

Conservation in Nottinghamshire

SPRING 1995

The Nottinghamshire Building Preservation Trust Ltd.

COVER ILLUSTRATION

By Tim Kellet, RIBA

By Tim Kellet, RIBA

Original Boots' Shopfront:
Pelham St.,
Nottingham

(See page 3)

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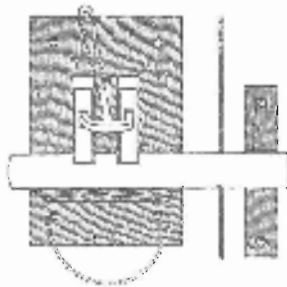


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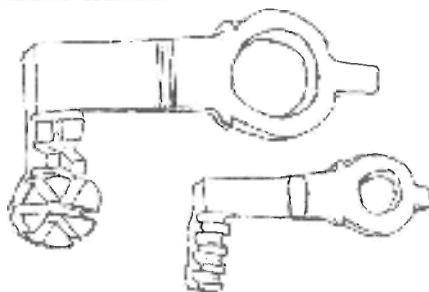
THE KEY TO THE PROBLEM

Part 3: Roman Locks

THE ROMANS IMPROVED the simple sliding bolt of the Greeks by incorporating elements of the Egyptian dropping tumbler mechanism. This added security, and was an idea widely adopted throughout the classical world. The characteristic T-shaped key, with its turned-back extensions, has been found on many ancient sites. It was passed through a vertical slit in the door, turned, and engaged in slots in the tumblers so that they could be lifted. This allowed the bolt to be pulled back by an arrangement of crossed cords tied to the bolt and passed through holes in the door.

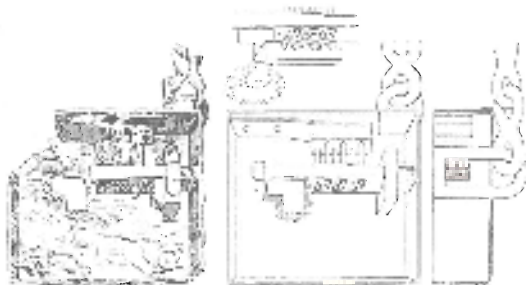


This variant of the Egyptian lock was further improved by the Romans when they made it from metal instead of wood and added a spring to give a more positive force to the tumblers than just gravity. The whole mechanism became more compact and keys were much smaller. The locks were generally of iron and so most of them have rusted away. But the keys were bronze and numbers have survived.



Although many people may be familiar with these

Although many people may be familiar with these Roman "finger ring" keys, they may be less certain of their operation. The drawing makes this clear: the "bit" of the key was entered into an L- or T-shaped slot in the face of the lock, turned until it engaged with the slots in the bolt, lifted to clear the tumblers and the key then slid sideways to withdraw the bolt.



— George and Val Oliphant.

NOTTS IN THE NEWS AGAIN

Bingham Town Scheme Reported

THE LAST NEWSLETTER reported that Newark had featured strongly in two successive numbers of *Context*, the journal of the Association of Conservation Officers. In the succeeding number of *Context* last autumn was a further report on local matters; this time on Bingham by Tony Player of Rushcliffe Borough Council and Charles Wagner of English Heritage. Nottinghamshire is obviously making itself a reputation in this field.

The Bingham scheme has been a new departure in that it has been allotted a high budget to be given in grants over a short period, by contrast with the low-budget long-term schemes which have been normal elsewhere. £20 000 from English Heritage, £10 000 from Nottinghamshire and £10 000 from Rushcliffe made up an annual budget of £40 000, which is high for a small town like Bingham. Extensive publicity and public involvement, and personal visits by Tony Player to all eligible property-owners, got the scheme off to a quick start. And the momentum has been maintained so that after less than five years all the problem buildings have been tackled.

The intensive methods used might not be practicable in a much larger conservation area, like Nottingham or Newark, but they certainly seem to have worked in Bingham. This may prove the model to follow for similar sized Town Schemes elsewhere in the country.



HARRY JOHNSON AWARDS 1994

FOR THE RECORD, the winners were as follows:

Winner:

Buttercross Veterinary Centre
Long Acre, Bingham.
Owner: Atkins & Beadle
Long Cross, Bingham.
Owner: Atkins & Beadle
Architect: Smith, Wooley.

Winner:

15 Elderly Persons Flats and Bungalows
Negus Court, Cromwell Crescent,
Lambley
Owner: Nene Housing Society Ltd.
Architect: Fellows Hallett Associates

Highly Commended:

New Church Centre
St Helen's Church, Burton Joyce.
For St Helen's Parochial Church Council
Architect: Forbes R. Mutch

A NEW LEASE OF LIFE

Scheme for Boughton Pumping Station

AFTER YEARS OF REDUNDANCY and neglect the Blackburn Engine House at Boughton Pumping Station faces a bright new future.

This fine Edwardian listed building was designed by W. B. Sturt and built in 1905 for the City of Nottingham Water Company. It was one of a number of pumping stations built to extract water from the sandstone aquifer. In the late 1960s the enormous triple-expansion steam engine became redundant and was scrapped, being replaced by modern pumping equipment housed in the smaller Davey Engine House (also a listed building).

The Blackburn building remained unused for over twenty years. During this time many attempts were made to find a new use, one of the most interesting being a proposal for a motor cycle museum in 1987. Unfortunately, Severn Trent Water's needs always constrained potential uses and none of the proposals came to anything. Continued disuse inevitably brought deterioration.

Further deterioration was caused and the threat of even greater disaster presented by coal-mining subsidence. One minor building on the site was lost to this and the Blackburn Engine House itself seriously cracked.

Fortunately, in 1992 Ollerton and Boughton Parish Councils started a chain of events that rescued the building from the brink. They set up an initial meeting attended by a large number of interested parties, which established a Working Group to investigate ways of saving the building. Their initiative welded a partnership between the Parish, District and County Councils, Severn Trent Water, and the local business community, and led to a viable scheme of re-use.

The Pumping House will be converted to contain offices, workshops and recreational facilities, all using the sustainable energy principle. The whole complex is to be heated and powered by an innovative wood chip power plant fuelled by waste from surrounding Sherwood Forest. This exciting scheme was recently the winner of £1m in the first Rural Challenge competition.

Contact: The Conservation Section,
Newark and Sherwood District Council,
01 636 605 111



NEW NATIONAL JOURNAL

MARCH 1995 SAW PUBLICATION of the first issue of *Journal of Architectural Conservation*. This was announced as a major new journal with a scope including all aspects of architectural conservation.

Dr David Watt is editor, under the guidance of an advisory board containing several names familiar in the field of conservation. Sir Bernard Feilden is Patron. The journal will be published three times a year, and contributions are now being invited for the first few issues.

This is a welcome announcement, for the new journal will fill a distinct gap in the literature available, providing authoritative coverage of both academic and practical subjects.

Contact: Donhead Publishing,
28 Southdean Gardens,
Wimbledon,
London SW19 6NU

COVER NOTES

Boots 1903 Corporate Image Is Exemplar For New Design Guide

THE FRONT OF THIS ISSUE is a reproduction of the cover of Nottingham City Council's new Shopfront Design Guide. It shows the front of Boots 1903 shop on Pelham Street, Nottingham. This design, by local architect Albert Nelson Bromley, became the model for future Boots department stores throughout the country.

The picture was specially drawn by Tim Kellet, RIBA, of Nottingham City Development Department.

The new Design Guide was produced by the City Council's Conservation & Design team. It aims to improve the quality of new shopfronts in the city, with the emphasis on well-executed modern designs and authentically-detailed reproductions of traditional examples, and on good quality generally. Sections of the guide analyse the components of a traditional shopfront and its relationship to the building above; other sections deal with the design and position of signs and lighting, the choice of style, the need for appropriate detailing and the incorporation of easy access and security features. This guide, well-furnished with clear illustrations, gives good practical advice aimed at shopkeepers, builders, and architects. Copies should by now be available from the reception desk at the Development Department.

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the individual contributors and must not be taken to represent the corporate views of Nottinghamshire Building Preservation Trust Ltd. or the views of its Officers.

Should we worry that this sort of thing still happens? Or do you think...

HERE ARE PICTURES of adjoining pairs of semi-detached Victorian villas in the inner suburbs of an east-midland city. (Opposite page). This kind of thing often used to be printed by the environmentally-aware journals and glossy monthlies, usually without any comment except a sardonic title such as "Mess of the Month". The idea was that the pictures spoke for themselves. Anyone with taste could see instantly what was wrong, and would know that doing that kind of thing to any building was the act of a barbarian and a vandal. So, briefly mock and then just ignore: on with something more worthwhile like providing examples of the right way to do things – that's been the general feeling about how such a plague should be cured.

I'm not sure that it's enough any more. For the great majority of people the pictures would *not* speak for themselves. Members of the Trust would get the point, but that's preaching to the converted. Elsewhere there is general ignorance about the aesthetic side of architecture. Many people are interested in the *history* of buildings, and have a vague feeling that old ones usually *look* nicer. But they don't know why. And when it comes to new buildings, hardly anyone is able to tell good from bad.

It can't do any harm for once to analyse in more detail just why things like our example are so distressing.

There are two aspects to the vandalism. First: destruction of something pleasant that was there before. Secondly: construction of something hideous in its place. The top picture shows a pair of houses still remaining largely as they were built (in about 1890 I would guess). They are not rare or outstanding, but just good examples of respectable middling late-Victorian family houses from a period when craftsmanship in the building industry was at its height, and even spec-built houses like these were put together with some care and thought. The nature of a semi-detached pair of houses means that they always break one of the rules of composition (avoid duality in a symmetrical composition). But the builder has tried to compensate by accentuating the visual strength of the bay windows with decoration, linking the front door arches to suggest a tripartite composition, and putting a good heavy terra-cotta cornice right across to hold it all together. Quite successful.

I'm not suggesting that the builder sat down and worked out the composition as I have done. But he was following, with some intelligence, a long tradition based on the fundamental rules of composition and proportion (which go back to Periclean Greece and beyond). He used good materials: local red brick, sandstone, terra-cotta, and welsh slate. The houses were confident and dignified. Nothing like them is being built today nor is likely to be built ever again. They deserve some respect.

What respect they are likely to get can be guessed if you look at what has happened to the pair next-door. (Bottom picture). Here, the bay windows have been ripped out, leaving a plain rectangular block, which prevents any possible solution to the composition problem. The front walls have had to be rendered to cover up the scars left by the rape of the bay windows.

The right-hand house retains the original openings for its new windows and so those at least are in scale. But the panes are horribly ill-proportioned, nearly square but not quite, despite the windows' having been made specially.

The left house is an even worse offender. Not only have they thrown away the bays but they have built up the openings, squeezing them down to half the original size. This, so that they could use standard windows, which are not only inherently ill-proportioned but also bear no relation either to the originals or to the neighbouring house. Notice that there are three different shapes of pane in the one casement.

It's JUST A MATTER Of Personal TASTE

*"Taste, good taste,
can only be developed
by studying the best
examples. No one is
born with good taste;
it is always the result
of education. The in-
experienced do not
have it."*

— Jan Tschichold



This fault is due to lazy design at the factory, and a major reason why modern spec. housing is so ugly. Previous centuries avoided it. Why is it universal today?

Another common horror: look at those brilliant-white services boxes under the window, and all the odd bits of wire and pipe. Another common horror: look at those brilliant-white services boxes under the window, and all the odd bits of wire and pipe. And there are plenty more nasties – I don't need to list them all. The picture isn't even redeemed by vegetation. Scraped bare, despite the example of the next-door houses with the big privet in front of the entrances (where nervous visitors could wait well-concealed from the stares of *hoi polloi*).

The result of these alterations is excruciating discord: like an orchestra where every second player is a quarter-tone flat and half a beat behind. But an orchestra can at least stop, tune up, and start again, watching the conductor this time. A building can't start all over again. The discord continues for ever, an offence to the public eye until the demolition people are allowed to put the poor thing out of its misery.

Well, why? Why has it been done here, and why is it done so often, all over the country? (And it's starting to happen to the "unspoilt" houses. Look at the windows,

and the white paint on the cornice). The cause is ignorance. And the reason for ignorance is lack of education.

No blame to the present lot of teachers. This problem is much older: that no-one was ever allotted the job of teaching school-children about the appearance of buildings. There are specialists to teach English Literature – the aesthetics of the language. There are music teachers, art teachers, drama teachers – all aesthetic specialists. But somehow architecture and civic design, the most important of the lot, got left out. If kids ever learnt anything on the subject it usually came from a history teacher – with an historical bias, inevitably; historians are not usually trained in aesthetics.

So we get ignorance piled upon ignorance back through the generations, until there has grown up the idea that taste in architecture is a congenital quality: no training given, therefore not needed; therefore everyone's opinion is of equal merit. This attitude is revealed most tellingly in a chant dragged out wherever aesthetic matters are discussed: "It's just a matter of personal taste". (JAMOPT is a useful acronym). This motto sounds deceptively democratic and plausible. But it is false. It pretends to defend the sanctity of personal taste and the individual's freedom to inflict it on the public. But it is used to excuse both the feeble and the downright ugly building, and to reject anything even slightly original. Its credentials can be easily rebutted.

First: in the present case, which can be taken as typical, it is not a question of good or bad taste. Just look at the photos. There is clearly a total *absence* of taste, or of any conception that there is such a thing as taste which should control what is done to the outside of houses.

Secondly: freedom to display the hideous results of bad education. In a world which is trying to ban all sorts

Secondly: freedom to display the hideous results of bad education. In a world which is trying to ban all sorts of pollution – acid rain, cigarettes, chewing-gum wrappers and noisy parties – the right of individuals to offend the public eye with ugly buildings can no longer be accepted. Visual pollution is as harmful as the other kinds, and less easy to escape from than most.

What can the NPPF and its members do?

Start with reading the quotations, by well-known names, which come with this article. Tschichold opposite, and Pevsner on page 6. Then, thinking is needed. This matter – the whole business of education of adults and children alike in what we might call Civic Aesthetics, – is clearly of public concern and great urgency. But is it the sort of thing that the Trust should be concerning itself with? Use this newsletter as a forum for discussion of the possibilities.

— Michael Hurst.

THE NATURE OF ARCHITECTURE

A pendant to the centrefold article.

WHAT DISTINGUISHES ARCHITECTURE from painting and sculpture is its spatial quality... the effect on our senses of the treatment of the interior, the sequence of rooms, the widening out of the nave at the crossing, the stately movement of a baroque staircase. In this, and only in this, no other artist can emulate the architect.

But architecture... is not exclusively spatial. In every building, besides enclosing space, the architect models volume and plane surface, i.e. designs an exterior and sets out individual walls. That means that the good architect requires the sculptor's and the painter's modes of vision in addition to his own spatial imagination. Thus architecture is the most comprehensive of all visual arts and has a right to claim superiority over the others.

Neither sculpture nor painting... surround us to the same extent as architecture, act upon us so incessantly and ubiquitously. We can avoid intercourse with what people call the Fine Arts, but we cannot escape buildings and the subtle but penetrating effects of their character, noble or mean, restrained or ostentatious, genuine or meretricious. An age without painting is conceivable... An age without architecture is impossible as long as human beings populate this world.

— *Sir Nikolaus Pevsner*

Introduction: AN OUTLINE OF EUROPEAN ARCHITECTURE.
(Fifth edition., 1957: Penguin)



The Association of Building Preservation Trusts

THE ASSOCIATION OF BUILDING PRESERVATION TRUSTS (APT) is established to promote wider knowledge and understanding of Building Preservation Trusts and to encourage and assist their objectives. Those objectives are to preserve buildings and structures of particular beauty or of historic, architectural or constructional interest, and ancient monuments and associated land.

A recent meeting of the APT, Midlands Area Committee, at the Ossington Coffee Palace in Newark was successfully hosted by NBPT. The association is proving to be of great mutual benefit to its member BPT's.

The APT is fully supported by the Architectural Heritage Fund, which sent representatives Maria Perks and Michele McPaul, to this area meeting. Their contribution was much appreciated.

After the formal meeting, local members escorted the visiting representatives of member APT's on a tour of Newark-on-Trent.

— *Brian Allebon*

SAVING HISTORIC MANSFIELD

Proposed Feasibility Study.

THE COUNCIL OF MANAGEMENT has recently authorised feasibility studies for two important properties in Mansfield.

Bath Mill, Bath Lane (Road to Clipstone)

BATH MILL (also known as Goldies Mill) built 1822 - 31, has been empty and unoccupied since 1986. It has four storeys plus a garret. The Mill is Listed Grade I and is on the 'Buildings at Risk' register. It is the last surviving intact Mill of several that once existed on the river Maun, built as a water powered textile mill. It is a good example of its type, stone built and imposing - despite its low-lying location - and of architectural significance.

Bath Mill was built originally for the making of cotton and lace thread. Later its product became cotton doubling. It was converted in about 1880 by W Goldie & Co for use as a hosiery mill.

The Mill's condition and size, planning blight, and the decline in the property market have all contributed to its present plight. Its saving grace has been that the roof has remained in reasonable condition. However, masonry has suffered from subsidence and the windows have all been vandalised.

Innisdoon, Crow Hill Drive (off Chesterfield Road South)

INNISDOON is a fine House by Parker and Unwin, listed Grade II*, and also critically At Risk. Built 1904-05, it is in the Arts and Crafts style with characteristic white-painted roughcast walls with hipped and gabled plain-tile roof and a complex plan. Very typical of the style of these architects, well-known practitioners of Arts and Crafts, who later went on to design Letchworth Garden City and Hampstead Garden Suburb.

It is most disturbing that a large part of the interior fittings (attributed to Cecil Hignett) has been lost through vandalism. There are fortunately photographic records of the doors, cupboard fronts, settle, and ironmongery which were all part of the original design.

Council Support

MANSFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL is supporting both projects.

Please take a look at these buildings when you are next in the Mansfield vicinity.

We hope that the projects may prove to be viable and that these very different but equally fine examples of building may be put to new use and be conserved.

— *Brian Allebon*



LONG MEMORY WANTED

CAN ANY READER identify the house pictured (above)? The architectural drawing is without detail (the house looks early-Georgian-ish) but the site is shown clearly and appears to be a steep bluff overlooking watermeadows.

The drawing comes from a sketchbook (artist unknown) in use between 1842 and 1845. Most of the 80-odd drawings in the book are of houses or agricultural scenes in the Dukeries and east Derbyshire, and this house most likely follows suit. But there are also a few scenes from Shrewsbury and from around Bridlington, so the location is by no means certain. Nor is it certain that the house still stands: if 1845 is the terminus it could have been gone 150 years ago.

News of any miraculous identifications to Neville Hoskins, please.



ALL SAINT'S, MARKHAM CLINTON.

REPUTED TO BE THE OLDEST CHURCH in the diocese of Southwell, All Saints at West Markham retains many of its original Saxon and Norman features. This is due to an interesting piece of history which resulted in the church being abandoned for over a hundred years, so missing the whole of the Victorian period of restoration.

The chief local landowner and Patron of the living was the Duke of Newcastle. In 1832 the Duke engaged Sturke to build a family mausoleum and chapel at Milton, the next visit. This rather isolated mausoleum then became the parish church. In 1949 came a reversion to the original state: the old church was brought back into

use, and the mausoleum left to moulder in its turn until eventually vested in the Redundant Churches fund.

The old church comprises nave, chancel, and south porch exclusively. There is no break between nave and chancel. There is much of interest, but in particular note the original Saxon mud floor, the Norman font, and the Jacobean pulpit.

Both church and mausoleum are worth a detour.

Prize Competition



VERNON RADCLIFFE contributed the crowd scene (below). A surprise gift awaits the sender (before the AGM) of the most original/amusing/scurrilous caption or title.

caption or title,



CONTRIBUTIONS, PLEASE.

IT WOULD BE NICE IF *Conservation in Nottinghamshire* could be published twice a year. We could afford it, especially as the new production method has saved money. The trouble is that there are not enough contributions. A county trust, serving a population of a million, should be able to contribute six pages-worth every six months, without the editor's having to chase it up. Yet at present not enough material is submitted to allow publication reliably even once a year. In this situation there is no point in setting a deadline for the next number: it will appear when we have enough copy.

There must be many Trust members with a contribution to make. Any length; any subject relevant or in-

teresting. A column is about 300 words: a good length for a short feature. Plenty of those, please

Send your material in as soon as it is ready. If it's on disc it makes life easier (telephone first to discuss the format) but it is equally welcome on paper, handwritten or typed. Line drawings reproduce better, but if photographs are necessary we can print them.

Can we also have some letters, please? There's a nicely controversial article in this number, which is just asking for comment. But any kind of feedback, pro or anti, is valuable in helping us to get it right next time.

Contact:

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01 636 77 814

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Registered Charity No. 254094

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The N.B.P.T. was founded in 1967, which was also the year in which Conservation Areas were established by the Civic Amenities Act. It was not entirely fortuitous that the two births coincided: it was the beginning of the groundswell for conservation - at a time when the word had not yet lost any of its resonance, as now through misuse it so often has.

The Trust was originally a grant-giving body. The grants, though small, were looked upon as an essential complement to and reinforcement of the Trust's other main job: the giving of technical and aesthetic advice. This advice then as now was given freely and generously by the Trust's technical advisers, working to preserve the historic buildings of the County.

Today, the Trust's main thrust is through the Projects Sub-Committee. This Committee has produced a 'buildings at risk' list: a list, comprehensive it is hoped, of buildings of architectural or historic merit which are threatened by neglect or over-development.

The Trust then investigates how best to save those buildings. The preferred method is to encourage the owners to take the right action, making the best use of grants and other finance available for historic buildings. But when all else fails the Trust will acquire the building and do the necessary work itself, sell it on again at a profit if one is available, and plough the money back into the Revolving Fund in order to save other buildings.

The Trust is frequently invited to comment on planning applications which affect listed buildings and Conservation Areas. It often also comments on applications even when not invited to do so. The Trust's comments are based solely on its own evaluation of the building and of how the proposals would affect the building. Its viewpoint is therefore always independent, even if not always agreeable.

For the membership, the Trust organizes slide evenings and an annual coach trip and other outings to places of architectural interest. It is also customary to invite an interesting speaker to the Annual General Meeting. The Trust publishes a Newsletter and News Bulletin, often with original and unpublished material.

New Members are very welcome, and the subscription is modest. To join, please complete the application and send it to the Secretary.

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

(Please delete parts that don't apply; use block letters.)

Minimum Annual Subscriptions:

Ordinary member £6 (Couples £9)
Life member £60 (Couples £90)
Corporate membership (for associations) £8

I/We apply to become

an Ordinary Member/Life Member/Corporate member of the Trust.

I/We enclose my/our first annual subscription of £

Name

Address

Post Code

Signed

Date

If you have a bank account, please use the Banker's Order form below. It really does help to simplify our book-keeping. Thank you.

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To

Bank

Branch

Please pay now, and on 1st April in each succeeding year, the sum of
Branch

Please pay now, and on 1st April in each succeeding year, the sum of

£ (..... pounds)

to: The National Westminster Bank PLC,
52 Rectory Road, West Bridgford, Nottingham,
for the credit of:

The Nottinghamshire Building Preservation Trust Limited.

Signature

Address

Date

My Account No.

* Please insert the name of your own bankers.