

# HERITAGE REVIEW

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## ***BALLYHOLME HOTEL***

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# ***EDITORIAL***

The ongoing controversy about the pace of redevelopment in Northern Ireland has been the subject of debate in our Assembly this year.

On the one hand, residents say that their areas cannot bear any more development without an unacceptable loss of amenity or a dangerous increase in traffic being generated. On the other hand, developers point to figures which suggest a growing need for new houses, and the fact that new developments are snapped up within days of going on the market - indeed in one recent case, such was the developer's confidence that even speculative sales were possible: apartments were being offered for sale "subject to planning permission".

When planning laws were introduced in the Province after the war they were drawn up on the principle of "facilitating orderly development". In other words, development was seen as a good thing, even a necessity if the country was to be stimulated and brought back to prosperity after two world wars. There was a need to ensure that it was carried out in a controlled way, with infrastructure keeping pace with new housing, and segregation of incompatible uses.

Green belts were designated from the outset but tragically it was not until 1972, more than twenty years after similar legislation had been brought in to England and Wales, that Northern Ireland was introduced to the concept of listed buildings. By that time we had lost many fine buildings to speculative development, road schemes and housing redevelopment. Many more were to be lost in the maelstrom of the Troubles. As a result our statutory list is smaller and more fragmentary than it might have been.

This was recognised when listing began. In addition to recording grades A and B+ (nationally important buildings, of which we have only a few hundred) and B ("ordinary" listed buildings, which amount to about 8000 entries across the Province), inspectors were also instructed to record grade C buildings, which were of lesser importance or had been considerably altered but still contributed to the townscape or were capable of restoration. They were even invited to look at buildings which did not even come into this category but which had some merit and deserved to be recorded.

Sadly, the grade C buildings were never statutorily listed, and as a result the majority have been demolished or altered out of recognition during the last thirty years. The Environment & Heritage Service is currently resurveying the statutory list and removing buildings that are not in their original condition. In a period of intense development pressure this is leading to a disastrous loss of potentially restorable buildings. Listing is not just an academic exercise but an essential

protection against drastic alteration or outright demolition of buildings that are capable of contributing vitality and elegance to our towns and countryside.

The irony is that while we have a growing number of people who are concerned about our architectural environment, many of whom want to live in old buildings, our legislation has been eroded and the planning and appeals procedures have succumbed time and again to development pressures. Nearly 70% of our housing stock in Northern Ireland has been built since 1964. In other words barely a quarter of our houses predate the present Troubles.

Part of the difficulty is the sheer number of new applications received by Planning Service every week. These are running in some areas at up to 70% above last year's levels, swamping hard-pressed officials. When the planners decide to refuse an application (which is in roughly 5% of applications) the developer can take the case to the Planning Appeals Commission. Developers can appeal when refused permission, but "third parties", that is neighbours and other people who may be directly affected by the development, have no redress. In the south of Ireland and many other EEC countries, there exists "third party right of appeal", under which neighbours can object to a successful application and have the case looked at afresh. Here only the developer can appeal against a planning decision. This conflicts with European Human Rights legislation, and our legislation may need to be changed (see page 4).

Most people want to see old buildings kept, the history of their towns and cities respected, and trees and green open spaces available to all. This is not just a nimby or yuppie ideal, nor should it be the privilege of only a wealthy few. Hearth Housing Association, which provides social housing through the re-use of historic buildings, recently carried out a survey of its tenants. It found that, although 76% of its tenants had applied to the Association simply because they needed a house and they had no interest in historic buildings, only 21% said they would prefer to live in a new building, and 83% said they took a pride in the age of their house. They liked their houses because of the traditional windows, or the gardens, or the ceiling roses, or the high ceilings, or the sloping ceilings, or the fireplaces, or the chimneys. They recognised, and appreciated, the fact that their houses had individual characteristics and histories.

As for the perceived need for all these extra homes - yes, the population is growing and yes household sizes are increasing, but are they really growing *so* fast? Has the population of wee towns on the North Antrim coast like Castlerock and Portballintrae increased by 50% in the course of ten years, as the rate of apartment building would suggest? Of course not. Most of these are second homes that will be

occupied at weekends only or for a month in the summer, and do not represent a larger population that contributes to the vitality and diversity of the villages.

The planning system may have difficulty in “recognising” second homes, but surely it can prevent development that is out of scale and character with such areas. Many of the new Belfast apartments have been bought speculatively since property has become a “good investment”, and are by no means all occupied. We do not *need* many of the blocks that are being built today.

Because of modern housing policies and the lack of proper planning control, many people are not being given the choice of living in old buildings. If you cannot afford to buy an old house in the teeth of developers, the chances are you will have to live in a modern apartment or an anonymous bungalow in the endless car-dependent suburbia that is spewing out into the countryside from our towns and villages. We need proper investment in public transport, and officials better educated in sustainable policies to ensure that better use is made of existing structures - then those of us who want to live in old buildings can continue to have that option.

## ***DONALD GIRVAN***

Donald Girvan, a founding member of the UAHS, author of many of its early lists, and a stalwart campaigner for the buildings of the North Coast, died in June, aged only 63.

He was active in planning campaigns for many years, and was one of the Society’s most effective planning monitors. Indeed, the recent campaign to save Portrush Town Hall (see page 18) derived much of its impetus from Donald’s concerns and scholarship. He will be sadly missed by his many friends, and the humorous and touching tribute paid to him at his funeral by Prof Alastair Rowan brought back a sense of a very remarkable personality. It was a very personal tribute to an old friend, recalling Donald’s musical talents, “the paradox of his physical sloth and keenly focused energies”, his perfectionism, his wide-ranging and erudite knowledge of art and architecture. Donald’s passion and concern for the buildings of the north coast will be greatly missed. He was always the first to tell us of issues, and his persistence ensured that between us we had some impact on the preservation of threatened buildings there. It will be much more difficult without him.



# ***LIAISON WITH GOVERNMENT***

Our President, Sir Charles Brett, and the Chairman, Peter Marlow, were warmly received by the Minister for the Environment, Sam Foster, and a large delegation of senior staff from his department in August. It was a tribute to Sir Charles and the respect with which his written expressions of concern had been received that the debate was as lively and long as it was.

The Committee also had the opportunity in the autumn to give a presentation to, and respond to questions from, the Assembly Environment Committee, chaired by the Rev Dr William McCrea. We were impressed by their incisive questions, their detailed grasp of many of the issues at stake, and the sympathetic reception we were accorded.

Members of the Committee have had a series of highly productive meetings with various local councils throughout the year. Peter Marlow, Marcus Patton, Rita Harkin and others have given presentations to North Down, Belfast, Fermanagh, Coleraine, Ards, and Larne councils. The process will be continued until all the councils that will receive us have been visited.

The purpose of the presentations is to inform the councillors about the Society, its history, present activities, and to explain our concerns about planning matters, illustrated with local examples in so far as is possible. While the presentations were always limited to about ten minutes, the questions often took more than half an hour. They were intense, articulate, and elicited a full and interesting dialogue which, almost invariably, included such issues as the suspension of EHS grants and their resurvey programme. It has proved a useful opportunity for us to try to support our colleagues in the Department by trying to provide a clear explanation of their policies while at the same time urging the local representatives to express their very real concerns about the existing situation.

## ***PLANNING APPEALS***

In May a delegation from the Society met with John Warke, the chief commissioner of the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC), and his deputy, Maire Campbell. We asked for the meeting because of concern that the PAC has the power to override the Planning Service, and we raised concerns about a number of recent appeals where decisions were reached which might have been legally defensible but appeared to go against the grain of good planning.

They pointed out that their decisions have to be based solely on the evidence brought forward at an appeal, and that their decisions

are based on policy. This emphasises the value of the Society appearing at appeals in order to make sure that our viewpoints are heard.

They also told us that they support the concept of third party appeals, which would now appear to be mandatory under human rights legislation, since if a developer has a right of appeal it is unfair for others affected by the decision not to have an equivalent right. The meeting was cordial, and it was helpful to air our concerns in a less formal atmosphere than the usual appeals situation.

## **WEB SITE**

Those of you who spend time at computer keyboards may already have discovered that the Society now has a web site. In the best tradition of computer progress (teenagers building systems in their garage etc) it was designed in the course of a discussion between Peter Marlow, Rita Harkin and Marcus Patton on the way back from one of their council presentations, and Marcus had produced the prototype a week later - though to be honest it did take rather longer to flesh it all out.

This is not just a page up there in the ether giving our address and phone number, as so many web sites still are, but is an attempt to provide a full profile of our activities and concerns that we hope will be useful to our members, supply information to visitors, and be a source which the conventional media will pick up.

If you go to [www.uahs.co.uk](http://www.uahs.co.uk), you will find current news stories, details of all our publications, and an array of extracts from our books giving detailed information on a wide selection of buildings. If you want to know how to object to a planning application, you will find advice there, along with the addresses of planning offices. You may even find our comments on the application that concerns you.

We will be adding to the site regularly, so each time you visit you should find something new. The UAHS has been a publisher in conventional print for many years, and this new medium takes some getting used to, but effectively the web site has been our main publication this year. It will never be "finished" in the way that traditional books are, and pages will be deleted or (mostly) added as events progress. Please visit it, and let us have your comments.

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I do not consider the large car parking area and lip service to a residual area of land for a specimen tree to be a quality environment. (*Planning commissioner John Turner, in recommending refusal of an application for apartments in Church Road, Holywood: sadly, he was overruled by his colleagues who considered that the removal of trees and erection of apartments would not have a detrimental effect on the nearby St James' Church*).

# ***HISTORIC BUILDINGS GRANTS***

Heritage Lottery Fund grants are often sizeable, and have made possible schemes that could not have been envisaged ten years ago. The traditional historic buildings grant from the DoE could seem rather insignificant in the shadow of the new HLF grants, but the HLF can generally only fund charitable organisations, and the many private owners of historic buildings do not have access to it. Not only that, but traditionally the historic buildings grant has been very flexible and unbureaucratic, enabling people to move rapidly from application to work on site.

Sadly, in April 2000 the EHS announced a suspension of the grant with effect from 29 October the previous year. A budget of £1.7m per annum did not match with applications totalling £4m, and all applications within the previous six months were returned. While some attempt to match income and expenditure was inevitable, the procedure used was very damaging. Contracts had been let on the basis that grant would be available and EHS architects had given no clue that the suspension would happen, let alone be retrospective.

The Society argued that a degree of over-commitment was necessary to ensure that money could be spent every year, since most schemes take a year or two to come to fruition, and some can be delayed for longer still while other funding is sought. The £4m certainly included projects like that, and it was likely to include other offers made in the past on schemes that had since been abandoned altogether. Rather than cut grant completely, we argued that EHS should be able to taper its grant by reducing its percentage or targeting it towards important remedial works; even a delay in making payments would have been more tolerable than retrospective trimming.

It was obvious that this measure would hit private owners. What may not have been anticipated was its effect on HLF-funded schemes. HLF hardly ever totally funds schemes, and partnership funding is essential if they are to get off the ground. Historic buildings grant might make up 10% of the cost of a scheme, small enough in itself but a vital part of the partnership funding needed to lever HLF funding. The effect on many lottery schemes was very damaging; and it made the Townscape Heritage Initiatives (THIs) that were to revitalise many of our conservation areas quite impossible, since the key projects that were to unlock general funding almost all involved listed buildings.

Protests at the grant suspension were widespread, and Assembly members and councillors joined forces to support threatened projects. Some more money was found, EHS chased up all its current projects and may even have had difficulty spending some of its current commitment (part of the grant is always retained till the final certificate

is issued, and that is frequently long after the project is finished), and it appears likely that new applications will be accepted again this spring.

Sadly, the new-look grant will probably take longer to administer, and it will certainly have to be targeted more narrowly. How projects will be prioritised remains to be seen; there has been an extensive consultation process during the last few months. The Society has called for the grant to be spread as widely as possible, but particularly at buildings at risk and at repairs that will help to ensure the survival of the building and original fabric.

## ***WHEN SHOULD A BUILDING BE DELISTED?***

The Society continues to be greatly concerned at the extent of de-listing going on. The EHS cannot go into detail on its reasons for de-listing particular structures, but interestingly it did respond in one instance last year, and this throws considerable light on its criteria.

The case in point was a small church in Co Antrim, which happened to have been included in Sir Charles Brett's *Buildings of Co Antrim*, and as it happened had also been picked out for inclusion in our web site as a typical small dissenters church. It dated from 1829, and the walls, roof and window openings were original. It was de-listed because of a poorly-detailed rear extension, the loss of its original windows (despite survival of the original fanlight and good evidence from which to restore), loss of original gates and pillars, the addition of an internal porch with 'beauty board' dado, loss of some rainwater goods, and the



*Islandmagee Methodist Church - altered, but surely not fatally?*

fact that the church pews were “no longer Georgian and date partly from the Victorian era and partly from the 1960s and 70s”.

As our President said in response to this justification, these changes would have required listed building consent had the building not had ecclesiastical exemption. However we do not believe that the changes are irreversible, and the exterior continues to make “a major contribution to the landscape and environment of the area”. After the building was de-listed, an application was made in June for permission to add a new exterior porch, which if approved (and it will now be hard for the planners to refuse it) will dramatically change the character of the building. EHS has stated that the reversibility or otherwise of changes “is not a criterion for listing” - but are they listing for historic interest only, or for architectural character?

We feel strongly that in this case, as in many others, the building is still substantially present, certainly restorable, and should remain listed. If a building has been demolished, or must be demolished in order to make way for some approved essential development, then it will need to be de-listed, but while the building has a future its listing should remain to protect it and encourage its improvement in order to restore its architectural character and the context of what historic character remains. How many buildings have never been altered, and of our remaining listed buildings, how can we guarantee that they will not be altered in future?

## ***GOING WITH A BANG***

Primrose Wilson, a former Chairman of this Society, retired in November from her position as Chairman of the Historic Buildings Council for Northern Ireland for the last six years. Typically, she did not go quietly, and in her final report she expressed the serious concerns of her Council about various issues, including the vexed matter of de-listing, which she said she believed would cause “long-term damage to the built heritage”, with the combination of the grant aid moratorium and negative press publicity giving historic buildings a poor public image.

Members of the Council supported her. Knowing that there had been a fourfold increase in listed buildings when the second survey was undertaken in England, they were dismayed that of the 192 buildings presented to date here, 59 were recommended for delisting and only 22 were new listings. Sharing the Society’s view, they feel strongly that de-listing should be a last resort - “the general public understand that a listed building has a special status, when it is delisted they feel it is devalued.” They appreciate the detailed and careful nature of the relisting research, but remark that “it would be ironic if

in twenty years' time Northern Ireland had the best written information on historic buildings but the least evidence of its material heritage extant."

When the HBC Report was launched in December, Rev Dr William McCrea, Chairman of the Assembly's Environment Committee, hit hard at the process which appoints an expert Historic Buildings Council then proceeds to ignore its advice: He said he was amazed to find that "out of over 1,000 building applications involving listed buildings in 1999, only around 20 were referred to the Council for their advice... In fact, my Committee are currently asking the Department of the Environment to explain why it has rejected the advice of the Council in 39 out of 46 cases where the Council in their advisory role recommended retention of listing."

We look forward with interest to learning the answer.

## ***DISNEYLAND RULES OK***

The Society is very concerned at the outcome of a recent planning appeal concerning refusal of permission to demolish nos. 41-43 Waring Street, a six bay four-storey stucco building on a stone plinth, with varied windows at each level and a balcony with guilloche parapet. Many buildings in this area were flattened during the Blitz in 1941, and any survivals are therefore very important. The site is adjacent to the grade A listed Ulster Bank, and directly affects the setting of the listed building. Demolition was permitted by the Planning Appeals Commission on the basis that a replica facade would be acceptable.



The UAHS believes that the arguments put forward by PAC for allowing the demolition were seriously flawed; in particular, their suggestion that "the building is not listed and... does not contribute significantly to the essential character and appearance of the CA". The point of CAs is to protect buildings which are not of listable quality but which contribute to the historic or architectural character of the area. The lack of listing therefore was not a material factor, but the age and style of the building certainly should be.

A Victorian building will surely always contribute more to a Victorian conservation area (as the Cathedral area essentially is) than any modern replica. If every building that did not “contribute significantly” to a conservation area was demolished at the whim of a developer, we would soon have a bogus streetscape that might as well be situated in Disneyland. While design quality is one factor for designating a conservation area, its historic period and development is at least as important, and the survival of genuine buildings is crucial.

And if the PAC does not consider the facade to contribute to the character of the CA, why was it insisting on a replica being constructed?

## ***RE-ORDERING THE SERVICE SHEET***

There is a vogue at present for churches confronted with shrinking congregations to sell off church halls to finance the internal re-arrangement of their churches. It happened at Great Victoria Street Presbyterian Church last year, and the University Road Methodist Church lodged plans to do something similar last April, with Deramore Developments building apartments on the site of its old church halls and the interior of the church being re-jigged. Churches contain some of the finest historic interiors in our towns, and the loss of original interiors is a serious erosion of our built heritage.

If churches aren't shrinking, they're expanding, which can be even more damaging. Cookstown Presbyterian Church is planning a major extension of its church which may lead to a complete rebuild of the front elevation to accommodate additional bays along the nave, or a grotesque fattening of the nave behind the portico. In the 19th century, congregations dealt with these things more sensibly, with successful churches giving birth to daughter congregations that detached themselves and built fine new buildings, leaving the old ones alone. Perhaps today's expanding congregations should also learn to fly the nest?

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To the incumbent the church is a workshop or laboratory; to the antiquary it is a relic. To the parish it is a utility; to the outsider a luxury. How unite these incompatibles? A utilitarian machine has naturally to be kept going, so that it may continue to discharge its original functions; an antiquarian specimen has to be preserved without making good even its worst deficiencies... The policy of “masterly inaction” - often the greatest of all policies - was never practised to higher gain than by these, who simply left their historic buildings alone. To do nothing, where to act on little knowledge is a dangerous thing, is to do most and best. (*Thomas Hardy, Memories of Church Restoration, address to SPAB's AGM in 1906, reprinted in SPAB News vol.21 no.1 2000*)

# ***INDUSTRIAL NEWS***

The Sirocco site, home to the Sirocco Engineering Company whose lettered gable was like a gateway to east Belfast, has been acquired by developers and is being cleared. Sirocco started by making tea machinery for export to the Empire but went on to specialise in fans of all sorts, and the warships on both sides of the First World War depended on Sirocco fans. The distinctive brick gabled building, alive with memories of its industrial history, has been pulled down despite promises by the developer that it would be retained - perhaps just as well as it will be spared the ignominy of sitting grimly in the midst of what will probably be another jolly riverside housing development. The Clarendon Mill buildings by the celebrated James A Hanna on the other side of the river in Corporation Street have also been demolished.

The fate of the Jennymount Mill (highlighted in our last issue) is still uncertain and the greater proportion of warehousing remains unprotected despite the view of Northern Ireland's foremost industrial archaeologist, Dr Fred Hamond, that the entire complex is worthy of listing as 'symbolic of Belfast's once great linen heritage'. The example of loft apartments and conversions such as the successful Somerset Mill in the Dublin Road has so far been ignored in this case, as it was in the case of the Albion Works (see page 23).

## ***BANK MOVES***

Whether it is a consequence of having too much money or the result of some innate restlessness, banks are continually moving, upgrading and refurbishing their premises. In Belfast, the Ulster Bank demolished most of the Donegall Square Methodist Church and moved into vast offices above it recently, and its former headquarters, the magnificent James Hamilton building in Waring Street, is now going on the market along with the Ulster Buildings next door. Meanwhile, the Northern Bank has left the old Assembly Buildings in Waring Street, and moved that branch to the recently gutted Corn Exchange on Victoria Street. At least they had the good taste to move to another listed building, but it is one that has been given an ungainly additional floor of accommodation that looms over the original parapet and cornsheaf gable. Both banks have put listed branches in Victoria Street on the market.

They obviously aren't trying to impress their customers with the luxury of their premises any more - are they so ashamed of being wealthy that they have to squander their resources (and the proceeds of our overdrafts) on the perpetual gutting of branches and moving house to ever less distinguished premises?

# ***NEW CONSERVATION AREAS***

The pressure of development on suburban Belfast, particularly in attractive areas like Malone and Knockdene, has become intense in recent years, and the planners have found it almost impossible to control. Most of the houses in such areas (inevitably) are not listed, and yet, as Paul Larmour remarked in the Society's list for *Malone and Stranmillis*, "this whole suburb contains the greatest concentration of good architect-designed houses in Ulster". Areas like Malone were obvious candidates for conservation area status for that reason, but they were large, and their characteristics quite hard to define because of the sheer exuberant variety of the buildings.

About ten years ago the planners attempted to control the relatively minor development pressures of the day by designating Areas of Townscape Character (ATCs). The Society welcomed the interest this showed, but has always felt that the ATC solution was toothless and insufficient. This became bitterly apparent as the UAHS (and growing numbers of residents groups) opposed the increasing numbers of planning applications and appeals for the area.

Every attempt the planners made to control development was undermined by the developers' ultimate tool - demolition. Once the good building had gone (and unless the building was listed it could be knocked down without warning by its owner) controls over its replacement became the only sanction, and loss of the area's character became inevitable. The Knockdene case (reported in HR2), where the UAHS argued *inter alia* that a replica could never comply with the character of an ATC because it would lack "patina", was the straw that broke the ATC's back.

In July last year, the Minister announced no less than five new conservation areas for Belfast, corresponding to the old ATCs of Malone, Knockdene, King's Road, Cyprus Avenue and Somerton Road. For the first time conservation areas have been declared with a simple designation notice and map. More details will obviously have to follow, but the designation removes the crucial permitted development right of demolition. This allows time to argue over the merits of individual applications, and it is hoped will lead to the preservation of many more buildings.

The Society has participated in the first appeals against buildings protected by the new designation, and more are piling up. Some will be hard battles, but if we can establish the correct principles early on it will be much easier to fight subsequent appeals. Indeed, we hope developers will get the message that these are areas where conservation should be the norm, and they will not consider demolition.

# VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE

In *Heritage Review 2* we mentioned the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's pilot project to restore six unlisted vernacular buildings. Sadly this has run into funding difficulties, but some of the lessons learned there have been picked up by the Mourne Heritage Trust in its own project for restoration of vernacular buildings. We continue to liaise with the Executive, and can appreciate their problems in dealing with mandatory fitness standards. We have submitted a document to them to allow vernacular merit to be taken into account in the assessment of properties and hope they will start to use it this year. We have also agreed to participate in a training day for grants officers.

MHT's ground-breaking 'Mourne Homesteads' initiative recognises the high levels of vacancy in the Mourne AONB, the increasing loss of unlisted traditional buildings in the area, and the contribution of the vernacular to protected landscapes, together with an appreciation of the need for affordable housing in the area. It hopes to operate a three year programme of restoration of up to 40 dwellings implemented in three stages. The tireless work of the Trust has succeeded both in raising the profile of these dwellings in the local community with an increased sense of ownership and in contributing to debate on the future of the development of the region.

We also welcome the work of Regeneration of South Armagh (ROSA) aimed at raising the profile of the contribution of traditional buildings to the protected landscape of the Slieve Gullion AONB, through the imminent publication of their survey of traditional buildings.

We urge local councils to take a lead on listing and adopt Local Lists as in the United Kingdom. Of note also in this respect is Historic Scotland's *Rural Buildings of the Lothians*, which provides an informative and effective primer with good advice and case studies on the reuse of and extension to traditional buildings.

Fermanagh has approximately 180 of the 300 odd dwellings on which Closing Orders have been placed since the introduction of the Housing Order, and we welcome the work of Fermanagh District Council, Fermanagh County Councillors and MLAs on the reassessment and lifting of Closing Orders on many vernacular buildings, which had effectively consigned them to an architectural graveyard.

Planning Service however continues to put the future of traditional buildings at risk by allowing the remaining stock to be used as trade-ins for new dwellings. Planning Service should encourage the use of appropriate forms such as steeply pitched structures with a narrow plan rather than shallow pitched buildings with a deep plan - the mongrel vernacular now so prevalent in our countryside.

Amongst the most disturbing news in this respect has been the loss of the large and important seven bay Ballyrath House. The case in effect brought to the fore the inadequacy of all the arms of DoE. Environment and Heritage Service: Built Heritage were apparently unable to intervene to list the substantial dwelling as the application for replacement was already under consideration by Planning Service (see also Robbs Ferry Cottage, p.17). Despite imaginative solutions for reuse put forward by Hearth, the availability of replacement grant and the owner's desire to avoid interference with his working farm prevented retention of the old house. Ironically the owners had approached Armagh County Museum several years ago, realising the historical importance of their house, but it had not been picked up in earlier listing surveys.

The Society has received an increasing number of requests to appear at appeals against refusals of applications to restore vernacular buildings, and when the buildings have had architectural merit we have tried to comply with the requests. In one instance the application to restore a substantial and derelict two-storey dwelling in a Green Belt had been refused on the grounds that 'The approval of this proposal would set a dangerous precedent for the conversion of all derelict and semi-derelict vernacular buildings in the countryside, thereby seriously prejudicing the objectives of Green Belt designation'.

It is obvious that we all have a lot to learn!

## ***GREENER GRASS***

It used to be that we could boast we had much better planning legislation than our beleaguered colleagues south of the border. Sadly that appears no longer to be the case. The case of the demolition of Archers garage in Dublin where the first million pound fine for demolition of a listed building was threatened, is a case in point. Not only is the vandal being required to rebuild a replica of the garage, he may still have to pay a substantial fine, and he has been prevented from building a four-storey office block at the rear of the site because it "would have an unfavourable impact on the architectural integrity of Archer's garage when it is reinstated as a protected structure". Perhaps we are becoming cynical, but here we could expect the developer to be fined £5000 at most - and then be allowed to build a six-storey block on the site.

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Poverty and neglect over many years have saved much of our heritage; prosperity in a few short years looks likely to decimate it. This in spite of vastly improved legislation, the establishment on a statutory basis of the Heritage Council, and a genuine general wish to look after our heritage for the next generation. (*Mary Bryan of the Irish Georgian Society, writing in Building Design, October 2000*)

# LEGAL NOTES

Buying a house has become a much more elaborate process than it used to be. No longer does your solicitor just scan over the deeds and ask you to sign on the dotted line if your mortgage valuation is satisfactory. He or she will prepare a long list of questions that the vendor will be expected to answer, establishing the availability of services and so on.

One such question asks if any structural alterations have been made, and if so whether Building Control approval can be produced. One question which has not so far been raised is whether (if the building is listed) Listed Building Consent was obtained for any works. If a listed building has had plastic windows put in, or significant changes made internally, the new owner can be required by the DoE to remedy any unauthorised changes, and may be fined for the alterations.

The Society raised this issue with the Law Society of Northern Ireland last year, pointing out that purchasers should be recommended by their solicitor to check that the listed building they are buying has not been recently altered or, if it has, that LBC consent was granted. While it is not likely that DoE will prosecute except in blatant cases, the lack of a consent may provide a bargaining tool to reduce the purchase price on the basis that the new owner may have to make good the damage. More importantly, if this question becomes a standard one, owners of listed buildings will be discouraged from making unauthorised alterations - they may get away with it at the time, but if they have to pay to put timber windows back when they leave they are less likely to remove them in the first place.

The Law Society has agreed to include this question in its standard forms, and EHS has welcomed the assistance which it should provide in helping to "police" listed buildings.

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When buying a listed building, new owners should take special care to ensure that searches have been conducted properly... Technically, unauthorised work carried out to a listed building by one owner becomes the responsibility of a new owner when the building changes hands. With listed buildings, this liability remains indefinitely... In a recent case, involving a house in Wales, an owner told us [SPAB] that his local authority was requiring him to amend work carried out illegally by a previous owner at an estimated cost of £60,000. (*SPAB News vol.21 no.2, summer 2000*)

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"I'm delighted, discumknockerated." (*Ken Dodd, commenting on the unanimous decision of Liverpool City councillors - against the advice of their planning officers - to turn down plans to demolish the delightfully named Thingwall House, Broadgreen, Liverpool, for luxury homes, November 2000*).

# ***THE CROSSKEYS INN***

The Crosskeys Inn in Co Antrim, listed grade A and one of our best thatched buildings, was burnt out in February 2000. Said to be about 350 years old, it had been a hostelry for many years, and latterly had developed fame as a favoured meeting place for traditional musicians. Tragically the building was not fully insured, and the owners are seeking finance for the restoration from the sale of CDs and other events - worth supporting whether you like thatch or fiddle music.

# ***BALLYDUGAN MILL***

A highly ambitious restoration has recently been completed by UAHS member Noel Killen, who acquired the derelict and partially collapsed six-storey rubble-stone corn mill at Ballydugan outside Downpatrick some ten years ago, and has painstakingly restored it in his spare time. Some of us claim to have restored a building, meaning we have employed a builder to restore it, but Noel is a builder himself and has personally repaired windows and staircases and reslated the enormous building.

The mill was built in 1792 by John Auchinleck of Strangford, and has an unusual stone-walled forecourt and gate-house, making it look like a Plantation tower-house.

It is now open as a restaurant and tourist accommodation, and recently won an Earthfest award. It was described in a restaurant review in the Belfast Telegraph as “stunning and unique”, with “spectacular views of the surrounding countryside” from the eighth floor balcony. We do recommend repeat visits. We hope you will enjoy the cuisine - you will certainly admire the pluck and determination Noel has put into the project.



*Ballydugan Mill, long before restoration (left) and after (right)*

# CASEWORK

## Development at Cushendun

The UAHS joined strong objections from the National Trust against a development proposal for Cushendun. The site is inside the village's conservation area, and the size of the proposed building will have a very considerable impact on the village.

With the publication of PPS6 and its strong comments on protection of the setting of conservation areas, we had felt the application was likely to be turned down. Not so. The planners were very proud that they had reduced the height of the building by several feet, but its massiveness went unopposed. The National Trust felt that its attempts to preserve the character of Cushendun were being so severely compromised that it seriously considered seeking a judicial review of the decision. Surely, with all the planning documents setting out stringent controls on developments affecting the setting of listed buildings and conservation areas, the planners had taken a wrong decision in allowing such a blatant intrusion? Not so, it seems. As long as the planners have "taken account of" the various plans, advice notes, legislation and so on, they can make whatever decision they like. The only way to counter this is to demonstrate that they have made an irrational decision. Permitting a large development so close to one of our most charming and complete villages (giving a lovely view from the new buildings but a pretty dire one from the old ones) in the face of all one's own excellent advice notes does *seem* rather irrational. It seems that it is, however, legal.

## Robbs Ferry Cottage

This unusual survival is a traditional cottage associated with a ferry across the River Bann. The original roof structure and thatch remain under its tin roof, and it has an early tripartite window and many internal features of interest including the kitchen loft and original cupboards in the walls. Near the cottage is the tree-lined route down to the "Breast" where the ferry crossed the river.

The owner has outline permission for a replacement dwelling on the site, and it appears that because of that existing permission EHS is not prepared to consider adding the complex to the statutory list, despite a recommendation from its consultants and the HBC to that effect. As a result the property has the value of a building site, and anyone wanting to restore the building will have to pay through the nose. Surely listing should not depend on the absence of proposals for development? The Society has encountered several cases of this nature recently, and cannot find any justification under legislation for such a reservation.

## Portrush Town Hall

The UAHS has been supporting local campaigners for some years to prevent the demolition of this fine Victorian building on the seafront at Portrush, and was relieved when planning permission for its demolition by Coleraine Borough Council was refused at the end of 1999, as reported in our last issue.

Not unexpectedly, Coleraine Borough Council appealed the decision, and the appeal was heard last April. The UAHS was represented, along with the Historic Buildings Council which was appearing at an appeal for the first time, and Hearth which represented the interests of building preservation trusts. Since listed building consent for demolition had only narrowly been refused, we expected the appeal to be a hard battle. It was, but in the event the PAC found in favour of keeping the building, and a number of significant remarks were made by the commissioner.

“I accept”, he said, “that where building fabric is so damaged as to be beyond repair, its replacement would amount to rebuilding rather than conservation. To my mind, however, there is a distinction between that situation and one where a substantial proportion of a building, although in a poor state, is capable of being repaired... In any case, to my mind the precise proportion of the fabric requiring replacement is not a conclusive test of whether the works required to restore the building would result in its conservation. A more important question is whether, as a result of the works, the building’s essential character and features of special interest would be retained...”

It is clear that PAC regards a building’s listing as depending as much on its “architectural character” as on its “historic character”. This view compares with Environment and Heritage Service’s current attitude that a building without large amounts of “original” (as opposed to sympathetically repaired or replaced after bomb damage, dereliction or general wear and tear) fabric should no longer be listed. We believe that both are important, and while not wanting to see unnecessary replacement, we do want to see fine architecture surviving even if (through whatever unfortunate circumstances) much of the original fabric has been lost.

Coleraine Borough Council has been an honourable loser, and accepted at once that the building would now have to be restored. Not only that, but they were soon back in discussion with the Society, and an agreement in principle has been reached to lease the building to Hearth for restoration, after which the Council will take it back to run as a theatre with other community facilities.

We believe this has been a popular outcome, and we hope that the Council will have every reason to be proud of the old town hall once again when it has been restored.

## Seaport Lodge

Seaport Lodge is an elegant but comparatively modest 18th century bathing lodge on a dramatic clifftop location overlooking Portballintrae. Our North Antrim list features a charming contemporary picture of it (see below). Despite being listed, and despite the opposition of the local residents' association, the Causeway Coast Consortium and the UAHS, planning permission has been granted to convert it into apartments (a bad enough fate for a very manageable and well-preserved house); worse still the proposal will add very damaging new wings to the house. These will no doubt benefit the developer's pocket but will certainly detract from a fine building by grossly extending its plot size.



## Fitzwilliam Terrace

Nos.71-75 University Road is a group of stucco houses known as Fitzwilliam Terrace. Built in 1846-48, it is contemporary with the nearby Botanic View Terrace, University Square, and of course Queen's College itself, all built within a decade. Although Thomas Jackson's original Queen's Elms of 1859 was replaced by the modernist Student's Union some thirty years ago, the setting of the university is otherwise remarkably intact, and the proposal to demolish not only the Union (which will be lamented by some) but also Fitzwilliam Terrace, in order to erect a "landmark building and space" seems ill considered.

The Society joined with the Belfast Civic Trust and Belfast Buildings Preservation Trust in objecting to the brief being given to architects for "Lanyon II" (as the University's plan to redevelop the area in front of the main building is called), reminding the University of the motion unanimously passed by its convocation in 1994 that "whereas change in most fields can be carried out without losing past culture, the

alteration or destruction of architectural heritage is irreversible". The Vice-Chancellor, Prof George Bain, has assured us that "every aspect of the scheme will again be examined" before full planning permission is sought, but the setting of one of Belfast's best-loved buildings should not be compromised by the demolition of its neighbours for a new building that may be less than excellent.

## **85 Botanic Avenue**

In our last issue we reported on the unauthorised demolition of 85 Botanic Avenue at the corner of Mount Charles. The owners had applied for a new building on the site and tried to pre-empt the decision by demolishing the existing one.

The UAHS had objected to the original proposals, and we were delighted to learn last May that the PAC has upheld the planners' decision and confirmed that not only was the demolition illegal, but that the proposed replacement building was also not acceptable. While this does not restore the protected building, it does indicate that developers who pre-empt planning decisions will not necessarily be allowed to build on their sites as they might wish. The DoE has stated that it intends to prosecute the owner for wilful demolition.

## **Nazareth House**

Nazareth House, the Victorian former convent of 1876 at the junction of Ormeau Road and Ravenhill Road, has been sold to developers for £4m. Perhaps they paid too much for it, as they say they cannot make their project "stack up" without demolishing the existing building. The Society met with the developers and their architects to suggest that retention of the tower and main block at least would be worth preserving as prime attractions of the site, as it appeared they were being condemned without any proper measured survey having been carried out. Unfortunately the building is not listed, despite the original structure being largely intact and a very important piece of townscape for the area.



## **Favour Royal**

Favour Royal, a listed building in extensive grounds at Augher, is threatened with a vast extension to convert it to a hotel, with the grounds being converted to a golf course. EHS have raised few objections as their protected curtilage for the listed building is quite small, but it is hoped that inclusion of the grounds in the Register of Historic Gardens and Demesnes may provide the necessary protection. This is the first test case of the new Register and related policies in PPS6. The UAHS met with the local planners to express our concerns. The initial proposals have been reduced in size but still involve massive extension.



## **The Tin Church**

St Matthias', a sweet little (as our research officer, Rita Harkin, refers to it) tin church on the Glen Road came to the attention of the Society when it was featured on the front page of the Andersonstown News, with the caption "It's High Noon for Jesse James Chapel". Plans are afoot which involve its demolition and replacement with a bigger church on the site, also leading to the loss of its sylvan setting. The UAHS joined with the Arts and Heritage Officers of the Council in meeting the local priest to emphasise the rarity of this type of construction and the contribution that it makes to the fast eroding character of the area.

The church was opened in August 1892 by the Lord Bishop of Down as the Church of Ireland's St Luke's Mission, and was re-consecrated as a Catholic Church in 1970 providing a chapel of ease for St Teresa's Glen Road. It therefore, as local councillor Tom Hartley observed,

“reflects the social history of the area with its shifting demographics”, as well as demonstrating the flexibility of many old buildings.

There are a tiny number of tin churches and dwellings in Northern Ireland but those that remain are underrated and understudied. Examples of these buildings were shown at the Great Exhibition in 1851 and a growth in their use soon followed. This church, with its Gothic twist, is a more ornate example than the 1923 Gospel Hall in Glenanne included in the UAHs publication, *Buildings of County Armagh*, though its charm still lies in its simplicity. Corrugated iron was a useful vernacular material, being cheap and quick to build. It was also easy to transport, and churches were often sent off in flat packs to the colonies. Their production would usually have occurred in areas of heavy industry and in Belfast Harland and Wolff provided these in lull periods. Cllr Hartley notes that they would have been dedicated in the yards and also in the final destination.

The realisation that tin buildings are a rare type has led to the listing of such structures in the Silent Valley and Fermanagh. Historic Scotland has included examples in its schedule and further afield in Australia “portable iron houses” are a cherished architectural resource. Perhaps this delightful chapel will also be taken under the wing of listing protection and be retained alongside any new accommodation? If not, the nature of corrugated iron means that it could simply be unbolted, dismantled and taken elsewhere for re-erection. Any takers for this tin treasure?

## OBI TUARY

### **Ballyholme Hotel**

It’s always sad to lose a friend. The Ballyholme Hotel provided comfortable short and longer term accommodation, full of character despite, or perhaps because of, its somewhat dated furnishings and manner. In many ways it was a period piece; one only had to have afternoon tea there to know what the service and quality of a previous generation might have been like. The welcome was warm, personal and sincere.

Understandably perhaps, the balance shifted toward residential care and, perhaps inevitably, there was a requirement for the kinds of adaptation that less-abled, elderly, people need. Fair enough, but did that really necessitate an application for delisting in order to install the odd ramp and handrail? Would it not have been possible to issue a Listed Building Consent for the changes? Apparently not, according to a hotel spokesperson. Delisting was duly requested and, despite the efforts by the Society and many locals, it was granted on grounds including the change of windows. (Why had that been allowed when

the building was listed? If it was not approved, why were the owners not fined for making the unauthorised change? Why couldn't the correct windows be reinstated and the listing remain in force? ). Another factor cited was the lack of legally defensible documentation of the rear elevation (as if it mattered!).

Sadly, the cynics among us were proved right: shortly after delisting the building was sold, the bulldozer moved in, the front elevation was reduced to half a storey and the rest of the site cleared for future development. So what was once a fine example of a series of terrace houses with an interesting history and constituting an important element in the streetscape overlooking Ballyholme Bay, is now a pathetic, miniature, forlorn stage set. No one wants friends to end up like that.

## **Cushendall**

A three storey five bay building with prominent chimneys in the Cushendall Conservation Area was demolished and replaced with a two-storey building. While the new building is quite sympathetically designed, we have to question the need to demolish what appeared to be a sound building, and one of the most prominent in the village.

## **Albion Works**

One of the last centrally located linen factories in Belfast, the Albion Factory of 1909 by Watt & Tulloch, fell to the developer's axe in December. Although the building was generally sound and well located, the developer claimed that he couldn't make restoration and conversion "stack up", and the building will be replaced with yet another modern apartment block. While not as spectacular as the same architects' Whitehall Tobacco Works on Sandy Row, the building had a distinctive canted corner with fat Ionic granite columns supporting its name in embossed lettering.



## **58-60 Bedford St**

Nos.58-60 Bedford Street (which is the beginning of the Dublin Road) was a warehouse built about 1892 for the handkerchief manufacturers Gribbon Bros. It was a six-storey (originally four) red brick warehouse with stucco features and a curved corner to Ormeau Avenue, with some pilasters rising to become chimneys above the parapet. Despite lying in the Linen Conservation Area, it was demolished during March 2000.

# ***BUILDINGS AT RISK***

In October 1999 a conference was held at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum entitled *Buildings at Risk - Some Options and Solutions*, which took stock of the situation at that time and suggested a range of future options (see HR3). The Buildings at Risk (BAR) Project, a cooperative effort between the Society and EHS, had been running for some eight years and had produced six BAR Catalogues. The proceedings of the day recorded the success of the project - an overall 23% rescue rate, 139 “good news” reports of restoration or re-use, and millions of pounds of investment that in turn has brought jobs and regeneration to many areas - a very positive message that re-use can work.

But despite the painfully slow progress in our efforts to conserve the Province’s built heritage, we see an absence of any commitment to the built heritage in the Programme for Government, the suspension of historic buildings grants, the difficulties being experienced with the resurvey of historic buildings, which inevitably means that many of our buildings remain at risk.

Following the completion of the BAR Project in 1999, the Society has continued to discuss with EHS how best both organisations can cooperate in a partnership to address the problems facing historic buildings, listed and unlisted, which are at risk from neglect, demolition, or inappropriate development. These discussions are nearing completion and when concluded will create an agreement allowing the Society to concentrate on the plight of a wide range of structures and buildings at risk, and also to look at the recommendations of the 1999 Conference, such as the exciting *Monumentenwacht* scheme which has been so successful in Holland, and to test their feasibility for implementation.

The Society has also been in discussion with Belfast City Council to explore the possibility of a project which would focus on the economic potential of historic buildings in the City area, using the many successes to date as exemplars - McCausland’s Hotel, Tedford’s Restaurant, St George’s Market, etc. The intention would be to encourage investors and developers to use existing buildings as the basis of their schemes rather than pursue their usual instinct to demolish and rebuild.

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A unique development on the Malone Road, of 18 luxury apartments and penthouses... in an area of outstanding architectural heritage (*Full page advert for 55-57 Malone Road apartments, omitting to mention that part of said heritage was demolished to make way for them, June 2000*)

“There’s talk that the apartments market is going to burst...But just this month we had a Dublin investor who bought three Belfast apartments - that was over £800,000.” (*A spokesman for Eric Cairns, quoted in Belfast Telegraph 17 August 2000*) - *That’s all right then, it’s good to know there are still people who need three houses to sleep in.*

# HEARTH

Hearth is the housing association managed jointly by the UAHS and the National Trust to provide a mechanism for rescuing historic buildings in the Province which are at risk of demolition or dereliction.

During the year, Hearth's architectural practice has been assisting a private client in the restoration of an unlisted vernacular farmhouse above Kilwaughter in Co Antrim, retaining the traditional kitchen fireplace and other features that may date back to the early 18th century when early maps show the cottage. Important agreements were also reached just before Christmas that should lead to the restoration of other buildings, the most important of which are Portrush Town Hall (see p.18) and an important but unlisted building at the edge of the Queen's conservation area.

Hearth's scheme for two flats and two shops at 27-31 Irish Street, Downpatrick involved traditional three storey premises in a steep street leading up from the centre of the market town, which had been largely vacant for a number of years. Downpatrick has a mediaeval core, and the site of the buildings was in use for centuries. A survey of 1708 shows a building known as "Finniston's half Tenement", which was a two-storey stone-walled thatched house, with four more houses down a back entry. Although Hearth's houses are not as early as that, they are likely to date from the late 18th century, and one was the birthplace of Bishop Dorrian, Catholic



Bishop of Down & Connor till his death in 1885. Originally they would have been purely houses, and the shopfronts inserted in the ground floors would have been in the same ownership as the houses in the upper floors. Sadly the shops and flats now have to be separated, but the presence of people living in the houses again should play a part in revitalising the centre of this once-bustling market town.

Hearth carried out a survey of its tenants during the year, the results of which demonstrated a wide appreciation of its work. Although three-quarters of Hearth's tenants did not apply to it because they were interested in historic buildings, over 60% said they preferred living in an old building rather than a new one, and 90% said they take a pride in the age of their house. Nearly 80% said Hearth was

right to retain the traditional design of windows, and the level of interest in the built environment was underlined by over 40% saying they would accept limited television reception if the only alternative was a prominent aerial on their house.

One tenant commented that she got pleasure from living in a house that was formerly the blacksmith's forge where her father would have brought horses in for shoeing. Some other interesting general comments included "I like the idea of small houses being restored with the care that is usually only given to grander places"; and "Hearth is not only creating homes for people but keeping our history alive."

Nearly all housing association schemes involve new building rather than restoration. But is this what tenants really want? Hearth's survey indicates that most tenants enjoy living in old houses as long as they can be made comfortable and provided with modern services. Yet according to the Housing Executive's 1996 House Condition Survey, only a fifth of the Province's housing stock was built before 1919, and it has probably decreased by a further 5% since then with further demolitions and new developments. That means that more than 70% of Northern Ireland's houses were built in the last fifty years. The remaining old houses are still enjoyed by most of their inhabitants, and we all know people who are looking for that elusive old house with "character". Perhaps the providers of public housing should think twice before they pull down yet another old street?

In 1950 there were some 30,000 thatched cottages in Northern Ireland. Today there are about a hundred, and not all of those are occupied or in good condition. The traditional image of the Irish cottage, with its whitewashed walls and the rambling rose at the half door, is almost a thing of the past. Normally Hearth takes on buildings that are in very poor condition and long vacant, but it made an exception in acquiring Curry's Cottage near Derrylin in Co Fermanagh, which was immaculately thatched and painted, and even had an occupant. The reason for taking it on was the scarcity and fragility of thatched cottages. Thatch can deteriorate very quickly and mud walls erode rapidly once water gets at them, and this was a building threatened with replacement or at best a precarious future as an outbuilding to a modern bungalow.

Its restoration was finished at the beginning of this year, and the mud-walled cottage with its tiny windows and deep roof of rye thatch, was sparkling in the sunshine last summer. Seamus Curry, who was born there seventy years ago, still lives in his family home, but Hearth built an annex alongside it that contains a modern kitchen and bathroom. The traditional "kitchen" of the old cottage, where at one time every activity from eating and cooking to chatting and even sleeping took place, is now his living room, with some lighting and underfloor heating, but physically it has not changed, and he still

*The interior of  
Curry's Cottage  
showing the crane,  
wicker hood and  
roof crucks*



burns the turf fire on its open hearth every day.

This cottage was particularly important because of the cruck trusses supporting the roof. The old trusses were carefully repaired and the mud walls, badly cracked and bulging in some parts, were repaired using local clay. It was far from a straightforward job, and we sat in on a number of what Sherlock Holmes would have called three-pipe problems - the contractor smoking one pipe, his joiner sucking another, and the foreman puffing on a third! Our thanks to builder Victor Chambers for his very conscientious work on the project, and to the Heritage Lottery Fund for making it financially possible.

## ***EDUCATION***

As reported in our last Review, the Society was given funding by the Heritage Lottery Fund, assisted by partnership funding from other charities, to employ an education officer for three years, organising a programme for children at Key Stage 2 (ages 8 to 11).

We were delighted to have Simon Walker as our first Education Officer. Coming from the Education Department of the Ulster Museum, he had teaching experience behind him, a good knowledge of how teachers used education resources, and a keen interest in architecture, particularly ecclesiastical architecture on which he has just published a book (see Reviews).

Simon laid the basis of our programme, including a town trail for Caledon, which is on our web site along with some sample resource pages. Sadly for us, he was then offered a permanent teaching post back at his old school, and understandably decided to take it up. During his short period with the Society he achieved a great deal, but inevitably there was a hiatus before his replacement, Angela Fitzpatrick, was able to take up the position in 2001. We look forward to working with her.

# BOOK REVIEWS

## Early Photographs

*A Century in Focus: Photography and Photographers in the North of Ireland 1839-1939*, by W A Maguire. Blackstaff Press, 2000. xii + 176 pp. £20.00. ISBN 0 85640 679 1

Every year, usually just before Christmas, books containing reproductions of old photographs of local interest are published. Sometimes they are no more than that: pictures with more-or-less informative captions, handy stocking-fillers, but scarcely of any enduring value. Sometimes, like Brian Mackey's *Lisburn: the Town and Its People, 1873-1973*, also published by Blackstaff in 2000, they come with a properly researched and useful historical introduction. And sometimes, though much more rarely, but as in the case of W. A. Maguire's most welcome new book, they combine the fascination of old photographs with impeccable scholarship of a high order and constitute an important contribution to the literature, not just of historical photography, but also of the wider social history of Ireland.

Maguire's extraordinarily well-illustrated history of the first century of photography in the North of Ireland demonstrates how quickly the new medium spread, even to provincial Belfast. As any knowledgeable schoolchild should know, the very first modern photographs were produced in January 1839 by Louis Daguerre in France and William Henry Fox Talbot in England. But they might not know (though there is no excuse now for not doing so) that in September 1839 Francis S. Beatty, of Castle Place, Belfast, was also making photographs. Sadly, none survive from this period, but, naturally, there is great interest in the earliest images: one of Beatty's from 1843 shows the 2nd Marquess of Donegall outside the Agricultural Bank in Donegall Place. Another (by an amateur photographer called W. J. Young) shows old buildings being demolished in Queen's Square in 1854 and illustrates a classic use of archive photographs, showing us what has gone. But it also reminds us - and this is one of the continuing fascinations of the subject - that photography is not just the preserve of professionals. Indeed, Maguire describes the famous trio of Robert Welch, Alexander Hogg and W. A. Green themselves as 'professional amateurs'.

This superbly-produced book contains well over a hundred colour and black and white illustrations. Some of these are familiar, but most are not, and they are invariably well-chosen. Proper source references (in end-notes) demonstrate that the provision of a 'scholarly apparatus' is not incompatible with an attractive and accessible text (cheapskate publishers take note). The volume, moreover, will endure as an essential work of reference for identifying and dating old photographs. A most valuable 14-page appendix lists over 400 professional photographers

and studios, from Harold Abernethy (1894-1939), who worked in the family business in Belfast, to 'Young and Glass', who operated in Carlisle Road Derry in 1878.

*K J*

## **The Big House**

*The Big House in Ireland*, by Valerie Pakenham. Cassell & Co, 2000. £25. ISBN 0 304 35422 8

This is a highly original book: an anthology on the haunting subject of the Irish "Big House", composed partly of pictures, most of them in colour, admirably chosen; and partly of literary quotations from a wide variety of sources; and very good value for money. It is not a work of architectural history: rather it follows the pioneering path of Mark Girouard in charting the fascinating social history that inhabits the architecture. The book has three main sections, "Places", "People", and "Outside the Walls"; each sub-divided into chapters dealing with a wide range of subjects, the best, perhaps, "Plumbing, heating, and the lack of them"; "the ills of the flesh"; and "Staying on" - seventeen chapters in all.

Apart from the well-chosen illustrations - many from old prints and photographs, many from photographs specially taken by the author's husband Thomas Pakenham - she has drawn on "letters, diaries, inventories, wills, memoirs, travellers' accounts, with an occasional dip into fiction... The most exciting hunting-ground... has been the large number of private collections of family papers.... put into order and made accessible by the heroic efforts of Dr Anthony Malcomson".

The book concludes on a cheerful note: "The wheel has turned full circle. New democratic Ireland is buying up the Big Houses to live in for itself. As I open the 'Irish Times', the advertisements leap out at me in full colour from the property supplements... After nearly a century of decay, the Big Houses of Ireland are springing back into life". (May it prove to be so for Gosford Castle, Brownlow House, Killeevy Castle, and many another under threat in the North!)

Just a week before being invited to write this piece, I sent a copy as my 80th birthday present to Dame Jennifer Jenkins, President of Hearth. One would not lightly send her a book one did not think absolutely first-rate: that is the highest compliment I can pay this author. I just hope that Jennifer enjoys it as much as I did.

*CEBB*

## A New Bible for Churches

*Historic Ulster Churches*, by Simon Walker. Institute of Irish Studies, QUB, 2000. 203pp. £12.50. ISBN 0853897670

Here is a book which goes some way towards filling a gap on the shelves of the student of ecclesiastical history in Ulster. There are many such books in England but Simon Walker has put us all in his debt by pioneering the study, not just of church architecture, but of the totality of church furnishing and decoration as well. Churches are more than bricks and mortar; they enshrine the memories and the heritage of all those generations which have gone before and which have left their imprint on the bricks and mortar.

The book is conveniently divided into historical and, by definition, architectural periods from the earliest times right up to the present day, each chapter being preceded by a summary of the principal architectural trends which informed the buildings. Interspersed amidst the text are short vignettes (printed in shaded boxes) on a variety of associated topics, such as bellringing, stained glass or even potted biographies of such worthies as John Wesley and Henry Cooke.

Such a book cannot be exhaustive in its coverage and one would not expect it to be so; whilst the choice of churches is determinedly interdenominational, one would question the inclusion of some buildings to the exclusion of others. But this is a very personal reaction. I find the lack of referenced footnotes a little disturbing, which leaves a question mark over some of the author's attributions. Whilst the detailed architectural descriptions are excellent, a wider trawl of available material, eg individual church histories, might have filled in some rather obvious gaps. Such material has become increasingly available in recent years. When writing about St Mark's, Dundela (pp.131/2), the author has overlooked the lighting, designed twenty years ago by Stephen Dykes Bower, one of the finest ecclesiastical architects of his generation, whose only other work in Ireland is in Drumbo Church of Ireland and the Hillsborough choir desk lights. I should have thought this fact was worthy of a mention.

There is a danger in relying uncritically on secondary sources and, although your reviewer has to declare an interest in Down Cathedral, the author has perpetuated some of the myths about this building which, I had hoped, were laid to rest some years ago (p.10). This is unfortunate. Nevertheless, this is a fine book and well worth a place on anyone's shelves. One would hope that it will encourage all of us, churchgoers or not, to take an interest in the variety and wealth of beauty, not only outside, but also inside our Ulster churches, churches which we tend to take for granted, but which often repay a visit to witness the love and care which the local congregation often lavishes on them. As your reviewer said at the outset, this book goes

some way towards filling a gap - the next volume will surely be called *More Historic Ulster Churches*.

FR

## **A Window of Opportunity?**

*Framing the View - Window Frames for a Sustainable Future*, by Lydia Wilson. [2000]. 24pp. Free.

This highly accessible, colourful and informative booklet, which originated as a project funded by the Sustainable Communities Millennium Award, sets out to dispel once and for all the heavily marketed myths about the magical qualities of PVC-u windows. The slow, creeping pace of replacement windows has broken into a gallop of late, and the timely release of this publication which fights for the timber corner of the windows market is to be warmly welcomed.

Take a look around your street or indeed scan your nearest conservation area and witness how the historic texture and character of the locality is being eroded by this aesthetically and environmentally unfriendly material. Even for those already convinced that timber windows with their idiosyncracies are preferable to the flat, plastic 'heritage style' varieties, little written evidence has existed in a readily digestible form, making the reasons difficult to articulate to date.

As the booklet systematically argues, not only is PVC-u visually inferior to wood; it is not maintenance free; cannot be repaired relatively cheaply like wood; and has nasty environmental repercussions by creating toxins during both production and disposal. It cannot be recycled. In comparison wood is renewable, recyclable, waste efficient and biodegradable. Plastic windows are new, whereas "wooden windows have been refined, tried and tested over centuries of use", If it ain't broke... The above thesis is effectively illustrated with carefully selected photographs, punctuating the short sections of text, which are in turn interspersed with pertinent quotations.

The author has approached an impressive number of experts in order to glean findings in support of her argument and it is perhaps this credence which will make the book such a useful tool. The acknowledgements include Duchas, the Soil Association, Greenpeace, London Fire and Civil Defence Authority, Nordic Timber Council, the Timber Trade Federation and the British Research Establishment. An empirical edge is lent by a table from the British Woodworking Federation which sets out the U value of timber alongside PVC-u and aluminium, indicating that timber loses least heat. An easily scanned comparison table at the end draws the 13 short chapters together to reiterate the points of this entirely convincing argument.

It is hoped that these succinctly expressed, yet comprehensive, findings will not only reach professionals involved in conservation, but will make their way into the consciousness of the general public, who are being won over by the idea of bright, white rattle-free units. In view of the frightening statistics that the PVC-u industry has spent over 500 million pounds on advertising in the last six years, perhaps we should all get out there and start selling the opposing argument door to door!

RH

## **BAR 7**

*Buildings at Risk: Some Options and Solutions and a Review.* UAHS/EHS, 2000. 120pp. Free. ISBN 0900457562

Read all about it - problem buildings and problem owners and solutions to the former if not the latter. According to one conference paper reported here, problem owners come in many different guises including the eccentric (not to mention the clinically insane), the crook, the unresponsive, the philistine and the incompetent. So no UAHS members here then.

The seventh volume of *Buildings at Risk* breaks somewhat with the tradition of its six eminent predecessors. As it was the Millennium issue, it was decided that it should look back at the achievements of the *Buildings at Risk* project since its inception in 1992. This volume therefore includes a review of the findings of the project, a report on good schemes and, in Section I, a report of the proceedings of the joint Ulster Architectural Heritage Society/ Environment and Heritage Service conference held in October 1999 from which this publication takes its title. A full report of the conference appeared in last year's *Heritage Review* (pp.12-15). If your appetite was whetted by that report and you missed the conference you can now bone up on the words of wisdom of a range of enthusiastic, erudite and often witty speakers by reading Section I of this *Buildings at Risk* volume.

Section II looks at twenty four good news stories selected from well over a hundred good schemes reported in earlier *BAR* volumes. The schemes were chosen to illustrate a number of solutions, funding options and new uses. Section III contains lists and statistics compiled from *BAR* 1-6. These show success and failure rates by county and also identify the most vulnerable building types. Lest we forget the aim of the earlier *BAR* publications, this one also includes some forty or so buildings still at risk. The situation is never static, however, and it is pleasing to note that one of them, Portrush Town Hall, is soon to get a new lease of life under the auspices of Hearsh.

Harriet Devlin, the UAHS' *Buildings at Risk* Officer from 1997 to

2000, concludes her introduction to this volume by commenting that 'until the potential for re-use becomes part of the Northern Ireland psyche we [the UAHS] will continue to add to the list of buildings at risk in search of new owners or new ideas.' As reported elsewhere in this issue of Heritage Review this is indeed the case and the Buildings at Risk project will soon be up and running again. A particularly inspiring paper at the conference, included in the first section of this publication, was Gert-Jan Luyjendyk's account of the Monumentenwacht scheme in Holland. It is exciting to note that the possibility of introducing a similar scheme in Northern Ireland is likely to be explored in the new phase of BAR. The principle behind Monumentenwacht is that 'the only way to preserve historic buildings is maintenance, regular preventive maintenance. Preventive because prevention is always better than cure.' Certainly many buildings listed in this excellent series of Buildings at Risk catalogues could have been saved had the 'stitch in time' principle been applied.

*KL*

## ***EVENTS***

To greet the new millennium the Society's programme of events doubled in size as well as content! This was due mainly to the new series of more informal lectures held in the former Carnegie Library, Donegall Road. 'Liquorice Allsorts' as they were entitled proved to be such a popular innovation that they will be continued in 2001 as 'Dolly Mixtures'! We are very grateful to Andrew Nesbitt who kindly allowed us to use his beautifully restored office building for the lectures. The series gave an insight into the work of the Society past and present and also featured the work of Hearth, Historic Buildings Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund. For the first time we introduced a 'season' ticket for the Society's lectures which proved to be popular. The Dolly Mixtures series will be held in a different venue, also a recent award winning success story, the former St Patrick's School, in Donegall Street. There is car parking at the building and lectures will commence at 7.30pm.

Other lectures during 2000 included an inspirational description of the restoration of the Albert Memorial in London by the project architect, Duncan Wilson from Inskip and Jenkins. Susan Kidd, from the Georgia Conservancy, described the battle for historic preservation in the USA while, closer to home, Lord Mount Charles outlined the way in which Slane Castle was restored. During the year we had two lectures on the topic of 'windows'. The first one, in June, was by Nessa Roche and the second in September by Hentie Louw.

The week-end in the Mourne when we took over Hanna's Close, a

restored clachan, and visited local places of interest was a great success. We have decided to repeat the formula this year by booking the Belle Isle courtyard in Fermanagh for a week-end of non stop entertainment if last year is anything to go by! Another innovation last year was a cycling event. Some keen cyclists, as well as others who had not ventured onto their bikes for several years, made their way from Lambeg to Belfast along the Lagan Canal stopping from time to time to be enlightened about aspects of our industrial heritage.

In August Paddy Byrne led a walking tour of Cushendun paying particular attention to the architecture of Clough Williams Ellis, while a month earlier Colin Hatrick showed members some interesting aspects and hidden treasures of County Tyrone. In complete contrast the October outing was an exposition on funereal architecture in Belfast followed by a visit to a local hostelry.

The Society's programme of events makes a substantial contribution to its work. It draws attention to the importance of sometimes little known aspects of our architectural and industrial heritage and so assists the Society in its campaigning role. The support of members is essential and much appreciated; suggestions for events are always welcome. The Chairman of the Events Committee rarely gets much feedback unless it is a complaint! But this year a member wrote to the Chairman, Peter Marlow, "the recent programme of events over the last 18 months has been refreshingly innovative, varied, still scholarly and fun".

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During the year, the Society contributed ideas and detailed information to two major initiatives by other bodies. One was *Environment 2000*, a hard-hitting series of debates chaired by Brian Black and broadcast by UTV in February. The Society also contributed to the selection of buildings for Belfast City Council's first major heritage exhibition, "Historic Belfast: a guide to the city's landmark buildings", which was launched in the autumn with an accompanying brochure.

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Tate Modern... is an enormous architectural achievement that brings a Continental sensibility to the heart of London... And where else, but as part of a conversion, would you have the luxury of a vast concourse 155 x 23 x 30m high? A new-build scheme couldn't suggest being so gratuitously lavish with its space and still get it past the accountants. More importantly, in these days of sustainability and green thinking what is more important than conserving and adapting our existing building stock rather than sweeping everything away and starting again? Continuously and carelessly extracting primary, non-renewable resources cannot carry on forever. This is not an argument against new-build per se - but we should not demolish and rebuild unnecessarily. At some time in the future we will have to prioritise where these resources go. Indeed, incremental change has always been the way London has evolved and established its character... The Tate Modern shows us that a silk purse can indeed be made from unpromising material. (Building Design editorial 12 May 2000)

# APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

The Society depends on an active membership for its effectiveness. Members can help its work in many ways - by monitoring planning applications, for example, or drawing attention to undesirable development. The Society organises regular outings, expeditions, lectures and social events. Members also enjoy the privilege of buying all the Society's publications at a 25% discount (see overleaf for a full list).

To:  
The Secretary  
Ulster Architectural Heritage Society  
66 Donegall Pass  
Belfast  
BT7 1BU

Full name (s) .....

Address .....

.....

..... Post Code .....

Telephone:(home) ..... (work).....

Area of particular interest or concern (if any) .....

.....

.....

Please indicate the type of membership applied for:

- Annual Membership £14
- Joint Annual Membership £20
- Corporate Annual Membership £45
- Student up to 25 years Annual Membership £7

***Members paying by direct debit will receive a £1 reduction in their subscription rate. Forms are available on request.***

# **UAHS PUBLICATIONS**

## **BOOKS, MONOGRAPHS AND ESSAYS**

An Introduction to Modern Ulster Architecture	£4.00	Roger Mulholland	£4.00
Fishmongers' Company in Ulster	£8.00	Architectural Schizophrenia	£4.00
Moneymore & Draperstown	£8.00	Malone House	£4.00
Irish Church Monuments	£8.00	The Workhouses of Ulster	£4.00
J J McCarthy and the Gothic Revival in Ireland	£8.00	Ballywalter Park	£4.00
Northern Gardens	£2.00	Hillsborough Castle	£4.50
Diamond as Big as a Square	£2.00	Ulster Model Schools	£7.60
Mausolea in Ulster	£4.00	Buildings of Co Antrim	£24.00
Classical Churches in Ulster	£1.00	Gate Lodges of Ulster	£13.95
		Stormont	£8.00
		Buildings of Co Armagh	£28.00

## **LISTS AND GAZETTEERS**

Queen's area of Belfast	£4.00	Mid Down	£4.00
Banbridge	£4.00	Donaghadee & Portpatrick	£4.00
Town of Monaghan	£4.00	Rathfriland & Hilltown	£4.00
West Antrim	£4.00	Malone & Stranmillis	£7.50
Craigavon (Omnibus)	£4.00	Buildings of Armagh	£6.50
Joy Street area, Belfast	£4.00	Central Belfast	£9.50
St Helier, Jersey	£4.00	Bangor (new edition)	£9.00

Orders for all the foregoing publications, and standing orders for future publications, may be sent to the Society at 66 Donegall Pass, Belfast BT7 1BU, and will be fulfilled subject to availability, and at the charges for postage and packing ruling at the date of order.

Many of the Society's early Lists are now out of print, and while we hope to bring out new editions of some them, the Secretary is happy to assist enquirers by making photocopies on request at cost from the copies held in the Society's office. The following items are now out of print:

Lisburn	Island of Rathlin
Portaferry and Strangford	Mourne
Antrim and Ballymena	North Derry
Downpatrick	Carrickfergus
City of Derry	Town of Cavan
Dungannon & Cookstown	An Introduction to Ulster Architecture
Glens of Antrim	Palm House and Botanic Gardens, Belfast
North Antrim	Court Houses and Market Houses
Coleraine and Portstewart	Clandeboyne
Enniskillen	
East Down	

**The Ulster Architectural Heritage Society** exists to promote the appreciation and enjoyment of good architecture of all periods - from the prehistoric to the contemporary - in the nine counties of Ulster, to encourage the preservation and restoration of buildings of merit or importance; and to increase public awareness of the beauty, history and character of local neighbourhoods.

**Ulster  
Architectural  
Heritage  
Society**

This newsletter outlines some of the major activities of the Society during the year 2000.

**President:** Sir Charles Brett  
**Vice-Presidents:** Dr M J Craig  
Mr J Cornforth

**UAHS Committee for 2000-2001:**

Peter O. Marlow (*Chairman*)  
Sean Hagan (*Hon Secretary*)  
Keith McCleane (*Hon Treasurer*)  
Lady Carswell  
John Cowdy

Anthony Cranney	Annesley Malley
Stephen Douglas	Marcus Patton
Nicholas Hanna	Terence Reeves-Smyth
Helen Hossack	Dawson Stelfox
Karen Latimer	Sally Visick
Brian McKee	
Ian McQuiston	
Caroline Maguire	

**Secretary:** Miss Joan Kinch  
**Education Officer:** Simon Walker (resigned Sep 00)  
**Research Officer:** Miss Rita Harkin

The Society is always looking for members interested in taking an active part in its activities. In particular, monitoring of planning applications in different areas, preparation of new lists, and assistance in organising outings are always appreciated. If you would like to help in any of these ways, please contact the Secretary, Miss Joan Kinch, at Belfast 9055 0213. Our e-mail number is [iinfo@uahs.co.uk](mailto:iinfo@uahs.co.uk), and our website is [www.uahs.co.uk](http://www.uahs.co.uk).

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Our front cover shows the Ballyholme Hotel, Bangor. The back cover shows Curry's Cottage, Co Fermanagh, before and after restoration by Hearth. *Contributors to this issue:* Sir Charles Brett, Rita Harkin, Keith

