



IHBC SOUTH WEST BULLETIN AUTUMN 2023

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1. IHBC News

The IHBC is continuing to investigate the benefits of securing Charter status. The Petition for Charter is available on the web hub.

The IHBC is continuing its investigation of the costs and benefits of securing Charter Status. It is possible to contribute to the scoping survey for IHBC members gauging views and opinions. Constructive and frank comments are welcome, as they will help explore the views on this issue.

2. IHBC SW Events

IHBC SW Draft Cob/Earth Day

This event has now been delayed until 2024 but is still in development and may now be in Exeter.

It is likely to include speakers on Historic earth building, geology of earth building, clay building technology, cob repairs and Plymouth Universities Cobauge Project.

IHBC SW Retrofitting

In association with IHBC Central we have organised a day conference on retrofitting with Prof John Edwards. This will be at Bridgwater Arts Centre (a grade 1 listed building) on Wednesday the 22nd of November 2023. Details can be found at https://www.ihbc.org.uk/branches/s_west/index.html and click on the events tab.

IHBC South West Branch Training Day and AGM Retrofitting Traditional and Historic Buildings with Prof John Edwards

Tickets

£45 for IHBC members

£55 for non - members

Includes Refreshment and Buffet Lunch

Details:

Bridgwater Arts Centre, part of a grade 1 listed building with a pay and display car park nearby and with Bridgwater train station 15-minutes' walk away

What's included:

- IHBC Toolbox on Retrofit
- Sustainable maintenance and repair that improve performance
- Applying standards such as BS7913, BS EN 16883, PAS 2035 and PAS2038
- Roles and responsibilities – different perspectives

Indicative Programme

9.30 Registration and Coffee

10.00 Introduction by the Chair

10.05 Session One

11.00 Tea /Coffee

11.15 Session two

12.30 Lunch

13.30 Session three

14.30 Q & A Discussion

15.00 Branch AGM

3. No. 9 Fore Street Chard

It is not often we have a building study to report on in the Bulletin and it would be interesting to receive more similar stories from member to share good practice on experience in the South West or further afield of saving buildings at risk.

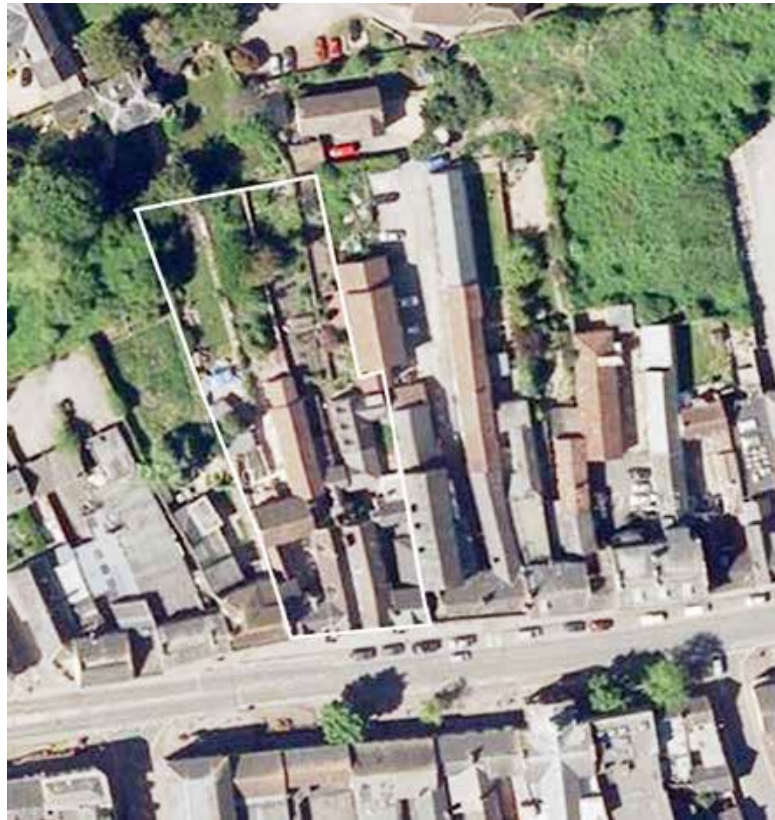
No 9 Fore Street is part of a grade 1 listed building at risk. The whole is 7 to 13. This part was in private ownership and had been the subject of applications for subdivision into flats, which were dismissed at appeal.

Somerset Council purchased it with the aid of grant funding and immediately leased it to the Somerset Building Preservation Trust early in 2023.

The project is at the early stages of evaluation and feasibility and there are urgent actions to undertake initially to remove asbestos and deal with rainwater damage.

So far a report on the property has been produced in 2015 by Keystone, Exeter as part of a project undertaken with Jo Hibbert of Levitate Architects to survey, analysis and provide an options appraisal. A measured survey has also been produced as an initial evidence base for understanding. The report was commissioned by South Somerset District Council.

The need for an options appraisal was driven by the situation of number 9 whose poor condition and unoccupied nature have led to its inclusion in the English Heritage national Heritage at Risk Register.



Pic 1. Aerial View showing property outlined



Pic. 2 7 - 13 Fore Street elevation

7A-13 Fore Street has medieval origins and may have been a single 13th century burgage plot, later divided into two (typical of later medieval development) or two plots from the outset. No documentary evidence to indicate who occupied the burgage plot or plots has been found before the late 16th century. It can be assumed that a house or houses of high status would have existed in this location, fronting the market place.

Many properties in the town needed rebuilding after the fire of 1577. It is not known if No's 7A-13 needed reconstruction. A 1602 survey of manor properties refers to many 'newe built' properties, including the chambers, stables and outhouses of the Lyon Inn (the hall and kitchen seem not to have been rebuilt) and tenements in High Street. Even when houses are not described as newly built, rents were to be improved suggesting that the buildings had been recently upgraded. Several of the properties are described as having substantial land: meadow, orchard, and gardens.

Very little documentary information has been discovered about the building group in the 18th century. The courtroom ceiling contains a date of 1749 with the initials GII for King George II. Judging from the fabric, the building now known as 13A, brick with sash windows in its east elevation, was built or rebuilt in the late 18th or early 19th century.

The origins of the courtroom were investigated and the key view is that it evolves from a grand great chamber or hall, signifying his high status, both as a property of a wealthy merchant and likely to hold key positions in the borough. It is considered that in the 17th century a great open hall of the medieval period, as a multi-purpose space for communal living and eating in common, was an archaic element in merchant and most gentry's status houses. The emphasis in domestic planning by that date was on rooms with specialist functions and on privacy. It may well have at this time been adapted as the occasional courtroom with assizes occurring infrequently, once or twice a year in Chard.

A colourwash representation of the Fore Street front of the building group dated 1843 (Pic 4.) has proved an important document in analyzing subsequent changes to the front elevation.



Pic 3. South elevation of Courtroom block circa 1900



Pic 4. The south elevation circa 1840's

Into the 20th century the archives of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) show repeated anxieties about the condition of Nos 7-9 and, particularly, the court room plasterwork, throughout the 20th century.

SPAB intervened at intervals with the objective of encouraging, and sometimes specifying, sympathetic repair and avoiding losses of valuable historic fabric. In the 1930s the Society was concerned that interior fittings of interest would be sold or neglected. So much so that in the 1930's they investigated buying the property, but to no avail.

In 1975 the building group was listed and in 1976, Commander Williams, a Somerset building historian well-known for his publications on vernacular buildings, undertook an historical survey of Nos. 7A-9 inclusive, illustrated with sketch plans. In 1979, and Leonard Hoskins, a local historian, published a short pamphlet on the building.

In the early 1990s Royal Life aquired a 25-year fully-repairing lease on No 9 and during their lease the property was bought by Bradley Management who chose to surrender the lease and pay for dilapidations.

More recently in 2003, major conservation work was undertaken on the court room, the repairs carried out by Carrek Ltd and the rest of No 9 was repaired.

In 2004 Bradley Management commissioned a report on No 9 from the Bath Archaeological Trust in connection with an application to redevelop No 9.

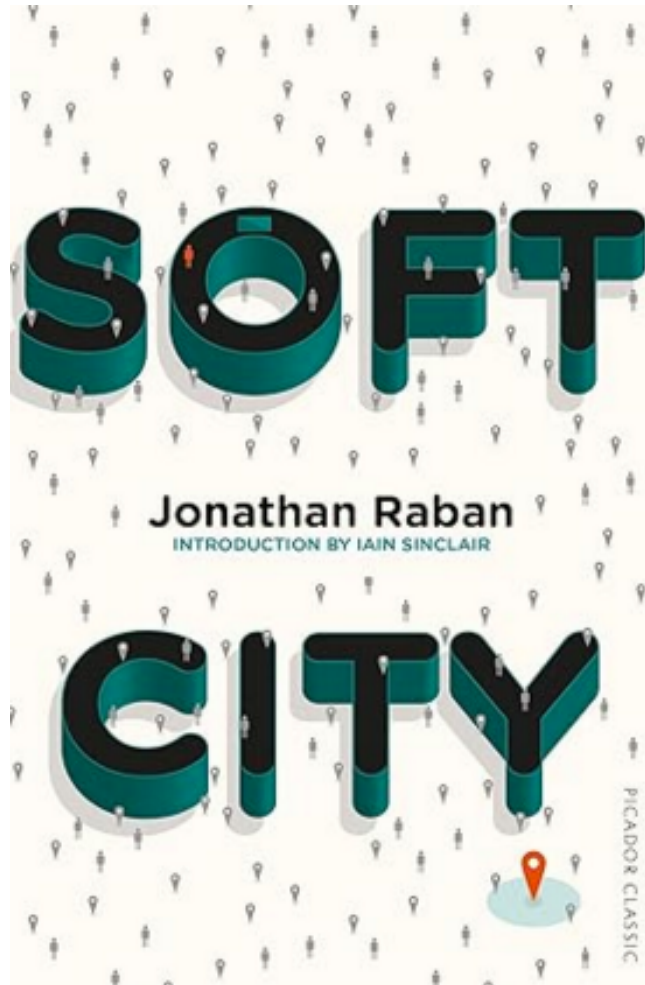
Permission was granted for the conversion of the ancillary rear wing of No 9 into four small residential units in 2004, the work done in 2009. The application to redevelop the main range of No 9, between the Fore Street frontage and the court room (residential above a lock-up shop) , was refused by South Somerset District Council and rejected on appeal in 2010 on grounds of impact on a Grade 1 building and the opinion that the proposal would have a detrimental effect on the living conditions of residents. No 9, including the court room, is currently disused and deprived of a motive for maintenance.

In 2010 the whole building was added to the Register of Heritage at Risk.



Plan 1 Provisional development plan by J Thorpe Keystone

4. Books



I have just finished this book and wholly recommend, while not directly heritage it covers a wide range of ideas and thoughts that are related.

Jonathan Raban's *Soft City*, although dating from the early 1970's is a compelling exploration of Urban Life, and a classic in its understanding of the city and living in the modern city. It is equally relevant today in the even more overcrowded planet.

The introduction is from the renowned Psycho-geographer Ian Sinclair.

In the city we can live deliberately: inventing and renewing ourselves, carving out journeys, creating private spaces. But in the city we are also afraid of being alone, clinging to the structures of daily life to ward off the chaos around us.

How is it that the noisy, jostling, overwhelming metropolis leaves us at once so energized and so fragile? In *Soft City*, Jonathan Raban, one of our most acclaimed novelists and travel writers seeks to find out.

Bulletin Editors Comment

This is the quarterly Bulletin for the IHBC SW Branch. It looks to highlight relevant news and best practice in the South West and things of interest from elsewhere.

I would welcome contributions from members in the South West as the best way to make this Bulletin relevant and worthwhile. I look forward to receive contributions on any topic, be it buildings, people or anything else members feel might be relevant and of interest. Please attach relevant photographs with contribution as these help make the Bulletin of visual interest and saves a lot of words!

Please note that Bulletin is made up from a variety of Contributor's and the Editor holds no responsibility for the viewpoints expressed or information provided.

