



IHBC South West Region covering: Avon, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Scilly Isles, Somerset & Wiltshire

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Railway Heritage Recognised

Network Rail plans to rationalise the signalling of the railway network into 12 regional centres effectively spell the end for manual signal boxes by 2030. The traditional signal box with its distinctive glazed upper storey containing the various levers and mechanical interlocking system hidden below will therefore become consigned to preserved lines after over 150 years of distinguished service. English Heritage have worked with Network Rail to carry out an assessment of signal boxes across the country with the objective of recommending 'good representative samples of the main pre-grouping (i.e. pre-1923) types for listing. 50 examples were submitted to the Secretary of State for consideration and to date 26 have received grade II listed status. Five of the signal boxes are located in the south west region on the lines of the former Great Western (GWR), London & South Western (LSWR) and Somerset & Dorset Joint (SD) railways. John Minnis' full report 'Railway Signal Boxes: A Review' (English Heritage research report series no. 28-2012) is available from: <http://services.english-heritage.org.uk/ResearchReportsPdfs/028-2012WEB.pdf>.

Malcolm James (with thanks to Alan Strickland)



Bournemouth West Junction signal box dates from 1882 and is a good example of the LSWR 'type 3' structure with its tall elegant form and distinctive toplights above the horizontal sliding sashes (image © Alan Elliott 1992)

Heritage Funding - A Glimmer of Light on the Horizon

Media has incredible power to influence our thought processes and decision making, especially where the facts may be unclear or otherwise 'obscured'. So depending on which statistics you believe, the UK's toughest recession post-1945 appears to be officially over - or is it? Many of us will be familiar with still empty shops on the High Street and a glut of commercial properties, especially in those market towns experiencing a disproportionately high level of unemployment. Factor in that many of these buildings are poorly maintained despite being listed and the picture does not appear as rosy as the economic analysts would have us believe. It is therefore heartening to hear about the first South West Heritage Funding Fair taking place in Exeter on 20 June 2014. Organised by the South West Association of Preservation Trusts (SWAPT) under the banner "*Finding the money for buildings now and in the future*", the event will provide the opportunity for anyone from churches, building preservation trusts, parish and town councils and other organisations to attend a range of workshops and talk with prospective funders on a one-to-one basis. SWAPT Treasurer Camilla Hale explained that specific emphasis will be given to "*helping organisations develop effective financial strategies for future income generation, as well as addressing how organisations also encourage and involve the community in the preservation and sense of ownership of their heritage buildings*". Funders already signed up for the event include the Architectural Heritage Fund, Big Lottery Fund, Heritage Lottery Fund, English Heritage, Pilgrim Trust and the Viridor Credits Environmental Company. Attendance costs £20 per person for preservation trust members and £40 for others, including refreshments. The full programme with workshop options and booking information are available at: <http://www.stroudpreservationtrust.org.uk/swapt-heritage-fair.html> or e-mail Camilla Hale/ Mary Boucher at sptrust30@gmail.com. Malcolm James

AGM Exeter 18 July 2014

The next IHBC South West AGM will be held at St Stephens church, Exeter on Friday 18 July 2014. The venue is of special interest given its Anglo-Saxon origins and recently completed renovation works. Full details of the event will be sent out by branch representatives next month.

http://www.parishofcentralexeter.co.uk/st_stephens.htm

Kate Baxter-Hunter



The Church of St Stephen on Exeter High Street (to south of cathedral) (© Parish Central Exeter)

Historically employed in buildings from the 15th through to the 19th century, the term 'lime ash floor' encompasses a wide range of floor types and constituent materials. Their light-weight construction coupled with good load-bearing, aesthetic and possibly fire-resistant qualities made them ideal for upper storeys. Examples of lime ash for ground floor construction are typically found in storage areas rather than in reception rooms.

The materials used in constructing a lime ash floor depended on local traditions and included combinations of lime (burnt in coal or wood fired kilns), sand or loam, broken brick and brick dust, gypsum (typically burnt from alabaster during the 17th century) and even horse dung. Lime and gypsum act as 'binders' for the aggregates whilst the 'pozzolanic' properties of brick dust and ash containing burnt clays accelerate the chemical set of the floor slab by reacting with the lime. In addition, any hydraulic lime or gypsum present adds water-setting characteristics to the mix.

Lime ash floors were traditionally finished smooth and often egg white or curdled milk would be trowelled into the surface to give it a polish and make it water repellent. These materials contain a protein from the classification 'albumin' (spelt 'albumen' in the case of egg white). Albumin reacts with lime to form water-repellent chemicals which are bound into the surface of the floor. It is similar to the reaction used in tempera paintwork to bind the pigments into a mural surface.

For upper floors, the lime ash floor was usually constructed over a bed of reeds loosely laid across the joists or on lath fixed to the joists with a layer of straw on top of the lath. The lack of a rigid connection between the floor slab and the structure gave inherent flexibility and allowed a degree of movement to be accommodated. For ground floors the thickness of the floor slab was typically around 2-3" (i.e. 50-75 mm) and their polished water repellent surfaces were ideal for storage purposes but could be decorative as well (hence their occasional use in the main living rooms).

Many historic lime ash floors have unfortunately been lost during

"renovation" works in order to lay a concrete floor slab over a damp proof membrane. Although compliant with Building Regulations requirements, such impervious floor slabs are unsuitable for historic buildings because residual ground moisture is forced to the periphery; where it manifests itself as rising dampness.

Repairing an existing lime ash floor

Replication of the original constituent materials is virtually impossible given that the local lime kilns which produced lime incorporating the fuel ash no longer exist. 'Reverse-engineering' of a sample slab mix is also difficult because many of the constituents are inter-reacting to form a cocktail of chemical components. For small patch repairs to an existing floor it is worth considering the use of a more authentic range of ingredients in the knowledge that these will harmonise more readily with the existing floor and be less intrusive.

Option 1

This is a mix of lime putty, sand and pozzolans. The lime putty and sand are pre-mixed at a ratio of 3 parts coarse sand to 1 part lime putty and this premix is then 'knocked-up' on site with the pozzolans. Pozzolans are now manufactured on a commercial scale and examples such as 'Argical' are highly reactive compared to their forebears. Four parts of ready mixed lime mortar to 1 part Argical and 0.5 parts by volume of coal ash will yield an authentic mix for repair purposes. Whilst the coal ash makes for a more historically correct material, it could be reduced in volume if bulk sourcing proves difficult. The pozzolans start reacting with the lime in the mortar mix after around 10 days and the reaction usually takes around one month to complete. The floor should be protected during this curing period but will gain sufficient strength to be walked on after only a few days.

Option 2

This utilises a mix of a Natural Hydraulic Lime (NHL), sand and coal ash similar to the mixes trialled at Petworth House in Sussex from 2000 onwards. The mix would be 2.5 parts coarse sand to 1 part French NHL3.5 and 1 part coal ash. Again the proportions of coal ash can be reduced if necessary. The floor should be hard enough to walk on after a few days and its

initial hardening process is quicker than Option 1 in the first few weeks. This may have a bearing on the chosen option and for an even quicker set Hanson NHL5 could be used as it has a quicker rate of set than NHL3.5. As with laying any floor screed, the lime ash repairs require tamping and floating to a flat surface level with the surrounding retained floor. The surface will also need to be trowelled to a shine, using egg-white to lubricate the process and provide water repellent properties. Some types of olive soap can be used instead of albumen.

For more extensive repairs and/ or new floors it may be possible to incorporate an insulating layer under the finishing screed using expanded clay aggregates. This makes the replacement floor more akin to a modern 'limecrete floor', the typical constituents of which are as follows:

- A layer of geotextile membrane;
- 100 mm approx. of loose-fill insulating expanded clay or recycled foamed glass insulant;
- Another layer of geotextile membrane (to prevent slab 'slumping' into clay);
- 100 mm approx. slab of limecrete (expanded clay mixed with NHL5);
- Finishing screed of 50 mm approx. based on NHL5 and sand.

The composition of the replacement floor will depend on the depth available but the screed can still be tamped, floated and trowelled to a smooth finish and polished with olive soap/ egg white. Alternatively, regardless of the overall composition of the new floor it is possible to exchange the 'limecrete' screed with the more traditional 'patch repair' formulas set out earlier. The choice of materials will invariably be guided by a number of factors, e.g. the speed of set required and whether the materials used for any repairs can deviate from the historic formulae. Note that works to floors in a listed building will require formal planning and listed building consents from the local council, from whom advice should be sought in advance of any work commencing.

Mike Wye
Director, Mike Wye & Associates Ltd.
<http://limecrete.net/index.html>

NB. Mike Wye runs specialist materials training days for IHBC members. Please see his website.

Planning Appeal: 1 Crofter's Court, Filham, Ivybridge, Devon (APP/K1128/D/13/2209149)

The owner of a stone barn conversion sought planning permission to replace some mahogany stained and painted double glazing units with white plastic uPVC fenestration of comparable sizes. South Hams District Council refused consent in September 2013 on the grounds that the proposed development would adversely impact the character and appearance of the (unlisted) building and the setting of the nearby Grade II listed former farmhouse known as Middle Filham.

In dismissing the appeal, the inspector considered that the replacement of the timber windows with plastic double glazing would "cause considerable harm to the building (the original conversion of which he judged to be "well-considered and designed") and would not represent good design as required by the council's policies". The inspector noted that whilst other former agricultural buildings within the curtilage of Middle Filham had also been converted using plastic windows, these were not examples of good design and in no way set any precedent. The contrast between the "rough" stonework of the historic buildings and the smooth, mechanical appearance of modern plastic was highlighted as "not complimentary" to the overall setting.

Maureen Pearce

Cotham and Redland Conservation Area. An Article 4 Direction in respect of permitted development rights for the demolition of front garden walls and the formation of off-road parking was confirmed in September 2012.

The council's supplementary planning guidance on off-street residential parking in conservation areas (PAN6) places restrictions on the maximum access width, namely 2-3 metres and less than one third of the overall frontage. In addition, original features such as gates and piers should be re-used within the new design where practicable.

The inspector noted that the proposals for the vehicular access had been "sensitively designed in accordance with the principles set out in PAN6", with the opening being "modest" within the context of the property's frontage and retention of over 50% of the garden and the gate piers. opening. Both appeals were allowed because the inspector concluded that the proposed development would not cause harm to the character or appearance of the designated conservation area.

Kingsley Fulbrook

Planning Appeal: 47-49 Worcester Street, Gloucester (APP/U1620/A/13/2207460)

The appeal was made against Gloucester City Council's refusal to allow removal of a shop front and other alterations including new uPVC windows as part of a residential conversion. The key issue under consideration was whether the proposed development preserved or enhanced the character or appearance of the Worcester Street Conservation Area.

47-49 Worcester Street comprise a pair of mid-terraced three storey properties, prominently sited opposite a number of listed buildings. Although the traditional shop front had been replaced with an unsympathetic modern version at some time previous to the subject planning application, the upper storey windows were timber framed sliding-sash types of likely period origins. These were subsequently removed by the appellant

and replaced with outward opening uPVC double glazed units and having "a heavy looking crucifix design which provides horizontal rather than vertical proportions". The inspector considered the new fenestration to be "incongruous and uncharacteristic of the conservation area as a whole". The design and smooth finish of the half-glazed uPVC doors was also highlighted as inappropriate and "compounds the harmful impact of the alterations to the fenestration".



In dismissing the appeal, the inspector concluded that the appellant's "unsympathetic alterations" should be reversed and any modern replacements should be in the style and materials of the original.

Charlotte Lewis

Pink Cottages: Too Bright for the Seaside!

Readers will no doubt recall the debate surrounding the external redecoration of Grade II listed Lantern Cottage in Kennford, Devon as featured in *Bulletin* 25. The repainted pink scheme was judged to be particularly vibrant and "the wrong type of pink".

The owners of an 18th century Grade II listed dwelling in Sussex appear to have opted for a similarly fashionable and bright shade of pink - with predictable result at appeal! Despite their claim that the colour was "appropriate to a seaside location", the inspector felt that it was strident in contrast to the very pale pink colour wash evident from earlier schemes (and the muted colours of neighbouring properties). Dismissing the appeal he ruled the scheme "discordant and an unwelcome intrusion into the setting of other listed buildings and the conservation area".

Old Castle Road is located in the Wyke Regis area of Weymouth and runs along the northern shore of Portland harbour. Large detached and semi-detached two storey properties of 1930s origin characterise the area. The remains of a Tudor coastal defence fort stand at nearby Sandsfoot Castle, with the adjacent Sandsfoot Gardens forming a natural boundary between the fort (Grade II* listed and a Scheduled Ancient Monument) and the road.



Sandsfoot Gardens looking south towards the fort with Portland Harbour beyond

Back in July 2007, Weymouth & Portland Borough Council received a planning application for 39 Old Castle Road, a private residence standing next to Sandsfoot Gardens. The proposed development included 'renovation' of the semi-detached house into two flats and construction of a new three storey dwelling in the grounds flanking Sandsfoot Gardens. Refusal for the development was issued in October 2007 and the applicant subsequently lodged an appeal (ref. APP/P1235/A/07/2061540). The inspector upheld the appeal in May 2008 on the grounds that *"none of the design, scale or siting of the proposed extension (i.e. the new dwelling with its modernist, rectilinear form) would harm the character or appearance of the area"*.

However, on completion the 'extension' raised considerable concerns from local Councillors and the public alike over who approved the scheme. Consequently this development was widely perceived as giving "planning" a bad name in the area.

Whilst the effect on the setting of a listed building was not included in the Council's specific reasons for refusal, the design of



View of development from Old Castle Road (top) and the "sculptural form" of the extension as seen from Sandsfoot Gardens in 2010 (bottom)

the extension was raised as part of the consideration in the case. The Council's written representations to the Planning Inspectorate stated that:

- The approach adopted in this case did not adequately reflect the character of the house, either as one of a pair of semi-detached properties, or having regard to the character of development on this section of Old Castle Road;
- That a siege tower design concept has little to do with a Tudor Castle that was designed specifically to accommodate a battery of cannons;
- Of particular concern is the mass and height of the proposal, its manner of connection to the existing building and its overall visual impact.
- Through its width, depth, height, location and choice of sheet materials, the extension would visually overwhelm the existing dwelling and introduce an unbalanced and cramped appearance.

The Council also raised concerns over on-street car parking and the effect of the proposed development on the adjacent trees in Sandsfoot Gardens. These concerns were dismissed and the rationale applied by the inspector appears highly questionable even today. Whilst the appeal decision seemed perverse to the Council's planning department, it was perhaps the inspector's specific reference

to the appellants having *"previously received awards for their architecture"* that gave rise to additional concerns. The local perception of the decision was that the Inspector, an architect, was trying to give the benefit of the doubt to the appellant and fellow practitioners. In his decision, the Inspector noted that the extension would be *"markedly different from its neighbours"* and that *"its position at the end of the row would be unique and it would be set back from the road"*.

In a formal response to the Council, the Planning Inspectorate stated that *"the reasoning within this decision does not give a full insight in to the basis upon which the inspector reached his conclusions, particularly with regard to the effects of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area. I can only agree that the extension, as built, cannot reasonably be said to fit the character of the area. As to the appellants' record as an architect, this is not relevant to the decision, the quality of the scheme being the important factor. This was clearly an irrelevant factor, not a material condition and should not have been included in the decision letter. However of more concern is clearly the impact of the extension on No 39 Old Castle Road itself. I can only agree that on this occasion, both the reasoning within the decision and the development itself falls some way short of what we all would expect. For this I offer my full and unreserved apology"*.

The letter made clear that those involved in the decision would be made aware of their short comings and the need to learn from them. Clearly, until the extension was complete the justification for the Council's concerns may not have been self-evident, so complaining to the Planning Inspectorate was never going to reverse the decision. However, the message would seem to be that if IHBC members have **justifiable** cause for concern over appeal decisions then this should be flagged to senior management. This will contribute to the learning process for all and is of course much cheaper than Judicial Review. Unfortunately, if built, you have to live with the consequences, regardless of how useful it may serve as an example of how not to do it!

Norton St Philip, Somerset

Located in the Mendip countryside to the south of Bath, the village of Norton St Phillip has an impressive 15th century church, several fine stone houses, cottages, gazebos and even an Elizabethan dovecote. The George Inn with its distinctive stone plinth and timber framing is reputed to be one of the oldest public houses in England. The Duke of Monmouth narrowly escaped assassination whilst staying here before the Battle of Sedgemoor in 1685 and the resulting skirmish through the village proved costly to his forces.

The population of the village increased to over 1,000 during the second half of the 20th century, but was coupled with marked reductions in local services. However, the latest development by Bloor Homes off the High Street has gone some way to reverse these fortunes with new retail and local amenities sensitively incorporated alongside housing in an eclectic mix of architectural styles. With



clear echoes of Poundbury in its layout, massing and streetscape 'punctuation', the 'Fortescue Fields' development is generally accepted as a welcome boost for the village. All of the architectural stone for the project was supplied by Hanson Bath & Portland Stone and includes Box Ground and Hartham Park sources.

Malcolm James (images © QMJ Publishing Ltd.)
<http://bloorhomes.com/developments/>

Gloucestershire

In March 2013 Gloucester City Council set up a City Centre Investment Fund identifying a number of initiatives that would lead to an increase in the attractiveness and viability of the City Centre; including a historic grants scheme for vacant buildings and lighting of historic

structures. One of the schemes was to clad 'ugly' structures and £150,000 was allocated to this proposal. To deliver on this, an informal officer group was set up comprising Urban Design, Historic Building and Environmental disciplines. No strict criteria were applied for choosing the buildings, but it was recognised that those dating from the 1970s and 1980s were particular cases in point. The pilot project is Kings Walk Car Park on Eastgate Street and if successful will lead onto further schemes being completed. The target completion date for the scheme is September 2015.



The example below shows the building's frontage altered by the use of a variety of panels which can be different colours, styles and textures; with a 'chameleon panel' enabling them to change colour under different external light levels.



Charlotte Lewis (PhotoShop image © BBC 2014)
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-gloucestershire-26834426>

Over in the Cotswolds, the early 18th century country house known as 'Williamstrip Park' at Coln St Aldwyn has recently been extended and a new development added in the form of an indoor pool pavilion within the grounds. The extension replaces unsympathetic additions made to the house during the 20th century and includes an internal hall with elegant cantilevered stone staircase. The pool pavilion is designed as a classical temple with an interior inspired by



The new internal hall at Williamstrip Park with its elegant cantilevered staircase in Portland stone: note Bassae and Corinthian orders

Pompeii and Herculeum. Construction of both elements utilises a wide range of natural stone including Portland, Kilkenny and Moleanus limestones, statuary marble and Connemara marble. Architect Craig Hamilton has received widespread praise for his restrained and cerebral approach in creating a natural overall effect with painstaking attention to detail.



Interior of the new pool pavilion highlighting the classical proportions and continuous dado formed of Kilkenny Irish limestone

In nearby Bibury, the derelict cottage at No.29 The Square (as featured in *Bulletin 21*) has been transformed. Repair works have progressed well over the intervening two years and the Grade II listed property is now almost ready for reoccupation.



Malcolm James
(Williamstrip images © QMJ Publishing Ltd.)

New Access Staircase at Royal William Yard, Devonport

The Royal William Yard was designed by Sir John Renny to supply the Royal Navy's requirements for beer, rum, ship's biscuits and cured meat. Built between 1826 and 1832, the Grade I listed site remained in continuous use until the 1990s and has subsequently been regenerated by developer Urban Splash to provide a wide range of accommodation including residential, shops, offices and restaurants.

Local architectural practice Gillespie Yunnice Architects of Totnes have just received an RIBA South West award for its bold contemporary design of a new steel staircase at the yard. Practice manager Lotti Jullien explained that an access route linking the 'dead end' of the yard (by implicit virtue of its naturally defensive, peninsula location) with the green space of the peninsula above has always been a key part of the regeneration masterplan. The staircase was designed to emulate some of the excitement and surprise of journeying along the South West Coast Path; this journey being very different dependent on the direction of travel. Panoramic Views of the Tamar Estuary across into Cornwall are concealed until reaching a glass viewing platform. In contrast, the entrance from the open space is through a steel 'portal' housed within a sunken ruin of an old military store.

Lotti Jullien <http://www.gyarchitects.co.uk>



Clockwise from top-left: View of staircase providing a link between the green space beyond the high retaining wall (right) and the Royal William Yard (left) with Devonport beyond; staircase at night showing integral lighting; view west over Tamar Estuary to Mount Edgcombe, Cornwall (images © Richard Downer)

Porthmeor Studios Update



<http://www.bsijwtrust.co.uk/porthmeorrenovaa.html>
<http://www.longkentish.com/projects.php?js=1#>

The £4 million restoration project at Porthmeor Studios in St Ives, Cornwall has been short-listed for a RIBA award with the completion of repairs to studio 18. This important Grade II* listed building provides workspace for local fishermen and artists. Internationally recognised artists who have worked at the studios include Ben Nicholson, Patrick Heron and Francis Bacon.

Alyson Cooper (image © Graham Gaunt).

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