case.

# NOOKS and CORNERS

**H**OTEL BRISTOL, one of only five surviving historic hotels in the Cornish seaside town of Newquay, faces demolition to make way for a huge "upscale" hotel and apartments scheme overlooking Tolcarne Bay.

The plans submitted to Cornwall council by Manchester-based developer Salboy show a dense, blocky 10-storey building more reminiscent of 1980s Benidorm over-development than the traditional Cornish seaside.

Hotel Bristol, on the other hand, is highlighted in the Cornwall & Scilly Urban Survey (a massive early 2000s project to underpin sustainable regeneration in 19 historic towns) thanks to having "greater architectural flamboyance and freedom" than its smaller, more domestic neighbours.

The building's conversion from large residential villa to grand hotel took place in the 1930s and interior features from that period remain, including large, etched art deco mirrors in the ballroom.

The Cornish Buildings group (CBG) recently tried to get the Bristol Hotel listed. In rejecting it, Historic England noted that, "Seaside hotels of this sort are so common nationally, and it is that national picture which we must use for reference." But, the expert assessor noted: "For me, the hotel adds to the strong arguments about the need for a local list which acknowledges and values buildings such as these which are of such importance in their local setting."

Only one of Newquay's historic hotels, the Headland, by prominent 19th century Cornish architect Silvanus Trevail, is on the national list.

Salboy's application has attracted plenty of objections from locals, with one describing it as "hilariously inappropriate for the location" and another as "a monstrosity in size and design". Nor are locals fooled by the fact that the plans have been reduced from the ludicrous 14-storeys first mooted in public consultation – as if the reduction was a generous concession to public feeling.

"The volume of public concern noted on the portal [planning website] speaks for itself and shows how valued this heritage asset is to the townscape and setting of the historic holiday resort," says CBG's own submission to planners. "Furthermore, its design contributes to the local distinctiveness and sense of place of the town and, with its wider grouping of Victorian / Edwardian hotels tells a story of growth, fashion, and urbanisation of Newquay."

**NUMBERS 29-31 Byrom Street, in the St John's Street conservation area of central Manchester, are in a parlous state and have been deteriorating ever since Euro Car Parks (ECP) bought them in the 1980s.**

Manchester has been ruthlessly unsentimental for the last 200 years with its architectural legacy, and Georgian houses of quality are rare. St John Street and Byrom Street are the last runs of Georgian townhouses in the city centre and many are being converted back to posh residences, after serving as barristers' chambers and doctors' surgeries in recent decades. St John Street now sports the homes of ex-footballer and present property developer Gary Neville, and Ferran Soriano, the CEO of Manchester City. The Byrom Street houses have an added ingredient: "Gothick" doorcases from the

1790s, which matched the style of the long-gone St John's Church which once occupied the gardens opposite. These houses are the last domestic examples of this short-lived UK architectural fashion in Manchester. Their importance has long been recognised – they were listed in 1952, almost as soon as listing of domestic properties began.

Land registry records show the title absolute has resided with Barry Tucker, owner of Euro Car Parks (ECP), since 10 March 2017. His company is best-known for raking it in from, among other things, NHS hospital car parks. ECP has had a turnover of £97m and profits of £15.6m in the last three years.

As anybody who has ever challenged a fine from a car park company will know, they are nigh on impossible to contact. A magazine in the city, Manchester Confidential, which recently published detailed photos showing the

sad state of the buildings, including spalled brickwork and plants growing out of the roof, has been trying to get in touch with Tucker about Byrom Street. Tucker, who has fancy houses in Hale Barns, south Manchester, and close to Regents Park in London, failed himself to answer emails, phone calls or requests via old-fashioned letter writing. The only response was a letter from Mr Tucker's and ECP's lawyers, Mishcon de Reya. It took grave exception to the publication's

description of him as a "fat cat" car park owner and use of quotes from a Daily Mail article which identified his London home, but did not mention the Byrom Street properties.

Local councillors have commented on the terrible condition of the buildings and the good news is that Manchester city council has promised to send inspectors out to assess the listed properties. The bad news is that their over-stretched officers might not get there before the buildings are condemned – and can be replaced with some easy-to-sell apartments in the booming city centre.



**TOLCARNE BAYWATCH:**  
Newquay's Hotel Bristol (top) and its proposed Benidorm-style replacement



"Does this make you question your faith?"

## Letters

letters@private-eye.co.uk



### Spare ribbing



Sir,

Re the Harry pillory (Eye 1590). Bold of you to let Piers Morgan and Jeremy Clarkson guest edit your magazine. I would cancel my subscription but my dad pays for it.

ETHAN MACKINTOSH, Brighton.

...When my copy of Eye 1590 finally arrived today, I was gladdened to see that – what with space being so scarce – there was enough spare for four or more pages to be devoted to a book you clearly don't like.

CHRIS MILLER, Bristol.

...I was recently given a copy of the book "Spare", about which there have been several negative posts in your esteemed organ. However, I must disagree with those who criticise this work – especially on these cold winter nights – when we are all in need of comfort. If this book is fully opened on page 208 – exactly halfway through its 416 pages – and it is then carefully placed open, in a standard log burner, it burns pleasingly well, and gave my wife and I a full 27 minutes of heat.

SIMON A.F. HOWELL.

### Bright Sparky

Sir,

Old Sparky (Keeping the Lights On, Eye 1590) is quite right that one of the major hurdles Rolls-Royce would face should its small modular reactor plans ever get a green light is huge Nimby objections.

Unfortunately, all plans to improve our teetering-on-the-brink energy supply face well-funded and strident objections. Throughout Suffolk and Constable country there are the obvious objections to Sizewell C – but also to the converter stations and power cables required to bring offshore wind power to where it can be used. There are also objectors to solar farms such as the four-square mile Sunnica proposal around Freckenham and Chippenham.

Perhaps the objectors should be offered a deal whereby they agree to disconnecting themselves entirely from the grid as an alternative to additional power generation.

MIKE PENBERTH, Cambs.

...Tom Quinn ("Call of the rewild", Letters, Eye 1590) fears irretrievable damage will be done to RSBP Minsmere by the building of Sizewell C. This would probably be the same irretrievable damage that was aired at enormous length in the two-year public inquiry for Sizewell B in 1985-87, and which did not happen.

PHIL SAUNDERS, (not working at Sizewell, and not seeking to).

Bungay, Suffolk.

### Air show supremacy

Sir,

Thank you for the recent coverage of the Shoreham air show disaster (Eye 1589 & passim). I was very much involved as a police chaplain. You gave more time to the inquest than other "media outlets".

DANIEL.



## **Lamb and Flag Smelting works**

We have had two correspondents raise concerns about the state of the Lamb and Flag Smelting Works at St Erth.

We wrote to Cornwall Council in April 2022

*Dear Enforcement*

*I am writing on behalf of the Cornish Buildings Group buildings at risk project, funded by Historic England and the Cornwall Heritage Trust, regarding the Grade 2 listed Lamb and Flag smelting works in Canonstown, a building that appears on the Cornish Buildings at Risk Register and on SAVE's endangered building list.*

*This project is very concerned with the major deterioration shown. It is of note that the west side of the roof has now fully collapsed. The building has been in stark decline for over a decade (we reported it back in 2014) and now because of serious neglect it is in a dangerous condition. We understand that some work has carried on without the appropriate consents.*

*We are also very concerned, and have been in conversation with Historic England, over the poor response times and feedback on enforcement requests. Our three live applications from January have not been responded to nor have requests for updates been acknowledged. With no information to prove otherwise we can only assume that no action is being taken on these cases and therefore have low confidence that the willful neglect of the Lamb and Flag will receive due attention. Cornwall Council's lack of ability or will to enforce neglect of listed heritage assets is of great concern.*

*Sincerely*

*Paul Holden, FSA. Project Lead*

And received this response

*Dear Mr Holden,*

*Thank you for your e-mail the contents of which I note.*

*I can confirm that the Councils investigations are currently active and ongoing at this time under case reference EN21/01762. Due to the restrictions of the General Data Protection Regulations, we are unable to provide you with detailed updates as to the actions that we are taking or indeed intend to take, however, I will ask the case officer to contact you upon her return on the 3<sup>rd</sup> May so that we can provide you with all the information that we are permitted to disclose which I hope will add some clarity as to the current position of the Councils investigations into this matter. In the meantime, I would be most grateful if you could provide me with copies of any correspondence that you have sent to the Council in relation to this matter where you consider a response is outstanding.*

*Yours sincerely,*

*Alan Mason, Planning Enforcement Group Leader*

Needless to say the case officer never reported back on the smelting works and we have asked for progress on this case which to date has not been forthcoming.

### Good news

[Penzance Town Deal](#) are delighted to announce that the iconic Market House is now under new community led ownership thanks to funding from the Town Deal. The Penzance Regeneration Company, a not-for-profit company, which has been established by local Penzance stakeholders has now completed the purchase.

More on this at

<https://www.penzance-tc.gov.uk/the-market-house-penzance-purchased-for-the-community>



Historic  
England



Posted by [buildings at risk](#) 9th Feb 2023

**Published by buildings atr isk**

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. [View more posts](#)