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Winter 1992

Heritage Newsletter



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. This newsletter outlines some of the major activities of the Society during 1991.

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Secretary: Miss Joan Kinch

Our **front cover** shows Robinson's Bar, Great Victoria Street, Belfast, shortly before it was fire-bombed and subsequently demolished.

The **back cover** shows the scheme at 8-14 Castlefin Road, Castlederg, recently restored by Hearth Housing Association after bomb damage.

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 660809.

Contributors: Michael Coulter, David Evans, Ian Gailey, Colin Hatrick, John Lewis-Crosby, Marion Meek, John Neill, Marcus Patton, Dawson Stelfox, and Primrose Wilson.

Editorial

Probably the most prominent planning controversy of the last year concerned the proposal to build an office block almost opposite St Malachy's Church in Belfast's Alfred Street. The Church wanted the site to remain as open space, and sought a judicial review against the planning approval, but despite considerable public sympathy for the Church's position, the approval was considered to have been correctly granted, and construction is now under way.

The Church's objections were chiefly based on the height of the new building, although its bulk will probably have more impact. The proposal was in fact reduced in height from an original application for a twelve storey building to one much closer to the height of an adjacent listed warehouse of 1911 by James Hanna. There is even a precedent for a substantial building on the site, which was previously occupied by Dunville's whiskey warehouse.

A rather unusual twist to the application however was that, although nominally a private development, the new building was custom-designed to suit the DoE, which is to occupy the completed block. The Department was therefore in effect sitting in judgement on its own application. Nevertheless, in the absence of any height control, with precious few aesthetic guidelines, and a generally *laissez faire* approach to development in the centre of Belfast in recent years, the Department could hardly be faulted on having approved a building much more modest in scale than, for example, the Atrium development approved the previous year for an equally sensitive site in Bedford Street. The Alfred Street application provided a focus for public unease over the scale of redevelopment in Belfast in recent years, but is no worse than some of the banal and arbitrary developments that have sprung up in Great Victoria Street and have made the nickname "The Golden Mile" seem heavily ironic. In recent years, planning control seems to have been abandoned in favour of development at any cost; and the true cost of that policy is becoming apparent now that the heat has gone out of the office boom and it may prove difficult to attract developers to Laganside. If the lid had been kept on a few years ago there would have been more steam left to power the Laganside initiative.

While sharing the Church's concern for the setting of Thomas Jackson's 1840 Gothic church, the Society decided not to enter the debate over Alfred Street, though we objected to the original planning application for a twelve storey building, and commented on the aesthetic appearance of the second application. The UAHS was

not convinced by the suggestion that an open space to one side would necessarily enhance the setting of the Church, any more than St Anne's Cathedral has been improved by the recently formed Cathedral Open Space, which the Society had opposed. Apparently planners are now realising that it was unwise to create so much open space around St Annes and are considering building houses in Academy Street! The intriguing vista of the Cathedral from winding Church Street has been lost and replaced by a general view, but the not dissimilar vista of St Malachy's from Clarence Street will be recreated when the site is redeveloped. Comparison between the two sites is interesting however, in that St Anne's was designed as a facade building in a street, whereas St Malachy's actually started life in isolation, and in that sense there was greater justification for an open space in Alfred Street. However to create a formal symmetrical space would entail the demolition of the fine Hanna warehouse, to which the UAHS would be opposed. Time has moved on, and the St Malachy's site is now historically an urban one.

If the Dunville building was still standing there would be no call for it to be demolished; the important factor now is to ensure that the new building (here and on other gap sites) is of a high standard. Recent planning documents pay lip service to conservation and high design standards, but consideration of the setting of listed buildings still does not receive high enough priority. The controversy over St Malachy's demonstrated public concern over the issue; and the UAHS continues to press for planning controls that enhance our listed buildings and conservation areas. Sometimes that means an open space, more often it means new development on a gap site - the common factor is the quality and scale of the new development, and always the historic building should form the starting point.

Even recessions have silver linings, and conservationists have been able to breathe easier since the demise of the building boom of the late 1980s which seemed to be pulling down everything over fifty years of age standing on commercially viable sites. Comparatively little demolition has taken place during the last year, although equally it has been difficult to see where money might come from to restore historic buildings at risk. In a climate of financial stringency, congratulations are due to those involved in the painstaking restoration of Downpatrick Courthouse, badly damaged by a bomb in 1971 and re-opened in 1991 by the Lord Chancellor; and on the expedition with which the Grand Opera House, seriously damaged by a 1000 lb bomb at the end of 1991, was repaired and able to get back to normal business less than six months later.

Belfast City Centre Local Plan 2005

Having set the overall context of the Belfast Urban Area Plan, the DoE is now preparing a Local Plan for the Belfast city centre area. This will be a statutory document, and as such of considerable importance in shaping the future of the city. The Preliminary Statement was issued in October 1991, followed by a period of consultation during which the Society's representatives met with the Planning Service and their consultants, and they in turn made a presentation to the Society's Committee on the preliminary proposals. The next stage is a draft Local Plan, which has still not appeared as we go to press. If there are serious objections to this then a Public Inquiry may be called.

The preliminary objective of the Plan is the revitalisation and economic development of the city centre - a statement that on its own would be sufficient to cause alarm and consternation as to what further havoc is planned for our ever-dwindling stock of historic buildings condemned as being beyond economic repair or in the way of new mega-developments. Fortunately, though, this primary aim is backed up by the intention "to maintain and improve the physical environment and to enhance the architectural character of the City Centre". Before however, you sink back into your armchair with a sigh of relief, consider the inclusion of that increasingly dreaded word "enhance" and observe the absence of "conservation" in the aim. The Department is no longer content to conserve "conservation areas", but feels impelled to enhance them - which normally means new pavements, roads, street furniture and lampposts, often stripping away local character and imposing a universal modern interpretation of Victoriana. Meanwhile the buildings themselves decay through lack of investment and reasonable conservation area grants, or are destroyed through insensitive alterations.

The Department has appointed a consultant, Cy Paumier of LDR International Ltd, an American company with a track record of urban revitalisation, mainly in the States but more recently in England. He is an assured and urbane professional, and talks easily of the need for design guidelines to respect the style, height and mass of the existing buildings, of incentives for correct conservation of historic buildings and of the need to create human and understandable townscapes. But barely a mention of this is in the "Preliminary Statement" and we will have to wait for the Draft Plan to see whether his views have won through the Departmental maze.

Of crucial importance is the weight given to the guidelines - will they be advisory, and therefore probably unenforceable, or statutory? If the latter will they be watered down to a dribble of general statements and good intentions, or will we have specific and rigid height restrictions, control of demolition and use of repairs notices? The Draft Plan will be coming soon - look out for it in the paper, go along and visit the displays, consider what sort of a city centre you want by 2005, and send your comments to both the Department and the Society.

St George's Market

Following the decline of the rebuilt Smithfield Market, Belfast City Councillors decided in 1991 that the best way to revive it would be to banish the traders of St George's Market to Smithfield. Quite apart from the problem this would create of finding a new use for the listed market building (probably leading to calls for its demolition in due course), the move would almost certainly kill off what is still a flourishing and successful market. St George's works because it has been in its present location for many generations, and because it has a ready-made customer base on its doorstep in the Markets area, one of the few parts of central Belfast which is still residential. The old and much-loved Smithfield Market is long gone, its stall-holders and customers alike have moved to new locations, Smithfield has been isolated from through-traffic by Castlecourt, and in any case many of the traditional traders could not afford the high rents and rates of new premises. There is a strong case for Belfast's last traditional market to be allowed to remain in its existing premises, and to spend money on restoration and improvement of the listed building rather than on needless eviction of its traders. That case seems now to be making some headway, and the Council is currently having second thoughts.

Whether or not it was a good idea in the first place was neither here nor there. What had to be done was to get rid of that hideous building site on the seafront. The people of Bangor deserve no less. (North Down Councillor Hazel Bradford welcoming the granting of planning permission for Bregenz House at Bangor marina in May 1991, some five months after the Council had started building it amidst considerable public outcry. The building site was formerly known as Bangor Bay.)

At least we can take comfort in our concrete gardens, and think how wonderful it is to be environmentally improved through uniformity. (A correspondent to the *Belfast Telegraph*, commenting on the Housing Executive's offer of £400 grants to householders flagging over their front garden and advocating "uniformity as a means of enhancing the environment".)

Navan Fort and Heritage Centres

The earthwork known as Navan Fort would appear to be the focal point of a group of monuments which constitute one of the most important archaeological landscapes in Ireland. The Society objected to planning applications submitted in 1990 and 1991 to site a visitors centre with associated car parking on sites SW of Navan Fort.

In March 1991 outline planning permission was granted subject to twelve conditions which included the siting and design of the building and location of car parking. No site works were to be permitted until an archaeological investigation had taken place and a landscaping scheme was to be submitted to the Department before development commenced. The initial archaeological investigation yielded only occasional traces of human activity, some neolithic arrowheads and pottery fragments. Most recently a Christian burial and an early Christian linear ditch were investigated. Work has commenced on the visitor centre with a planned opening date of June 1993.

While the Society's concerns were primarily with Navan, the issue of visitor centres being located in environmentally sensitive areas is a national problem. Early in 1991 An Bord Pleanála refused planning permission for a proposed historic theme park for the foot of the Rock of Cashel. While recognising that such a provision would have increased benefits for tourism the appeals board ruled that the development "would detract from the visual setting of the Rock of Cashel, encroach on its isolation and holistic entity and intrude on its medieval ambience and monastic tranquillity".

In Mullagmore, Co Clare, permission is being sought for an interpretative centre to serve the Burren national park, which is being opposed by conservation bodies. Meanwhile in Co Mayo planning permission was granted for a visitor centre at the Ceide fields which was described as looking like an outsize skeleton spacecraft on a dramatic cliff top site!

It is good to be able to report that the Department has decided to provide special protection to the group of monuments at Navan by identifying an Area of Significant Archaeological Interest at Navan in the Armagh Area Plan 2004. This will embrace Navan Fort, Loughnashade, Húghey's Fort, the King's Stables and a group of megalithic tombs. This is the first time such an initiative has been undertaken in Northern Ireland and the Society hopes it will not be the last.

To Harm or Merely Not To Enhance?

A series of recent English planning law cases have given rise to considerable interest, and when the dust settles no doubt their implications will find their way into Northern Ireland legislation too.

In 1989 the judge in the case of *Steinberg and Sykes v Secretary of State* interpreted the wording in the Planning Act that "special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing" the character or appearance of a conservation area, as meaning that planning authorities should require of new developments that they should positively enhance, and not merely avoid harming, such areas. In February 1991 the Court of Appeal found in the case of *Bath Society v Secretary of State* that the planning authority's primary statutory duty was to take account of the development plan, and that if a development enhanced the character of a conservation area that would be very much in favour of permitting it. Furthermore it was concluded that if a development neither preserved nor enhanced the character of the area it was probably detrimental to it.

Both these cases seemed to strengthen the planning authority's control, but in a third case in March 1991, *South Lakeland DC v Secretary of State*, the Court of Appeal concluded that the character of a conservation area could be said to be preserved where it was not actually harmed (a view confirmed at the House of Lords in February 1992), so perhaps we have come back more or less to square one on the matter. However, a draft Planning Policy Guideline published late in 1991 has moved so far from laissez-faire as to suggest that any development should "result in a gain in environmental and landscape terms". Perhaps the old "presumption in favour of development" behind which planners always hide is about to disappear?

The Planning and Compensation Act which went through Parliament in 1991 included powers for authorities to refuse to consider repeated planning applications for developments already turned down at appeal, and to control "vexatious" applications. At least one current case here is going through a seemingly endless cycle of application, refusal, appeal, refusal at appeal, new application - and some means of breaking the cycle is badly needed.

We are flattered that a building we commissioned and own has been listed but at this stage we are not fully aware of all the implications this might have. (A spokesman for Willis Corroon, on learning that their 1970s headquarters in Ipswich, designed by Foster Associates, had been listed following threats to alter its interior).

Stained Glass: A Neglected Art

For some time the Society has been concerned about the condition and maintenance of stained glass in churches. It is entirely understandable that hard-pressed congregations should concentrate on the fabric of their buildings and give thanks that the windows continue to keep out the weather.

The attention of Environment Service has been drawn to the problem and it is hoped that the Department will find it possible to introduce a scheme of grant-aid in the near future to encourage a new approach to the conservation of historical glass. The Society is concerned about the present anomaly which makes it possible to grant-aid stained glass in secular buildings but not in churches. This anomaly existed in Great Britain until 1980 but has now been rectified, and the Society believes it is time that the situation was changed here. Such an initiative is seen as a vital step towards preservation of this art form for future generations; and unless repair work is undertaken soon some of our earliest local glass will be lost.

Apart from imported material we do not possess medieval glass *in situ* and the time span of our windows is only some two hundred years. Local practitioners were in the field from about 1840 but the bulk of the nineteenth century work was entrusted to firms from Great Britain and abroad. This output was considerable in the last part of the century and we are fortunate that artistic content and quality of glass are of a high standard. Proliferation of local interests, starting from just before 1900, was augmented by Dublin firms though studios from the mainland continued to enjoy a considerable share of overall production. In addition a few charming examples of the work of Continental artists may be seen.

In recent years local firms have been concerned with the repair of windows that have been damaged by explosion and so a reservoir of skill is ready to be tapped. If grant-aid were introduced into Northern Ireland the schemes involved would be modest, with a number of churches being inspected each year to plan a programme of cleaning, cementing and re-banding, thereby avoiding the need for major repairs in the future. Occasionally re-leading or replacement of glass may be required and in some cases major repair of this nature would be all that could be achieved in any one year.

The art of the glass painter should be esteemed like that of the easel painter, and congregations should be aware of the value of their windows. In the Society's recent Lists (Malone & Stranmillis, and Armagh) sizeable sections have been devoted to stained glass.

Carrickfergus Regeneration

A number of our finest towns have recently been chosen for special treatment. Carrickfergus, Downpatrick, Armagh and Newry are all historic towns with distinctive character - and in each case they need a boost in jobs and morale. In all three towns project offices have opened with support from the local council, the regional planning office, and a slice of Environmental Improvement money.

Carrickfergus was the first project centre. Factories had closed, town centre shops and sites stood empty for years. Consultants advised a package involving tourist attractions, improvements in the historic town centre, and then, once the old town had been improved, some new construction on the sea front.

Environment Service set the ball rolling with new displays throughout the castle. An ACE project is working on the 17th-century town walls, and a whole series of town initiatives has kept the town involved and active. Funding was offered for improved shop fronts, with a competition for people to judge which were the best. The children decorated shops at Christmas. The 'big lamp', a much loved meeting place that had been demolished to accommodate traffic requirements was reproduced. In conservation terms this was no great deal, but in human terms it was a triumph. Five or six small landscape schemes have been undertaken. They vary in quality; none of them is first class, but they are a success in upgrading the morale and status of the town. New medium size shops are being built now, a historical entertainment to be known as the Knight Ride will open in 1993, and, it is hoped, prosperity is just around the corner.

Thatch

Ulster's traditional thatched buildings are vanishing at an alarming rate, according to the 11th Report of the Historic Buildings Council for Northern Ireland, published in October 1991. The HBC estimates there are now fewer than a hundred of the distinctive reed-roofed buildings left, which is a drop of three hundred on the number surveyed between 1969 and 1972. The report highlighted neglect, vandalism and "visual illiteracy" for the dramatic decline, and pointed out the urgent need to train young people as thatchers to maintain those buildings that still remain.

The DoE has announced its objective to complete the listing of all pre-1914 buildings by 1993, and of all pre-1960 buildings by 1994; while there are also plans for many more conservation areas.

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"We are always interested in working on historic buildings"

Hearth

Hearth is the housing association managed jointly by the Society and the National Trust to restore historic buildings in the province which are at risk, either providing rental housing with the assistance of DoE grants, or restoring property for sale using its charitable "Revolving Fund".

The year 1991 saw work commence on the restoration of Whaley's Buildings, a group of fourteen houses on Castle Street, Chapel Lane and Upper Irish Street, Armagh, which was described in our last Newsletter. This was the largest scheme yet undertaken by Hearth, consisting of the restoration of nine listed houses (two of which were four stories high), reconstruction of two houses earlier destroyed by bomb damage, and building of three new houses. The contract was not completed till the middle of 1992, when Dame Jennifer Jenkins, Hearth's President, formally opened the houses (as she had earlier performed a topping-out ceremony at the end of 1991 by setting a stone urn back on top of the corner building between Castle Street and Upper Irish Street). The houses have all been sold or agreed for sale as we go to press, and have become another link in the continuing regeneration of Armagh.

In 1991, the housing association arm of Hearth carried out the restoration of a terrace of modest stone houses at Castlefin Road Castlederg. Originally built as a factory or warehouse about 1870, the building was converted into houses at the turn of the century, but to an unusual plan where each pair of two-bedroom houses shared the same front door and staircase. In relatively recent times the pairs had been combined to form four slightly larger houses, but they lacked most of the modern amenities and had been targeted for demolition. Shortly after Hearth acquired them they were badly damaged by a 1000 lb van bomb at the police station across the road, and restoration was somewhat delayed to plan the much more extensive work then required. However the contractor made an excellent job of repairing shattered doors and staircases, and in the spring of 1992 the Daly family, who had brought up ten children in one of the houses, moved back into their former home, now equipped with a bathroom and a new bedroom "borrowed" from the neighbouring house.

Hearth Housing Association has also been working on the restoration of three Georgian terrace houses at 201-205 Donegall Street, Belfast. Flanked on one side by St Patrick's Church and

parochial house, its other side was adjacent to a fine terrace of three storey houses at nos.207-215 which was unfortunately demolished for a road-widening scheme during 1990. Originally thought to date from the late 18th century (on the strength of leases relating to the sites), evidence uncovered during work suggests that they were probably built after 1820, but architecturally they are certainly Georgian in style, and together with the remaining houses in Joy Street and Hamilton Street they represent the last Georgian houses left in central Belfast. Unfortunately they had been blighted by the road plans, and had been neglected for some twenty years when Roads Service eventually released their grip and permitted listing of the terrace. It was only just in time: the back wall of no.201 actually collapsed due to dry rot in window heads and wall battens, and Hearth had to undertake remedial works to stabilise the terrace prior to acquisition.

In the course of work, the back walls have been entirely rebuilt, and indeed considerable areas of brick replacement were required to the front wall because of decay and later alterations (a shop window for instance has been converted back to its original domestic appearance). The houses are three storey at the front, but four at the rear, with stone-walled basements, and will provide much-needed family houses in this area.



201-205 Donegall Street, Belfast

Despite the size of the scheme in Armagh, Hearth Revolving Fund was also able to embark on another scheme at 3 Stewart's Place, Holywood. This was built about 1840 and formed a corner building between Stewart's Place and the High Street; a matching house survives on the other side of the street. Unfortunately the buildings on either side of no.3 were demolished during the sixties and it was neglected and later vandalised while itself awaiting demolition. The Housing Executive applied for listed building consent to demolish in 1990, but this was refused, and Hearth subsequently agreed to purchase the property. It has been extensively restored during 1992 by contractors Hugh J O'Boyle, and is due to go on the market before the end of the year, as a four bedroom house with two fine reception rooms.

Work has also started during 1992 on a number of other small properties which will be reported in our next issue. These include the Lockhouse at Ballyskeagh outside Belfast, Turnly's Tower in Cushendall, and a group of cottages at Glenoe above Larne. These are all being carried out by the Revolving Fund, and will be available for sale on completion.



3 Stewart's Place, Holywood, with the Priory in the background

Modification of Historic Buildings

The Society organised a two-day seminar in November 1991 on the topic of the adaptation of historic buildings to meet modern-day requirements, in particular the legislation and codes of practice regarding fire safety and disabled access. It was held in the Down Museum in Downpatrick, itself a case study in the imaginative conversion of an old building that was studied with critical enthusiasm by the delegates. The seminar was chaired by Dick Oram of Historic Monuments and Buildings Branch of the DoE, and opened by Eddie McGrady MP, who had been involved in the decision to convert the old Gaol into the Museum. The danger of fires in historic buildings was fresh in everyone's mind following the disastrous fire a few days earlier at Slane Castle.

The first paper was given by John McCarthy, an architect who lectures on fire protection. He outlined the conflicts between the craft-based construction of old buildings and the technological nature of many fire protective installations; and between saving lives and saving a building and its contents. The key he felt lay in the creation of fire-tight cells which prevented fire from spreading, combined with obvious and direct escape routes allowing people to leave the building quickly. An essential element in this was the protection of doors by sheeting them with a fire-protective material, or bonding a fire-proof core between the two faces of the door. Steel beams behave notoriously badly in fires, crumpling with the heat, whereas heavy timber beams will form a protective charred surface, and often survive intense fires with little structural damage. Of fire fighting equipment, detection systems were of primary importance, and sprinkler systems could be more widely used to suppress outbreaks. Every historic building was different, and the ease of protection of any building in one aspect could be offered as a trade-off towards aspects that could less readily be overcome; use of fire management systems, to control the use and means of escape, could permit greater flexibility in terms of the standard requirements.

Peter Marlow of the National Trust spoke next about the problems of disabled access to historic buildings, illustrating his points from his experience as the National Trust's historic buildings representative in the province. The conflict here was how to make provision for disabled visitors without compromising the historic fabric and feeling of history for ordinary visitors; and having got disabled visitors into a building, making sure that they can get out again in an emergency. Many Trust properties use removable ramps at access steps, but often it is only possible to get a disabled visitor beyond the ground floor by use of lifts, which are expensive, disruptive, and cannot be used during a fire. The Trust attempts to provide for disabled visitors at the most popular locations, but most importantly, provides information about what facilities are available, so that people know in advance how much they will be able to visit.

The next speaker was Terry Ashton of the Government Fire Research Station at Warrington, who developed the earlier talk on fire by emphasising the need for management programmes to prevent fire occurring in the first place, and to ensure that knowledge of the fire prevention system in use in a building is widespread among its occupants, with fire drills regularly carried out. Fire control panels

need to be in a prominent location for ease of access to the Fire Brigade, fire extinguishers should be on hand in areas of high risk, and intumescent paint must never be overpainted.

The last speaker on the first day was David Stewart of DoE Works Service, who outlined the history of building regulations from the Book of Deuteronomy to King John's Ordinance of 1212, and from Charles II's Proclamation after the Great Fire of London and the Fire Prevention (Metropolis) Act of 1774 to the first Northern Ireland building bye-laws of 1859 and the present day regulations of 1973 and later. Although Crown buildings are exempt, most historic buildings must comply with the regulations unless relaxations can be granted.

The second day began with a talk by Ken Ewart of the NI Council for the Disabled, his first-hand experience as a disabled person bringing many of the problems into sharp relief. Nevertheless he drew attention to the range of disabilities that may be less obvious than physical problems, such as mental disability and poor sight or hearing. The priorities he identified were vehicular access to the building, and parking convenient to it; and then signage within the building. NICD offers an advisory service and likes to be consulted about schemes at an early stage.

Harry Welsh of the NI Fire Brigade spoke about the advisory work of the Fire Service, but again his experience as a fireman in tackling actual fires made his comments particularly vivid. His priorities were access for the fire engine; and then compartmentation within the building to isolate the fire and smoke.

The last speaker was Alistair Coey, who described the modifications he had made as architect during the conversion of Downpatrick Gaol. After lunch the delegates were taken round the Museum to see the precautions in situ, just as the previous day had included a visit to Castleward to see adaptations there.

Altogether it was a stimulating couple of days, unfortunately providing no easy answers to the problems of making historic buildings safe and accessible without spoiling them in the process; but outlining many of the problems that arise and techniques for overcoming them.

The comparison with the Lady Chatterley trial of 1960 is compelling. In that case the literary avant-garde had to defend and extol the virtues of one of Lawrence's lesser works against the forces of reaction and censorship. At Poultry progressives are asked to support one of James Stirling's lesser works. The choice as presented is between modern design or Prince Charles and the young Fogeys. This is to miss the point: the success of Lady Chatterley did not result in the loss of a Victorian novel by a writer from the second rank of greatness. At Poultry a good building will be lost forever. (A correspondent of Building Design, on Lord Palumbo's proposal to redevelop the listed Mappin & Webb's building in London with a new building by Stirling).

As a regular visitor back home...I couldn't help noticing this summer just how much of the city centre has evaporated. What the Provos didn't achieve, the developers seem to have accomplished with barely the blink of an eye. (Letter in the Belfast Telegraph, August 1991).

Heritage Repairs and Heritage Restorations

The Society continues to take an interest in Heritage Repairs Ltd, the ACE scheme which it helped to set up some years ago, although it is now a separate company. In the 1950s Ulster led the field in industrial archaeology because of the pioneering work of ERR Green and Alan McCutcheon, but since then the impetus has been lost. Much that would have been of great interest to our children and grandchildren has either been scrapped or bought by more discerning conservationists in England and further afield. On the principle that it is never too late, a small group of ACE workers has been brought together by Heritage Restorations Ltd. This team is available to rescue and restore machinery, and is currently working at Orrs Mill, Benburb, preparing machinery for display in the Blackwater Valley Industrial Museum. The Directors hope that this new company will encourage owners of historic machinery to retain and restore it for enjoyment by the public, and they do not intend to confine themselves solely to the work of the team, but to advise on ways to conserve our industrial heritage. The team consists of ACE workers working under an experienced fitter and, thanks to the Ulster Museum, the advice of Alfred Montgomery of its Local History Department is available.

Like every other organisation working in the field of building construction and repair, Heritage Repairs has had a most difficult year, but has come through with a new manager and an enthusiastic team of ACE workers. Projects completed include work at Seagoe old Church in Craigavon, further work to the Klondyke Building, cobbling at Downpatrick, joinery work at Ballymoney and Baillies Mills, and re-roofing in Crossgar. In addition the Company now operates a first year training scheme for joiners in the Klondyke Building at the Gas Works on the Ormeau Road, Belfast, for the Construction Industry Training Board and the Training and Employment Agency. It is hoped that the Company will introduce training courses in other skills as the need arises.

Jim Swann, the new manager of Heritage Repairs Ltd and Heritage Restorations Ltd, is tackling his task with enthusiasm. He is a former works manager of Newtownabbey and Carrickfergus District Councils and then ran his own building company. Happily for Heritage Restorations his early training was as an engineer, so he would appear to be completely suited for his task, but his best qualification is the enthusiasm which he is bringing to the work of both Companies.

HERITAGE REPAIRS LTD HERITAGE RESTORATIONS LTD

Two teams of ACE workers led by Tradesmen are available to owners of buildings and machinery of architectural and historic interest for repair and restoration work. Their skills include joinery, cobbling, slating, restoration of machinery etc. More sophisticated work is passed on to sub-contractors.

Further details and estimates from :- The Manager, Heritage Repairs Ltd., 185 Stranmillis Road, Belfast, BT9 5DU, or Tel (0232) 664492

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Book Review

Robert McKinstry, Richard Oram, Roger Weatherup and Primrose Wilson: The Buildings of Armagh, Belfast, UAHS, 1992: xvii, 217pp. 50 illus., folding map. £6.50 (£5.00 + £1.00 p&p to UAHS members).

For almost as long as I can remember the city of Armagh has held a special place in my imagination. My earliest visits were with my father to George Paterson, Curator of the County Museum, when, hearing them talk of the See of Armagh I assumed that there was a maritime connection and looked for the masts of ships moored somewhere behind the Mall. Armagh seemed a roly-poly town with winding streets, cosy corners and the towers and spires of churches rising among tufty trees - the sort of place that Rupert Bear might live in, only grander and Irish in character. Later, as a student of architecture, George Paterson was kind enough to show me around the city and the buildings associated with Francis Johnston. Occasional visits since then, most recently to the official opening of Hearth's refurbishment of Whaley's Buildings in Castle Street, have confirmed those earliest impressions of a city of wonder: a little rural Dublin in the drumlins, well beyond the Pale, steeped and steeped in history.

Now comes the long and eagerly awaited listing of the buildings of Armagh by the UAHS, and it lives up to all expectations. Four authors each with their own specialist knowledge have collaborated to record and evaluate the present stock of buildings. Among them is Roger Weatherup, Curator of the Armagh County Museum, successor to George Paterson. The others are: Robert McKinstry, Ulster's first and still foremost conservation architect; Richard Oram, an investigator of Historic Buildings for DOE(NI); and Primrose Wilson, Chairman of this Society. The writing sets high standards of scholarship, observation and the detailed recording of the buildings and their history. The listing includes a complete survey of the stained glass in the city's churches by Colin Hatrick, the former Senior Inspector of Buildings for the DOE(NI), who has made a special study of the province's stained glass.

In addition there are six background essays covering aspects of the city's history; the contributors include Dr G O Simms, the late Archbishop of Armagh, on the old Cathedral; Damian Wood, Vice-Principal of St Patrick's College, on the building of St Patrick's Cathedral; and from Hugh Dixon, much missed friend and stalwart of the Society (now working in Northumbria), an essay on architects working in Armagh before 1900. The wealth of material

presented in the Society's new A5 book format, and illustrated with photographs of Armagh's buildings past and present as well as the reproductions of architects' original drawings makes this publication a compendium of all one should need to know about the architecture of Armagh.

My enthusiasm is only tempered by some minor cavils. I would have valued an historical outline of the development of the town to account for its concentric and mazy plan form and some illustration of that process in maps. The topographical map of County Armagh by J A Rocque (1760) is referred to in the text but not shown. The only map included, a folded insert at the back of the book, is too small in scale to be of much value.

These comments are minor reservations: the book opens with W R Rodgers' poem *Armagh*, an evocation of the flavour of this town 'of grey and equal stone...raised at a time when reason was all the rage' and is just one of the delights of this splendid publication. I will be sure to have it with me when next I set sail for the See of Armagh.

D.E.

**FOR CONSERVATION, RESTORATION, OR
CONVERSION OF OLD, HISTORIC OR
LISTED BUILDINGS, CONTACT**

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*Projects completed for the National Trust at: Castleward,
Derrymore, Rowallane, Springhill, Ardress, Mounistewart,
The Argory, Kearney Village.*

Activities 1991

The initial event of the year was a lecture by Mr Sean Nolan, Director of the Ulster Museum, describing the development of the Museum buildings over the years. Few realised the problems facing museums regarding changes in methods of display and developing the correct conditions for the safety of artefacts.

For our Annual General Meeting on 26 February, we returned to our former venue provided by the Construction Employers Federation Limited at 143 Malone Road, Belfast. The guest speaker was Mr George Mackey, Chief Executive of the Laganside Corporation, who described what was being done for the arts and architecture within the Laganside development.

On 10 March a party of members was treated to an unusual privilege of being allowed behind the scenes at the Belfast International Airport where they could appreciate the problems facing an architect engaged on such a project. Some of the partners of McAlister Armstrong & Partners were available to act as guides and we were all fascinated with the enormity of the scheme.

On the afternoon of Sunday, 14 April, the Society repeated the opening of Clondeboyce by kind permission of the Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava. She had in attendance a number of eminent personalities of the art world who delivered most erudite addresses regarding their own particular field. Members then had the opportunity of seeing the work of the Conservation Volunteers in the Estate.

Any activity planned and presented by Hugh Dixon is a success, and "Dixon's Northumbria" on the weekend of 31 May to 3 June, was no exception. Hugh had designed an itinerary which allowed members to appreciate many types of buildings. The tedious journey was more than compensated by what we saw. Hugh took us to castles and to some of the magnificent houses of the merchant princes of the North-East. The Childrens' Outing to Armagh Planetarium scheduled for the 22 June, had, unfortunately, to be cancelled due to lack of support. Whereas childrens' outings were much in demand a number of years ago the present generation does not appear to be so interested.

The visit to the Portballintrae and Bushmills area covered a wide selection of buildings from the prehistoric to the twentieth century. Following a short visit to Lissanduff members moved to Runkerry, one of the many houses built for the Macnaghten family in North Antrim. After a picnic, members moved to the Giant's Causeway School by Clough Williams-Ellis and then on to Dunderave where we were shown the interior by Sir Patrick and Lady Macnaghten.

"A Day by the Lower Bann" on the 3 August commenced with a visit to the Cistercian Abbey of Our Lady of Bethlehem, the former Portglenone House, built in 1823. Following a picnic at Moore Lodge members were guided around the house by Sir William Moore, whose family has occupied the site since the 17th Century. Members showed great interest in the Dove Cote which is one of the finest in the country. Next we admired Glandore, a well restored mid-Victorian Gothic house whose owner deserves warm congratulations on the work he has carried out.

The visit to Killyleagh Castle on the 17 August proved immensely popular and there was a long waiting list. Colonel Denis Rowan-Hamilton led a tour of the Castle from ground floor to the roof which had our members fascinated, and there was also an opportunity to see the gardens where so much restoration has recently taken place. After lunch members were welcomed to Ballytrim by Mr and Mrs Sam Cunningham. Following a talk describing the research the Cunninghams had carried out into the house's history, members were allowed to wander at will through the gardens, and to meet the pedigree Angora goats.

The visit to the "Riviera of the North" on the 21 September was a repeat of last year's outing to cater for the large numbers of members who were disappointed on that occasion. Those fortunate enough to attend were royally entertained to lunch by Mr Edward Haughey at Carpenham. Afterwards he guided the party round Ballyedmond Castle where he has provided an appropriate home for the marble staircase from Robinson & Cleaver.

A group of approximately 40 members visited Londonderry on Saturday, 5 October, where they were received by an erudite team consisting of Annesley Malley, planner, Brian Lacey, historian, Caroline Dickson, architect and Paddy Doherty, developer. Members were given a deep insight into the problems of modernising with sensitivity in an historic city such as Derry. The citizens of the Maiden City are hopeful that this can be achieved.

The Society's November lecture was presented, under the auspices of the Belfast Festival at Queens, by Maxwell Hutchinson, Past President of the Royal Institute of British Architects and Chairman of East Midlands Arts. The lecture took the form of an informal musical entertainment exploring the relationship between music and architecture with the aid of the grand piano, the synthesiser, the electric guitar and a box of electronic tricks. It proved to be an unorthodox but fascinating event. The Steam Train Event held on Sunday 3 November turned out to be memorable outing, consequently it is described in more detail elsewhere in the Newsletter.

The year proved an attractive one for those who attended outings and there was great demand to attend where popular private houses were included. This necessitated a ballot on a number of occasions, as no other means of making a fair selection has been devised.

The Delights of Steam

On Sunday 3 November 1991 members of the Society were invited to join in the fun of a steam train outing, organised by Historic Monuments and Buildings Environment Service DOE, with a steam train hired from the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland. The aim of the outing was to publicise the re-opening of Moira Railway Station, the oldest surviving railway station in Ulster.

The weather that morning was dry, bright and cool, ideal for viewing and photographing a steam train. Most passengers arrived well before the scheduled departure time (10.00hrs) and had the pleasure of watching the engine shunting around the station and taking on water. Some even turned up in period costume,

adding to the atmosphere, and late arrivals were pleased to find that the old lady had decided to leave in her own good time - none of that 10.00hrs nonsense!

With a sustained hiss of steam we were on our way. The train pulled smoothly out of the station. Wisps of steam floated past the carriage windows. Cameras clicked and videos whirred, as present-day hi-tech viewed the high technology of an earlier era. At first, through Newtownabbey and Whiteabbey, the speed was impressive. Then with the left turn and the hard climb up to Mossley we slowed dramatically, as the wheels searched for grip on this little used, leaf-strewn section of line. The climb proved to be a struggle - a steam and water guzzling struggle. Picking up speed again, and into Antrim for more shunting as we changed from the Derry to the Lisburn line, down the east side of Lough Neagh, we came to a halt before the junction with the main Belfast Dublin line. Through clouds of steam we could see crowds of spectators eagerly awaiting our arrival in Lisburn, for the start of the main event.

We waited. We were well behind schedule. There were more clouds of steam, it looked great, but we didn't move. We couldn't move. The lead plugs in the boiler had melted, and steam escaped into the firebox and put the fire out. No more steam! Disaster! Had the climb up to Mossley used up too much water?

As soon as RPSI advised the organisers of the seriousness of the situation we despatched an envoy, on foot, to break the news to the party at Lisburn. There was also a lot of feverish activity behind the scenes as the RPSI and NIR tried to arrange a replacement train, and to clear the broken-down train from the track. They succeeded, but not surprisingly it did take some time.

By the time everyone piled aboard the replacement train we were well over an hour behind schedule, and in modern (heated!) carriages powered by diesel engines. The tours at Lisburn, Moira and Lurgan stations had to be abandoned. Then, on arrival at Moira, we learned that one of the vintage buses that Ulsterbus had planned to lay on for the day had broken-down. "It never rains but it pours!"

Fortunately, the signal-box and the station at Moira were both open and there was a welcoming fire in the grate. The buildings looked extremely well with their recently restored fabric and colour scheme and interior displays, and it was marvellous to see the crowds on the platform.

So the day was full of 'surprises', but the basic aim of publicising the (re)opening of Moira station as an industrial monument, and celebrating the 150th anniversary of its original opening, was achieved. The station is open to the public, and the key may be collected from the Historic Monuments yard, on the opposite side of the level-crossing, during normal working hours. A guide-card is available, price 20p. Finally, the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland apologises for the failure of the engine on the day, and hope that this will not prevent you from travelling with them in future. HMBB apologises for any disappointment which was experienced, and thanks you for your tolerance.

Moira station was first opened on 8th November 1841, as part of the Lisburn to Lurgan extension of the earlier Belfast to Lisburn line, operated by the Ulster Railway Co. The building was closed in 1967.

OBITUARY

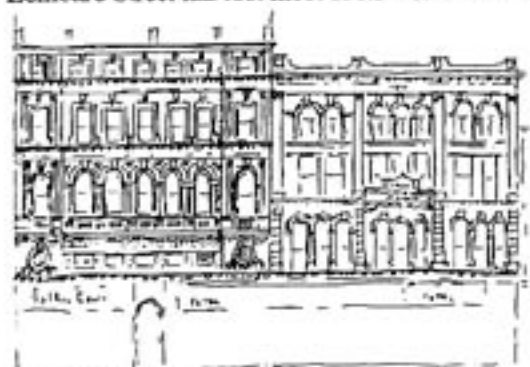
The last year has seen a revival of the terrorist's tactic of planting large bombs in the province's urban areas, causing extensive damage. Even when buildings can be repaired - as is normally the case - there is an unfortunate loss of historic fabric, and delays in receiving compensation combined with the commercial difficulties of trading in such circumstances, often militate against the kind of careful restoration one might find in England, and indeed against any kind of restoration.

On the night of March 14 1991 a firebomb attack was made on Robinson's Bar in Great Victoria Street, next-door-but-one to the famous Crown Bar. Its first and second floors were totally destroyed, and (although not obviously damaged by the fire) the front elevation was subsequently demolished, leading to speculation that yet another office development was planned for the "Golden Mile". Although work has not yet started, it is understood that reproduction of the Bar with its early Victorian facade is planned.

The Beresford Arms Hotel in Armagh's English Street was demolished in February 1991, having lain derelict since being ripped apart by an IRA bomb nearly twenty years earlier. A replacement building on the site, designed to house the Bank of Ireland, will involve reinstatement of the original facade.

Pottinger's Entry off Belfast's Ann Street had a chunky archway housed in a Victorian building that was demolished in July 1991, and although the arch has been rebuilt in the new building, it no longer has such a sympathetic setting, but one that is clearly of the 1990s in style.

The Irish Temperance League Buildings in Lombard Street Belfast, a distinctive stucco-fronted building of 1877 by Joseph Marsh where refreshments of "Superior Quality" were served, without intoxicants, was demolished in the summer of 1991. Until then little changed from its development in the 1870s, Lombard Street has lost most of its western side during the last five years.



Irish Temperance League building and its neighbour in Lombard Street, both demolished in 1991. The shopfronts were modern.

It is...a fallacy that the higher the building, the greater the employment generated. (Sir Charles Brett, in the course of a correspondence in the Belfast Telegraph concerning the building of office blocks).

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

The Society depends on an active membership for its effectiveness. Members can help in its work in many ways - by monitoring planning applications, for example, or drawing attention to undesirable developments. 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*).

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21. North Derry	Out of Print
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25. Rathfriland and Hilltown	£1.40
26. Bangor and Groomsport	Out of Print
27. Malone and Stranmillis	£7.50
28. Buildings of Armagh	£6.50

Orders for all the foregoing publications, and standing orders for future publications, may be sent to the Society at 185 Stranmillis Road, Belfast 9, and will be fulfilled subject to availability, and at the charges for postage and packing ruling at the date of order. Copies of the out-of-print publications are held in the Society's office, and the Secretary can make photocopies on request.

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