

WILTSHIRE
HISTORIC
BUILDINGS
T R U S T



1 9 6 7 - 2 0 0 7

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Architect to the Trust.

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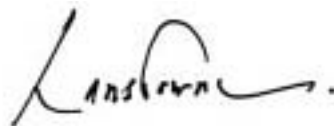
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Foreword

The visionaries who, forty years ago, established this Trust deserve recognition. It was only in the late 1960s that the nation's most vulnerable heritage buildings were thrown a lifeline of protection with the implementation of listed building consent. Up until then the demolition ball and bulldozer reigned supreme. Listed buildings were, and still are, a controversial subject. A civilised society evolves, respecting its past, whilst embracing the future. With the introduction of listed building and conservation areas consents the exemplars of our built heritage were, for the first time, protected against the ravages of the demolition contractors. However, without grant aid many remained empty and derelict. Some financial formula had to be found which could act as a catalyst to attract funding to bridge the financial shortfall. This was the challenge facing the founding fathers of the Trust forty years ago. Their solution was to establish, through a one-off County Council grant, a revolving capital sum, since when this "financial generator" has stimulated countless heritage improvement projects throughout the county. The Trust's policy is to pump prime schemes, always ensuring there is a clear exit

strategy, so its limited capital can be unlocked at the end of each project to assist the next candidate. The Trust's success has been primarily due to its standing within the conservation movement. Mr. George McDonic, MBE, its Chairman, and Mr. Colin Johns, the Trust's Architect, are both acknowledged leaders in their respective professions. I would also wish to place on record our thanks to Angela Wakeley for her contribution to the work of the Trust since its inception in 1967, and of course to all our dedicated committee members and officers whose advice and support have been invaluable.

This short publication not only illustrates the diverse nature of the Trust's work but is also dedicated to those who have been involved in these projects over the past four decades.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lansdowne', with a large, stylized initial 'L'.

The Marquis of Lansdowne, LVO DL

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The formation and early days of the Trust

The Wiltshire Historic Buildings Trust was formed in 1967 and evolved from an initiative by Wiltshire County Council which would involve the then Borough, Rural and Urban District Councils and preservation societies in the county.

In 1967 attitudes to conservation were significantly different to those of today. At the end of the Second World War central and local government priorities were to rehouse those made homeless and to rebuild damaged city and town centres. Conservation was not a consideration and many historic buildings were demolished as part of the exercise to rebuild the infrastructure of the country. In the early and mid-20th century planning controls in favour of preserving historic buildings were weak and it was often seen that the only way to save a building was to buy it.

In many towns and cities the rebuilding coincided with the need to replace slum dwellings and provide enhanced standards of health and sanitation with the result that many houses were condemned and replaced with comprehensive housing projects. Shortages in building materials and skilled labour led to the development of industrialised building and prefabrication with experimental building techniques introduced. The resultant quality of life for those in the new housing schemes and the visual effects on town and city centres were far below expectation and during the 1960s there was increasing unease about the direction that architecture and planning were taking.

Although it might be imagined that Wiltshire was less affected than other places there was clear evidence in the 1960s of a threat to the county's historic towns and

villages and a wish to see vernacular buildings retained. The growth in conservation interest arose from a desire to protect communities and the 'familiar and cherished scene', together with a greater appreciation of the contribution made by historic buildings to the character and economic life of an area. This period saw a growth in conservation pressure groups such as the Civic Trust, Victorian Society and others, and especially smaller locally based societies which were formed to seek protection for their own communities.

The planning controls protecting historic buildings changed significantly in the late 1960s. This came about following the establishment of a Preservation Policy Group within the Ministry of Housing and Local Government and encouraged by popular campaigns in favour of conservation. Various government circulars and advice notes at the time stressed the need for conservation to be the starting point for determining the scale and pace of change with listed buildings identified as key elements.

The process of listing historic buildings can be traced back to the late 19th century and the direct efforts of Sir John Lubbock MP to introduce a measure of state control. Over several years he sought to introduce legislation into the House of Commons and was finally successful with the passing of the first Ancient Monuments Act of 1882. The legislation initially applied only to selected monuments and it is worth recording that Sir John (later Lord Avebury), in recognising the inadequacy of the controls, went on to purchase Avebury, Silbury Hill, West Kennet Long Barrow and Hackpen Hill to 'save them from harm.' Indeed it was not until the 1947 Town and Country

The formation and early days of the Trust

Planning Act that the Minister was given a duty, as opposed only to powers, to compile lists of buildings of special architectural or historic interest with a view to guiding local planning authorities in the preservation of such buildings.

The criteria for listing established in the late 1940s were that "all buildings built before 1700 which survive in anything like their original condition should be listed. Most buildings between 1700 to 1840 should be listed although selection is necessary and between 1840 and 1914 only buildings of definite quality and character should be included."

The listing process proceeded slowly and it took almost 20 years for the first surveys to be completed. By then it was realised that the early lists were inadequate and that the exercise needed to be up-dated but progress was again slow and by the 1970s only the major towns in England had been reviewed. Rather than wait another 20 years the government of the day initiated an accelerated resurvey to cover all the areas that had not been reappraised and this was carried out in the mid-1980s. The listing criteria have been revised from time to time and later buildings can be included. The current listing of historic buildings, now carried out by English Heritage, is based on expanded criteria published in 2006 following a major reappraisal.

The early records of the Trust indicate that at the time many of the historic buildings in Wiltshire were in poor condition. In 1967 there were probably less than 5,000 listed buildings, a figure which grew to over 15,000 following the comprehensive resurveys in the towns in the early 1970s and in the rural areas in the mid-1980s.

Buildings are not usually demolished simply because they are in such poor condition that they cannot be saved. They are usually lost because the cost of repair exceeds the value on completion or because the site is more valuable without the building. This was recognised in the 1950 Report of the Committee on Houses of Outstanding Historic or Architectural Interest commissioned by the then Chancellor of the Exchequer which led directly to the setting up of the Historic Buildings Council for England and the emergence of government grants for historic buildings. Initially grants were restricted to "outstanding" buildings but the 1962 Local Authorities Historic Buildings Act allowed local councils to support the conservation of historic buildings from public funds.

The first mention of a possible trust came from a report to the Town and Country Planning Committee of the County Council in February 1965. The report identified the potential for the County Council to give grants under the terms of the Local Authorities Historic Buildings Act 1962 and suggested that it was a course of action that should be followed. It was intended that these grants would normally be shared with the relevant Borough or District Council with the owner of the building making a substantial contribution. The report further indicated that there would be cases where an owner was unwilling or unable to carry out the necessary restoration and that it may be necessary for the authorities to consider the use of a Building Preservation Order which, if confirmed, could lead to a purchase notice being served.

In the 1960s most planning authorities were not able to

The formation and early days of the Trust

place themselves in the position of being faced with a purchase notice and having to accept the liability of a derelict historic building which then needed repair. It was however recognised that the situation would be different if a trust was in existence to take on the problem. The 1965 report outlined the formation of a trust and a possible structure and recommended action. Membership would include those representing the County, Borough and District Councils, together with local preservation societies. The success of a trust and its ability to deal with a number of buildings would depend on its financial resources. To give the Wiltshire Trust a start the County Council promised a grant of £3,500 in the first year in the hope that local preservation societies would contribute £500, other charities might contribute up to £5,000 with say £1,000 from the Borough and District Councils, giving a total of £10,000.

The initial subscribers and supporters saw the formation of the Trust as a positive way of protecting the architectural heritage of the county. Since its inception the Trust has operated a revolving fund utilising the proceeds of one project to finance the next but has also been involved in other projects and initiatives.

The conservation of historic buildings was given additional emphasis in 1967 when the Civic Amenities Act brought into being the concept of conservation areas, an initiative that now encompasses most of the towns and villages in Wiltshire. Also in the late 1960s the Historic Buildings Council introduced the concept of Town Schemes whereby grants could be given for important groups of buildings. These were partnership arrangements between central and local government to

cover defined historic areas. One of the earliest such schemes in the country was established in Bradford on Avon, with later town schemes covering most of the county's historic towns. The work undertaken made a significant impact on the condition of historic buildings in the various towns with the Trust represented on each of the joint committees that had been set up to promote these initiatives.

In the wider context the Wiltshire Historic Buildings Trust was one of the early revolving fund trusts utilising the idea that has since been much copied. In 1967 there were only 21 building preservation trusts across the UK, a figure which has now grown to some 300.

1

Barton Farm



BRADFORD ON AVON

one

Barton Farm BRADFORD ON AVON

one

At the Annual General Meeting in October 1969 the Chairman, Sir Geoffrey Tritton, announced that the Trust had bought a group of buildings at Barton Farm, Bradford on Avon. The farmhouse and farm buildings together with the surrounding fields had been purchased by Wiltshire County Council to create a country park. The Trust subsequently acquired the 15th century granary, the farmhouse, an 18th century dairy and other buildings associated with the farm use. The site has long been recognised as of considerable architectural and historic significance and adjoins the famous Tithes Barn which at the time was under the control of the Ministry of Works.

The Farmhouse was in need of substantial repair and the Trust immediately undertook major work to stabilise the walls and reroof the building. Repairs were also undertaken to the 15th century Granary but at the time the future of the complex still had to be resolved and work was restricted because of the Trust's limited resources. In the pioneering days of its existence the Trust was advised by former Wiltshire Council Architect Frank Bowden and he was responsible for this and several other early schemes.



Roof of the Granary



1968 sketch of the farmhouse by Frank Bowden

In 1972 Mr. Chard, the then tenant of Barton Farm, relinquished his occupation of the fields fronting the river and subsequently vacated the Farmhouse. After considerable deliberation and at a time of low property prices the complex of buildings owned by the Trust was sold to a group of private owners for the establishment of a craft centre. Since then the area has had a chequered history. The cow-byres were converted to craft workshops but the dairy was then demolished and the West Barn seriously damaged by fire. Ownership became fragmented which made management difficult.

The County Council decision to create a Country Park open for public use and extending from Barton Farm downstream to Avoncliff gave enhanced prominence to the Tithe Barn, Farmhouse and Granary. In 2003 the Bradford on Avon Preservation Trust with help from the Heritage Lottery Fund, and others, purchased the farmyard and surrounding buildings as a community facility. The trust restored the derelict West Barn and greatly improved the setting of all of the historic buildings. Care and maintenance is now much improved and the Barton Farm complex is much valued for its architectural and historic interest and in the contribution it makes to the town.



The view from the Tithe Barn towards the Farmhouse in 1967... and in 2007



Roof of the Granary

2

23 South Wraxall



16TH CENTURY
COTTAGES

two

South Wraxall 16TH CENTURY COTTAGES

two

Also in 1969 the Trust acquired a pair of 16th century cottages in West Wiltshire, these being 23 and 24 South Wraxall. One of the cottages was derelict and the other occupied although in poor condition. The Trust's plan was to renovate the pair of cottages into a single dwelling which would be let to the former owners for their lifetime.

It is often imagined that country cottages are idyllic but conditions for agricultural workers were often poor as was found here. Extensive repairs were carried out with

complete new services. The cost of work was around £8,000. In a 1970 report on the property the main interest of these buildings was said to be their attractive exterior which is an important part of the street scene and typical of the best country cottages of that period. The agreement for the owners to live in the property ran from 1971 to 1982 when the cottage was vacated and subsequently sold. The opportunity to realise capital by the sale of this property considerably enhanced the ability of the Trust to undertake larger and more complex projects.



The 2007 view of 23 South Wraxall

3

Wilton Windmill



three

Wilton Windmill

In 1971 the Trust was asked to sponsor an appeal for the restoration of Wilton Windmill. Reports at the time indicated that it was believed to be the only windmill in Wiltshire capable of being restored as a substantial amount of original machinery remained. A committee comprising of the Trust together with members of the County Council, Marlborough & Ramsbury Rural District Council, Grafton Parish Council and Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society was formed to take the project forward. It was hoped at the time that when restored the public would have full access to the windmill and as it is close to the Crofton Pumping Station on the Kennet and Avon Canal it would prove a considerable attraction to visitors.

In his investigation in June 1970 Kenneth Major, a mill specialist and architect, reported that the mill was a fine example of the period of mill-wrighting which became possible after the Industrial Revolution had made easy the production of reasonably sized castings. The whole was described as a good piece of mill history which had survived in a comparatively complete form.



Removing the remains of the fantail staging 1969



Works underway in 1975. The tower has been restored, the gallery constructed and the fantail is being assembled.

In 1971 a further report on the condition of the machinery and the feasibility of restoration was prepared by Derek Ogden, Millwright and Engineer, who was subsequently given a contract to undertake the engineering work. In the event Mr. Ogden was unable to finish the project and it was taken on and completed by David Nichols of Jameson Marshall Ltd. of Woodbridge, Suffolk.

With advice from the Trust's Architect, Frank Bowden, and the Wind and Watermill Section of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the mill was fully restored to working order at a cost of around £25,000. A substantial grant was given by the Historic Buildings Council for England and on completion of repairs the mill was handed back to the County Council. In 1976 the Wilton Windmill Society was formed to maintain and operate the mill which is now a key feature in the landscape of east Wiltshire.



The windmill in 1976 when the sails turned again for the first time.

4

3 High Street



MARLBOROUGH

four

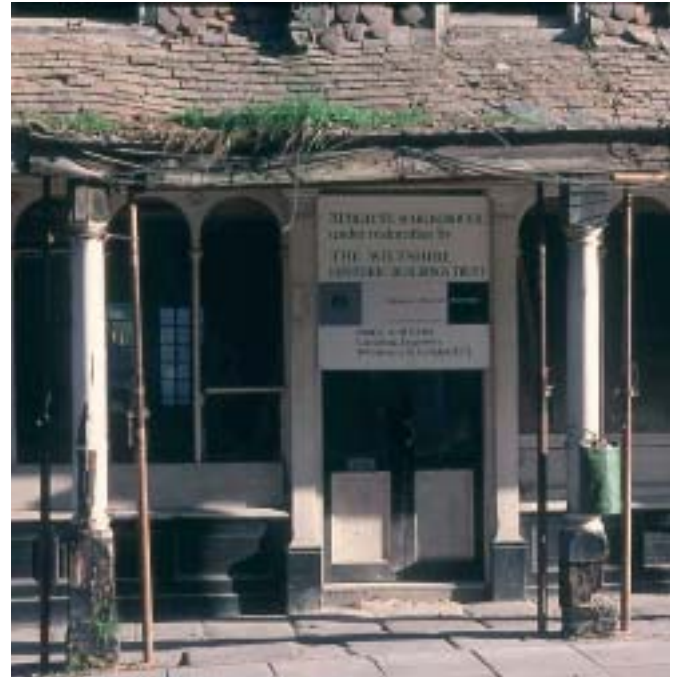
3 High Street MARLBOROUGH

four

In 1978 this 17th century tile-hung timber frame building was identified as a building at risk. The condition of the building was of considerable concern to neighbours with damage being caused to adjacent properties and hampering attempts to improve the street scene. Efforts to work with the owner to improve the situation were unsuccessful and Kennet District Council decided that it must take action to ensure public safety. The Council served a Repairs Notice which was followed by compulsory acquisition.

An important consideration in determining the future of the building was a back-to-back agreement whereby the building was immediately sold on to the Trust so that the project could start without delay. The repair and conversion work was carried out under the direction of Margaret Maxwell Architect and the scheme provided a ground floor shop unit with residential accommodation above.

The success of the project was largely due to the degree of co-operation between the Trust and the District Council with goodwill on both sides. The scheme was financed from Trust funds with grant aid from Kennet District Council and the Department of the Environment. Unfortunately the building was later severely damaged by fire but fully restored as one of the many fine historic buildings that line Marlborough High Street.



The condition of the building presents an obvious danger to passers-by



The street view in 1978...



and in 2007

5

Church Street



CALNE

five

Church Street CALNE

five

Towards the end of the 20th century Calne was mostly remembered for the sausage and bacon curing factories of C. & T. Harris Ltd. which had occupied buildings spread over six acres of the town centre and for 200 years had provided the main economic base of the town. The closure of the C. & T. Harris business in 1983 had a devastating impact on local confidence and led to many job losses. Schemes were considered for the possible reuse of the large six storey brick buildings which dominated the town centre, but no realistic alternative uses could be found. The property was subsequently acquired by North Wiltshire District Council which demolished the buildings for town centre redevelopment.

The historic fabric of Calne had been badly affected by the 1968 improvements to the A4 Marlborough-Bath Road, when a number of interesting buildings were lost, indeed it was tempting at that stage to think that Calne had lost most of its built heritage but the town deserved a closer look. The demolition of the Harris factories opened-up a vast empty central area which many felt would provide a great opportunity for the construction of a new town centre.

The people of Calne were highly critical of the initial ideas for a town centre supermarket development but strongly supported the idea of a community-based regeneration project involving Gordon Michell who had been the Director of the Wirksworth Project in Derbyshire. This led to the formation of the Calne Project which was to be run as an independent town development trust with charitable status. Financial support was given by the County, District and Town Councils, together with English Heritage. This trust

was initially governed by an executive committee composed of representatives from the four sponsoring authorities, as well as the town's business and voluntary organisations, the Calne Civic Society, and the schools.

In purchasing the Harris property, the District Council had acquired a group of buildings in Church Street which were formerly linked to the factory complex. One of the first ideas of the Calne Project was to commission a feasibility study for the rehabilitation and reuse of this group of buildings. Gordon Michell had been impressed by the Pippit Buildings scheme carried out by the Bradford on Avon Preservation Trust in 1982, and therefore approached Vernon Gibbs, the architect for the Bradford on Avon Project, and commissioned the Church Street feasibility study. From there it was a short step to investigate the possibility of the Trust taking on the historic buildings as a key component in the future regeneration of Calne. It soon became clear that there was significant potential in Church Street to re-establish an area of some quality and character, building on and enhancing the setting for the imposing Parish Church of St Mary.



The centre of Calne in 1983 illustrating the dominance of the Harris factory buildings.

Phase 1

The first buildings acquired by the Trust were Nos.7, 9 and 11 Church Street, purchased in 1987. These were vacant shops with storage on the first floor of the smallest shop No.7, and self-contained flats above 9 and 11. The buildings, dating from the early 20th century, were not listed but were considered to be of sufficient importance to keep and were certainly buildings that made a positive contribution to the street scene. The rehabilitation scheme involved the removal of redundant rear additions and the construction of new storage areas and rear delivery yards for the shops. Vernon Gibbs Architects were commissioned by the Trust to take forward the ideas outlined in their earlier study. Work started in March 1988 and was completed in February 1989.



The south end of Church Street in 1986...



The south end of Church Street in 1986...and in 1989

Phase 2

The second phase of the work involved the listed buildings Nos.13 and 15 Church Street. No.13 was previously in use as a shop on the ground floor with shop storage over and No.15 had been used by C. & T. Harris as a shop on the ground floor with the works pay office on the upper floor. Both buildings were purchased from North Wiltshire District Council in 1989. Shop use was retained at No.13 and No.15 converted to provide a shop on the ground floor with storage behind. A maisonette to the first and second floors of No.15 has a private garden and garage to the rear. The ground floor later became a doctor's surgery.

It was considered important for historical reference that because the shop at No.13 had formerly been the retail outlet for C. & T. Harris, its 1930s bronze and marble shop front should be retained and refurbished as a link with the past. In the replanning of No.13 various

partitions that had over the years been inserted to form small offices were demolished. This on the upper floor exposed a room of generous proportions formerly used as the works banking hall. As with the remainder of the development, mouldings, cornices, architraves etc. were reinstated to match the original. A new metal stairway designed to reflect the feeling of the 1930's shop front was inserted to lead up to this space, initially used as a coffee shop and accessed from the craft shop below. The ashlar front facades of the building were cleaned and repaired and the Venetian window and shop front of No.15 were reinstated. Work was completed in 1990.



The rear of 13 and 15 Church Street as work started in 1989



Number 13 Church Street following closure of the Harris factory

Changes have taken place since completion, the top floor of No.13 is now a self-contained flat and the ground floor of No.15 is in office use but the significance of this is that Calne now has a new confidence and can successfully accommodate such changes.



The 1930's shopfront restored as a link to the past use.

Phase 3

The third phase, purchased from North Wiltshire District Council in 1990, included Nos. 21, 23 and 25 Church Street together with the area behind. Nos.21



The 1930's shopfront restored as a link to the past use.



The 1930's shopfront restored as a link to the past use.

and 23 were in use as one building, being a shop on the ground floor with residential accommodation above. No.25 was a separate lock-up shop with a flat over, having access from the side entrance. To the rear there was a building which had at some time been a slaughterhouse but later used for storage. The outbuildings to the rear were neglected and in a dilapidated state.

A scheme of repair, alteration and extension to provide five shops and three flats started in 1990. Two of the shops front onto Church Street, with the other three shops having access from a small courtyard, the plan of which is based on the layout of the earlier buildings. Two of the shop units are new construction. The upper floors of the street front buildings were converted to form two single-bedroom flats and one two-bedroom flat. The paved courtyard, much enjoyed as an outdoor amenity, provides access from Church

Street and links with car parking to the rear of the buildings.

It would have been easy to ignore the potential of the courtyard but by providing a link to the street behind it has become a valuable addition to the economic life of Calne. Views of the scheme are often used to promote Calne as a place to visit and enjoy.

Nos. 21/25 are part of the original street pattern of Calne and have a traditional layout of frontage buildings with outbuildings stretching back either side of the yard. Outwardly the buildings appear to be nineteenth century, although it was known that No.21/23 had medieval origins. What was not known was the full extent of the historic structure which was revealed as a result of the building work. This uncovered the substantial remains of a seventeenth century, three-bay, timber-frame building, much of



The rear of 21,23 and 25 Church Street following demolition of the factory buildings as seen in 1992.



The abandoned courtyard in 1986





The courtyard with a new lease of life in 1993

which can now be seen, enhancing especially the shop ceiling and the attic bedroom. Work was completed in Spring 1992 by which time the Trust had spent over £1.1 million on the whole three phase project.

Church Street in 2007 is a very different place to that seen in the 1980s. All the shops are in use and the full potential of the buildings has been achieved and maintained.



Church Street in 2007 is a very different place to that seen in the 1980s. All the shops are in use and the full potential of the buildings has been achieved and maintained.

6

The Ostlers's House



PICKWICK, CORSHAM

six

The Ostler's House PICKWICK, CORSHAM

In July 2002 North Wiltshire District Council approached the Trust regarding the outbuildings at the Hare and Hounds which had for some years been on the District Council Buildings at Risk list. The District Council was in discussion with the owners of the property and had suggested that the building could

be rescued by a sale to the Trust. Apart from limited use as a beer store the buildings were empty and neglected. Following consideration of an outline feasibility study the Trust acquired the property in April 2003 and commissioned Rhys Brookes of Harrison Brookes Architects to undertake the project.



The rear of 13 and 15 Church Street as work started in 1989

The Ostler's House PICKWICK, CORSHAM

six

The Hare and Hounds public house on the A4 is famous for having been the residence of Moses Pickwick, founder of the celebrated Moses Pickwick Coaches. Charles Dickens, in travelling this route, became acquainted with Mr. Pickwick and his unique history and gave his name to the "Pickwick Papers". The Ostler's House was at that time a stable block and associated accommodation (Number 42). Archaeological investigations undertaken during the course of the project have confirmed the existence and extent of the stables.

The stable was once larger than the present building and extended further west. It also contained a through passage from the main road to a courtyard. At first floor level above the through passage are four tiers of pigeon

holes and these can still be seen in the renovated building. Evidence of the extent of buildings on the site can be seen on the 1886 Ordnance Survey Map which shows also a row of cottages (Numbers 44 and 46) attached to the south gable end of the Ostler's House. These were demolished 40 or 50 years ago.

During the course of the project the Trust made contact with the Corsham Civic Society and received information including 1948 sale particulars of the residue of the Pickwick Estate which makes reference to a block of three cottages and garden with store known as 42, 44 and 46 Pickwick. The cottages are approached from the village street under an archway from which there is a Store and Loft leading off.



Historical photographs can provide valuable information. Here as seen in 1948 the original line of the gable of the Ostler's House provides justification for its rebuilding



Adjoining buildings were demolished in the 1960s but knowledge of their existence helps to explain how the area was used in the past

The Ostler's House PICKWICK, CORSHAM

six

Information was also received from Mr. John Pullen who was able to tell the Trust that his parents, Fred and Grace Pullen, were licensees of the Hare and Hounds from 1941 to 1966. His grandparents James and Mary Herbert were the last people to live in the house.

This project commemorates the valuable contribution

made to the work of the Wiltshire Historic Buildings Trust by Robert Harries who was a subscriber to the Memorandum and Articles of Association when the Trust was formed in 1967. On his retirement as Chief Executive of Wiltshire County Council in 1984 he became Secretary of the Trust, a post he held until 1988. He then became a Governor until his death in 2002.



Completed in 2005 the building provides attractive residential accommodation and by its reuse adds to the quality of the area.

7

Small Projects



seven

Over the years many of the small historic structures in the county have been lost, particularly where they are no longer required for their original use. The individuality of these structures creates a local identity which is recognised and valued by the community and from time to time the Trust receives requests for help to save a particular structure or feature.

The Well House at Derry Hill

The Well House at Derry Hill is a small circular timber frame structure incorporating a conical stone slate roof. It dates from the end of the 19th century and was built to provide shelter for the well that once supplied water to the surrounding cottages. There are similar Well Houses at Biddestone, Colerne and Hilmarton, and all four were provided by the Poynder family who were important landowners in the area at the time. When the Trust was approached by Calne Without Parish Council in 2002 the Well House was already in a poor state of repair. The rescue of this small building was a partnership between the Trust, the Parish Council, the District Council and Viridor Waste Management. Community First also assisted in bringing this project to a successful conclusion.



2002



2003

The occasion of the completion of work in 2003 was marked by a ceremony at the Well House where Mrs. Rosemary Dean, who once lived nearby and recalled drawing water from the well, was the guest of honour.

The Apple Store at Rowdeford School

The Rowdeford Charity Trust, based at Rowdeford School, was established to support young people with special needs throughout the south-west of England. An interesting initiative by the Charity is the development of an Environmental Centre based in the school grounds and incorporating the restoration and reuse of derelict buildings, including a Victorian walled kitchen garden. The Apple Store is part of the complex.

The Apple Store is a small building standing on staddlestones within the grounds of Rowdeford House, a property which once belonged to the architect Thomas Wyatt. He owned the house from 1793 to 1798 and is believed to have been responsible for the rebuilding in 1810. At that time the gardens were landscaped with some ingenious water features utilising the stream that supplied power to Rowde Mill. Help was given to the Rowdeford Charity Trust with advice on the necessary repairs to the building and in the offer of a small grant. On completion of the work in 2006 the Apple Store has become a quiet retreat for teaching staff.



Set in attractive grounds and as seen in 2002



A quiet retreat in 2006

The Granary at Yatesbury Manor Farm

In May 2006 the Trust was approached by Will Woodlands which is a registered charity established to promote tree planting in the English countryside. The Will Woodlands Trust had purchased land at Yatesbury for the creation of new woodland and in so doing had acquired the granary at Manor Farm.

The timber-frame Granary dates from the 18th century and when acquired by Will Woodlands was considered at risk. Acting as agent for Will Woodlands the trust made an application for listed building consent and has provided technical advice for the project. At the time of writing (2007) work is in progress on repairs to the frame. The corrugated iron roof will later be removed and the Granary thatched.



Work in progress in 2007 to repair the timber frame

8

Feasibility Studies



eight

In recent years interest in property, and especially historic property, has removed many poor quality buildings from the "at risk" list with private investment securing their future. This is often beneficial in that public money is no longer required to support these conservation projects but there will always be the more intractable problems which are the buildings which the Trust is nowadays asked to rescue. In some cases the buildings will be of considerable architectural or historic interest which makes their conversion to alternative uses more difficult. They may also be in a very poor state of repair resulting in very high costs to secure their survival. The complexity of many of these projects is such that a full appraisal has to be undertaken before it can be determined whether or not a rescue scheme is feasible.

Not everyone is in favour of conservation and some building owners will seek permission to demolish a historic building because they have alternative plans for the site. There may also be social or political reasons encouraging demolition. If there is no demand for a building in its present form it is likely to be neglected. This may be related to a replacement building elsewhere or simply changing economic forces. In some cases it has also been argued that restrictive conservation policies, for example on alterations or change of use, have contributed to the problem. Building Preservation Trusts can bring in an entirely new agenda and provide solutions not found elsewhere and this is why the potential sale of a building, possibly to a trust, is a material consideration in all formal applications for demolition.

Amongst the more difficult problems the Trust has looked at in recent years are Brookhall at Heywood, Fosbury Church and the former Assize Courts at Devizes.

The Medieval Lodging Range at Brookhall

The Medieval Lodging Range at Brookhall dates from the early 16th century, is listed grade I and forms part of a group of historic buildings in Heywood Parish just north of the Westbury Trading Estate. It is remarkable for having survived with minimum alteration and finding a new use for a building of such age and importance is not easy.

In 1998 the Trust commissioned an appraisal of the Brookhall complex from Architecton Architects to seek ideas of possible new uses and to examine the overall costs of repair. One of the major problems with the investigation was the need to keep alterations to the



The Medieval Lodging Range as seen from the courtyard in 1987

Lodging Range to a minimum which had a marked effect on the potential value. In conjunction with the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings information on the building was published in the March 1999 edition of Country Life in an attempt to

find a new owner. The exercise generated considerable interest but was not successful in achieving its aim. With the costs of repair exceeding the value of the buildings on completion the Lodging Range remains at risk and it is difficult to see how it will be rescued.

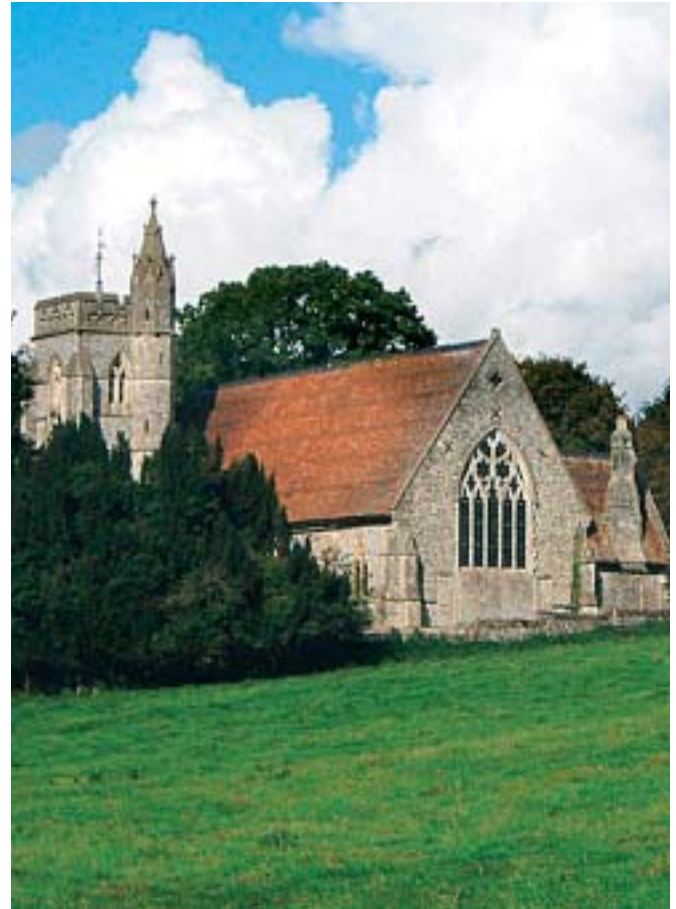


The first floor interior showing the main roof structure

Christ Church Fosbury

In spring 2003 the Trust joined with English Heritage in commissioning a feasibility study on Christ Church at Fosbury. This is the former Anglican parish church designed in 1854 by the architect S.S. Teulon. The church was declared redundant in 1979 and subsequently sold. Its location is picturesque but relatively isolated which reduces the potential for an alternative use. Recent burials mean that the graveyard is still visited. The major problem with the church was the condition of the main roof covering with resulting water penetration and damage to the interior.

The appraisal, by Acanthus Ferguson Mann Architects, suggested several options but the existence of a restrictive covenant has made it difficult to find an acceptable alternative use. The Trust has not been successful in promoting a new use for the building but, following completion of the study, the owners have undertaken major roof repairs. This provides a respite and hopefully the opportunity for a new use to emerge some time in the future.



The former Church of St Mary viewed from the east

The former Assize Courts Devizes

Since being sold by Wiltshire County Council in the 1980s the former Assize Courts at Northgate Street in Devizes has remained unused and in an increasingly poor state of repair. The building has changed hands on a number of occasions but none of the owners has so far been able to rescue the building. When the Courts were first declared redundant efforts were made to find a use that would involve relatively little alteration to the building but in more recent times it has appeared that conversion to residential use would be the only way to secure its future. The poor condition of the building is a blight on Northgate Street which is one of the main routes into town and action to save it is long overdue.

In 2006 Kennet District Council established a Project Team, including the Trust, to investigate ways to save the building. As part of this exercise the Trust has commissioned an Options Appraisal (2007) in the hope that a positive way forward can be found. A considerable amount of work will have to be undertaken to find a solution and Architecton Architects have again been employed with Defacto Project Management providing financial advice on the project.



On the main approach to Devizes from the west the imposing Ionic portico of the Assize Courts is a key element in the street scene. Repair and reuse of this fine building are long overdue.



The ruined interior in 2007

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Helping Others



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When the Trust was established in 1967 the subscribers decided that it should be run as a revolving fund and that the Trust would not therefore be offering grants to others. The Trust is precluded by its charitable status from offering grants to private owners but has from time to time made contributions to special projects in Wiltshire. These include a small contribution to the Salisbury Cathedral Appeal and in 1999 a grant to the Warminster Buildings Preservation Trust to assist with a town centre project.

The Merchant's House Trust Marlborough

The Merchant's House in Marlborough is an important town house on the north side of the High Street which was acquired by Marlborough Town Council and subsequently leased to the Merchant's House Trust. In addition to rescuing the building the Merchant's House Trust purchased property to the rear to re-establish the historic burgage plot, a project which the Wiltshire Trust has supported by way of a loan.

Warminster Preservation Trust

In 1998 the Warminster Buildings Preservation Trust purchased a property at the junction of George Street and High Street known as Carter's Corner, named after the butcher who occupied the corner building. This is a key building in the townscape but by the end of the 1990s was in a poor state of repair and was bought by Warminster BPT as a revolving fund project. This was a difficult project involving a building that was potentially unstable and made more complex by its cramped corner site location. A scheme for a lock-up

shop and five flats was completed in 2000 and this has provided much needed low-cost accommodation in the town centre. The Warminster BPT was able to secure substantial funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and West Wiltshire District Council and WHBT provided additional grant to help with the shortfall.

The Friends of Lydiard Park

Lydiard Park and Mansion was purchased by Swindon Borough Council in 1943 at the instigation of the then Town Clerk David Murray John. His vision was to provide an attractive historic building and associated open space for the people of Swindon to enjoy. For a number of years he lobbied the government to list the Mansion and provide help towards the cost of restoration and in 1953 was rewarded by the then newly formed Historic Buildings Council for England giving one of its first grants to assist with the building repair. On completion the house was officially re-opened in May 1955 by Lord Lansdowne.

The Ice House dates from the 18th century and was constructed following the remodelling of Lydiard House in 1743. Also the formal gardens were removed to be replaced by an English garden landscape with the lake and other features softened to fit the new style. The walled garden and Ice House date from this time. Ice houses were built to store snow and ice enabling cooks in the big house to chill food and produce luxury deserts for the family and their guests. The Lydiard Ice House is a circular brick structure roughly 7 metres wide and 8/9 metres in height mostly below ground. The conical roof is earth covered and the structure has a shaft access. The utilitarian brickwork has been replaced to a

design based on historic analysis with lighting installed to allow visitors to see the structure.

The restoration of the Ice House, aided by a grant from the Trust, is a small part of the Lydiard Park project which started in 2003 to restore the historic landscape,

including the lake, and improve visitor facilities in the 260 acre park. An impressive programme of work has been carried out with considerable help from local businesses, individuals and the Heritage Lottery Fund. The Mansion is now listed grade I with other features in the park listed grade II.



Work was completed on the Ice House in the spring of 2007

10

The Way Forward



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The Way Forward

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The establishment of the Historic Buildings Council in 1953 provided, for the first time, financial aid for the rescue of important historic buildings in England. The Council ceased to exist in 1984 on the establishment of English Heritage which inherited a number of the then existing grant schemes and later developed others. The early grant schemes largely focused on saving the architectural and historic quality of buildings, a process which in recent years has changed towards fulfilling a wider remit. Funding for English Heritage has declined significantly in real terms resulting in a reduction in the grants available to private owners including trusts. The emergence of the Heritage Lottery Fund has provided a major new opportunity for community groups, including building preservation trusts, but Lottery grants are essentially for community projects. Future activity is therefore more complex than in the past but the potential is significantly greater. If the Trust is successful in finding a way forward for the Assize Courts in Devizes it is likely to be linked to the availability of grants from Lottery sources.

Understanding is a key element in all conservation projects as the importance of a building may not at first be apparent. Finding out how and when a building was constructed coupled with how it may have been used and altered through time is an essential first step. Understanding helps decision making and allows the significance of a building to be retained and enhanced. Similarly recording what is found and what is done adds to our knowledge and enjoyment. Restoring historic buildings and giving them a new use is a continuous process. As buildings are rescued other buildings fall vacant and can easily become at risk. The scale of the problem and the range of buildings depend on the circumstances of the day and investment in new buildings can threaten

the old. Schools, hospitals and other public buildings may fall into this category but can equally provide intriguing opportunities for new uses. Industrial and agricultural buildings may also be affected by changing economic circumstances leaving them empty as activity moves elsewhere. Finding new uses is always much easier if early action has been taken to prevent the buildings falling into disrepair. Churches in the county make a major contribution to the historic quality of towns and villages and, although funding for major repairs can be obtained from national sources, the problem of redundancy does occur. The high architectural and historic interest of such buildings demands action to ensure their survival.

In reviewing the work of the Trust the recurring theme that emerges is the number of individuals and professionals, contractors and craftsmen that have contributed to its success. Equally the trust cannot succeed without the help of other agencies and authorities and it is the partnership projects that bring the most reward. It has not been possible to name them all here but this publication is a record of their important contributions. Many of those who visit Wiltshire come to look at the attractive towns and villages and enjoy the countryside. Similarly, those who live and work in the county see the historic towns, villages and individual buildings as an important legacy to be handed on for future generations to enjoy. The rescue of an historic building, particularly a building at high risk, can be a time-consuming exercise with a number of formidable obstacles to overcome but the results bring much reward. Such schemes will only be successful if there is a long-term commitment and the ability to initiate and manage projects and it is the intention of the Wiltshire Historic Buildings Trust to provide the means for this creative conservation activity to continue.

Appendix 1

List of Subscribers to The Memorandum and Articles of Association

The Countess of Radnor, OBE DL
The Right Honourable Lord Margadale, TD
Major S.V. Christie-Miller, CBE DL
Sir Geoffrey Tritton, Bt CBE DL
Mr. R.P. Harries, LL.M
Mr. R.L.W. Moon, FIMTA
Mr. K. Cooper, MTPI

Presidents from the formation in 1967

The Right Honourable Lord Margadale, TD *1967 - 1975*
The Countess of Radnor, OBE DL *1975 - 1994*
The Right Honourable The Marquis of Lansdowne,
LVO DL *1994 -*

Chairmen

Sir Geoffrey Tritton, Bt CBE DL *1967 - 1976*
Mrs. B.G. Sykes *1976 - 1980*
Dr. T.K. Maurice, OBE *1980 - 1986*
Mr. G.F. McDonic, MBE *1986 -*

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